

## Mosul City Profile

6<sup>th</sup> September 2007

### Facts & figures

"Mosul is a sprawling city, which has a medieval core formed by closely packed courtyard houses that cascade down to the Tigris. Around the core are soulless developments and ugly roads and bridges, reminiscent of any western city. On the edge of Mosul stands the vast ruined city of Nineveh"<sup>1</sup>.



Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire from the 8th century BC. Today's Assyrians count their civilisation back 6,750 years and as such it is one of the oldest cities in the world.



Location: Capital of Nineveh province, 250 miles north of Baghdad on the banks of the Tigris River

Population: 1,739,000 (2002 est.)

Ethnicity: Mosul city centre is mainly Sunni Arab; the suburbs are mostly Kurdish; also with Yazidis and Assyrians.

Religion: Sunni Islam, with a minority of Christians and Yazidis.

### Mosul in history

The Bible records how Jonah was sent by God to the Assyrian city of Nineveh, as God had seen how wicked the people of the city were. God wanted to confront their wickedness so that they would repent (Jonah 1:1-2). The prophet Nahum describes the horrors of their wickedness, particularly idolatry and endless violent cruelty (Nahum 1:14, 3:1-4).

Mosul became the capital of the Assyrian Empire in the 8th century BC, and the centre of the worship of Ishtar (Venus). It was burned down then taken over by the Babylonians in the 6th century BC, then became part of the Seleucid Empire following Alexander's conquest in 332 BC. Over the next 1,500 years Mosul was sacked, conquered or ruled by the Parthians, the Romans, Sassanid Persia, the Muslim Army, the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Zengid dynasty, and finally in the 13th century it was conquered and destroyed by the Mongols. In the 15th century AD it was rebuilt and became part of the Ottoman Empire. After the end of World War One the province of Mosul came under British control as part of the new Iraq.

### Mosul today

The horrific violence of Nineveh in Jonah and Nahum's time is still evident today in the region of modern Mosul. On Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2007 co-ordinated bombs went off in the Yazidi villages of Qataniya and Adnaniya near Mosul. Over 250 people were killed. There are several fatal attacks each week in Mosul.



Yazidis (about 350,000 in the Mosul region) have a faith that is a mixture of other religions and they worship an archangel, sometimes represented by a peacock figure. This is believed by some Muslims to be the devil. There was a massacre of 23 Yazidis

<sup>1</sup> The Lost Palaces of Iraq By Dan Cruickshank [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/iraq/iraq\\_lost\\_cities\\_04.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/recent/iraq/iraq_lost_cities_04.shtml)

by militants on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2007 in alleged retaliation for the “honour” killing of a Yazidi girl that had converted to Islam to marry her Kurdish boyfriend.

Most of the police force are Sunni Arabs and come mainly from one powerful tribe. Hence questions about their loyalty have been raised. Law and order is not something minority groups can rely on. The soldiers are either Kurds or Americans.



Mosul is (or was) the Iraqi city with the largest number of Christians. They have been there since before the arrival of Islam. Christians in Mosul suffer as other people do in the conflict, but they are especially vulnerable to being targeted by militant groups. Churches have been bombed, priests kidnapped and murdered, businesses attacked and Christian women threatened if they do not wear the veil. As a result thousands of Christians have fled from the city to Syria or to Kurdish areas further north.

The districts of Nineveh province, which has a mixed Arab / Kurdish population, are due to vote in a referendum by the end of 2007 on whether they want to be administered by the Kurdish Regional Government to the north. Many districts around Mosul (though not the Arab centre of the city) are expected to vote to join. This has led to violence by Arab militants against minority groups to intimidate them against a positive vote. However some feel it may have the opposite effect as they may feel more secure under the administration of Kurdish forces.



Not though the Assyrian Christians in Mosul. They are persecuted and attacked by Arab militants, but they are still opposed to administration by the Kurds, given the numerous massacres that Assyrians have suffered at Kurdish hands in the previous centuries. The Assyrians want their own self governing region in their heartland near to Mosul.

The Mosul Dam, 20 miles to the north of the city on the Tigris River, holds 8 billion cubic metres of water. The dam is in very poor condition and has a reasonably high chance of failing in the next few years. If the dam breaks then up to 70% of Mosul (pop. 1.7M) could be washed away. Efforts are being made to carry out repairs, but the US & Iraqi authorities have other priorities.

#### How to pray

- Pray for an end to violence in Mosul
- Pray for the protection and safety of minorities, including the historic Christian communities
- Pray for government that serves and protects all peoples
- Pray that the spiritual principalities of violence, destruction and control (empire) would be dethroned
- Pray that Arabs, Kurds and Yazidis would hear of the liberating love of Jesus and embrace Him as the Prince of Peace
- Pray for new communities of followers of Jesus to be started in Mosul among these peoples



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