



News and Current Events :: Iraq Christians train to recapture homes from Islamic State

Iraq Christians train to recapture homes from Islamic State - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2015/7/4 21:11

With wooden crosses around their necks and others tattooed on their arms, several dozen Iraqi Christians are training to recapture their homes overrun by the Islamic State jihadist group.

A year ago, IS launched a fierce offensive in northern Iraq, quickly capturing second city Mosul, with its large Christian minority, and Christian-populated areas in the surrounding Nineveh province.

Residents were given the choice of converting to Islam, paying a tax to continue practising their faith, or death.

Thousands fled, but some want to fight back, and are now training at a military base near the Baghdad airport.

They have Shiite Muslim fighters instructing them on how to use their Kalashnikov assault rifles and on the basics of combat manoeuvres, but they are vocal in their Christianity on parade, chanting Ya Mariam (O Mary) in cadence as they march in a salute to the mother of Jesus.

We heard that the Christians had an opportunity for jihad (holy war), and we all came and volunteered," said 17-year-old Chaldean Christian Frank Samir.

"Our children are dying; our Christian families were displaced. How do we ourselves accept that people say the Christians are not fighting? On the contrary, we want to fight everywhere," he said.

Samir is from Baghdad, but most of the Christians in the "Ketaeb Babylon" unit are from Mosul.

The IS assault was the latest in a long series of disasters for Iraqi Christians, who have repeatedly been attacked by jihadists since the 2003 overthrow of dictator Saddam Hussein, pushing hundreds of thousands to flee abroad.

"Two weeks of training"

"I did not hesitate to volunteer with my brothers to fight Daesh," said Fares Issa, 38, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

"I will continue fighting (them) until the liberation of Mosul and their expulsion from all the areas of Iraq," said Issa, who sold cars in Mosul before the conflict began.

Both Christian and Muslim religious symbols are displayed at the training area. These include a large cross affixed to a concrete blast wall and banners reading "God is greatest" and "There is no god but God," the first part of the Muslim testament of faith.

The training courses of which this is the ninth last only two weeks.

But this is far too little time to turn new recruits into competent fighters able to face the battle-hardened jihadists, many of whom have years of experience fighting in Iraq and neighbouring Syria.

"The main aim of forming our forces is the liberation of Mosul," said Rayan al-Kaldani, the secretary general of Ketaeb Babylon.

"We took part in the operations to liberate the city of Tikrit and other operations, including Baiji, in Salaheddin province," he said, referring to major battles north of Baghdad.

According to Kaldani, the Christians fight under the command of Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis, one of the top commanders in the "Popular Mobilisation" forces, an umbrella organisation mainly made up of Shiite fighters.

Re: Iraq Christians train to recapture homes from Islamic State - posted by Koheleth, on: 2015/7/4 21:38

Sad news. I guess if they really had the gospel, they would mobilize to take that. Jesus never fought his enemies with bullets.

Re: - posted by murrcolr (), on: 2015/7/5 4:59

The three things that struck me out of this report were.

1. mother worship - But they are vocal in their Christianity on parade, chanting Ya Mariam (O Mary) in cadence as they march in a salute to the mother of Jesus.
- 2 . Babylon - "The main aim of forming our forces is the liberation of Mosul," said Rayan al-Kaldani, the secretary general of Ketaeb Babylon.
3. Mahdi - According to Kaldani, the Christians fight under the command of Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis,