

# MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

## MIDDLE EAST

### Iraq Country Snapshot

**Country Name:** Republic of Iraq

**Country Founded in:** Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> 1932 (from League of Nations mandate under British administration); June 24<sup>th</sup> 2004 (the Coalition Provisional Authority transferred power to the Iraqi Interim Government)

**Population:** 27,499,638 (July 2007 est., CIA World fact book)

**Government Type:** parliamentary democracy

**Geography in the world:** Middle East, bordering the Persian Gulf, between Iran and Kuwait

Number of people groups: 35 (peoplegroups.org)

**Picture of flag:**



#### Religion Snapshot

Major Religion: Islam 97% (Shiite 60-65%, Sunni 32-37%)

All religions: Christian or other 3%

**Government interaction with religion:** the official religion is Islam and the sharing of other faiths is prohibited.

## Iraq Country Profile

### Basic Facts

#### Name

Republic of Iraq

#### Demographics

The estimated population of Iraq is about 27,499,638 people.

Most of the people live in the urban centers of Iraq and are heavily concentrated in the capital of the country, Bagdad.

The majority of the population is between the ages of 15-64 which is about 57.6% of the population. Several ethnic groups are represented in Iraq: Arab 75-80%; Kurds 15-20%; and Turkoman, Assyrian, or other 5%.

#### Population:

27,499,638

#### Age Structure:

0-14 years: 39.4% (male 5,509,736/female 5,338,722)

15-64 years: 57.6% (male 8,018,841/female 7,812,611)

65 years and over: 3% (male 386,321/female 433,407)

#### Median Age:

Total: 20 years

Male: 19.9 years

Female: 20 years

#### Population growth rate:

2.618%

#### Birth Rate:

31.44 births/1,000 population

#### Death Rate:

5.26 deaths/1,000 population

#### Life Expectancy At Birth:

Total population: 69.31 years

Male: 68.04 years

Female: 70.65 years

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

## **Language**

Arabic is the national language and is the mother tongue of about 80% of the Iraqi population. The other main language that is spoken is used by the Kurds in the Kurdish region of Iraq. It is also spoken by the Yazidi people. Aramaic, the ancient Syriac dialect, is retained by the Assyrians. Another Syriac dialect, Mandaean, is the liturgical language of the Sabaeans. The Turkomans speak a Turkic dialect. Armenian is also spoken.

Source: *WORLD MARK Encyclopedia of the Nations, Asia & Oceania*, Tenth Edition.

## **Society/Culture**

Iraqis consider the family to be very important. Family unity is one of the most important values that an Iraqi could possess. Keeping one's honor, both personally and for the family, are also very important. One does not speak of family problems with non-family members. It is considered embarrassing to the family and shameful conduct.

Although, many women in Arab culture enjoy talking and the art of gossip.

Most families live near each other in urban situations and help each other out in times of need. A traditional house of a typical 40 year old man includes himself, his wife, unmarried children, their married sons with their wives and children, the man's mother if she is still alive, and the man's unmarried sisters if they are not married.

One of the most important people in a household is the man's mother: her sons respect her, and her daughters-in-law must follow and obey her instructions. Women run the household and her children, while the husband earns the living and has financial control. There are certain and defined roles for the male and female genders in Arab society and many try not to change them. They tend to be more traditional in ways, no matter how modern the family is. Most marriages are still arranged by families, but a couple has a say whether they want to marry the chosen person.

Traditionally, first or second cousins are preferred for marriage partners. Divorce is not seen much in Iraqi society, but it does exist and not too hard under Islamic law.

Children belong to the father's family, and in cases of divorce the father is automatically awarded custody. Children are raised from a young age to recognize their respective differences, even though women are educated and work in many professional positions. Children are loved and adored by their families, and many pray to have sons to carry on the family name.

Source: *WORLD MARK Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, Volume 3: Asia and Oceania.

## **Government**

The coup d'état of 14 July 1958 established a dictatorial regime headed by the military. Until his execution in 1963, Abd al-Karim al-Qasim ruled Iraq, with a Council of State and a cabinet.

On July 27<sup>th</sup> 1958, Qasim's regime put forth a provisional constitution, which had been repeatedly changed because of the status of the Kurdish regions.

In 1968, a coup that was taken over by the Ba'ath Party took place and ruled Iraq until the invasion of Iraq took place in 2003. The Ba'ath party ruled by means of the Revolutionary Command Council. The Council selected the president and a cabinet that consisted of military personnel and civilian leaders. The president served as the as chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, which exercised both executive and legislative powers by decree. The president also served as prime minister, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and secretary general of the Ba'ath party.

The National Assembly is present has little power and authority. Most senior officials were close associates and relatives of the then president, Saddam Hussein who was president from 1979 until 2003. Saddam Hussein's reign was marred by continued violence and war. Many feared for their lives while under his regime, including many of the government officials who were his relatives.

An incident in 1995 arose when two of his sons-in-law defected to Jordan along with Hussein's daughters. After a promise of amnesty was delivered to the defectors by Iraq, the men returned and were executed after crossing the border into Iraq. Many minority groups including the Kurds, the Christian groups, and the Shiites lived in fear from Saddam.

After Hussein's regime and government were deposed in 2003 by the US-led coalition invasion, an interim government was formed and later an election was formed to establish a permanent government along with a constitution that was ratified in 2005. A Shiite coalition, the United Iraqi Alliance (UAI), won 51% of the vote, followed by the Kurdistan Alliance with 26%. About 58% of registered Iraqi voters participated in the election, which was boycotted by many of the Iraqi Sunnis. Sunni Arabs had only 17 seats in the 275-member parliament, but they represented about 20% of the population in Iraq.

The newly elected National Assembly selected Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as Iraq's new president, and then he chose Shiite politician, Jawad al-Maliki, to be Iraq's new prime minister. The new constitution stated that Islam was the official religion of the state, the parliament could not pass anything that was contrary to the Islamic law, and that Iraqis may choose to be judged by their religious community's canon law in times of personal matters. At the same time, the new constitution stated that all Iraqis are guaranteed civil rights and freedoms.

Source: [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761567303\\_10/Iraq.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567303_10/Iraq.html); [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/791014.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/791014.stm); and *WORLD MARK: Encyclopedia of the Nations, Asia & Oceania*, Tenth Edition.

## **Economy**

Iraq's economy is heavily dominated by the production of oil which has traditionally provided about 95% of foreign exchange earnings. Under Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq suffered much economically.

Iraq's seizure of Kuwait in 1990 led to UN sanctions on Iraq and drastically injured them economically. As a result of the UN economic sanctions, the US froze all Iraqi assets in the US and barred all economic transactions between the United States and Iraq. Many other countries imposed similar sanctions on top of the UN-imposed embargo.

Implementation of the UN's oil-for-food program in 1996 helped Iraq drastically, especially the conditions of the Iraqi citizens. Iraq was authorized by the UN to export limited amounts of oil in exchange for basic human necessities such as food and medicine.

In December 1999, the UN allowed Iraq to export as much oil as they needed to meet their basic humanitarian needs. Since the US-led coalition invaded Iraq, the country has gone through economic hardships but they are gaining momentum. The Iraqi government has negotiated a debt reduction agreement with the Paris Club and a Standby Arrangement with the IMF. The Iraqi government is trying to stabilize its country internally in order to be able to bounce back economically within the international world. Controlling inflation, reducing corruption, and implementing structural reforms such as bank restructuring and developing the private sector, will be key to Iraq's economic prospects.

Iraq's unemployment rate is between 25% to 30%, and its current GDP (2006) is at \$50.72 billion.

Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

## **Literacy**

Education in Iraq is free. Six years of primary education are compulsory, but many children do not attend school as they must work to help support their families. Instruction is in Arabic, although in much of the Kurdish-inhabited northern region, which has been autonomous since 1991, Kurdish is used in all levels of education alongside Arabic.

According to the CIA World Factbook, about 74 percent of Iraqis aged 15 or older are literate. UNESCO states that before the first Gulf War in 1991, Iraq had a very strong educational system and one of the best in the Middle East. Primary school Gross Enrollment Rate was over 100% and literacy levels were high. However, since that time education has suffered immensely because of UN sanctions, the war, and instability in the area.

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority, along with international help, decided to reform the Iraqi educational system. They increased teacher's salaries and implemented more training programs. They also removed all Baathist propaganda from Iraq's educational curriculum. They revised the curriculum in all subject matters and improved school conditions by fixing up the buildings and by adding libraries and laboratories to these facilities. Schools are normally divided into boys-only schools and girls-only schools.

No private schools exist. Before the regime changed in 2003, there were about 240,000 people who were enrolled in institutions of higher education. However after the regime changed in 2003, the system included about 6 million students that were enrolled in kindergarten through the twelfth grade and there was an estimated 300,000 teachers and administrators.

It should be noted that there are still some unsafe areas for the Iraqis to move around in, thus many children are still unable to attend school. More students attended vocational or teacher-training institutions. Iraq has a number of large universities, including the University of Baghdad (founded in 1957), the University of Al Başrah (1964), and the University of Mosul (1967). The country also has about 20 technical institutes.

Source: [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761567303\\_5/Iraq.html#p14](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567303_5/Iraq.html#p14), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>, and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Iraq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Iraq)

## **Land/Geography**

Present-day Iraq comprises an area of about 168,754 sq. mi. and is more than twice the size of the state of Idaho.

Iraq is bordered on the north by Turkey, on the east by Iran, on the southeast by the Persian Gulf and Kuwait, on the south by Saudi Arabia, on the west by Jordan, and on the northwest by Syria. Iraq is home to the two famous rivers that flow through it, the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is a land of barren desert, mighty rivers, mountains, and swamps.

The country can be divided into four sections: Mesopotamia, the upper river plains, the northeastern mountains, and the western and southern desert.

There are two major seasons in Iraq: a long and hot summer that lasts from May until October with temperatures reaching 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade; and a short winter that lasts from December to March with temperatures averaging about 50 degrees Fahrenheit and then go lower during the nighttime. Spring and fall are transitional seasons and do not last long at all. There is normally no rain that falls from the end of May to the end of September. Annual rainfall is less than 15 in., and therefore, agriculture is dependent on irrigation.

Source: [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761567303\\_3/Iraq.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567303_3/Iraq.html); *WORLDMARK: Encyclopedia of the Nations; Asia & Oceania*, Tenth Edition.

## **History**

The ancient history of Iraq is rich and deep, which fostered a succession of many early civilizations. Some of the earliest known human settlements can be traced to what is modern day Iraq which can be traced to as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. Recorded history in Mesopotamia begins with the civilization of Sumer, which arose probably in the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and had its final flowering under the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dynasty of Ur at the close of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium.

Periods of control followed by Babylonia and Assyria. The Babylonians made their capital at Babylon and their cultural height is represented by Hammurabi, who put together a set of laws that survive to this day known as the code of Hammurabi.

The Assyrians then came along and made their capital to be located in Nineveh. Assyrian rule was interrupted during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC by the Aramaeans whose language, Aramaic, flourished in the eastern Mediterranean area later in times. The Assyrians finally fell under the Chaldeans along with the help of the Medes in Persia, destroyed Nineveh in 612 BC. Nebuchadnezzar II rebuilt the city-state of Babylon, but later fell to the Persians under Cyrus of the Achaemenid dynasty in 539 BC.

The Persians were then defeated by the Macedonian, Alexander the Great, by 327 BC and penetrated deep within the Persian Empire. The Seleucids, Alexander's successors in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, built their capital city, Seleucia, on the Tigris, just south of Baghdad. They had to give up their powers to the Parthians, who conquered Mesopotamia in 138 BC.

The Arabs conquered Iraq in AD 637 and brought with them the Islamic religion. The Abbasids made Baghdad their capital city and made Iraq into a cultural and intellectual area. A Mongol invasion in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century ended Iraq's flourishing economy and cultural achievements.

In 1258, Genghis Khan's grandson Hulagu destroyed the city of Baghdad and its canal system which crippled the productivity of that region. The Ottoman Turks, under Suleyman the Magnificent, conquered Baghdad in 1534 and, except for a short period of Persian control in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Iraq remained under Ottoman rule until World War I.

Late in 1914, the Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers, and a British expeditionary force landed in Iraq and occupied the city of Basra and then the whole country of Iraq fell under British control by 1918. In 1920, Iraq was declared a League of Nations mandate under the administration of the UK. On August 23, 1921, Faisal I, the son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, became the king of Iraq. Iraq then gained independence from the UK in 1932 and was admitted into the League of Nations as an official member.

Faisal died in 1933 and was followed by his son as successor, but was later killed in an accident in 1939. After several military coups, the monarchy was abolished.

The Ba'th party came into power in 1968 when they staged a coup and replaced Abd ar-Rahman Arif with Gen. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as president. In the 1970s, the Ba'th regime focused on improving the Iraqi economy and nationalizing the petroleum industry in 1972-72 and allocating large sums for capital development. Bakr later resigned from his position in 1979 and chose Saddam Hussein al-Takriti to be his successor.

Under Saddam's presidency, Iraq experienced much turmoil. Saddam Hussein decided to discredit a pact they had made in Iran in 1975 and invaded Iran. The war lasted until 1988 after Iran accepted a UN cease-fire proposal on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Iraq experienced enormous casualties, physical damage, and a huge debt. Saddam also wanted to mount an attack against the Kurdish

minority for aiding the Iranians. He attacked villages and poured poisonous gases against masses of Kurdish people. Saddam also decided to invade Kuwait in 1990 after many of Iraq's wartime allies seemed unwilling to ease financial terms or keep oil prices high and questioned Iraq's rearmament efforts. Saddam also invaded Kuwait because they felt that Kuwait belonged to them which dated back to the days of the monarchy in Iraq. A devastating air war began on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1991 which was followed by ground attack on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Iraq was defeated, but still left Saddam Hussein in power.

The 1990s were a hard time for Iraq economically speaking. The UN imposed sanctions on Iraq which prohibited Iraq from selling oil on the global market in major transactions and froze Iraqi assets overseas. However, because of deteriorating living conditions, the UN established the "oil for food" program which allowed Iraq to sell oil in limited quantities in order to purchase food and basic supplies for the Iraqi people.

Iraq faced even harder times recently with the US-led invasion in 2003 to see if Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction and to rid Iraq of Saddam's tyrannical regime. Saddam was captured and later put on trial by the new Iraqi government for crimes against humanity. Iraq is continuing to try to recover and set up its government for the Iraqi people. There is violence between the Shi'a and Sunni sects, but the government is trying to regain control of its country and govern the people justly and fairly.

Source: [http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761567303\\_11/Iraq.html#p38](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567303_11/Iraq.html#p38); WORLDMARK Encyclopedia of the Nations, Asia & Oceania, Tenth Edition.

### **Christian History**

Christians have inhabited what is modern day Iraq for about 2,000 years, tracing their ancestry to ancient Mesopotamia and surrounding lands. In the first century of the early church, Jewish colonies were evangelized, an activity that was traditionally been given to the Apostle Thomas.

Church structures developed under the patriarch of Antioch in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but a century later the church in Mesopotamia declared its independence from Antioch and became almost totally Nestorian. Up until the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Nestorians expanded their form of the gospel towards the east, but Islam came along and over took the region in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Latin missionaries made strenuous efforts towards obtaining Nestorian reunion with Rome, which resulted in the establishment of the uniate Chaldean Catholics in Baghdad in 1553. A Latin diocese was formed in 1632, but no resident Latin bishop was permitted until 1820. Protestantism also made its appearance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Christians who today use a Syriac liturgy are divided into Chaldeans, Nestorians (Assyrian Church of the East), Syrian Catholics, and Syrian Orthodox, the latter called Jacobites. These churches are of Mesopotamian origin, and in certain villages Syriac is still the spoken as well as the liturgical language. After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the Armenian Catholics and Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians) left Turkey because of heavy persecution and massacres and made their residence in Iraq. Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics are small communities composed largely of immigrants from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. Latin Catholics are mostly



foreigners and their clergy are occupied with schools, youth, medical, and seminary work, along with parish and inter-rite activities.

Source: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3526386.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3526386.stm); World Christian Encyclopedia, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, Volume 1: The World by Countries.

## **Religion**

### **Non-Christian**

#### *Islam*

Islam basically arrived in Iraq in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Sunnis are actually the minority in Iraq, while Shias form a majority of the population which is about 62% of the 96% who are Muslim. Sunnis form the urban middle class and under Saddam Hussein ruled as government officials.

The Kurdish community of Iraq follow the Shafiite rite, but there are many who are Christians and Yazidis. There are many Shi'a sanctuaries found within Iraq such as in Karbala, Samarra, An Najaf, and Al Khadimain. There is an Institute of Islamic Studies located in the capital city, Baghdad.

#### *Yazidi religion*

This religion was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by a man named Shaikh Adi. They believe that the fallen angel Malak Ta'us manifested himself into Shaikh Adi, whom many Muslims call the Yazidis to be devil worshippers. The Yazidi religion is a mixture of several religions including Zoroastrian, Manichaeism, Jewish, Nestorian, and Muslim. They have two holy books, the Black Book and the Book of Revelation. They mostly live near the city of Mosul.

#### *Judaism (very small number, about 171 people)*

Judaism is practiced by a very small community of Iraqis in the area of Baghdad. There were many Jews that lived in Iraq prior to World War II, numbering about 250,000. After 1950, many began to immigrate to Israel and many more have left since then to avoid persecution in Iraq.

#### *Baha'i (about 2,607 live in Iraq)*

The Baha'i have a long history of being in Iraq of about 120 years. However, with heavy persecutions against them over the years and many were banned in 1970, their numbers have become very small.

#### *Mandaeanism (about 30,000 in Iraq)*

Mandaeanism began in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD as Gnosticism, but its followers today call themselves Mandaiia (Gnostics), but are also called Mandaean, Christians of St. John, Followers of John the Baptist, Dippers, Sabaeans, and (the priestly caste) Nasoreans. This religion has its center in fertility worship. They have three sacred books: Kinza or Treasure, which is a collection of

hymns with cosmological and doctrinal tests; the Book of John, an account of the life of John the Baptist; and the Qolasta, a book of hymns. They can be found in lower Mesopotamia, in Basra, Kut, and Suq al-Shuyukh. They worship on Sundays and have a hierarchical clergy.

*Catholic*- 1.2%, 268,000 total

Chaldean Catholics- 242,000

Syrian Catholics- 50,000

Armenian Catholics- 2,150

Greek Catholics- 350

Latin Catholics- 3,200

*Orthodox*- 0.6%, 139,000

Ancient Church of the East (Assyrian Church)- 32,967

Syrian Orthodox- 14,371

Armenian Apostolic Church- 9,341

### **Protestant/Evangelicals/Pentecostals**

Protestant- less than 1%, approximately 1,400

Evangelicals- less than 1%, approximately 69,000

Pentecostals/Charismatics- about 1%, approximately 265,000

Source- *Operation World*, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition; *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Volume 1: The World By Countries

## **People Groups**

11692

Adyghe (27091)

They are also known as the Circassians who are the oldest indigenous people of Northwest Caucasus and identify themselves as Adyghe. Many fled their country when Russia took over their lands. They are a Sunni Muslim group who speak Russian. They are a minority group that comes from Russia, but can also be found in France, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, are just to name a few. They are less than 2% evangelical, but have the Bible and the Jesus film available in their language.

00000

American (156,000)

There has been an influx of Americans entering Iraq because of the war that was begun in 2003. The Americans that are mainly there are connected with the military, aid organizations, media, or

business. Many Americans adhere to the Christian faith, but many are merely cultural Christians who practice it by tradition than by faith.

11693

Anatolian Turk (26269)

They are very nationalistic and proud of being from Turkey. Many are rural farmers in Iraq. They are mainly a Muslim group of the Hanafite tradition. There are very few known evangelical believers among them, but they do have resources available to them in the Turkish language such as the Bible and the Jesus film.

11697

Arab (6447882)

These cover various Arabs from different Middle Eastern and Gulf countries that live in Iraq. Many adhere to the Sunni Muslim faith, but there are few that belong to the Orthodox faith such as Egyptians and Jordanians. There are not many Christians among them since many look at Islam as a way of life not just as a religion. They do have many Christian resources available to them in the Arabic language such as the Bible and the Jesus film.

46403

Armenian (67569)

Armenians can be found all over the world because many fled their country in order to escape ethnic cleansing that started happening in 1915 at the on-set of World War I. Many can be found in Iraq and tend to live within their own Armenian communities. They come from traditionally Christian Orthodox backgrounds, but many are cultural and nominal Christians. They do have Christian resources available to them in their language such as the Jesus film and the Bible.

11701

Assyrian (42773)

They are an ethnic group that originated in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, but many have left these countries because of various religious and ethnic persecutions. They are believed to have descended from the ancient Akkadians, who, starting with Sargon of Akkad, emerged as the ruling class of Assyria. Babylonia was a colony of Assyria. Eventually Aramaean tribes assimilated into the Assyrian empire and their language became dominant, while the different cultures merged to form the ancient Assyrian culture.

Today, the Assyrian community is very proud of their history and is identify with their Orthodox faith. They can trace the history of their church with the Nestorian church. They have experienced heavy persecution especially in the early 1900s by the Ottoman Turks and many fled to Europe and North America. There is a very small number of Assyrians that are actually evangelical Christians, but many would say that they are nominal or cultural Christians. They do have Christian resources available to them in their language such as the Bible and the Jesus film.

11702

Azerbaijani (2120909)

The Azerbaijani language of today is based the Oghuz language (brought from Central Asia by Seljuk Turks) that is heavily influenced by Persian and Arabic. This language is the official language of the Republic of Azerbaijan. They can also be found in other countries such as Iran and Iraq.

They are a traditionally Muslim people. There are very few evangelical Christians among this people, but there are Gospel recordings available to them in their language and a Christian radio broadcast.

11703

Bajelan (28516)

They are part of the Gurani ethnic group which come from Iran. They live in the northern regions of Iran and Iraq known as Kurdistan. They are often categorized as Kurds. It is believed that their original homeland was somewhere near the Caspian Sea. Their lives are not easy living in Iraq and the old Iraqi government tried to ethnically cleanse them from Iraq. They are Muslim belonging to either the Sunni or Shiite sect. There are very few evangelical Christians among this people.

11696

Bedouin Arab (1283185)

They are a nomadic people that adhere to the Muslim religion. They are a simple people and mostly agricultural people and herders. They are a close community and can be closed to outsiders. There are very few known evangelical Christians among them, but do have Christian resources available to them since they do speak Arabic.

11704

Behdini (287171)

They live in primarily along the eastern border of Iraq. They originate from Turkey and Iran. They are known as southern Kurds. They are mostly Muslim and have been heavily persecuted by the former Iraqi government that was under Saddam Hussein. There very few evangelical Christians among this people, but do have the Bible translated into their language.

46404

British (788)

The British people that are present in Iraq are there for work reasons or military reasons. Many British will call themselves Christians, but many are nominal Christians who follow the traditions.

11706

### Central Kurd (568203)

The Kurds are a very large ethnic group of about 25 million and trace their roots back to the Medes of ancient Persia of what is now Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, more than 2,500 years ago. The Kurds of Iraq live along the northeastern borders of Turkey and Iran. They comprise about 30% of the Iraqi population and are mostly farmers.

Before the ousting of Saddam Hussein's regime, the Kurds were very much persecuted because of their support of the Iranian side during the Iraq-Iran War. Iraq tried to eradicate them during the 1980s and went after the young men en masse and executed them. They are Muslims, but many are nominal Muslims. There are very few Christians amongst the Kurds, but they do have the Jesus film translated into their language and they do have Gospel recordings also available to them.

11707

### Chaldean (196778)

During the days of the early church, they were part of the heretical group called the Nestorians. They later broke away from that group and rejoined the Roman Catholic Church. They are a minority group found within Iraq and tend to live within their own community. They can be found in Mosul, Baghdad, Basra, and within southeastern Iraqi Kurdistan. They speak a neo-Aramaic language that uses the Syriac script. They do not have a large evangelical Christian population, but have Bible portions written in their language and the Jesus film is also translated into their language.

42745

### Circassian (15735)

Their primary religion is Islam. The Bible is translated into their language. Also, there are Gospel recordings found in their language and the Jesus film is translated for them. There is no active church plant among this people group and they are less than 2% evangelical.

They originate from the Caucasus region. By the mid-1860s, roughly 90% of the Adyghe (Cherkess) population had been either killed or forced to flee to various parts of the Ottoman Empire. Many of them sought asylum in the United States and settled in New Jersey and New York City. They speak Arabic, Adygey, and English. Although they adhere to Islam, they are considered by many other Arabs liberal in their beliefs.

11708

### Egyptian Arab (37552)

They live in Iraq mainly for job opportunities. A large portion of Egyptians are Muslim, but there is a large minority that adheres to the Coptic faith. Many of the Egyptian Muslim are very devout and strict about their faith. They do have the Jesus film, Gospel recordings, the Bible, and Christian radio broadcasts available in their language.

11710

Ghorbati Gypsy (71287)

Gypsies, which are also called Romani or Domari, are made up of two groups: the Ghorbati and the Nawari. Both of the groups speak a dialect of the Gypsy language which is known as Romany, a language that is related to the North Indo-Aryan language of India. Their dialect, Domari, uses many Arabic words. The Ghorbati are named from the Arabic word that means "stranger."

The Gypsies originated in India and worked as musicians, entertainers, and as metal workers. They were not highly regarded people and were sent off to Persia as minstrels. They then split off into two groups and left to either Europe (the Romany Gypsies) or to the Middle East (the Domari Gypsies).

In Iraq they adhere to Islam, but they adhere to whatever faith in whichever country that they live in. They are not trusted within the countries that they live in. They are known for deceiving people and for being thieves. However, not all gypsies are like this and have tried to work honestly to prove themselves. They are hard to reach, since they are not trusting of others who are not from the gypsy community.

11695

Gulf Arab (238810)

Many of the Arabs from the Arabian Gulf are in Iraq for business purposes. They adhere to Islam and very traditional in their faith. There is a very small number among them that claim Christianity as their faith, but they do have Christian resources available to them in Arabic such as the Bible and the Jesus film.

11713

Hawrami, Gurani (27057)

They are an Iranian ethnic group called the Gurani and are split off in the Hawrami and the Bajelani. They can be found in Iraqi Kurdistan and many times they are categorized as Kurds. They are largely an agricultural people and tend to taking care of livestock. They are all largely Muslim who belong to either the Sunni sect or the Shiite sect. There are very few evangelical believers among these people.

11714

Herki (27057)

They are an Iraqi Kurdish group that live in the mountains. They are made up of tribes and clans. They are a rural people and mostly make their living from farming and raising livestock. The Herki language is possibly a dialect of Kurmanji. Apart from the Herki Kurd of Iraq, there are other large communities that can be found in Turkey and Iran. They adhere to Islam, but mix

many animistic traditions also within their belief system. There are very few known evangelical believers among them.

11698

Iraqi Arab- Sunni (10201640)

They are a large majority of the Iraqi population. There is a large faction between the Sunni Muslim and the Shiite Muslims in Iraq resulting many times in large fights and animosity between the groups. Many of the Iraqi Muslim consider their religion a way of life. There are a small number of evangelical believers among them. They do have Christian resources and missionaries trying to reach out to them and share the message of Christ with them.

46790

Iraqi Arabs- Shi'a (14,400,000)

They are the other large majority group that is found in Iraq. There are large factions between the Shiites and Sunni of Iraq and many of the outbursts are very violent against each other. The Shiites tend to live in their own communities and large pockets of them take up different cities within Iraq. There are very few evangelical Christians among them, but they do have Christian resources available to them and also missionaries are trying to reach out to them despite the violence and war.

11715

Jewish (142)

There is a very small community of Jews that live in Iraq. Many of them fled to Israel and other parts of America and Europe. Many adhere to the traditional Jewish beliefs and have very little known evangelical Christians among the Jewish community of Iraq.

11716

Koi-sanjaq Sooret (1140)

They live in northern Iraq and use the Syriac script. Speakers of this language call it 'Surat'. They have communities that are Muslim or adhere to the Catholic faith. There are very few known evangelical Christians among them.

11718

Kurmanji (1791926)

It is the dominant dialect of the Kurds of Iraq. They live in Iraqi Kurdistan and have been very much persecuted in the past under the former regime of Saddam Hussein. They are mostly Muslims and have very few evangelical Christians among them. They do have Christian resources available to them in their language such as the Jesus film and the Bible.

11717

Luri (95524)

This is an ethnic group that comes from Iran. They are a nomadic people, but many have settled into farming. Their language is called Luri, which is very close to the Farsi language. They are a Muslim group and there are very few known evangelical believers among them.

46405

Mandaeen (53731)

They speak a form of Aramaic and are considered to be an off-shoot of Judaism, but also a blend of ancient Gnosticism. They believe that they descended from Adam who was the first to receive the religious instructions of the Mandaeans. Their last great teacher and healer was John the Baptist. They do also speak Arabic and are persecuted by the Muslims in Iraq. Many have fled to Jordan, Syria, and to the United States. There are very few known evangelical Christians among this people and the Bible is not translated into their language, but all speak Arabic also so one can use the Arabic Bible and the Jesus film in Arabic.

42746

Palestinian Arab (41816)

Many Palestinians fled their homeland and sought refuge in Iraq. Many live in their own communities and try to work and provide for their families. They mostly adhere to Islam, but there is a small community of them that follow the Orthodox faith. There is also a small population of Palestinians that are evangelical believers, but many are nominal Christians. They do have the Bible and Jesus film available to them in the Arabic language.

11719

Persian (298513)

The Iranians that live in Iraq have come to seeking work. The relationship between Iraq and Iran has been strained in the past that led to a war between both nations in the 1980s over the issue of land and other factors. Iranians tend to be Shiite Muslim. There are very few evangelical Christians among the Iranian people, but they do have the Bible and Jesus film translated into the Farsi language. There are missionaries trying to reach out to them, but it is very difficult for them to live in Iran. So, many missionaries live in other countries where Iranians can be found such as the United Arab Emirates.

46406

Russian (2200)

The Russians that live in Iraq have come specifically seeking employment opportunities. Many of the Russians are either Russian Orthodox or have no belief in God at all. There is a growing number of evangelical Christians among them. They do have the Bible and Jesus film in the Russian language.

11721

Shikaki (27057)



They are a Kurdish group who live in northern Kurdistan. They are a rural people, but many are engaged in trade, services, and craft work. They embraced Islam after the Arab conquests during the seventh century. Not only do they practice Islam, but it is also a way of life for them. It is so much integrated into their society and culture. There are very few known evangelical Christians among this people.

11722

Sorani Kurd (3582157)

They are a Kurdish group who live in Iraqi Kurdistan. They are a rural people, but many are engaged in trade, services, and craft work. They embraced Islam after the Arab conquests during the seventh century. Not only do they practice Islam, but it is also a way of life for them. It is so much integrated into their society and culture. There are very few known evangelical Christians among this people.

11700

Southern Assyrian (Turoyo) (84223)

They speak a form of Syrian Aramaic and use the Syriac script. They also speak Arabic. They are an ethnic group that originated in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria, but many have left these countries because of various religious and ethnic persecutions. They are believed to have descended from the ancient Akkadians, who, starting with Sargon of Akkad, emerged as the ruling class of Assyria. Babylonia was a colony of Assyria. Eventually Aramaean tribes assimilated into the Assyrian empire and their language became dominant, while the different cultures merged to form the ancient Assyrian culture.

Today, the Assyrian community are very proud of their history and are identify with their Orthodox faith. They can trace the history of their church with the Nestorian church. They have experienced heavy persecution especially in the early 1900s by the Ottoman Turks and many fled to Europe and North America. There is a very small number of Assyrians that are actually evangelical Christians, but many would say that they are nominal or cultural Christians. They do have Christian resources available to them in their language such as the Bible and the Jesus film.

11723

Surchi (15685)

There is not much known about this group, but it is thought that their language may be a dialect of Kurmanji. They live in the Kurdish communities in Iraq. They are about 99% Muslim and are very nationalistic and are prideful of their heritage and culture. They have been persecuted in the past by the Iraqi government. There are very small numbers of evangelical Christians among this people.

11694

Syrian Arab (16197)

Mostly adhere to Sunni Islam, but a large majority belongs to Shiite Islam and its many sects. There are missionaries that are trying to reach the Syrian Arabs, but there is not a church planting movement among them.

11724

Turkmen (340676)

They originate from Turkmenistan and later migrated into the Caucasus region where they learned to use the Russian language and continually use it. They are mostly herders and farmers. They also work as crafty tradesmen in bazaars. They originally took on the heretical Christian belief of the Nestorians, but then were conquered by the Muslim and adhered to Islam.

11725

Urdu (3136)

The Urdu are predominately from Northern India and Pakistan. Many have migrated to various parts of the Arab world seeking better economic opportunities. They mostly adhere to Islam and have very few known evangelical Christians among the Urdu speakers. They do have Christian resources available to them such as the Bible and the Jesus film.

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should place Iraq in the center of their prayers. These prayers should include stability and peace for the society. These people have not known peace for many years.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to reach the minorities who embrace some misinformed aspects of Christianity.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should remain ready to meet physical needs among the peoples of Iraq.
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should consider work among the Kurds as a special target group in Iraq.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches will find ways to overcome the prejudice that naturally adheres to people from the West. The present war in Iraq will make missionaries from the West less effective. Missionaries from non-western countries may find greater acceptance in Iraq.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop methods for sharing the Good News with followers of Islam. Local believers will be trained in these methods.

**Pictures** – See attached folder in Iraq folder.

**Links**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq>

<http://www.iraq.net/>

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/index.html?inline=nyt-geo>

<http://www.state.gov/p/nea/ci/c3212.htm>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/topics/topic.php?topicId=1010>

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107644.html>

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/iqtoc.html>

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/791014.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/791014.stm)

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=50&Body=iraq&Body1=inspect>