

MaterCare proposes a name for the persecution of Christians

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OFFICIAL STATEMENT:

Christians remain, according to recent a Pew Study[1] and the Religious Freedom in the World Report[2], the most persecuted world-wide religious faith. An example of this is the recent Asia Bibi case. In 2009, Bibi, a Catholic, was part of a group of farmhands picking berries in Punjab, Pakistan. She was sent for water when she stopped to take a drink from an old metal cup she found. Her fellow workers angrily told her that she was forbidden to drink from the same cup as a Muslim and an argument developed in which they critiqued each other's religion. Shortly after, a mob came to her house, beat her and her family before she was taken by police, imprisoned, and sentenced to death for blasphemy. Since 1990, at least 65 Christians have been put to death for blasphemy in Pakistan alone. Due to massive (and very rare) international pressure, she has recently been released.

While this case is shocking, the persecution of Christians, worldwide, is far more common than we think. In fact, according to a recent Pew forum study, Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world, a statistic supported by Amnesty International. One of the reasons the Western world may be turning a blind eye to the massive persecution of Christians in the Middle East, Africa, as well as at home, is that there is no word for the persecution or oppression of Christians. When we have a word, we can identify oppression, we can name and resist it. And so, the words "Islamophobia" or "Anti-Semitism" play a key role in identifying and resisting the oppression of such groups. The success of these words is proved by the fact that most people assume, wrongly, that Muslims and Jewish people are actually more persecuted worldwide than Christians. But they are wrong. They are wrong, but how can we combat something we can't name? His Grace Anba Angaelos, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, argued in the Telegraph that because there is no Christian equivalent for these words the persecution of Christians is "not seen as the phenomenon which we know it is".[3]

As the persecution of Christians grows, the time has come for a word to denote it. While Western states and Churches will, rightly, condemn states that oppress minorities, we are so blind to the reality of anti-Christian persecution. The hope is that the Asia Bibi case will draw attention to the oppression of Christians worldwide, an oppression the time has come to finally name, with a word which sums up this persecution, "anti-Christian".

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[1] <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/09/christians-faced-widespread-harassment-in-2015-but-mostly-in-christian-majority-countries/>

[2] <http://religion-freedom-report.org.uk/>

[3] <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2018/11/09/persecution-christians-ignored-no-word-says-archbishop/>