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## Martyrs in a Modern World

Tuesday, January 4, 2011

Christians — especially those enjoying the safety of the West — often think of martyrdom as a part of the distant Christian past. But a recent barrage of headlines dispels that notion in a hurry. Over the past several weeks, Christians in Iraq suffered a series of church bombings, and experts in the region predicted a virtual evacuation of that nation's Christian population. Approximately half of all Iraqi Christians have already fled the country. That represents a failure of the American ambition to leave Iraq with a government that would protect basic human rights and liberties. The murderous terrorism against Christians in Iraq amounts to a form of religious cleansing.



Meanwhile, oppression of Christians in Egypt, the most populous Arab nation, intensified with a January 1 bombing of the Saints Church in Alexandria. Twenty-one worshipers were killed and another 100 were injured. Analysts predicted a rise in the scale of these attacks, since many Muslims seem intent on eliminating Egypt's approximately 10 million Christians.

In Pakistan, rioters took to the streets to insist that the nation's draconian blasphemy laws stay in place — effectively allowing only Muslim practice and preaching. As *The New York Times* reported, "A crippling strike by Islamist parties brought Pakistan to a standstill on Friday as thousands of people took to the streets, and forced businesses to close, to head off any change in the country's blasphemy law, which rights groups say has been used to persecute minorities, especially Christians."

There is no way we can determine the exact theological beliefs of these worshipers in Egypt, Iraq, and Pakistan, but there can be no question that they are suffering and dying in the name of Jesus Christ. They deserve our earnest prayers and advocacy. They also remind us by their witness that Christ has enemies — and so do His followers. The blood of the martyrs does indeed cry out their witness for Christ.

We must pray for persecuted Christians everywhere around the world.

*"Through prayer we can be saved because of our Lord Jesus Christ, even after we have been punished. This will become salvation and confidence to us at the much more fearful and universal judgment of our Lord and Savior."* Justin Martyr

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Salman Masood, "[Pakistanis Rally in Support of Blasphemy Law](#)," *The New York Times*, Friday, December 31, 2010.

Sarah A. Topol, "[In Egypt, a Widening Sectarian Divide](#)," *Newsweek*, Monday, January 3, 2011.

