

The Existential Elephant in the ‘Christian Persecution’ Room

Open Doors USA recently released its widely cited 2014 World Watch List—a report that highlights and ranks the 50 worst nations around the globe persecuting Christians.

The one glaring fact that emerges from this report is that the overwhelming majority of **Christian persecution** around the globe today is being committed at the hands of Muslims of all races, languages, cultures and socio-political circumstances: Muslims from among America’s allies (Saudi Arabia) and its enemies (Iran); Muslims from economically rich nations (Qatar) and from poor nations (Somalia and Yemen); Muslims from “Islamic republic” nations (Pakistan) and from “moderate” nations (Malaysia and Indonesia); Muslims from nations rescued by America (Kuwait) and Muslims claiming “grievances” against America (fill in the space __).

A common denominator, a pattern, exists, one that is even more extensive than Open Doors implies. According to that organization’s communications director, Emily Fuentes, “of the 50 worst nations for persecution, 37 of them are Muslim,” or 74 percent.

In fact, while this number suggests that the other 13 countries making the top 50 are not Muslim—for example Kenya and Ethiopia—those doing the persecution there are.

In other words, those persecuting Christians in 41 of 50 nations are Muslims; that is, a whopping 82 percent of all persecution around the globe is being committed by adherents of Islam—sometimes in Christian majority nations, for example, the Central African Republic which, after the 2013 Islamic takeover, now ranks No. 16, “severe persecution” (the

Christian-majority nation did not even appear in the previous year's top 50).

As for the top 10 absolute worst nations, where, according to the 2014 World Watch List, Christians suffer "extreme persecution," nine—that is, 90 percent—are Muslim. (Indeed, Open Doors' global map of Christian persecution can easily be confused with a global map of the Islamic world, with the exception of China—ranked 37, "moderate persecution"—and some sporadic countries dominated by crime and godless tyranny, Colombia, North Korea, etc.)

Similarly, a recent Morning Star News report listing 2013's ten most horrific anecdotes of Christian persecution around the world finds that nine out of ten—again, 90 percent—were committed at the hands of those professing Islam.

Still, considering that the 2014 World Watch List ranks North Korea—non-Islamic, communist—as the number one worst persecutor of Christians, why belabor the religious identity of Muslims?

Here we come to some critically important but blurred distinctions. While Christians are indeed suffering extreme persecution in North Korea, these fall into the realm of the temporal, the aberrant, even. Something as simple as overthrowing the North Korean regime would likely end persecution there almost overnight—just as the fall of Communist Soviet Union saw religious persecution come to a quick close.

In the Islamic world, however, a similar scenario would not alleviate the sufferings of Christians by an iota. Quite the opposite; where dictators fall—Mubarak in Egypt, Qaddafi in Libya, and ongoing attempts to oust Assad in Syria—Christian persecution rises.

The reason for this dichotomy is that Christian persecution by non-Muslims (mostly communists) is often rooted to a temporal

regime or ideology. Conversely, Muslim persecution of Christians is perennial, existential, and far transcends this or that regime or ruler. It is part and parcel of the history, doctrines, and socio-political makeup of Islam—hence its tenacity; hence its ubiquity.

Still, the significance of all this is often overlooked. Thus, “Dr. David Curry, CEO and president of Open Doors USA, told The Blaze ‘Not every circumstance is the same. For example, in North Korea, you have a quasi-Stalinist government that is the most difficult place to call yourself a Christian on the planet—and has been for the last 12 years,’ he noted. But while North Korea’s government is the real culprit, in places like Iraq, ‘roving extremist groups’ are waging attacks against Christians, while government officials are seemingly powerless to stop the carnage, he explained.”

True; but atheistic Stalinism/communism is a relatively new phenomenon—about a century old—and, over the years, its rule (if not variants of its ideology) has greatly waned, so that only a handful of nations today are communist.

On the other hand, “roving extremist groups” (also known in other contexts and countries as “Islamists,” “terrorists,” “mujahidin,” “mobs,” “radicals,” “people-with-grievances,” etc.) attacking and killing “infidel” Christians have been around since the dawn of Islam. It is a well-documented, even if suppressed, history

To further understand the differences between temporal and existential persecution, consider: Russia, once a staunch Orthodox Christian nation, led the communist movement and persecuted its own Christians; yet today, a century later, it is becoming more orthodox again, prominent among Western nations for showing support for **persecuted Christians**.

North Korea—where its leader, Kim Jong-Un, is worshipped as a god and the people are shielded from reality, including

outside their borders—seems to be experiencing what Russia did under the Soviet Union and thus living in a delusional state.

But if the once mighty USSR could not persevere, surely it's a matter of time before tiny North Korea's walls also come crumbling down, with the resulting religious freedom that former communist nations have experienced. Tellingly, the only countries that were part of the USSR that still persecute Christians are Muslim, such as Uzbekistan (ranked No. 15, "severe persecution") and Turkmenistan (ranked NO. 20, also "severe persecution").

Time, however, is not on the side of Christians living amid Muslims; quite the opposite. Since the 7th century, when Islam came into being, Muslims have been invading and conquering Christian lands so that more than half of the territory that was once Christian in the 7th century—including all of North Africa and the Levant—are today the heart of the "Muslim world."

Muslim persecution of Christians exists in 41 nations today as part of a continuum that started nearly 14 centuries ago. As I document in *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians*, the very same patterns of Christian persecution prevalent throughout the Muslim world today are often identical to those from centuries past. The facts speak for themselves.

Put differently, long after North Korea's Kim Jong Un has gone the way of the dodo, Islam will still be here and—short of a miraculous "reformation"—still treating Christians and other "infidels" like it did for centuries.

Confronting this understandably discomfiting and better-left-unsaid fact is the first real step to alleviating the sufferings of the overwhelming majority of Christians around the world.

Unfortunately, however, while some are willing to point out

that Christians are being persecuted around the Muslim world—*why* that is the case, *why* 82 percent of the world's persecution is committed by Muslims from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances—is the great elephant in the room that few wish to address. For doing so would cause some long held and cherished premises of the modern West to come crashing down.

*CBN News contributor **Raymond Ibrahim** is author of Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians. He is a Shillman Fellow, David Horowitz Freedom Center; Associate Fellow, Middle East Forum; and 2013 Media Fellow, Hoover Institution.*