

# Christian population declined 90% under Palestinian Authority and Hamas

By Christina McIntosh

I came across this article in the [Jerusalem Post](#) a few days ago.

*Violence and coercion has resulted in up to a 90% decline in the [Christian population](#) in areas under Hamas or Palestinian Authority control, according to a new study by the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCFA).*

*In 1922, Christians constituted 11% of the population. Today, in 2024, they are just 1%.*

*The JCFA research, led by Lt. Col. (res.) Maurice Hirsch and Attorney Tirza Shorr, discovered mass emigration of Christians, particularly from historically significant cities like Bethlehem.*



Esmerelda tells me she remembers visiting Bethlehem in 1993

and noted the many Christian woodcarvers making beautiful (and sometimes unusual to Anglican eyes) gifts and objects. This article from the [Catholic News Agency](#) from 2022 says that Zakharia Brothers are, or were two years ago, still working and trading in Bethlehem but even then it was getting increasingly difficult for them. Esmerelda treasures a carving she bought there of the Virgin and Child which was originally her gift to her late father-in-law.

*As Latin Catholics, the Zakharia family are part of a shrinking Christian community in the city of Jesus' birth.*

*Christians declined from 84% of Bethlehem's population in 1922 to 25% in 2007, according to the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. A 2017 Palestinian Authority survey found that Christians make up just 1% of the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with a total population of 46,850.*

## Back to the Jerusalem Post

*"Demographics don't lie. We are witnessing a significant 80-90% decline in the Christian population in major cities," the researchers emphasized.*

*The Christian population in Gaza shrank from 5,000 before Hamas took over the area to only 1,000 in October 2023, the report found. JCFA explained that religious and legal discrimination, desecration of holy sites, and social exclusion were behind the decline in the Christian population.*

*The city of Bethlehem is used as an illustration of what JCFA calls "Christian demographic erasure."*

*In 1950, Bethlehem and the surrounding villages were 86% Christian.*

*However, this has dwindled since 1994, when the PA took*

*control of the city. The last census in 2017 showed Bethlehem was 10% Christian families, but many have left, or are leaving, due to systemic socio-economic hardships and instability, discrimination, and harassment, including of Christian clergy, by Muslim Palestinians and the Islam-dominated Palestinian Authority.*

*Bethlehem also serves as an example of Christians undergoing forced conversion to Islam, a phenomenon that Gaza's Bishop Alexios, warned of in 2016. "Christians who converted to Islam did so under [threats and violence](#)," Alexios said at the time.*

*"The mass exodus of the Christians risks undermining the survival of Christianity in its birthplace," the report added.*

*The report also collected testimonies regarding violence and harassment against Christians, especially of girls, since the PA took over. . .*

*"It's unacceptable that in 2025, Christians in the Palestinian Authority fear reporting hate incidents against them for fear of arrest or worse," the report concludes.*

Earlier this week I looked up Jacques Ellul's brilliant book "Un Chretien Pour Israel" (1983)

Unfortunately, it's the only one of his vast oeuvre that has NOT been translated into English, but with much determination, I was able to work my way through it, and created my own 'crib' translation of it.

In the chapter on 'Jerusalem' Ellul notes that during the period of Jordanian Arab **Muslim** domination of most of Jerusalem (ie the area that our media primly refer to, these days, as 'East Jerusalem', the area that contains all the most ancient Jewish and Christian historic and religiously

significant locations) the Christian population in that area, subjected to continual Muslim bullying, dropped from 19,000 to 11,000; this in the mere 19 years between 1948 and 1967. He also notes that between 1967 – when Israel liberated Jerusalem and 1982/83 (when his book was published) the Christian population, under Jewish rule, nearly doubled. Here is the relevant passage, in my somewhat awkward translation.

*“Apart from what I have mentioned above, it is necessary to recall the essential thing, that – contrary to solemn promises repeated in recent years, that if the Old City is given back to the Palestinians they will guarantee free access to the ‘holy places’ of the three religions – during Jordanian rule the Jewish holy places were forbidden to the Jews, the Islamic holy places were forbidden to Muslim citizens of Israel and, moreover, the Christian population of Jerusalem was bullied continually by the Jordanian authorities, so much so that their number diminished from 19 000 in 1948 to 11 000 in 1967, and that after that date, under Jewish authority, it almost doubled!”*

This is a worthy riposte for all those sly palestinianist quislings within the church who are always blaming the Jews for the decline in numbers of Christians within the PA-controlled areas of Judea and Samaria!

RE Ellul’s book: it is hard to find.

I managed to identify a copy in the library of one of the Australian libraries and read not many years after publication. I borrowed it again during this year and made my rough translation.

It is an extraordinary work. Way back in 1983 he foresaw exactly what is happening now. He had already met and befriended Bat Yeor, so he knew all about jihad, and the dhimma; and when in his book he analyses, clause by clause, not the Hamas Charter, but the original PLO Charter, a

translation of which he had obtained – he sees right through its superficially ‘westernised’ terminology of liberation, etc, and remarks at the end that it is ‘a perfect expression of the jihad’.

Ellul dissects the anti-Israel propaganda (of the time) with all the expertise and grim distaste of a master surgeon dissecting a cancer.

It would be a public service to the entire western world for someone to arrange for a properly-authorized English translation of ‘Un Chretien Pour Israel’; the ONLY un-Englished work by Jacques Ellul.