



Iraqi Christians: “Perilously Close to Extinction”

Oh, for the days of Saddam Hussein.

In the days since the 2003 U.S.-led coalition toppled the Iraqi dictator and his Ba’ath Party, it’s become extremely dangerous to follow Jesus in Iraq. Always a minority in the country, the number of Christians in Iraq in 2003 hovered around 1.5 million. Today, not even two decades removed from Saddam’s overthrow, only about 250,000 remain, an 83-percent drop.



Right Reverend Bashar Warda, the archbishop of Erbil, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (shown on right), laid out the situation in plain words in London recently. “Christianity in Iraq,” Bashar said, “one of the oldest Churches, if not the oldest Church in the world, is perilously close to extinction. Those of us who remain must be ready to face martyrdom.”

As the Christian persecution watchdog group [Open Doors explains](#), Iraqi Christians face persecution from various groups, including the government, which has begun urging Christians to emigrate. But the Rt. Rev. Warda is focused on one group, which he calls an “existential” threat. Islamic State (ISIS) militants, who are determined to blot Christianity from the country by any means necessary.

“Our tormenters confiscated our present,” Warda said, “while seeking to wipe out our history and destroy our future. In Iraq, there is no redress for those who have lost properties, homes and businesses. Tens of thousands of Christians have nothing to show for their life’s work, for generations of work, in places where their families have lived, maybe, for thousands of years.”

Starting in 2014, ISIS began its push to create a caliphate over the region, and it succeeded in overtaking large sections of Iraq and Syria. In those early days, ISIS posted videos of the beheading of U.S. journalists [James Foley](#) and [Steven Sotloff](#), glimpses of the type of brutality the group was capable of. Since then, the group has been defeated militarily, more or less, but a remnant remains, still looking to achieve its goal of a caliphate in the region.

And the tiny Christian population is among its main targets. The group believes that killing Christians and other minorities is an effective way to gain converts to Islam.

Rt. Rev. Warda believes that a culture of political correctness in Great Britain has prevented Christian leaders in the country from speaking out against the ongoing genocide in Iraq. He believes that leaders are more concerned about being seen as “Islamophobic” than they are of the religious cleansing currently taking place.

“Will you continue to condone this never-ending, organized persecution against us?” Warda asked the assembled group of Christian leaders. “When the next wave of violence begins to hit us, will anyone on your campuses hold demonstrations and [carry signs](#) that say, ‘We are all Christians?’”

The Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen, the Bishop of Truro, agrees with Warda, but only in part. “I think the archbishop is right that a culture of ‘political correctness’ has prevented Western voices from speaking out about the persecution of Christians,” Mounstephen said, before adding, “I think though this is



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mainly to do with a reluctance borne of post-colonial guilt.”

Sigh. What Mounstephen is saying is that, “Yeah, we ignore the Christians getting killed by Islamic extremists, but it’s kind of our fault because we were jerks in the past.”

“If we only consider it [persecution] in the light of Islamic militancy,” Mounstephen went on to say, “we let a lot of other people off the hook who should otherwise be held to account.”

Of course that’s true, but Rt. Rev. Warda is concerned about Iraq, where the main trouble is Islamic extremists. The way that atheists in North Korea and China treat Christians is a different story completely. Can’t both situations be forcefully condemned by name?

The refusal of mainstream Christian denominations to call out Islamic extremism by name, both in Great Britain and worldwide — including America — is borne not out of “post-colonial guilt,” as Rt. Rev. Mounstephen maintains, but by an institutional fear of being called “Islamophobic” by the mainstream media and the global elites who run it. Warda is right; adherence to political correctness, especially in mainstream denominations, is a huge problem. The fear-based reluctance to call out Islamic extremists is tacit approval of their actions.

But if a prominent Christian leader — say, [Pope Francis](#) — were to suddenly grow a spine and call out Islamic extremism by name, perhaps others, including the “vast majority of peaceful Muslims” we’re always being told about, would follow suit.

After all, if Christians don’t care about Christian persecution, why should the governments?

Photo of Bashar Warda: [Rei Momo](#)



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