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While many Christians in the West sit back in comfort and assume that all persecution of the Church has ended, almost a thousand believers die as martyrs for Christ - every day.

While many have presumptuously announced a new era of peace, churches continue to be burnt to the ground in *Nigeria*, Christians are executed in *Pakistan* and crucified in *Sudan*.

To those of us involved in serving the suffering Churches and speaking up for the persecuted it is inexplicable that most of the Christian publications, programmes and prayer meetings ignore the reality of the war being waged against God and His people.

In **Somalia** there are no longer any churches left. The last church was destroyed and the last minister murdered by Muslim mobs. Even small Protestant home churches have been attacked by Muslim brotherhoods who have burned Bibles.

Just before Christmas, in the **Philippines**, 40 Christians were murdered by terrorists of the *Islamic National Liberation Front*.

Pakistan, which has the largest Islamic population in the world (97% of their 113 million inhabitants are Muslims), has passed new laws which make "defamation of the prophet Mohammed", or the Quran, a capital offence. Several Christians have been executed for allegedly insulting Mohammed. Several reports have been received of people being forced to convert to Islam.

In Communist **China** many Christians belonging to the unregistered house churches have

been arrested and imprisoned in *“re-education camps”* (concentration camps). Despite decades of atheistic brainwashing, anti-Christian propaganda and communist persecution there are estimated to be about 63 million Christians in China, most of them belonging to house churches.

In the Islamic military dictatorship of **Nigeria** hundreds of churches have been vandalised or burnt down and hundreds of Christians killed by Muslim mobs.

Over 1,5 million people, many of whom were Christians, have been killed in the **Sudan** as a result of the merciless war waged by the Muslim north against the Christian, and animist, south. The Islamic *“National Defence Militia”* are reported to have burnt down 140 villages in the Nuba mountains (inhabited by Christian tribes). They also shot or burnt to death many women and children and crucified more than a hundred men. The Roman Catholic church has reported a campaign of *“genocide”* against Sudanese Christians. The Muslim government has reportedly been waging a scorched earth policy to break the resistance of Christians and starve them into submission. Food and medical care have been reserved for Muslims and for those who convert to Islam. Of the 25 million people in Sudan (which is the largest country in Africa), 74% are Muslims, 15% Animists and 10% Christians.

In **Egypt** violent attacks by militant Muslims on Christians claimed over a hundred lives last year. The *Coptic Orthodox* Church of Egypt has survived 1 300 years of Muslim Arab persecution and still numbers over 4 million active members (out of a total population of 56 million).

In **Saudi Arabia** over 200 Christians were imprisoned last year. As in **Yemen, Libya** and other strict Islamic countries, converts from Islam to Christianity face brutal persecution. Families have been known to publicly behead or drown relatives who have converted to Christ.

For 5 years Armenian Christians in **Nagorno Karabach** (part of the Russian Commonwealth) have been fighting against ethnic purges by Muslims from surrounding Azerbaidshan. Many thousands of Christians, especially in

Croatia

, have also lost their lives in the Yugoslav Civil War at the hands of the Communist Serbs or

Muslim Bosnians.

Christians in **Burma** and **Sri Lanka** suffer under Buddhist discrimination. And in some parts of **India**

Christians suffer persecution from Hindu authorities. Many Christians have also been killed by communist terrorists in

Peru

,
Columbia

and

South Africa

More believers have died for Christ in the 20th Century than in all the other 19 Centuries combined. The World Evangelisation Database has calculated that since AD33 at least 41 million Christians have been martyred. Of those, over 27 million were killed since 1900. Since 1950 over 10 million have died for their faith, mainly at the hands of communist and Muslim persecutors.

Christians in the West need to wake up and realise that we are engaged in a spiritual world war - a war in which the lives and eternal destinies of millions of men, women and children are at stake. As with any other war this conflict requires sacrifice (rationing and conscription), dedication and courage.

“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also.” Hebrews 13:3

Peter Hammond

Sources for this report include:

IDEA (Inform at/on Service of the German Evangelical Alliance);

ISHR (International Society for Human Rights);

CSI (Christian Solidarity International);

Amnesty International; and

The Almanac of the Christian World 1993.