



# d as militants children alive



Islamic State group, which swept past US-trained and equipped Iraqi government forces in recent weeks and now controls much of Iraq.

US, Iraqi and British cargo planes dropped tons of food, water, tents and other equipment to the refugees on Friday and yesterday.

Iraq's defence ministry released a video showing people in the Sinjar mountains rushing to collect food and water as the Iraqi government's fleet of C130

cargo planes dropped 20 tons of aid at a time.

But at least 56 children have died of dehydration in the mountains, UNICEF's spokesman in Iraq, Karim Elkorany, said. British officials estimated between 50,000 and 150,000 people could be trapped on the mountain.

Juan Mohammed, a local government spokesman in the Syrian city of Qamishli, said more than 20,000 starving Yazidis are fleeing across the border, braving gunfire through a tenuous "safe passage" that Kurdish peshmerga forces are trying to protect.

## HIDING

With shocked, sunburnt faces, men, women and children limped to a camp for displaced Iraqis, finding safety after harsh days of hiding on a blazing mountaintop, fleeing the Islamic State extremists.

Children who died of thirst were left behind and some exhausted mothers abandoned living babies, as thousands of Yazidis trekked across a rocky mountain chain in temperatures over 100F (38C).

They crossed into neighbour-

ing Syria, and then looped back into Iraq to reach safety at the Bajid Kandala camp.

Other Yazidis have settled in refugee camps in Syria - so awful is their situation, they have sought safety in a country aflame in a civil war.

The US military officially withdrew its combat forces in late 2011 after more than eight years of war in Iraq.

It returned to battle on Friday when two F/A-18 jets dropped 500lb bombs on Islamic State fighters advancing on the Kurdish capital of Irbil as violence sent the number of displaced Iraqis soaring.

Mr Obama was adamant that US troops cannot bring peace to Iraq.

"We can conduct airstrikes, but ultimately there's not going to be an American military solution to this problem. There's going to have to be an Iraqi solution that America and other countries and allies support," he said.

The Pentagon said the militants were using the artillery to shell Kurdish forces defending Irbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, home to a US consulate and about three dozen U.S. military trainers.

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## DUBLINER DESCRIBES THE FEAR OF MILITANTS

By Fiona Dillon

DUBLINER William Holden has put contingency plans in place for an emergency evacuation from Iraq if it becomes necessary.

The 44-year-old from Clondalkin has a packed bag at the ready, travel documents, a fully-charged phone and cash, just in case he is forced to leave with a moment's notice.

In the meantime, William is continuing the vital work he has been doing for the past five months as head of logistics and procurement with the Danish Refugee Council in the country.

The dad-of-two (right) is based in Iraq's third-largest city, Erbil - the capital of Kurdistan - a city of 1.5m people, which has become a refuge for countless members of religious minorities fleeing Islamic State militants.

### CHRISTIANS

He has a key role in distributing aid to the refugees who are arriving in their tens of thousands.

Describing conditions on the ground, William said that around 15,000 Christians arrived into Erbil last Wednesday night - all had left their towns within minutes as the militants, known locally as the 'Daash' came looking for them at 2am.

"Every church is full, every park, even partially-built houses and offices are now occupied," he said

William said that the temperatures are "mid-40s every day".

"The Christian quarter where I live, Ainkawa, is practically closed off to ensure no 'sleeper cells' enter and terrorise the population," he said.

Meanwhile, he said that he spent three days in the city of Duhok last week "preparing for emergency food parcels to be distributed to 500 families who escaped from Zumar to near Duhok. They are staying in a transit camp for now".

"The roads are quiet and many people have left Duhok due to the fear of the Daash," he said.

William said that many of the towns that he and other workers transit through are in what's known as the 'disputed zone'. That is where ISIS militants have made a run for cover in recent days.



### SUPPORT

"We still had to drive through part of this area in order to return to Erbil. The road was empty for obvious reasons and some burned out cars could be seen, but it was quiet when we were driving through," he said.

"I am assessing the gaps in the support, and training where possible," said William, who up the Irish Emergency Logistics Team.

Meanwhile, the Department of Foreign Affairs here has "advised against all travel to Iraq because of the extremely dangerous security situation".

A spokesperson said that one request for consular assistance had been received over the weekend regarding an Irish citizen in Iraq.

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