

Pope Francis Chastises the World's Christians

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Pope Francis delivered [Others disagree](#), pointing out that when it is justified, apprehension (a more acceptable-sounding synonym than “fear”) can be as sound a basis for policy, and sometimes a good deal sounder, than the absence of fear. It was Churchill who had “feared” Hitler and the Nazis all through the 1930s, having recognized that appeasement would never work, while those who thought they could make a deal with Hitler – the Cliveden Set, Lord Halifax, Prime Minister Chamberlain – did not. It was “fear” of Stalin’s plans that led the Western democracies, sensibly, to such measures as the NATO military alliance, and the same intelligent “fear” of Communist expansion also led to American subsidies to the non-Communist parties in France and Italy in the late 1940s and early 1950s, so as to prevent the takeover, through free

elections, of those countries by their very large Communist parties.

Now the Pope, not content with his defense of Islam, nor with his ahistorical deploring of "fear" as a basis for policy, tells the world's Christians that they ought to express shame for the actions of those among them who are leaving future generations, the Pope claims, a world "fractured by divisions and wars." He never mentions Islam.

How are Christians today responsible for a world "fractured by divisions and wars"? Let's just remind ourselves of some, most, almost all, of those "divisions and wars" that the Pope has overlooked. There is the Syrian civil war, that has gone on for seven years, between different groups of Muslims, the Alawites supported by both the Shi'a Iranians and the Lebanese Shi'a militia Hezbollah, fighting various Sunni rebel groups, from the secular to the Salafi, not to mention local branches of Al-Qaeda and ISIS. About half a million people have been killed to date. There is the proxy war in Yemen, between Saudi Arabia and Iran, with the Saudis wantonly bombing civilians in San'a, Yemen's capital, and the Houthi (Shia) rebels just as wantonly lobbying Iranian missiles into Riyadh. There is the cold war between four Arab states, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt, which have imposed a land, sea, and air blockade of tiny Qatar, because of its support of the Muslim Brotherhood and its overtures to Iran. There are two Islamist groups in Nigeria, Boko Haram and a local branch of the Islamic State, kidnapping Christian girls, burning down Christian villages, murdering Christian worshippers. In Algeria, Muslim Arabs, though they have at long last officially recognized the Berber language, still allow it to be taught in less than 15% of the schools; no attempt is made to preserve or revive the Berber culture. In Egypt, Hamas (the "Palestinian" branch of the Muslim Brotherhood) and the Islamic State from bases in Sinai have attacked Egyptian police and soldiers. Muslim militants from IS, and other

groups too, have bombed or burned Coptic churches and killed worshippers. A Sufi mosque was attacked by the Islamic State in the northern Sinai; 305 worshippers were murdered.

There are Muslim Turks attacking Kurds in western Syria, just as Muslim Arabs have been murdering Kurds for decades. Saddam Hussein, of late and unlamented memory, killed 182,000 Kurds, some with poison gas, and moved large numbers of Arabs in so as to "arabize" formerly Kurdish lands whose previous owners had been killed. In Iraq, the Christian population has plummeted from 1.4 million in 2003 to 200,000 today, both because of endless killings of Christians by Muslim terrorists, and because of the subsequent flight by Christians who leave the country for the safety of the West, never to return. As for the Yazidis, the mass murders and mass rapes of members of this small and ancient religious group, by the Muslims of the Islamic State, constituted attempted genocide, and it was only intervention by the Americans, British, and Australians that managed to save the Yazidis from annihilation. Up to 10,000 may have been killed, half a million became refugees, and 7,000 Yazidi girls and women were sold as sex slaves in Sinjar, and the slave markets of Mosul and Raqqa. Some of the Yazidi girls and women were simply taken by ISIS fighters as their due; after they had had their fill, they would pass the girls around for others to enjoy to their heart's content; other Muslims bought them as sex slaves (they had price tags attached). They would be raped by their buyers, and after a while, passed around to others to enjoy.

The Shi'a Muslims in Iran have persecuted Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Baha'is. Some have been killed. The leader of the Jewish community in Iran, Habib Elghanian, was executed just a few months after the Islamic Republic had been declared, on May 9, 1979, on charges of being a "Zionist spy." In 1981, all eight members of Iran's Baha'i National Spiritual Assembly were executed in a campaign to stamp out the religion. The Baha'i report that "since the 1979 Islamic

Revolution in Iran, Baha'is have been systematically persecuted as a matter of government policy. During the first decade of this persecution, more than 200 Baha'is were killed or executed, hundreds more were tortured or imprisoned, and tens of thousands lost jobs, access to education, and other rights – all solely because of their religious belief.

The Baha'i International Community [Middle East Institute](#), "in a letter to Ali Shamkhani, the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Esfandiar Ekhtiari, a Zoroastrian lawmaker, complained that the community's Sadeh mid-winter celebration this year was 'attacked by elders that are supposed to be enforcing and promoting the law.'" He added that these individuals "beat the drum of religious divisiveness in a way that was intolerable and does not seem to be ending."

"While Ekhtiari did not identify the individuals responsible for inciting hatred toward the Zoroastrian community, Iranian clerics and intelligence agents of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (I.R.G.C.) and the Basij Force often harass and persecute followers of religious minorities, including the Zoroastrians."

Christians, too, suffer severe discrimination in Iran, especially in educational opportunities and employment. There is the constant fear of physical harassment by Muslims, and of the clerics who incite hatred toward the Christians. Christians have been beaten, been forced to work without pay (or face being denounced publicly on some trumped-up charge). The worst treatment is meted out to converts to Christianity from Islam, who are ordinarily disavowed by their families, can lose their jobs, can be publicly humiliated.

In Pakistan, Sunni Muslims have persecuted Christians, Hindus, and Shi'a Muslims. The Hindu population of Pakistan has gone from 15% in 1947 to 2% today, the result of persecution, including murder, that led many Hindus either to flee to India or to convert to Islam. Christians have been accused of

blasphemy by their Muslim neighbors, and been sentenced to death, purely on their (doubtful) testimony. Asia Bibi, for example, made the mistake of drinking from the same glass as her Muslim neighbors used. They then claimed she had spoken ill of the Prophet – how likely is that, given that she would know that could be cause for her own execution? – and she, this illiterate 45-year-old lady and mother of five, was sentenced to death. She is still in prison, waiting for the sentence to be carried out. Churches have been firebombed, Christians killed for any reason or no reason, on the testimony of a Muslim who might have a number of possible motives, including a desire to get rid of a business competitor, or to help oneself to a convicted Christian's property, or to terrify local Christians into fleeing, leaving land to be taken, or as in the case of Asia Bibi, because her Muslim fellow workers (berry pickers) just didn't like her and chose to manufacture a claim of "blasphemy." When the Muslim head of the (Pakistani) Punjab, Salman Taseer, dared to call for a review of the blasphemy laws and asked that Asia Bibi be pardoned, he was executed – by his own bodyguard. Twenty years ago, the Catholic bishop of Faisalabad, Bishop John Joseph, in complete despair, committed suicide to protest the horrible persecution of Christians by Muslims in Pakistan. Nothing has changed since his sacrificial protest. Christians are still killed, by judicial murders under the blasphemy laws, and by violent attacks from Muslim militants, on individuals, families, and on churches. Do you think Pope Francis has given much thought to Bishop John Joseph, and the reason for his protest?

Sipah-e-Sahaba, a terrorist group of Sunni Muslim terrorists in Pakistan, takes great delight in murdering Shi'a professionals (doctors, engineers, lawyers), and attacking Shi'a mosques and schools. For these Sunni militants, Shia are not real Muslims at all, but Infidels; indeed, they are the worst of infidels, for they deceive people into thinking they are Muslims. Of course, the Sunni-Shi'a schism is 1400 years

old, and Shi'a Muslims have also, when given the chance, persecuted Sunnis, most obviously in overwhelmingly Shi'a Iran. In Lebanon, the Shi'a Hezbollah, who have come so far so fast, have been known to bully Sunnis who, decades ago, used to do the same to the Shi'a. In Iraq, the Sunni despot Saddam Hussein violently suppressed the Shi'a Arab uprising, killing – it is believed – hundreds of thousands in the south.

In Afghanistan, too, the Shi'a Hazara have been attacked by the Taliban, and were saved, just, by the American forces that invaded Afghanistan in 2001. But as only a few thousand American troops remain in that country, those attacks have been renewed with fervor. Sometimes the Islamic State “claims credit,” sometimes the Taliban, sometimes what is mysteriously called “the Haqqani network” (which is a Taliban-linked group based in Pakistan). It hardly matters who was guilty for which particular attack: all three groups want to kill Shi'a.

We could go on in our tour d'horizon of Muslim murder and mayhem around the world. But let's skip over Bangladesh and Indonesia, and come back to the newest field of battle: Europe. Tens of millions of Muslims now live in Europe. What have they brought that has made Europe a better and more peaceful place? Unlike all the other, non-Muslim immigrants (Chinese, Hindus, black African Christians, Eastern Europeans) the Muslim immigrants have great difficulty in integrating with their host societies because, though Pope Francis will no doubt find this hard to believe, they don't want to integrate on the Infidels' terms; they want the West to accommodate them. After all, Muslims are told “you are the best nation” or “best of peoples” (Qur'an 3:110) while non-Muslims are the “most vile of creatures” (Qur'an 98:6). Their rates of unemployment and of criminality are many times higher than those for any non-Muslim group, immigrant or indigenous, in every country where they have managed to gain admittance.

Muslim migrants are a great drain on the taxpayers in the generous welfare states of Western Europe. They take full

advantage of every possible benefit: free or highly subsidized housing, free education, free medical care, family allowances, unemployment benefits somehow received even when they have not worked at all or worked very little. They have been linked to large-scale crimes against huge numbers of women: the sexual attacks by hundreds of Muslims on more than a thousand German women in Cologne during a New Year's Eve celebration, the grooming-gang scandals in the United Kingdom that the police have been so reluctant to investigate, and that may have involved more than a million English girls and their Pakistani Muslim groomers. Then there is the constant threat of terrorism. Muslim terrorists have struck London, Manchester, Paris, Nice, Toulouse, Madrid, Brussels, Amsterdam, Berlin, Munich, Copenhagen, Malmö, Stockholm, Helsinki, Moscow, Beslan, Mumbai, Delhi, Beijing. In America, Muslim terrorists have attacked in New York, Washington, Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Minneapolis, San Bernardino, Fort Hood, Orlando, Chattanooga. There have been more than 35,000 attacks by Muslim terrorists since 9/11/2001 alone.

Let's return to Pope Francis, and his Good Friday claim that Christians nowadays have a lot to answer for. Where, among the Christians Pope Francis chastises, are there examples of practices that can be found in Muslim states, such as:

Secret police, state terrorism, terrorism by Muslim groups and individuals, torture as an instrument of state policy, mass murder, rape, sex slavery, sex-slave markets, deportations, disappearances, assassinations, indiscriminate bombing of civilians, chemical warfare, suppression of ethnic minorities, including mass killings, forced conversions to Islam, harassment, persecution, and murder of non-Muslim minorities (Christians, Hindus, Baha'is, Zoroastrians, Buddhists), executions by both the state and private vigilantes for "blasphemy" against Islam, murders of government officials who criticize blasphemy laws, sectarian violence of Sunnis against Shia, and Shia against Sunnis, and much more in the

same horrific vein.

Perhaps Pope Francis can tell us where, among what group of Christians today, one can find anything like the Muslim practices listed just above. He might, if he dared not address the world's Muslims, at least have had the decency to address "all people everywhere" rather than just Christians, in his indictment; he might have said something to the effect that **"we ought to express shame for the actions of all those, of whatever faith, who are leaving future generations a world 'fractured by divisions and wars.'" He may still, willfully, refuse to recognize publicly those mainly responsible for a world "fractured by divisions and wars."** But those who understand perfectly well that the responsibility for these "divisions and wars" is overwhelmingly that of Islam, and of Muslims, would at least not have to endure the Pope's finger-pointing in exactly the wrong direction. He'll have many more chances to speak about the distempers of our giddy globe. May he at least start to be "inclusive" in his assignment of guilt. Given this Pope's proclivities to never blame what he keeps calling "authentic Islam" for anything, such inclusivity would be an outcome devoutly to be wished.

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