

**REVIEW BY BAT YE'OR**

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES UNDER THE RULE OF ISLAM**  
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**BY FREDERICK P. ISAAC**

The history of the Christians of the Middle East is shrouded in obscurity as if a conspiratorial silence is determined to rivet the last nail in a coffin that the West has put to rest. Flourishing on this amnesia, we now see new histories taking over the achievements of their predecessors, strutting about with pretentious, gleaming vestments of civilizations looted through *jihad* usurpation.

In Tabari – the renowned 10<sup>th</sup> century Muslim scholars – we read that before the Islamic conquest, Iraq was inhabited by the two Peoples of the Book. In Islamic parlance it designates Jews and Christians. Jews have lived in Iraq-Assyria – which constituted a province of the Persian Empire – since their exile there by Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC). Christianity spread among the inhabitants through those ancient Jewish communities. They lived side by side in the same villages. Today there are hardly any Jews left from the numerous diaspora of antique lineage. As for Assyrian Christianity, it has declined considerably from the time of Arab-Islamic invasion, and particularly in the past half century.

It is this history of a long agony, interrupted temporarily by brilliant and peaceful periods, that Frederick P. Isaac, an Assyrian himself, has tried to recapture. His endeavour is not without difficulties as the frequent destruction of monasteries and churches – those reliquaries of libraries and history – of massacres, looting and exiles of Assyrian villagers have spread a silence of death over the centuries.

Isaac is an heir of this ancient Assyrian history, which he recounts in a simple and clear language. He also assesses his personal experience, which he decided to record at his son's request. The Assyrian diaspora is now questioned by their second and third generation anxious to discover its roots abandoned by the hasty flight of the persecuted, and forgotten in the tribulation of exile.

Isaac's book exposes the religious apartheid condition of Jews and Christians under *shari'a*, the traditional Islamic law. He deplores the collusion, after World War I, of the Western colonial Powers with Muslim authorities against the indigenous religious minorities. The latter were betrayed and abandoned by England and France, the Mandate powers. "Thus – he writes – Assyria was dismembered and its Christian people described as aliens, groups of different sects of unidentified nationalities....The aim of the key power brokers was to deny the Assyrians statehood."(p.130). Though their country has been appropriated, he writes, the Assyrians are a nation in their own right.

In early 1922 the French and British colonial powers abolished the Assyrian Resettlement Project in their northern region of Mesopotamia. The rehabilitation program for the Assyrians was cancelled as well as its relief work and humanitarian assistance. The Christians were scattered without compensation, protection and shelter, they were robbed of their homes and treated mercilessly. England parcelled out Assyria and "sold it to the highest bidder of the four neighbouring Islamic countries." Isaac's book is a vibrant call to remind the world of an ancient Christian people, sacrificed to the West's policy of Islamic appeasement. "The international community has a moral obligation to relieve the Assyrians from this intolerable situation." The Mandate powers had dispossessed and fragmented a small nation, a crime that must be redressed.

Since the two World Wars, the desire of the Assyrians has always been to live free from Islamic rule, in their own homeland. But "the West dashed their expectation for independence from the Islamic domineering rulers." To comply with Muslim policy, Western nations never considered the Assyrians a separate people, says Isaac, rather they robbed them of their homeland and delivered them to their traditional enemies. This policy of duplicity still continues today by the silence of Western governments, the media, and intellectuals regarding the fact that indigenous minorities in the Islamic lands "are subjected to continuous oppression and humiliation. They live in total anxiety. They are in constant fear of losing their jobs, their properties and their lives."

In his conclusion, the author describes how Iraq “distorts the truth and falsifies textbooks of history and social studies about the Assyrians....as a part of its policy of the educational curricula that it teaches in schools.” (p.176). This policy is general in all the lands Islamized by *jihad*. The same denial of Jewish and Christian history that preceded Islam is constantly enforced. It is epitomized by the Arab-Israeli conflict where Israel is called a colonial and usurper people in its own land, a dismissal of the whole Biblical and post-Biblical history on which Christianity rests. Europe’s collusion with the PLO and its replacement policy fits well the duplicity described by Isaac concerning the Christians – but in the case of Israel, this duplicity which is consonant with the Islamic refusal of the Bible, destroys Christianity itself.