society for threatened peoples

MANDAEANS IN IRAQ

After centuries of persecution - Today their very survival is threatened

A Memoranda of the Society for Threatened Peoples

Society for Threatened Peoples

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION with consultative status with the UNITED NATIONS and with participatory status with the COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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INTRODUCTION

Small religious minorities in Iraq subjected to discrimination and intimidation under the regime of Saddam Hussein have not escaped persecution since his fall from power. The radicalisation of sections of the Muslim population has led to an increase in attacks on minorities such as the Mandaeans who are considered "unclean". Christians, Jews, Baha'i and Yezidi also feel insecure and afraid in the face of religious discrimination.

Mandaeism is the oldest surviving gnostic religion (from the Greek *gnosis*, meaning knowledge). The religion's precise date of origin is still disputed by religious academics. John the Baptist (*Jahia* or *Jehana* in Mandaean) is a central figure in the Mandaean religion. He is the religion's prophet. However the religion itself predates the person of John the Baptist. It has a very similar creation story to the Judaeo-Christian one, identifying Adam and Eve as the first man and woman. One of its most important rites is baptism.

Some Mandaeans in exile, concerned for the Mandaean community in Iraq, have approached Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (GfbV) / Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) seeking assistance. There are large Mandaean communities in Sweden, Australia, the USA and Canada. The situation of the approximately 800 Iraqi Mandaeans living in Germany is not secure. Most were granted the status of refugees fleeing political persecution during the 1990s but proceedings are now under way to have that status revoked. No Mandaeans have as yet been sent back to Iraq but deportations have only been temporarily deferred and there is no prospect of a secure future for themselves and their children. There are approximately 10,000 Mandaeans in Iran suffering persecution under the regime of the new President Mahmoud Ahmedinedjad. This Briefing Paper aims to shed light on the origins of the Mandaeans, their religion and their present circumstances and sketch out some prospects for the future.

During 2005 the position of the Mandaeans in Iraq deteriorated with rising numbers of murders, rapes and abductions. In January 2006 GfbV / STP asked the President of the Association of Mandaeans in Germany to travel to Syria, where many of the Iraqi Mandaeans have sought refuge, to investigate the reasons why they left Iraq and their situation in the host country of Syria. His findings are set out in Section 1.3 along with documentary evidence of crimes perpetrated against the Mandaeans .

1. THE MANDAEANS TODAY

1.1. Numbers

Estimates of the size of the Mandaean community vary considerably. Dr Qais Saidi[1], President of the Association of Mandaeans, reckons the number of believers worldwide to be approximately 60,000. The majority live in Iraq, mostly in the major cities such as Baghdad, Basra, Amara and Nasiriya, and there is another large group in Southern Iran. During the 1970s Dr. Sabih Al-Sohairy[2], Professor of Semitic Studies at the University of Baghdad and a specialist in Mandaean Studies, estimated that there were approximately 30,000 Mandaeans in Iraq, approximately 0.015% of the total Iraqi population at the time and a figure consistent with Saidi's figuire. Dr Saidi estimates the number of Mandaeans in Iran at 10,000. The approximately 20,000 Mandaeans in the diaspora, according to his calculations, have settled mainly in Western Europe, from Germany to Norway, and in Australia, the USA, Canada and New Zealand.

1.2. The situation in Iraq today

Since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 the Mandaeans have found their lives increasingly at risk. The number of killings, rapes, incidents of public humiliation, abductions and forcible conversions is on the increase.

The rape of a Mandaean woman goes unpunished in Iraq because of the predominantly held Islamic belief that this act constitutes the purification of an unbeliever and is not unlawful. Because of this victims have no hope of obtaining justice in Iraq.

Mandaeans are increasingly discriminated against and harassed, through arbitrary dismissal, expropriation, arrest, exclusion from government jobs and other forms of discriminatory treatment.

Women are forced to wear headscarves. During the recent Iraq War young men were conscripted and forced to serve in the armed forces even though their religion very strictly forbids the taking of life.

Mandaeans not infrequently find themselves forced to deny their religion and traditions, a very grave sin according to their faith. They are converting "voluntarily" to Islam and assuming Muslim names out of a fear of persecution and humiliation. Anyone who will not convert voluntarily is forced to. In 2003 the Shi'ite leader and jurist Ayatollah Al-Hakeem issued a ruling on his website that Mandaeans should be forced to convert to Islam or else killed.

The stirring-up of anti-Mandaean feeling among the Muslim population has encouraged further outrages against Mandaeans:

On 2 July 2005 Hadeel Samir Aodaa was kidnapped and raped numerous times by a group of men who had been harassing and tormenting her. According to the medical report issued by the hospital "She has suffered traumatic injury, with lesions of the abdomen and back, cuts, scratches and other injuries to the vagina and second-degree burns on the left leg." In the period leading up to the crime Hadeel Samir Aodaa had been subjected to a campaign of intimidation, receiving numerous telephone threats and threatening letters. She was attacked while out walking in a public place. The April 2005 issue of the US magazine "Christianity Today" carried an article on rapes of Mandaean women. "Armed individuals attack Mandaeans without fear of punishment. They kidnap Mandaean women and girls in particular", stated 23-year-old Shayma, herself the victim of abduction and rape. She was seized on her way to the shops in the Baghdad neighbourhood of Zayoona. She was taken out into the countryside to a place where she was repeatedly raped and tortured over a period of eight days. Her kidnappers demanded a ransom of 10,000 US dollars. "While they were abusing me, they kept shouting, "You are an unbeliever! Your life and everything you own belongs to us!", Shayma reported.

On 22.7.2005 Rawdha Salomi Abdullah (53) was abducted and murdered. In his statement to the police her brother declared that "On Friday 22.7.2005 my sister was kidnapped by persons unknown. The people responsible phoned me and told me they were holding my sister. We arranged that on the 27th of July I would bring the ransom money to a square near where I live. They took the money and told me to come back for my sister in one hour's time. It was 7:30 am. I waited an hour and then went back. I found the body of my sister Rawdha". According to the autopsy report, "The body of the victim was riddled with bullets. There were at least five gunshot wounds. The calibre of weapon used was 9 mm".

Moaayad Ibrahim Mehsen was murdered on 18.4.2005. On 6.7.2005 Khalil A. Khalil, a jeweller, was kidnapped from his premises of his business in Al-Rosyeen street. His kidnappers were armed and wore masks. They stole his jewellery along with the cash that he kept. After they kidnapped him they tortured him. When he was freed he needed medical attention. According to the doctor's certificate, "Khalil A. Khalil has attended my clinic. He has cuts and bruises and was bleeding from injuries to various parts of his body including the back, hands and legs. He has suffered very serious injuries".

On 10.8.2005 Nwar Menim Mohy (15) was shot dead. On 14.8.2005 Tareq Kh. Mohi was killed in Ramadi, approximately 100km from Baghdad. His body was found on 19.8.2005. His daughter Zena Tareq Kh. Mohi had been "disappeared" on 11.7.2004. Tareq Al-Khamesi was killed on 19.8.2005. That same day the 15-year-old Nwar Al-Khamesi was also killed.

Other victims:
Mohaned Naseem Hammady Al-Ashi, murdered on 3.6.2005 in Baghdad
Haithem MahdiSalih Gailan, murdered on 2.7.2005 in Baghdad
Mowafq Khayad Jaber and his son, abducted on 6.7.2005 in Baghdad
Khaled Walid Tajeh, abducted on 6.7.2005 in Baghdad
Riad Dakhil Hamady, murdered on 7.7.2005 in Basra
Samer Said Wadi, murdered on 12.7.2005 in Fallujah
Mazin Hameed Al-Saifi, murdered on 27.7.2005 in Fallujah
Khaled Liewas Al-Bisharah, abducted on 3.8.2005 in Baghdad

There are many reports of Mandaeans receiving threatening letters or telephone calls telling them to change their religion - in other words convert to Islam - or else leave the country. By January 2006 approximately 1,000 families were reported to have fled to Syria or Jordan. On 20.9.2005 the British BBC news service carried a report on the situation of the Mandaeans under the title "Iraq chaos threatens ancient faith". After Ibtisam Sabah Habib, the head of the family, was killed by Iraqi extremists and the family's valuables were stolen, the rest of the family of fled to Syria, the BBC reported. The report quoted from the text of a leaflet distributed to to Mandaean and Christian households, "Either you adopt Islam and live among us in observance or you leave our country and stop making a mockery of our values. Otherwise the sword of justice that distinguishes belief from blasphemy will separate us". According to the BBC, who have identified numerous other instances of Mandaeans being tortured and murdered, there are only 13,000 Mandaeans still left in Iraq.

Based on its own investigations GfbV / STP is not convinced by the suggestion that Northern Iraq offers an alternative place of refuge for the Mandaeans and has concluded that there is no alternative for them at present but to leave the country. There are two main reasons. In recent months there have been clashes between Kurds and Arabs seeking to establish control in different localities and regions of Northern Iraq. There is no reason to assume that the Kurds will afford members of particular Iraqi faith groups special treatment and the probability is that they would simply see the Mandaeans, who are in any case one of the smallest minority groups, as Arabs and treat them with hostility. Secondly although the security situation in Northern Iraq is better than in other parts of Iraq, it is not that much more secure as to offer rejected asylum-seekers the prospect of building a new life there without fear of physical danger. Moreover the Kurdish provinces are already struggling to cope with the influx of tens of thousands of Christians fleeing Southern Iraq.

"The dirty unbeliever is being consumed by fire", Muslim men shouted as they burned a seven-year-old Mandaean boy alive (SMAA[3]) after Saddam's overthrow in 2003. Karam Majeed, who has set up an organisation for the protection of Mandaean culture, argues that the threat of violence is very serious. In an Islamic country when the followers of a religion are described as "unclean" that anyone associated with that religion is considered to fall outside the protection of the law. Muslims can undertake the public killing of a Mandaean and see themselves not as having committed a crime but as having acted with justification.

SMAA reports a horrific incident that took place in Hay Al-Shurta, a suburb of Baghdad, on 20 December 2003 when Rafid Al-Khamisy was urged by Muslims to abjure his religion and convert to Islam. When he refused he was killed by his Muslim fellow citizens, in full public view.

SMAA also reports that 35 families underwent forcible conversion in Fallujah in January 2004. The women and children suffered the worst consequences. According to Dr Erica Hunter of the University of Melbourne, Australia, whose specialist fields of research include Mandaeism, they were taken from their their families to live with men they did not know and forced to practice another religion. Similar abductions of women tantamount to forcible conversion are frequent according to Dr Hunter.

Hunter also reports Mandaean couples being forced to divorce and then marry Muslim partners. When a person is required to convert to Islam, whether voluntarily or under threat of violence, this is an irreversible step. In an Islamic country to attempt to unconvert is to risk your life.

1.3. Findings of Dr. Saidi Qais's visit to Syria, 3-26.1.2006

The purpose of this visit was to obtain a general impression of the situation facing the Mandaeans in Iraq and the refugees in Syria. A questionnaire consisting of 17 separate questions was completed by 85 individual respondents - 11 women and 74 men. The age distribution of interviewees was as follows: seven aged 20-30 years, 19 aged 30-40 years, 23 aged 40-50 years and 36 aged over 50 years. In terms of educational background 21 had completed secondary school, 32 had attended an institute and 32 had received a technical college- or university-level education. The majority of interviewees were employed as teachers, engineers, doctors, goldsmiths, traders and shopkeepers. 10 had left Iraq in 2003, 35 in 2004 and 40 in 2005. 72 lived in Baghdad before leaving the country, two were from the town of Wasit, one from Missan, two from Karkook , four from Faloge , three from Diqar and two from Basra. All said that they had personally been victims of violence or members of their own families had been subject to attacks and arbitrary acts of violence. More specifically they reported their experience of killings, rapes, forcible conversion to Islam, abductions and the looting of their shops. They had been denied employment and had suffered discrimination on the basis of their religious affiliation.

Women in particular had been forced to dress in accordance with Islamic custom. Children in schools had been forced to attend Islamic religious education classes. After being granted refugee status in Syria only three of the interviewees had received any welfare assistance. Six of the interviewees were asylum seekers, nine had refugee status, 43 had temporary residence permits and 27 were living illegally in Syria.

The refugees' humanitarian situation gave cause for concern. All of the interviewees were unemployed. They had no access to medical care as they could not afford the relatively modest cost of treatment or pay for the medication they required. The situation was particularly difficult for anyone suffering from a major illness, including a number of cancer patients.

Many of the children of the interviewees (52) were not attending school as there was no money to pay for school uniforms or educational materials, and they were also afraid of being forced to attend Islamic religious instruction classes in Syria. When asked about their religious practices, the Mandaeans reported problems performing their baptismal ceremony because they did not have the running water needed for the ceremony. They were particularly concerned that they were unable to bury their dead in accordance with the prescribed rites. They even tried to take their dead back to Iraq in order to bury them at home or to get permission from Christians to bury them in Christian cemeteries.

The Mandaean refugees had sought refuge mainly in areas of Syria and neighbourhoods of the capital Damascus where Christians live and where they were unlikely to face persecution. When asked how they saw the future - in other words did they want to stay in Syria, return home to Iraq or move on to a third country, only one of the refugees said that he wanted to return home to Iraq. The rest said that they wanted to move somewhere else where they could live in peace and security. It was this question more than any other that revealed the desperate nature of the situation they found themselves in. As far as the Mandaeans are concerned the insecurity and unfamiliarity of a life in exile and permanent separation from their homeland is preferable to going back to Iraq or remaining in Syria or Jordan.

Mr Saidi's report concludes with the warning that although the Mandaeans have survived for hundreds of years they fear that this century may be their last. Academics interested in the Mandaeans already to some extent treat them as a subject of historic study and do very little to help save a small faith community. This small minority group of 60,000 people with a completely peaceful history, who speak Aramaic and have their own alphabet, whose last prophet is John the Baptist, the same John who according to the Bible baptised Jesus in the Jordan, faces the prospect of extinction unless they receive help.

1.4. Outlook

What would happen if the USA, Great Britain and their allies withdrew their troops from Iraq and left the threatened minorities to their fate? In 2003 American soldiers were advising Mandaeans to leave Iraq as soon as possible and seek refuge abroad. The World Evangelical Alliance says that it was told that the occupying forces were not in a position to guarantee Mandaeans and Christians protection.

As a result many Mandaeans have now left. As the following events in Iraq through the media they remain pessimistic. It is impossible for the time being for them to go home. The risk is too great. The Mandaeans in exile are now trying to integrate. Their children are learning the language of the host country and attending local schools. Nevertheless they are still trying to keep their religion alive. Prof. Kurt Rudolph reports that Mandaean priests in among other countries England, the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia and North America are now helping Mandaean exile communities maintain their religious traditions.

In addition Mandaean texts are being translated and a Mandaean magazine is being published in the Netherlands, Britain and Iraq. The Mandaeans are also using the internet and have their own dedicated websites[4] where there are forums which they can use to keep in touch with one another and strengthen the bonds that keep their community together. A Special Committee for the Protection of Mandaeans has been set up in Syria and Jordan.

Dr. Saidi believes that the small faith community has a future again now that Mandaeans can once again talk and learn about their religion. They are doing as much as they can to preserve their thousand-year-old religion. All the same according to Prof. Alsohairy many Mandaeans are convinced that they need outside support to keep their faith community alive.

1.5. Demands

Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker / Society for Threatened Peoples calls on

- churches and religious aid agencies to provide humanitarian assistance to Mandaean refugees in Syria and Jordan.
- the Iraqi government to take steps to protect the members of religious minority communities in Iraq, the Mandaeans in particular, and to end the extensive impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of crimes against Mandaeans.
- the German Federal Government to accept a quota of Mandaean refugees in Germany.
- the governments of Germany's neighbour states likewise to accept quotas of Mandaean refugees
- the German Federal Government to guarantee Mandaeans in Germany the right of residence.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Mandaeism

The Mandaeans, or Sabians ("The Baptised" in Aramaic Mandaean) as they are referred to by Muslims, are followers of a religion whose temporal and geographical origins are still disputed by students of the so-called "Mandaean question". Some religious historians such as Prof. Kurt Rudolph, drawing on evidence from Babylonian, Persian and Islamic sources, maintain that the history of the Mandaeans can be traced back as far as the 3rd century AD. Other historians take the creation story of gnosticism as their reference point and date the origin of Mandaeism back to the start of the Christian era.

Religious academics suspect that the Mandaeans may originally have come from Palestine. During the first quarter of the 1st century AD they moved to the town of Harran in Syria to escape persecution and harassment. The hostility of local Christians and later the Islamic community forced them to move on to the area south of Babylon where they settled in the poorly-drained marshlands of Southern Iraq, where many Mandaeans still live even today. Other researchers cite Sumerian and Babylonian rituals referred to in the Mandaean holy texts in support of their argument that the Mandaeans have their origins in Mesopotamia, in the area around the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

Mandaeism is the oldest existing gnostic religion (from the Greek *gnosis*, signifying awareness or knowledge), although this is also disputed by some religious academics. The Mandaean view of the universe is based on a gnostic dualism that sees the world as existing on two separate levels. Humankind inhabits a world ruled by darkness from which each individual departs when they die and from which all souls, after passing through a series of portals guarded by sentinels of the underworld, will eventually pass on into the world of light. The Mandaeans believe that an emissary will come to lead all souls out of the world of darkness and into the light, heralding the end of the world. The world of darkness will disappear leaving only the world of light and the time of suffering and pain will be over.

The creation story of the Mandaeans is very similar to that of the Judaeo-Christians. Both faiths identify Adam and Eve as the first human couple. However Mandaeans believe that Eve came into existence not in an act of creation using Adam's rib but as a gift from the world of light to Adam. This may be the origin of women's equal status within the Mandaean community. For example a child is given its mother's surname. In the past the Mandaeans had women priests. Mandaeism is a monotheistic religion. Centuries of Persian rule have left their mark on Mandaeism. Nevertheless, according to Kurt Rudolph, it remains a separate religion.

The Sacred Text of the Mandaeans is the *Sidra Rabba*, also known as the *Ginza* ("The Treasure"), translated into German in 1925 by Mark Lidzbarski[6]. This consists of two parts, the religious teachings and myths comprising the "Right Ginza" while the holy texts and full instructions for the conduct of the traditional rituals are contained in the "Left Ginza".

Along with burial and the funeral rites, the ceremony of baptism has a central role in Mandaean religion. Baptism is not a sacrament performed once in a lifetime as in Christianity but can take place every week. The Mandaeans believe that during baptism, known as *Masbútá*, they are very close to the world of light. Baptism can only be carried out on Sundays, during daytime, and it is only during the feast of *Panga* that it can take place on other days. Mandaeans believe that through the ritual of baptism by immersion sins are forgiven, sickness cured and demons expelled. To purify the body after menstruation and following sexual intercourse *Tamasha*, a baptism by immersion performed without the intervention of a priest, is carried out. The Mandaean baptism is traditionally performed in flowing water (*Jerdena*, or Jordan). Dressed in a white garment consisting of seven pieces of cloth the believer is led by the priest wearing a similar garment made of nine pieces of cloth into the water and baptised by immersion. Mandaeans believe that life stops for a brief moment before starting again fresh and new after the baptism. Prayer, fasting and caring for other people are other important tenets of the religion.

Masbútá is important because together with the requiem mass it is a prerequisite for the salvation of the soul. Baptism is therefore of crucial significance and unbaptised children are not considered to be part of the Mandaean faith community.

Mandaeism is not a proselytising religion. There is no law prohibiting members of this faith community from converting to another religion or preventing members of other religions from converting to Mandaeism. However marriage or forced marriage to someone of a different faith or forcible conversion results in a Mandaean losing their membership of the faith community.

2.2. Centuries of persecution

Over the course of their history the Mandaeans have often suffered persecution by Muslims and been driven from their places of settlement. Unlike Christians and Jews Mandaeans are not considered by Muslims to belong to the Religions of the Book to which the Qur'an refers and are not considered to come under the protection of Islam. Their religion is not respected by Christians either. Portuguese missionaries attempted to resettle the Mandaean community from Iraq to Muscat, Goa or Ceylon, where it was thought they might more easily be converted to Catholicism (see Lupieri, "The Mandaeans", pp. 85 *et seq.*).

After Saddam Hussein assumed power in 1979 the Mandaeans faced increased hostility. Between 1991 and 1993 Mandaeans living in the low-lying marshlands in the south of Iraq were the target of another campaign of extermination. The government of Saddam Hussein took harsh and brutal action against the population of the

marshlands between Basra, Amara and Nasiriya. The Marsh Arabs, who had lived in the marshlands for 5,000 years, were specifically targeted. Following the armed uprising of Shi'ites after the 2nd [*sic*] Gulf War in 1991 many insurgents and deserters fled to this remote region, 150,000 km in area. Saddam Hussein used this as an excuse to destroy the region and its inhabitants. He drained the marshlands. The Marsh Arabs are Shi'ites, like the majority of the Iraqi population, and suffered very severe repression during the 1970s and 1980s. The area's geographical proximity to Iran meant that they were also seen as constituting a potential threat to security. The draining, clearance and wholesale destruction of the marshlands affected the Mandaeans as well. Many were killed and the Mandaean community in the marshlands was reduced from 5,000-7,000 to 1,000-2,000. The centres of their culture were destroyed and they were forced to abandon the place where they have lived since at least the 5th century. The survivors fled to the major cities and towns of Iraq such as Baghdad.

2.3. Changing religious practices

Since October 2003 Mandaeans living in Sweden have been able to worship publicly. Without government assistance Mandaeans have built themselves a temple where they are now able to perform the traditional baptismal rites in running water.

The construction of this temple has brought the Mandaeans new hope. In the diaspora in particular they have been unable to perform the traditional rites in their new circumstances. Over the past few decades it has become much harder to practice their faith. Traditions have decayed and ritual practices been abandoned in modern industrial society.

Dr. Qais Saidi describes how this has affected the Mandaeans in Germany. Baptism in running water is celebrated only occasionally, for example in May 2004 in the Rhine at Mannheim. They are unable to follow the example of their Swedish co-religionists because they lack the necessary financial resources. Geographical circumstances have meant that in Iraq and Iran and in exile as well the use of showers in private homes to perform baptism has become accepted.

Prof. Sabih Al-Sohairy reports that young people from Baghdad and Basra have objected to baptism by immersion in "Jordan" on hygienic grounds, preferring to use a font.

The strict dietary requirements have also changed. In the past only sheep and poultry were killed and eaten because all other animals were considered unclean. Special ritual observances, such as the baptism of the sacrificial animal and the rule that only a priest (*Halali*) should perform this procedure, are often ignored or forgotten. Al-Sohairy reports that young Mandaeans no longer restrict themselves to eating ritually slaughtered meat but slaughter their own animals, purchase meat in the market and even eat in restaurants (see Sabih Al-Sohairy: *Die irakischen Mandaeans in der Gegenwart*, ["The Iraqi Mandaeans Today"], Hamburg 1975).

Another problem is the threat to the continued existence of the Mandaean priesthood. Many Mandaean priests died in two serious cholera epidemics in 1831 and 1838. The young have lost their teachers. Today there are a few deacons and very few young novices. Originally the priesthood was passed from father to son. Nowadays however the young sons of priests choose other occupations. Al-Sohairy points to the growth in leisure activities and more varied employment opportunities as the cause. A life constrained by strict rules is one that increasingly few young people are prepared to contemplate. In addition the status of Mandaean priests in their own community has changed considerably.

Their reputation in student circles from which potential recruits might expect to be drawn has declined considerably. Students criticise the priests for failing to ensure that the community is kept properly informed about Mandaeism, so that knowledge of their own written language and Mandaean religion is very limited. It is not just the priesthood but the religion itself that is in decline. In Iraq and Iran there is no Mandaean religious education in schools and children and young people are denied access to their religion. In 1969 Kurt Rudolph noted that participation in Mandaean worship was declining. 35 years later this situation has deteriorated further.

Unless something is done soon to support more spiritually inclined members of the younger generation and reinforce their knowledge of their religion in their country of origin and in the diaspora, the pessimistic view that Mandaeism is on the verge of extinction will prove to be fully justified.

2.4. Linguistic change and changes in choice of employment

In 1975 Sabih Al-Sohairy reported a drastic decline in the use of the Mandaean language as Mandaeans adapted themselves to the linguistic environment in which they lived. Today they speak Arabic or the language of their country of exile. Mandaean is used only for worship purposes (see Sabih Al-Sohairy: *Die irakischen Mandaeans in der Gegenwart*, Hamburg 1975). Classical Mandaean is a dialect of Aramaic, closely related to the Aramäic of the Babylonian Talmud. Alongside classic Mandaean there is a modern form of spoken Mandaean known as Neo-Mandaean which has a substantial Arabic content. Neo-Mandaean is spoken only by Mandaeans living in the Iranian province of Khuzistan.

Mandaeans find it very difficult nowadays to exercise their traditional occupations as goldsmiths and silversmiths. Despite the fact that this has been their chosen field for generations and half the Mandaeans living in Baghdad in 1975 were still working as goldsmiths and silversmiths, the Iranian jewellers' association has decided to grant licences to Muslim jewellers only, according to Mary Elizabeth Hansen in a report for Coalition for the Defense of Human Rights in early 2004.

There has also been a marked change in the attitudes of young people living in Baghdad. Young Mandaeans are keen to follow an academic career in particular.

3. NOTES

[1] Dr. Qais Saidi, formerly General Secretary of the Supreme Religious Council of the Mandaeans in Iraq, now president of the Association of Mandaeans in Germany. In 2004 he published *Ich lerne Mandäisch* ["I'm learning Mandaean"], the first Mandaean language textbook. His Dictionary of Mandaean is awaiting publication.

[2] Prof. Dr. Sabih Al-Sohairy, Professor of Semitic Studies at Baghdad, visiting professor at Heidelberg. He is the only Mandaean academic who has examined his own religion. He lives in Nürnberg where he is President of a Mandaean association.

[3] SMAA (Sabian Mandaean Association Australia)

[4] See e.g. example the websites www.mandaeans.org; www.mandaeanworld.com

[5] Prof. Kurt Rudolph (born in 1929) is a German academic whose special field of study is Gnosticism and

Manichaeism. He has also done research in the fields of Protestant theology, the history of religion and Semitic studies. His work at the Universities of Leipzig, Chicago and Marburg has earned him an international reputation as an authority on Gnosticism and the Mandaean religion. He is also a student of Islam and methodological issues relating to religious studies. Since receiving his emeritus professorship in 1994 Kurt Rudolph has been awarded honorary doctorates from Aarhus and Leipzig. His most important works are: *Die Mandäer I, Das Mandäerproblem* ["The Mandaeans I - The Mandaean Question"], 1960; *Die Mandäer II, Der Kult* ["The Mandaeans II - The Religion"], 1961; *Die Gnosis - Wesen und Geschichte einer Spätantiken Religion* [Gnosticism - Essence and History of a Religion of Late Antiquity"], 1977.

[6] Mark Lidzbarski was born in 1868 in Plock, Poland. He gained his degree in Semitic Philology 1889-1892 at Berlin. He was appointed to a lecturership in Oriental Philology at the University of Kiel in February 1896, appointed Professor at Greifswald in 1907 and appointed Professor at Göttingen in 1917. He died at Göttingen on 13 November 1928. At Berlin, Kiel, Greifswald and Göttingen Lidzbarski did work of lasting importance. His principal areas of research in the field of Near Eastern Studies were the Neo-Aramaic dialect, Semitic epigraphics and Mandaean philology and he was an acknowledged authority on the latter two subjects. He translated the Mandaean holy texts into German: *Ginza: der Schatz oder Das große Buch der Mandäer* ["Ginza: The Treasure, or The Great Book of the Mandaeans, translated and annotated by Mark Lidzbarski"], Berlin, 1925; *Mandäische Liturgien.* ["Mandaean Liturgies"], Berlin 1920; *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer.* ["The Mandaean Book of John"], Töpelmann, Giessen 1915, 1966.

4. APPENDIX

4.1. Documenting attacks, killings and abductions

The following documents have been made available to GfbV by the Australian Mandaean Association in the original language version and in sworn translation.

Summary translations are appended

1a. Certificate issued by the hospital in Baghdad: Hadeel Samir Aodaa received treatment in hospital on 2.07.2005 after being raped.
1b. Police report concerning the physical mistreatment and repeated rape of Hadeel Samir Aodaa

2. Charges relating to death threats against Zaiad Tariq Warsan. He and his family were threatened because he worked in the Al-Rasheed Hotel.

4a. Statement made to the police by Tareq Mohi reporting the abduction of his daughter Zena Tareq, born in 1980.
4b. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts reproducing the missing persons report made by Tareq Mohi.
4c. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts concerning the disappearance of Zena Tareq
4d. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts concerning the disappearance of Zena Tareq on her way to University.
4e. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts concerning the case of Zena Tareq
4f. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts concerning the case of Zena Tareq

5a. Report on the abduction and murder of Reyadh Salomi Abudalla
5b. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts concerning the abduction and murder of Reyadh Salomi Abudalla

5c. Death certificate of Reyadh Salomis Abudalla
5d. Post-mortem report on Reyadh Salomi Abudalla
6. Death certificate of Tareq Al-Khamesi
7a. Copy of the police register entry concerning the disappearance of Khalid A. Khalid, who was abducted from his shop.
7b. Entry in the court record concerning the statement made by Karam A. Khalid reporting the abduction of his brother Khalid A. Khalid
7c. Police report concerning the abduction of Khalid A. Khalid
7d. Copy of a complaint filed with the courts concerning the abduction of Khalid A. Khalid
7e. Copy of the police register entry concerning the abduction of Khalid A. Khalid

8. Post-mortem report on Nwar M. Salih, who died from gunshot wounds and physical mistreatment

9a. Police report concerning the abduction and murder of Waleed Kh. Mohi
9b. Entry in the court record concerning the circumstances of the abduction and murder of Waleed Kh. Mohi
9c. see 9a/b
9d. see 9a/b
9e. see 9a/b
9f. see 9a/b
9g. see 9a/b
9h. see 9a/b

10.1. Acknowledgment by the US Marine Corps of cooperation given by Shaker Salah, who was subsequently abducted and murdered.

10. Death certificate for Moaayad Ibrahim Mehsen

11. Death certificate for Nwar Al-Khamesi

12. Autopsy report on Feras Faraj Saleh, who died of gunshot wounds

13. Death certificate of Nwar S. Mohy

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14a. Eye witness reports concerning the death of Nwar M. Salih

14b. Certificate issued by the Ministry of Health concerning the death by shooting of Nwar M. Salih

14c. Letter from the Mandaean Union confirming the death of Nwar M. Salih

15a. Letter from the official prosecutor confirming the death of Nwar S. Mohy

15b. Police certificate confirming the death of Nwar S. Mohy

17. Threatening letter addressed to Layth Shaker

18. Threatening letter addressed to Mahmoud Shaker

4.2. Background reading

Sabih Alsohairy, *Die irakischen Mandäer in der Gegenwart*, 1975.

Kurt Rudolph: *Die Mandäer, Band 1 - Prolegomena: das Mandaeansproblem*, 1960, *Band. 2 Der Kult*, 1961 [„The Mandaeans - Vol. 1 Introduction - The Mandaean Question; Vol. 2 The Religion"].

Mark Lidzbarski: *Ginza: der Schatz oder Das große Buch der Mandäer* [„Ginza: The Treasure, or The Great Book of the Mandaeans, translated and annotated by Mark Lidzbarski"], 1925.

GfbV/STP: *Seit Jahrhunderten verfolgt, heute akut bedroht, Mandäer im Irak* [After centuries of persecution today their very survival is threatened: Mandaeans in Iraq], a Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker / Society for Threatened Peoples Briefing Paper, 2006.

ATTACHMENT