

# Persecution of Christians Under the Palestinian Authority

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The Palestinian Authority (PA) **actively persecutes** Christians in Judea and Samaria (the 'West Bank').

Given the Muslim majority within the PA-controlled territories, the PA enacts religious laws that **treat Christians as second-class citizens**.

Note that the international community recognizes the PA as the legitimate leaders of the Palestinian-Arabs. It never speaks out against this persecution.

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## What is the status of Christians in the Palestinian Authority today?

- The rise in administrative powers of the PA since the 1993 Oslo Accords has caused the Christian population in Judea and Samaria to flee.
  - **Christians represented two-thirds of Bethlehem's population in 1995** (Bethlehem is one of the most important cities in the world for Christians). In 2012 (after 17 years of PA persecution), Christians made up **less than 20 percent** of the city.<sup>i</sup>
- **Muslim extremists have firebombed** the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem 14 times, as of 2014.<sup>ii</sup>
- **These extremists also desecrate Christian graves<sup>iii</sup> and attack Christians following false accusations of acting as "agents for Israel and the Western world."**<sup>iv</sup>
- Meanwhile, Israel recognizes the full rights of all its minorities and protects the holy sites of all religions.

## Dhimmi laws – Persecution against Christians:

Some Muslim leaders refer to the non-Muslim minorities in their societies as *Dhimmis*. The term originated from the Pact of Umar, following the conquering of the Christians in the Assyrian region by Umar ibn al-Khattab in the 7th century.<sup>v</sup> The Pact highlighted everything that non-Muslims could and could not do, including but not limited to:

1. Denying non-Muslims the opportunity to bear arms
2. Forcing non-Muslims to pay a special tax due to their *Dhimmi* status
3. Denying non-Muslims the right to publicly practice their religion
4. Non-Muslim testimony carries less weight in court

Many Arab and other Islamic countries still enact these laws, opening the doors to persecution and mistreatment of non-Muslims.<sup>vi</sup> In addition to the commonality of these practices in places like Syria, Egypt, and Iran, **the Palestinian Authority has taken part in this form of persecution of Christians**.

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<sup>i</sup> "Why Did 60 Minutes Deceive Its Viewers?" *Gatestone Institute*, February 15, 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> "Middle Eastern Christians: Battered, Violated, and Abused: Do They Have Any Chance of Survival?" *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, May 22, 2014.

<sup>iii</sup> "Christian graves desecrated in the West Bank," *The Telegraph*, May 25, 2009.

<sup>iv</sup> "Muslim attacks against Christians on the rise in West Bank," *World Tribune*, May 28, 2012.

<sup>v</sup> "Medieval Sourcebook: Pact of Umar, 7th Century?" *Fordham University: The Jesuit University of New York*, 1996.

<sup>vi</sup> Persecution of Christians in the Muslim world: We are what we tolerate