

# Escaping the homeland

Every human being on the Earth has the right to spend their lives according to their choices and with freedom. But we are the ones who have been deprived of this right. We had been bought like slaves and like prisoners even in our own homeland. We lived a life full of scares, hardships and dangers. We saw the death of humanity, prosperity and freedom in our homeland.

We had been brought up in Iraq. We had seen the things, the things most scary to normal people. Our lives were so different from the people who lived in their homeland. Mousil, a city of Iraq, was our homeland. But even we were not allowed to live free life there. In 2003, after the American occupation of Iraq, Mousil became the second major city in Iraq. Everyone was scared. People were becoming afraid of death. They were not free to move. They were not allowed to go outside, because the war had started. Terrorism was rooted here. Terrorism was becoming stronger and stronger, even under different names.

They started with Al-Qaeda and at the same time they were becoming part of many other groups of militaries. Groups like Alamo army, Alilog and Islamic states. They were not only making the people scared of many things but at the same time they were attacking the holy places of Muslims and Christians, like mosques and churches. They attacked the religious places even, so the people who were going to their holy places had no idea if they would make it back to their homes or not. Things were becoming tougher day by day. Our lives were limited to our houses. They did not stop there, they started violating human rights by spreading racism. They made racism through different ways. They had divide the religion Islam into different categories like Sunni Islam, Shia Islam, Yazidis and Kurdi. They made Muslims fight with each other. Then the Christians were also their victims. Hence this way Mousil was the place you can find people from different religions and beliefs there, Kurdi, Shia, Sunni, Yazidis and others.

2004 and 2005 were even worse. Everyone who lived there were not safe, even the children became their main victims in this area. They just kidnap children and ask their parents or family for a ransom. We were becoming more scared. For us everything was becoming dark. Fear had become a part of our lives. And now it had become a normal thing that someone had been kidnapped and was killed. It had been normal for us to see blood in the street, to see dead bodies. It had

become normal for us to hear about someone's kidnapping. They kidnapped the people and asked for money to leave him otherwise they killed. But still this person was lucky to go back to his family even after they had payed. Explosions were killing many people, were making people paralyzed, sightless, and people were also getting many other injuries.

In the middle of 2005 they started to kill people based on their ID's. The ID issued by Iraq contains all the information about that person to whom they're issued. They contained the religion and name, like if the person named on Sunni prophet or Shia or Christians. They were stopping people on streets and asked for it. If unfortunately those miserable people had different believes they killed them on the spot.

The situation became more miserable when the women and children also became their victims. They violated all the human rights but there were no one who asked them, who punished them, who stopped them. They were becoming cruel to women. They deprived them of their rights and their freedom. The charm of our faces had been changed to the sick faces. They made life so conservative to us that it was very difficult to breathe. The war, the deaths, the difficulties and the sorrowneess spread everywhere.

They forced women to wear a barrier. At this time women were scared to go shopping. Even women were not able to go out alone for something. They could not go for study, for earning etc. Women who were the only source of income for their families, not allowed to go out for earning. This is why their families died because of hunger. This didn't stop here, they set their own rules for the shops. The Muslim shopkeepers had to pay an amount of money every month and the non-Muslim had to pay more. And it was also compulsory for some schools to give Islamic education. And all the students, if they were Muslim or not, must attend Islamic classes and follow with them.

And then the times came when people stopped being afraid of death. They prepared themselves for death and everything that was making them scared. Because it had become routine for us to see blood every day, to hear about deaths, explosions, kidnappings, attacks etc. And also who were going to work in the morning look at their children as the last time they were going to see them. Because there was little chance to expect that would they see their family again, or if they would come back to their home or not.

From the beginning of 2006 the terrorists had started focusing on killing people depending on what they believe. Terrorists even threaten the people via mail, leaving a bullet on their car, and they also gave them calls. During this all many of the Christian families left Mousil between 2006 to 2009. Because they were left with only three options, the first was to leave, second was to pay a big amount of money, and the last one was to be killed. Hence they left their property and everything and went to some other place.

There was no family who hadn't lost their family member. Every day, every week they were losing someone of their family or friends. At that time every street had a funeral and even some families had lost more than one member.

This is why most Christian people left Mousil to live in towns around, but it was not easy as they faced mistreatment and racism in the beginning. But after on they understood, these people had challenges to see people from different culture and live with them for a few years.

On June 2014, Islamic State occupied Mousil and on the very next month they kicked all the non-Muslim out of their homeland. People were deprived of their houses. They were constrained to move out to another city. The non-Muslim who stayed there were killed. They started to burn Christian houses, just because they had different beliefs. And they practiced sexual assault with Yazidi's women and they said those women had been halal to them. They also sold them to each other for some cash. They also had big shops for it.

Then most people left mousil and went to Arbil to get passport and to migrate because they had lost everything. And then we moved new places far away of our homeland. But at new place we had faced a lot of problems, as we had to learn new language, had to adopt new culture etc. They were kind of racist in the beginning but after on they understood why we were there. We got harassed in many ways but our lives were saved there.

The first priority is to alive, so we stayed alive. But sometimes we feel degraded when we were called minorities there, when we had to adjust there because we were not in our own homeland. We had left our own homeland because "we were not worth saving in our homeland".

The new challenges we faced at the new place were even harder, but we had to overcome them. Although at the new place there were no fear of death, there

were no blood, there were no moans and groans of crying people. But we had challenges of learning new languages; we had the challenge to adjust in new culture. And that was the toughest thing which we came across. Racists were also present there. In the beginning it had become a big challenge to overcome racism but gradually it was fine. Now we are happy because we are alive. We are living a free life. We are having no fear of being murdered. But we missed our homeland.

***Anonymous. Edited and reproduced with permission.***