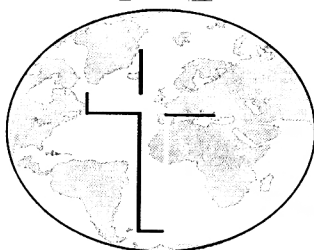


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## SYRIA'S CHRISTIANS, 7 YEARS LATER

This coming March, marks 7 years of the onset of the Global War on Syria, started March 2011, and designated as the Arabic Spring (Bloody Spring), claiming to bring democracy and freedom to Syria where I was born. I will review what happened to the Christians in the Middle East over the past 7 years, with special emphasis on the Christian Syrians, but before I start, I would like to address 4 things.

1. Syria was the cradle of civilization where Christianity began with the Birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, of the Great Syria, (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan) Syria's Christian community is one of the oldest in the World, going back two millennia and Syria's ties to Christianity are as old as the faith itself. The followers of Christ were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26), which was part of the current Syria until 1939 when it was forcibly taken over by Turkey, with the help of France who was occupying Syria at that time. Saul of Tresus, who later become the Apostle Paul, was converted to Christianity and baptized in Damascus of Syria by Ananias. His conversion was a very important turning point in the history of Christianity. It was really quite remarkable that Saul entered Damascus as a persecutor and left it as an Apostle, instrumental in spreading Christianity to the entire Roman Empire, and Syrian Christians are very proud of the fact that Paul started his evangelical mission from Damascus. Saidnaya, 18 miles north of Damascus, is the second holiest Christian place after the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. It contains an Icon of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus believed to have been painted by St. Luke, the Apostle. The city of Maaloula, 36 miles northeast of Damascus, was the cradle of Aramaic civilization 1400 years before Christ and the third holiest Christian place, all of its inhabitants are Christian and still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ and teach it to their children. The Church of Om-alzinnar in Homs is one of the oldest churches in the country, and near the northern city of Aleppo is the Church of St. Simon Stylites who spent decades on top of a stone pillar to demonstrate his faith. Two Emperors and seven Popes were sent to Rome from Syria.

2. Syria was often described as the final refuge for Middle East Christians and called the "Mother of Refugees". It has served as a sanctuary for Christians from other Middle Eastern countries, such as the Armenian from Turkey, during and after World War I, the Palestinians from Israel in 1948, the Lebanese during the Civil War between 1975 and 1990 and also the war in 2006 and the Iraqi Christians after the Iraq Invasion in 2003. It also opened its doors to many other refugees such as Kurds and Sudanese.

3. Syria and prior to the onset of the Bloody Spring in March 2011 was and still is a secular country. The Syrian Government, whether you like it or not, provided free medical care, free medicine to its people, free education, was self-sufficient, did not owe the World Bank or IME a penny. Syria was one of very few countries in the Middle East where Christians can practice their faith without fear and are permitted to build new churches and schools, both Christmas and Easter are national holidays in Syria.

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Christian government workers are given the opportunity to attend Church on Sunday, even though Sunday is a work day. Churches, just like Mosques are received free electricity from the government and the religion of the citizens is not stated on their ID's or passports.

4. Native Christians in the Middle East in general and in Syria in particular, are the envoys of a forgotten World, bearing the fierce and haunted spirit of the early church. Sadly, Christians in America and in the West do not even know they exist and assume everyone in the Middle East is a Muslim. They are usually shocked or surprised to discover that you could be both an Arab and a Christian.

So, what the exporter of democracy and advocate of freedom did to Syria until now. They destroyed the only oil refinery in Homs, so the people have no gasoline, diesel fuel or gas to run their cars, heat their homes or cook a meal. They destroyed electric generators so they have no lights to run the factories. They destroyed medicine manufacturing factories, especially in Aleppo, grain storage, cotton storage and sold it to Turkey for pennies on the dollar. Stole the oil, selling it for \$10.00 a barrel to the Turks, destroyed or stole Syria's archeological treasurers (over 10,000 sites) and sold them, and still selling them to the Turks and Europeans, and on top of that, enforced an economical blockade on the country and the people. 25% of the population are refugees out of the country, another 25% are refugees inside the country. Half of them are jobless and half of the children do not attend school. They robbed, destroyed, killed, kidnapped, raped, sold and committed every atrocity known under the sun. The country before the "Revolution" was self-sufficient in oil, gas, electricity, food, medicine and did not owe anyone a penny, as I mentioned. The country now is in ruins, and broke. Sanctions imposed by Mr. Obama were directed to Syria's political leadership, for the misdeeds of the Government that after 7 years is still in power, but in fact constitute a form of collective punishment against all Syrians, especially the Christians. These economical sanctions play a major role impoverishing Christians and forcing them to flee the country, which is why Syria's Christian leaders are calling for the immediate lifting of the sanctions.

The following is a partial list of the atrocities committed by the "Revolutionary" thugs so far:

January 25, 2012: Father Basilous Naser Killed in the city of Hama where he was assisting a wounded man.

January 29, 2012: The Convent of Saidnaya was shelled.

February 2012 The Church of Oum-Alzennar in Homs was bombed, after forcibly expelling 80,000 of the Christians of Homs and destroying and burning all Christian homes and Churches by December 2012.

April 22, 2013: both Greek Orthodox Bishop Boulos Yazigi and the Syrian Orthodox Arch Bishop Gregorias Youhanna Ibrahim kidnapped near the Turkish border by Islamic Terrorists, their driver Deacon Fathalla Kabboud was killed, bishops fate still unknown.

September 8, 2013: the city of Maaloula attacked, forty churches and Monastarys, including the Convent of Mar-Takla and the Convent of St. George and the Church of Marsarkis, all over a thousand years old, burned and destroyed. Three Christian young lads were slaughtered in cold blood after they refused to deny their faith in Jesus Christ, 18 kidnapped, freed by the Syrian army after they were tortured for a few days.

September 13, 2013: 36 Muslim religious leaders issued a fatwa (creed) allowing Sunni Muslims to seize the property belonging to Christians and other non-Muslim groups.

October 2, 2013: The city of Sadad, inhabited by 15,000 Syrian-Orthodox Christians, an ancient city goes back two millennia before Christ and mentioned in the Old Testament. The thugs stayed in the city for 7 days before they were thrown out by the Army on October 28, 2013, during these 7 days they killed 45 Christians, including women and children, injured 30, kidnapped 10, 35 bodies were found in a mass grave. The bodies of 6 people from one family (ages 16-90) were found in the bottom of a well, 14 churches were ransacked and destroyed.

November 23, 2013: the town of Dair-attich, where Christians make one-half of its population, was taken by the thugs before they pulled out from the town on November 28, they slaughtered all the patients, doctors and nurses of the town's main hospital (undisclosed numbers).

December 1, 2013: 12 nuns were kidnapped from Maaloula, including the head of the nuns, Mother Blagia Sayaf of the Convent of Mar-Takla, and 3 men working at the convent after they took the city again, destroying and burning most of its homes.

January 13, 2014: The thugs took the city of Al-Raqqqa of 240,000 people, 10% of whom are Christians, most of them fled to Al-Hasake and Kamishli before the thugs entered the city. The few remaining have to pay Jizya (tax), 60,000 S.P (\$120.00) per year, per person to keep their faith. Those who did not have the money has to convert to Islam or die. The city's two churches, one was converted to the Islamic State Headquarters, the other was burned.

October 2014: Armenian Father Hanna Jallous and 20 Christians were kidnapped by Al-Nusar, they were eventually freed.

January 2015: Armenian Father Michal Kayyal and Greek Orthodox Mahar Mahfouz were killed.

February 2015: Isis seized 35 Assyrian Christian villages, kidnapped over 300 Christians, released 23 of them in March

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2015 and demanded 15 million pounds for the release of the 230 remaining people. The remaining villagers amounting to over 1200 fled to Hassake and Kamishli, leaving their 35 villages totally destroyed.

For the Syrian Christian the situation is simply and plainly an ethnic cleansing and genocide. Since the start of the "Revolution" in March 2011, 200,000 Christians have been killed, the same number maimed, 500,000 left or been forced to leave the country, and there is no end in sight for the exodus. In Aleppo, the 2nd largest city in the country, the number of Christians declined from 150,000 in 2011 to 35,000 in 2017.

In Homs, the 3rd largest city in the country, 80,000 Christians forced to leave in 2012. From the city of Hassake, 25,000 left. Christian towns such as Maaloula, Sadad and Kasab are totally cleared from their Christian inhabitants. So far, they have burned or destroyed over 100 churches and Monastarys, Christian areas in Damascus such as Kassa, Bab-Sharki, Bab-Touma and Taballeh are shelled practically on a daily basis by mortars, even up to these days. Cars filled with explosives are left, they explode all over the cities, especially in Christian neighborhoods, killing, attacking places of worship and abduction continue to be the norm.

The Syrians have endured so far 6 years 9 months of the Global War that was declared on the country (longer than World War II), and despite the recent defeat of Isis (Wahabbi) in Iraq and Syria, the war is far from over. They still have to deal with the Nursa Front (Islamist Brotherhood) and tens if not hundreds of their sisters and brothers of terrorism. No one wants to put an end to this war, No UN, No USA, no Russia, no E.U., no terrorists, no one, as all of them are making money from it, they want more looting, destruction and more killing. The Syrian Christians are only collateral damage.

Emptying the Middle East of its Christians is nothing new, and it has been going on for a long time, especially since the beginning of the 20th century, killing 2 million Armenians, Syriac, Assyrian and Caldese by the Turks when Christians made 30% of Asia Minor's (today's Turkey) population, dropping now these days to 0.25%. In Syria, the Christians constituted 30% of the population in 1927, declining to 10% in 1971, 8% in 2011 and 2.5% at the moment, dropping from 2 million to 500,000 in 2017, a drop of 75% in 7 years. In Iraq, the population of Christians plunged from 1.8 million in 2003 to 250,000 after the American invasion. In Israel and Palestine (West Bank) combined, 300,000 Christians remain. In Jordan the number of Christians is about 300,000. Between 1975 and 1990 the Christian population of Lebanon declined from 50 to 25%. In Sudan, half of the Christian Sudanese are refugees, killed or fled the country, in Egypt the Copts are oppressed and marginalized, hundreds have been killed, more than 500 minor girls have been kidnapped and forced to adopt Islam, 80 Churches have been burned, thousands were forced to leave their villages and more than 100,000 Egyptians have immigrated to the U.S. since the beginning of the "Egyptian Revolution" in 2011.

Persecution of Christians is not limited to the Middle East. Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the World according to ADF International and in at least 10 countries, Christians are harassed and persecuted by Governments and organizations. The center of Global Christianity states that between the years 2005 and 2015, 900,000 Christians were martyred, an average of 90,000 Christians each year.

Should they succeed in regime change and the current secular government of Syria be overthrown, the country's name will be changed to Syriastan, Shariaa law will be enforced and Christians will be given three choices; convert to Islam, pay the Jizya (religious tax) with humiliation or die, the choice of leaving the country will not be an option anymore. The number of Christians will plunge to less than 100,000 or 0.125% of the population, similar to what happened to the Christians in Turkey.

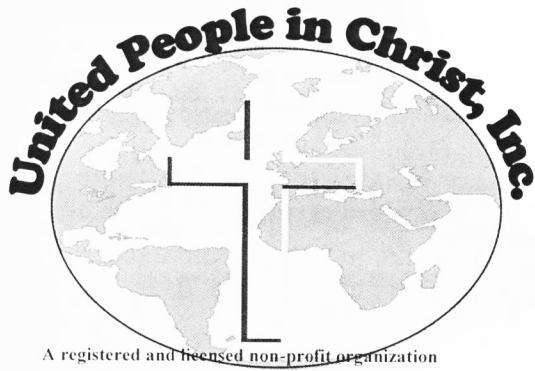
The entire World and what is called the "International Community" remains blind, deaf and silent to the situation of the Christians in the Middle East, especially Syria and Iraq.

Please pray for the Christians of the Middle East. Please pray for the Christians in Syria, where people were called Christians first among the nations. Please pray for the Christians who have not fled the country yet, pray for the Christians of Syria who left and who are refugees inside of the country or scattered in neighboring countries and all over the World.

Wishing everyone and each one of you a very Merry Christmas and a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,

Amid Habib, M.D., F.A.A.P., F.A.C.E.



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**THIS CHRISTMAS WE NEED YOUR HELP**

Please use the enclosed self-addressed envelope to send your tax deductible donation to help your needy brothers and sisters in Christ persecuted in the Middle East. I do know most of you are having financial difficulties these days, especially after Hurricane Irma, but I also know that our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Middle East are in a much worse situation than us and desperately need our help. What better way to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas than to help a needy Christian you do not know!!!

The United People in Christ Spring Picnic, held April 30, 2017, generated \$2,378.00 to help our needy brothers and sisters in Christ in the Middle East. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who donated the food, drinks, the door prizes and raffle items, thank each and everyone who attended the Picnic and helped to make it a success. The United People in Christ dinner was cancelled this year due to Hurricane Irma.. The dinner will be held, Lord willing, in April 2018 and the United People in Christ Picnic will be moved to October 2018.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY & PROSPEROUS  
NEW YEAR!!!**