

EuroParliament Prez: Christians 'Not Safe In Our Continent'



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In a high-level meeting on religious persecution in Brussels, the President of the European Parliament (EP) said that Europe cannot afford to continue ignoring the fate of [Christians](#), who are "clearly the most persecuted group" in the world.

In Wednesday's meeting, EP President Martin Schulz said that the persecution of Christians is "undervalued" and does not receive enough attention, which has also meant that it "hasn't been properly addressed."

Schulz's concerns were echoed by EP Vice President Antonio Tajani, who warned that Europe sometimes "falls into the temptation of thinking we can ignore this task," referring to the protection Christians throughout the world who suffer persecution.

Speakers cited the work of Open Doors, a human rights organization that monitors the persecution of Christians, noting that 150 million Christians worldwide suffer torture, rape and arbitrary imprisonment. Christians in Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Pakistan, North Korea and Nigeria are among those hardest hit.

The Open Doors [report](#) for 2015 found that "Islamic extremism is by far the most significant persecution engine" of Christians in the world today and that "40 of the 50 countries on the World Watch List are affected by this kind of persecution."

For Islamists, Tajani said, Christians are the new "crusaders" of Europe, and because of Islamic persecution in the Middle East more than 70 percent of Christians have fled Iraq since 2003, with another 700 thousand Christians who have been forced to leave their home in Syria since the outbreak of civil war.

"Each month 200 [churches](#) and places of worship in the world are attacked and destroyed. Every day and in every region of the world, there are new cases of persecution against Christians," said Tajani.

"No religious community is as subject to hatred, violence and systematic aggression as the Christians," he said.

Tajani suggested that where radicalized religion is the problem, religion can also be the solution. "In the name of religion, we have an obligation to condemn all those who show contempt for life and kill in the name of God," he said. "Whoever shoots in the name of God, shoot against God."

Another speaker, auxiliary bishop Jean Kockerols of Brussels, said that the idea that Christians are intruders in certain Muslim-dominated countries must be debunked, since the Christian presence in the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent "dates back to centuries before the spread of the Koran."

"The West must break the silence on the persecution of Christians in the world," said [Tajani](#), and Europe must promote "a model of society in opposition to religious radicalism and brutal and criminal projects, such as creating an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria and then extending its tentacles into to Libya."

"It should shake us up," said Schulz, "that on our continent, Christians are not safe."

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