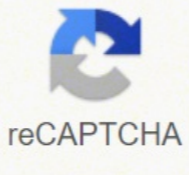




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## Number of christian martyrs in 20th century

In a departure from our usual pattern, in this issue of Glimpses we take a look at a twentieth-century phenomenon in Christian history that has urgent relevance for us today. More Christians have died for their faith in this current century than all other centuries of church history combined. To fill us in on this little known and shocking holocaust we welcome guest contributor and journalist Dan Wooding who has reported first hand from most of the present day lion's dens for Christians. When we finally met in Moscow, Alexander Ogorodnikov peered at me over his "granny" reading glasses. "Thank you for caring!" he said, his voice choking with emotion. The Russian dissident, wearing a dark, pinstriped suit and sporting a ponytail, had spent seven lonely years in the former Soviet prison system, or Gulag. He had been convicted of running a Christian discussion group for other students at the Moscow State University, where he was studying film making. I had first learned of his plight from a letter he had written to former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The letter was published by Keston College, a British-based organization that monitored persecution in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In the letter, Ogorodnikov told Gorbachev that he had been in prison for five years and had not received one letter or a visit from any Christian. "Have Me Executed" "I know it is a sin to commit suicide, but I am so lonely that I wish to ask you to have me executed by firing squad," he wrote. After reading his appeal, I immediately organized a letter-writing and prayer campaign on his behalf in the United States. Within weeks, thousands of letters had arrived at his camp, and waves of prayer went up to heaven on his behalf. Soon, his case came to the attention of then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher interceded with Gorbachev on Ogorodnikov's behalf, and the prisoner was released. Now running a soup kitchen for Moscow's homeless, Ogorodnikov told me, "You don't know what it was like to discover that there were Christians who cared -- who wanted me to live and who loved me." Worldwide Persecution Continues Now that freedom has come to the former Soviet Union, Ogorodnikov and thousands of other Christian prisoners have been released and are free to share their faith openly with others. That is not the case in many other countries, such as Sudan. In six years, more than 1.3 million Christians and other non-Muslim people have been killed in this African nation -- more than Bosnia, Chechnya and Haiti combined. "Sudan is characterized by the total or near complete absence of civil liberties," said Christian activist Nina Shea, during US Congressional Human Rights Caucus hearings. "Individual Christians, including clergy, have over the past few years . . . been assassinated, imprisoned, tortured and flogged for their faith." That pattern is being repeated in country after country around the world, often in areas where Islam is strong. Christians in North America can easily forget the daily danger in which their sisters and brothers overseas live. We don't realize that our peaceful existence here isn't the standard experience of Christians around the world. This Is The Age of Martyrs In a recent article, Justin D. Long emphasized the startling fact that more people have died for their faith in the Twentieth Century than in all of the previous centuries combined. "During this century, we have documented cases in excess of 26 million martyrs. From AD 33 to 1900, we have documented 14 million martyrs." He did add, however, that thankfully martyrdom has been on the decline for the past decade. "The current rate is 159,000 martyrs per year -- down from 330,000 per year at the height of the cold war. With the demise of the Soviet Union and its sponsored communism, religious freedoms have opened up. Although there are still numerous restrictions and some persecution, martyrdom -- in the form of executions and assassinations -- has been significantly curtailed." Worst Genocide of the Century Possibly the worst organized killings of Christians in this century took part in Turkey. Paul Marshall in his book, Their Blood Cries Out, co-authored with Lila Gilbert, wrote, "Although Turkey is now a country with relatively few Christians, this was not always the case. Less than one hundred years ago, Turkey, or rather its Ottoman predecessor, was about 30 percent Christian. This situation changed when some two million ethnic Armenian Christians were massacred between 1905 and 1918, a genocide which the Turkish government still denies. Many of the remaining Christians fled immediately. Others facing death threats, systemic harassment, and discrimination, followed them later." Uganda Holocaust Much of the persecution in recent years has been taking place in predominately Islamic nations. Idi Amin, the self-appointed President for Life, a Muslim, seized power in Uganda in a coup in 1971 and soon he and his brutal followers began to try to set up the Islamic State of Uganda with funds from Saudi Arabia and Libya. The problem they faced was that many of the population were devout Christians and so they began a systematic killing that is almost beyond belief. . . . By the end of his reign of terror in 1979 when he was toppled by Tanzanian troops, some 500,000 Ugandans had been murdered, 300,000 of which were believers. China's Struggling Christians China is a land where Christians, particularly those in the underground church, are often under attack. China recently launched a campaign of persecution against Christians who are not registered in the official state church. According to Compass Direct News Service, the campaign stems largely from government fear that the huge number of Christians in China could be swiftly galvanized into a vast antigovernment movement. Although estimates of the number of China's Christians begin as low as 10 million, those with access to China's unregistered house churches place the total at 50 million. Some observers have estimated the number to be as high as 90 million. Whatever the actual number, even if it is the lower estimate, this represents an incredible saga of survival and growth of the community of believers under sustained government hostility and opposition. Chiapas The Southern Mexico State of Chiapas has seen an incredible situation for the Indians there who have accepted Christ. During the past 30 years, 30,000 have been driven from their homes and hundreds have been murdered. David Tamez, Executive Director of Latin American Indian Ministries, said, "Around 5,000 Indians have run away from their own communities to save their lives and in search for a better and safe refuge for their families. In 1997 we have seen one of the most difficult years for the Chiapas people, where over 60% are evangelicals, because at least 500 people were killed in different villages for the 'crime' of embracing the Christian faith." We Can Make a Difference In an editorial in Christianity Today, David Neff points out that American Christians do not lead typical Christian lives. "The typical Christian lives in a developing country, speaks a non-European language, and exists under the constant threat of persecution -- of murder, imprisonment, torture, or rape," he says. "The persecutor's sword dangles by a hair over Christians in the still-communist countries and in lands where the rising tide of Islamism overwhelms political efforts at fairness, tolerance, and due process." ("Our Extended Persecuted Family," April 29, 1996). The persecution of Christians did not end with the collapse of the Roman or even the Russian empire. It's still alive around the world. Like Alexander Ogorodnikov, our persecuted brothers and sisters need to know that the world holds other Christians who care and who love them. Is there anything we can do for persecuted Christians? Yes. We can pray. And we can support ministries that work to bring these Christians liberty. Help for Persecuted Christians If you would like more information on how you can help persecuted Christians, contact the following organizations, which specialize in helping persecuted believers: In the 20th century AD there were more Christians killed because of their faith in the Jewish Messiah than in all the centuries of Christian persecution combined. 65% of all Christians who have ever been persecuted or martyred lived in the years from 1900-2000. Antonio Socci, an Italian journalist, estimates that 45 million Christians were martyred in the 20th century. The New Persecuted: Inquiries into Anti-Christian Intolerance in the New Century Of The Martyrs. This number is considered high by some. Most of the organizations that monitor human rights and Christian agencies that calculate Christian persecutions and deaths estimate the number of Christians killed in the last century as 15-20 million--still a shocking number.The 20th century commenced with the Massacre of the Armenian Christians beginning on April 24, 1915 and continuing in the years after World War I. The Turkish Muslim government decided that the Christian "race" was a danger to their national unity. In order to settle what they called "the Armenian question," they systematically killed 1.5 million Christian Armenians. A crowd looks on as Christian Armenians are hanged in the street in Constantinople before their forced removal to the desert. Their genocide began after April 1915. When the atheist Communists took over Russia in 1917, they spent the next seven decades deliberately suppressing, exiling and killing an estimated 20 million Christians (17 million Russian Orthodox and 3 million Roman Catholic). Russian Christians killed by atheist Communists started March 8, 1917. The Russian Orthodox Church canonized more than two thousand clerical martyrs of communism. After the Communist revolution in Mexico and the new Constitution in 1917, the atheist government began a vigorous campaign against the Catholic Church. The State outlawed religious orders, took away the clergy's right to vote and restricted rights to worship. A people's army, the Cristeros (Fighters for Christ), rose up against the atheists and more than 30,000 of them were killed. The army was led by General Enriquez Gorostieta (left) from 1926-1929. 40 priests were assassinated between 1926-1934. By the end of 1934, there were only 334 priests licensed to minister to 15,000,000 Mexicans. In Spain 13 bishops, 4,172 priests and seminarians, 2,364 monks and 283 nuns were killed by atheist Leftists during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Synagogues, Protestant churches and Catholic churches were burned, pillaged or closed. 150,000-400,000 people who opposed Franco were killed. In Franco's Fascist Spain (1939-1975), the country's 30,000 Protestants were persecuted and many were forced to leave the country. All non-Catholic Bibles were prohibited and were confiscated by the police. One of the mass graves, dating from the start of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), recently discovered in an excavation from July-August of 2014 at Estepar (Burgos). The grave contains twenty-six Christians who were killed by the fascists in August-September 1936. A mass grave of Jewish corpses at the Nazi Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. When Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, his avowed purpose was "to settle the Jewish question" forever. When Titus had destroyed Jerusalem in 70, the Romans felt they "had settled the Jewish problem" forever. Before World War II there were 9,000,000 Jews living in Europe. When World War II was over, there were 3,000,000 Jews in Europe. Hitler had killed 90% of the Jews in Poland; 70% of the Jews in Yugoslavia, Hungary, the Netherlands and Greece; 50% of the Jews in Norway, Estonia, Romania and Belgium; over 30% of all the Jews in Russia and 25% of the Jews in France and Italy. The Nazis killed two out of every three people who were of the same race and ethnicity as was Jesus of Nazareth. Hitler and his propagandists correctly linked the religion of Christianity with the Jews: "The Fuhrer is deeply religious, though completely anti-Christian. He views Christianity as a symptom of decay. Rightly so. It is a branch of the Jewish race...Both (Judaism and Christianity)...in the end, they will be destroyed." Joseph Goebbels (Nazi Minister Of Propaganda), The Goebbels Diaries: Entry on December 29, 1939 Germany was a nominally Christian country. The Nazis first forced believing Christians underground. They became the Confessing Church. When the Confessing Church was taken to the death camps, there was no longer a Christian opposition to Hitler. The German people, like the Turkish people during the Armenian genocide, went along with the Nazis even when the killings included their Christian neighbors, Gypsies, Communists, the mentally handicapped (target of the Euthanasia Project), homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses. Hitler and the Nazi ideology were antithetical to both God and the better angels of human nature. In trying to build a Darwinian/Nietzschean race of tall, blue-eyed, blond-haired people, the 5'9", dark-haired, brown-eyed Hitler (right) massacred 60,000,000 people all over Europe. His experiments in conquest and eugenics should have been a final lesson to mankind. They were not. During Mao Zedong's ten-year Cultural Revolution Of The Proletariat (1966-1976), it is estimated he killed from 45-70 million Chinese. People who wore glasses were killed because they knew how to read and cared about learning. Untold numbers of Christians were killed because they were theists and would not renounce their faith in Christ. The atheist Communist "Great March Forward" ended with Mao's death in 1976. In the decades following his death, however, the number of Christians in China has exploded to between 60-80 million believers. The Christians in China are today the largest single persecuted Christian community. The Christian church at Xingsha Ecological Park in Changsha, China. At 260 feet tall, it is bigger than the nearby largest statue of Mao Zedong in China. The last 2,000 years have proven it is impossible to kill or destroy in the hearts and minds of people all over the world the belief in Jesus as Resurrected and Savior. Starting at the beginning of the Roman Empire to our modern day millions have been martyred but "His TRUTH is marching on." Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) was inspired to write new lyrics to the Union Marching Song John Brown's Body while visiting a Union camp in November 1861. She penned the poem The Battle Hymn of the Republic in her hotel room after that visit. It was set to music by William Steffe.--Article by Sandra Sweeny Silver Battle Hymn of the Republic sung by the United States Army Field Band--over 3.5 million views. CLICK FOR HOME PAGE

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