

Mayhem in northern Iraq

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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In the current issue of the *Century*, [Philip Jenkins writes about the fall of Mosul](#), Iraq's second-largest city, to the Islamic State/ISIS. Jenkins traces the area's deep Christian history, concluding that "we may be seeing the end of an astounding example of Christian continuity that lasted nearly two millennia."

Since Jenkins wrote that, ISIS has been moving fast. The Sunni militants have now taken several other cities in the North, including Qaraqosh, the largest Christian city in Iraq; the city's residents largely simply fled. There are reports of horrifying violence, widespread theft, and [forced conversions](#)—all targeting, [among other groups](#), Christians.

One Christian woman, newly exiled from Mosul, [puts it starkly](#): "It is no longer possible for Christians to live in Iraq."

Today, [the U.S. started bombing ISIS](#) in Iraq. I'm not one to ever welcome such news. American motivation here isn't strictly humanitarian; it's clear that [our political interest in an autonomous Kurdistan is a driving force](#). And while Obama promises [no more ground troops in Iraq](#), we all know too well how one thing can lead to another.

Still, in a region where it can be hard to know who the good guys are, one thing's pretty clear: [ISIS's peerless brutality is aimed at pretty much everyone](#). They're causing unspeakable suffering, and [the situation is very different from the one in Syria](#), where Obama sought military authorization last year. While [some may see American airstrikes against ISIS as a bit of all-too-familiar violent futility](#), I'm not convinced yet.