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Islamic State Claims Baghdad Bombings
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Islamic State Claims Baghdad Bombings

By RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq

July 20, 2014

The Islamic State extremist group has claimed responsibility for a series of car bombings in mainly Shi'ite neighborhoods of Baghdad that killed at least 27 people.

The group, formerly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), said in a statement late on July 19 that its fighters were behind suicide and car-bomb attacks in Baghdad earlier that day.

In related news, Iraqi Christians have been fleeing the northern city of Mosul after Islamic State militants threatened to kill them unless they convert or pay a special tax.

Hundreds of Christian families reportedly fled their homes in Mosul before an ultimatum by the Islamic State expired at noon on July 19.

Speaking by phone from Mosul on July 19, RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq correspondent said "virtually no Christians" remained in the city.

The militants, in messages broadcast from mosques, had said that if Christians do not abide by their conditions, there would be "nothing for them but the sword."

Residents said militants had been seen tagging the homes of Christians with the letter N for "Nassarrah," a term used for Christians in the Koran.

ISIL issued a similar ultimatum to residents of the Syrian city of Raqqa in February, calling on Christians to pay 14 grams of pure gold in exchange for their safety.

With reporting by AFP, AP, Reuters, alarabiya.net, and the BBC

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