



The Effect of Christian Persecution in the Middle East

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*AP Seminar at Weymouth High School
Submitted 22 May 2023*

Abstract

Christian persecution in the Middle East is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted solution. International pressure and violent harassment are major causes and impacts of this persecution. Social media emerges as the most effective solution, allowing for the exposure of religious persecution and raising awareness. It can also lead to the implementation of laws to protect against further persecution. Social media builds relationships, protects vulnerable communities, and encourages high-level acts of unity. While there may be limitations, such as misinformation and limited access, social media remains a powerful tool to address Christian persecution in the Middle East.

Keywords: Christina persecution, freedom, social media, violence

Introduction

Overcoming adversity through the persecution of Christians by terrorist groups is a complex and deeply troubling issue that requires a multifaceted solution. Nelson Mandela highlights how gaining “freedom after a prolonged struggle” due to the courage of people that sacrificed so much for equality and peace in the country (13). Rahill, Guitele, J., further illustrates how the forest fires in California can be tied to the theme of overcoming adversity. In situations out of one’s control because the fires are unpredictable and disastrous, but must be stopped, since they’re harder to prevent. Both authors exemplify the theme of overcoming adversity in situations out of their control. Haider

Huma, a Director of Education and Research delivers an ambitious vision for the future that highlights that the drastic decline in the number of Christians in the Middle East is considered to be part of a longer-term exodus related to general violence. Today, Christians in the Middle East constitute no more than 3-4% of the region’s population (Haider 17). The Guardian is a British daily newspaper that addresses how millions of Christians in the region have been uprooted from their homes, and many have been killed, kidnapped, imprisoned, and discriminated against due to practicing their religion. Therefore the population in the Middle East of Christians is decreasing (The Guardian). This information leads to the question of

what is the most effective way to address Christian Persecution in the Middle East? To analyze the Christian Persecution in the Middle East, the technological, social and cultural, political, and legal causes, impacts, and potential solutions must be considered. Therefore to understand the complexity of this topic, a careful evaluation of the research highlights International Pressure, pontification, and Violent harassment. Through this exploration, it will become clear that social media is the most effective solution because it can be used as a way to expose this religious persecution and raise awareness, which as a result could catalyze laws that governments could impose to protect against further religious persecution in their land.

Violent Harassment

With the rise of Islam, Christians in the region have endured a tolerated position that urges many limitations on religious, political, and economic freedoms. LeMasters Philip is the pastor of St. Luke Orthodox Christian Church and a professor of religion. He highlights that in varying places, Islamic societies imposed requirements such as paying the tax, wearing distinctive dresses, and prohibiting the building or repair of churches and the conversion of Muslims. "Christians still made up the majority of the population in the lands of the Caliphate from Egypt to Iraq," (5) but many of them "converted to Islam under the influence of social and economic pressure" (5). Moreover, some governors extorted and destroyed their churches. If you went against any of the laws, or returned to their religions, you were automatically killed (LeMaster). Christians suffered and faced a lot at the hands of those who were against their religion.

International Pressure

International pressure can play a crucial role in addressing and reducing Christian persecution in the Middle East. Beccaro Andrea, a research Fellow who researches activities that concern the study of terrorism, elaborates on how the ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) movement has been expanding since 2003. The goal of the ISIS movement is to "solidify and expand its control of territory," (3) and to govern through the education of its strict interpretation. ISIS established roots in Mosul, where they performed tremendous criminal activities (4). This helped ISIS to ease control over many areas and loosen the Government (8). Beccaro is elaborating on how "ISIS is a serious security threat" (4) in the Mediterranean area. Casper Jayson, a local correspondent for Christianity, agrees with Beccaro Andrea on how social hostility toward religion is at its lowest level in the Middle East since ISIS. He also highlights that 80% of countries in each region harass religious groups, including 28 nations experiencing terrorist violence resulting in more than 50 injuries or deaths (3). Unfortunately, they didn't stop there, the "ISIS caused a series of bombings at churches and hotels on Easter Sunday" (6), property damage, physical assaults, detentions, killings, and displacement were all "social hostilities toward religion that were present at very high levels" (Casper). In addition, Chow Christopher, a journalist, activist, and educator highlights how the people that had more power used any excuse they could to "burn their churches, stone them in the streets, and essentially persecute them into submission" (1) to their "divine" status. These actions seemed unlawful, but the government wasn't able to do much because the ISIS movement took matters into its own hands and gained more power than them. By raising awareness, using diplomatic and economic pressure, and utilizing legal frameworks, the international community can work to protect the

rights of Christians and promote religious freedom (Chow 12). Terminating practices that persecuted the Christians led to the beginning of accepting their religion. Farmand Hamed, a children's rights activist, and a research consultant highlight that In Iran, children are expected to announce their religion at school and are treated differently based on their answers. These children tend to get "harsh discipline, such as being insulted, degraded, threatened with expulsion, and in some cases, dismissed from school" (3). In addition, in regards to their religion or beliefs, girls as young as 7 years of age are required to wear a head covering. If they disobey the rules then they will face discriminatory laws, which violates children's rights (Farmand 3). These discriminatory laws affect children's lives such as their well being and access to health and education.

Social Media

Social media in the hands of various users might be optimized to more effectively inform communities about the struggles of persecuted minority groups. This can in turn lead to a greater understanding of how to best advocate and communicate the public perception of the persecution of Coptic Orthodox Christians in the Middle East and other persecuted minorities, to a wider audience. Therefore to understand the complexity of this topic, potential solutions would be that social media Build Relationships, Protects Vulnerable Communities, and Encourage High-Level Acts of Unity. Through this exploration, it will become clear that social media is the most effective solution because it can be used as a way to expose this religious persecution and raise awareness, which as a result could catalyze laws that governments could impose to protect against further religious persecution in their land.

Builds Relationships

Overcoming adversity through the persecution of Christians by terrorist groups is a complex and deeply troubling issue that requires a multifaceted solution. Therefore, using social media as a weapon can empower Christians to gain the freedom they seek. Soliman Sophia is a fourth-year Political Science and Journalism student who emphasizes how social media has become a basic, and seminal form of international communication. Each platform was intended for users to create a unique sphere of influence and interaction that represents their interests (2). Not only that but she also states that social media allows those of similar ideological backgrounds to join together, discuss, collaborate, and mobilize, in addition to educating others about their political ideals. Another reason why social media is effective in building relationships is that many users have taken this opportunity to construct their social media accounts as a tool for political activism (Soliman 28). Social media advocacy is most effective when it is integrated into the larger goals of an organization. Social media has become an integral tool for political commentary, advocacy, and accountability on a global scale. The U.S. Department of State is an executive department, responsible for the country's foreign policy and relations. They highlight that social media will urge respect for religious freedom. This will encourage the government to propose "changes to the country's laws" (3) regulating "religious practice" (3). In addition, it will spread awareness regarding the limiting effects on the "religious freedom of the current religious law" (3). This will allow all Christians to practice their faith freely in their countries. Therefore, all Christians will have the freedom to follow their religious or other related actions to take part in religious activities and spread their beliefs (U.S Department of State 18). The constitution defines the country as secular and provides for

freedom of religion and belief as well as the freedom to decline religious affiliation.

Protects Vulnerable Communities

Overcoming adversity through the persecution of Christians by terrorist groups is a complex and deeply troubling issue that requires a multifaceted solution. Therefore, using social media as a weapon can empower Christians to gain the freedom they seek. Soliman Sophia is a fourth-year Political Science and Journalism student who emphasizes how social media has become a basic, and seminal form of international communication. Each platform was intended for users to create a unique sphere of influence and interaction that represents their interests (2). Not only that but she also states that social media allows those of similar ideological backgrounds to join together, discuss, collaborate, and mobilize, in addition to educating others about their political ideals. Another reason why social media is effective in building relationships is that many users have taken this opportunity to construct their social media accounts as a tool for political activism (Soliman 28). Social media advocacy is most effective when it is integrated into the larger goals of an organization. Social media has become an integral tool for political commentary, advocacy, and accountability on a global scale. The U.S. Department of State is an executive department, responsible for the country's foreign policy and relations. They highlight that social media will urge respect for religious freedom. This will encourage the government to propose changes to the country's laws regulating religious practice. In addition, it will raise "concerns regarding the restrictive effects" (6) on the "religious freedom of the current" (7) religious law. In addition to this, he adds on saying that criminal and administrative codes, especially concerning criminal penalties for peaceful religious speech, praying without registration, and censorship of religious literature. This will allow all Christians to

practice their faith freely in their countries. Therefore, all Christians will have the right to follow their religious or other conviction to take part in religious activities and spread their beliefs (U.S. Department of State 18). The constitution defines the country as a secular state and provides for freedom of religion and belief as well as the freedom to decline religious affiliation.

Encourage High Level Acts of Unity.

Efforts to improve the status of Christians in the region require a multifaceted approach. Rahill, Guitale, J., highlights how the forest fires in California can be tied into the theme of overcoming adversity. In situations out of one's control because the fires are unpredictable and disastrous, but must be stopped, since the fires are harder to prevent. Social media is the same since we can't know the true outcome of how things will end. Both authors exemplify the theme of overcoming adversity in situations out of their control. Egyptian President Sisi took conscious steps to improve relations with Christians and to emphasize unity among Egyptians. This has contributed to lower levels of sectarian violence in the country. Haider Huma, a Director of Education and Research delivers an ambitious vision for the future. He further illustrates that Christians throughout the Middle East face persecution and discrimination. Therefore, efforts to improve the position of Christians in the region require a multifaceted approach (4). President Sisi took "deliberate steps to improve relations with Christian communities" (5) and to emphasize agreement among Egyptians. The efforts that were taken to improve this issue were that they addressed the "Coptic Christian Community at a Christmas vigil" (7), where they publicly apologized that authorities had not finished rebuilding destroyed churches and pleaded to complete the process speedily. Through these actions, In Iran, President

Rouhani, also “quickly tried to improve conditions for Christian communities(Haider 17).

Limitations and Implications

Social media is an effective solution for addressing Christian persecution in the Middle East, but there are obstacles to consider. Open Doors Youth supports those facing discrimination for following Jesus and emphasizes that social media may not always shed light on the truth. Edited stories can spin narratives against religious minorities, and unchecked posts perpetuate false narratives. Furthermore, not everyone has access to social media. Despite these challenges, social media benefits all religious minorities and promotes political activism and virtual community building. Christians facing attacks must continue fighting for their freedom.

Conclusion

These are concerning statistics. Therefore, to understand the full scope of this problem, I conducted research on “The Christian persecution in the Middle East” from various lenses to see if we could get a better picture, and what I found was disturbing. Throughout my research, I found out that the Persecution of Christian by terrorist groups is a complex and deeply troubling issue that requires multifaceted solutions. Therefore, the most effective solution was social media. Social media will help deliver the message across the world and will grant them freedom. Social media will also allow other communities to not be afraid and share their thoughts.

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