

Why Now Is the Most Dangerous Time for You to Be a Christian

The age of martyrs is now. It is misguided to believe that the worst persecution of Christians took place in the ancient Roman Empire. We are moved by the harrowing accounts of Christians being thrown to lions in the Colosseum, though the numbers may actually be somewhat inflated. The brutality of the first-century Roman persecution was real and those early martyrs should be honored, but in all of human history, the most dangerous time to be a Christian is actually right now.

A staggering 90,000 Christians were martyred in 2016 alone, according to Dr. Massimo Introvigne, director of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR). Approximately 600 million are not entirely free to worship. The CESNUR study goes on to explain that the major source of persecution has shifted. In the not-too-distant past, the state perpetrators of persecution were the atheistic communist nations, such as those in the former Soviet Union. At one point, the government of Albania falsely boasted that they had eradicated Christianity in that country. When communism fell, they discovered they were wrong.

I have a very good friend, for example, who was imprisoned in Ukraine for his Christian faith. Today he is a great evangelist being used mightily in many countries, especially in the former Soviet Union. Even today, punitive and even deadly actions are often taken against the Christian community in several of those socialist nations. However, the monstrous new perpetrator of mass persecution of Christians is no longer state communism, but Islam, both state and non-state. According to Introvigne, "Islamic ultra-fundamentalism" is now the new murderer of Christians.

Consider for a moment the staggering arithmetic of modern martyrdom. According to my calculations, there are 525,600 minutes in a year. The report says 90,000 Christians were slain in 2016. That means every minutes of every day in 2016, a brother or sister in Christ was murdered simply for being a Christian.

This Christian nightmare is not the occasional random murder by some lone-wolf psychopath. It is systemic persecution that includes rape, forced marriage, torture and “conversion” to Islam at the point of a sword—the literal point of a sword or muzzle of a machine gun.

Nations and world leaders must face up to the true nature of this slaughter. When Boko Haram kidnapped dozens of little girls in Nigeria, it was not political. The “Chibok girls” were Christians, and their kidnappers were Islamists who genuinely believed that, according to the Quran, they had a right to enslave, buy, sell and rape young Christian captives. I’m not saying all Islamics believe that, of course, but it is an indisputable fact that state-sponsored and non-state murder and persecution of Christians is largely an Islamic issue.

According to the annual watch list published by another organization, Open Doors, the top 10 countries where intense persecution of Christians takes place were all more than 50 percent Muslim. Furthermore, 40 of the top 50 such countries are predominantly Muslim. While the United Nations obsesses over Israeli apartment houses in East Jerusalem, it is largely silent in condemning Islamic apostasy laws and the persecution of Christians in 40 nations.

Religious freedom is a basic human rights issue. No one, ever, anywhere should be persecuted because of their religion. Their houses of worship should never be torched. Their clergy should never be imprisoned. It should never be illegal to change your faith, abandon your faith or preach your faith in a way that calls others to join it. What ought to be illegal, what ought

to be condemned and prosecuted by the U.N., is the Islamic murder of Christians, Jews or those of any other faith or of no faith. The international outcry has been feeble, to say the least. At worst, it has been collaborative, especially from the U.N. Yet Article 18 of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights states clearly:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

It is time for an unceasing clamor, an international din of outraged voices, to be raised demanding this carnage stop and apostasy laws be condemned and repealed. Ninety thousand? Ninety thousand Christians murdered in one year? This must stop!

If Islam is the religion of peace many claim it to be, the community of nations must demand peace for the Christians and others who are finding little or no peace in Islamic nations.
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Dr. Mark Rutland *is president of both Global Servants () and the National Institute of Christian Leadership (). A renowned communicator and New York Times best-selling author, he has more than 30 years of experience in organizational leadership, having served as a senior pastor and a university president.*