

Sudanese Islamists: We Will Never Forgive Christians for Not Being Muslims

A Bible school opens its doors for the first time in months as a declaration is made over loudspeakers at a nearby mosque: "We will never forgive the Christians for not being Muslims. Their institutions have no place in Sudan." Elsewhere, Christian children are told by their Muslim cohorts that they will be killed because they are enemies of Allah. These incidents are just two examples that illustrate the increased levels of persecution Christians are experiencing in **Sudan** since South Sudan gained its independence on July 9, 2011.

The Sudanese government, which has committed acts of genocide against various minority groups, is ratcheting up its persecution of the Christian minority in Sudan. Many Christians, fearing this increased level of **persecution**, have fled to South Sudan. Unfortunately, the border has been closed because of conflicts that have erupted along the border. Many Christians now find themselves trapped in Sudan, living under an increasingly repressive and openly hostile regime.

President Omar al-Bashir has declared that with the separation of the Christian South, Sudan will now become a "purely Islamic state." This statement by the president has been reflected in the policies of the government. The Sudanese government has started to enforce Sharia law more strictly on all people, including non-Muslims. Now, Christian women found not covering their heads with a hijab (veil) are arrested for violating Shariah. Also, Christian institutions across the country are being shut down by the government or destroyed by mobs of Muslims unchecked by the police.

Last April, Gerif West Bible School in Khartoum, the capital

of Sudan, was attacked by a mob of Muslims. The mob bulldozed the school to the ground and then set the ruins on fire. Before the attack, a hardline Muslim sheikh leading the attack, Muhammad Abdelkrim, urged **Muslims** to not tolerate any Christian presence in Sudan. He shouted that no Muslims should have any dealings with Christians because they are 'infidels.' It was reported that the police stood by and watched the attack on Gerif West, showing, at best, ambivalence towards Christian persecution in Sudan.

Classes resumed on Oct. 15 as anti-Christian messages emanated from a nearby mosque's loudspeakers. "We are expecting the level of persecution to rise in Sudan in the coming days," a pastor who worked at Gerif West told reporters.

It's not only **Christian institutions** under attack in Sudan. Christians as individuals find themselves marginalized from society and under threat from their Muslim neighbors. Many live in a constant state of fear as persecution intensifies.

Sudanese Christian Jackson Taban told an ICC representative: "Sudan has turned into a hostile place for Christians. Churches have been destroyed and Christian schools have been closed. Persecution has become so bad that many are afraid to be caught carrying Bibles for fear of being arrested or being harassed by the Muslim community. We have to pray secretly in house churches because the church building we conducted services in was deliberately destroyed."

Taban is one of thousands of Christians who fled to South Sudan because of the persecution they were experiencing in Sudan. Jackson knew it was time for his family to flee when Muslim children told his children that, "we are going to kill you all because you are enemies of Allah."

Jackson and his family now live in one of the many refugee camps in South Sudan. The South Sudanese government is attempting to relocate these refugees, but the process has

been slow for the young nation, leaving thousands of Christians waiting.

The stories of Jackson and the children of Gerif West Bible School are only a few examples of the persecution Christians are facing in Sudan. As many as 500,000 Christians are still trapped in Sudan, living under an increasingly repressive government and society. Many, who attempted to flee to South Sudan before the border was closed, now live in makeshift camps on the outskirts of Khartoum, some living under nothing more than a plastic sheet.

Efforts are being made to evacuate the neediest women and children, but as long as the border is closed, many will have to stay in a country where they remain persecuted and unwanted and may eventually face the full wrath of a government that is no stranger to genocide.

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