

Raymond Ibrahim

## The Slaughter of Christians

June 28, 2020 Gatestone Institute

The following are among the abuses Muslims inflicted on Christians throughout the month of May 2020: **Nigeria:** From January 2020 to mid-May 2020, Muslim terrorists massacred at least 620 Christians (470 by Fulani herdsmen and 150 by Boko Haram). According to a May 14 report:

*"Militant Fulani Herdsmen and Boko Haram ... have intensified their anti-Christian violence ... with hacking to death in the past four months and half of 2020 of no fewer than 620 defenseless Christians, and wanton burning or destruction of their centers of worship and learning. The atrocities against Christians have gone unchecked and risen to alarming apogee with the country's security forces and concerned political actors looking the other way or colluding with the Jihadists. Houses burnt or destroyed during the period are in their hundreds; likewise dozens of Christian worship and learning centers."*

The report further states that, since 2009, "not less than 32,000 Christians have been butchered to death by the country's main Jihadists." Earlier this year, Christian Solidarity International issued a "Genocide Warning for Christians in Nigeria," in response to the "rising tide of violence directed against Nigerian Christians and others classified as 'infidels' by Islamist militants..." More recently, in a May statement, the Christian Rights Agenda, another human rights group, expressed concern for "the seeming silence of Nigeria's President, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, who as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces has not only failed to protect the Christian communities but has remained silent over these killings. To date, no Fulani herdsmen have been arrested and prosecuted over the killings, a development that has helped to embolden them." It is worth noting that Buhari himself is a Fulani Muslim.

Separately, the Muslim man who murdered Michael Nnadi, an 18-year-old seminarian at the Good Shepherd Seminary, confessed from his jail cell that he did so because the youth "continued preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ" to his captors. According to the May 3 report, "the first day Nnadi was kidnapped ... he did not allow [Mustapha Mohammed, his murderer] to have peace" due to his relentless preaching of the Gospel. Mohammed "did not like the confidence displayed by the young man and decided to send him to an early grave."

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** Muslim fighters from the Allied Democratic Forces, which earlier pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS), murdered at least 17 people, possibly many more, in the Christian-majority (95%) African nation. "They fired several shots in the air," a local said. "When the population was fleeing, they captured some people and cut them up with machetes." In late 2019, the same group murdered a pastor after he refused to stop preaching and convert to Islam.

### Attacks on Christian Churches, Cemeteries, and Crosses

**Greece:** Muslim migrants ransacked and transformed a church into their personal toilet. This public restroom was once the St. Catherine Church in Moria, a small town on the island of Lesbos, which has been flooded with migrants who arrived via from Turkey. "The smell inside is unbearable," said a local. "[T]he metropolitan of Mytilene is aware of the situation in the area, nevertheless, he does not wish to deal with it for his own reasons." According to the report:

"This is only the latest incident ... [I]t has become extremely common for Greek Orthodox Churches to be vandalised and attacked by illegal immigrants on Lesbos...."

"As a deeply religious society, these attacks on churches are shocking to the Greek people and calls to question whether these illegal immigrants seeking a new life in Europe are willing to integrate and conform to the norms and values of their new countries.

"These continued attacks have ultimately seen the people of Lesbos, who were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016, become increasingly frustrated by the unresolved situation that has restricted and changed their lives as they no longer feel safe on their once near crime-free island."

Other incidents on Lesvos include "African immigrants ridiculing and coughing on police in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and thousands of olive trees being destroyed."

**Turkey:** On May 8, a man tried to torch a church in Istanbul; the church had been attacked in the previous years, sometimes with hate-filled graffiti. When police detained the arsonist, he said "I burned it because they [Christians] brought the coronavirus [onto Turkey]." Discussing this incident, another reportsaid that "Minorities in Turkey, such as Armenians, Rums and Syriacs [all Christians], as well as their places of worship, are occasionally targeted in hate attacks."

Two weeks later, on May 22, in broad daylight, a man climbed the fence of a historic Armenian church in Istanbul and proceeded to yank off its metal cross and hurl it to the ground, as captured on surveillance footage. The man, who looks more like a Westernized "hipster" than an ardent Islamist, walks up to and stares at the cross for a while — he even looks at and strikes a pose for the security camera — before attacking the crucifix.

**Pakistan:** After Friday prayers on May 8, an armed Muslim mob shouting "anti-Christian slogans" attacked and tried to set fire to the Trinity Pentecostal Church in Hakeem Pura. Built 22 years ago, the church was desecrated, and a large cross and part of a wall broken. The Muslim man behind the attack had sold land to the growing church a year earlier, and now wanted it back. A Christian eyewitness said that the mob, "after attacking the walls and the cross, challenging anyone who dare oppose them, fled... Not only was the cross broken, but our hearts were crushed too."

Separately, Muslim "land grabbers" seized, desecrated, and ploughed over the graves of a century-old Christian cemetery with a tractor. According to the May 22 report:

"The Christian community there reportedly protested against the violation and tried to stop the vandalism. However, they were allegedly threatened with guns... [A]ll graves that were destroyed had crosses fixed on the top... [S]ome of the houses occupied by the Christians were demolished and people were forced to flee from their homes. Amid widespread discrimination against the Christian community in Pakistan, the properties owned by the minorities are often subjected to injustice including land grabbing and being the target of criminals. Moreover, the economic disparities and religious bias in Pakistan's judiciary have increased the struggles Christians face to recover the lost land."

**Serbia:** On Sunday, May 31, two Muslim migrants entered the St. Alexander Nevsky Church in Belgrade during service and robbed several of the mostly elderly congregants. "There were two of them. They broke into the church during the liturgy, which was in progress, and they stole two purses along with three mobile phones," a church leader said, adding:

"Upon entering the temple, they split up on two sides, and after the people saw what was happening, they managed to catch one of them and take away his mobile phones and the money he stole. The other managed to escape. He took two purses, in one there were 3,500 dinars, while in the other there were 18,000, which was the entire pension of one woman. We handed that young man over to the police, while the other managed to escape. This is an insult. Isn't anything sacred to people, such as the liturgy? Terrible."

**Egypt:** On May 30, 2020 — two days before President Trump recognized Global Coptic Day — Egyptian authorities demolished the only Coptic church in village of Koum al-Farag, even though it had stood for 15 years and served 3,000 Christians. According to the report:

"The destruction of the church was a punishment for the 'crime' of building rooms for Sunday school.... When the work began, some extremist Muslims began to attack Christians."

#### **A separate report on this incident relates:**

"According to an ancient Islamic tradition, or common law, churches are prevented from being formally recognised or displaying any Christian symbols if a mosque is built next to them."

The authorities decided to solve this issue by demolishing the church, which took a tractor "six long hours," a Copt recalled:

*"The decision was not welcomed by the Christians in the village, so they protested by appearing at the site in possession of the documents. However, the police and some*

*radicals began to insult and assault Christians, including women and children. The church leader received so many punches in the face and chest that he passed out."*

In a separate attack in the early hours of May 16, "an air conditioning technician threw a Molotov cocktail inside the Virgin Mary Church in Alexandria." According to the report:

"Security camera footage led to his apprehension. Fortunately, no one was injured in this attack. Predictably, however, the prosecutors appear to be [pursuing] an acquittal on the claim that the perpetrator of the religious hate crime is also mentally ill. Based on precedent, it is extremely unlikely that this perpetrator will face any consequences for his attempt to torch a church."

**Mozambique:** Islamic terrorists attacked a monastery. The four monks residing in it managed to hide and emerge unscathed. However, the hospital they were building for a nearby village was destroyed by the armed Muslims. According to the May 18 report:

*"Little is known about the insurgents, and until recently there were doubts they were actually islamists, but they have claimed to be fighting for the imposition of Sharia law in the North of Mozambique.... The attack on the monastery, which included the destruction of a hospital that the monks were building in the village, is the second most serious attack against a Christian target since the troubles began. Last month a Catholic mission was also attacked, although, as here, nobody was killed. Other communities have not been so lucky, as the insurgents have left a trail of death and destruction behind them in the towns and villages they attack."*

**Nigeria:** On May 7, a helicopter bombed and destroyed a church. The building was empty at the time; no casualties were reported. According to a local leader,

*"The helicopter used to hover around the area, dropping some things. We don't know what they have been dropping but yesterday in the afternoon, the helicopter came and dropped a bomb ... [The] Assembly of God church was destroyed including a nearby building.... Hours after the incident, a group of people numbering about 100 pass through the village carrying guns. Some were trekking while others rode on motorcycles. One of them was carrying a flag which is not a Nigerian flag; one other person was making some incantations in Arabic... People have fled the village... The question is who was in the helicopter dropping bomb?... We are very concerned ... If it was a mistake by security agencies, they should come out and explain so as to allay the fears of the community."*

**Algeria:** Four Muslim guards responsible for protecting a church vandalized and overturned its statue of the Virgin Mary. According to the report,

"[T]he chapel of Santa Cruz built in stones extracted from the mountain of Murdjadjo where it is perched, was the object of an attempted theft... Four looters allegedly destroyed the statue of the Virgin Mary by attempting to steal it. They have even destroyed other holy monuments in their path....

It was later found, however, that the chapel's four hired guards were themselves the "looters" responsible for the desecration. The report continues:

"In addition, the Christian community in Algeria denounces... the intimidation which the faithful are subject to. Many Christians have denounced the series of closings of churches in the national territory. Several evangelical associations and organizations have called for an end to 'the increasing pressure and intimidation from the Algerian government.'"

**Iran:** On Sunday, May 17, a Christian cemetery was set ablaze, just two days after the tomb of the biblical Esther and Mordecai was also set on fire on the 72nd anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel. Damage at the tomb — a holy site shared by Jews and Christians — was reportedly minimal. Few other details concerning the burned Christian cemetery aside from video footage—showing smoke billowing over its walls are available. A Hindu temple was also reportedly set on fire in May.

**France:** Unknown vandals cut down an iconic iron cross that had stood on the summit of Pic Saint-Loup since 1911 and was visible for miles around. According to the May 14 report,

*"While Europe has experienced a growing number of acts of vandalism and profanation of Christian sites, the greatest number of such acts have occurred in France, where churches, schools, cemeteries, and monuments 'are being vandalized, desecrated, and burned at an average rate of three per day,' according to reports drawing from government statistics."*

Although the identity of the vandals responsible for this latest outrage is unknown, it appears that Western European nations that have large Muslim migrant populations are seeing a disproportionate rise in attacks on churches and Christian symbols. According to a 2017 study on France — which has the largest Muslim population in Europe — "Islamist extremist attacks on Christians" rose by 38%, going from 273 attacks in 2015 to 376 in 2016; the majority occurred during Christmas season and "many of the attacks took place in churches and other places of worship." Similarly, around Christmas 2016, in a German region where more than a million Muslims reside, some 50 public Christian statues (including those of Jesus) were beheaded and crucifixes broken.

### **Abduction, Rape, and Forced Conversion of Christian Women**

**Nigeria:** Between March 23 and April 30, six young Christian girls and one older married woman were kidnapped. "We are saddened to report to you the battles we have been fighting even amidst the lockdown," the Hausa Christians Foundation reported on May 4, adding that it "has been working on the following tragic incidences of abduction and forceful Islamization, despite the fact that the lockdown has limited our efforts." The statement continues:

*"The usual practice is that these girls will be forced into marriage and perpetually be abused sexually, physical and emotionally. We are doing our best to rescue these precious lives but our efforts have been truncated by the current government imposed lockdown that has put everything on hold.... The simple reason for the injustice and the persecution we have been subjected to... is because of our faith in Christ Jesus."*

Two of the young girls have since been rescued.

**Pakistan:** Another young Christian girl was kidnapped. According to a May 2 report,

"On Sunday, April 26, a 14-year-old Christian girl ... was abducted by a group of armed Muslim men... [T]he Christian girl's family has filed a police report and is begging police to recover their relative.... Myra Shehbaz was abducted by a group of Muslim men led by Muhammad Naqash. Eye witnesses claim that Myra was attacked while she was traveling to her workplace as a domestic worker on Sunday afternoon.... Myra's abductors forced her into a car and Myra tried to resist... [The] abductors were armed and fired several shots into the air.... [The girl's mother] fears her daughter will be raped, forcefully converted to [sic] Islam, or even killed.... [A]n estimated 1,000 women and girls from Pakistan's Hindu and Christian community are assaulted, abducted, forcefully married to their captor, and forcibly converted to Islam every year."

**Egypt:** In a May 22 report, Coptic Solidarity, a human rights organization focused on the plight of Egypt's Christians, made the following remarks:

"The indigenous Coptic Christians of Egypt continue to experience increasing persecution, by the government and society.... To illustrate, at least five Coptic women, including some minors, have reportedly been kidnapped or disappeared in just the last few weeks, and Egyptian state security has made no concerted effort to recover them.... Ranya Abd al-Masih, a Coptic wife and mother of three from a town just north of the capital, Cairo... remains hidden despite protests, including from the region's church, which laments 'the total lack of reaction by the authorities.'"

### **Hate for and Abuse of Christians**

**Austria:** A local newspaper reported:

*"A graffiti that rightly causes a lot of agitation. The lettering 'Christians must die' can be seen at the Traisen-Markt train station. Above it, in the same style, the words 'Allah Akbar' [sic]. The removal of the graffiti has already begun and will cost about 500 Euros."*

**Uganda:** A Muslim father burned his daughter for converting to Christianity. While traveling with her father, a sheikh (respected elder) of the Muslim community, Rehema Kyomuhendo, 24, heard the gospel and secretly converted. On the night of May 4, while she and her father were staying at her aunt's home, she called a Christian associate: "As she was sharing Christ with me, I was so overjoyed," Rehema later explained, "and my father heard my joy and woke up, came from his bedroom furiously and started beating me up with blows, slaps and kicks." He also shouted that he was "going to kill her." He broke a gas container, lit the pieces with the unspilt fuel, and began to burn his daughter. Her cries awakened her aunt, who protected her from the sheikh. Last reported, Rehema was expected to need more than a month of hospitalization due to "serious burns on her leg, stomach, rib area, near her neck and on part of her back." No one has "reported the assault to police for fear that her father might try kill her."

**Pakistan:** In another example of abuse of Christians, this time in connection to COVID-19, "an Islamic cleric claims his organization is using COVID-19 food aid to convert non-Muslims to Islam," according to a May 8 report. Speaking on Pakistani television, the cleric boasted of how when a destitute Christian man came for aid, the "staff of the organization offered him conversion against food which he accepted." The man was subsequently renamed Muhammad Ramadan, signifying his conversion had occurred during the Muslim holy month. The cleric had added that Muhammad was then fasting (which is ironic considering hunger is what prompted him to convert in the first place).

---

**Raymond Ibrahim**, author of the recent book, *Sword and Scimitar, Fourteen Centuries of War between Islam and the West*, is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Gatestone Institute, a Shillman Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center, and a Judith Rosen Friedman Fellow at the Middle East Forum.