Isolating Israel

“Come,” they say, “let us destroy them as a nation” - Psalm 83: 4

Rev. Malcolm Hedding

‘It is an attack so widespread, sustained and sadly effective that everywhere people are buying into it or giving in to it.’

SOLUTION. As 2010 ends it is a word mentioned often in connection with Israel. This summer’s Flotilla incident, which had more to do with an anti-Israel agenda than with humanitarian aid for the beleaguered residents of Gaza, has empowered the anti-Israel Left and enabled them to make increased calls for her to be isolated. The enemies of Israel have used this incident to further broaden out their attack at every level. They are sadly supported by much of the global press and the ever-vocal radical political left.

As a consequence, labour unions in many parts of the world are refusing to off-load ships with Israeli products onboard while historical Church Movements such as Presbyterians, Anglicans and Lutherans are intensifying their calls for disinvestment in companies doing business with Israel.

This “attack” is so widespread, sustained and sadly effective that the “average Joe” everywhere is buying into it or, because of pressure and intimidation, giving in to it. The result is that organisations that stand with Israel, like the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, are being branded as misguided and viewed with increasing suspicion.

This is the climate in which we now operate. In short there is a sustained campaign to delegitimise and dismantle Israel and those who defend her are targeted in the same way.

However, we are not moved or persuaded by public opinion but by the Word of the living God. We are thus convinced that Israel’s modern day restoration is not a political coincidence but rather evidence of God’s faithfulness to His word and promise made to Abraham some 4000 years ago. We will stand firm in our support of Israel and her right to exist in and enjoy the land that God forever gave her (Genesis 17:7-8). This includes proclaiming that Jerusalem is and should remain the undivided eternal capital of the Jewish people. Israel’s claims in this regard are beyond dispute.

The campaign to delegitimise Israel has made strange bedfellows of radical Muslims and radical leftists. Islam’s well-documented abuse of women, honour killings, execution of those from its ranks who convert to other religions, and agenda to introduce Sharia Law stand in blatant opposition to the ‘progressive’ thinking of the Left. So, why would they turn a blind eye or tolerate such blatant contradictions of their philosophical world-view? The answer is simple; they unite with radical Islam in their hatred of Israel and desire to see her removed from the Middle East.
Dear Friends,

As we approach the Jewish festival of Hanukkah we are reminded of the miraculous events that led to the liberation of Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple. Jesus observed the holiday (John 10: 22-23) and knew that His Father in Heaven had once again “rescued” Jerusalem. Sadly, he also foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 yet equally spoke of its return to Jewish sovereignty before the end of the age (Luke 21:20-24).

This return was also a miracle, as in November 1917 British General Edmund Allenby liberated Jerusalem on the first day of Hanukkah. This enabled the British Government to issue the Balfour Declaration which eventually led to the restoration of the Jewish State. Of course, in 1967 a fuller liberation of Jerusalem came, bringing the divided city together again under Israeli sovereignty.

Today, Jerusalem is once more under threat. The Bible has spoken about this, too. However, if Hanukkah tells us one thing, it is that the God of the Bible is not disconnected from the city. In the end it will experience a political, social and spiritual liberation that will make it “a praise in the earth.” Prayer will bring this day closer.

It is appropriate therefore that at this time of the year we celebrate Jesus’ birth. He, too, is the Light of God coming into the world; a Light that has crossed the shores of the world and brought with it joy and salvation. The Incarnation is admittedly a mystery, but a wonderful one. No wonder angels sang over Bethlehem the night Jesus was born and a star gave heavenly direction.

We also pause to celebrate the good things that our Heavenly Father has done for us and through us in 2010. In January we were able to respond to an urgent appeal to help fund Israeli search-and-rescue efforts in the earthquake ravaged Caribbean nation of Haiti. In April, we dedicated the first phase of a unique assisted-living facility for elderly Holocaust survivors in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, and in September we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our ministry at the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem!

As we ponder these things in our hearts, may we all be filled with light!

In Jesus,

Rev. Malcolm Hedding
ICEJ Executive Director
Defending the Faith
This season reminds us of God’s light penetrating a dark and broken world

For Christians, Hanukkah and Christmas are inextricably linked. Both have to do with God’s light penetrating a dark and broken world. In the one, Hanukkah, there was an attempt by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid tyrant, to extinguish the light of God in Jewish worship and in the other, Christmas, Herod the hated ruler of Judea sought to destroy the “arrival of the light” by murdering every newborn baby in Bethlehem.

This tells us that essentially the light of God is really not welcome in this world. It is resisted and fought against by the agents of darkness and the fallenness of the human heart. This is an ongoing struggle which rages on from generation to generation. The Jewish people have been on the frontline in this struggle for centuries and have paid a great and horrific price in order to give to the world the light of God’s Word.

Jude, in his very short epistle, calls upon us to vigorously defend the truth that has been handed down to us (verse 3). We also are to enter into the struggle for the blessing of Israel, especially as we see anti-Semitism rising again everywhere. For Zion’s sake we cannot remain silent! (Isaiah 62:1).

Once again, the people of Israel are under the real threat of destruction. This is not an exaggeration as Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad voices his desire for that end with every passing day and is preparing for it with his regime’s relentless drive to acquire nuclear capabilities.

In addition, all across the globe and sadly even within the Christian world, there is a sustained attack against the divinity of Jesus. Here, too, we have to stand firm recognising that this constitutes the very essence of our faith! Scripture acknowledges that His divinity is a great mystery but it nevertheless clearly teaches it (1 Timothy 3:15-16).

In an incredibly humble way, Jesus taught that He indeed was God and did not shy away from this truth (John 10:30, John 10:38, John 14:7-10). He also accepted worship as God from his followers (John 20:24-29).

The writers of the New Testament clearly established the same truth by attributing Old Testament passages referring to God as actually applying to Jesus (John 12:37-41, Hebrews 1:8-9). These two passages are quoting from Isaiah 6 and Psalm 45 respectively.

It is also worth noting the Scriptures teach that Jesus was begotten (brought into world by the Incarnation) and yet eternally pre-existent (John 1:14, John 17:5). He is nothing less than the Creator of the universe!

These things are beyond dispute and have to be defended. May we be filled with much joy as we celebrate them at this time of year and rejoice in the fullness of God’s wonderful light!

Rev. Malcolm Hedding is a church-planter, Bible teacher and author who serves as ICEJ Executive Director in Jerusalem.
ICEJ Outreach
Christian Friends of Yad Vashem

Time to Act Now!
Dr. Jürgen Bühler

Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future is a powerful slogan for Yad Vashem, Israel’s revered Holocaust memorial and museum.

Our Christian past indeed has a lot to teach us about working towards a better future. The tragic history of Christian anti-Semitism and in particular the Holocaust holds many lessons. Yet too often we focus on our own individual past and we are always hoping for a brighter future, all the while overlooking the pressing issues of today. The events of this year should have alarm bells ringing in our spirits. The lessons of the past are not for some distant future but for today! More people need to be educated when we see the rising tide of hostility against Israel and Jews worldwide.

A Troubling Year
The year 2010 has been one of the most challenging years for Israel ever. It began with a wave of “apartheid weeks” on university campuses all across North America aimed at branding Israel a “racist regime” as existed in former South Africa. International artists began cancelling their appearances in Israel in protest of Israeli policies. Foreign companies started disinvesting from Israeli firms. Leading unionists, leftists and gay rights groups linked hands with Muslim extremists in promoting the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” campaign against Israel.

In Malmö, Sweden the small Jewish community has been violently harassed by radical Muslim elements. The local synagogue was firebombed, its windows smashed. The mayor of the liberal Swedish city advised Jewish residents that they would be more secure if they would denounce Israeli actions in Gaza.

In late May, a Turkish flotilla provoked a violent clash at sea with IDF forces in an unnecessary attempt to break the Gaza “blockade”. The tragic incident unleashed a flood of international condemnations against Israel as well as another Goldstone-style UN inquiry meant to deprive Israelis of the right of self-defence.

Meanwhile, world leaders deplored the “humanitarian crisis” in the Gaza Strip and some media described it as one big concentration camp, ignoring the ample supply of food and aid provided daily by Israel. The episode even drew a rare rebuke of Israel from the German Bundestag which was unique in its unanimity among all parties Left and Right.

In July, a gang of vandals were acquitted by a British court for breaking into an arms factory and causing heavy damage in protest against Israel’s incursion into Gaza in winter 2009, after the judge instructed jury members it was okay to think that Israel had turned Gaza into “hell on earth”.

In September of this year, EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht told Belgian TV that the “Jewish lobby” is responsible for a lack of peace with the Palestinians and charged that it is “not easy to have, even with moderate Jews, a rational discussion about what is actually happening in the Middle East”.

In October, the Norwegian government informed a German shipbuilding company that submarines it had manufactured for Israel could no longer be tested in Norwegian waters, part of a new ban on security exports to Israel.

Later the same month, eight countries boycotted the annual OECD conference because it was held this year in Jerusalem. These nations included Turkey, Belgium, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, Ireland and South Africa.

Then, just a few weeks ago at a synod of Catholic bishops from the Middle East, the secretary for the gathering blamed Israel for the exodus of Christians from the region and further stated: “We Christians cannot speak about the promised land for the Jewish people. There is no longer a chosen people.”

An Unholy Alliance
The list of such anti-Israel incidents this year alone is seemingly endless. Israel today is increasingly isolated by a global campaign to delegitimize the very existence of the Jewish State.
While Jews in most Western countries enjoy protection, the new threat against the Jewish people is anti-Israelism. As long as Jews refrain from supporting the state of Israel, they are safe. This is the message from Malmö and all across Europe. Undermining the Jewish state has become trendy in parliaments, publishing houses and institutions of higher learning. And those of us who defend the only free democracy in the Middle East are demonized as a threat to world peace.

On the streets of Europe and elsewhere, an unholy alliance is being formed between radical leftists and Islamic extremists. Even Evangelical churches are being influenced by this new brand of anti-Semitism. These are days in which we need to act. If we do not apply the lessons from the past in the present, then the future will be even bleaker.

**Not Just a Museum**

The reason the ICEJ decided to partner with Yad Vashem to establish a Desk for Christian Friends of that prestigious institution is foremost directed at preventing another Holocaust. Yad Vashem is not only geared towards remembering the past, but it carries a powerful message for the present and future.

Yad Vashem works on three fronts which are all crucial to making a difference in our day:

1) **Remembrance** – Yad Vashem gives the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust a place of memory and honour. It documents their lives as ordinary citizens of Europe, as well as the demons of nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism which brought destruction upon them.

2) **Education** – Countless people have been through the educational programs at Yad Vashem, whether students, soldiers, teachers, scholars, politicians or ordinary tourists. In recent years, the Christian Desk has worked to make sure this regularly includes pastors and spiritual leaders from all over the world, who are being educated not only about the past but how to apply the lessons of history to our times. Its renowned educational programs combined with meetings with Israeli officials offer effective tools to every minister and church leader to face the new challenges of today.

3) **Recognition** – Yad Vashem keeps not only the memory of the victims alive but it is dedicated to recognising those “Righteous among the Nations” who risked their lives to take a stand on behalf of the truth and who saved lives during the darkest hours of the Shoah. Their sacrifices live on today thanks to Yad Vashem, inspiring future generations.

The Christian Embassy’s partnership with Yad Vashem is therefore a crucial part of the work of the ICEJ to which we will always be committed. We want to invite you to join us today in this great cause. The time has truly come to act!

So join us today by becoming a Christian Friend of Yad Vashem at: [www.icej.org/articles/yad_vashem_christian_desk](http://www.icej.org/articles/yad_vashem_christian_desk)

Dr Jürgen Bühler serves as ICEJ International Director in Jerusalem and travels extensively teaching on Israel in churches across the world.
**Rapid Response**

On January 13, in the hours following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that devastated the Caribbean nation of Haiti, a highly trained Israeli rapid response team had just finished a gruelling 18-hour recovery operation at the scene of a fatal helicopter crash in a deep forest ravine outside Mexico City. “We were the closest ones” said Dovie Maisel from the ZAKA international rescue unit which was among the first on the ground in Port-au-Prince. “We were there almost alone.”

**Plea for Help**

As the Israeli rescue team landed in the earthquake zone, the ZAKA leadership placed an urgent phone call to ICEJ Director Malcolm Hedding asking the Embassy to partner with them in their search-and-rescue operations in Haiti.

In the gruelling 38-hour operation that followed, Maisel and his team managed to free eight students in a collapsed multi-story university building. It was a rescue effort underwritten by the generosity of ICEJ donors around the world. Within hours ZAKA paramedics arrived in Port-au-Prince as part of a 200-strong delegation from the IDF, MagenDavid Adom and IsraAID. As the donations kept flowing, the Israeli rescue contingent earned worldwide praise for their heroic efforts. The IDF mobile field hospital was hailed as the only foreign aid mission able to do complex surgical operations in the disaster zone and one young woman whose life was saved during childbirth named her new-born son “Israel” in gratitude.

**Breaking down Walls**

“Cracked floors, collapsing walls and crumbling furniture” - that’s how Rabbi Ze’ev Slavin described the art studio in the school for orphaned and abused boys that he runs in the Israeli town of Kfar Chabad, just outside Tel Aviv. Called Or v’Simcha (Light & Joy), this Orthodox Jewish boarding school is home to some 340 boys in need of great care and healing. Some have fathers in jail, others are there because of violence in the home. Still others come from impoverished or homeless families.

The art studio project was launched during last year’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration when ICEJ AID brought 50 Feast pilgrims to the school to meet the boys and to tear down a dilapidated wall to prepare for the renovations. It is just one of dozens of similar projects that have impacted thousands of Israeli lives this year. “We were very grateful to meet the ICEJ,” recalled Rabbi Slavin at the studio dedication in Spring. “It was just unbelievable when you came in with sledgehammers and literally broke down the wall! Now,” says the Rabbi, “everything is brand new!”

**Provision for Passover**

Despite the resilience of the Israeli economy in the midst of a global recession, many are unable to afford basic necessities during Passover. This year, ICEJ AID delivered holiday help from Dimona in the South to Karmiel in the North, touching struggling families, needy immigrants, the disabled and those suffering from mental illness. This year, we also had the privilege of blessing nearly 100 elderly Holocaust survivors across the country with holiday food baskets and Seder meals.
SUPPORTING ISRAEL

ICEJ AID 2010

Home for Holocaust Survivors

April saw the leadership of the Christian Embassy take part in the dedication of a new home for Holocaust survivors in the northern coastal city of Haifa. Opposition Leader Tzipi Livni and Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger attended the dedication which marked the completion of the first phase of extensive renovations. Spearheaded by the ICEJ’s German Branch, the Haifa Home demonstrates our commitment to help the estimated 210,000 Holocaust survivors in Israel end their days in dignity.

A Model Care Facility

Able to house up to 80 survivors, the ICEJ-sponsored Haifa Home is today considered a model in dealing with the growing national problem of poor and needy survivors of the Shoah. Residents receive free lodging, food and medical care, with doctors and nurses from area hospitals volunteering to cover their health needs around-the-clock. The kitchen is also feeding other Holocaust survivors who live in the area. Yet more than 2,000 remain on the waiting list.

That’s why, at the opening ceremony for the enlarged facility in September, the ICEJ contributed an additional $300,000 to purchase a second three-story building on the same street, which will be able to house another 50 survivors from the current waiting list. “We cannot bring back the countless victims of the Nazi genocide against the Jews of Europe”, said ICEJ International Director Jürgen Bühler. “But we can bring some comfort and relief to those still with us who suffered greatly in that dark time and even to this day.”

Throughout 2010, we have partnered with the Ruppin Academic Center near Netanya to enable more second-generation immigrants to gain higher education qualifications, supported a successful after-school program in Bet Shemesh that provides a safe place for at-risk Ethiopian teens and we’ve continued to support the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma at Herzog Hospital as it seeks to assist an older generation come to terms with the trauma of their historic desert journey. None of this would have been possible without your faithful support.

Ethiopian Jews

Making aliya has been fraught with difficulties for Ethiopian Jews, many of whom fled their famine-ravaged homeland in the early 1980s by trekking across Africa’s Nubian Desert on foot. It was a journey that saw only 2 out of 3 make it to Israel alive. This year, ICEJ AID has been focusing on the needs of this unique community: increasing educational opportunities for young Ethiopians on one hand while assisting the older generations deal with the painful memories of their journey nearly 30 years ago.

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Grafted ‘Hands on’ Tour

Young adults from 13 different nations converged on Israel in July to learn about modern Israel and engage in practical ‘hands-on’ acts of service. Projects included painting the house of a young Russian mother who escaped from a human-trafficking gang, playing with Sudanese refugee children at a women’s shelter in Haifa and cleaning trash in the Arab Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City. The ICEJ’s ‘Grafted’ team left having had a life-changing encounter with Israel and God.
**Standing Against the Tide**

The ICEJ is called to stand against the rising tide of hostility that threatens the nation of Israel and the Jewish community worldwide. Whether it is our strategic partnership with Yad Vashem aimed at helping Christians better understand the roots of the Nazi Holocaust; the launch of the *Israel Defense Network* or simply speaking out against the world’s shameful response to the Gaza Flotilla incident in May, the ICEJ is committed to standing against the hatred and injustice that is directed at Israel. We do this all in the name of Christ, on your behalf and thanks to your faithful prayers and generous financial support.

**Gaza Flotilla**

On May 31, Israeli commandos intercepted a flotilla of ships attempting to break the Gaza sea blockade and deliver aid directly to Hamas. What they encountered onboard was a mob of jihadist activists determined to reach Gaza or be martyred in combat on the way. The standoff left nine Turkish combatants dead, and seven Israeli soldiers wounded, triggering widespread media condemnation and angry demonstrations in cities across the globe.

The ICEJ’s network of national branches quickly responded to the crisis, supporting the embattled Jewish community by defending Israel’s actions with press statements and video reports supplied by the ICEJ News team in Jerusalem. In Norway, over 4,000 ICEJ supporters gathered in a solidarity rally in Oslo, while similar counter-protests were held in the Philippines, Finland and Ireland.

**Israel Defense Network**

Israel is currently facing a widespread campaign of delegitimization. The boycott, sanctions and divestment movement is at the forefront of a concerted effort by pro-Palestinian activists, trade unionists, neo-Marxist groups and mainline denominations to combat the perceived US political bias towards Israel.

That’s why in late 2010 the ICEJ launched the *Israel Defense Network*, a mechanism through which pro-Israel Christians can be empowered to stand against the tide and make the case for Israel in the local church and the wider community. Using a wide range of online tools, the *Defense Network* will enable quick dissemination of talking points, blog posts, audio downloads, Bible studies and news analysis. The network will be spearheaded by in-depth discussions of key issues on our regular web-based TV program, *Middle East Digest*.

**Holocaust Education**

2010 saw the inauguration of the first Christian Leadership Conference at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, an event that was timed to coincide with Israel’s annual Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day). Convened in partnership with the ICEJ and with funding provided by the Embassy’s German Branch, the gathering enabled 23 pastors and ministry leaders from 8 nations to examine the legacy of the Holocaust, and the resurgence of global anti-Semitism.

“The danger [of rising anti-Semitism] is real for the whole Middle East”, warned Dr. Bahjat Batarseh, a Jordanian evangelist who has ministered in 130 countries - one of the participants most impacted by the April leadership conference. “And we need to take it seriously, not only to speak about it again, but to pray and trust God.”

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**ICEJ Advocacy**

*Promoting Justice, Speaking Truth*

**Israel Today Needs your voice You must be heard**

**Israel Defense Network**

CHRISTIAN • GLOBAL • ONLINE • VOCAL

[www.israeldefensenetwork.com](http://www.israeldefensenetwork.com)
ICEJ Aliyah Program Doubles

Howard Flower

In response to the surge in aliyah to Israel over the past two years, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem this year doubled our sponsorship of Jews returning to their ancient homeland.

The lingering worldwide economic downturn, together with a troubling wave of anti-Semitism, has led to an increase in Jews coming home to Israel. To keep up with demand, the ICEJ has expanded its aliyah flights program and continued to help sponsor the Jewish Agency’s innovative Red Carpet welcomes for newcomers arriving in the land. This has meant that our aliyah operations have increased more than 100% over the last year.

With aliyah worldwide on the rise for a second consecutive year, the ICEJ has been assisting not only Russian Jews, but also French Jews, Swedish Jews, South African Jews and Latino Jews as well. We helped nearly 1,500 Jews come home in 2009, but that figure will come to more than 3,000 for the year 2010.

Likewise, the ICEJ in 2010 has doubled the number of returnees which we have sponsored through the Red Carpet program, compared with last year. This initiative is a fast-track absorption program which enables new arrivals to complete most of their immigration paperwork within 24 hours of touching down at Ben-Gurion Airport. The program includes linking arrivals with olim from their same country, as well as special travel and hospitality arrangements.

In another area, ICEJ-Finland and the Finnish Exodus Committee have very generously offered to assume all the costs for Russia returnees who travel to Israel via Helsinki – a route that has operated since the fall of Soviet communism in 1989. This included three flights in 2010 – in May, October and November.

Other ICEJ aliyah flights have been coming from Sweden and Russia, with nearly 600 passengers sponsored over recent months. An extra baggage fee is also provided allowing up to 75 kilos per person, which proves very helpful in moving entire families to Israel.

Other new programs include the aliyah work of ICEJ-Sweden, led by national director Anki Backmark. Last month also marked the start of a new Aliyah program in Latvia which will be under the direction of ICEJ representative Ilze Saulite. Aliyah is rising in Latvia due to the economic crisis there and more help is needed to bring Jewish families to the airport.

In December, the ICEJ will also sponsor a flight from France, where many in this large Jewish community are starting to come home. Radical Muslim agitation is one driving factor in their decision, as well as the strengthening economy in Israel and the opportunity to live a Jewish life openly.

Please join with us to help meet the increased needs of our Aliyah operations.

Support our ongoing efforts to assist Jewish Aliyah. Give online at www.icej.org
The Bleeding of Iraqi Christians
As congregants are massacred, traditionalist clerics ignore Islam, blame Israel

The world was shocked by the recent news of an al-Qaida terror cell’s brutal bloodbath inside a Baghdad cathedral in late October. Radical Muslim militiamen stormed the church and held dozens of people hostage while issuing a litany of far-ranging demands, including the release of several Egyptian women who allegedly had converted to Islam and were being held against their will by the Coptic Church. In an ensuing shootout with Iraqi police, the al-Qaida gunmen slaughtered 44 Christian worshippers, two priests and seven security personnel.

This cruel atrocity was followed by a series of ongoing Islamist attacks targeting Baghdad’s Christian neighbourhoods, including a string of thirteen coordinated bombings two weeks later that claimed another six lives, sowing panic among the dwindling members of this two millennia-old Christian community, many of whom openly spoke of fleeing.

In actuality, Iraq’s ancient Christian community has been under brutal assault by radical Islamic elements for several years now, an easy prey in the chaotic aftermath of the US-led invasion. While achieving its objective of toppling the despotic regime of Saddam Hussein, that conflict was deliberately prolonged by global jihadists who decided to make Iraq the central battleground of their embittered campaign against the free, democratic world. Native Iraqi Christians, in their minds, were nothing more than traitorous allies of the “Crusader” West.

Thus, five churches were bombed in Baghdad on one Sunday alone in 2004. Christians have been regularly kidnapped and held for ransom, Christian shops torched, priests beheaded, and Christian women beaten for “un-Islamic” dress. Iraqi Christians have even been targeted for perceived offenses against Islam committed thousands of miles away, as in the case of the Danish cartoon riots in 2005 and the Pope’s remarks on Islam in September 2006.

While all segments of Iraqi society have suffered in this violence-plagued period, the Christian suffering has been disproportionate, as has been their emigration abroad, according to reports by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. In under a decade, the Chaldean, Assyrian, Syrian, Armenian, and Protestant flocks in Iraq have declined from an estimated 1.4 million to roughly half that number. The Christian presence in Baghdad is now one-third of its former strength.

David Parsons

‘The reality is that Iraq’s ancient Christian community has been under brutal assault by radical Islamic elements for several years’
Other Christian minorities throughout the Middle East have experienced similar attrition rates over recent decades, be it the Egyptian Coptics, Lebanese Maronites, or the Greek Orthodox faithful in Jordan, Syria and the Palestinian areas (Israel’s growing Christian population in the lone exception in the region). This unprecedented Christian exodus from Arab lands has become a serious cause for concern among Western church hierarchies, and was slated to be a major topic of discussion at the Vatican’s recent Synod of Catholic bishops from the Middle East. In fact, a ground-breaking document compiled ahead of that gathering identified “political Islam” – for the first time – as the prevailing reason for the Christian flight.

Yet by the time the Middle East bishops concluded their two-week summit in Rome, anti-Israel agitators among them had somehow swayed the entire lot to blame all their problems on the Jews.

The Synod’s concluding “Message” barely mentioned the main problems plaguing their congregations, such as the rise of radical Islam and official as well as societal constraints on religious freedom. Instead, they issued a plea for the international community to work “to put an end to the occupation” of Palestinian territories, thus spotlighting Israel as their main source of torment.

Archbishop Cyril Salim Bustros, head of the Greek Melkite Church in America, went even further in his comments made while introducing the Synod’s final communiqué. He insisted that it was “unacceptable” for Israel to take “recourse to biblical positions which use the Word of God to wrongly justify injustices”, a statement lifted directly from the Message itself. He also maintained that, “We Christians cannot speak of the ‘Promised Land’ as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people... This promise was nullified by Christ... There is no longer a chosen people”.

A Vatican spokesman tried to brush aside his undignified remarks as an “individual” view, ignoring the fact that Bustros was speaking as the official secretary for the Synod.

The absurdity of this clerical charade was laid bare by the Baghdad cathedral massacre just a few days hence, as it would have been incredibly hard to blame that tragedy on Israel. Ironically, Bustros is bishop over a growing Greek Melkite Church in the United States precisely because so many from his denomination have been squeezed out of their home parishes by Islamic extremism that has been left unchecked by indifferent Arab rulers. Yet could you ever imagine Bustros upbraiding Muslim leaders for taking “recourse to the Koran to wrongly justify injustices”.

Middle East Christians do not expect a modern-day Baldwin to come riding in at the head of an army of deliverance. But they are looking for some honest acknowledgement of their suffering and its true infictors, as well as some measure of hope to sustain them if they choose to stay. Perhaps a concerted dose of Western diplomacy on their behalf would help stop the bleeding.”

David Parsons is ICEJ Media Director and Contributing Christian Editor of The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition. This article was first published by The Jerusalem Post.

Learn more: www.jpost.com/ce
So, what could be at the root of this mad hatred? Only one thing, anti-Semitism! The hatred of things Jewish is an old deadly malady of the human heart that is so intense that it will unite the most unlikely groups and people. This is a disease of choice. It is not a sickness but a deliberate decision to persecute, hound and destroy Jews. It involves people of all stations of life and thus is not a respecter of persons.

The new target of those filled with this hatred is the “corporate Jew” or Israel. By this means they disavow ant-Semitism and affirm that their attack against Israel is legitimate because of political concerns. This is the big lie! These people hate all things Jewish, they propagate the age old lies of the ‘Protocols of the Elders Zion’ and buy into anything that denies the Holocaust and they will not stop until they have achieved their goals.

Their narrative denies history, twists the truth and even denies any Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Nevertheless, the liberal left marches hand-in-hand with them!

Meanwhile, smelling weakness in the American Administration, Ahmadinejad of Iran has stepped up his war against the Jews by prompting Hezbollah into armed conflict with Israel on her northern border. On the web he has initiated a new project that by the use of cartoons denies the Holocaust. The message is clear; though the Jews have never yet been exterminated despite countless historical attempts - they now deserve it! When will the madness stop and who will step up to oppose it?

Malcolm Hedding serves as ICEJ Executive Director. This article was first published in The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition.