

Paying the Ultimate Price for Truth

✖ *"First they came for the communists, but I was not a communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unions, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew so I did not speak out. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me."* –Martin Niemöller, German Pastor & Theologian

Can you imagine life without a Bible? Or a world where owning a Bible, or even talking about Scripture, would land you in jail? Thousands of Christians across the Middle East live that life every day. In nations like Iraq, Iran and Pakistan some Christians are persecuted—and even killed—for choosing to worship Jesus Christ. And as the West watches the continuing unrest in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere in the Arab world, the persecution of Christians is accelerating, not abating.

Sources report that in Egypt, groups like the Muslim Brotherhood are using the overthrow of Hosni Mubarek to solidify their own position in a new government structure. According to its website, the Muslim Brotherhood is "the largest Islamic group in the world," active in more than 80 countries and known by different names, like " Hamas" in the land controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

The Brotherhood's official English site also records that while he was still a young man, their founder, Hassan Al-Banna, worked to "resist Christian missions that had come to [his] town." They advocate Islam as a way of life and using the Quran as the basis of family structure and law. "It is probably safe to say that this organization hopes to follow in the footsteps of its founder by ending any Christian influence

in the nations in which it holds power,” says Frank Wright, NRB President & CEO. “Right now, movement toward ‘new governments’ in the Middle East does not spell freedom for the Church.”

If you bear the name of Jesus Christ and seek to live for Him and in accordance with the Bible, this impacts you. Every Believer is part of One Church, and Arab Christians might as well be sitting next to you in the pew. They are your brothers and sisters, and they are in great peril. As Easter approaches, pray for those who are literally laying down their lives for simply speaking Truth to their families, friends and neighbors.

Western Believers must also speak out. Earlier this year, the NRB Board of Directors passed a Resolution calling on President Obama to “make a bold public statement against the international persecution of Christians, and to further enforce that position through his choice of Executive Branch appointments and through his foreign policy decisions.” NRB Members like Open Doors USA and Voice of the Martyrs tell us that right now, Believers in many Arab nations are either running for their lives, or staying in their ancestral homes and losing their lives.

And NRB members are not alone in speaking out. On January 20th, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing in the U.S. House of Representatives to examine the persecution of Christians in Iraq and Egypt. One week later, a bipartisan group of eight Members, led by Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA)—a stalwart defender of Christians internationally—urged Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to focus on this issue at the U.S. embassies in Baghdad and Cairo. Their letter asked her to make these individuals solely responsible for handling issues related to religious freedom, in order to focus attention on the persecution of Christians.

Our own political leader, President Barack Obama, has often

stated his commitment to international human rights, but has so far remained silent regarding the specific plight of Arab Christians. "Easter offers our President a natural opportunity to affirm his support for the rights of Christians in the Arab world to live, work, and exercise their faith freely," concluded Dr. Wright.

"Since forms of 'democracy' in Arab nations have not historically meant free religious speech and expression for anyone who is non-Muslim, Arabs who bear the name of Christ will be driven underground more rapidly unless a figure as influential as our President publicly states that he is paying careful attention. And if we do not speak up for our brethren on the other side of the globe who are being persecuted today, will there be anyone left to speak up when persecution comes to our own shores?"

Laurel A. MacLeod is a director of communications of the NRB.