



[Religion](#)

Hoping for a Miracle

On the Possible End of a Christian Presence in Iraq

Otmar Oehring

Iraq is one of the countries generally referred to as the cradle of Christendom. Since 2003, the number of Iraqi Christians has, however, fallen dramatically. Whether Christianity has any sort of future in Iraq is currently impossible to divine.

Christians in the Multi-Ethnic State of Iraq – a Diminishing Minority

It is unclear what proportion of Christians made up the Iraqi population in the past. One source quotes a total of 1.4 million Christians in 1980 (equal to 10.25 per cent of the total population)¹; another specifies a figure constituting seven per cent of the population.² According to Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo³, the number of Christians in Iraq had already fallen to 800,000 (3.1 per cent of the total population) before the invasion in April 2003,⁴ with numbers continuing to fall in the years that followed. It would therefore be surprising if there had been 800,000⁵ (2.96 per cent) or 700,000⁶ (2.59 per cent) Christians still living in Iraq in 2006. It might in fact have been 500,000⁷ (1.85 per cent), of whom half would have been based in Baghdad.⁸ The proportion of Christians in the population continued to fall dramatically even after 2006. Data to the contrary are not credible. Nevertheless, in 2011 a report alleged that the Christian population in the still stood at three per cent⁹ (956,032 of 31,867,758 inhabitants¹⁰). In its report in 2012 on religious freedom in Iraq, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) refers to Christian leaders in Iraq in speaking of 400,000 to 850,000¹¹ Christians (1.21 per cent or 2.57 per cent). Compared with this, according to a statement by the Chairman of the Chaldean Democratic Union Party, Ablahad Afraim, fewer than 400,000¹² (1.17 per cent) of Christians were still living in Iraq in 2013, and USCIRF reports, referring to some Christian leaders, that the proportion of Christians remaining supposedly stands between only 300,000 and 250,000¹³ (0.79 per cent or 0.55 per cent). By contrast, at the end of 2015, Iraqi bishops did not want to

rule out the number of Christians still remaining in Iraq standing at only approximately 200,000, if not even fewer.¹⁴ These figures were confirmed at the end of 2016 by Iraqi bishops, whereby it also became clear that a further – possibly even an accelerated – exodus of Christians was likely to occur, as long as the conditions they had stipulated for returning to their former places of residence remained unmet.¹⁵

Causes: the Consequences of the Invasion in 2003

The Iraqi constitution of 1970 did not stipulate religious freedom in the sense of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Prior to 2003, however, under the dictator Saddam Hussein, there was considerable room for manoeuvre for the non-Muslim minorities in some instances, albeit this was limited strictly to the practice of religion. The sharp decline in this section of the population since the invasion of 2003 is due in no small part to the general developments in Iraq after 2003.

Terror of Radical Islamist Groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Years from 2003 to 2010

Between 1970 and 1990 there was significant migration from northern Iraq to conurbations such as Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk and Mosul as a result of developments in the oil industry. Violent attacks by al-Qaeda and associated groups between 2003 and 2009 triggered a return migration to northern Iraq. Many returning Christians have already permanently left Iraq in large numbers, due to the lack of prospects in their ancestral settlement areas on the Nineveh Plains and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Christian Churches in Iraq

Up to 80 per cent of Christians in Iraq¹⁶ – other sources claim two thirds, or maybe even only 50 per cent¹⁷ – are said to belong to the Chaldean Catholic Church, approximately one fifth to the autocephalous Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East¹⁸ and possibly just ten per cent to the two Assyrian churches.¹⁹ Other churches in Iraq are the Syriac Catholic and the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Armenian Orthodox and the Armenian Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox and the Greek Melkite Catholic Church. If we start from the premise that around 50 per cent of all Christians in Iraq belong to the Chaldean Church and around ten per cent are members of the Assyrian churches, then the remaining 40 per cent are attributable to the Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholic Church.²⁰

The number of believers in Protestant and evangelical (free) churches comes to approximately 5,000.²¹ If we assume a figure of around 250,000 Christians remaining in Iraq, we can extrapolate the breakdown as approximately 125,000 (equals 50 per cent) or 166,650 (equals two thirds) to 200,000 (equals 80 per cent) Chaldean Catholic Christians; approximately 100,000 Syriac Catholic or Syriac Orthodox members; and approximately 25,000 Assyrian Christians (equals ten per cent). If we assume a figure of only around 200,000 Christians in Iraq, this would mean approximately 100,000 (equals 50 per cent) or 133,333 (equals two thirds) to 160,000 (equals 80 per cent) are Chaldean Christians; approximately 80,000 are Syriac Catholic or Syriac Orthodox members; and approximately 20,000 are Assyrian Christians (equals ten per cent). Today, the overwhelming majority of Christians in Iraq live in northern Iraq, primarily in the KRI. A maximum of 25,000²² Christians are thought to still be living in Baghdad – figures from the Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako, according to whom up to 150,000 Christians²³ are supposedly still living in Baghdad, have no basis in fact.²⁴

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Christians were vilified and persecuted as being “collaborators” with the invaders.

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq threatened to descend into civil war, in which radical Islamist groups associated with al-Qaeda not only took action against the western invaders, but also against the native Christians, whom they accused of collaborating with the West. In point of fact, many Christians were willingly commissioned by the invading forces due to their high level of education and good language skills. As “collaborators with the Christian

invaders” they therefore inevitably became targets of the radical Islamist groups alluded to. In this situation, not least out of self-defence, a section of Iraq’s Muslim population began to harass and persecute not just Christians but also those of other religious minorities, and to appropriate their possessions. The consequence was a huge refugee movement from Iraq that included Christians, although the leaders of the Christian churches in Iraq – first and foremost the former Patriarch of the Chaldean Church, Emmanuel III. Cardinal Delly²⁵ – took a stand against it and initially did not even want to accept their believers’ right to freely decide to leave the country.²⁶ The focus was on the concern for the continued existence of the indigenous Christian churches present in Iraq, such as the Assyrian, Chaldean and Syriac Orthodox Church, which would find no, or at least no adequate organisational

structures in the secularised host countries of Europe. There were concerns that the Iraqi Christians might join other churches there, or follow the example of the secularised populations in these countries and turn away from the churches completely. Some Iraqi church leaders are, meanwhile, cautiously optimistic now that in Germany, for example, suitable church structures are being developed. The Syriac Orthodox Christians can find a new spiritual home in the numerous Syriac Orthodox communities, which were set up as early as the 1980s by refugees from Turkey. Since then, some Chaldean communities have also sprung up, e.g. in Essen,²⁷ Stuttgart²⁸ and Munich.²⁹

Expulsion in 2014 by the Terrorist Militia Islamic State

The expulsion of Christians from their ancestral settlement areas on the Nineveh Plains and in Mosul as part of the campaigns of conquest by the group known as Islamic State (IS) in summer 2014, accelerated the exodus of Christians from Iraq. The Nineveh Plains form part of those areas that have been disputed for centuries by the Iraqi central government and the government of the KRI. The Nineveh Plains have, nonetheless, been controlled for a long time by the Kurdish Peshmerga. However, they withdrew as IS advanced in the summer of 2014, which was seen as a betrayal by Christians. The Christians, though, unlike the Yazidis, were fortunate in that they had time to travel to the KRI in safety, where they also found acceptance.

The campaigns of conquest by IS accelerated the exodus of Christians from Iraq.

According to data from the Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Matti Warda, around 100,000 Christian refugees from Iraq are currently living as refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.³⁰ In mid-2016, around 18,500³¹ in total were living in Jordan, while in Lebanon

the figure was approximately 4,200 families (equalling up to 42,000 people).³² At the end of 2015 there were approx. 48,000 Christian refugees from Iraq (over 90 per cent) and Syria (under ten per cent)³³ registered with UNHCR and KADER³⁴ in Turkey; at the end of 2016 this came to around 50,000.³⁵ We can therefore assume that, in both 2015 and 2016, an equally large number of Christian refugees, though probably far more, passed Turkey without registering there. In recent years, their stay has lasted up to several years, with strongly fluctuating numbers due to illegal onward movement, or as a consequence of relocation programmes implemented by the UNHCR and IOM to Australia, Canada and the USA and, most recently, to New Zealand as well.³⁶

Prospects

Change in the Denominational Power Structure in Baghdad after 2003³⁷

After the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, the denominational basis of the power structure in Baghdad was reversed. Where the regime of Saddam Hussein – himself a Sunni – had had to buttress itself with the support of the smaller of the two large ethno-religious groups within the population (the Sunni Muslims making up an estimated 17 per cent of the population) the present-day government is based on the majoritarian Shiite population, with a proportion of 58 to 63 per cent. While Saddam Hussein forged alliances with Christians to secure his power, integrating them into his machinery of power (though without giving the Christians any real political influence), the Shiite-dominated governments do not require the assistance of the Christians and other non-Muslim minority groups. Nevertheless, the leaders of the so-called Christian parties in Iraq seem to still be in denial that the basic parameters have changed. The Christians hold five seats in the Iraqi parliament (328 seats), but are by no means a cohesive group. In the elections to Iraq's parliament on 30 April 2014, seven Christian parties were included on five lists and there were also two independent

Christian candidates. In light of the above, the Christian representatives in Parliament have no influence of any sort and are therefore not taken seriously by the Iraqi church leaders either.

Christians in Iraq today, who lack any political clout, can therefore no longer count on the protection and consideration that they received under Saddam Hussein.

The Relationship between the Christians and the Arabs or Kurds

The relationship between Christians and Kurds is ambivalent. This does not belie the fact that church leaders living in the KRI regularly sing the praise of the region's government in public – this is the nature of the business. Conversely, the government of the KRI, which is dominated by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan and led by Masud Barzani, has regularly presented itself as the protector both of Christians in the KRI and those living for instance on the Nineveh Plains. The former Christian Finance Minister (2006 to 2009) of the KRI, Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo, supported this position by apportioning considerable funds from the USA and the Netherlands for the benefit of the Christian churches. It is likely that both sides profited from this: the KRI government, since it was able to present itself to the West as protector of the Christians; and the Christian churches, who benefited from the financial donations.

Despite all the negative experiences with the Kurds, when questioned, the Christians in the KRI and on the Nineveh Plains always emphasised that they preferred to live under the control of the Kurdish government than under that of the Arabs or the Iraqi central government. The fact that the government of the KRI, which is dominated by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan led by Masud Barzani, was seen as a secular government doubtless also plays a part, while the Iraqi central government is seen as a government dominated by Shiites and Shiite Islam; and one which many Christians allege has committed to the Islamisation of Iraq. This

is also attributed to the subordinate government representatives in northern Iraq – such as the Governor of Mosul and the representatives of the governorate of Nineveh (Mosul), who are all Sunni Muslims. The Christian stance must also be understood in this context: “If Masud Barzani is no longer President of the KRI and the Barzanis in the KRI have nothing more to say, I’ll be leaving the country within 24 hours.”³⁸ Whether the resignation of Masud Barzani from his position of President of the KRI³⁹ will speed up the exodus of Christians, is not yet possible to determine.

The Christians would favour a Kurdish government over the Iraqi central government.

Notwithstanding this, Christians in Iraq have always lived side by side with Shiite and Sunni Arabs or Sunni Kurds and members of other, smaller ethno-religious groups in the same place or region. This is also the case on the Nineveh Plains. Nevertheless, Christians often report on the living conditions in these areas as if only Christians lived there. However, the Nineveh Plains, too, have always been an area settled by Muslims and members of other ethno-religious groups, e.g. the Shabak people. Thus, even prior to the conquest of the Christian settlements on the Nineveh Plains by IS militias in summer 2014, it is thought that only 22 to 23 per cent – others believe around 40 per cent – of the population was Christian. In terms of the future, it is estimated that Christians will make up a maximum proportion of ten per cent at best.⁴⁰

Destruction and Reconstruction of Christian Settlement Areas on the Nineveh Plains

Christians' hopes of a possible return were raised following the reconquest or liberation of the Christian settlement areas of Bartella, Qaraqosh and Karemlash at the end of October 2016. These hopes were short-lived, however, after church members investigating the



The bereaved: Millions of people have been displaced due to the advance of the terrorist militia IS and the escalating combat operations in large parts of Iraq. [Source: © Zohra Bensemra, Reuters.](#)

situation in Qaraqosh and Bartella reported that between 75 and 85 per cent of the buildings in both places had been so severely damaged by the impact of the fighting and air strikes, that they would probably need to be torn down. Many buildings that appeared largely intact from the outside, were burnt out and it was doubtful whether the shell of the building could be retained. In the opinion of the Syriac Catholic Bishop of Mosul, Yohanna Petros Mouche, the pillaging was a clear message to Christians not to come back.⁴¹ In any case, the reconstruction would take at least three to four years, swallow an enormous amount of money and could not be achieved

by the local Christian population without foreign aid. Christian diaspora groups, particularly in the USA but also church aid agencies such as *Kirche in Not* (Church in Need), have not let the questionable political prospects in the region discourage from contributing to the reconstruction of the ruined Christian settlement areas on the Nineveh Plains.

In point of fact, some Christians have already returned. However, the parameters have changed so much following the referendum of 25 September 2017 that many are now fundamentally rethinking their intention to return.



After the destruction: The reconstruction of destroyed Christian settlement areas in the Nineveh Plains has begun despite uncertain political prospects. [Source: © Marko Djurica, Reuters.](#)

Smouldering and Potential Conflicts

Even before the reconquest of Mosul in 2016/17, numerous conflicts in northern Iraq flared up, which could now break out at any time. The first conflict, which had been smouldering for a long time between Baghdad and Erbil over disputed territory⁴² – including the Nineveh Plains, also populated by Christians – which predominantly concerned Iraqi Kurds’ desire for independence,⁴³ became extremely acute immediately after the referendum of 25 September 2017. The most affected are those Christians who want(ed) to return to their ancestral settlement areas on the Nineveh Plains east of Mosul. However, Christians are

also at risk of being affected by potential conflicts that could arise out of the interests of Iran (land bridge between Iran and northern Syria)⁴⁴ and Turkey (PKK, Mosul, Sunnis)⁴⁵ in northern Iraq.

Returning to the Nineveh Plains – a Question of Safety

The Nineveh Plains are an area of Iraq that lies outside Kurdistan and which is disputed territory between the central government and the Kurdish regional government. A prerequisite for Christians to return to this area is for their safety there to be guaranteed. The central government is by rights responsible, but has



shown no presence there as yet, in contrast to the Kurdish Peshmerga. However, after the referendum of 25 September 2017, the Peshmerga were forced to withdraw by the Iraqi army and the Shiite militias allied with it. Whether the central government will now ensure order and security remains to be seen. There is no legal basis for international security guarantees – often demanded by Iraqi Christians – since Iraq, which would be responsible for providing protection, is a sovereign state. The expectation that Christian and Yazidi militias could guarantee protection is equally unrealistic, since they are too small to do so, as well as being poorly equipped and having virtually no training. Furthermore, the governments in Baghdad and Erbil are hindering their deployment. Moreover, they are in part allied to the Iraqi army, in part to the Shiite-dominated people mobilisation militias or the Kurdish Peshmerga and, consequently, thoroughly fragmented.

Is there a Future for the Presence of Christians in Northern Iraq?

It is virtually impossible to give an unequivocal answer. The prospects have certainly not improved following the referendum of 25 September 2017. In a joint statement dated 1 October 2017, the leaders of the Christian churches in the region of Kurdistan⁴⁶ gave their view⁴⁷ on the precarious situation following the referendum. With regard to the current problems they are advocating dialogue between the Iraqi central government and the government of the KRI. At the same time, they accuse both governments of failing to defend Christians' interests and to protect their rights, which they claim has led to the migration of many Christians. The bishops lament the fact that there are no indications of Christianity having a future in Iraq, where it has existed since the 1st century. They say that the situation has become very serious for Christians and that the parishes are no longer in a position to oppose the emigration of those who have remained thus far. Should the present disputes continue, Christians would increasingly decide to

emigrate, which, they say, would lead to there ultimately being no Christians in Iraq anymore.

Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that we will see the end of a Christian presence in Iraq in the near future.

Dr. Otmar Oehring is Coordinator for International Religious Dialogue in the Team Political Dialogue and Analysis at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

- 1 Cf. Steele, Jonathan 2006: We're staying and we will resist, *The Guardian*, 30 Nov 2006, in: <http://bit.ly/2Amg6vB> [13 Nov 2017].
- 2 Cf. Islamopedia Online: Christians in Iraq, in: <http://bit.ly/2zUj1yR> [13 Nov 2017].
- 3 Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo is an Assyrian politician, see: Wikipedia 2016: Sarkis Aghajan Mamendo, in: <http://bit.ly/2BBrkHj> [13 Nov 2017].
- 4 Cf. Shamulddin, Sarkawt 2017: PKK Vs. KDP in Sinjar; What Is Washington's Role?, *Kurdish Policy Foundation*, 29 Jan 2017, in: <http://bit.ly/2igC12G> [13 Nov 2017].
- 5 Cf. *ibid.*
- 6 Cf. IRIN 2006: Christians live in fear of death squads, 19 Oct 2006, in: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/61897/iraq-christians-live-fear-death-squads> [13 Nov 2017].
- 7 Cf. Shamulddin 2017, n. 4.
- 8 Cf. *ibid.*
- 9 Cf. Islamopedia Online, n. 2.
- 10 Cf. The World Bank 2017: Data on Iraq, in: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/iraq> [13 Nov 2017].
- 11 Cf. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 2012: International Religious Freedom Report for 2012: Iraq, in: <http://bit.ly/2AGLEUF> [13 Nov 2017].
- 12 Cf. Hanna, Bassem Francis 2013: Decade of Violence Threatens to Uproot Iraq's Christians, *Al-Monitor*, 21 Aug 2013, in: <http://bit.ly/2AfkLSO> [13 Nov 2017].
- 13 Cf. United States Commission on International Religious Freedom 2016: 2016 Annual Report: pp.99-103, in: <http://bit.ly/2BwKwLI> [13 Nov 2017]; cf. email correspondence with the Archimandrite of the Assyrian Church of the East in Dohuk, Iraq Emanuel Youkhana, 13 Mar 2017, quote: "[...] the optimistic figure is 250,000 [...]".
- 14 From a discussion with the Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Matti Warda, the Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Youhanna Boutros Mouche and the Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Baghdad, Ephrem Yousif Abba Mansoor, Ankawa, Nov 2015. Cf. Matti Warda / Mouche / Abba Mansoor, n. 7.
- 15 From a discussion with the Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Matti Warda, the Syriac Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Youhanna Boutros Mouche and the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop of Mosul, Nicodemus Daoud Sharaf, Berlin, 12/13 Dec 2016.
- 16 Cf. Teule, Herman 2009: *The Christian Minorities in Iraq: The Question of Religious and Ethnic Identity*, in: Timmermann, Christiane et al. (ed.): *In-Between Spaces: Christian and Muslim Minorities in Transition in Europe and the Middle East*, Brussels, p. 48.
- 17 Cf. Archimandrite Youkhana, n. 13.
- 18 Cf. Wikipedia 2017: Assyrian Church of the East, in: <http://bit.ly/2A67gFD> [13 Nov 2017]; Wikipedia 2017: Ancient Church of the East, in: <http://bit.ly/2AWWCrk> [13 Nov 2017].
- 19 Cf. Archimandrite Youkhana, n. 13.
- 20 Cf. *ibid.*
- 21 Cf. U.S. Department of State 2012, n. 11.
- 22 Cf. Matti Warda / Mouche / Abba Mansoor, n. 14.
- 23 From discussions with the Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako and the Chaldean Suffragan Bishop Yaldo, Berlin, 19 / 20 Oct 2016.
- 24 The Patriarch is referring to figures that were updated based on the figures compiled up to 2003, without taking into account the negative demographic developments after 2003. It is also important to note that there is no guarantee of credibility as regards the numbers recorded up to 2003.
- 25 Emmanuel III. Cardinal Delyly was Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldean Catholic Church, see: Wikipedia 2017: Emmanuel III Delyly, in: <http://bit.ly/2iT2kwj> [13 Nov 2017].
- 26 The result of numerous discussions with the Chaldean Patriarch Emmanuel III. Cardinal Delyly, Vatican City in 2008 and 2009 and other Iraqi church leaders, including the former Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk and the present Chaldean Patriarch, Louis Sako, in Aachen and Munich, 2006 to 2009.
- 27 The parish of St. Nikolaus, see: <http://bit.ly/2AhW9sb> [13 Nov 2017].
- 28 Cf. Maier, Melanie 2014: Chaldäer in Stuttgart: Eigene Kirche für Christen aus dem Irak (Chaldeans in Stuttgart: our own churches for Iraqi Christians), *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 29 Nov 2014, in: <http://goo.gl/Lr8ChK> [13 Nov 2017].
- 29 Chaldean Catholic community in Munich, see: <http://bit.ly/2BA1HfF> [13 Nov 2017].
- 30 Cf. McKenna, Josephine 2017: Trump ban will hurt Christian refugees fleeing conflict, say Iraqi Catholic leaders, *RNS Religion News Service*, 30 Jan 2017, in: <http://bit.ly/2kIPMMG> [13 Nov 2017].
- 31 From a discussion with Father Rifat Bader, Amman, 24 May 2016.
- 32 From an email correspondence with Michel Constantin, Regional Director, CNEWA/Pontifical Mission, Beirut, 7 Feb 2017; email correspondence with Habib Afram, President of the Syriac League, Beirut, 5 April 2017.
- 33 From a discussion with the Chaldean Patriarchal vicar François Yakan, Istanbul, 18 Dec 2015.
- 34 KADER (Keldani-Asuri Yardımlaşma Derneği, en. Chaldean Assyrian aid organisation), see <http://kader-turkey.org> [13 Nov 2017]. KADER was set up by the Chaldean Patriarchal vicar in Turkey, Mgr. François Yakan, in consultation with governmental (T.C. Başbakanlık, Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı – Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, AFAD, see: <https://afad.gov.tr> [13 Nov 2017]), civil society (Sığınmacılar ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği / Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, SGDD-ASAM, see: <http://sgdd.org.tr> [13 Nov 2017]), and international organisations for refugee aid (UNHCR, IOM, ICMC) to ensure suitable care of Christian refugees from Iraq in particular.

- 35 From a discussion with the Chaldean Patriarchal vicar François Yakan, Istanbul, 21 Nov 2016.
- 36 Telephone call with the Chaldean Patriarchal vicar François Yakan, 27 Feb 2017.
- 37 For more detailed information: Oehring, Otmar 2017: Changes in Baghdad's religious power structure, in: idem 2017: Christians and Yazidis in Iraq: Current situation and prospects, St. Augustin/Berlin, pp. 15-17, in: <http://kas.de/wf/en/33.49220> [13 Nov 2017].
- 38 For example, in a discussion with a Christian journalist, Ankawa, 28 Oct 2016.
- 39 Cf. Goran, Baxtiyar 2017: Barzani: I refuse an extension to my Presidency term, Kurdistan 24, 29 Oct 2017, in: <http://bit.ly/2jwjY55> [13 Nov 2017].
- 40 From a discussion with William Warda, Berlin, 14 Dec 2016.
- 41 Matti Warda / Mouche / Daoud Sharaf, n.15.
- 42 Cf. Oehring 2017, n. 37, p.27-33.
- 43 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 48.
- 44 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 57-58.
- 45 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58-70.
- 46 Bashar Warda (Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil), Nicodemus Daoud Sharaf (Syriac Orthodox Archbishop of Mosul), Apris Jounsen (Archbishop of the Assyrian Church of the East of Erbil), Rabban al Qas (Chaldean Bishop of Zakho and Ahmadia Bishop), Timotheus Musa al Shamani (Syriac Orthodox Bishop of Mar Mattai monastery).
- 47 Cf. Abouna.org 2017: Statement of the Heads of the Christian Churches in KR on the Referendum Crisis, 2 Oct 2017, Zebari, Aziz Emmanuel (transl.), Baghdadhope, in: <http://bit.ly/2j2fGmF> [13 Nov 2017].