

ORU President Makes Christian-Jewish History for Persecution's Sake

At a news conference on Monday in Jerusalem, Empowered21 President and Global Co-Chair Billy Wilson joined with prominent leaders of major Jewish and Christian global organizations to sign a historic joint initiative calling on world leaders to take firm action to halt the brutal persecution of Christians in the Middle East.

The letter was sent to 95 democratic countries and co-signed by Wilson, president and co-chairman of the Empowered21 Global Council and president of Oral Roberts University; International Christian Embassy Jerusalem executive director Jürgen Bühler; and World Jewish Congress President Ronald S. Lauder. The joint initiative was unveiled at the Feast of Tabernacles celebration sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

"This letter gives an important voice to Christians who are being persecuted and even killed for their faith around the world, especially in the Middle East," Wilson said. "In this age of technology, we have a greater awareness of these types of alarming oppressions and a greater responsibility to protect Christian communities. Most Christ-followers in these difficult situations will not respond with violence and therefore need global governmental authorities to stand with them against these injustices."

He continued: "I was humbled that Mr. Lauder, whose people have persevered through some of the greatest persecution in the world's history, joined to sign this historic letter. To see this prominent Jewish leader stand with Christians in this moment should speak volumes to these world leaders."

According to The Voice of the Martyrs, there are more Christian martyrs today than there were in 100 A.D.—in the days of the Roman Empire. Of the top 10 countries of the worst Christian persecution listed by Open Doors, eight are in the Middle East.

The rise of ISIS, or the Islamic State, has continued to raise concern for the safety of Christians in the Middle East. This information from World Watch Monitor shows some examples of the threat:

“Where Islamic State has gained power, their reign of terror is driving all Christians and other minorities out. Before Islamic State began its rampage, about 3,000 Christians had been living in Mosul, down from 35,000 after the 2003 war. Now, there are virtually no Christians left. The mainly Christian town of Qarakosh has been abandoned as well, along with other villages; the last Christians have left the northern town of Bartella. Tens of thousands of Christians have become internally displaced, fleeing to the Kurdish region, with cities like Erbil and Dohuk taking in thousands of them.”

Also on hand to speak at the news conference was Canon Andrew White, known as the “Vicar of Baghdad,” an Anglican cleric who has become one of the leading voices of the persecuted Christians of Iraq.

“The current plight of Middle East Christians is heart-breaking, and even Western churches have to do more to bring the suffering of our fellow believers to the forefront worldwide,” said Dr. Bühler. “But to have a prominent global Jewish leader lend his voice to this moral call for protecting the region’s persecuted Christians is unprecedented in modern times. We welcome all others of goodwill who will take a stand now for these vulnerable ancient Christian communities.”

“Just as Christians defend Jews against anti-Semitism, just as

Christians support Israel, we Jews have an obligation to speak out against the growing persecution of Christians in many parts of the world," Lauder said in explaining his participation as head of the World Jewish Congress.

"Islamist extremists have launched a full-fledged assault on our Western values, on our civilization, and Jews and Christians must work hand in hand to defeat this threat. For too long, the world has remained silent in the face of this evil. We must act before it is too late," Lauder added.

Read the letter here.