



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 12, 2011

## Their Last Church Destroyed, Afghan Christians Fear the Worst

American Christians may not see eye-to-eye on the justness or wisdom of their government's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but one thing on which they should be able to agree — because the facts are indisputable — is that the wars have been devastating for their coreligionists in those countries. Hundreds of thousands of Christians, including members of one of the world's oldest Christian communities, have either fled from or been killed in Iraq since 2003. Now, according to the U.S. State Department, the situation for Christians in Afghanistan has become so dire that not a single church remains in that country.



[CNSNews.com](#) quotes the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for the second half of 2010:

There is no longer a public Christian church; the courts have not upheld the church's claim to its 99-year lease, and the landowner destroyed the building in March [2010]. [Private] chapels and churches for the international community of various faiths are located on several military bases, PRTs [Provincial Reconstruction Teams], and at the Italian embassy. Some citizens who converted to Christianity as refugees have returned.

Furthermore, says the report, "there were no Christian schools in the country."

One would not expect there to be vast numbers of churches and Christian schools in a country with an estimated 500 to 8,000 Christians. But that they have no place to worship publicly after the United States has poured \$440 billion and over 1,700 servicemen's lives into an effort supposedly to liberate Afghans from the tyranny of an Islamic state is just another sign that Operation Enduring Freedom has not exactly turned out as advertised.

Such a result comes as no surprise given that the [constitution](#) of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan — "which," [CNSNews.com](#) points out, "was ratified with the help of U.S. mediation in 2004" — declares that Islam is the official religion of the state. While the document states that "followers of other religions are free to exercise their faith and perform their religious rites," they are only permitted to do so "within the limits of the provisions of law" — but "no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam." Since Islamic law frowns upon other faiths and, under some interpretations, prescribes capital punishment for converts to other religions, that guarantee of religious freedom is essentially meaningless.

[CNSNews.com](#) elaborates:

"The government's level of respect for religious freedom in law and in practice declined during the reporting period, particularly for Christian groups and individuals," reads the State



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Department report.

“Negative societal opinions and suspicion of Christian activities led to targeting of Christian groups and individuals, including Muslim converts to Christianity,” said the report. “The lack of government responsiveness and protection for these groups and individuals contributed to the deterioration of religious freedom.”

Most Christians in the country refuse to “state their beliefs or gather openly to worship,” said the State Department.

The situation for Jews, by the way, is even worse. The report notes that there is now “only one known Jewish resident” of Afghanistan, writes [CNSNews.com](#); but then there were only a handful of Jews in that country prior to the U.S. invasion. There is also one synagogue, but for obvious reasons it is not in use.

Of course, the State Department hastens to inform readers that “the U.S. government regularly discusses religious freedom with [Afghan] government officials as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.” Undoubtedly such discussions are accompanied by a wink and a nod; human rights generally take a back seat to the U.S. government’s strategic aims, as witness its longtime support for such paragons of decency as Saddam Hussein and Hosni Mubarak. (Although, ironically, Christians in Iraq and Egypt fared much better under Saddam and Mubarak, respectively, than they have under their U.S. and Western-backed successor regimes.)

Much of the damage wrought by the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be undone by human hands. Christians and Jews might want to pray for their fellow believers in those countries — and anywhere else Uncle Sam decides to “liberate” the populace.

*Photo: Christians (joined by U.S. military personnel) pray during a Christmas Eve Mass at a church in Kabul, Afghanistan, which was still in use on Sunday, Dec. 24, 2006.*



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