SIMELE MASSACRE

Commemorative symbol of the massacre

The Assyrian text says "August," while the number seven holds a special philosophical significance in Assyrian religious practice

In 1932, Iraq received independence under King Feisal. Under their spiritual leader Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII, the Assyrians demanded autonomy, which in fact had been promised by the Allies after WWI, within the new state. Assyrian soldiers theretofore in British service began to form a militia. In June 1933, Mar Shimun arrived in Baghdad for negotiations, upon which he was detained and exiled to Cyprus. Many Assyrians wanted to leave Iraq, but there was no place to go. In early 1933, a group of Assyrian who had been denied asylum in Syria crossed the border back into Iraq. The vast majority were unarmed, but the Iraqi government sent troops to attack them, during which there were casualties on both sides. In partial consequence, troops were dispatched to the northern part of the country, where most of its Assyrians lived.

In early August 1933, Iraqi troops began an assault on Assyrian settlements in the area of Dohuk and Mosul. The soldiers committed terrible atrocities against unarmed men, women, and children. Sixty-three Assyrian villages were destroyed, at the cost of some three thousand lives. Thousands of refugees fled into neighboring countries.

> "I saw and heard many horrible things in the Great War, but what I saw in Simel is beyond human imagination."
>
> —From a secret report of a British eye witness in the service of the Iraqi government, 1933

Area in Iraq affected by the massacre and destruction

The 1933 Simele Massacre

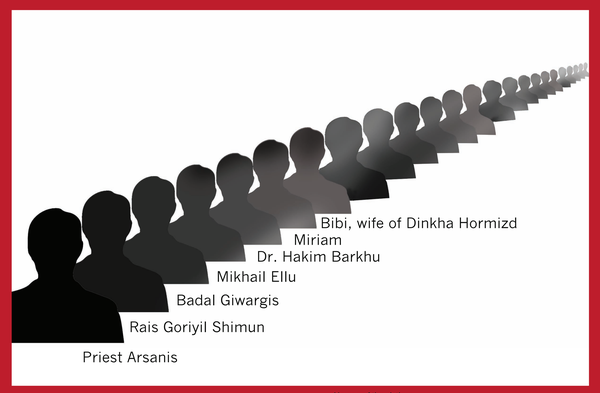
There are no photographs of the massacre, but this recent painting expresses the tragedy.

List of targeted villages [10]

Ala Keena	Bameri	Betershy	Dairke	Gond Naze	Kaserezden	Korekavana	Majel Makhte	Sirchuri
Aloka	Barcawra	Betafrey	Dair Kishnik	Harkonda	Kerry	Kowashey	Rabibyia	Shekhidra
Badalliya	Baroshkey	Bidari	Derjendy	Idleb	Kitba	Lazga	Rekawa	Spendarook
Baderden	Basorik	Biswaya	Fishkhabour	Kaberto	Khalata	Mansouriya	Sar Shorey	Tal Zet
Bagerey	Bastikey	Carbeli	Garvaly	Karpel	Kharab Koli	Mawani	Sezary	Tel Khish
Bakhitmey	Benaringee	Chem Jehaney	Gereban	Karshen	Kharsheniya	Qasr Yazdin	Sidzari	Zeniyat

Assyrian villages devastated by the Iraqi army

Up to sixty-five Assyrian villages were assaulted, the majority reduced to rubble.



Names of the victims

About 3,000 Assyrians were killed in the massacre.
Some can be identified by name, others remain anonymous.

No photographs survive.

A group of refugees awaiting transfer via airplane from Mosul to Hinaidi Military Camp, near Baghdad, immediately after the massacre, August 1933.

Credit: Courtesy of Frederick Aprim

Refugees boarding an airplane

Credit: Courtesy of Frederick Aprim

"Men, women, and children were massacred wholesale most barbarously by rifle, pistol and machine gun fire. Groups of Assyrians were tied up with ropes and shot down by regular and irregular troops... Priests were killed and their bodies mutilated. Assyrian women were violated and killed. Holy books were destroyed and Assyrian villages set on fire. Assyrian children clinging to their parents who were being driven to slaughter were shot dead. Pregnant women had their wombs cut open and their babies destroyed..."

Eshai Shimun
Catholicos of the Assyrians
Nicosia, Cyprus, September 20th, 1933

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII in 1933

Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII (1908–1975) was the spiritual and political leader of the Assyrian victims. He was deported to Cyprus for publicizing the atrocities.

> "Kurds and Arabs, on whom the government putting the blame for the killing of the Assyrians, have saved hundreds of women and children from the Iraqi Army"
>
> —American resident of Mosul, 1933