



## News and Current Events :: Iraqi Christians Become Targets of Attacks

**Iraqi Christians Become Targets of Attacks - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2005/1/30 21:37**

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BAGHDAD, IRAQ (BosNewsLife/VOA)-- Iraqi Christians have become targets of attacks by bandits and Muslim militants, but many continue to risk injury, and death, to attend church services. While gunshots can be heard in the distance, hundreds of Iraqi Christians can be seen singing songs about Jesus Christ, who, they say gives them hope in a country devastated by war and decades of dictatorship.

To get to church, believers race through the streets every Sunday, fearing attacks by Muslim extremists who have targeted Christian-owned shops, and Christian women who do not wear head scarves. Among the worshippers are men who survived the horrors of the front lines when they were forced to serve in the army of Saddam Hussein. Some even want the former Iraqi leader to visit their church, so he can, in their words, receive forgiveness for his sins.

This is one of many churches that have expanded or been established since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime. The open meeting of the Evangelical Alliance Church would have been impossible under the previous regime, when all but traditional churches were banned. Church members met secretly for several years. The arrival of American forces enabled the congregation to officially open its doors. But visiting the Sunday church service can be dangerous.

Maral Manuel, 32, calls herself a born-again Christian, and is looking to the heavens for protection in Iraq's increasingly volatile society. "Lord Jesus protected our lives, because you know there many thieves, criminals and murders," she said. "It is a difficult life. But He saved us by His soldiers and Angels."

When asked how she goes to church when there are a lot of shootings, she replied: "We don't have a car, but we have a special church bus and busses to our work where we are going." Manuel and other Christians say the special bus service will be needed for some time, amid ongoing violence directed against Christian believers. They claim the security situation worsened because most Iraqi policemen and soldiers were dismissed by the U.S.-led coalition.