

# Muslim Persecution of Christians

By Robert Spencer

Robert Spencer is a scholar of Islamic history, theology, and law and the director of [Jihad Watch](#). He is the author of eight books, eleven monographs, and hundreds of articles about jihad and Islamic terrorism, including the New York Times Bestsellers *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)* and *The Truth About Muhammad*. His latest book, *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs*, is available now from Regnery Publishing.

Christianity, born in the Middle East, is in danger of losing its two millenia-long presence there. If that notion sounds alarmist to Western ears, it is acknowledged by Middle Easterners as a growing likelihood.

“I fear the extinction of Christianity in Iraq and the Middle East,” said the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Baghdad, Jean Benjamin Sleiman, as Pope Benedict XVI visited that troubled region this week. The Lebanese Christian columnist Sarkis Naoum added: “Unless there is a turn toward secularism in the Arab world, I don’t think there is a future for Christians here.” In 1909, the Middle East was 20 percent Christian; one hundred years later, that percentage has fallen to five percent.

This precipitous decline is chronicled and explained in a detailed historical video entitled Muslim Persecution of Christians, produced by the Terrorism Awareness Project. The video, which is embedded [above], recounts contemporary examples of anti-Christian violence, and the Islamic theology that justifies and intensifies it.

As the video demonstrates, the resurgence of the Islamic jihad and Islamic supremacism around the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries can be directly correlated with the declining Christian population. As Muslims, influenced by Salafi movements to restore the “purity” of Islamic governance, reassert traditional Islamic legal stipulations mandating and institutionalizing discrimination against and harassment of Christians, Christians all over the Islamic world are feeling the heat.

In Pakistan’s Swat Valley, where the Taliban has been lately implementing Shari’a law, Christians have been forced for their own safety to wear Islamic clothing and grow beards, so as to avoid attracting unwanted attention. Not all have been successful: many Christians have fled the area after the Taliban demanded from them jizya payments so large that they were beyond their means to pay. Jizya is the poll tax mandated in the Qur’an (9:29) that “People of the Book” – that is, primarily Jews and Christians – must pay for the privilege of living in an Islamic state.

Meanwhile, Egypt’s State Council, which advises that country’s Administrative Court, issued a report vilifying Maher El-Gohary, an Egyptian convert from Islam to Christianity, who had requested that his religion as listed on his official identification card be changed to reflect his conversion. The report denounced El-Gohary as an “apostate,” termed Christians “infidels,” and insisted (in line with the Qur’an and traditional Islamic belief) that Jesus was a Muslim prophet. It also skewered the convert’s “audacity” in making his request, which the report said threatened Egypt’s social order. Fr. Matthias Nasr Manqarious, who is helping El-Gohary take on

Egypt's legal system, explained that converts from Islam to Christianity today "can't live as Christians in broad daylight."

Converts from Islam to Christianity face similar troubles elsewhere in the Islamic world as well. Recently a Pentecostal pastor in Kenya, Abdi Welli Ahmed, who is also a convert from Islam, attempted to cross from Ethiopia into Somaliland, a breakaway Somali province. Ahmed explains: "I was beaten up for being in possession of Christian materials. They threatened to kill me if I did not renounce my faith, but I refused to their face. They were inhuman."

Why do converts face such a hard time? Because Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, said, "If anyone changes his religion, kill him" – and the death penalty for apostasy is still mandated by all the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Many Muslim countries take this very seriously. Early in May, Libyan police arrested a Coptic Christian from Egypt, Gergis Massoud Hanna, on charges of "Proselytizing Christianity in Libya" – although there are indications that a scheming business partner falsely accused Hanna. Pakistan's blasphemy laws are likewise used to harass Christians. Around the same time Hanna was arrested, a Pakistani attorney prosecuting blasphemy charges against a Christian, Hector Aleem, came out for vigilantism: "If the judge does not punish Aleem according to the law, then [we] will kill him ourselves."

Pakistan, Egypt, and Somalia have one thing in common: a resurgence of Islamic supremacism and reassertion of elements of Islamic law have not been enforced in those countries by their Western-influenced governments in the recent past. The momentum everywhere in the Islamic world lies with these Salafi movements – and Christians, as well as other non-Muslims, bear the brunt of this reassertion. Muslim persecution of Christians, built as it is into the foundations of Islamic theology and law, is not going to go away – and if movements of Islamic purity continue to gain ground in the Islamic world, it will only increase. It is long past time for human rights organizations and all free people to take notice, and say, "No more."

Posted by [Robert](#) on May 15, 2009 1:56 AM

Jihad Watch ([www.jihadwatch.org](http://www.jihadwatch.org)) and FrontPage Magazine.com