Persecution of Christians in the Middle East

THE DECLINE OF A COMMUNITY

In the early 1900’s 20% of the Middle East & North Africa was Christian. The history of Christianity in this region is deep. Today Christians make up just 4% of the population. Indigenous Christians by the millions are persecuted in certain Muslim majority countries where Christianity was once prevalent. Today they are persecuted simply for being Christians.

Open Doors USA, a non-profit organization serving the persecuted church throughout the world says Christians are persecuted in over sixty-five countries. Among the worst are some of Israel’s neighbors: Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian territories.

Many who can escape, flee. For example, thousands of Coptic Christians have fled Egypt each year, but what about the people who can’t afford to relocate in order to evade persecution throughout the Middle East? What happens to them?

“We see believers tortured for confessing Christ, and women and children sold into the most terrible form of human slavery.”
Vice President of the United States Mike Pence

TERROR, FORCED CONVERSION AND EXPULSION

In 2011 twenty-one people were killed in an attack on a church in Egypt during a New Years Eve service. In 2013 a gang of hundreds armed with knives, Amnesty International reported, murdered four Christians. The rioters then continued to set fire to Christian property and destroy Christian homes. On Palm Sunday in 2017, suicide bombers in Egypt attacked two Coptic churches, killing 44 worshipers.

Can you imagine your beautiful Sunday morning service violently interrupted by a suicide bombing? Losing your life for being a Christian in the house of God?

In recent years, Christians from Syria have been expelled from their homes by the thousands. In areas seized by ISIS, Christians have been ordered to convert, pay a religious levy or face death. What if you can’t pay?

Between 2005-2015, The Center for the Study of Global Christianity estimates that 900,000 Christians were killed for being Christians each year.

Think about that: 900,000 people in the Body of Christ killed for standing with Jesus. Nearly one million people killed in a ten-year period for following Jesus.
A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Why is Israel different? Israel is different because in the Middle East where Christians are being slaughtered solely for their faith, Christians worship freely. The Christian population is decreasing dramatically all over the region due to persecution of the most violent kind yet in Israel, the only Jewish state in the world, the Christian population is growing.

The situation of Christians in Israel is a stark contrast to that of Christians in Gaza, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Jordan and Egypt. Christians in Jaffa are unafraid to gather for Christmas Day services. Believers in Tel Aviv are able to gather for prayer and worship.

Israel protects religious minorities. Christians in Israel serve in the military. They study in Israeli universities. Muslims are able to build mosques throughout Israel. Take a walk through Jaffa or Jerusalem; even if you know nothing about Islam you will know when it is time for prayer because you will hear the Muslim call to prayer. Visit Haifa and you will admire the ornate gardens kept so beautifully by the Baha’i faith. You will also find the Druze living harmoniously in Israel. The Druze community is a separate culture and religious community with members woven throughout Israeli society.

Christians who want to support Christians, should support Israel. Israel is the only place in the Middle East where Christians are protected.

There is one place in the Middle East where Christians worship freely without fear of violence; that place is Israel. In the Jewish state, Christians are able to gather, worship and practice their faith openly. While the Christian population in Israel’s neighboring countries is shrinking as a result of persecution, it is actually growing in Israel.

“We don’t just protect Christian religious sites – we protect Christian people. Christians should enjoy all the freedom to worship as they please in the Middle East and anywhere else and the only place in the Middle East where they can do so is Israel.”
Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu

Every November, CUFI on Campus holds a Raise Your Voice campaign on campuses across the nation to sound the alarm on this ongoing attack on our Christian brethren. #RaiseYourVoice