

Townhall.com logo NOVEMBER 10, 2010

# The Murderers of Christianity

By Pat Buchanan

11/9/2010

Sunday, on the eve of All Saints' Day, Nov. 1, 2010, the faithful gathered at the Assyrian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Salvation in Baghdad.

As Father Wassim Sabih finished the mass, eight al-Qaida stormed in, began shooting and forced him to the floor. As the priest pleaded that his parishioners be spared, they executed him and began their mission of mass murder.

When security forces broke in, the killers threw grenades to finish off the surviving Christians and detonated explosive-laden vests to kill the police. The toll was 46 parishioners and two priests killed, 78 others wounded, many in critical condition after losing limbs.

Within 48 hours, al-Qaida in Mesopotamia issued a bulletin: "All Christian centers, organizations and institutions, leaders and followers, are legitimate targets for the (holy warriors)."

It was the worst massacre of Christians yet. For Assyrian Catholics known as Chaldeans, whose ancestors were converted by St. Thomas the Apostle, the U.S. war of liberation has been seven years of hell.

Estimates of the number of Christians in Iraq in 2003 vary from 800,000 to 1.5 million. But hundreds of thousands have fled since the invasion. Seven of the 14 churches in Baghdad have closed, and two-thirds of the city's 500,000 Christians are gone.

While Saddam Hussein, a secularist, had protected religious minorities, Muslim vigilantes -- Shia, Sunni and Kurd, as well as al-Qaida -- have attacked the Christians who have endured kidnappings, pillage, rapes, beheadings and assassinations.

And what has happened to this Christian community, which had lived peacefully alongside Muslim neighbors for centuries, must be marked down as one of the predictable and predicted consequences of America's war in Iraq.

In editor Tom Fleming's Chronicles, just days before President Bush ordered the invasion, columnist Wayne Allensworth warned pointedly:

"Iraqi Christians fear they will be the first victims of a war that might dismember their country, unleashing ethnic and religious conflicts that Baghdad had previously suppressed. Tariq, a Christian merchant in Baghdad, told the French weekly Marianne that 'If the United States goes to war against our country ... (t)he Wahhabis and other fundamentalists will take advantage of the confusion to throw us out of our homes, destroy us as a community and declare Iraq an Islamic nation.'

"If recent history is any indication, Tariq has cause for concern," wrote Allensworth. "The Shiite uprising in southern Iraq during the first Gulf War -- encouraged and then abandoned by Washington -- targeted Christians. Many Christians had supported Saddam's regime, in spite of creeping Islamicization, as their best hope of survival in the Islamic Middle East."

"We let the Shia genie out of the bottle," said a rueful Yitzhak Rabin after Israel's invasion of Lebanon gave birth to Hezbollah.

We Americans did the same with our wars against Saddam's Iraq.

Why is Christianity being murdered in its cradle by Muslim fanatics?

Multiple reasons. A return of Islamic militancy. The rise of ethnic nationalism that conflates tribal and religious identity. Hatred of America for its domination of the region, for our war on terror that they see as a war on Islam and for our support of Israel in its suppression of the Palestinians.

Christians across the Middle East are now seen as both members of an alien religion and a fifth column of the Crusaders inside their camp.

Paul Marshall of Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom warns that we may be in another great wave of persecution, "as Christians flee the Palestinian areas, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt."

Christians are gone from Jerusalem, gone from Nazareth, gone from Bethlehem. From Egypt to Iran, the Vatican counts 17 million left.

"Across the Middle East," writes Robert Fisk in The Independent, "it is the same story of despairing -- sometimes frightened -- Christian minorities, and of an exodus that reaches almost Biblical proportions."

In an essay titled in Christ's own words, "Whoever Loses His Life for My Sake ..." columnist Doug Bandow writes,

"Although Christians are no longer tossed to the lions in the Roman Colosseum, believers are routinely murdered, imprisoned,

tortured and beaten. Churches, businesses and homes are regularly destroyed. The opportunity to meet for worship and prayer is blocked. There is real persecution rather than the cultural hostility often denounced as 'persecution' in America."

America remains the most Christianized of the Western nations. Yet, the protests of the White House, State Department and major media over the eradication of Christianity in the Middle East is muted.

Where is the outrage? What happened to the America whose president, with a British prime minister in Placentia Bay, on the eve of war sang with his sailors, "Onward Christian Soldiers"?

Are we so wary of offending Muslim sensibilities or inflaming Muslim rage we cannot denounce the pogroms perpetrated against Christians in the name of Allah?

Of what worth these wars for democracy if we end up freeing fanatics to annihilate communities or expel populations of our own Christian brothers and sisters across the Middle East?

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**Pat Buchanan**

Pat Buchanan is a founding editor of The American Conservative magazine, and the author of many books including [State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America](#).

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