

Press Largely Ignores Horror of the Persecuted Church

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By Eric Metaxas

MANHATTAN, N.Y.—More Christians are persecuted today than ever before, which is why we need to join in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

On a sunny day last May, several families climbed onto a couple of buses, happily looking forward to visiting a monastery together.

They never made it. Instead, half of them, including 10 children, were slaughtered. You see, these families were Egyptian Christians.

Islamic terrorists dressed in military fatigues stopped the buses and ordered the riders off. As one eyewitness later said, “As each pilgrim came off the bus, they were asked to renounce their Christian faith and profess belief in Islam. But all of them—even the children—refused.”

The terrorists murdered 29 Christians before fleeing.

This Sunday [Nov. 4] is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. It’s a time to focus our attention on our brothers and sisters who are being arrested, tortured, murdered and driven out of their homeland, simply because they worship Jesus.

The attack in Egypt was just one of many around the world last spring.

- In Germany, a Muslim stabbed a woman to death—one who had converted from Islam to Christianity.
- In Pakistan, a Christian pastor was sentenced to life in prison and tortured for blasphemy. He reportedly has been tortured many times.
- In North Korea, entire families are thrown into labor camps, where they often die from torture, beatings and starvation.
- In Turkey last year, American missionary Andrew Brunson was locked up on the absurd grounds that he was a terrorist.
- Islamists have also swept through Niger, setting fire to Christian churches, orphanages, schools and homes. I could go on.

According to Open Doors USA, the worst offenders are North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan.

Sometimes Christians are persecuted by a hostile government, as in China. But in the majority of countries Islamist extremists are at fault.

Tragically, Western governments and the United Nations are not doing enough to prevent genocidal efforts, according to the Catholic News Agency. They should—and they must.

More Christians are being persecuted today than ever before in history. Some 100 million believers are at risk. And yet the world press largely ignores this massive humanitarian horror.

Why, you may ask, are Christians being persecuted in such great numbers today?

- In part, it's because they're considered part of the "imperial" West.
- And in many countries Christians are the ones who are speaking out against the exploitation of the poor.
- Third, Christianity is spreading rapidly in predominantly Muslim countries.
- And totalitarian leaders hate Christians because our ultimate allegiance is always going to be to God and not to a government.

Finally, writes Laura McAlister on the blog site Ignitum Today, "the hidden reality behind all persecution" is revealed in the book of Revelation: It teaches that Satan "makes war" on "those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus."

Folks, we need to wake up, speak out and urge our leaders in government to do what it can to fight atrocities committed against innocent men, women and children around the world.

Above all, we need to pray for them fervently. Lifting them up before God's throne is what persecuted Christians say they need most.

Finally, to those who are suffering for their faith, I leave you with the words of Joshua: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid . . . for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."