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Iraq

# A humanitarian intervention?

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**The intervention of American forces in Iraq has been presented in the Western media as an intervention to protect religious and ethnic minorities from the advance of ultra-reactionary jihadist group Islamic State (IS), formerly Islamic State in Iran and the Levant (ISIS). This propaganda hides the imperialist political interests of the US in their military intervention, which has in fact nothing to do with humanitarian objectives.**

The IS since June has been in continuous advance in various regions since taking the town of Mosul. To start with IS worked within a heterogeneous coalition comprising ex-Baathists and tribal chiefs, but the jihadist group has rapidly moved to the forefront of the other components of the coalition. [[For a background to the events in June, see an article "[Iraq the continuous suffering](#)"] IS has repressed all the components of the population that refused its authority, including Sunni Muslims, while attacking Christian minorities and the Yezidis (a Kurdish-speaking minority whose monotheistic religion has roots in Zoroastrianism practiced mainly in Iran). IS has emptied Mosul of its Christian population and has occupied Qaraqosh, the largest Christian town in Iraq.

Nonetheless we should note the solidarity of part of the Muslim population of Mosul against the attacks of the IS upon the Christians. Some Muslims have in effect joined the Christians in demonstrating with placards carrying the inscription "I am Christian, I am Iraq", interposing themselves between their Christian compatriots and the jihadists of the IS. Mahmoud Am-Asali, professor of law at the University of Mosul, was the first Muslim beaten by the jihadists for having defended the Christians. On Saturday 19 July, expiry date of the notorious ultimatum of terror (in which the jihadists offered three choices to the Christians of Mosul "Islam, Dhimma (a special tax) or the sword to those who refused the other two"), Muslims in Mosul joined Mass in the church to pray alongside their Christian brothers. This also happened on Sunday 20 July in Baghdad, at the Catholic church of St George.

The advances and the terror exercised by the IS have now caused the flight of 100,000 Christians who have been forced to leave their homes, as well as 20 to 30,000 members of the Yezidi community who remain trapped by attacks by the IS in the mountains of Sinjar, without food, water or shelter, according to the High Commissioner of the UN for Refugees. Thousands of others, exhausted and dehydrated managed to get to Kurdistan via Syria. More than 200,000 people have been displaced by the military advance of the IS, at the same time as the latter have massacred civilians.

The IS comprises about 10,000 men in Iraq and about 7000 in Syria.

The US military intervention has taken the form of airborne attacks "targeted" at the jihadists of the IS, the sending military advisors to the field, as well as the supply of arms to the governments of Iraq and the autonomous Kurdish region. France and the UK have also armed the latter. The support of the self-styled "anti-imperialist" Iran for the US strikes in support of its Iraqi allies should be noted...

The Iranian regime has also sent "Pasdaran" ("Revolutionary Guards") to Iraq to fight the IS, while it has delivered some Sukhoi SU-25 ground-attack and close-support planes (reserved to Pasdaran forces only within the Iranian armed forces). At the same time, Iran has continued to mobilize and finance Iraqi Shia militias. Members of the Lebanese Hezbollah also appear to be involved in the tasks of command and control. One of them, Ibrahim al-Hajj, veteran of the 2006 conflict with Israel, has recently been killed in the North, near Mosul, which the IS has controlled since the start of its offensive in June.

On the other hand, Kurdish fighters from Iraq, Syria and Turkey have unified their forces in a rare alliance, putting their differences aside temporarily, to unite against the jihadists in Northern Iraq in the region of Rabia and Sinjar, to

## A humanitarian intervention?

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the west of Mosul. Kurdish combatants of the Turkish PKK, of the Syrian PYD and the Iraqi Peshmergas have effectively unified their forces in an unprecedented collaboration.

The US military intervention, in spite of its “humanitarian” propaganda, nonetheless fits the clear political objectives of protecting US diplomatic personnel stationed in Irbil and the big multinational companies in the oil sector, including Mobil, Chevron, Exxon and Total which exploit the oil of the region and which have already invested more than \$10,000,000,000, but the main objective is to support their ally, the Iraqi regime, successor to the US invasion. The US did not intervene when Mosul and other regions fell and when more than 200,000 refugees fled towards Kurdistan, but not until the IS threatened to conquer Kurdish territory and the capital Baghdad in the South.

It is because the US only wanted superficial changes within the Iraqi regime, such as replacing the Prime Minister Maliki, who has also been abandoned by his Iranian ally because of his disastrous rule over the country. The new Prime Minister, Haidar al-Abadi, does not represent anything like a revolution; he is close to Maliki and a member of the same party Dawa, whereas he has been the Minister of Communications within the interim government put in place after the overthrow of Saddam Hussain in 2003. He has received international support, including from Iran. Maliki nonetheless tried to cling to power, but eventually he was forced to resign. Following this announcement, the US leadership has declared that it is prepared to increase economic and military aid to Iraq, if the new Al-Abadi government becomes more inclusive in particular of the Sunni population of Iraq. But it has been forgotten that the government has the same formula and the same political forces which has led Iraq into the current situation as we explained in our June [article](#).

The protection of religious and ethnic minorities is not at all a priority for the US as can be seen when one observes the practice of its political allies in the region, which have on the contrary discriminated against and oppressed their minorities, such as Saudi Arabia and its Shia minority, Egypte and its Coptic Christian and Shiite minorities, and of course Israel and the Palestinian population (including Christians), which has repressed them and forced them into exile from the lands occupied in 1948 (now the Zionist state) to the West Bank, Jordan and Gaza, without mentioning its Apartheid policies, of occupation and colonisation. The US did little to stop attacks on minorities following the American-British invasion of 2003.

We have to remember that the origins of the IS started with the constitution of Al-Qaida following the US invasion. Its leader Abu Bagdadi gained his experience of jihadism after the invasion when he joined the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaida under the command of the Jordanian al-Zarkaoui. In 2010, he took the leadership of the then ISIS (now known as IS) which replaced Al-Qaida in Iraq. It is nonetheless its involvement in the Syrian revolution, fighting the Free Syrian Army more than the Assad regime, particularly after 2013, which has allowed the IS group to become what it is today. The fighting in Syria has given the IS training and unprecedented experience of combat. Now the group has resources including tanks, Humvees, missiles and other heavy weapons captured during its offensive in Iraq. This material, often US made and notably abandoned by the Iraqi army during its retreat from Mosul in June has considerably reinforced the military strength of the IS.

The US intervention is motivated by political and imperialist interests and nothing else. These interests demand the maintenance of the authoritarian and sectarian regime that the US created in 2003 and which it has supported ever since. The IS is the enemy of the US because it threatens the sovereignty of a government that collaborates with the US, and not because it is an ultra-reactionary group which attacks minorities and Iraqis in general.

More so, if the US has not intervened in Syria, it is not because the Assad regime protects religious and ethnic minorities, but because it does not actually want to overthrow a regime which has served its political interests on many occasions in the past, notably by repressing progressive Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements in Lebanon and in Syria or when it took part in the imperialist war against Iraq in 1991 within the US-led coalition., etc.... The US wants a “Yemeni solution” with the Assad regime – that is to say to keep the regime’s structures and incorporate within it part of the self-styled opposition which serves Western interests. It’s for this reason that the US haven’t intervened in Syria, and not the protection of minorities.

## A humanitarian intervention?

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Moreover the actions of the IS within Syria haven't resulted in a change to the politics of the US in relation to the Syrian revolution. The events in Iraq have simply resulted in the Assad regime attacking its base in the town of Raqqa, to give it the appearance of fighting "terrorism" in front of the international community. The Assad regime since the start of the Syrian revolution has devoted itself in effect to attacking democrats, the people's committees, and the Free Syrian Army, all the while releasing from prison islamists and jihadists and allowing them to develop. The latter, with the support of regional forces such as the Saudis and Qatar have been able to build strong and well-armed military forces.

The protection of religious and ethnic minorities, and all Iraqi citizens can only be achieved by a truly democratic state, social and clear of all political sectarianism and foreign international and regional interventions. In the same way this doesn't stop us supporting the self-determination of the Kurdish people, and even the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan if that is what it wants. This support doesn't mean for one moment that we should support the feudal chief Barzani, allied with the US and Turkey, who must on the contrary be fought against and considered as an enemy of the popular Kurdish classes because of his authoritarian, neo-liberal policies, and alliances with Western imperialism and regional collaboration with Turkey and Israel.

It is because we must oppose ourselves to the imperialist intervention of the US and other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, and to oppose the jihadists of the IS, its crimes and its reactionary polices, as well as the authoritarian and sectarian government of Baghdad. These foreign interventions are one of the main reasons for the current situation within the country.

The foremost need in Iraq is to build a popular social movement; democratic, progressive and non-religious, opposing itself to communitarianism, to allow the popular classes to oppose the different political groups and foreign states that try to divide them on religious and ethnic grounds, to impoverish them with neo-liberal policies and to oppress them by authoritarian and repressive measures.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from the blog [Syria Freedom Forever](#).*