



Assyria Council of Europe

1st November 2010
Press Release

CHURCH IN BAGHDAD ATTACKED BY ISLAMIST GUNMEN. AT LEAST 58 DEAD AND 75 MORE WOUNDED.

A Catholic church in central Baghdad was attacked yesterday by Islamist militants believed not to be from Iraq. Iraqi forces stormed the church and a gunfight ensued with the militants, who raided the church and took its parishioners hostage. Reports suggest at least 58 people are believed to be dead, including a priest, with 75 people more wounded.

Worshippers were attending their Sunday mass when gunmen wearing suicide vests detonated bombs outside and then entered Our Lady of Salvation church and started killing indiscriminately. Once the attention of the Iraqi security forces was gained, they proceeded to make demands calling for the release of Al Qaeda militants who had been caught and detained.

Survivors have [spoken](#) of religious taunts and killing at random. The militants started shooting hostages by saying "We will go to paradise when we kill you, and you will go to hell". Iraqi commandos along with American helicopters arrived on the scene shortly after. Questions must be raised about the methods employed during the rescue as many lives were lost in the process.

Violence towards the Assyrian Christian community is a persistent and endemic problem in Iraq. The Assyrians have endured a terrible time since and before Saddam Hussein's removal. Current security is highly inadequate as seen here with a large number of Assyrians being murdered by apparent foreign nationals with criminal intentions.

The Assyria Council of Europe's view is that "Assyrian Christians are once again the victim of a horrendous attack on their culture, their religion, and most importantly, their position within their homeland. This will prompt even more Assyrians to leave in search of safety. It is vital that Assyrian Christians are afforded with the same rights as other ethnic groups in Iraq.

These include being granted a province, in accordance with federal law, which provides a secure geographically defined region where all minority groups, including Assyrian Christians, are given administrative responsibility and the authority to locally derive their security forces. More than 1 million Assyrian Christians have left Iraq post-Saddam, and this cannot be allowed to continue."

The Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) is a Brussels based non profit advocating rights of minorities in Iraq since 2007. **Homepage:** www.assyriacouncil.eu **Email:** info@assyriacouncil.eu