

**The tragedy in Iraq -**  
- **Andrew White in Bagdad**  
- **Michael Nazir Ali**  
- **Douglas Alexander**  
- **Archbishop of Canterbury**

**The West  
must face  
the evil that  
has  
revealed  
itself in the  
Iraq  
genocide**

**by Michael  
Nazir-Ali**

A beautiful  
mosaic of  
ancient religions,  
cultures and  
languages in the  
Middle East is  
being  
systematically  
destroyed. Until  
now, the world has watched mutely.



***Hunted: Iraqi Christians - whose ties to the land are ancient -  
have been hounded from their homes and threatened with  
death if they do not convert***

Telegraph - When Muslims were threatened with genocide in Bosnia, the international community acted in concert to prevent the campaign against them developing into a full-scale pogrom. I went there myself, as part of an effort to bring relief supplies to all those who were affected. I was also present when millions of Afghan refugees poured into Pakistan after the Soviet

invasion of that country. Once again, Western countries, Christian, Islamic and secular organisations were at the forefront of bringing relief to these people.

For years now the Christian, Mandaean, Yazidi and other ancient communities of Iraq, have been [harried, bombed, exiled and massacred](#) without anyone batting so much as an eyelid. Churches have been bombed, clergy kidnapped and murdered, shops and homes attacked and destroyed. This persecution has now been elevated to genocide by the advent of Isis. People are being beheaded, crucified, shot in cold blood and exiled to a waterless desert simply because of their religious beliefs.

What began in Iraq, continued in Syria. Here the West's ill-advised backing of an Islamist uprising (largely funded by Saudi Arabia and Qatar) against the Assad regime has turned into a nightmare which has given birth to ultra-extremist organisations like Isis. Once again, religious and ethnic minorities, whether Christian, Alawite or Druze, have been the victims, alongside ordinary people of all kinds. Isis, now armed to the teeth with weaponry originally intended by the suppliers for "moderate" Islamist groups, has arrived in Iraq with a vengeance beyond anything that unfortunate country has so far experienced.

Next door in Iran, the Baha'i have been reduced to being a non-people: their marriages are not recognised, their children cannot be educated, their leaders have been executed or are in prison and even their graveyards have been desecrated. Christians, similarly, are not allowed to worship in Farsi, or to hold meetings in their homes. Churches have either been closed or can open only under tightly-controlled conditions. Any violation of these orders brings arrest, interrogation and imprisonment. Zoroastrians, belonging to the indigenous religion of Iran, are now so reduced in numbers that there are more of them outside Iran than remain in the country. Jews, likewise, are in daily danger of being associated with Zionism and having their property confiscated as "enemy property", even if they have never set foot in Israel.

In Pakistan, Christians are being cowed by the draconian blasphemy laws, systematic discrimination and terrorist attacks on churches, schools and social organisations. The Ahmadiyya (a heterodox group), also, suffer legal discrimination, restrictions on the practice of their religion and recurrent mob violence. Only in Egypt can we say that the large Coptic minority has a breathing space as they await the emergence, perhaps, of a new order.

So will the world just stand by and watch this unprecedented onslaught on freedom or will we do something beyond airdropping food and medicines and protecting our own personnel who may be caught up in the conflict?

### [Michael Nazir-Ali](#)

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali is President of the Oxford Centre for Training, Research, Advocacy and Dialogue and a leading authority on relations between Christianity and Islam. Born in Pakistan, he was Bishop of Rochester from 1994 to 2009 and the first non-white diocesan bishop in the history of the Church of England.

More at -

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/michaelnazirali/100282928/the-west-must-face-the-evil-that-has-revealed-itself-in-the-iraq-genocide/>

## **We cannot be silent in the face of the slaughter in Iraq**

**Douglas Alexander,  
Shadow Foreign  
Secretary**

Forty thousand followers of the Yazidi faith are huddling, terrified, on the side of Mount Sinjar, fearing that their women are going to be raped, enslaved or killed.

Nearly a quarter of Iraq's Christians have been driven from their homes in the past week alone. In theory, the Islamic State gave them the choice of converting, paying a fine, or leaving. In practice, many were murdered before they could even make that horrendous choice: the militants have, in the words of Canon Andrew White, vicar of Baghdad, "chopped off heads, chopped children in half, hanged people on crosses. The stories are so bad



***Christians in the town of Karaqosh - nearly a quarter of Iraq's Christians have been driven from their homes in the past week alone***

they don't sound true". He is understandably angry that so far, Britain and other Western governments have proved deaf to pleas for sanctuary.

[...] The Government should be doing more to speak out about the continued suffering of religious minorities, including Christians, inside Iraq. To do so would not be to support one faith over another – it would be to take a stand against oppression of our fellow human beings. That is why I have written to the Foreign Secretary to urge him to set out what steps the Government will now take, along with our allies, to address this grave and growing threat.

We as a party have welcomed, and support, the Government's assurances it is not proposing military intervention in Iraq. There are, however, urgent diplomatic and humanitarian steps that we should take. First, the Government should call an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council – which we currently chair – to agree on further humanitarian action. Second, ministers should open discussions with the UN's refugee agency about what shelter can be provided within Iraq – and how to provide greater assistance to refugees fleeing the region. Third, the Government should urge the UN Human Rights Council, which it joined in December, to build a consensus for action on religious freedom at the highest international level.

Finally, we politicians must accept that we have a role in raising the issue of religious persecution on to the public agenda. For too long, the growing persecution of Christians around the world has remained largely untold.

Sunday is a Day of Prayer for the persecuted people of Iraq, here and around the world. As millions unite in prayer, I hope the international community can unite in action. With the lives of thousands hanging in the balance, no one should be willing to walk by on the other side for fear of causing offence.

More at -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11022763/We-cannot-be-silent-in-the-face-of-the-slaughter-in-Iraq.html>

## **Vicar of Baghdad: We need military action NOW**

**Canon Andrew White, Mailonline:**

**I have just returned from a secret visit to Qaraqosh – once the largest Christian town in Iraq, but no longer.**

Today, Qaraqosh stands 90 per cent empty, desecrated by the gunmen of the fanatical Islamic State terror group now in control. The majority of the town's 50,000 people have fled, fearing that, like other Christians in this region, they will be massacred.

The militants, in a further act of sacrilege, have established their administrative posts in the abandoned churches.

My visit, under the noses of the gunmen, was frightening – but that is nothing to the terror of the poor souls left behind.

Since I went to St George's Anglican church in Baghdad in 2003 – the only Anglican church in the city – I have seen countless terrible things. Many of my congregation have been killed or mutilated in the years of violence.

But I have never witnessed anything on the scale, or which has affected me quite so dreadfully as on this visit to the north of Iraq.

In the nearby city of Irbil, I found many of those Christians who had fled. Some 30,000 refugees are packed into the Kurdish capital, forming a new Christian suburb.

I spoke to one woman who had survived the massacres in Qaraqosh. She had a bandaged left hand. When IS soldiers could not remove her gold wedding ring, they had simply hacked off her finger. She wept as she told me.

More at -

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2720983/Vicar-Baghdad-We-need-military-actions-NOW.html#ixzz3A0fvfuTZ%C2%A0>

## **Statement from Archbishop of Canterbury on Iraq**

**The Archbishop of Canterbury issued on Friday this**

**[Statement from Archbishop Justin on Iraq.](#)**



**“The horrific events in Iraq rightly call our attention and sorrow yet again. Christians and other religious minorities are being killed and face terrible suffering.**



“What we are seeing in Iraq violates brutally people’s right to freedom of religion and belief, as set out under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is extremely important that aid efforts are supported and that those who have been displaced are able to find safety. I believe that, like France, the United Kingdom’s doors should be open to refugees, as they have been throughout history.

“The international community must document human rights abuses being committed in northern Iraq so that future prosecutions can take place. It is important and necessary for the international community to challenge the culture of impunity which has allowed these atrocities to take place.

“With the world’s attention on the plight of those in Iraq, we must not forget that this is part of an evil pattern around the world where Christians and other minorities are being killed and persecuted for their faith. Only this week I received an email from a friend in Northern Nigeria about an appalling attack on a village, where Christians were killed because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Such horrific stories have become depressingly familiar in countries around the world, including Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

“We must continue to cry to God for peace and justice and security throughout the world. Those suffering such appalling treatment in Iraq are especially in my prayers at this time.”

## **Omagh Bomb victim’s father hails ‘therapy’ of remembrance event**

**Sixteen years on from the Omagh Bomb, families of the dead were among those gathered to remember the worst single atrocity of the Troubles.**

News Letter - Representatives of Catholicism, Protestantism and even Judaism congregated in the Co Tyrone town for a 40 minute service honouring the terror victims and their counterparts across the globe.

Michael Gallagher, who lost his 21-year-old son Aidan in the blast, said that although his pain never ends events like this do help to ease the emotional burden he must carry.

He told the News Letter that up to 300 turned out for the service in the Memorial Garden of Light at 3pm today, despite the deeply unpromising weather.

“Miraculously, at that period the rain stopped and we got in and out of the garden dry”, said Mr Gallagher, 64.



“It’s obvious there’s a need for some form of communal remembrance. We’ll go on holding that service as long as there is a need.”

There were readings in Irish, reflecting the lives of those from the Republic who were murdered, and a poem in Spanish for those from Spain who also perished as a result of the explosion on August 15, 1998.

Rabbi David Singer from Belfast’s synagogue also offered a religious reading.

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/omagh-bomb-victim-s-father-hails-therapy-of-remembrance-event-1-6230728>

## Churches in West Africa call for prayer as Ebola virus spreads

**Church leaders in West Africa have asked for our prayers as the Ebola virus continues to spread, with over 932 reported deaths.**

Please make use of the prayer we have written – see below.

Ebola is spreading in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea and threatening other countries in West Africa.

The people of Ghana are becoming increasingly aware of the epidemic.

The Anglican mission agency Us (formerly USPG) is in contact with our Anglican partners throughout the Church of the Province of West Africa (CPWA), which includes The Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cameroon and Ghana.

Janette O'Neill, Chief Executive of Us, said: 'This is the worst Ebola outbreak in history. When communities face such terrible suffering the church must be

there to combat fear and hopelessness with both love and tangible support.

'The church can also be a source of knowledge to help families understand the situation, and the church can help to make sure governments are fully aware of what is happening at community level.'



*A nurse comforts a patient who has been diagnosed to have the Ebola virus.*

#### **From the church in Liberia:**

The Most Revd Jonathan Hart, Archbishop of Liberia, reports: 'The Ebola virus is having a very bad effect on the lives of citizens in Liberia.

'We have joined hands with the council of churches, the government and other organisations in the fight against Ebola. Churches are educating our members to avoid contact with infected people, wash hands with chorine, and not to panic.'

'Our church has joined the health authorities in calling on our people to wash their hands with chlorine and soap, avoid hands shaking and, as much as possible, refuse unnecessary bodily contact. We encourage the public to keep their environments clean.

'The government has authorised the closure of all schools. Places of entertainment are operating on a reduced level.

'We need disposable surgical gloves, chorine and basic hygiene kits to safeguard against Ebola.'

#### **From the church in Sierra Leone:**

Ade Renner-Thomas, Chancellor for the Diocese of Freetown, Sierra Leone, writes: 'Many thanks for your thoughts and prayers.



'Here in Sierra Leone the government has declared a state of public health emergency. It means there are quarantines in the areas most affected. Movements are restricted in certain areas, and gatherings of more than five people are prohibited.

'When we have met as a church, there are no more handshakes when we share the peace, etc.

'We need as much prayer as you can offer.

### **From the church in Ghana:**

The Most Revd Daniel Sarfo, Archbishop of the Internal Province of Ghana, said: 'People in my country are anxious. They are alert and watching the situation closely. The Anglican Church must act and prepare congregations to face any eventuality.

'There are instances in Ghana where people ran away from relatives who came from neighbouring affected countries. People are scared and anxious. The church needs to respond. We cannot remain idle in this situation.'

### Prayers for West Africa:

God of our anguish, we cry to you  
For all who wrestle with Ebola.  
Grant we pray, peace to the afraid,  
Your welcome to the dying and  
Your comfort to those living with loss.  
And, merciful Father,  
bless those many loving hands  
That bravely offer care and hope.

By the Revd Canon Edgar Ruddock, Us (formerly USPG)

God of healing,  
whose Son healed those who were brought to him.  
Hear our prayer for the peoples of West Africa  
suffering from the Ebola outbreak.  
Inspire and enable your church  
to be a source of healing, comfort and hope to those affected,  
and an agent for the education  
and equipping of communities

to stop the spread of this disease.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

By the Revd Tim Harford, Us (formerly USPG)

See also -

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/08/responding-to-ebola-crisis-in-sierra-leone-and-liberia.aspx>

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/08/wcc-expresses-deep-and-shared-concern-at-ebola-outbreak-in-west-africa.aspx>