

# The Dire Reality: Christians in Syria at Risk of Genocide

As Syria descends into uncertainty after the fall of President Bashar al-Assad's regime, persecution experts are warning of extreme dangers Christians and members of other minority groups would face.

In the days leading up to the regime's fall, David Curry, president and CEO of Global Christian Relief, emailed an "urgent" message to supporters, noting Christians are "caught once again in the crosshairs of war."

Already, Curry said thousands were becoming displaced, with road closures and refugee camps swelling. Others, he said, were trapped in their homes.

In a statement shared with CBN News Sunday after Syrian rebels entered Damascus and Assad reportedly fled the nation with his family, Curry further underscored the difficult nature of the situation.

"The so-called 'opposition forces,' Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), are little more than a reconstructed remnant of ISIS and Al Qaeda fighters," he warned. "Considered a terrorist organization, they have, in less than two weeks, ethnically cleansed the northwest of Syria, including Aleppo and beyond, of Kurds and Christians."

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And Curry said it's expected this reign of terror will only progress into other areas of Syria.

"When the civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, Christians comprised approximately 10% of the population, about 1.5

million people,” he added. “After years of constant fighting and persecution by jihadist radicals, that number has dwindled to just 300,000—now there is no safe place for Kurds and Christians.”

International Christian Concern, another persecution watchdog, released a country profile on Syria Dec. 3, noting religious minorities inside the nation are “regularly subjected to the worst violations imaginable.”

The situation in Syria has long been perilous, with Assad struggling in recent years to retain power.

“Though conditions are dire for Christians and other religious groups in the south, where Assad wields most of his power, the situation is not better in the north, where Turkish-backed terrorists continue to fight for territory and perpetrate heinous acts of violence against Kurdish and Yazidi religious communities,” ICC notes.

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Persecution manifests itself in government restrictions, torture, imprisonment, acts of terrorism – and more. After decades of authoritarian rule at the hands of Assad, who took power in 2000, it’s unclear what comes next (his family has held power for the past 50 years).

Many Christians have reportedly fled Syria after HTS, a terror-designated group, took over. Jeff King, president of ICC, told The Christian Post the coming days will be essential to understanding what’s next for the Christians who remain behind.

“The coming days and weeks will be crucial for the fate of [the] Christian community,” King said. “Christians, with roots stretching back nearly two millennia, now face an uncertain

and perilous future.”

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# **Apostle Emanuele Cannistraci, Founder of Gateway City Church San Jose, Has Passed Away**

A pioneering Christian leader, the founding pastor of the Gateway City Church in San Jose, Apostle Emanuele Cannistraci, has passed on to heaven.

The church made an announcement about “Apostle C” on Facebook saying, “His unwavering faith, visionary leadership, and deep love for God have left an immeasurable impact on our church and communities around the world.”

Cannistraci’s apostolic gifting equipped him to be a church planter and to become a pioneer over many decades in the Apostolic and Prophetic Movement—which are two of the church governing gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11.

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That Bible verse reveals the five New Testament church leadership gifts, explaining that Jesus Christ “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”

“Apostle C dedicated his life to spreading the Gospel, mentoring leaders, and pioneering the Apostolic and Prophetic Movement. His legacy will continue to inspire generations,” the church stated.

Prayers of support and condolences are being sent to members of the Robertson family after news broke over the weekend that “Duck Dynasty” star Phil Robertson has been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

Social media influencer Sadie Robertson Huff reached out to her followers after her uncle, Jase Robertson, revealed the diagnosis on Friday’s episode of the “Unashamed with the Robertson Family” podcast.

“Phil’s not doing well. I think I spoke on the 1,000th podcast, we were trying to figure out the diagnosis, but according to the doctors, he has some sort of blood disease causing all kinds of problems,” Jase shared.

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“It’s like accelerated, and it’s causing problems with his entire body. And he has early stages of Alzheimer’s. So, if you put those things together, he’s really not doing well. He’s struggling,” he continued.

Phil is a big part of the podcast, but due to his declining health has not been able to join recently.

“I’m like, ‘Well Phil, you can barely walk around without

crying out in pain, and your memory is not what it once was.' He's like, 'Tell me about it.' So he is literally unable to—I think he would agree—to just sit down and have a conversation," Jase said.

"He misses it. He misses the stories we tell," he added.

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Jase also shared that the family has a team of doctors, but they feel there is no cure for what he has.

"We're trying to do a lot of things to figure out how to make him more comfortable and maybe help with his memory," he said.

Robertson Huff, Phil's granddaughter, responded to the announcement on social media, "Seeing all of the articles go out yesterday about my grandpa's Alzheimer's diagnosis has kept my tears flowing... something about it being public makes it even more real."

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# Shocking Accusations Against Daystar TV: What We Know So Far

The political divide in America is both deep and wide. Unfortunately, this can have a negative impact within families, communities and even the church.

Now two Christian leaders from opposite sides of the political spectrum are working for a common cause.

“Look, everybody knows I’m a friend of Donald Trump. They know I support him very much,” said Dr. Robert Jeffress of First Baptist Church Dallas.

“I’ve been in the Democratic Party most of my life,” said Justin Giboney of the AND Campaign, an organization that aims to help and organize Christians for civic and cultural engagement.

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Both Jeffress and Giboney took vastly different paths into the world of politics – differences they recently shared during an appearance on CBN’s Prayerlink.

“I had very little involvement in politics the first 20 years of my ministry,” explained Jeffress. “But it all changed when a member brought to me some library books from our public library. They were pro-homosexual books written to persuade children into that kind of lifestyle. And she said, ‘What are you going to do about this?’”

“We as believers have a responsibility to push back against evil wherever we can,” he said.

Giboney credits the message and meaning of civil rights for driving his interest.

“Early on my grandfather, who was a preacher himself, taught me that when it comes to people having their rights, people being treated fairly, you couldn’t go into politics and just fight for yourself that you also wanted to make sure that you fought for others,” Giboney said.

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The two also shared their thoughts on interpreting the biblical response to certain social issues, such as the southern border crisis.

“It doesn’t prescribe what immigration policy should be,” said Jeffress. “But there are some things the Bible speaks very clearly about and I base my politics or for whom I vote based on what the Bible says.”

“I agree that the Bible might not speak specifically on what our immigration policy should be, but I would say that it would have something to say about the humanity of that policy and how we treat the least of these and the stranger,” Giboney countered.

Discussions on such issues have led to bitter debate and anger among believers with some questioning the faith of those whose views differ from their own.

It is a sentiment both Jeffress and Giboney agree hurts the gospel message.

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# **Assad Regime Collapses as Rebels Capture Damascus; Israel Steps Into Syria**

The preacher told the outlet he has prayed for people facing extremely difficult seasons such as being homeless or addicted to drugs.

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“I never know what I’m going to be praying for when somebody turns in,” Fogleman said. “So, I think it’s a great privilege just to be able to do it.”

The 82-year-old has also had the privilege of leading people to Christ including two teenagers on their way to prom and one couple who responded to Fogleman’s presentation of the Gospel and were subsequently baptized.

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# Franklin Graham Shares Gospel with 24,000, Masses Choose to Follow Jesus

More than 24,000 people filled the C n Th  Stadium in Vietnam earlier this week to seek Jesus during the Season of Love Festival with Evangelist Franklin Graham.

It was a major turnout of people hungry to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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“The Gospel transcends all languages and cultures,” Graham, president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), said. “We praise God for the hundreds of people whose hearts were moved and they responded to the invitation to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and follow Him as Lord of their lives!”

Over 315 churches and pastors came together to plan and pray for the two-day outreach. As a result, 14,000 people participated on the first night and 10,000 stood in the pouring rain on the second night to hear powerful messages on salvation. Altogether, more than 1,200 made decisions for Christ.

“Rain is a sign of God’s blessing in the Bible, and today we saw God pour out His blessings on Vietnam,” Graham shared on Facebook early Wednesday. “It was a privilege to see so many people respond to God’s invitation to receive Jesus Christ by faith tonight.”

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According to the BGEA, opportunities to share the gospel in the communist nation are increasing.

“We’re there to share the love of Christ,” said Festival Director Derek Forbes, adding that the government keeps giving them opportunities to host outreaches.

*The Gospel transcends all languages and cultures. What a privilege to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ in C n Tho, Vietnam, tonight! I told the nearly 14,000 people in the stadium that there are two types of blindness—physical blindness and spiritual blindness. We praise God...*

*– Franklin Graham (@Franklin\_Graham) December 3, 2024*

“We really have been given a lot of freedom,” he said.

The ministry held its first evangelistic outreach in the nation in 2017 for its Love Hanoi Festival and then completed the Spring Love Festival in Ho Chi Minh City last year.

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# Soccer Player Reprimanded After Adding 'I Love Jesus' to LGBTQ Armband

English soccer player Marc Guéhi was slapped Saturday with a warning from the Football Association after the Crystal Palace center-back wore an armband emblazoned with the phrase, "I love Jesus."

The team captain wrote the Christian saying on a band decorated with rainbow colors, intended to represent the LGBTQ flag, according to ESPN.

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FA rules allow "initiative slogans/emblems promoting the game of football, respect, and integrity," but prohibit players from wearing clothing or gear displaying "political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images."

While the association reminded Guéhi and Crystal Palace of their responsibilities as an athlete and team, respectively, neither will face any formal action for the armband in question.

*ESPN has learned that Crystal Palace and England centre-back Marc Guéhi could face an English Football Association (FA) charge after writing "I love Jesus" on his rainbow-coloured captain's armband for Saturday's 1-1 draw at home to Newcastle United.*

– ESPN UK (@ESPNUK) December 3, 2024

A spokesperson for the FA said in a statement no official warning was given after Guéhi wore the band with the three-word phrase during his team's 1-1 draw with Newcastle United.

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“Marc Guehi has not received an official warning from us,” said the FA representative. “We have contacted Crystal Palace to formally remind them and Marc Guehi that the appearance on, or incorporation in, any item of clothing, football boots, or other equipment of any religious message is prohibited as stated in Rule A4 of our kit and advertising regulations.”

The rainbow armband—without “I love Jesus” written on it—is apparently viewed differently by the FA.

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## **This Was the Most Read Bible Verse of 2024**

Popular Bible app YouVersion says it has seen more people engage with the Bible this year than ever before, drawing closer to God through His Word and through prayer features on the app.

Developers of the Bible app point out the most popular verse from 2024 reveals that people have been seeking God's comfort in tumultuous times.

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This year, the most searched Scripture was Philippians 4:6. It reads: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

YouVersion Founder and CEO Bobby Gruenewald believes it shows that people are more likely to turn to God when they face anxiety and daily struggles.



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"In many cases, our anxiety comes from holding onto worries that we aren't meant to carry," said Gruenewald. "To me, this verse being sought out the most this year is an illustration that our community is seeking God in prayer and choosing to trust Him to carry their burdens—and we're seeing that supported in the data."

The YouVersion app was designed to encourage and challenge people to seek God throughout each day. It offers a free Bible experience in more than 2,170 languages and has been installed on more than 875 million unique devices.

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"I was just trying to figure out how to use technology to help people read the Bible more consistently. And just had enough faith to start, to try something, and of course, what we've seen God do is incredible. Our faith has grown, but in the

very beginning had no idea what it was going to become,” Gruenewald previously told CBN News.

## **Praying for Peace**

Seeking peace through God’s Word is not the only thing that has increased this year.

YouVersion also saw increased interest in prayer around the world.

The words “prayer” and “peace” were among the top in-app search terms this year and the app’s YouVersion Prayer features went up by 46% this year compared to last year.

The YouVersion’s Prayer Team volunteers responded to prayer requests in 20 languages and prayed for concerns involving finances, healing, family, marriage and anxiety.

The group has partnered with 24-7 Prayer International to facilitate “an unbroken chain of prayer, every hour of the day and night” among churches in more than 65 countries.

This year, they saw a 37% increase in the number of 24-7 Prayer Rooms they’re supporting.

“Throughout 2024, we have seen a rise in the number of people dedicating themselves to night and day prayer in different nations around the world,” said Carla Harding, International Director of Products for 24-7 Prayer International. “Our hope is that through continual prayer, the global church would be ignited in the presence of God and carry His love with greater compassion and power to the communities around them.”

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