

# Amnesty Calls on Iraq to Protect Christians

Is the Iraqi government doing enough to protect the country's Christian minority from an expected spike in violent attacks as they prepare to celebrate Christmas?

Amnesty International doesn't think so. The group is calling on the government to do more.

"Attacks on Christians and their churches by armed groups have intensified in past weeks and have clearly included war crimes" says Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International director for the Middle East and North Africa. "We fear that militants are likely to attempt serious attacks against Christians during the Christmas period for maximum publicity and to embarrass the government."

Amnesty International has cause to be concerned. Last year armed groups carried out fatal bomb attacks on churches in Mosul on Dec. 15 and Dec. 23. Some 65 attacks on Christian churches in Iraq were recorded between mid-2004 and the end of 2009.

The increase in violence against Christians in the last month takes place against a backdrop of sectarian violence in Iraq, including several bomb attacks on



# Christmas or Happy Holidays?

It's no great revelation that Americans are divided over what greetings businesses should use during the December holiday season. But in case you had any doubts, a PRRI/RNS Religion News Survey has made it official.

Forty-nine percent of Americans say stores should use "merry Christmas" this holiday season, compared to 44 percent who say that they should use more generic "happy holidays" or "season's greetings" out of respect for people of different faiths. The survey reveals large religious, partisan and regional differences over the appropriateness of different holiday greetings.

"Celebrations of the birth of Jesus in Christianity have always blended the explicitly religious with elements of the contemporary culture," says Robert P. Jones, CEO of PRRI. "That roughly equal numbers of Americans both read the story of the birth of Jesus from the Bible and the story of Santa Claus in *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* is a continuation of that tradition."

Here's how it breaks down demographics-wise:

- A majority of white evangelical Protestants (69 percent) and white mainline Protestants (57 percent) support stores using "merry Christmas." A majority of Catholics

(55 percent), however, support stores using more generic greetings like “happy holidays.”

- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of Republicans also support saying “merry Christmas” as opposed to more generic greetings. In contrast, nearly 6-in-10 (58 percent) Democrats say stores and businesses should be using “happy holidays” or “season’s greetings” out of respect for people of different faiths.
- A majority of Americans living in the Midwest (56 percent) and the South (54 percent), and a plurality (49 percent) of those living in the West say stores and businesses should greet customers with “merry Christmas,” while nearly 6-in-10 (58 percent) Americans living in the Northeast say businesses should use more generic greetings.

*What about you? Do you say “merry Christmas,” “happy holidays” or something else?*

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## **America Breeding Culture of Rejection, Index Warns**

American children are battling rejection as families are increasingly

falling apart. A disturbing 55 percent of American children come from broken homes—and 55 percent of American teenagers' parents have rejected each other, either through divorce, separation, or choosing not to marry. So says the Index of Belonging and Rejection.

Produced by Pat Fagan, Ph.D., of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute, a project of Family Research Council, the Index defines an intact family as a biological mother and father remaining legally married to each other since before or around the time of their child's birth.

As Fagan sees it, American society is dysfunctional, characterized by a faulty understanding of the male-female relationship. The solution, he says, is a compass correction, learning again how to belong to each other when we have begotten children together.

“If we fail in this, as a nation we will continue to ‘define deviancy down,’ in the inimitable phrase of Daniel Patrick Moynihan,” Fagan says. “The merging again of the realities of father and mother with those of husband and wife will strengthen our children and lead to immeasurable benefits for children, adults and society. These include financial, educational, legislative, legal and judicial gains.”

According to the Index's analysis of the 2008 American Community Survey, significant variations in the capacity to belong occur across regions and within different ethnic groups. For example:

- *62 percent of Asian-American teenagers live with both married parents.*
  
- *54 percent of white youth, a slight majority, live with both parents.*
  
- *41 percent of teenagers from multiracial family backgrounds live in intact families.*
  
- *40 percent of Hispanic teenagers nationwide live with both parents.*
  
- *24 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native adolescents—fewer than one in four—have lived with both married parents throughout childhood.*
  
- *17 percent of African-American youth—fewer than one in five—live with both married parents.*

Beyond racial differences, the Index varies across regional and socioeconomic lines.

Forty-one percent of adolescents living in the South grow up belonging to an intact family. What's more, large urban counties whose populations are less educated, less affluent and contain high concentrations of minority groups tend to have lower proportions of two-parent families.

"Individual children, communities and the nation as a whole suffer the consequences of the culture of rejection in American homes," Fagan says. "Children in broken homes are more likely to be poor or welfare-dependent. They enjoy less academic achievement and less social development, have more accidents and injuries, and have worse mental health and more behavioral problems. These children also have worse relationships with their parents and are more likely to reject their own spouses later."


Fagan goes on to say that the culture of rejection burdens communities with higher levels of poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, domestic abuse, child neglect, delinquency, crime and crime victimization, drug abuse, academic failure and school dropout, and unmarried teen pregnancy and childbearing.

"The United States experiences increased costs in education, health care, mental health and the administration of justice," he

concludes. "Our future as a country depends on the strength of our families. Such strength is waning, which should give every American pause for concern and motivation for action."

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## Christians on Endangered Species List in Iraq

The  centuries-old Christian community in Iraq is on the verge of extinction, according to Open Doors, an organization that fights for Christian freedom in dangerous countries.

The estimated number of Christians in Iraq has been cut in half—from about 700,000 in 2003 to a mere 350,000 today. Open Doors reports that thousands of Christians have fled the country while others have taken refuge in northern Iraq.

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## White House Turns to

# Religious Leaders for DREAM Act Support

✘ The White House

is calling on religious leaders to help make the DREAM Act a reality. The White House hosted a call on Thursday morning with rabbis, pastors and Christian leaders who hope to convince at least 60 United States senators to pass the bipartisan legislation before Congress takes its holiday break.

The DREAM Act is legislation that would give students who grew up in the U.S. a chance to contribute to the nation's well-being by serving in the U.S. armed forces or pursuing a higher education. The limited, targeted legislation would allow only the best and brightest young people to earn their legal status after a rigorous and lengthy process. It applies to those brought to the United States as minors through no fault of their own by their parents.

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## Once-Paralyzed Pastor Knox Dances at Holiday Celebration

✘ Remember Delia

Knox, the music minister who stood up and walked out of a wheelchair that held

her captive for 22 years? Well, now she's not only walking—she's dancing.

Knox, a popular singer who pastors Living World Christian Center in Mobile, Ala., with her husband, Bishop Levy Knox, had been paralyzed since a car accident on Christmas Day 1987. A [video](#) captured her miraculous healing at the Bay of the Holy Spirit Revival at the Mobile Convention Center in September.

On Thursday night, the Knoxes will host “A Night With the King—Celebrating the Miracle.” The night has been organized to celebrate the miracle God performed in Knox's life. A tweet Knox distributed said, “It's Time to Dance! One Night With the King! A Christmas Celebration 23 years in the making!” The celebration will feature artist Adlan Cruz at The Battle House Hotel Crystal Ballroom.

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## Europe Escapes Forced Abortion Rule

In a case many see as the “Roe v. Wade of Europe,” the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled that the document contains no “right” to abortion. That's the Thursday decision in the case A, B and C v. Ireland.

A loss would have forced all countries in the Council of Europe to allow abortion or face large financial penalties in damages if sued. The case is pivotal because the lawsuit was decided in the Grand Chamber of the ECHR and the judgment is therefore binding on all lower chambers and member states.

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## **Most Americans Don't Understand Bill of Rights**

The Bill of Rights protects many freedoms—but do you know what they are? An alarming number of American adults can't tell you what those rights are, according to a Bill of Rights Institute study conducted by Harris Interactive.

When asked questions about the nation's founding documents, American adults selected the correct answer 32 percent of the time, on average, on questions about the Bill of Rights and the freedoms it protects and American government.

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# ORU Remembers Oral Roberts One Year After Passing

It's been a year since Oral Roberts went home to be with the Lord. But his legacy lives on at the university he founded in 1963. Oral Roberts University (ORU) continues to focus on the vision and mission of one of this generation's most effective evangelists—and the school is [paying tribute](#) to its founder in an online collection of photos and videos.

“Oral Roberts was a great man who profoundly impacted the world for Jesus Christ. We are deeply thankful for his life,” says ORU President Mark Rutland. “Nowhere is the imprint of this man of God more evident than ORU. This university is the enduring legacy of Chancellor Roberts.”