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**Excerpts from**

**A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2011- 2013**

**by Patriarch Gregorios III**

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Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

Of Alexandria and of Jerusalem

**FOREWORD**

“I am writing this letter in Damascus where we have been experiencing a harsh, bloody, painful and long Way of the Cross that has stretched down every road in Syria. All Syrians have been living this Way of the Cross for more than two years now.”

“In all the countries around the world where Christians suffer for their faith, Our Lord is persecuted too – as he revealed to St Paul on the road to Damascus.”

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction – Christianity, persecution and exodus**

* “Our people are very afraid. We were expecting trouble but nothing to this degree of brutality.” With emotion evident in his voice, Bishop Kyrillos William of Assiut, Egypt talks to staff at Aid to the Church in Need the morning after a spate of violence against Christians concentrated within less than 48 hours. He said that nearly 80 churches and other Coptic centres including convents, Church-run schools and clinics had been attacked all across the country. He explained that fear of attack meant that thousands of Christians were too afraid to leave their homes.”
* “Christians have fallen victim to widespread and intense acts of violence motivated in part at least by religious hatred. Furthermore, in the period under review, 2011–2013, evidence both first and second-hand suggests that the violence and intimidation in question is now more serious than in preceding years. Taken as a whole, the oppression raises grave questions about the long-term survival of Christianity in regions where until recently the Church has been both numerous in terms of faithful, and active in terms of the part it has played in public life.”
* “A close comparison of the impact of the violence on the various religious communities concerned points to two key forces of change: firstly that as large and well-established communities, often with a long history, Christians are disproportionately vulnerable to attack, and secondly that their reaction has been to flee regions of conflict with little prospect of returning, at least in the short-term. Nor indeed are these twin problems – vulnerability and exodus – passing phenomena.”
* “Christianity may yet remain the largest world religion, but its claims to universality – a truly global presence on all five continents – may soon be lost as it becomes the prime victim in the emergence of theocratic states where minority faith groups – most especially Christians – have no place, except perhaps as third-class citizens.”

**"Global perspectives: 75 percent of persecution is against Christians**

* “If this prognosis sounds ominous, the start of the reporting period – spring 2011 – began on a distinctly unpromising note. Even before the Arab Spring began, an event which was to have devastating consequences for Christianity, leading human rights researchers and commentators declared something long suspected but not yet proven – that is until now: that Christianity is the world’s most persecuted religion. In October 2010, a report issued by the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) concluded that at least 75 per cent of all religious persecution was directed against Christians. It released findings showing that about 100 million Christians experienced some sort of discrimination, oppression or persecution.” 2
* “… in November 2012 German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared before a synod of the country’s Lutheran Church that: “Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world.” 3
* “Foremost among the issues considered was the preponderance of anti- Christian violence, notably attacks on churches and Christians’ homes and businesses, as well as kidnapping of faithful for reasons connected to their faith or religious identity. Linked to this are court cases involving Christians suffering persecution – the number of cases, the nature of the (alleged) offences, and the outcome of the court’s deliberations. This is particularly relevant concerning Blasphemy accusations.”
* “A fourth but by no means lesser concern has been efforts to track social changes affecting Christians. Examples under this category include access to employment, education and healthcare, where social stigmatisation has had a habit of making it impossible for Christians to claim their rights in spite of entitlement under the law.”
* “… by far the most significant conclusion of the 2013 edition of Persecuted and Forgotten? Is that in 20 of the 30 countries under review the situation for Christians had worsened.”
* “… in the majority, Christians had suffered such a severe decline in their fortunes that many now lived in fear of their safety, were under pressure to leave or change their religion, or at least were at a distinct economic and social disadvantage on account of their beliefs.”

**Middle East – Arab Spring, Christian Winter**

* “Of greatest concern is the Middle East. Here, the Arab Spring has placed unparalleled pressures on ancient Christian communities whose capacity to weather storms of violence and institutionalised discrimination has been tested to a degree not seen in modern times ... This included bombing of churches, physical attacks on Christians’ homes and shops, kidnapping (especially of women and in some cases, clergy), as well as public statements in the media and by militant groups, specifically aimed against Christians. An upsurge in anti- Christian violence and intimidation was one factor, perhaps even the dominant one, in a mass movement of Christians.”
* “This is the impact of the Arab Spring. Syria, so recently the country of choice for Iraqi Christians seeking sanctuary, has now become the nightmare that the refugees thought they had left behind ... Entire populations of predominantly Christian towns and villages around Homs suddenly fled for their lives in early 2012.”
* “Syrian Christian refugees in Jordan who reported being told: “Don’t celebrate Easter or you will be killed like your Christ.”6 By the summer of 2013, Syrian refugees were thought to have topped two million.” 7
* “Already disenfranchised by the Islamist agenda of President Mohammed Morsi, a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Christians’ hopes of a fresh start after his July 2013 fall from power were soon dashed. Violence against the country’s Coptic Christians in August 2013 saw nearly 80 churches and other Church establishments attacked in the single-biggest blow to the Middle East’s largest Christian community, standing at about 10 million. Already, 200,000 Christians had left the country since the fall of President Mubarak in February 2011.”
* “… an end to the presence of the Church in its ancient heartlands is no longer a remote possibility but a very real and pressing threat.”

**Militant Islamism – an inter-continental threat**

* “Many of the problems faced by Christians in the Middle East are similar in nature and extent elsewhere in the world: the common link in many cases is militant Islamism. The period in question has seen an unprecedented upsurge in fundamentalist Islam, which specifically seeks to eradicate the presence of Christianity wherever the faith is to be found. Attacks from Islamists which were few and far between are now commonplace and Christians are paying with their lives. Community after community has suffered, attracting comparatively minimal international media coverage.”
* “While militant Islamism has had huge impact in the Middle East, the problems it has created for Christians are to be seen in the context of broader issues, notably an upsurge of general instability, a breakdown of law and order and poverty caused at least in part by forced displacement. In broad terms the same applies to many parts of Africa. Here the specific threat to Christians posed by Islamism is brought into sharp relief as a result of it emerging as part of a mix of problems – political, economic and social.

The most obvious case of this is Nigeria. In April 2011, the Christian Association of Nigeria reported that 430 churches were attacked in violence associated with the Presidential elections that brought Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the south, to power. 65,000 people were forced from their homes and 800 people lay dead. The violence continued thereafter, targeting not only Christians but also security structures, government buildings, markets and even Muslim communities. Christians, especially in the north, were terrorised by attacks on churches packed with faithful that took place almost every Sunday.   
  
The perpetrators of the violence, militant group Boko Haram (which means “Western Education is Forbidden”), declared what they described as “a war on Christians”. A Boko Haram spokesman said: “We will create so much effort to end the Christian presence in our push to have a proper Islamic state that the Christians won't be able to stay.” In Boko Haram’s home region of northeast Nigeria, the Church was crushed. By the summer of 2013 it was reported that half of the churches in the 37-parish Diocese of Maiduguri had been damaged or destroyed within one year. Research for the year to October 2012 showed that, of the 1,201 Christians killed for their faith worldwide, 791 were from Nigeria. But Nigeria was by no means alone.”

* “Then there is Tanzania, where armed Islamists have fired on churches and priests in the island of Zanzibar in a cycle of violence that only made the headlines when suspected Islamists threw acid on two British 18-year-old girls caught singing during Ramadan.”
* “Islamist fighters in Mali, who in 2012 mounted one of the most ferocious attacks by fundamentalist Muslims in modern times. By August of that year, leading Church sources reported that 200,000 Christians from northern Mali had fled the Islamist-controlled region for neighbouring Algeria. Few parts of Africa were now free from the threat of militant Islamist movements, whose objective was pan-continental domination and whose primary targets of religious hatred were Christians.”
* “… in spite of vigorous efforts to radicalise many communities where Islam is predominant or in the ascendant, many – if not most – local people remain resistant to extremism and want to live in peace and prosperity with their neighbours. This is evidenced by the Muslims who in the summer of 2013 stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Egypt’s Christians and repulsed advancing extremist mobs bent on destroying churches as well as Christians’ homes and businesses.”
* “… it is the Arab Spring that has been the most important development. A movement that started out with much promise for the advance of democracy has proved disastrous for Christians, whose very presence in some parts of the Middle East now hangs by a thread. A domino effect of anti-Christian persecution and turbulence is now clearly visible, starting in Iraq, moving to Syria and now spreading to Egypt – three Middle East countries which have had sizeable and influential Christian communities. Now, the Christian population has suffered a rapid decline as a sea-change in political attitudes takes place, favouring a theocratic system. Taken as a whole, with the possible exception of Jordan, no Middle East country has over the past three years seen anything other than a decline in the fortunes of Christians. But the problems have spread far beyond the Arab Spring, with militant Islamism representing a major threat, especially in Africa but also in key regions of the Asian subcontinent. There Christianity is persecuted as never before.”
* “Describing how police saved him by intervening just as Islamists were breaking through his front door, Coptic Catholic Bishop Joannes Zakaria of Luxor urged ACN to keep in touch, at least so that others might know the witness of faith shown by those willing to give their lives for their beliefs.”

**AFGHANISTAN  
  
Population: 29.1 million  
Religions: Muslim 99%  
Christian Population: Less than 5,000**

* “Afghanistan’s one remaining public church was destroyed in March 2010. The church’s disappearance gives an indication of the extent of the problems experienced by the country’s small Christian community whose religious faith and practice is a closely guarded secret, all the more so if any one of them is a convert. Apostasy is deemed a “crime” punishable by death ...”
* “By 2011, President Karzai was implementing the council’s request that Shari‘a be enforced nationwide. The previous year he mounted what was termed a “convert hunt” after an Afghan television channel broadcast images of people being baptised.”

**NIGERIA**

**Population: 158 million  
Religions: Muslim 40%  
Christian Population: 63 million (40%)**

* “In a statement to ACN staff visiting conflict-ridden north-east Nigeria, Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos, President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, said: “In north-east Nigeria, they can burn our churches, they can attack our homes but they cannot destroy our spirit. We have suffered persecution, discrimination and harassment but they can never take away our faith and our hope in the risen Lord.” The May 2013 ACN trip, taking in visits to a dozen or more churches damaged or destroyed by persecution, came soon after a religious freedom watchdog produced research showing that in the year to October 2012, 791 of the 1,201 killings of Christians worldwide took place in Nigeria. 326 Nigeria was the most dangerous place in the world for Christians. The reports coincided with statements made by a priest from Borno state, north-east Nigeria, claiming that 50 of the 52 Catholic churches in the region had been forcibly abandoned, damaged or destroyed. At the same time, the Nigerian Catholic Bishops’ Conference stated that since 2007 more than 700 churches had been attacked. In spite of heightened security – notably armed guards outside each church – suicide bomb attacks on churches packed with Sunday worshippers continued through 2013. The violence followed two years of vicious attacks against Christians, with attacks on Catholic cathedrals such as Zaria and Bauchi. The violence peaked after the disputed presidential elections of April 2011 when, according to the Christian Association of Nigeria, 430 churches were destroyed or damaged.”
* “In many if not most cases, attacks against Christians have been carried out by the Islamist terror group Boko Haram, which is not satisfied by the imposition of Shari‘a law in 12 of the country’s 36 states, where Muslims are very numerous. The group demands ‘pure’ Islamic rule and wants to overthrow secular rule and stamp out Christian influence. Angered by reports of Christians carrying out reprisal attacks against Muslims and mosques in June 2012, a Boko Haram spokesman said: “The Nigerian state and Christians are our enemies and we will be launching attacks on the Nigerian state and its security apparatus as well as churches until we achieve our goal of establishing an Islamic state.” 327 It followed a March 2012 Boko Haram declaration of a “war on Christians” aimed at eliminating them from parts of the country: “We will create so much effort to have an Islamic state that Christians will not be able to stay.”
* January 2011: “Six villages near Jos in Plateau State were attacked between midnight and 3am by militants. Five people were killed. Following the attacks on Nding Jok, Lo Hala, Wereh Fan and Ratatis in the Barkin Ladi local government area, police took up to two hours to arrive. State security arrested 29 men thought to be involved in the attacks, who were heavily armed with automatic weapons, axes and machetes. Security forces also allegedly found 25 automatic weapons in a nearby mosque.” 332
* January 2011: “A police officer from Abuja led militants on a killing spree in the predominantly Christian Barkin Ladi Government Area just outside Jos. 14 people in four villages were killed.” 333
* March 2011: “Two young Muslim men were killed when the bomb they were taking to the Church of Christ in Nigeria in Nasarawa Gwom exploded prematurely. One member of the congregation, Moses Samuel, was injured by the explosion and admitted to Jos University Hospital. Nine Christians were attacked with knives the same morning at Duala Junction, a man and two women were killed while the others were treated at the same hospital as Mr Samuel.” 335
* April 2011: “Up to 600 people were killed and 288 churches were burned down in the country’s northern states in the week following the election of Christian Goodluck Jonathan as the president of Nigeria. Some Muslim groups claimed the election was rigged.” 336
* May 2011: “A pastor’s wife and three of his children were among 17 people killed when extremists attacked Kurum village, Bauchi State. Hearing the cries of his daughter Sum, Pastor James Musa Rike ran to her, only to find that a serious machete wound to her stomach had splayed out her intestines. She told her father the militants cried “See how your Jesus will save you” as they attacked, but the girl replied that Jesus had already saved her.” 337
* June 2011: “Five people died when churches and police stations in Maiduguri were targeted by Islamist militants: two bystanders were caught up in an explosion when a bomb thrown at St Patrick’s Church fell short of its target; and three militants were killed in a gun battle with police.” 338
* August/September 2011: “More than 100 Christians were killed in a series of attacks in Plateau State in which the military were implicated. Survivors of the attack on Vwang Kogot village – which saw 14 deaths including a pregnant woman – said attackers were assisted by men in Nigerian Army uniforms. State Governor Jonah Jang said: “I am convinced that the armed forces are being polluted with the religious crisis in this country” and requested their immediate withdrawal.” 341
* December 2011/January 2012: “President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in parts of the country following attacks by Boko Haram. The measure was enforced in four states in the north-east, the centre and the west of the country, with the president vowing to “crush” Boko Haram and closing international borders in the process. It followed a spate of violence climaxing in a number of attacks on Christmas Day, including churches in the cities of Madalla, Jos, Kano, Damaturu and Gadaka. In one attack that day, 44 people were killed and more than 80 others were injured when extremists targeted Mass-goers at St Theresa’s Catholic Church in Madalla, near the Nigerian capital, Abuja. Most of the dead were very young and included four year-old Emmanuel Dike, who was killed alongside his father, his brother and his sister. Also dead were Chiemerie Nwachukwu, an eight-month-old baby who was killed alongside his mother. Their bishop, Martin Igwe Uzoukwu of Minna, told ACN: “Our people have suffered so much but our response should not be one of anger but one seeking peace and justice.” 343
* January 2012: “A fresh wave of violence against churchgoers left 27 people dead. The religiously-motivated massacres, three in as many days, targeted Christians in Mubi and Gombe, both towns in the north-east where President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency the week before. Some 17 other deaths have been reported in other regions. At least nine people died and 19 were injured in a shooting at an Evangelical church in Gombe city in the north-east. Pastor Johnson Jauro told reporters that gunmen burst into his church killing people including his wife. He said: “The attackers started shooting sporadically. They shot through the window of the church. Many members who attended the church service were also injured.” Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attack, carried out by extremists who rushed over from a nearby mosque. Up to 20 people died in Mubi, Adamawa state as gunmen opened fire in a town hall where Christian traders were meeting, holding prayers.” 344
* February 2012: “Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack during Sunday service at a Protestant church in Jos. At least three people died, including a young girl, and 50 others were wounded. The media quoted witnesses saying a car “packed with explosives” rammed the gate of a perimeter fence at the church and exploded a few yards from a wall of the 800-seat church. Boko Haram spokesman Abdul Qaqa told reporters: “We attacked simply because it’s a church and we can decide to attack any other church. We have just started.” 347
* March 2012: “Islamist group Boko Haram declared a “war on Christians” saying that it would launch a series of “coordinated” attacks in order to “eradicate Christians from certain parts of the country”. A Nigerian news website quoted an unnamed spokesman for Boko Haram as saying: “We will create so much effort to end the Christian presence in our push to have a proper Islamic state that Christians won’t be able to stay.” Human rights group International Christian Concern’s Jonathan Racho described the reports as “alarming”. He added: “Since Christmas, Boko Haram has martyred about 100 Christians in northern Nigeria. They think they have not met their goal for eradicating Christians. They are prepared for more bloodshed… I urge Christians around the world to contact their governments and ask them to get Nigeria to protect its citizens.”
* October 2012: “Suicide bomb attack during morning Mass at St Rita’s Catholic Church, Kaduna, in the north of the city, left four people dead and 160 injured. Among the dead were three members of the choir who were closest to the centre of the blast, which as well as badly damaging the church, completely demolished the Shrine to Our Lady of Fatima outside.” 352
* July 2013: “Christians in northern Nigeria expressed alarm at the growing “phenomenon” of Christian girls under the age of 18 being abducted and forced to convert to Islam ... A Boko Haram statement read: “Kidnapping Christian women is part of the new efforts to attack Christians and force them to leave the north.” 355
* August 2013: “Islamist extremists were accused of cutting the throats of 44 villagers during a raid on Dumba village in Borno State, north-east Nigeria. According to an official from the National Emergency Management Agency, the attackers gouged out eyes of several survivors.” 356

**PAKISTAN**

**Population: 175 million  
Religions: Muslim 95%   
Hindu: 1.5%   
Christian Population: 2.5 million (1.5%)**

* “Under 295 B&C of the Penal Code, known as the *Blasphemy Laws*, dishonouring the Prophet is punishable by death and disrespect to the Qur’an can incur life imprisonment.”
* “45-year-old Asia Bibi, who in November 2010 became the first woman in Pakistan to be sentenced to death for blasphemy. The Christian mother of five was arrested because of verbal insults she is alleged to have made against the prophet Mohammed. While Asia Bibi still remains in jail with the death sentence hanging over her head.”
* “Since 2001 at least 50 Christians have been killed by mob violence after the blasphemy laws were invoked as a pretext.”
* “Christian schools in several areas of Pakistan were closed on Monday 9th March 2013 in a protest for better protection following a 3,000 strong mob torching more than 100 Christian homes in Lahore’s Joseph Colony.”
* “According to Fr Jill John the rape of Christian women in Punjab has become “common practice”. 383 It is estimated that at least 300 Christian women – including minors – are kidnapped, often sexually abused, and forced to convert to Islam every year. 384 This number includes 18-year-old Mariah Manisha, a Catholic girl from Khushpur, who was killed in November 2011 by her Muslim kidnapper. Fr Zafal Iqbal told Fides: “[T]he girl resisted. She did not want to convert to Islam, and she did not marry the man, who killed her for this. She is a martyr.” 385 Peter Jacob, of the Catholic Church’s National Commission for Justice and Peace, said “[T]he number of attacks against women in Pakistan is four times higher than the cases that [are] reported” and many crimes “based on sex pass in silence”. 386
* June 2011: “At least 10 Christian families in a village in the Punjab Province fled their homes after an attempt to force an eight-year-old boy to convert to Islam turned ugly. Little Ihtesham (known as Sunny) Masih, who lived with his family in Khanewal district’s Mian Channu area, met Muslim boys from a nearby religious school while on an errand to fetch ice. The boy’s great uncle Yousaf Masih said the boys asked Sunny to recite the Kalma, Islam’s proclamation of Mohammed as Prophet, but Sunny refused. The boys began hitting Sunny and only stopped when his uncle, Dildar Masih, passed by and intervened. The uncle rebuked the boys for trying to force his nephew to convert. A little while later, Dildar Masih was accused of blasphemy, and 500 people besieged his home. Dildar was taken to a police station but within 30 minutes 2,000 Muslims were outside demanding he be handed over to them. Under pressure, police filed a blasphemy case against Dildar. Unsatisfied, Muslim clerics urged people to “take revenge” via their mosque’s loudspeakers the following day.” 393
* August 2011: “Christian men Ishfaq Munawar and Naeem Masih were returning home after an early morning prayer service at a church in Sohrab Goth on Pakistan Independence Day (14th), when ethnic Pashtun youths stopped them and attacked them. Ishfaq Munawar’s brother Liaqat Munawar said: “The Pashtun youths… tried to force them to recite the Kalma [Islamic profession of faith] and become Muslims, telling them that this was the only way they could live peacefully in the city. They also offered monetary incentives and ‘protection’ to Ishfaq and Naeem, but the two refused to renounce Christianity.” After this the youths went to a car parked nearby. Munawar and Masih got back onto their motorcycle, when suddenly the car returned, reversing into the Christians. “The Muslims got out of the car armed with iron rods and attacked Ishfaq and Naeem, shouting that they should either recite the Kalma or be prepared to die,” said Liaqat Munawar. The two Christians were severely beaten and left unconscious. Ishfaq Munawar’s jaw was fractured and five teeth were broken.” 395
* September 2011: “A 13-year-old Christian girl Faryal Tauseef, a student at Sir Syed High School, in the northern town of Havelian, was beaten, expelled and her family driven out of their home after she mispelt a word in a test. Writing in the Pakistan language of Urdu, Faryal put ‘laanat’ (meaning ‘curse’) instead of ‘Naat’ (meaning a poem in praise of Mohammed). After looking at the papers, Faryal’s teacher, Fareeda Bibi, summoned the girl and scolded and beat her. Next day, male students held a rally demanding that a criminal case be registered against Faryal and that she be expelled. Local Muslim clerics also called on district authorities to take action against the girl and her family. The area’s Managing Director, Asif Siddiki, summoned Faryal and her mother, who both immediately apologised and said the mistake was not intentional. But, district authorities expelled her from the school and transferred her mother, a nurse, from a hospital in Abbotabad to another elsewhere.” 398
* September 2011: “A 32-year-old Christian woman was raped while returning home on Thursday 15th to Mustafabad, in Punjab Province’s Kasur district, from the factory where she works. “As soon as I entered our street, [my neighbour] Bhallu appeared from the shadows and put his hand on my mouth. A second person, who I later recognized as Bhallu’s friend Shera, came from behind and put a pistol on my temple. A third person also appeared on the scene, and together they first gagged me and then forcibly took me to an abandoned house. I tried my best to get free from their hold and save myself, but they were too powerful for me. I tried screaming, but they hit me. Not for a minute did they acknowledge that I was a mother to five children. Then they raped me, one after the other. Their third accomplice stood guard as they tore in on me like animals.” After she pressed charges, local Islamists reportedly threatened to harm her family unless the charges were dropped.” 400
* “Though it was our house of worship which was attacked and our children who were beaten up, we apologised to the other party… For the sake of our lives we said that it was our fault.” 402
* March-April 2012: “A Christian woman Shamin Bibi, a mother of five, was beaten and stripped of her clothes. Her attackers lambasted her family for dressing smartly and said they should only wear outfits befitting their status as manual workers from a religious minority.”
* February 2013: “A Christian man, Younas Masih, 55, died after being shot five times as he returned home from work – his co-workers had been pressuring him to convert to Islam. The killing followed a heated discussion with his co-workers after he again refused to change his religion. Police refused to open an investigation into the murder despite requests from his family.” 417
* March 2013: “178 Christian homes and two churches were torched when a 3,000-strong mob attacked Joseph Colony, near Badami Bah, Lahore, following an accusation that 26-year-old Christian sanitary worker Sawan Masih had defamed the Prophet Mohammed. The accusation followed an altercation with Muslim barber, Imran Shahid, who refused to serve him. Police arrested the Christian after Shahid recorded a charge of blasphemy against Masih, stating the young man had insulted the Prophet Mohammed whilst drunk. The following morning a mob attacked the Christian colony. Resident Salamat Masih told AsiaNews, “We were working like every day, when we started to hear a noise, and suddenly a wall of people fell upon the colony. They threw acid and stoned our houses, then set them on fire. The authorities intervened only when everything was destroyed”. Residents fled attackers and at least 35 people were injured.” 422
* June 2013: “Christian lawyer, Mushtaq Gill, was threatened with death if he continued to provide legal assistance to three Christian women who were stripped naked and paraded through the streets of Sereser village. Among those allegedly responsible was Rana Ishaq, a member of the country’s ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) party.”
* September 2013: “Two suicide bombers attacked All Saints Anglican Church, Peshawar just after the Communion service on Sunday 22nd had finished. Bishop Sebastian Shaw, Apostolic Administrator of Lahore Archdiocese, told ACN that 81 people died in the blast and were buried on the same day. More than 140 people were wounded by the explosion.”

**SAUDI ARABIA**

**Population: 25 million  
Religions: Muslim 95%  
Other: 1%   
Christian Population: 1 Million (4%)**

* “Saudi Arabia continues to have one of the world’s worst records regarding religious freedom, an assessment confirmed by many leading human rights observers.”
* “Christians and other religious minorities continue to be systematically persecuted. Public display of crosses and other symbols is strictly forbidden, as is public worship by Christians and adherents of other non- Islamic religions. Despite an apparent increase in official Saudi statements permitting non-Islamic worship in private, religious police have reportedly continued to raid people’s homes. Bishops, priests and other Christian leaders often have to travel in secret. Non-Muslims are not allowed to be buried in the country. Saudi Arabia is now the only country in the Middle East without a recognised church since one opened in Qatar in 2008. Official school textbooks were criticised for inciting hatred towards Christians and other non-Muslim faiths.”
* “Many Christians are domestics and other menial workers from countries such as Philippines and several other predominantly Catholic nations. Fears persist about evangelisation in a country where conversion from Islam to another faith is punishable by death. The country’s religious police, which enforce strict observance of Islamic practices, follow a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of Christian proselytism. Hence, there are repeated reports of Christians receiving harsh penalties including incarceration, whipping and other abuse for activities described as evangelisation and blasphemy.”
* January 2012: “A group of 35 Christians from Ethiopia were arrested and beaten after they were caught at a prayer meeting in Jeddah. The incident, reported by Human Rights Watch, stated that the 29 women and six men were arrested in mid-December 2011 while praying during Advent. They were taken to a police station and then on to a prison. The women were forced to strip and undergo ‘body cavity’ searches while the men were insulted, called ‘unbelievers’ and beaten. They were later charged with “unlawful mingling” of unmarried people from the opposite sex, which is banned.” 431
* March 2012: “Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah, the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia, declared that all churches in theArabian Peninsula should be destroyed. He made the ruling after a proposal by a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of Kuwait called for a ban on the construction of new churches in the country.... The Grand Mufti, who is also head of the Saudi Supreme Council of Islamic Scholars, quoted the prophet Mohammed, saying that Islam is the only religion that should exist on the Arabian Peninsula. He said that as part of the Arabian Peninsula, Kuwait should destroy all its churches.” 432

**SUDAN and SOUTH SUDAN**

**Population: 45 million  
Religions: Muslim 70%   
Local Religions: 12%  
Other: 3%   
Christian Population: 6.75 million (15%)**

* “In line with Islamic Shari‘a law under Article 126 of the 1991 Criminal Act, apostasy from Islam is punishable by death.”
* “Of particular concern was the government’s violence towards the Nuba people. Human rights observers highlighted the intensive bombing campaign of the Nuba mountains, mainly populated by Christians, saying that it “reportedly amounted to ethnic cleansing”. 441
* June 2011: “Christians were killed by military intelligence agents and Islamic militants after attacks on churches in South Kordofan state. Nimeri Philip Kalo, a student at St. Paul Major Seminary, was seized by a Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) intelligence unit and detained near the UN Mission in Kadugli’s al Shaeer area. He was shot in front of witnesses. Mr Kalo was fleeing the town with other Christians after Muslim militias, said to be working with the SAF, attacked and looted at least three church buildings in Kadugli.”
* June 2011: “The governor of North Kordofan, Mutasim Mirghani Zaki Eldeen, declared jihad against the predominantly Christian Nuba people.” 444
* July-August 2011: “Muslim extremists sent text messages to at least 10 church leaders in Khartoum warning that they would target Christian leaders and buildings. One message read: “We want this country to be purely an Islamic state, so we must kill the infidels and destroy their churches all over Sudan.” 447
* December 2011: “Christian teenager Hilba Abdelfadil Anglo said she had forgiven the gang of extremists who had kidnapped her and carried out physical and sexual attacks against her. In June 2010 the then 15-year-old was abducted before being beaten unconscious. Constantly moving her to different places around Khartoum, the gang threatened to kill her if she tried to escape and called her family ‘infidels’ for their Christian faith. She was raped by the gang leader. After a year in captivity, she had convinced her captors to think she had converted to Islam, which meant they relaxed controls on her. She escaped and found her way back to her family. When she went to the police to report the gang, they refused to act unless she converted to Islam. In her latest report, Hilba stated that she was praying for her attackers.”
* June 2012: “Government officials in Khartoum gave the go-ahead for the demolition of two church buildings in the area, the first St John’s Episcopal Church in Haj Yousif and the second, a Catholic church building. A local source said: “The government wants to remove all churches from Khartoum.”
* July 2013: “Reports detailed how converting from Islam to Christianity in Sudan has become more dangerous since the secession of South Sudan. About 170 people were imprisoned or indicted for apostasy between 2011 and 2012.”

**SYRIA**

**Population: 22 million  
Religions: Muslim 92.5%   
Other: 2%  
Christian Population: 1.16 million (5.25%)**

* “Early on in the conflict, events in Homs – home to Syria’s second largest Christian community – showed the extent of the crisis being faced by the faithful. Thousands upon thousands of Christians fled the city. In Homs’ Christian quarter, eight or more ancient churches and other religious buildings were desecrated and ruined."
* “The killing and abduction of clergy, the desecration of churches, and ongoing violence and intimidation, left Christians with no option but to leave. As recently as the 1920s, Christians made up 30 percent of Syria’s population, and their numbers were recently boosted by the arrival of refugees from Iraq. However, they were suddenly in massive decline. 491 Reliable figures regarding the extent of the Christian exodus were in short supply. In mid-2013 reports from Aleppo, for example, showed that within two years 30,000 Christians had fled the city...”
* January 2012: “A secret report stated that Christians were being murdered and kidnapped as part of the violence spreading to key regions of Syria. The source, who could not be named for safety reasons, said the spate of attacks had taken place over three weeks after Christmas, and were motivated by factors including religious intolerance. According to the report, two Christian men, one aged 28, and the other a 37-year-old father with a pregnant wife, were kidnapped by rebels in separate incidents and were later found dead. The first was found hanged and the other was reportedly cut to pieces and thrown in a river. Four others were kidnapped and abducted – their captors threatening to kill them too.” 497
* March 2012: “At least 50,000 people, almost the entire Christian population of Homs, fled violence and persecution and sought sanctuary inneighbouring villages and towns outside the city. According to several reports, extremist members of the Faruq Brigade – which is part of the Free Syrian Army – went door to door in the Homs neighbourhoods of Hamidya and Bustan al-Diwan, targeting Christian homes. Fr Elias Aghia, the Superior General of the Missionaries of St Paul based in the Lebanese village of Harissa, told ACN that he had heard first-hand accounts from refugees of families being threatened: “Once the Islamist fanatics went in there was nothing the Christians could do. Where could they hide? Where could they go? The army could not protect them or send in tanks – the ancient streets are too small. Do not think this was an accident. There is a deliberate plan to isolate, cut off and destroy the Christian communities. Many mainstream Muslims were also told to leave by the soldiers.”
* September 2012: “Islamist extremists attacked the mostly Christian village of al-Hasaniya near the city of Homs, Syria. According to local TV, they killed five civilians and took 17 people hostage.” 500
* October 2012: “Greek Orthodox priest Fr Fadi Jamil Haddad, aged 44, was kidnapped and later found dead in Damascus. The married priest, who was parish priest of St Elias’ Church, Qatana, was seized after setting off to negotiate the release of a parishioner, a doctor, who had been abducted a few days earlier. Fr Fadi was kidnapped with the doctor’s father-in-law, whose fate is unknown. Fr Fadi’s abductors demanded a huge ransom (equivalent to €550,000 (£475,000)) but killed him anyway. Six days after his abduction, his body was found on a road in the Drousha area of Damascus with what the Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus described as “indescribable” signs of torture and mutilation on his body, with his eyes gouged out. Thousands attended his funeral at St Elias’ Church the following day. During the service a bomb exploded. Two civilians and some soldiers were killed.”
* April 2013: “Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Gregorios III of Antioch detailed atrocities against Christians since the conflict began in early 2011. He said 1,000 Christians had been killed, that “entire villages have been cleared of their Christian inhabitants” and that more than 40 churches and other religious buildings had been damaged or destroyed.”
* April 2013: “Greek Orthodox Archbishop Boulos Yazigi and Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim were seized near the city of Aleppo, becoming the most senior Church figures to be targeted in Syria’s civil war. The archbishops, who hold diocesan sees in Aleppo, were seized on their return from a humanitarian mission to a village close to Syria’s border with Turkey. The driver of their vehicle was killed when they were ambushed by an armed group who forced them out of the car. Nobody has taken responsibility for kidnapping the archbishops but some sources claimed those responsible were ‘Chechen jihadists’ Two months later, with still little or no information about the kidnapped archbishops ...”
* June 2013: “Father Francis Mourad, 49, was killed when Islamist fighters attacked the Monastery of St Anthony in al-Ghasssinyah, a predominantly Christian village in Idlib province, Syria. Fr Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Custos of the Holy Land, said Fr Murad was a guest at the monastery and was shot dead while trying to defend people living in the convent, who included four nuns and 10 lay Christians.”
* July 2013: “Two priests have given a report of the tragic suffering and death of Mariam, a 15-year-old girl, who was repeatedly raped by jihadists who overran her home city of Qusair, in the Homs governorate. Unlike her family, Mariam was unable to escape when Jabhat al-Nusra seized Qusair and she was captured and forced into an Islamic marriage. The commander of Jabhat al-Nusra in Qusair married Mariam and raped her before repudiating her. The next day the young woman was forced to marry another Islamic militant. He too raped and repudiated her. The same thing happened for 15 days on each of which Mariam was raped by 15 different men. Mariam was killed after she displayed signs of mental illness. The atrocities took place after social networks spread a fatwa across the country produced by Salafist sheikh Yasir al-Ajlawni, who declared that it was lawful to rape any “non-Sunni Syrian woman”

**YEMEN**

**Population: 124 million  
Religions: Muslim 99%   
Christian Population: 8,000 (< 1%)**

* “Islamist groups took full advantage and captured key areas, notably in the south. Here Al Qaeda imposed its strict interpretation of Islamic law. The US State Department reported “harassment, floggings, amputations and murder, including crucifixions”, during the relatively brief occupation of the cities of Abyan. Al Qaeda forced all residents to pray at mosques five times a day, harassed women on the streets for not wearing suitably modest dress and destroyed tombs perceived to be idolatrous.”
* January 2013: “According to unconfirmed reports, there could be as many as 25,000 non-native Christians in Yemen, many of them refugees from countries including Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, where the persecution of Christians is often even worse. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab (“the Youth”) are reported to “behead Muslim apostates to Christianity on a regular basis.” 590

For footnote references, see original PDF document:

<http://www.boston-catholic-journal.com/persecuted-and-forgotten-the-church-militant-in-partibus-infidelium/persecuted-and-forgotten-the-plight-of-the-church-militant-in-partibus-infidelium-2013.PDF>

Editor  
Boston Catholic Journal

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the ***Aid to the Church in Need*** [www.aidtochurch.org](http://www.aidtochurch.org), “a Pontifical Foundation of the Catholic Church, supporting the Catholic faithful and other Christians where they are persecuted, oppressed or in pastoral need.” Especial thanks to <http://www.acnuk.org/> in the UK for their kind permission to reprint the article, *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2011- 2013*



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