

Persecution of Christians increases here and overseas

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By [Randy W. Bright](#)

According to a recent report by the Religious News Service, "From imprisonment to torture to beheadings, more Christians worldwide live in fear for their lives than at any time in the modern era...That's the message from Open Doors USA, which released its annual World Watch List on Wednesday (Jan 7). Christian persecution reached historic levels in 2014, with approximately 100 million Christians around the world facing possible dire consequences for merely practicing their religion..." Open Doors USA expects 2015 to be even worse.

The same RNS report stated that Voice of the Martyrs spokesman Todd Nettleton (headquartered in Bartlesville, Oklahoma) agreed that "Muslim extremism is the main source of Christian oppression."

Nettleton said, "Wherever there is growing Islamic radicalism, there is growing persecution of Christians. Even where moderate Islamic states offer peace - and that is rare - they almost never have freedom to practice their faith and are often marked for death."

Persecution takes many forms, but one particular insidious form is church burnings. Earlier this month, Muslims in Niger, who were protesting the publication of Muhammad in the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, burned numerous churches and killed many Christians in the process.

One report indicated that in the capital city of Niamey, ten people were killed and six churches were burned. Another report stated that a minimum of 45 churches had been burned, and that some of the victims' charred bodies were found in the ruins of the churches. One Muslim was quoted to have said, "They offended our Prophet Muhammad. That's what we didn't like."

More churches were burned in other cities in Niger. Two were burned in the city of Maradi, and in the city of Zinder, a body was discovered in a Catholic church that had been burned. There were also reports of looting of Christians' homes and businesses as well as churches.

The burnings are not isolated to Niger, nor are they something that has only recently begun.

In 2011, a report on the endoftheamericandream.com website indicated that a Coptic church was bombed, leaving 21 people dead and 43 injured. Another report indicated that "an estimated 4,000 Muslims violently assaulted Christian homes and burned a church in the Egyptian town of Soul, which is about 18 miles from Cairo." In Pakistan, physical attacks and church burnings were reported to have "become commonplace" and in that year, a Christian man was reported to have been burned alive and his wife raped because they would not convert to Islam. That attack was allegedly carried out by Pakistani police officers.

The same year, 69 churches were reported to have been burned in Ethiopia, and in Nigeria church burnings in the hundreds were reported, in addition to thousands of Christian-owned

businesses that had been destroyed. Massacres of Christians were also reported, and around 40,000 Christians had been displaced.

In Iraq, where the Christian Church has existed for 2,000 years, Christians are leaving due to persecution at the hands of ISIS. Churches have been burned and Christians have been killed.

What is significant about the church burnings in Muslim countries is that while they are done as an expression of hatred toward Christians, it is not the first expression of hatred. The first expression of hatred is intolerance. The church burnings, murder and other violent acts are orchestrated to instill enough fear to exert control.

We should not forget, however, that Muslims are not the only ones who have used this method to turn one group of people violently upon another. The Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews is but one example. Any group of people that is not truly rooted in Christ is capable of rationalizing that irrational violence is justified.

But it could never happen in America, right? Lest we believe that Americans are not capable of such a thing, we need to remember that about 55 million Americans have been murdered with impunity since Roe v. Wade. The fact that those acts were done privately instead of such dramatic fashion as a church burning makes them no less evil.

So is it possible that church burnings could come to our shores, at the hands of Muslims or others, perhaps our own citizens? I think given the circumstances of growing intolerance to anything Christian, it is not if, but when.



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