

# **IRAQI CHRISTIANS** **FACE PERSECUTION**

Threatened with torture, burning, bombing for not joining  
'resistance'

Posted: June 25, 2004  
1:00 a.m. Eastern

© 2004 WorldNetDaily.com

Assyrian Christians recently liberated from Saddam Hussein's regime are suffering a string of deadly attacks church leaders believe are religiously motivated.

Christians and churches have received letters in Arabic threatening that if they don't follow Islamic practice and support "the resistance," they will face the consequences: "torture, and burning or exploding the house with the family in it," says Elizabeth Kendal, researcher for the [World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission](#), in a report published by the Assist News Service.

Mandaeen Christians, who follow the teachings of John the Baptist, have been receiving the same threats and suffering the same violence, Kendal says.

The unchecked Islamic aggression is forcing the Christians to flee, she states, citing some examples.

On June 7, four masked men drove into the Christian Assyrian Quarters of the Dora district of Baghdad and opened fire on Assyrians going to work. Four were killed and several others wounded.

In the afternoon, the same day, three Assyrian women were killed in another drive-by shooting as they returned home from working at the Coalition Provisional Authority.

On 22 March, an elderly Assyrian couple was murdered in the Assyrian district. The wife was beaten to death and the husband had his throat cut.

As [WorldNetDaily reported](http://WorldNetDaily.com), Ken Joseph Jr., an Assyrian who directs [Assyrianchristians.com](http://Assyrianchristians.com), says several developments that "bode ill for Christians in Iraq are causing believers to flee the nation."

Facing next Wednesday's deadline for transfer of power, a temporary constitution that reads Islam is the "Official Religion of the State," and the failure to receive even one position on the Executive Council and only one ministry post – the Christians of Iraq are voting with their feet, says Joseph.

Kendal says the Assyrian Christians greatly fear that the history of abandonment and massacre of their minority group is about to repeat itself.

Historians regard the Assyrians as the indigenous people of Iraq. In biblical times, their homeland was centered around the Nineveh plains in Upper Mesopotamia, now northern Iraq, where they were visited by the prophet Jonah. The Assyrian Church of the East was founded in AD 33. Some 600 years later Arab invaders put the Assyrians under Muslim domination.

Invasions over the centuries nearly eliminated them. The Assyrians fought for the Allies in World War I and were promised autonomy in their homeland upon victory. But they were abandoned to the mercy of the Ottoman Turks when the British mandate was lifted in 1932, resulting in the massacre of two-thirds of the population.

In Saddam Hussein's secular state, the Assyrian remnant suffered severely under his discriminatory ethnic policy of Arabization.