

New Faith-Based Film Reveals the Horrific Reality of John 15:20

"America will stand by followers of Christ in this hour of need," U.S. Vice President Mike Pence told the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians, the recent conference on the topic of persecution held in the nation's capital.

"Our administration is fully committed in bringing relief and comfort to believers, not only across the Middle East but across the world," he said.

People from 130 countries were represented at the summit, which was organized by evangelist Franklin Graham and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

So what is happening to Christians around the world that is worrying so many people?

Clarion Project's new film *Faithkeepers* uncovers the horrific reality faced by so many simply for being who they are.

In the Middle East, the birthplace of Christianity, Christians and other minorities are being violently persecuted, driven out of their homes, and killed," the *Faithkeepers* team says. "Their places of worship are being destroyed, and their history is being erased."

Across the world, but particularly in the Middle East, Christians and other religious minorities are persecuted for their faith. Most of this persecution is meted out at the hands of radical Islam, although by no means all of it.

In Iraq and Syria, ravaged by war, Christians, Yazidis and other minority groups are suffering grievously under the yoke of terrorist groups like the Islamic State. Christian

communities that fall under their control are given a simple choice: convert to Islam, pay the jizya, a humiliating protection tax, or die.

Thousands of Yazidi women and girls were kidnapped into sex slavery and sold in the markets of Mosul and Raqqa. They have suffered unimaginably.

"Faithkeepers gives face and voice to the humanitarian crisis and genocide affecting millions in the Middle East as a result of religious and ethnic persecution," the *Faithkeepers* team added.

"The film is a testament to the stories of the persecuted and an inspiring portrait of the human spirit. *Faithkeepers*—the movie and movement— will awaken, enlighten and inspire all people of faith to stand up and take action."

In an exclusive interview with *Faithkeepers* Producer Paula Kweskin by Elliot Friedland, obtained by ASSIST News Service (), she was asked why she's so excited about her latest movie, which premiered on May 23.

"It brings much-needed attention to the horrific persecution faced by Christians and other minorities in the Middle East," she said.

What is the goal of *Faithkeepers*?

"We would like to awaken the Christian community and all people of conscience to understand and be empowered to take action on behalf of Christians and other minorities in the Middle East who are experiencing genocide. We feel there is a real lack of information and this is first and foremost a film to educate people and wake them up about this humanitarian crisis."

Asked what efforts is the U.S. government doing to protect Christians in the Middle East and is it enough? Kweskin said:

“Congress has taken a number of steps to protect Christians and other minorities in the Middle East.

“House Concurrent Resolution 75, which passed the House of Representatives in March 2016, correctly states ‘the atrocities perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against Christians, Yezidis, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.’ The bill is currently awaiting passage through the Senate but if passed it will push the U.N. and other international bodies, working with U.S. leadership, to establish war crimes tribunals for ISIS leaders and take other more robust steps to tackle ISIS. There are other proposed bills, including one which would expedite the asylum process for Christians and other minorities fleeing ISIS persecution.

(Editor’s Note: HR (House Resolution) 390, ‘The Iraq and Syria Emergency Genocide Relief and Accountability Act’ passed the U.S. House of Representatives on the evening of June 6 by unanimous consent).

“In addition, President Trump has increased the number of soldiers deployed to Iraq and Syria to fight ISIS and earlier this year he gave Defense Secretary Mattis the authority to set troop levels in Iraq and Syria. This means the U.S. military has the freedom to commit the forces it needs to eliminate ISIS, working with local partners on the ground.”

“We have a three-pronged call to action: awareness, advocacy, and aid. Visit our website for more information on how exactly to help ():

Awareness: Spread the word by posting the trailer on your Facebook page or sending it to family and friends – each one of us has the capacity to do that and awareness leads to action.

Advocacy: Speak to elected officials and make sure they are engaged on the issue and are supporting steps to end the

genocide and help these communities.

Aid: We are collecting funds to distribute to selected charities and organizations in the region doing critical work on the ground."

What needs to be done to help Christians and other minorities who are now returning to villages and towns that were devastated by ISIS?

"First and foremost, there has to be strong security in place. But we can't just protect them, we also have to help them rebuild. Right now they're going back to destroyed churches and homes and are in a terrible situation. We need to give them the support to restore their devastated communities, whether that is politically, economically or in other ways. But I don't think it will be possible for them to return unless there is a strong effort from the international community to assist them, not just in the short term but in the long term."

How do you respond to people who say the United States has already wasted too much blood and treasure in the Middle East and that it's not our problem to fix?

"This is a humanitarian mission that goes beyond any one country. I see a genocide happening and I feel compelled to act. Minorities in the Middle East are a stabilizing and moderating force in the region.

"A strong, peaceful and diverse Middle East is definitely in America's interests." {eoa}

This article originally appeared on Assist News Service.