

Army of Psychologists Needed after Liberation in Mosul

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The stench of death lingers in the streets of east Mosul, but the trauma of terrorism may last for generations, Iraqi observers say.

For the first time in eight years, an American president acknowledged the grim specificity of the horrors visited upon Iraq and Syria as he addressed the national prayer breakfast in Washington. “We have seen peace loving Muslims brutalized, victimized, murdered and oppressed by ISIS killers,” President Donald Trump told the packed breakfast gathering Feb. 2. “We have seen a campaign of ISIS and genocide against Christians, where they cut off heads. Not since the Middle Ages have we seen that. We haven’t seen that, the cutting off of heads. Now they cut off the heads, they drown people in steel cages,” the President continued.



“All nations have a moral obligation to speak out against such violence. All nations have a duty to work together to confront it and to confront it viciously if we have to,” he added.

“My people are all suffering from PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder],” Fr. Douglas Bazi, the former pastor of a large congregation of Chaldean Christians who were forced from their homes in the Nineveh Plain on Jun. 6, 2014, has said.

The reconstruction team going into Mosul after liberation will need an army of psychologists who can treat the tens of thousands of young people who have been traumatized by seeing so many beheadings, amputations, and live execution by burning, according to Dr. Abbas Khadim, an Iraqi scholar at the School for Advanced and International Studies in Washington, DC. Young children are likely suffering from PTSD, and needless to say many adults, too. “A whole generation of youth have been schooled in brutality,” Khadim has said.

But the brutality continues. An unconfirmed report on Al Sumeria TV on Feb. 2 claimed that sources in Mosul say that two preadolescent boys in the Cubs organization in west Mosul each suffered a hand amputation because they had refused to execute adults in front of their families. Did it actually happen? The fact that the story could be believed at all is surprising, yet the films of Islamic State children executing adults and film of children suffering amputations in public squares are numerous on the internet.

In recent weeks terrorist commanders have ordered every house owner to cut an escape opening in the wall separating his house from his neighbor's house so that terrorists can flee easily from one house to another without exiting doors or being seen by coalition aircraft or drones, according to Ayad Salih, head of a government development office in Erbil. "One week ago, ISIS told west Mosul residents 'if you don't create these escape exits, we will kill you,'" says Salih, whose job includes calling residents in west Mosul to assess conditions.

Since the coalition now controls the east bank of Mosul, ISIS has declared all the residents of east Mosul "infidels" [*Kaffir*] said Ayad. "They recently ordered all West Bankers who have relatives living in east Mosul to go to the local mosque and publicly denounce their relatives," Salih said in an exclusive interview. Since kinship ties in Iraq are extremely important, the terrorist government fears that West Bankers could seek favors from their liberated family members a few hundred yards away. "Failure to denounce relatives will entail a death sentence, too," said Salih.

To drive home the point that the Iraqi army cannot provide security to the liberated areas, mortar barrages from the west bank to east Mosul, where half the population has sheltered in place, are daily occurrences. On Jan. 31 a mortar attack killed 20 civilians in east Mosul, Sada of *Daesh Daily* reported.

The photos of Iraqi children posing with and greeting Iraqi Security forces in Mosul invariably show jubilant, smiling kids. But observers say there is anxiety beneath the smiles. Many of the children have seen their relatives humiliated, or even executed. "In some ways, the atrocities committed by terrorists in Iraq have had greater effect on the local population than the crimes done behind the scenes in previous epochs, because the crimes of the radical jihadists were done in the open, in the street," said Dr. Tawfik Hamid, a medical doctor and educator as well as author of the book, *Inside Jihad*.

What do the Iraqi authorities need to do help the liberated population return to normal life?

"They need two things," Hamid said. "First, the Government of Iraq needs to demonstrate through smart media that Islamic State has been effectively defeated. This would reassure the Iraqi people. The religious people of Iraq want to feel that vengeance of God has taken place. Seeing this can significantly relieve their discomfort," he said.

"Second, the people of Mosul area need to see their economic conditions improve," Hamid said in an interview. "There should be greater availability of foods that were in shortage. People put great emphasis on food, so if, for example, sugar is more available, they will conclude that a new authority has arrived."

The change of authority can't come soon enough for the residents of west Mosul. Salih, who grew up in Mosul and studied there, said there are close to one million people trapped by the Islamic State, and many of them are starving. Meanwhile, the Iraqi government has begun to drop millions of leaflets on the residents there to report to them the "normal life" obtained by residents on the liberated side of the city.

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Photo Credit: Aerial view of Mosul during recent fighting. Screenshot of PBS Frontline documentary "Battle for Iraq", released January 2017.