



Pascale Warda:

“The Situation of the Christian Communities in Iraq”

Summary

Iraq’s former Minister of Migration and Displacement, Pascale Warda, strongly criticized the current treatment of Christians in Iraq, characterizing it as “violence against humanity” at a lecture delivered at Oxford.

Warda, currently leader of Iraq’s Hammurabi Human Rights Organization, addressed the persecution and violence facing religious minorities in Iraq, a situation which “is not met with any response” from the international community.

“Iraq is a very rich country and has been a civilization for 7000 years,” Warda said. “It has always been an ethnically and religiously diverse place, and Christians have lived here since the very beginnings of their religion.” However, the former minister spoke of an increase of violence, corruption and sectarianism in this country, starting with the rule of Saddam Hussein.

“For years and years, we were victims of forced ‘Arabization,’” under Saddam, said Warda. “Today, we are witnessing inhuman killings of Christian bishops, the targeting of churches, and massacres of Christian communities and families.”

“Iraq was completely destroyed – physically, economically, even psychologically,” in the war that began in 2003, Warda said. “It will be very difficult to rebuild.” However, the dire condition for Christians and other religious minorities is unprecedented, even compared to the general situation: “Christians are not only targeted on the street, but also by the law.”

“Iraq has to be governed by a democratic system to protect the dignity of all citizens, regardless of difference in belief and ethnic identity,” the former minister concluded. “We don’t want protection as *dhimmis*,” she said, referring to the ancient “protected” status afforded to non-Muslims subject to Islamic rule. “We want to be protected by law.”

As it is now, “we, as Christians, are targeted. We want to stay in the country, but we don’t know how.”