

s and Current Events :: 'Hated Because We Want to Exist as Christians:' Tens of Thousands of Iraqi Christians

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Tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians who have fled the Islamic State terror group to neighboring countries such as Jordan have said they are stuck in limbo, with nowhere to go and limited ways to provide a living. Pope Francis has condemned the world's silence on the issue, while an Iraqi archbishop has said that Christians in the region are hated because they want to keep hold of their faith.

"The Church is unable to offer and guarantee the fundamental security that its members need to thrive. It is no secret that hatred of minorities has intensified in certain quarters over the past few years. It is difficult to understand this hate. We are hated because we persist in wanting to exist as Christians. In other words, we are hated because we persist in demanding a basic human right," His Exc. Mgr. Bashar Matti Warda, C.S.S.R., Archbishop of Erbil, said in a statement to Fides News Agency.

The Associated Press reported on Sunday that close to 7,000 Christians from northern Iraq alone have fled to Jordan. They have not been granted permission to work and have not been resettled to the West as hoped, leaving them in a state of limbo.

"We've lost hope in everything," said 67-year-old Hinda Ablahat, who lives with other refugees in a church shelter in Amman, the capital of Jordan. "We've been sitting here for a year and nothing has happened."

"Everyone has forgotten us," added 25-year-old Johnny al-Behno.

The refugees receive assistance from nonprofits such as Caritas, a Catholic charity, but the need remains huge.

IS has given Christians in both Iraq and Syria little choice but to abandon their homes, where they had lived for generations. The terror group has been forcing religious minorities to convert to Islam, pay heavy taxes, or face death.

Last week Pope Francis urged the world to be more attentive to the dire situation Christians and other religious minorities find themselves in Iraq and the affected regions.

The Vatican leader thanked those "who took on the care of these brothers and sisters, not turning their gaze away."

He added that the Christian communities in Jordan who are helping the refugees "proclaim the resurrection of Christ by sharing their suffering and giving them aid."

"You bow down to their suffering, which risks suffocating hope," Francis added.

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