

News and Current Events :: Killing Christians, in the name of the Prophet...**Killing Christians, in the name of the Prophet... - posted by Earendel (), on: 2011/1/7 23:35**

Michael Coren: Killing Christians, in the name of the Prophet

By Michael Coren

The bomb that killed at least 21 Egyptian Christians on New Year's morning was packed with sharpened metal, iron balls and razor wire. Many of those that the device didn't rip to death will never see, walk or function properly ever again. With terrorist bombs, euphemisms such as "wounded" and "traumatized" are hideously misplaced. These are not, however, the only banalities being tossed around when this latest attack is discussed. Words like "rare," "surprise," and "extremist" seem similarly absurd to those who know anything about the plight of Christians in large chunks of the Muslim world. Remember, more than 50 Iraqi Catholics were murdered in November; on Christmas Day in the southern Philippines on a Muslim-dominated island a church was bombed and parishioners hurt; and in Pakistan just weeks ago a 45-year-old Christian mother of five, Asia Bibi, was sentenced to death for "defaming the Prophet." Not bad for a little over a month!

It has all become so painfully routine as to appear almost predictable. In Pakistan, churches have been destroyed, Christians lynched, children forcibly converted. Catholics and Anglicans have been denied jobs, government support, housing and the most basic human rights. In Egypt, many of the eight million Christians face daily harassment in a country of 70 million Muslims, with periodic violence—often deadly—and police indifference, and even support, for mob attacks. One particularly sinister aspect to the Egyptian mass persecution is the difficulty Christians now face in obtaining exit visas, conjuring up dark echoes of previous campaign against German and Soviet Jews.

In January 2000, in El-Kosheh, Egypt, another 21 Christians were killed in rioting by local Muslims, aided by the police. When authorities eventually reacted, they arrested more than a thousand local Christians, many of whom were tortured. There are numerous cases of Christian girls being kidnapped by Muslim gangs and then being forcibly converted and married to Muslim men. If they flee these marriages and try to return to Christianity, they are killed as apostates. Church desecration is common, as are public burnings of Bibles and Christian literature. There are also documented cases of Christians being ritually crucified, the rape of Christian girls and the prolonged beating of children, some of them babies.

In Saudi Arabia, it is effectively illegal to be a follower of Christ. In Iran, Christians face obvious discrimination. In the Gaza strip, they have been attacked, a Christian bookstore bombed and Christian women threatened with acid thrown in their faces unless they cover their heads. In Indonesia in 2005, three Christian schoolgirls were beheaded by an Islamic gang and, while that nation's government does often attempt to enforce the law, there is a long history of anti-Christian hostility. Even in traditionally tolerant Syria, Jordan and the West Bank, an increasing tendency toward Islamic fundamentalism has made life difficult for the Christian minority. In relatively moderate Turkey, seminaries have been closed down and priests and nuns murdered; and in Cyprus, the occupying Turks have destroyed numerous Christian sites and holy places.

Islamic apologists will point to certain Christians in positions of influence, deny that persecution exists at all, or, more frequently, argue that the accusations are propaganda lies told by Christians and Jews in North America and Europe. While this may sound absurd, it is almost impossible to overstate the degree of paranoia among many Muslims concerning Jews and Christians. One of the accusations made against the slaughtered Christians in Egypt this week was that they were building up arms dumps in their churches, and that they were agents of the United States and Israel. Iraqi Christians fleeing to Syria are not trusted because they are seen as being pro-Western.

All this in spite of the fact that Arab nationalism itself often was initiated by young Christian intellectuals in the early 20th century and that the Palestinian narrative was for more than a generation formed, and certainly explained to North America and Europe, by Christians. (Indeed, the Greek Orthodox were considered the most nationalistic and militant within the Palestinian community.) Today, Christian towns in the West Bank are disappearing. And while Israel's occupation has certainly destabilized the area and made life difficult, it is Muslim discrimination and aggression that has caused the most distress for Christians since the late 1980s. This, of course, is far too nuanced a position for most Western supporters of Palestine to embrace.

And here lies one of the main reasons why there is so little international anger within, for example, the labour movement, social activists and liberal churches in particular over the way Christians are treated in Islamic states.

To criticize an Arab government, to condemn the actions of Muslims, to side with suffering Christians, is seen as playing into the hands of the United States and Israel. It's a distorted and disturbed logic, but it's extraordinarily influential. Added to this is the neurotic smugness of a post-Christian society that sees Christianity as the religion of mum and dad, power elites and conservatives. Such people cannot, in the eyes of the typical secular and radicalized North American, be victims. It simply doesn't fit.

In truth, Christianity is far more Middle Eastern than North American. Egypt, Syria, Palestine and North Africa was the heartland of Christianity. The fact that conquering Muslim cavalry armies forced people to embrace Islam does not change the fact that Christianity pre-dates Islam and that Arab Christians were there, obviously, long before Arab Muslims.

It is almost miraculous that Christians still live in the region because, contrary to what public television and fashionable commentators tell us, pluralism and diversity are not philosophically or practically Islamic concepts. Put simply, the less Islamic a Muslim country is, the more freedom exists for religious minorities. Jews used to live in Egypt and Iraq; followers of Baha'i used to thrive in Iran; Pakistan before the jihadists boasted fine Catholic schools and respect for Judaism. We're in denial of all this because we have a comfortable, even racist, assumption that everybody thinks like progressive Westerners. Not so.

In Cairo, the government has issued its usual official condemnation of what happened this week, and the Christians of Alexandria will be treated well for a month or two. Then the campaigns will begin again. Islamic preachers will describe Christians and Jews as children of pigs and monkeys, young Muslims will be told that it is impossible to be a good Arab and a Christian, and the millions of Egyptian Christians who have served their country loyally and faithfully, and were especially appreciated by Gamal Abdel Nasser, will feel alone, despised and desperate. The blood of the martyrs, we are told, feeds the church and makes it grow, but the Christian body in the Muslim world has so hemorrhaged that it is close to death.

National Post

Read more: <http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2011/01/06/michael-coren-killing-christians-in-the-name-of-the-prophet/#ixzz1APnz8QxQ>

Re: Killing Christians, in the name of the Prophet... - posted by UntoBabes (), on: 2011/1/8 13:40

Brother Earendel,

Thank you for this article. So much I needed to know.

But this should not surprise us. It is the way the church grows and is purified. The true church was and is always under persecution.