



# RELIGIOUS LIBERTY UNDER ASSAULT

*Reversing the global war against faith*



# Addressing the worldwide crisis of religious freedom

By Thomas F. Farr

"They are raping and killing children in front of their parents. Then they are killing the parents."

Amid their tears, the speakers were Joseph and Mariam (not their real names), an Iraqi Christian couple who came to Catholic University to relate the travail of Christians in Iraq and Syria. Christianity, they told a stunned audience, will soon be eliminated in these two lands of the religion's birth.

Sarah Liu (in this case her real name) told of being tortured and sexually abused for four months at a Chinese "Women's Re-education Through Labor Prison." A subsequent arrest sent Ms. Liu, a Christian, to forced labor camp for three years. Her escape from China allowed her to tell her story, which may surprise those who think religious freedom is progressing in the world's largest nation.

The terrible, largely unacknowledged reality is this: We are witnessing in the early 21st century an international crisis in religious freedom. It pervades the Middle East, South and East Asia, Russia and sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Pew Research Center, three quarters of the world's people live in countries where religious freedom is severely restricted.

In many of these nations the symptoms include brutal torture, rape, unjust imprisonment, forced exile and murder. The primary causes of these horrors are the religious beliefs and practices of the victims, those of their tormentors or a combination of both.

The Pew studies also show that religious freedom is on the decline in the West, including in the United States. In fact, social hostility to religion is much higher in Europe than the global median. In the US, both social hostility and government restrictions have been increasing.

Why is this happening? And what does it mean for America and the world?

Religious freedom stands at the core of what it means to be human. No person can live a fully human life without the right — protected in law and culture — to seek God and to live in accord with the truth as he or she understands it.

Of course, a regime of religious freedom imposes limits. It does not justify violence or a state-mandated religious monopoly. At its core, religious freedom means an immunity from coercion on religious grounds by any human agent, especially the state, and full equality

under the law for all religious individuals and groups.

This concept of religious freedom underlays the American founding, and led to its labeling as "the first freedom," without which American democracy would fail. Since then most Americans have understood it as the birthright of every person, necessary to the success of any society that seeks to establish a system of ordered liberty.

Such views, it seems, are fleeting. Today, Americans who seek to exer-

— who are suffering for their religious beliefs? In the short term, we must destroy the Islamic State, which threatens them, the very existence of Christianity and the possibility of stability in the Middle East.

But the assault on religious liberty in America suggests that our nation is not prepared to deal with this crisis over the long term. When the Islamic State and other causes of the crisis have been removed, we are ill-equipped to help Christians, Muslims, Yazidis and others

longer believes.

The stakes are high. Contemporary scholarship and common sense demonstrate that religious freedom can over time help democracies stabilize, increase economic growth, advance the rights of women, and undermine religion-related violence and terrorism.

As it happens, a bill is moving through Congress which could begin to alleviate this problem, the Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act. This bill would force the State Depart-



Pope Francis greets people as he is escorted by President Barack Obama after arriving at Andrews Air Force Base in Md., Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2015. The Pope is spending three days in Washington before heading to New York and Philadelphia. This is the Pope's first visit to the United States. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

cise their citizenship with traditional religion-based moral arguments about the common good — on marriage, the sanctity of human life, and on religious freedom itself — are labeled by their fellow citizens as bigots, motivated by "malice" and a "desire to humiliate." This assault has been mounted by some on the left, but the leaders can be found on the Supreme Court, inspired by the words of Justice Anthony Kennedy in his majority Windsor decision.

What does this have to do with Joseph, Mariam, Sarah, and the millions of others — Christian and non-Christian

return to their homes and develop their own systems of ordered liberty.

In 1998 Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act, mandating the advancement of religious freedom in US foreign policy. Notwithstanding the dedicated service of many diplomats since then, no administration has seriously supported that policy. The current ambassador is an extremely talented man, but he has little authority and almost no resources to develop strategies that can address this problem. Even he cannot sell a product in which the American foreign policy elite no

ment to get serious about advancing religious freedom around the world. If we do not act now, we will look back in shame — as we do when pondering Munich (1939), Rwanda (1994) and Srebrenica (1995) — that we did so little to help avert disaster.

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# The Church under attack

**By Ashley E. McGuire**

As Pope Francis arrives for his first-ever visit to the United States, the Catholic Church in America faces uncertain times. For the past several years, the Church has been under a state of constant legal and cultural assault.

Most notably, the Health and Human Services mandate requiring that employers cover products and services like contraceptives, abortifacients and sterilization implicates scores of Catholic business owners and Catholic charitable institutions, many of whom are still fighting in court for a basic exemption. While the Supreme Court has ruled that religious owners of closely held companies with objections to the mandate do not have to comply, the fate of religious charities is uncertain.

The Little Sisters of the Poor have become the face of the nonprofit opposition to the mandate. The order of nuns, who live out their charism that every life is precious by caring for impoverished elderly people, is likely to have their case heard at the Supreme Court this fall. In a stunning ruling, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals decided against them, a decision that dissenting judges on that court said was “contrary to all precedent concerning

the free exercise of religion” and “will not long stand.”

Their fate will determine that of countless other Catholic charities and schools that cannot comply. One such school is the University of Notre Dame. The self-insured Catholic school has been a battleground for religious liberty for years. It was in a commencement address at Notre Dame that President Obama made the promise heard around the Church, assuring Catholics his administration would “honor the conscience of those that disagree with abortion and draft a sensible conscience clause.” This was a promise that he reiterated in a personal meeting with Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the archbishop of New York.

The passage of the Affordable Care Act relied on other empty promises, including the assurance that health care exchanges would not be used to fund abortion — or, in President Obama’s words to Congress, “under our plan, no federal dollars will be used to fund abortions, and federal conscience protections will remain in place.” That assurance, on which lone holdout Bart Stupak staked his vote, turned out to be another bald-faced lie. A quick scan of federal court dockets confirms this.

But the assault on the Church and

her institutions is not limited to legal battles over Obamacare. In another high-profile Supreme Court case, the Obama administration sought to overturn longstanding legal precedent that protects the right of religious groups like the Catholic Church to appoint their own ministers. The administration’s position in the case was so extreme that justices, including one of President Obama’s own appointees to the Court, expressed audible shock at the arguments. The Court’s decision was 9-0 in favor of the religious groups.

Suffering countless losses in the courts, the government has turned to other tactics. When the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops refused to send victims of crimes like human slavery and sex trafficking to abortion clinics, it was stripped of all federal funding. Countless Catholic adoption agencies around the country have been closed because of the Church’s traditional beliefs about marriage. The administration took away the United States’ separate embassy to the Holy See and crammed its diplomats into the embassy to Italy, as if the nations were one and the same.

And, in the latest jab, President Obama lined up a slate of outspoken critics of Catholic Church teaching to

welcome Pope Francis to the White House, a move that has drawn concern and pushback from the Vatican. This brazen move essentially sums up the state of affairs. Top government officials want photo ops with the pope and one-liners to support their agenda, all while using that very agenda to undermine the Church at every turn.

The Catholic Church is the largest nongovernmental provider of health care, education and charitable services to the poor. Orders like the Little Sisters of the Poor and institutions like Catholic Charities are living out Pope Francis’ call to serve the least of these, and they are paying a political price for seeking to do so in accordance with their most basic beliefs. As Pope Francis enthalls millions this week, it’s worth reflecting on the reality of things here. The current administration is systematically turning American Catholics into second-class citizens and uprooting the Church’s blooming works of charity for the poor, the disabled, the marginalized and the suffering.

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# An alarming new era for religious liberty in America

By Kelly Shackelford

**V**alues Voter Summit, one of the marquee annual events of the conservative movement, starts Friday at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in the District of Columbia.

The top issue on the agenda, highlighted in the recent Republican presidential debates, is religious liberty.

Today, religious liberty is under attack in America like never before. Each year, Liberty Institute publishes a survey titled “Undeniable,” cataloging incidents of religious hostility in America ([LibertyInstitute.org/pages/survey-of-religious-hostilities](http://LibertyInstitute.org/pages/survey-of-religious-hostilities)). Since we started conducting the annual survey three years ago, we have seen an astonishing 133 percent increase in attacks on religious freedom over the past two years.

Cases include everything from a 5-year-old girl who was ordered to stop praying over her meal by a school official to senior citizens being threatened with having their federally funded meals taken away because they were praying over their food. Government officials insisted the seniors’ prayers would violate “separation of church and state.”

Liberty Institute published the latest “Undeniable” survey before the Supreme Court marriage decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Since *Obergefell*, the institute has seen an extraordinary 400 percent increase in requests for legal help. We anticipate next year’s survey will reveal another tremendous hike in attacks nationwide.

The requests for help are coming in from the north, the south, the east and the west. We are hearing from people of wealth, people of no resources at all, people who are young and people who are older. The attacks are pervasive.

One example is U.S. Air Force Sgt. Phillip Monk, who was relieved of his duties because he did not agree with his commander’s views concerning same-sex marriage. Another is Dr. Eric Walsh, whom the state of Georgia fired after reviewing sermons he gave on marriage and sexuality as a lay pastor in his own church. Yet another is Craig James, a national sports broadcaster who lost his job at Fox Sports for holding religious beliefs on marriage — although he never mentioned his religious beliefs on air.

As the clash between religious liberty and “sexual liberty” intensifies, there is good news. In the *Obergefell* decision, the Supreme Court

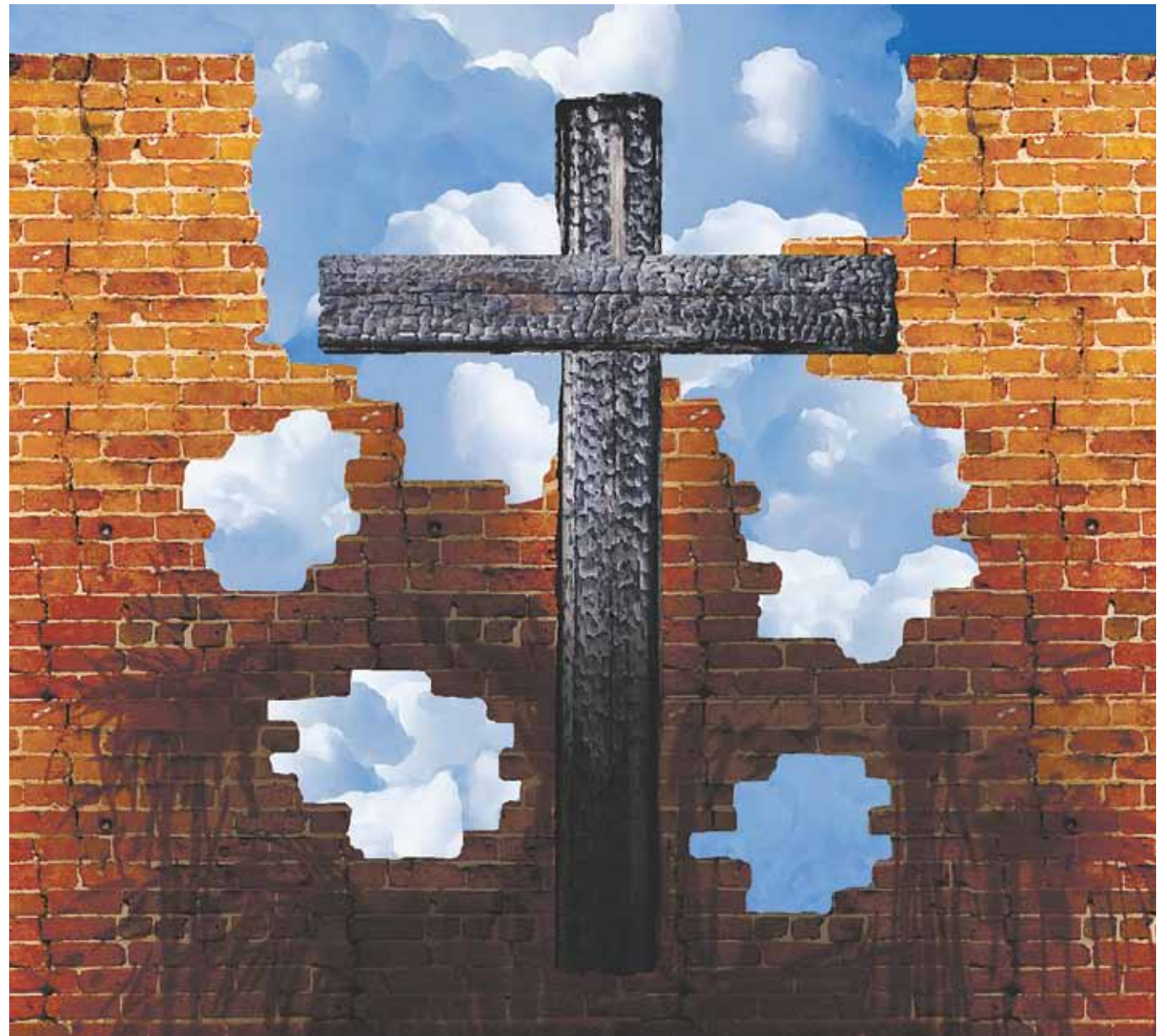


ILLUSTRATION BY HUNTER

acknowledged that the creation of a right to same-sex marriage did not overturn Americans’ First Amendment right to religious liberty. And, as a recent Liberty Institute case demonstrates, when people of faith stand up for their rights, they can win.

Chaplain Wes Modder is a heroic member of the Navy who has given his all to serve his country for over 20 years. Earlier this year, he was attacked for his faith. The Navy put him under the military version of a restraining order and relieved him of his duties because, during private counseling sessions, he answered sailors’ questions about marriage from a biblical point of view.

The Navy’s actions put Chaplain Modder’s entire career in jeopardy. We defended Chaplain Modder and appealed, asking the Navy to allow him to continue to do his job in line with his faith. Earlier this month, the

Navy reversed the decision and cleared Chaplain Modder of all charges and restored him to full service.

And there is more good news: When people of faith stand up for their faith, with Liberty Institute as their legal counsel, nine times out of 10, they win. At Values Voter Summit, Liberty Institute is debuting our brand new Religious Liberty Protection kits to educate people on how they can stand up for their rights in schools, churches, the military and the public arena. (View the kits here: [\[link\]](#))

Although I am excited to support people of all faiths in the battle for their rights, I find it incredibly sad that we live in a time where religious liberty kits are even necessary. This threat to religious liberty affects not only religious individuals, but society as a whole.

Religious liberty has been a constitutionally protected American right for

over 200 years. It’s why this country was founded. Our founders called religious freedom our first freedom. They did so not just because it is in the first two clauses of the First Amendment, but because they knew that if you lose your religious freedom, you will lose all of your freedoms. And when freedom is lost, America is lost.

Religious liberty is still our first freedom. Americans must not be intimidated into surrendering our First Amendment rights. Liberty Institute stands ready and willing to defend all people of faith under attack for their beliefs. We are winning these cases. The only question is: Are you willing to stand for what you believe and support those who are under attack for what they believe?

Kelly Shackelford is the president and CEO of Liberty Institute, a nonprofit law firm advocating religious liberty for all.



# From Cuba to the Land of the Free

**By Grazie Pozo Christie**

The Pope spent several days in Cuba, assuring the Cuban people of God's love for them (which must seem hard to discern sometimes on the Isle of Hopelessness). The Castro regime, with its characteristically fierce intolerance and aggression, succeeded in keeping him away from the brave Catholic dissidents who dare to propose that even Cubans ought to have one or two of the human rights the rest of the world takes for granted. While there, the Holy Father made a loving pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Cobre, where he said he felt "as a child who looks forward to arriving at his mother's house."

Here in Miami we also have a Shrine to Nuestra Senora de la Caridad del Cobre. Go there any day and sit in the back. You will see little groups of people, obviously recently arrived from Cuba, coming to pay their respects to Our Lady. They bring armfuls of flowers and fall to their knees in front of the statue, eyes brimming with tears. They've come to thank her for delivering them to the land of freedom.

Their new home is a country like no other in history. It was formed not along ethnic, racial or geographic lines but on a powerful idea: the idea that government exists, in George Washington's words, to protect the "persons and consciences of



A child holds Cuban and Vatican flags during an homily by Pope Francis at the sanctuary of the Virgin of Charity in El Cobre, in Santiago, Cuba, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2015. (Ismael Francisco/Cubadebate via AP)

men from oppression."

A revolutionary concept, new in the annals of human history. Always before, government was understood to confer rights, not to defend them. That's how it is

today in Cuba and in many other wretched countries, where governments oppress their citizens by limiting their rights of association, movement and speech and oppress their consciences by limiting their religious liberty.

Religion, after all, is man's elaborate and worthy attempt to answer the questions that haunt us: Why am I here? How should I live?

Man is distinguished, spectacularly, from all the other animals by his ability to come to conclusions and form definite convictions. Chesterton said that as man "piles doctrine on doctrine and conclusion on conclusion in the formation of some tremendous scheme of philosophy and religion, he is becoming more and more human."

Americans understand, deep in their bones, the glory of this ability and the sacredness of each man's quest to live life in accordance with his beliefs. Prisoners of conscience all over the world, and those who are afraid to wear a cross at their throat or attend a church service openly, look to America as an example and a beacon of hope.

Unfortunately, freedom of conscience is under attack in the United States. Religious people who hold on to classic and time-tested ideals of marriage, family and gender are finding themselves marginalized and discriminated against. Catholic adoption agencies closed for not placing

children with same-sex couples, orders of nuns forced to underwrite abortive contraceptives, CEOs and humble fire chiefs drummed out of work for supporting classic marriage and faithful Christians unable to express and live out their beliefs in the public square — all of these are dangerous symptoms of the new un-American oppression.

Next to the horrific fate of our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East, the decadeslong suppression of the Church in Cuba and the worsening persecution of Christians in China, our gradual loss of religious liberty might seem inconsequential. But when Pope Francis speaks to President Obama and to Congress, he must remember that a country like ours is an indispensable example to the rest of the world. Losing a little ground here may translate into catastrophic losses in more savage parts of the world.

Perhaps he might remind Mr. Obama of what George Washington wrote to the Quakers in 1789: "the conscientious scruples of all men should be treated with great delicacy and tenderness."

It is that delicacy and tenderness that should always grace our country and inspire the rest of the world.

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## The president's words and deeds

**By Maureen Malloy Ferguson**

When the pope and the president first met a year and a half ago at the Vatican, a major topic of concern raised by Pope Francis was the need for cooperation between church and state, particularly with regard to the exercise of religious freedom.

On Wednesday we will witness another meeting between pope and president, this time on President Obama's turf. While there will be warm discussions on areas of common concern, religious liberty is sure to be a contentious item on the agenda once again; events both domestically and internationally have ensured that.

Internationally, it's not so much what the president has done, as what he has not done. It's the deafening silence in the face of heart wrenching and barbaric persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East. Pope Francis is likely to raise this as a central issue in the private White House meeting on Wednesday, and again on Thursday when he addresses Congress.

Pope Francis does not mince words in describing the ethnic cleansing and persecution of Middle Eastern Christians,

Yazidis and others, saying it is "genocide" and should be named as such. Mr. Obama and congressional leaders will hear a plea similar to one Francis delivered this summer, when he said, "In this third world war, waged piecemeal, which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide — and I stress the word genocide — is taking place, and it must end."

What else can it be called when the Islamic State brutally invades the cradle of Christianity, beheading, crucifying, terrorizing and selling women and girls into sexual slavery? In compelling testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee this Spring, an Iraqi nun named Sister Diana Momeka told of the horrors she witnesses as she fled Mosul: "ISIS's plan is to evacuate the land of Christians and wipe the earth clean of any evidence that we ever existed."

As former Rep. Frank Wolf, known as the "conscience of the Congress" for his work on this issue, has said, "What we're seeing in Iraq and Syria today is genocide .... I visited Iraq in January of this year ... going through villages to the front lines ... I came back and asked, does this administration care? Does the Congress care?"

Pope Francis will be asking the same question — do we care? Some in

Congress care deeply, and are leading a bipartisan effort to declare these atrocities to be genocide. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, Nebraska Republican, and Rep. Anna Eshoo, California Democrat, are co-sponsoring a bipartisan resolution (H. Con. Res. 75) declaring that those who commit "atrocities against Christians and other ethnic and religious minorities ... are committing ... 'war crimes,' 'crimes against humanity,' and 'genocide.'" They are calling for the United States and the international community to end their "scandalous silence" in the face of this persecution, and for protection, humanitarian assistance and expedited refugee processing for these targeted populations. Mr. Fortenberry even traveled to Rome last month and presented the Holy Father a draft of this resolution.

Mr. Obama says he cares too, promising at the National Prayer Breakfast to "constantly reaffirm that fundamental freedom — freedom of religion — the right to practice our faith how we choose ... and to do so free of persecution and fear and discrimination."

On the domestic front, the mere planning of the papal visit has already served to highlight tensions. Making use of its home field advantage, the White

House invited to the pope's welcome ceremony activists who endorse policies that directly infringe upon the religious freedom of the Catholic Church. No matter the disregard for basic diplomatic protocol, or simple courtesy towards an honored guest.

Given the Holy Father's emphasis on poverty, the White House might have invited nuns known for their selfless and joyful care of the indigent elderly, the Little Sisters of the Poor. That however, would have created an awkwardness of another kind, since Mr. Obama's lawyers are currently fighting the Little Sisters in court to force them to facilitate contraceptive coverage in their health plans. The litany of this administration's offenses against religious liberty goes well beyond the Obamacare mandate, and promises to intensify in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* same-sex marriage decision.

Perhaps this week's meeting with Pope Francis will be an opportunity for Mr. Obama to recognize the gross incongruity between his words and actions. Miracles do happen.

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*Maureen Malloy Ferguson is the senior policy advisor for The Catholic Association.*

# Pressure grows to declare war against Christians a genocide

By Douglas Burton

Human rights activists see it. Foreign leaders see it. And more than 80 members of the U.S. Congress see it. Together, they are pressuring the leader of the free world to declare there is a Christian genocide going on in the Middle East.

Their campaign — which was discussed at a Capitol Hill conference earlier this month hosted by the two-year-old In Defense of Christians nonprofit — has an influential ally on its side.

Pope Francis, making his first visit to the United States on Wednesday, has noted the number of Christians being martyred today exceeds the number martyred during the days of the Roman Empire.

In fact, the sheer numbers of Christians murdered and tortured every year in a dozen countries in the developing world is only getting worse, thanks to the relentless campaign of the ISIS and al-Qaeda terror groups.

For example, in 2014, 2,000 Christians were murdered in Iraq alone, which is the number cited by historian Edward Gibbon as the total number of Christian martyrs in the first three centuries of Christianity.

In Iraq, where Christian churches were planted 1,800 years ago, Christianity has been wiped out except for 200,000 refugees sheltering in Kurdistan and a few in Baghdad. Their language, Aramaic; their homeland, the Nineveh Plain; and their calamity are Biblical in scale. Hundreds have been publicly tortured and executed in Mosul while women and children have suffered severe levels of sexual violence since the Islamic State took control in 2014.

“Christianity in the Middle East is shattered,” Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, Nebraska Republican, told the IDC conference on Sept. 9. “The ancient faith tradition lies beaten, broken and dying. Yet Christians in Iraq and Syria are hanging on in the face of the Islamic State’s barbarous onslaught. This is genocide.”

A year after Congress authorized a special envoy to expedite the humanitarian relief of persecuted minorities in Iraq, the Obama administration has finally chosen a person to fill the spot. Knox Thames has been named the State Department’s special adviser for religious minorities in the Near East (NEA) and South and Central Asia (SCA). His appointment was announced Sept. 16 by Ambassador David Saperstein, ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. The Christian refugees in Irbil hope that Mr. Thames hits the ground running.

“The appointment represents a positive step toward strengthening the U.S.



Delia Kashat, spokesperson for Nineveh Council and Fr. Douglas Bezi of Ainkawa, Iraq.

response to religious persecution in the Middle East,” says Delia Kashat, who works for the Nineveh Council of America, a newly established office that raises awareness on the plight of threatened Iraqi minorities, including the Yazidis.

“History is repeating itself,” she says of the latest crisis that reminds many refugees of the massacre of 3,000 Assyrian Christians in August 1933 and the Armenian genocide of 1915 that also claimed the lives of many Assyrian Christians.

“Having suffered multiple genocides over time, the true natives of Iraq and Syria serve as the equilibrium and peace-makers of the country,” she says. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Assyrian and Chaldean Christians in all provinces have suffered kidnappings, torture and brutal attacks, and massive exodus has followed

the ascendance of the Islamic State.

Ms. Kashat grew up in the Detroit metro area, home to around 150,000 Chaldean Christian immigrants, but her parents were born in the Nineveh Plain and fled Iraq in 1973. “They came to this country because this is where they could freely live and practice their faith,” she says.

Whether they call themselves Assyrian or Chaldean, Catholic or Orthodox, Iraqi Christians belong to a common ethnicity and claim descent from the ancient peoples who established Assyria 4,500 years ago.

Currently there are 14 Christian parties seeking seats in the Kurdish regional parliament, and each is tied to a particular church, according to Louay Mikhael, a Chaldean Christian from Dohuk, who

arrived in Silver Spring, Maryland, with his wife and child only in April.

Mr. Mikhael represents the Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council of the Kurdish Regional Government (CSA Popular Council), which will open its lobbying office in Washington in the coming weeks. Both Ms. Kashat and Mr. Mikhael are working in Washington to raise awareness on the issues affecting ethnic-religious minority populations.

After the surge of the Islamic State in the summer of 2014 approximately 130,000 people — virtually the entire population of Christians remaining in the Nineveh Plain near Mosul — have either fled the country or taken shelter in Kurdish cities.

“On Aug. 6 when ISIS attacked Qaraqosh, approximately 55 miles from Irbil, we had 60,000 people arriving in one day,” said Rev. Douglas Bezi, the Chaldean Catholic priest who manages a refugee center in the Christian suburb of Ainkawa.

The city of Irbil and its suburbs have nearly 100,000 Chaldean Catholic refugees sheltering in rented apartments, unfinished buildings or steel shipping containers. “When they arrived, I divided them into two groups, those who wanted to return in one group and those who wanted to leave the country,” Father Bezi said. “But after a year, no one wants to return to the Nineveh Plain. More than 60 percent of my people are traumatized, and wake up every day demoralized.”

Iraqi Christian advocates are united in their priorities for the United States: They want direct humanitarian assistance and international condemnation of the abuses these vulnerable groups face.

A Congressional resolution introduced Sept. 9 by Mr. Fortenberry and Rep. Anna Eshoo, California Democrat, calls on signers of the United Nations’ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, signed in 1948, to be “reminded of their legal obligations” under the agreement.

It also says those who have forced the migration of religious communities from their ancestral homelands — especially the Nineveh Plain, the historic home of Yazidis — be “tracked, sanctioned, arrested, prosecuted and punished.”

“Christianity is running the risk of becoming extinct in the region it was born. What is happening to the Christian community in Iraq will happen to all of Christianity in the Middle East if we don’t take action,” Ms. Kashat said.

*Douglas Burton, a former U.S. State Department official in Kirkuk, Iraq, is a former opinion editor of Insight on the News.*

## Persecution of Christians: By the numbers

There is debate over exactly how many Christians are martyred each year worldwide. The highest estimate comes from the Center for Global Study of Christianity, which says 109,000 Christians are martyred every year. The most conservative figure comes from professor Thomas Schirrmacher of the International Society for Human Rights, who estimates that 7,000 to 8,000 Christians are killed annually for their beliefs.

### Here are some facts and figures about Christian persecution and martyrdom around the world:

- In 2003, an estimated 1.3 million Christians were living in Iraq, chiefly in the northern province of Nineveh. Today, no Christians have survived in Nineveh.
- Approximately 200,000 Christian refugees are under the protection of the Kurdish Regional Government, and a few thousand Christians are living in Baghdad.

- Tens of thousands of Iraqi Christians have fled to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Syria.
- There were 2,000 Christian martyrs in the first three centuries of Christianity, according to Edward Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.”
- In 2004, there were 2,000 Christian martyrs in Iraq alone, according to the global study center.
- In 2000, the Sudanese civil war killed 50,000 Christians, according to a U.S. Department of State Religious Freedom Report.
- In 2004, 10,000 Christians were killed as a result of communal violence in Ambon, Indonesia.
- In 2007, communal violence in Nigeria resulted in 5,000 killings of Christians, according to global study center.
- In 2009, according to center estimates, 20,000 Christians were killed during the Sri Lanka civil war.



# Understanding genocide



By Frank R. Wolf

It has been over a year since ISIS declared a caliphate in the Middle East and still its brutal onslaught against religious minorities such as Christians, Yazidis, Shia Muslims and others continues. While the rest of the world has looked on in shock and disbelief, the actions of this insurgency have become more coordinated, systematic and inhumane. Furthermore, the vast amount of publicly available information clearly shows that what has and is currently being committed against these ancient faith communities is nothing short of an ongoing genocide in the 21st century. Here is what you need to know.

## Who has acknowledged the Islamic State's genocide?

- “In this third world war, waged piece-meal, which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide is taking place, and it must end.” — Pope Francis
- “The United States and other countries also are working to counter ISIL militarily, but there still needs to be an international effort to bring ISIL to justice for its horrific crimes, including its acts of genocide.” — Robert George, chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom
- “It’s a very clear case. It’s an ongoing

genocide because there are still people in captivity.” — Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court

- “ISIS’s mass murders of Chaldean Christians, Coptic Christians, Yazidis, Shia Muslims and other groups that do not conform to ISIS’s fanatical definition of totalitarian false ‘Islam’ definitely meets even the strictest definition of genocide.” — Gregory Stanton, president of Genocide Watch
- “These are in fact crimes of genocide committed against humanity that must be held accountable before international justice.” — Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations
- “Rape and other sexual crimes against women, accompanying mass executions targeting a distinct community, are central to genocide. This has been demonstrated time and time again, including in the genocides perpetrated against the Armenians, the Tutsis in Rwanda, Kurdish women in Iraq, Muslim women in the former Yugoslavia and, more recently, against the Christian women and girls by Boko Haram, an ISIS affiliate.” — Janet Benshoof, president of the Global Justice Center

## What is genocide?

In 1946, as the international community grappled with the aftermath of the Nazi Holocaust, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, scholar and philologist named Raphael Lemkin coined the term “genocide” to describe the age-old crime of taking deliberate, concerted actions to remove entire peoples from existence altogether.

Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment for the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as:

“Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

Tragically, despite the resounding vow to “never again” allow such horrors to occur, this crime has occurred again and again. Now, once again, it is occurring on our watch. Since the beginning of its swift and destructive rise in Iraq, ISIS has committed all of these against Christians and Yazidis through a calculated system of atrocity. Intent to commit the crime of genocide can clearly be seen in ISIS ideology, publications and communications, which the insurgency has made publicly available to the rest of the world.

## ISIS acts of genocide

- Christians and Yazidis have been systematically executed for not converting to Islam or as a terror tactic.
  - Christian and Yazidi children have even been beheaded and crucified.
  - Yazidis have been found in mass graves.
  - A 2014 pamphlet released by the group titled “Questions and Answers on Taking Captives and Slaves,” describes ISIS’ prescribed methods for forcing women and girls as young as 9 years old into sex slavery.
  - Once captured, the women and girls are forcibly converted and expected to raise the children produced from their rapes under ISIS’ interpretation of “pure” Islam.
  - Reports indicate that these “lion cubs” taken from Christian and Yazidi families are being raised to become the next generation of insurgency fighters.
- As opposed to previous such instances of genocide in modern history, there has

been no attempt by the group to conceal its actions. On the contrary, ISIS brazenly uses a social media-driven propaganda machine to broadcast its atrocities to the world.

A report released in March from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights on the situation in Iraq states, “It is reasonable to conclude that some of these incidents, considering the overall information, may constitute genocide.” Furthermore, the report calls for the Security Council “to remain seized of and address, in the strongest terms, information that points to genocide.”

## What can be done?

Historically, denial of genocide has typically been perpetrated by those committing the crime. Now denial is being committed by those who have seen the prima facie evidence of mankind’s ultimate crime and refused to acknowledge, halt and investigate what is clearly happening.

Faith communities that have existed in Iraq and Syria for thousands of years live on the edge of extinction. If immediate action is not taken, these communities of antiquity will continue on a trajectory of precipitous decline into nonexistence.

In previous history, the global community has delayed in acknowledging genocides as they were occurring in Cambodia, the Balkans and Rwanda. Had global leaders made this essential distinction and taken the necessary actions to stop these crimes earlier, innumerable lives might have been saved. Delaying the acknowledgment of this genocide — occurring in the 21st century — will only allow for unmitigated horror and catastrophic loss of life to continue.

.....  
*Frank R. Wolf is the senior distinguished fellow at the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative and the Wilson chair in religious freedom at Baylor University.*

## 10 things you can do about genocide

### By The 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative

- Understand the issue. Read the “What is Genocide?” page at [genocidewatch.net](http://genocidewatch.net). (<http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/what-is-genocide/>) and link to this page through social media.
- Learn more from the United Nations about the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), a relatively new doctrine that informs much of genocide prevention today (<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>).
- Contact your representative and senators in Congress (to look them up, click here) via email or phone and let them know you want them to support legislation defining the situation in Iraq and Syria as genocide.
- Dr. Gregory Stanton has developed a

framework for examining genocide, the “10 Stages of Genocide.” Visit Genocide Watch’s website to learn more about this framework and the recommended preventive steps you can take to stop genocide early.

<http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/8-stages-of-genocide/>

- Give to an organization that provides aid for those who are oppressed because of race, ethnicity or religion and post about it on social media. Some suggestions: Samaritan’s Purse, World Help, the Global Jewish Service Corps, American Jewish World Service or Women for Women.
- Visit United to End Genocide’s website and complete one of the “Take Action” items posted there: <http://www.endgenocide.org/>

take-action.

- Nicholas Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times, writes poignantly about genocide awareness. Read his columns related to genocide at <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/opinion/editorialsandoped/oped/columnists/nicholasdkristof/index.html>.
- Genocide is ultimately about the loss of humanity and recognition of human rights. Read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>), adopted in 1948 by the United Nations. Select one right you wish to promote in your community and write a letter to local groups or volunteer for an organization that



supports that right.

- Download the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative report from its fact-finding mission. in Iraq (<http://www.21wilberforce.org/amsite/media/edge-of-extinctionfinal.pdf>) Share this resource.
- Pray for those who are victims of genocide today, for an end to governments and systems that allow genocide to continue, and for the courage and tenacity to be an active advocate for justice.

# Call it genocide

By Ann Corkery

It is widely expected that during this week's visit to the United States, Pope Francis will say what is already clear to the rest of the world, but which too many other leaders are afraid to say themselves: The systematic persecution and murder of Christians, Yezidis, Muslims and other minority groups constitutes genocide.

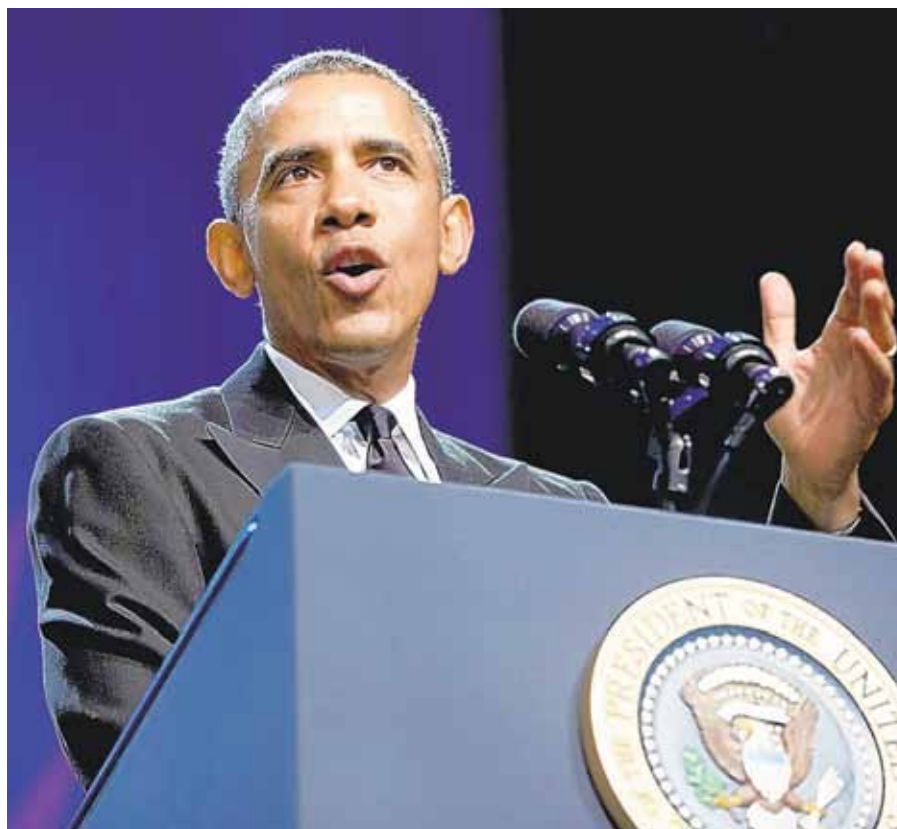
Across broad stretches of the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, Iraq and Syria, ISIS, Boko Haram and other Wahhabi-inspired murderers are displacing, enslaving and killing religious and ethnic minorities. We have all seen the footage of blindfolded prisoners, on their knees, mercilessly beheaded and shot, among many other atrocities. Some 2 million Christians lived in Iraq only two decades ago. Today the Iraqi Kurdistan Christianity Project estimates that only 300,000 to 450,000 remain, and nearly all of them have taken refuge in Kurdistan. Christians have lived and worshipped in Mosul (the ancient city of Nineveh) for over 2,000 years. Today, none are left.

A report released this spring by the United Nations Human Rights Commission reported "acts of violence perpetrated against civilians in Iraq and Syria because of their affiliation or perceived affiliation to an ethnic or religious group." Its statement that "it is reasonable to conclude that some of these incidents may constitute genocide" only adds to the evidence that it is time to file formal genocide charges against ISIS and its supporters.

The U.N.'s 1948 Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide offers a very clear definition: Genocide entails certain "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." Those acts include "killing members of the group," "causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group" and "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." All of which describes exactly what we're seeing in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia.

But what difference does it make what we call it? Isn't it just semantics? As long as we understand that it's very, very bad, isn't that sufficient?

As a matter of international law, calling these mass atrocities what they are makes all the difference. Genocide is a crime of monstrous proportions. Because genocide often includes both "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity," a global response from the U.N. and its member states is needed. Acts of genocide are punishable either



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by the states in which the crimes occurred or, if the state or nonstate actor is the perpetrator, by an international tribunal. Calling what ISIS, al-Nusra and Boko Haram are doing in the Middle East and Africa a "genocide" makes clear that those who murder and support its efforts will be prosecuted. It is a warning, carrying the promise of a reckoning.

And, of course, our commitments do not end with a word choice. Having

acknowledged that these horrors constitute genocide, governments around the world must then use all their powers under the Genocide Convention to "call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide." "Calling upon" is the language of international officialdom, and it is for the Obama administration

to give it force by leading a campaign to stop the genocide.

The U.N. record on genocide has been one of hesitation, half-measures and regrets. Just last year, people gathered in Rwanda to mark the 20th anniversary of the horrific genocide of Tutsis that left nearly 800,000 innocent men, women and children dead in just a few months. U.N. Chief Ban Ki-moon's remarks said it all: "We could have done much more. We should have done much more."

Nor did the U.N. or the United States do enough to prevent the genocide in Bosnia. As Samantha Power, the U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N., recently said, "the perpetrators of the genocide in Srebrenica killed more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys and raped countless women and girls, in part because they felt confident that they would never be punished." Even today, Russia and other members of the U.N. Security Council refuse to call what happened then a genocide.

The first step is to accurately and unequivocally name the crime we are trying to stop. According to Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, president of Genocide Watch and a professor at George Mason University, avoiding Orwellian terms like ethnic cleansing in favor of the more blunt and accurate term genocide "increases the probability of forceful action to end the crimes by over four times."

Now that the pope is calling the genocide in the Middle East, Africa and Asia by its proper name, Congress and President Obama should do so as well. Iraq has already asked the U.N. to investigate. The U.S. and other nations around the world should join the request and demand that the U.N. take the next steps: an international effort to identify, arrest, prosecute and punish individuals and countries that support these crimes.

In the past, too many leaders have been too timid to name what we see and have allowed monsters to persecute and execute people for their race and religion. How many times since the Holocaust have we heard the solemn pledge "never again"? If the U.N. fails to act this time, only to concede years from now that it didn't do nearly enough to prevent and punish genocide, it will be a case of "yet again" — and we owe the victims of these crimes better than that.

Ann Corkery is a partner at the law firm of Stein Mitchell and a former U.S. Public Delegate to U.N. General Assembly and U.S. Delegate to U.N. Commission on the Status of Women.





A boy praying at the grotto of the Virgin Mary in the Church of Saint Joseph of Ankawa. Copyright Aid to the Church in Need

By Christiaan Alting von Geusau

**J**oseph, a young Syrian man from the mountain village of Maaloula, was very proud of his hometown, one of the most important historical and religious sites in Syria. Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus Christ, is still spoken today in this predominantly Christian town of 5,000 souls. Maaloula also hosts two ancient shrines dedicated to saints that are much revered by Syrians across the country and in the diaspora — the fourth century Mar Sarkis (Saint Sergius) and Mar Takla (Saint Thecla) monasteries. Both Saint Sergius and Saint Thecla were killed by the Romans when they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. Throughout the centuries, pilgrims and visitors — Christian and Muslim alike — have flocked to this beautiful town 400 miles from Damascus, dramatically situated at 1,500 meters at the entrance of a unique rocky gorge. Maaloula is a sacred place and an important part of the Syrian identity.

In 2013 terrorists from the al-Nusra Front, an affiliate of al Qaeda, overran the town. The so-called “rebel” fighters not only desecrated the tomb of St. Thecla and burned precious crosses and icons in the town’s churches, but they also reverted to the now-daily occurring ritual of beheading Christians.

Joseph was one of them. He and other young Christian men were seized by a group of fighters and given a choice:

# The West’s complicit silence on genocide

**A courageous moral leadership of the United States and its allies is called for today to stop the unspeakable horrors that are daily being perpetrated against the Christians and other minorities in the Middle East before Christianity and its rich 2,000-year culture is completely wiped out from that region.**

convert to Islam or have your head cut off. Joseph lived by the principle that all Christians live by in the Middle East: “they can take everything from us, even our lives, but they cannot take away Jesus from us.” Joseph, like the great saints Sarkis and Thecla of his town, was put to death by the sword for refusing to renounce his faith in Christ.

The story of Joseph is but one of far too many that cry out to us, especially in the West. The scandalous silence of political leaders and the mainstream media in the face of a well-planned and generously funded genocide against the Christians demonstrates a fatal lack of moral leadership combined with

misplaced geopolitical and economic interests. And it occurs exactly 100 years after the Turkish genocide against the Armenians was met by indifference and inaction from world powers, including the United States. The only difference between the genocide then and now is the weapons being used. The ideology, location and methods of destruction of lives and culture are all the same. The American politicians and media who spent weeks this summer discussing and condemning the killing of a lion in Zimbabwe seem largely oblivious to the suffering of innocent people.

A courageous moral leadership of the United States and its allies is called for

today to stop the unspeakable horrors that are daily being perpetrated against the Christians and other minorities in the Middle East before Christianity and its rich 2,000-year culture is completely wiped out from that region. If Christianity indeed disappears from the Middle East, any prospect for peace in this ever-volatile region — where Christians have traditionally played a balancing role between the different tribes and Muslim denominations — will be forever lost, meaning that the prospects for world peace will have suffered a fatal blow as well. It is still not too late, but we need to wake up and realize our responsibility for our fellow human beings, whether they be Christian or Muslim.

The Holy Father, when coming to the United States this week, knowing so well the deep suffering of his flock, will likely be wearing a cross that once belonged to another Christian beheaded for his faith, Father Ragheed Ganni, who was slain in 2007 in Mosul. As Pope Francis has been begging world leaders, he will repeat to Americans this week not to “turn a blind eye” to persecuted Christians and “sit by mute and inactive in the face of this intolerable crime.” Will we finally heed his call?

*Dr. Christiaan Alting von Geusau is president of the International Catholic Legislators Network, which engages in initiatives to support persecuted Christians worldwide.*



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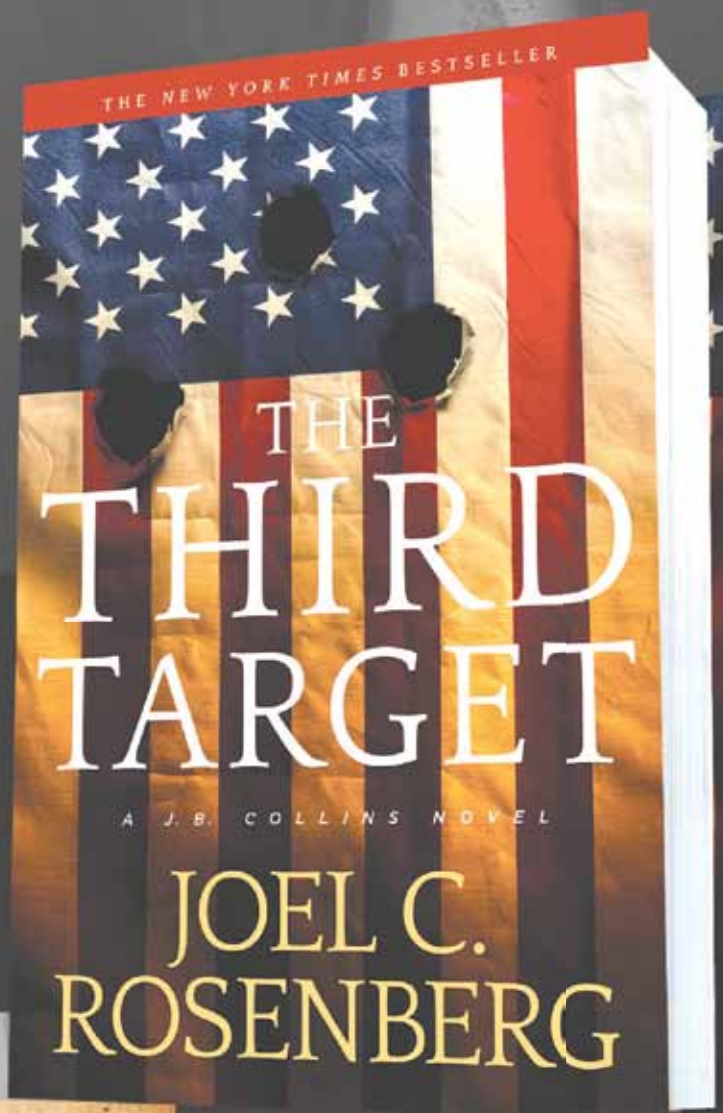
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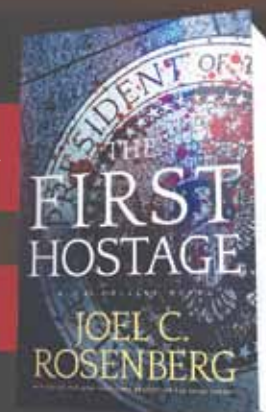


**JOEL C. ROSENBERG** is a *New York Times* bestselling author with more than three million copies sold. A front-page Sunday *New York Times* profile called him "a force in the capital." Joel is a sought-after Middle East analyst on FOX News, CNN *Headline News*, and *The Sean Hannity Show*. You can follow him on Twitter @joelcrosenberg or visit his website at joelrosenberg.com.

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# Let us not forget the people of the Nuba Mountains

By David Dettoni

**W**ith wars and conflict in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and elsewhere dominating headlines, let us not forget the ongoing war in the Nuba Mountains. Many call it the Silent War because so little of the world's attention is focused on what is going on there.

For over 30 years, this region of Sudan has been targeted by so called "government" forces in Khartoum. The people of the Nuba Mountains are mixed Christian, Muslim, and Animist. Khartoum repeatedly forces their version of Islam on all of Sudanese society, including other Muslims who do not share their radicalized interpretation. And it is bombing, attacking, and denying humanitarian aid to the peoples of the Nuba Mountains.

I have a deep connection to this part of the world. My great aunt was a nurse from Washington state who married a surgeon. They both wanted to serve the people in Africa, so they moved to Sudan and opened a medical clinic in the 1930s. Both my Great Aunt and her husband were killed during WW II when bombs hit their clinic. They were some of the first victims of aerial bombardment in Sudan. They are buried adjacent to the clinic that they founded in Doro, South Sudan.

When I worked for Rep. Frank Wolf of Virginia--no matter who was in the White House--we sent letters to Presidents and to whoever was Secretary of State, including photographs of the victims of Khartoum's aerial bombardment on the Nuba mountains: bloody corpses of innocent women and children, who had been in the wrong place at the wrong time. This was 15-25 years ago. The aerial bombardment by Khartoum against innocents, continues continuing today.

I recently was in the Nuba Mountains to evaluate conditions in this war-torn region. My guide and I were looking across a valley when we saw children running away from a water hole. My guide looked up in the air and said, "They must be running from an Antonov bomber from Khartoum." We glanced around the skies saw the outline of a bomber and heard its engines. We watched it for a few minutes until my guide said, "We had better take cover." We hurriedly climbed into a crevasse in the rocks as the plane circled overhead. After several minutes the plane stopped circling and moved away.



SUDAN RELIEF FUND

Dr. Tom Catena treats patients seeking help at the Mother of Mercy Hospital in the Nuba Mountains.



Others that day were not so fortunate, as this Antonov dropped its deadly cargo and flattened several villages that were still burning when I visited them. A mother of several children died when the bomb exploded 20 feet away. I met her widowed husband, her grieving parents, and the confused toddlers who had just lost their mother.

This happens every day in the Nuba Mountains with a ferocity that is difficult to imagine. Fighter planes suddenly zoom overhead and drop 1,000 pound bombs on villages, leaving craters 30 yards across and 20 feet deep. Families are burned to death in their huts as they sleep. During daytime raids, the people

shelter in fox holes. Thousands have been living in caves for years because they know that if they return home and rebuild, the bombs will come. Crops are laid to waste so frequently that farming is nearly impossible and most of the region faces starvation.

All of this human suffering is directed by an indicted war criminal who unlawfully seized power in Khartoum decades ago. Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, the only sitting head of state indicted on war crimes, wants to make everyone in his territory adhere to his radical version of Islam. He refuses to cede his power or admit his crimes.

Much of the world has turned its back on this war. Bashir prevents media and aid groups from entering the region. But it is a war that must be seen and recognized for what it is: religious persecution; the massive and regular targeting and slaughter of innocent civilians; and a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions.

Dr. Tom Catena, an American doctor, is the only surgeon in the Nuba

Mountains. He works tirelessly, day and night, treating all ailments, war injuries, and starvation. He knows firsthand of the suffering of the Nuba people. He and his small team have been tending to the victims of Khartoum's bombs in the Nuba Mountains since 2010.

Hundreds come daily to his Mother of Mercy Hospital, which is supported by the donations of the supporters of the Sudan Relief Fund. Most come on foot, others arrive in the backs of trucks or carried in their loved ones' arms. They come to this small hospital with shrapnel wounds, burns, and worse. They are sick, hungry, and traumatized by years of persecution and war. These are the victims of a religious persecution carried out by the fundamentalist Islamic government of Sudan—and forgotten by the outside world.

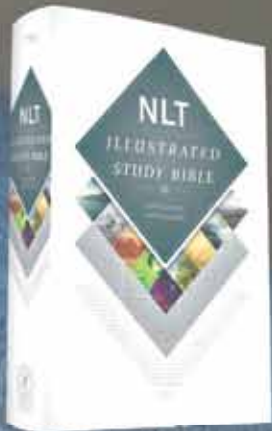
.....  
*Mr. Dettoni is Senior Advisor to the Sudan Relief Fund, a 501 (c) (3) that has been providing relief and assistance in the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan for more than 15 years.*



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