

Communities in Crisis Conference: 23 April 2016

Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS

The Christian population of Iraq has plummeted from 9%-10% pre-war to an estimated 3%. In 2014 Da'esh ethnically cleansed Mosul of its ancient Christian population, many of whom are now IDP's in the KRG administered regions of northern Iraq. Insurgency in Syria and especially in the northern regions of Aleppo and the Jezirah have impacted dramatically on the Christian communities, many of whom were already IDP's from Iraq. Today the Christians are caught up in the in-fighting between different terrorist organisations (Da'esh, Jabhat al Nusra) and the Syrian Army.

The atrocities committed by Da'esh against the Yezidi communities in the Sinjar region became world news headlines. What is lesser known is the impact of Daesh on Yezidi rituals and the celebration of the faith. Since 2003 the Mandaean communities have also been brutally targeted and now only very small numbers live in Iraq with real implications for the celebration of their rituals. There are now real fears about whether the Christians will manage to survive in their traditional homelands. The Mandaean and Yezidi communities are also depleted and will especially need to respond to the challenges surrounding the continued celebration of their rituals.

Morning Session. [10.30 A.M. – 12.30 P.M.] CHAIR: Dr. Nelida Fuccaro

10.40: Dr. Kristian Girling (Heythrop, London)

How can I close the House of God? Maintaining and consolidating the Chaldaean Catholic Church 2003-2015.

11.20 Dr. Eszter Spät (Bochum, Germany)

ISIS and Yezidi ritual life in Iraq.

12.10 Dr. Khalid Dinno (Toronto, Canada)

The Syrian Orthodox Christians from Sayfo to ISIS.

12.40 Dr. Suha Rassam (ICIN)

Genocide in 21st century Iraq.

LUNCH 1.15-2.15

Afternoon Session. [2.15 – 4.30 P.M.]

2.15 Dr. Erica C D Hunter (SOAS)

Cultural destruction of churches and monasteries in Iraq and Syria.

3.00 Prof. Jorunn Buckley (Bowdoin College, Maine, USA)

Mandaean rituals. Making sense to whom and where?

3.45 Dr. Aho Shemunkasho (Salzburg, Austria)

The contribution of Mor Gregorios Yuhanna Ibrahim towards Syriac theological studies in Salzburg.

4.30 Concluding discussion