

Christians, Israeli Jews Fight Persecution Together

Christians and Jews in Israel are banding together to stamp out what they say could become a trend of Christian **persecution** in the Holy Land.

Last February, vandals spray painted blasphemous and **anti-Christian graffiti** on the Narkis Street Baptist House in Jerusalem. It's not the first attack there. Five years ago someone set fire to the sanctuary, and in 1982 the previous wooden structure was burned to the ground.

"There are many other Christian institutions across the land that have also been attacked, and we feel we should show solidarity with them and with Israeli leaders that have spoken out," Chuck Kopp, senior pastor of the Narkis Street Congregation, told CBN News.

Since the beginning of the year, five churches have been vandalized, but no arrests or indictments were made. While that might not sound critical, some are concerned where that could lead.

David Pileggi, rector of Christ Church in Jerusalem's Old City, said the trend is "worrisome."

"I do think the issue is serious; it's not dangerous. Israel is a democracy. There's a huge amount of freedom for us as Christians in this country, but at the same time there is a trend, a growing trend of extremism and I think this is worrisome," Pileggi said.

"This type of thing could very easily escalate if there's any atmosphere of intolerance," Kopp warned.

It's not just the Christians who are concerned. Israeli

community leaders met with Christians recently to express their solidarity.

"These actions, we cannot tolerate them, not as Jews, not as human beings, me not as a rabbi, so we do condemn them and we do ask for your forgiveness that these things happened," Rabbi Ada Zavidov of the synagogue Kehilat Har-El said.

"When you ignore things, events like this, the graffiti and the rest, then worse things are down the road—persecution, discrimination, hate crimes and God knows the rest," Prof. Elihu Richter, with the Center for Genocide Prevention, told CBN News.

Dr. Mordechai Zaken, head of the government's Desk of Minority Affairs in the Ministry of Public Security, said it's not enough to show solidarity.

"We have to make sure the police or the authorities will find those who are responsible ... to make sure they will be caught and brought into trial and then continue to educate those who are responsible for those kind of things," Zaken said.

Prof. Richter wants the government to adopt a policy of "zero" for incitement.

"I want them to impose a policy of zero for hate crimes and incitement...as we demand of the rest of the world around us," he said.