

Escaping ISIS, With Help from a Muslim

Christians From Iraqi Town Tell Story of Being Saved by Good Samaritan



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Radio Vatican

Stories are emerging from Christian communities in Iraq that are vaguely reminiscent of the plight of Jews in Nazi Germany.

AINA, the Assyrian International News Agency, reported this week on a dozen Christians helped by a Muslim man in the north of Iraq who has helped Christians escape areas controlled by the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

Those familiar with the history of the Holocaust may be reminded of anti-Nazi Christians who hid Jews and helped them escape persecution.

The AINA story details the plight of 12 Assyrian Christians who failed to leave their town of Bartella before ISIS took over. The Islamic militants ordered them to stay in their homes. ISIS told them that they were in contact with their priests and they would let them know of any developments. The militants provided food for the first three days of captivity. But for the next 17 days they had to rely only on what was left in their houses. They took all their money and papers.

The group was taken to an Islamic court in Mosul, where they "converted" to Islam and were given an Islamic State ID. They said they saw one Assyrian who did not convert and was badly beaten. His hands were tied behind his back, they told reporters later, and he was driven off in a truck. They assumed that he was killed.

A brother to one of the women gave her the telephone number of a Muslim man who is against ISIS and who reportedly had helped another family escape. The group took two taxis to Mosul, where they called the man. He brought them into his house for one night and said that the journey to Kirkuk, where they could find safety, would cost them \$540, but that if they did not have the money he would still bring them there.

The Islamic State IDs turned out to help them. Leaving Mosul early in the morning, they had to get through 16 ISIS checkpoints. Each time, they said they were going to a family funeral

in Kirkuk, and they would be returning to Mosul immediately after the funeral. Some guards asked for an exact address in Mosul.

At the last checkpoint, their papers were taken away from them, and after about another mile, the Peshmerga—the Kurdish militia that has been fighting back ISIS militants—welcomed them into Kirkuk.

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