



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 3, 2018

## Archbishop of Canterbury Says Middle East Christians Face Extinction

The Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, writing in the December 1 *Sunday Telegraph*, observed that Christians are on the brink of “imminent extinction” in the Middle East.

Welby described the “daily threat of murder” that Christians encounter in the Middle East.

Writing just before a service at Westminster Abbey to celebrate the contribution of Christians in the Middle East, he stated:



In the last few years, they have been slaughtered by so-called Islamic State, and in many countries they find themselves squeezed between the upper and lower millstones of pressure on them within society and of conflicts that afflict the region.

Many have left. Hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes. Many have been killed, enslaved and persecuted or forcibly converted. Even those who remain ask the question, ‘Why stay?’ The Christian population of Iraq, for instance, is less than half what it was in 2003 and their churches, houses and businesses have been damaged or destroyed. The Syrian Christian population has halved since 2010. As a result, across the region Christian communities that were the foundation of the universal Church now face the threat of imminent extinction.

Welby said we should not ask Syrian Christians to choose between President Assad “under whom they were tolerated” and “the unimaginable horrors and threats of so-called Islamic State.”

The late deposed dictator of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, went beyond Assad’s “tolerance” of Christians. Tariq Aziz, Saddam’s close advisor and deputy prime minister, was a member of the Chaldean Catholic Church.

Following the removal of Saddam by the Americans, life for Christians in Iraq became unbearable and, as Welby noted, over half left the country.

Welby described the symptoms, but for the cause of the deterioration of Christianity in the Middle East, we must look further. Former Representative Ron Paul hit the nail on the head when he said back in 2015, “The reason so many are fleeing places like Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq is that U.S. and European interventionist foreign policy has left these countries destabilized with no hopes of economic recovery.”

We might add not only economic recovery, but cultural and religious recovery, as well.

*Image: Romolo Tavani via iStock / Getty Images Plus*

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