

The Long Decline of Christians in the Muslim World.
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Secular Americans and Europeans are often reluctant to rush to the defense of Christians around the world. Our educations have taught us that the Christian West cruelly colonized the good but downtrodden people of the lesser- developed world. Many of today's radicalized academics focus on Western racial bigotry; after all, only White people can be evil. They weep for the "underdog," hence the scorn for Israelis, who have the temerity to no longer be underdogs. The "poor Palestinians," no matter how violent or misogynistic, get the hand-wringing. One feminist professor, who should be outraged by the treatment of women in the Muslim world, instead adopted the hijab headscarf in "sisterhood" with observant Muslim women.

Recently, however, it is now impossible to ignore what is happening to Christians in the Muslim World. ISIS is not the only murderous enemy of Christians; they are just the latest. It is time to explore the fate of Christians since the beginnings of Islam.

The Prophet Mohammad began his mission admiring both the Christians and Jews in Arabia. But after his ten-year campaign to conquer the entire Arabian peninsula as warlord, he expelled all Christians and Jews from Arabia "forever." This still holds.

After the Prophet's death, his followers poured out to conquer the world; first, west across North Africa, and then east to take over the Persian Empire. These new zealots initially forced their conquered subjects to convert or die, but soon realized that they could do much better if they permitted some to pay an annual tax rather than convert. Tolerance was not the motive; money was.

Our history books do not explain why North Africa, which had been almost entirely Christian with a Jewish minority under the late Roman Empire, became almost entirely Muslim in a few short years. The combination of enforced conversion; extortionate taxation for those who declined to become Muslim; and destruction of irrigation systems, vineyards, and wheat fields, the economic base of the region, did the trick. Along with a huge population decline, conversion won out.

From 1250 onward, Islam's conquests declined, and bit by bit the Christian West began to recover or colonize their former holdings. The fate of Christians, Jews, or (in Persia) Zoroastrians varied depending on how benevolent or malevolent their rulers were. One could never know. Survival required plenty of money for payoffs.

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, Christians and Jews, who depended upon protection rackets with Muslim leadership, found themselves facing new enemies: Muslim nationalists, fascists, or religious fanatics. Little noted in the Western world was the gradual, then steep decline of Christian populations. The entire ancient Jewish population in Muslim lands was expelled (except in Morocco) upon the birth of Israel. Christians, who considered themselves Arabs because they spoke Arabic, soon found that was not enough. From 1918 on, Christians started to leave the Arab world. This flight is speeding up today. Before long, there will be no more Christians in the entire Middle East. Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories are final bastions for Christians, but with no future.

Muslim "religious tolerance" needs to be reconsidered and revised. Even the ancient Christian population in Egypt, the Copts (once the majority in Egypt) have declined from 10 percent to numbers as low as 3 percent. In Libya, ISIS beheaded scores of Egyptian Christian laborers on a public beach and in Iraq, they demolished the last 1400-year-old Christian monastery.

As Arab state identities melt down, another source of unity is no longer a good source of solidarity: the Arabic language. Who is an Arab then? In past centuries, most people who spoke Arabic as their first language considered themselves Arabs. This changed when Arabic-speaking Jews were expelled from Muslim countries. But Arabic-speaking Christians still held on to this identity--- until now.

In Islam's currently inflamed culture, the only real Arabs are from Arabia. The rest were conquered peoples who lost their identities: Iraqis, Syrians, Egyptians, Algerians, and Moroccans. After losing national and language identity, who will they be?

674 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of God's Law or Man's Law. You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.