



The Expulsion of the Christians of Mosul is horrendous

A Call for Political Action by Justice and Peace Europe

Since the beginning of June ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and in Syria), now IS (Islamic State), a militant Salafist group, has spread terror across Syria and Northern Iraq and occupied cities there, the largest being Mosul, the ancient Niniveh. With several thousand brutal fighters at present it rules an area about as large as Great Britain. The developments brought about by the occupation of this large territory by a terrorist group as ISIS has huge consequences for the region and beyond. It proclaims itself to be the Kalifat representing all Muslims worldwide and attracts fighters from many countries, including European nations, through effective use of social media, such as Twitter. The fact that Christians are among its most prominent targets should be a further motive for determined action.

On July 17th the leadership of IS has issued a decree giving all Christians until July 19th to convert to Islam, pay an exorbitantly high personal tax (jizya)¹ or leave Mosul, the main city in North Iraq, or face execution. The houses of those who left were expropriated by the state. Most of them fled to nearby Kurdistan under humiliating and dangerous conditions and without any belongings. Estimates of the number of Christians still in the area vary between 35 000 and 5 000, many having left before. The terrorist regime of IS thus during the past months has depleted Northern Iraq of its once thriving Christian communities and destroyed one of the oldest Churches of Christendom. Salafist militants also target and execute Shiites, Yesides and any who oppose their brutal practices. They are also destroying the cultural heritage of this historically rich region on a large scale. Churches, monasteries, and ancient places of pilgrimages of all religions, such as the tomb of Jonah and of Seth, have been devastated and desecrated during the past days.

In view of these horrendous developments in Northern Iraq *Justice and Peace Europe* welcomes the resolution of the European Parliament from the 17th of July. It urges the leadership of the European Union and all European politicians and public opinion leaders to take political action in accordance with the strong condemnation of the persecution of minorities in Mosul by the members of the UN Security Council on 21st July.

¹ Reports vary from 250-450 Dollars per month per person.

The following aims are to be pursued with vigour:

- declare ISIS officially a terrorist organisation;
- prohibit any supply of arms and disclose those groups and countries which support it;
- exert pressure on the Government of Iraq to pursue a policy of national unity including all its population and prevent the further disintegration of Iraq, which has disastrous consequences for the whole region;
- grant generous humanitarian aid to all governments in the region which are confronted with a huge number of refugees from Syria and now from Iraq, mainly Kurdistan, so as to be able to mitigate human suffering;
- provide all necessary supports and solidarity to the Christians brutally persecuted so as to help them regain hope and survive this time;
- recognize effectively religious persecution as a ground for asylum and grant it to those who have been exiled on grounds of religion,

Msgr. Sako, Patriarch of the Catholic-Chaldean Church, in an open letter on 17th July urged all Iraqis and particularly the Muslim leaders to respect “the innocent non-armed population of all ethnic, religious and sectarian backgrounds”. During the past days the IOC (Islamic Organisation of Cooperation) as well as other Muslim organisations, scholars and groups have strongly condemned the crimes of ISIS in the name of Islam. *Justice and Peace Europe* therefore recommends the fostering of cooperation with all Muslim groups which strongly oppose discrimination on religious grounds.

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*Justice and Peace Europe, the European Conference of Justice and Peace Commissions is the alliance of 31 Justice and Peace Commissions in Europe, working for the promotion of justice, peace and respect for human dignity. Justice and Peace Europe contributes to raise awareness of the **Catholic social doctrine** in the European societies and the European institutions. Its general secretariat is based in Brussels.*

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