

## MORNING PROGRAMME

**10.00 - 10.30 a.m. Registration**

**10.30 a.m. Welcome:**

*Dr. Erica C D Hunter*  
*Head, Dept. of Religions & Philosophies, SOAS*

**10.35 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.**

**(Chair: Dr. Erica C D Hunter)**

The morning session explores the responses of different Christian communities, past and present, to the larger communities in which they are situated.

**10.40 Prof. Mariz Tadros (Sussex)**

*"Copts of Egypt. Coping with ruptures through continuity and contention"*

**11.10 Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian (Oxford)**

*"Precarious citizens. Christian communities in Turkey today"*

**11.40 Dr. Naures Atto (Cambridge)**

*"The role of Suryoyo women during and after the 1915 genocide"*

**12.10 Prof. David Gaunt (Stockholm, Sweden)**

*"What lessons can be drawn from studying the Assyrian Genocide?"*

**12.45 BOOK Launch:**

*"LET THEM NOT RETURN. Sayfo, the genocide against the Assyrian, Syriac and Chaldean Christians in the Ottoman Empire", edited by David Gaunt, Naures Atto & Soner A. Barthoma*

**LUNCH**

**1.00 - 2.00 p.m. light luncheon in the foyer of the Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS**

## AFTERNOON PROGRAMME

The afternoon session continues to investigate the situations of Christian and other non-Muslim communities in the Middle East today, particularly focusing on 'picking up the pieces' after Da'esh.

**2.00 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.**

**(Chair: Dr. Mariz Tadros)**

**2.00 Assyrian Poetry recital by Nineb Lamassu (Cambridge)**

**2.15 Dr. Anthony O'Mahony (Heythrop College, London)**

*"The Eastern Catholic churches in the Middle East: contemporary situation and challenges"*

**2.45 Dr. Erica C D Hunter (SOAS, London)**

*"What after Da'esh? A tale of two cities in Iraq: Christians in Mosul and Basra"*

**3.15 Dr. Shwan Kakai (formerly from Kirkuk)**

*"The Kakai after ISIS"*

**3.45 Dr. Shahnaz Benelmouffok (Constantine, Algeria)**

*"The status of the minorities in Algeria and how religion can contribute to the process of peace building"*

**4.15 Concluding Discussion**



# “Christians across the Crescent” WORKSHOP – SOAS, University of London JULY 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

[TADROS, Mariz \(Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex\)](#)  
*Copts of Egypt: coping with ruptures through continuity and contention.*

The position of the largest religious minority in the Middle East, the Copts, has historically been subject to periods of peaceful co-existence and extreme encroachment. However, this paper will argue that the Copts are entering a new phase of systematic religious targeting that is of a character and intensity distinct from previous eras. While Copts have been for decades subject to institutionalized discrimination by the Egyptian state, insidious targeting by a wide spectrum of Islamist political movements, and some level of societal prejudice, the announcement of ISIS that Copts are its “favourite prey” has implications for the management of sectarianism in Egypt and in the Middle East more broadly. Nonetheless, there are enduring and new forms of resistance and resilience exercised by the community on a collective and individual level which are extremely important for the survival of a community that traces its ancient heritage back thousands of years.

[TCHILINGIRIAN, Hratch \(Oxford\)](#)  
*Precarious Citizens: Christian communities in Turkey today.*

Nearly a century after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, being a Christian in Turkey means going through a continuous process of state-imposed and societal minoritisation in virtually all aspects of communal and individual life. Discrimination and extreme “othering” continue to pose great challenges to Christian communities. This presentation will provide a brief background about the various Christian communities in Turkey today and will discuss some of the key problems facing them.

[ATTO, Naures \(Cambridge\)](#)  
*The role of Suryoye women during and after the 1915 genocide.*

We know very little about the precise role of survivor Suryoye women in the defence of their people, how they managed life, as most of the men were killed and their task to take care of remaining children and other family members became more necessary. In my paper, I will try to say something about their role as survivors and their role as victims, specifically from a gender perspective.

Of the few written sources that have reached us about the Sayfo in Syriac, all are written by male authors. Of the oral sources that we have, Suryoye eyewitness accounts that have been recorded are mostly those of male survivors. This paper is based on the following sources: Abdulmasih Qarabashi’s *Dmo Zliho* (Shed Blood, 1997); Sleyman Henno’s *Gunhe d Suryoye d Tur Abdin* (Catastrophies of the Suryoye in Tur Abdin, 1987); Jan Betsawoce’s recorded oral accounts of first and second generation Suryoye Sayfo survivors, published in Gaunt 2006; Julius J. Cicek’s *Mimre d’al Sayfe* (poems about Swords, 1981).

[GAUNT, David \(Stockholm University, Sweden\)](#)  
*What lessons can be drawn from studying the Assyrian Genocide?*

Scholars do research on genocide and mass violence to understand what background factors influence a government to decide on a course of eradicating ethnic and religious minorities. Some interpretations are psychological having to do with how innate cruelty can be mobilized against a target population. Other interpretations look at the “dark side” of modernization and its apparent need to unify the population base. Still further scholars emphasize social and economic factors. This presentation will attempt to put the Assyrian genocide during World War I into the context of comparative genocide studies. It will raise the question are there any specific lessons that can be drawn from this terrible event.

[O’MAHONY, Antony \(Heythrop College, London\)](#)  
*The Eastern Catholic churches in the Middle East: contemporary situation and challenges.*

Eastern Catholicism in the Middle East is a complex religious, political, ecclesial and cultural reality. The Eastern Catholic families of churches, as with their Oriental and Eastern Orthodox counterparts, represent an extremely complex ecclesiology, which, however broadly, reflects that of their sister-churches of the same rite and tradition, each denomination of which it mirrors. There are seven Eastern Catholic patriarchal churches (statistics 2016): Latin (in Israel 27 500, including about 500 Hebrew speaking Catholics - plus 50,000 Migrant workers; Palestinian territories circa 20,000; Jordan – 50,000, plus 35,000 Foreign workers and a number of Iraqi Catholic refugees); Maronite (3,537,690); Melkite [Greek Catholic] (1,522,802), Syrian (205,440); Armenian (736,134); Coptic (174,902) and Chaldean (640,828). Eastern Catholics in numbers are far from negligible, approximately three million across the Middle East, or approximately a fifth of Middle East Christians. However, this excludes the many millions of Catholics who live and work in the Arabian Gulf states and migrant workers across the region – who often work in challenging and for the church pastorally difficult circumstances. The Chaldean Catholic Church is the largest denomination in Iraq; this is also true for the Maronite Church in Lebanon; and for the Melkite [Greek Catholics] in Israel who number circa 90,000-100,00. All

these churches have very large diaspora communities – with displacement due to recent conflict this reality will almost certainly be permanent. The Conflicts in Iraq and Syria have been devastating for the Eastern Catholic communities; which continues to put pressure on wider religious and political settlement in Lebanon. This paper seeks to give modern historical account, describe context religious, social, cultural and political context; plus some reflections on the challenge situation and possible futures.

[HUNTER, Erica C D \(SOAS, London\)](#)

*A tale of two cities in Iraq: Christians in Mosul and Basra.*

The imminent removal of Da'esh from Mosul by the Iraqi army, raises the possibility of the return of the Christian population to this ancient city, following their expulsion in 2014. Various options are explored, especially the viability of 'integration' or 'separation' of the Christians and how this might be achieved. In considering the future of Christians in northern Iraq, i.e. Mosul and the Nineveh plains, the paper draws attention to the status and situation of Christian communities in Basra and southern Iraq, noting the strategies that are being currently being implemented.

[KAKAI, Shwan \(formerly from Kirkuk\)](#)

*The Kakai after ISIS.*

The paper introduces the Kakai, one of Iraq's least known communities, explaining its beliefs and traditions before moving on to explore the following topics:

- The Kakai under the American occupation 2003
- The Kakai during ISIS' attack on Iraq
- Young people and facing discrimination
- Publications about the Kakai
- The current situation and the future of the Kakai
- Suggestions and recommendations

[BENELMOUFFOK, Shahnez \(Constantine, Algeria\)](#)

*The status of the minorities in Algeria and how religion can contribute to the process of peace building.*

The paper sheds light on the status of the minorities in Algeria, exploring their roots, identification as well as their rights within the political state.

In particular it will discuss:

- the nature of the relationship between The Christian and Jewish minorities in Algeria

- the ability of Christians and Jews to practice their faith without government interference
- the status of Women, including non-Muslim women
- the repression of Berber culture and language rights

The aim is to explore the role of the religions in the development of peace by countering and preventing all aspects of violence leading to radicalization, exploring both the causes and the sociopolitical dimensions.