

Yazidis quietly celebrate Jama Feast

Religious celebrations curtailed this year for the ancient Yazidi religion.

Due to security reasons, Iraqi Yazidis begin celebration of their religious Jama feast without holding traditional ceremonies or parties.

Head of the high spiritual council of the Yazidi religion in northern Iraq, Baba Sheikh, said that Yazidis will celebrate the great feast, which began Sunday, without ceremonies as a precautionary measure following the terrorist attacks there two months ago.

"Because of the last event in Sinjar, there will be no parties during the Jama feast, which is our great feast. It started on Sunday and continues for four days. Only the religious ceremonies will be carried out," said Baba Sheikh.

Areas belonging to Sinjar town 129 kilometers northwest of Mosul, which are inhabited by Yazidi people, were hit by four car bombs and mortar shelling at the beginning of last August. The attacks killed and wounded over 800 people.

Before that, 22 Yazidi workers were murdered by insurgents in Mosul city, and thousands of others quit their jobs in Mosul and Baghdad to return home after receiving threats.

Ido Khalaf, 53, was displeased that the Jama



Yazidi girls in white dresses sit during Jama Feast ceremony at Lalish Temple, south of Duhok, October 11, 2006.

feast ceremonies were canceled, saying the ceremony should have been held the same as other religious ceremonies in Iraq. "I don't know... why the religious authority (the Yazidi Spiritual Council) and the government don't just take precautions and hold this feast, which is the greatest and most important," said Khalaf. He had hired a taxi to bring

him and his family to Lalish temple.

Jama is celebrated every year between October 6-12 at Lalish temple, 60 kilometers north of Mosul.

"I was surprised when the ceremonies were canceled; but I and my family will visit Lalish as we do every year," he added.

The feast seemed unimportant for Shivan Ali Hasso, 28, who said, "The

feast is not important to us anymore as our conditions in the areas near Mosul are getting worse because of the related authorities' neglect."

The real feast for Shivan is "to be sure and comfortable and safe when you work." He was fired from his job in Mosul after threats were directed to the Yazidi people there. Tensions rose

last April when conflicts between Sunni Muslims and Yazidis flared over an honor killing.

During one of the four Yazidi religious feasts and over the six days of Jama, Yazidis visit the Lalish temple, take part in chants, special dances, and other ceremonies.

Yazidi is an ancient religion. According to some estimates, there are

approximately 800,000 Yazidis in the world. Nearly 550,000 of them live in Iraq, mostly in Sinjar, Shekhan town, Ba'shiqa district, Al-Qush, and other areas in Duhok and Mosul provinces.

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Kurdistan is an economic sanctuary

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Dario RIVOLTA was born in Dezyo city north of Italy in 1952. He graduated from the college of political scientists, at the age of 32 and went to Algeria, where he became an administrator of an international company.

He became member of Trans Atlantic Dialogue in 1989, holding an office in New York, and became president of Italian chamber of commerce (fecam-est) in 1992.

In the spring of 2001, he was put in charge of the Italian-Lebanon organization.

He was elected as member of Italian parliament in 2003, and in 2004, became head of foreign political affairs of the Forza Italia Party, led by Berlusconi. He is deputy of the Italian Parliament of foreign commission.

Q) Honourable Rivolta,

today Kurdistan of Iraq is the only quiet and safe zone compared to the rest of the country that is continually bombarded by terrorist attacks, car bombs and kamikazees.

How do you find Kurdistan now, compared to your last journey here?

A) Every time I return to Erbil, I find changes both in the number of the constructions and in the comprehensive architecture of the city. But the most important thing is for more business to ferment in the city.

Q) Honourable, what is your impression of the meeting between president Barzani, especially with regard to the rule that Barzani had in the pacification between Shiites and Sunnites?

A) President Barzani is a wise and sensible person and he is far-sighted. I believe that these qualities have been very appreciated by his interlocutors, who, obviously, have trusted his

ideas.

Q) Finally, Italian industrialists have noticed the flourishing business in Kurdistan. The presence of 80 Italian firms was a very important consideration. In your opinion, will the Italian presence be a continuing part of the development of Kurdistan?

A) I have talked with Italian exhibitors present at Italia Export in Erbil and they have been satisfied with the kind of business connection established and it was clear they will stay both in relation with the Kurdish Region and return to the next fair's edition as well.

D) Honourable, the Iranian's bombings of the Kurdish villages of Iraq have been a clear violation of International law, but the Europe Union limited itself to a vague protest. In your opinion, should the EU have a specific position to protect Kurdistan -- the only healthy part of Iraq?

A) The violation of the Ira-

nian air space with bombings is, clearly, against the International law. I do believe that ONU is the right place for the formal complaint of Iranian Government. This is in addition to the formal diplomatic protest already advanced from Baghdad to Teheran. The difficult situation of the entire Iraq and the interference that the Government of Teheran could have and are having in the south of the Country pass unnoticed to no one.

The international and European as well contentious business is under everyone's eyes and it is not limited to a simple violation of the International law. Europe is still looking for the existence of a contractual solutions. Within the context of this relation, the bombings to the Kurdish border zone are the umpteenth sign of the difficulty in finding specific solutions to a crisis more and more dangerous.



Dario RIVOLTA