

# Israel's Prime Minister Stands Up for Iran's Persecuted Christians

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood up for Christians in Iran, blasting the Islamic regime for hypocrisy after one its leaders tweeted out a Christmas greeting even as the government raids Christian meetings and imprisons their leaders.

Iran's Foreign Minister sent out a tweet a few days before Christmas, including the message:

"A very happy and peaceful Christmas to all. May Christ's universal message of peace be embraced in the coming year."

Netanyahu took exception to the Christmas greeting from a representative of one of the world's harshest persecutors of Christians.

"I wonder what the Christians jailed this month in Iran would think about that tweet," he said in a taped message posted on his Facebook and Twitter pages.

CBN News has reported on the harsh treatment of Christians in the Islamic Republic of Iran. House churches are illegal and are often raided by security officials who arrest the congregants and jail the leaders. Bibles, literature and even office equipment are confiscated by the government.

"Imagine praying quietly in your home, surrounded by your family—and all of the sudden, armed thugs burst in and drag you away to prison. They torture you merely for practicing your Christian faith. Welcome to Iran. Saying 'Merry Christmas' while jailing Christians in your own country is the height of hypocrisy," said Netanyahu.

Despite the persecution, the church in Iran is one of the fastest growing churches in the world, as tens of thousands of Muslims are abandoning Islam to follow Jesus Christ.

Young people in Iran are especially disenchanted with the harsh Islamic regime and Netanyahu reached out to them in his message, saying: "I wonder what Iranian youth would think about that tweet, but sadly the regime bans Twitter. Except, of course, if you're a high ranking official."

It's not the first time Netanyahu has drawn attention to the plight of Christians in Iran. Addressing hundreds of Christian journalists in October, he encouraged them to highlight the suffering of the church in the Islamic nation.

"Profile the brave Christian leaders jailed for practicing their faith. Sit with the families, the school teachers jailed for years merely for converting to Christianity... Call out the lies of President (Hassan) Rouhani, who promised in 2013 that all religions would 'feel justice' in Iran while so many Christians live there in constant terror," he said.

"Some world leaders are willing to ignore this repression and seek to appease Iran, but I am not one of them," Netanyahu continued. "I think that how a country treats religious minorities is a very good indicator of how it will treat its fellow citizens and its neighbors."

In this most recent message, Netanyahu takes a familial tone with Christians in Iran.

"We stand with you, brothers and sisters. The world stands with you." {eoa}

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