

Chaldean archbishop sees signs of interfaith reconciliation in Iraq

by [Elizabeth Bryant](#) in the [February 15, 2017](#) issue

While the Iraqi conflict is not over, Archbishop Yousif Mirkis of Kirkuk is focused on how to heal his deeply divided country.

He called for a Marshall Plan for Iraq, referring to U.S. aid to Western Europe after World War II, during a visit to Paris to raise funds for an educational project he oversees. He is part of the Chaldean Church, which represents Catholics from Iraq and neighboring countries.

Through the project several hundred university students—Christians, Yazidis, and Muslims—study and live together.

He described another instance of interfaith reconciliation: the widow of a Japanese reporter who was kidnapped and killed in Fallujah funded the building of a hospital in the city.

“Instead of seeking revenge, she built a hospital and offered it to those who killed her husband,” he said. “There’s a lesson that should be repeated.”

At the same time, Mirkis fears for children and youth growing up under the rule of the self-described Islamic state.

“What do we do with the millions who have been educated under it?” he asked.

Iraq’s Christian population went from 1.5 million in 2003 to less than 300,000 last year, according to ADF International, a Vienna-based advocacy group. Some fear they may disappear.

Mirkis is not among them.

“For me, staying and resisting as a Christian minority is the right way,” he said.
—Religion News Service

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