

# 19th century Iraq church holds first Mass since Daesh defeat

Author:

Mon, 2022-05-02 00:19

MOSUL, Fallujah: Dozens of faithful celebrated Mass on Saturday at a Mosul church in northern Iraq for the first time since it was restored after its ransacking by Daesh terrorists.

Daesh swept into Mosul and proclaimed it their “capital” in 2014, in an onslaught that forced hundreds of thousands of Christians in the northern Nineveh province to flee, some to Iraq’s nearby Kurdistan region.

The Iraqi army drove out the jihadists three years later after months of grueling street fighting that devastated the city.

The Mar Tuma Syriac Catholic church, which dates back to the 19th century, was used by the jihadists as a prison or a court.

Restoration work is ongoing and its marble floor has been dismantled to be completely redone.

In September 2021, a new bell was inaugurated at the church during a ceremony attended by dozens of worshippers.

The 285-kg bell cast in Lebanon rang out on Saturday to cries of joy before the Mass got underway.

The service began with worshippers who packed the church chanting hymns as an organist played.

“This is the most beautiful church in Iraq,” said Father Pios Affas, 82, the delighted parish priest.

Affas also paid tribute to those behind the restoration work which, he said, had “brought the church back to its past glory, like the way it was 160 years ago.”

Inside the church, ochre and grey marble shone in the nave, where the altar and colonnaded arches were restored and new stained glass installed.

Jihadists had destroyed all Christian symbols, including the holy cross, and parts of the church were damaged by fire and shelling.

Artisans worked diligently to “clean the scorched marble” and restore it, Fraternity in Iraq, a French NGO that aids religious minorities, which helped fund the restoration work said earlier this year.

Outbuildings and rooms on the first floor, where windows have been broken and Daesh graffiti can be seen, are still due to be repaired.

Mosul and the surrounding plains of Nineveh were once home to one of the region's oldest Christian communities.

Iraq's Christian population has shrunk to fewer than 400,000 from around 1.5 million before the US-led invasion of 2003 that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

Nineveh province was left in ruins after three years of jihadist occupation which ended in 2017 when Iraqi forces backed by US-led coalition airstrikes pushed them out. Several monasteries and churches are being renovated but reconstruction is slow, and the Christian population that has fled has not returned.

Meanwhile, two rockets targeting a base in western Iraq hosting US-led coalition troops on Saturday crashed near the complex without causing casualties or damage, security sources said.

"Two rockets fell outside the Iraqi base of Ain Al-Asad," a security forces statement said, adding there were no "losses."

The base, controlled by Iraq, is located in the desert in the western Anbar province and hosts foreign troops from the coalition fighting the Daesh group.

A coalition official said there was "no impact on the installation reported" and "no coalition personnel injuries reported."

A previously unknown group calling itself "International Resistance" claimed the attack on a pro-Iran channel of messaging app Telegram.

Rockets and drones frequently target the Ain Al-Asad base.



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## [Turkish police hold dozens in May Day demonstrations](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-05-02 00:09

ISTANBUL: Turkish riot police detained dozens of protesters trying to reach Istanbul's main Taksim Square for May Day demonstrations against economic hardship caused by raging inflation.

The Istanbul governor's office had allowed May Day celebrations to be held in another district and deemed gatherings in all other locations as unauthorised and illegal.

A Reuters journalist saw riot police brawling with and handcuffing

protesters, images of which were shown on television by domestic broadcasters.

Police also detained 30 people in central Besiktas and 22 others in Sisli districts, the Demiroren News Agency reported. A statement from the Istanbul governor's office on Sunday said that 164 protesters had been detained across the city for "attempting to hold illegal demonstrations."

Marches led by workers and unions are held on May 1 every year as part of International Labor Day celebrations in many countries.

Turkey's annual inflation rate is expected to rise to 68 percent in April, driven higher by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and rising commodity prices, receding only slightly by the end of the year, a Reuters poll showed on Thursday.

The soaring inflation and the economic hardship it causes were cited in May Day statements from several groups.

"Our main theme this year had to be cost of living," the head of the Confederation of Turkish Labor Unions (Turk-Is), Ergun Atalay, said as he placed a wreath in Taksim Square and demanded that minimum wages be adjusted monthly to reflect rising prices. "Inflation is announced at the beginning of each month. The inflation rate should be added to wages every month," he said.

Citizens and trade unions in cities around Europe were taking to the streets for May Day marches, and to put out protest messages to their governments, notably in France where the holiday to honor workers was being used as a rallying cry against newly reelected President Emmanuel Macron.

May Day is a time of high emotion for participants and their causes, with police on the ready.

In Italy, after a two-year pandemic lull, an outdoor mega-concert was set for Rome with rallies and protests in cities across the country. Besides work, peace was an underlying theme with calls for an end to Russia's war in Ukraine.

Italy's three main labor unions were focusing their main rally in the hilltop town of Assisi, a frequent destination for peace protests. This year's slogan is "Working for peace."

"It's a May Day of social and civil commitment for peace and labor," said the head of Italy's CISL union, Daniela Fumarola.

Other protests were planned far and wide in Europe, including in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where students and others planned to rally in support of Ukraine as Communists, anarchists and anti-EU groups held their own gatherings.



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Turkish police remove followers of Islamist figure from mosques  
Turkish police say top Daesh figure captured

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## [Lebanese restaurant serves iftar at Japanese mosque](#)

Author:

Arab News Japan

ID:

1651355572812506600

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The only mosque in the city of Yokohama, the Yokohama Mosque, served more than 30 meals on Wednesday to Muslims to break their fast during Ramadan. After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, mosques across Japan have resumed community iftar gatherings, allowing people in the country to enjoy the communal aspect that forms a central part of Ramadan for many. At the Yokohama Mosque, the iftar meals were provided by the Lebanese

restaurant Al-Ain, which is located in Kanagawa. The meals donated by Al-Ain restaurant consist of a main course including rice, a sandwich, a side such as a piece of chicken and dessert.

Ziad Karam, the owner of Al-Ain restaurant said that he tried to help anyone who needed it at the mosque.

The restaurant has also offered a set iftar menu that is created exclusively for the holy month and charges ¥3,500 (\$27) per person. The iftar features a four-course menu that consists of cold and hot mezze platters, main dishes, and desserts to allow guests to indulge in the traditional savory dishes from the Lebanese cuisine.

“Ramadan traditionally has been very busy for us. There are many Japanese people that are interested in the Lebanese cuisine that also join in on the iftar meals,”

Karam said.

Additionally, Al-Ain restaurant will be offering halal lamb for three consecutive days through the provision of a “Eid Al-Fitr Dinner Course” in commemoration with Eid Al-Fitr holidays.



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# Palestinian Al-Musaharati keeps age-old tradition alive in Gaza

Author:

Hazem Balousha

ID:

1651354091212444800

Sun, 2022-05-01 00:27

GAZA CITY: Nizar Al-Dabbas, 51, has found fame in the role of Al-Musaharati in the city of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip where he has lived for 22 years.

Al-Musaharati is a person who volunteers to wake up Muslims in the middle of the night during Ramadan for sahoor.

Al-Dabbas dons a traditional galabiya, the famous black and white Palestinian keffiyeh, and wraps a red tarbush on his head, one of the signs of men's elegance, before going out.

During Ramadan, every day at 2:00 a.m. Al-Dabbas walks the streets of Gaza beating his drum, singing folkloric songs and chanting poetry, which he learned as a child in Syria.

For him, there is no joy in Ramadan without Al-Musaharati: "It is a profession or voluntary work from the ancient Arab-Islamic heritage."

Al-Dabbas is pleased that children carrying lanterns wait for him in front of their house or in the streets and alleys where he roams daily, to accompany him on his tour and chant songs with him.

Technological advancement has been a major reason for the decline of Al-Musaharati in recent years as people rely on mobile phones or alarm clocks to wake them up. Al-Dabbas feels the profession may die out in the future.

However, when he gets support from people and the children participate alongside him with drums and flutes, it motivates him to voluntarily take up the role of Al-Musaharati each year.

Al-Dabbas loves the profession, which he describes as "beautiful and earns its owner the great reward from God."

When the children accompany him, it makes Al-Dabbas nostalgic about his childhood in Syria. "When I was of the same age, I would wait for my Syrian Al-Musaharati everyday and accompany him on his tour ... and since then I inherited the love of this beautiful volunteer work associated with the most beautiful month of the year."

Al-Dabbas was born in Syria and lived there with his family for about 29 years. Al-Dabbas said that while growing up there he decided with one of his brothers to work together as Al-Muasharati during Ramadan.

In 2000, Al-Dabbas came

for a visit to Gaza with his family of 10, and decided to settle in the Qaizan Al-Najjar neighborhood in Khan Younis after spending many years in the Yarmouk refugee camp – the largest Palestinian refugee camp in Syria.

He worked in Syria as a Al-Musaharati for 15 years before coming to Gaza and

still wears the same dress and uses the same instruments as he did before. Al-Dabbas learnt the art of Al-Musaharati from a Syrian friend and memorized many of the phrases and songs from him. Historical sources trace the first appearance of this profession to the era of the Abbasid state during the era of Caliph Al-Muntasir Billah.



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## [Houthis crack down on women who walk without male chaperons](#)

Author:

Saeed Al-Batati

ID:

1651351876391948800

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AL-MUKALLA: Houthi moral policewomen have removed dozens of women from the streets of the northern city of Saada, the movement's heartland, for shopping



without a male guardian, also known as a mahram, residents and local media reports said.

The Iran-backed Houthis have banned women from shopping without a mahram, asking women to stick to the Islamic dress codes and only allowing women to shop in limited places in the city.

To enforce the ban, residents told Arab News, dozens of all-female morality police officers were seen roaming Saada during Ramadan, when streets are teeming with shoppers, searching for violators.

Al-Masdar Online, a Yemeni news site, reported that the Houthis broadcast the ban through loudspeakers fixed on cars that circulated the streets, asking women not to go out with mahram and naming markets where women could shop for Ramadan and Eid.

Houthi police briefly detained dozens of unescorted women, later releasing them after they had signed a written pledge.

The ban on women walking about without a mahram comes as the Yemeni militia intensifies its morality campaigns in areas under its control.

The Houthis have arrested dozens of women for violating Islamic dress codes, banned singing at weddings and arrested singers and artists who challenged the ban.

Since earlier last year, the Houthis have been holding Entesar Al-Hammadi, a Yemeni actress and model, after removing her from a street in Sanaa for allegedly "trading in drugs and ... prostitution."

The latest report by the UN Panel of Experts accused the Houthis of sexually assaulting women, subjecting them to different forms of physical and psychological torture and denying them birth control.

"The Houthis simply want women to be annexed to men and to serve as baby-making machines to produce fighters," Nadwa Al-Dawsari, a Yemeni conflict analyst, told Arab News.

Ali Al-Fakih, editor of Al-Masdar Online, said the Houthis have turned Saada into a testing site for their harsh rules, as they see the city as completely loyal to them. "They consider Saada as a pure place for their doctrine and followers. Thus, they can implement any decision easily," Al-Fakih said.

Unlike other Yemeni areas under their control, the Houthis have turned Saada into the most secretive place in Yemen, where even visitors to the city must inform the militia at checkpoints about their reasons for visiting and how long they would be staying there.

"People cannot breathe in Saada. I think we will later see the Houthi ban on women from going about without a mahram imposed in other areas," Al-Fakih said.



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Coalition to release 163 Houthi prisoners in 'humanitarian initiative' Yemen's Houthi militia announces release of crew of Emirati ship Rwabee