

FLAME HOTLINE

Facts & Logic About the Middle East

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Middle East Christians Are Safe Only in Israel

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Middle East Christians are fleeing for their lives from the lands that gave birth to their religion two thousand years ago.

In Judea and Samaria—the West Bank—the percentage of Middle East Christians has slumped from 20% to 2% since the 1967 War that drove out the Jordanians. Today, only about 46,000 Christians live there, the rest having been driven out by religious persecution, the Palestinian Authority's discriminatory laws and oppressive regime, and Islamist terrorism.

Most of Gaza's 3,200 Middle East Christians have taken flight since the Hamas takeover in 2007. Gaza's Christian population has shrunk to 836 people today. And most of those want to leave the religiously and economically oppressive hellhole.

As our holiday season draws to a close, it is important to celebrate the one place in the Middle East where Jews and Christians can live amicably and with full and equal rights: Israel.

Surveying the dire plight of Christians throughout the Middle East, there is only one good place there for a secure and decent life—free from terrorism and religious persecution—and that is to be found in the Jewish state: Israel.

Elsewhere, Middle East Christians live endangered lives in threatened communities, usually at the mercy of oppressive governments, a hostile religious establishment, Islamist terror groups, and discriminatory civil societies.

Middle East Christians from all over the majority-Muslim countries—from Egypt to Iran, and most notably in the Palestinian territories—are fleeing in large numbers. Most seek refuge in Western countries.

But the only country in the Middle East with a stable and growing Christian population is

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YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...
Anti-Zionism Is Racism
 Anti-Semitic attacks that kill Jews in a synagogue are fundamentally no different than attacks on Zionism—Israel's right to exist. They're both racist acts of hatred.

What are the facts?
 Zionism is not the belief that the Jewish people have a right to self-determination in the State of Israel in their ancestral homeland. According to the US State Department, self-determination is a form of nation building at local, using non-violence, through peaceful or lawful struggle. The form of self-determination appears in numerous places—mostly civil societies—throughout the world. It is not a right to self-determine in a specific territory to be held by the Jewish state, among all the world's nations, to meet Israel's needs in a national state. This nation respects a double standard, as well as its No complicity international protest Turkey's military colonization of Gaza, nor China's occupation of Tibet. The Israel is a fully recognized of belonging to one ancient homeland. In fact, Jews are the indigenous people of Palestine—remnants of the oldest surviving state in that land—over 3,500 years ago, with continuous residency since then. Indeed, Zionism is an anti-Semitic movement, being a right to return, to Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike.

Attack #1: Israel attacks Palestinian land. The attempt to displace the indigenous land people of the Holy Land is a racist act. The Palestinians have never had sovereignty over any territory. Therefore, they do not "own" public lands or property owned by Jews and Muslims that Jews think. The territory controlled by Israel today was settled on land that Jews owned or purchased, was public land granted by the British Mandate for Palestine, or was captured when Israel defeated invading Arab armies from Jordan and Syria in 1948—all legal acquisitions under international law, to be resolved by negotiations.

Attack #2: Israel's violence in the Holy Land are religious based. Many oppose the idea by using Jews and Christians that their rights to their own land are violated. But Zionism is largely a secular movement, and Israel's right to exist is also recognized by independent legal, historical and humanitarian rights. While Israel's state religion is indeed Judaism—and it is the world's only Jewish state—all other nations, mostly Muslims, that designate a state religion, also including China, Iran and England. Above all, Israel is not a theocracy; that fact, too, is a major discrepancy.

Attack #3: Israel is an apartheid state. This attempt to discriminate Israel is false in that Israel is the most diverse state in the Middle East. Its citizens of all races, genders, and ethnicities have been published and paid for by **FLAME** Facts and Logic About the Middle East P.O. Box 3688, Berkeley, CA 94708

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Israel. The population of Middle East Christians in Israel continues to grow by about two percent per year, and 175,000 Christians make their home there.

By comparison, Egypt's Coptic Christian communities have been targeted for extermination by the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS and others. In 2011, Alexandria's majestic Two Saints Church was firebombed, with the loss of 23 lives. In the city of Edfu, a 3,000 man Muslim pogrom against Middle East Christian churches, shops and homes shattered the Coptic community.

When Copts demonstrated in Cairo about these assaults, soldiers attacked these Middle East Christians, killing 27 and gravely injuring hundreds of them. Copts struggle to survive economically and are largely excluded from Egyptian civil society.

Middle East Christians unfortunate enough to reside in Iran face a government that is unremittingly and lethally hostile to non-Muslims. Under Sharia law, converting to Christianity is a crime punishable by death, as is proselytizing. New Testaments, when found, are burnt or re-purposed as toilet paper.

Syria, Iraq and even Lebanon have placed their Middle East Christian minorities under siege conditions. Middle East Christians have taken flight from hostile Arab governments and terror groups like ISIS, al Qaeda and Hezbollah.

Lebanon—long a Christian bulwark in the Middle East—can boast of Christian presence in the national government. But the Lebanese government is fully under the control of the Shiite terrorist organization, Hezbollah. Christians there are aware that beneath the veneer of governmental tolerance, there is a seething resentment of all things Christian in the Muslim *umma*.

The chaos of the past two decades in Iraq and Syria have seen the Middle East Christian populations there fall by more than half. Iraq's Christian population plummeted from over a million to four hundred thousand, as these Christians fled first to refugee camps in Syria and then onward to Jordan. They have been joined by three hundred thousand native Syrian Christians. And ISIS terrorists have killed or forcibly converted entire Christian communities.

Both Western and Middle East Christians have long immigrated to Israel, despite their more difficult path to citizenship. Middle East Christians are fully represented in the Knesset, the government, the IDF, and even occupy a seat on Israel's Supreme Court.

On the other hand, the situation for Middle East Christians living in Judea and Samaria under the Palestinian Authority and in Gaza—under Hamas—is perhaps the most dire.

Bethlehem is a case in point. It now has a much smaller Middle East Christian population than it once had. When Bethlehem was turned over to the Palestinian Authority (PA) after Oslo in December, 1995, the "Little Town" of 25,000 people was 80% Christian. PA rule has destroyed that majority: the latest census estimates a mere 20%-and-shrinking Christian population there.

This has been caused by hostile PA land-transfer rules, terrorism, and an increasingly exclusionary local civil society. The 2002 takeover of the Church of the Nativity by the Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade signaled to Middle East Christians that they were no longer

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FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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welcome in Christianity's "home town." PA courts routinely dispossess Christians of their land, giving preference to the flimsiest of Muslim claims.

Much as in Hezbollah-controlled Lebanon, Middle East Christians are represented in Bethlehem's municipal government as *dhimmis* only with the sufferance of PA and Hamas power-brokers and roving anti-Christian gangs.

This holiday season, the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committee in Gaza proclaimed the observance of Christmas there "an abomination," and vowed retribution on all who celebrated the Christian holy day. The only silver lining for Middle East Christians is that continued Hamas persecutions have shrunk their population in Gaza to mere hundreds. Most of these sought travel permits to Israel to observe Christmas this year. Israel granted a few hundred such passes, and it's unclear how many of these Middle East Christians will return to Gaza.

Christians worldwide have been major supporters of Israel. Disregarding the religious impulse behind segments of that support, we should welcome them into the Big Tent of Zionism. And we should take note of the ongoing predations suffered by Middle East Christians and ensure that America embraces their cause as a corollary of support for Israel.

Share with your friends and colleagues the hellish reality of Middle East Christians, and seek opportunities for mutual support with Christian friends and organizations.

I hope you'll also quickly visit FLAME's lively [new Facebook page](#) and review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's recent *hasbarah* campaign asserting the near-impossibility of distinguishing anti-Zionism from classic, racist anti-Semitism.

Best regards,

Ken Cohen

Editor, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. We may never defeat anti-Semitism or its equally twisted twin, anti-Zionism—but we have an obligation to fight them with every ounce of our being. That's why FLAME has created a new *hasbarah* message called "[Anti-Zionism is Racism.](#)" I hope you'll review this hard-hitting paid editorial, which began running this month—for the first time in the *New York Times*. It exposes slander of Israel and opposition to Israel's existence by BDS activists, members of Students for Justice in Palestine and even a few politicians as racist calumnies. These lies need to be called out, and FLAME's new position paper does it boldly. In addition to running in mainstream media, this editorial will be sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). To donate online, just go to donate now. Now, more than

ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Trump stay focused on the true obstacle to peace, which is the lack of a credible Palestinian peace partner.

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