



## Book Review:

### A Beacon of Hope and Courage: Iraq's Religious Minorities

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Salah Ali

Iraq Religious Freedom and Anti-Discrimination Roundtable



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Book Review:

## **A Beacon of Hope and Courage: Iraq's Religious Minorities**

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In her enlightening and thought-provoking work, “[Religious Minorities in Iraq: Co-existence, Faith, and Recovery after ISIS](#),” Maria Rita Corticelli masterfully shifts the narrative focus from portraying Iraq’s religious minorities solely as victims to illuminating their remarkable resilience and unwavering hope.

This book serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of these communities who have faced unimaginable challenges in the wake of the ISIS onslaught. As someone deeply intrigued by the intricate dynamics of the Middle East, I found this book to be nothing short of a revelation, challenging preconceived notions and offering a nuanced perspective that delves deep into the essence of these communities’ struggles and triumphs.

Corticelli’s narrative stands out from works like William McCants’ “[The ISIS Apo-calyptse](#).” While both provide invaluable insights into post-ISIS Iraq, Corticelli’s work goes above and beyond by humanizing the narrative. She brings to life the stories of individuals whose voices have often been overshadowed by political and historical analyses.

One of the pivotal factors contributing to the survival of these religious communities is their profound connection to the history of Iraq. This deep-rooted tie to their land and culture has been a wellspring of strength and resilience in the face of unimaginable adversity. These communities have not only weathered the storm but have done so with an unshakable commitment to their identity, faith, and heritage. Corticelli paints a vivid picture of their struggles and triumphs, offering a compelling and empathetic narrative.

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However, regrettably, political instability in Iraq and conflicts between various authorities, such as the *Federal Government of Iraq* (FGI) and the *Kurdistan Regional Government* (KRG), have further complicated the situation for these religious and ethnic minority communities. Caught in the crossfire between these authorities, they find themselves increasingly precarious. There is an urgent need for internal support from the government. However, progress has been painstakingly slow, and the government appears reluctant to address these communities' pressing issues.

Nevertheless, Corticelli eloquently argues that for these religious minorities to not only survive but also thrive, they must proactively engage in policy decision-making. She highlights the imperative need for their involvement in shaping the political landscape to secure their rights and protection.

Additionally, the author emphasizes the significance of international support for these communities. She calls for global recognition and assistance, citing Pope Francis' visit to Iraq as a prominent example of international solidarity, particularly for *Christians*. His visit shed light on the atrocities committed by ISIS, providing a platform for their suffering to be acknowledged on a global scale and promoting interfaith dialogue between different religious groups in Iraq.

Furthermore, Corticelli indirectly underlines the pivotal role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the local level. These organizations serve as crucial intermediaries, documenting violations and advocating for these marginalized communities. They bridge the silenced voices of the marginalized and the broader international community, amplifying their concerns and aspirations. Corticelli's exploration of the role of NGOs adds depth to the book, revealing the grassroots efforts that are instrumental in bringing about change and giving a voice to those who have long been unheard of.

This book is not merely a must-read for those interested in Middle Eastern politics or human rights issues; it is essential for anyone seeking to unravel the intricacies of survival and resilience under the harshest circumstances. It transcends the confines of conventional historical and political analysis, touching the core of human endurance and spirit. Through Corticelli's vivid storytelling, readers are transported to the heart of Iraq, where they can witness the unwavering determination of these religious minorities firsthand.

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As I concluded this profoundly thought-provoking journey with Corticelli's work, it left me contemplating the future. In a world where sensational headlines often overshadow human stories, this book is a potent reminder of the vibrancy and strength inherent in Iraq's rich cultural mosaic. It poses a pressing question to the global community: *How will we respond to the ongoing challenges faced by these extraordinarily resilient groups as we move forward?*

This book is not merely recounting events; it skillfully weaves the past and present into a tapestry of hope and survival. It challenges us to look beyond conventional narratives and recognize the enduring spirit of communities that have too often been relegated to the margins of our global consciousness. Moreover, it calls upon us to acknowledge the unique identities of each religious minority group, each marked by its distinct traditions, beliefs, and even internal challenges, such as *Kakais* and *Yazidis*.

In conclusion, *“Religious Minorities in Iraq: Coexistence, Faith, and Recovery after ISIS”* is an indispensable read for anyone seeking a profound understanding of the multifaceted experiences of Iraq's religious minority communities. It not only challenges prevailing narratives but also celebrates their strength and resilience. This book is a clarion call for greater recognition, support, and empathy towards these marginalized groups, ultimately serving as a catalyst for a more inclusive and compassionate future where the diverse voices of all communities in Iraq are not only heard but also respected and cherished.

Corticelli's work reminds us of the power of resilience, faith, and coexistence in a world often marked by division and conflict. It is a testament to the enduring human spirit and the capacity of communities to rebuild and thrive in the face of adversity. Through her meticulous research and empathetic storytelling, she has crafted a book that not only informs but also inspires. It is a tribute to the resilience of Iraq's religious minorities and a call to action for a more inclusive and compassionate world.

## **About CFG**

The Center for Faith, Identity, and Globalization (CFG) is the interdisciplinary research and publication unit of Rumi Forum. CFG contributes to the knowledge and research at the intersection of faith, identity, and globalization by generating academically-informed analyses and facilitating scholarly exchanges. CFG's spectrum of themes will cover contemporary subjects that are relevant to our understanding of the connection between faith, identity, and globalization, such as interfaith engagement, religious nationalism, conflict resolution, globalization, religious freedom, and spirituality.

## **About the Contributor**

Salah Ali is a dynamic professional currently serving as the General Coordinator at the *Iraq Religious Freedom and Anti-Discrimination Roundtable*, and he holds the position of Fellow with the Middle East Action Team at the *Religious Freedom Institute*. Simultaneously, Salah works as an Advisor to the *Minister of Endowment and Religious Affairs* in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, focusing on critical areas such as peacebuilding, re-religious freedom, and fostering peaceful coexistence. Additionally, he co-founded the re-cently established *Middle East and North Africa Platform for Religious Freedom and Coexistence* (MENAP). Committed to academic excellence, Salah is pursuing a Ph.D. in *Politics and International Relations* at Leeds Beckett University, complemented by a Master's degree in *Peace and Development Studies* from the same institution. Further enhancing his professional and academic credentials, Salah holds a certificate in *Politics* from the University of Oxford and a Bachelor of Arts in *International Studies* from The Open University in the UK. Salah Ali's diverse roles, initiatives, and academic pursuits underscore a comprehensive commitment to promoting religious freedom, peace, and coexistence in Iraq and the broader Middle East region.

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when they interact.**



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