

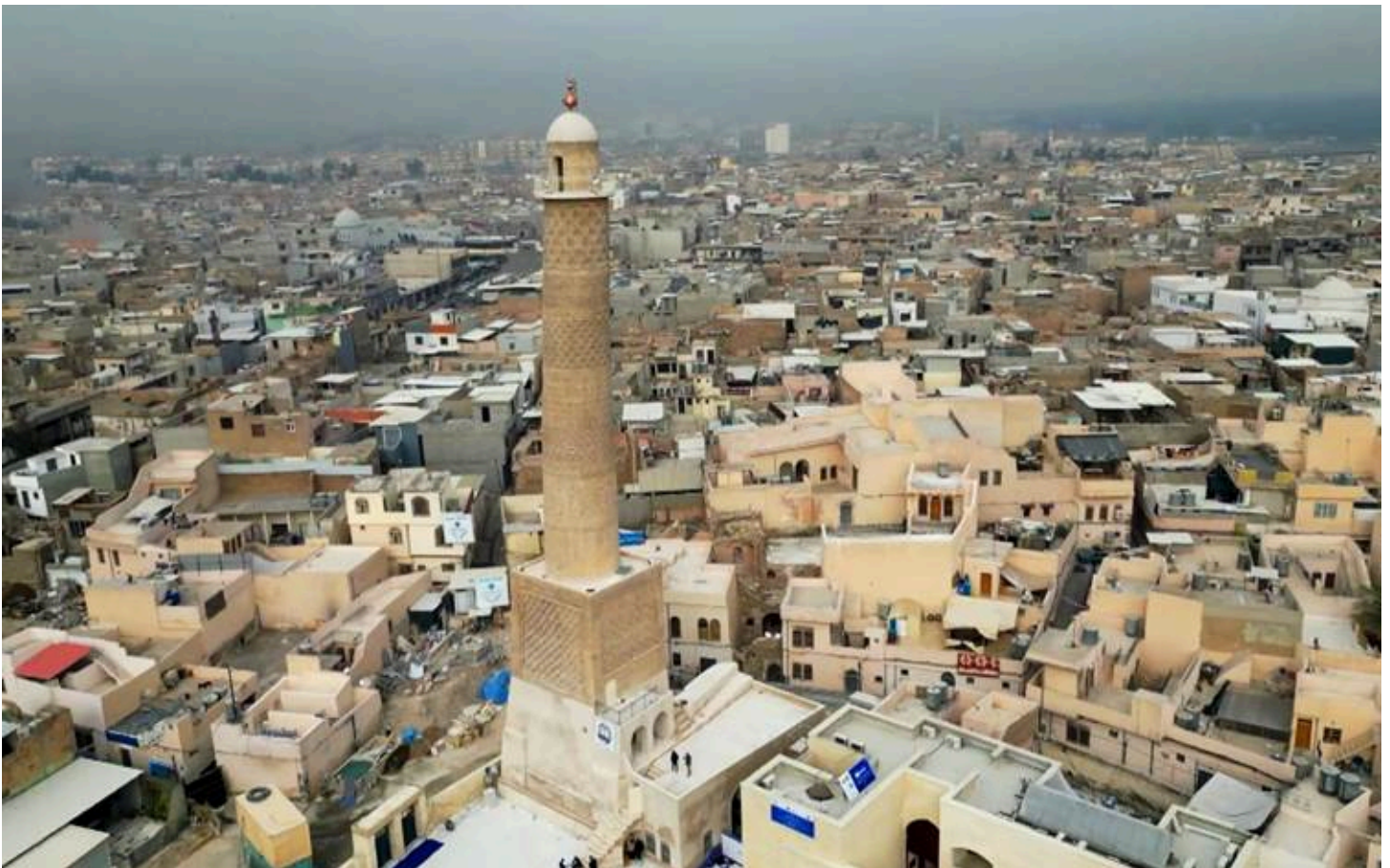
Mosul's iconic minaret reopened after destruction by ISIS

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MOSUL, Iraq - The al-Hadba minaret in Iraq's northern city of Mosul was destroyed by the Islamic State (ISIS) in 2017. UNESCO has been restoring the minaret for years. It was reopened in a ceremony on Wednesday.

The minaret is located in al-Nuri mosque.

"We are here by the minaret al-Hadba - one of the most iconic minarets of the Arab world and of the world in general. We know of the horrors that took place here and now it is a symbol of hope, of [a] better future. And soon we will have an official reopening," Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO director-general, told reporters on the sidelines of the ceremony.

The UN agency has spent dozens of millions of dollars on the project.

The mosque itself has yet to be fully restored.

Abdulqadir al-Dakhil, Nineveh governor, said a bigger ceremony will be held in spring to celebrate the restoration of the minaret.

"Thank God, what you are seeing today is the restoration of the towering al-Hadba minaret with its tilt. God willing, next spring the prime minister will be present at this site with the attendance of UNESCO and a large number of Arab officials, the European Union, Arab countries, and the call for prayer [adhan] will sound from al-Hadba minaret and prayer will be held at the al-Nuri mosque. The message is that Nineveh is back again," he told Rudaw.

Another historic site that is being restored is al-Saa'a Covent. It is also known as the Our Lady of the Hour Church.

"This is a very important historical place, this place has educated generations, this place has presented a lot to the city of Mosul and Iraq, and from this place we continue our mission as Dominican fathers for culture, thought, and knowledge," Majid Dominica, a priest, said.

ISIS seized control of swathes of Iraqi territory during a brazen offensive in 2014 but it was declared territorially defeated in 2017 when its so-called caliphate fell to Iraqi and Kurdish fighters, supported by a US-led international coalition, claiming lands earlier lost to the jihadists.

Despite its territorial defeat, the group has continued to pose a serious security threat through hit-and-run attacks, bombings, and abductions in several provinces.

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