

The Smashed Statue of Jesus You Probably Never Heard About

A statue of Jesus, several crosses and some statues of saints were found smashed on the floor of a church in Jaffa last week but unlike the high-profile desecration of a crucifix in Lebanon by IDF soldiers in April, the crime went largely unnoticed.

The attack happened in the St. Anthony of Padua Church located in Jaffa, a neighborhood of Tel Aviv, on August 16, and police have arrested a suspect for questioning.

The matter was reported in the Catholic news outlet Zenit, presented as part and parcel of the wave of attacks against Christians in Israel, which has most notably included Ultra Orthodox Jewish men spitting on members of the clergy.

So why has this not been given the wall-to-wall media coverage that surrounded the same crime in Lebanon? Both acts of vandalism were unacceptable, both were duly punished, but the key difference is that the perpetrator in this case was a Muslim Arab from Israel.

The vast majority of Israel's Arab population is Muslim, with a small minority of Christians, and the young man who allegedly entered the church to smash what he perceived as idols was a Muslim in his twenties from the local area.

Jaffa is one of the oldest ports in the world, famous for being the place from which the biblical prophet Jonah fled God's charge to preach to Nineveh, and then later where Peter received his vision of "unclean" animals on a sheet from heaven, letting him know that Gentiles were now to be included in the commonwealth of Israel.



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Today the ancient city is a popular tourist destination, rich in culture with a mixed population including many Arab Israelis and is, by and large, a place of peaceful coexistence.

Zenit cited statistics from the Religious Freedom Data Center (RFDC) and painted the incident as part of a wider problem of anti-Christian harassment in Israel.

According to RFDC data, 76 incidents were recorded between April and June this year, over half of which involved spitting. Almost 90% of those attacks, which also included harassment, vandalism and physical abuse took place in Jerusalem, primarily in the Old City.

RFDC is an independent Jewish Israeli organization established three years ago by Yiscah Harani, a tour guide, scholar, and advisor on Christianity and pilgrimage, along with other Jewish Israeli citizens, clergy, and tour guides, to advocate for Christian communities in Israel that had been experiencing harassment.

Their goal is not only to report such incidents, but also to "foster a human, direct, and ongoing connection between Christian institutions and Israeli-Jewish volunteers," believing that as Israel's capital, Jerusalem should serve as a "global model of respect, tolerance, and the full realization of freedom of worship for all religions."

As repugnant as the harassment in Israel has been, Christians face far less oppression in the Jewish state than those in Muslim nations where physical attacks, kidnappings, destruction and murder are commonplace.

The fact that it was a Jewish Israeli organization Zenit turned to in order to establish the extent of harassment in

Israel reveals the fact that dealing with discrimination against Christians is a matter of concern in Israeli society.

As RFDC figures show, there have been around 100 incidents targeting Christians in Israel each year, but these are dwarfed by the attacks on Christians in many of the countries of the Middle East, both in number and severity. Yet vandalism and violence committed by Islamists against Christians in Muslim nations is often completely overlooked by the media.

Commenting on the disparity in reporting on the attacks in Lebanon and Jaffa, Nathaniel Buzolic posted on Instagram:

“It wasn’t so long ago that the internet was flooded with a single image of an IDF soldier breaking a statue of Jesus in southern Lebanon. And every pro-Palestinian and mainstream media account jumped on that story for weeks because it gave them an unmatched opportunity to vilify Jews to the Christian world. But when an Arab Muslim does the exact same thing a few months later, you don’t hear a single thing about it.”

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