





EXODUS OF THE CHRISTIANS OF IRAQ

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On 31 October 2010, nine armed men wearing explosives strapped to them, entered Our Lady of Salvation Syriac Catholic Church in Baghdad during Sunday Mass. What followed was a bloodbath. Since then, more and more Christians are leaving Baghdad...between twenty to thirty families a day prefer exile, according to Iraqi NGO Hammurabi.
Before the first Gulf War, they were two million. Their exodus began during the years of the embargo and continued after the fall of Saddam. Today, only 500 000 Christians are left in Iraq. Mesopotamia, the land of Abraham's tomb, is their country of origin - are they now condemned to disappear from the Iraq?
Bessam, a young biologist waits for a visa to Amman and hopes to go to live with his sister in Canada. But he would have to turn his back on his past. Sevan, a teacher of French, has decided to stay. She remembers her Armenian grand-parents who fled the genocide in 1915.
The majority of Iraqi Muslims do not want the Christians to leave. Saad Salloun, editor-in-chief of the periodical Masarat, believes that if they leave the country like other minorities did, then Iraq will lose its roots...
It is the day before Easter in Baghdad. The churches are nearly empty: those who have not left are afraid and keep a low profile. The victims of the church attack of the previous October are still uppermost on everybody's mind.
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Categorie(s): History & Current Affairs
Tag(s): War, Religion, Iraq

Producer(s): POINT DU JOUR
Coproducer(s): ARTE G.E.I.E.
Length: 1x13 / Format: One-off
Original version: French
Nationality: France, 2014
Support(s): SD â€“ Digital 16/9

http://www.pointdujour-international.com/catalogueFiche.php?idFiche=38254&lang=en