

# Today's Martyrs

*Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom*



## Palestine

Archbishop Alexios (as of [July 28, 2012](#) is demanding that forced conversions in [Gaza](#) to Islam cease;

“confirmed that the Christians who converted to Islam did so under threats, coercion, compulsion, and force”, demanded in [mid-October 2016](#) that the government investigate forced conversions but received no reply)

Bishop Atallah Hanna (arrested on [June 27, 2015](#) by Israeli Occupation Forces during a peaceful demonstration in [Beit al-Baraka](#) against the illegal seizure and sale of a church-owned hospital;

said the [April 2, 2016](#) treatment of Metropolitan Swerios Malki Murad was "degrading, unjustified and unacceptable")

Archimandrite Chrysostomos (the Monastery of St John the Baptist and Forerunner [near the Jordan River near Jericho](#) was extensively vandalized on [February 29, 2016](#), began to document the damage)

Diana (alias, teacher, reported on [March 8, 2020](#) to have said "The [Palestinian] police have separate rules for Muslims and Christians. If, for example, there's a car accident involving a Christian and a Muslim, the police always side with the Muslim")

Drew Greek (church volunteer, fled the [East Jerusalem](#) church after the [September 29, 2014](#) noxious gas attack)

Ekram Juha (director of the [Bethlehem](#) mayor's office, commented on or before [December 1, 2015](#) on the Palestinian Authority's decision to limit the 2015 Christmas celebrations due to the dozens of recent deaths of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli security forces during attacks: "I'm truly disappointed...[Palestinians] have a difficult situation but we've lived with this situation for many years and celebrations have gone on. This is the place where Jesus was born and if you limit Christmas celebrations here you are limiting something spiritual and holy. I can understand limiting celebrations elsewhere, but not here in Bethlehem")

Fr Fadi Shalufa OFM (threatened with a knife after he shut a gate in the faces of two men who were harassing pilgrims in [Bethlehem](#) on [June 1, 2018](#))

Fairouz Ijha (aged 76, complained on [December 24, 2019](#) that the courts had refused for two years to help her recover land in [Bethlehem](#) that had been seized by Muslims: "Each time I ask the judge for permission to speak, he tells me, 'it's not your turn yet'. If I were a Muslim, I would have been treated differently")

Fatin Ayyad (aunt of Hiba Abu Dawoud, who allegedly converted to Islam under duress in [Gaza](#))

Fr Faysal Hijazin (told on [June 4, 2013](#) of an order by the Hamas government to enforce gender segregation in Christian schools in [Gaza](#) for children over 10 and their teachers "We don't have the space and we don't have the money to divide our schools")

Patriarch Fouad Twal (as of [June 4, 2013](#) will be speaking with the Hamas prime minister about an order by the Hamas government to enforce gender segregation in Christian schools in [Gaza](#) for children over 10 and their teachers;

said in [Gaza](#) on [December 22, 2014](#) "We have always been moved to read in the Gospels that Mary and Joseph found no room in the inn, and that baby Jesus was born in a grotto. Today, among the millions of refugees, there are many children who desire to be able to sleep in a grotto like the one in which the Savior is born. For them it would be a luxury";

said in [Jerusalem](#) on [July 23, 2015](#) of the refugee crisis resulting from war in Iraq and Syria dragging on and on: "Now everyone is tired. The parish priests are tired, the donors are tired, the people are tired and losing their enthusiasm. At the beginning, they were happy to help. But now the future? Caritas does not have the resources to give three meals a day to each person")

Fr Gabriel Romanelli IVE (Argentine citizen, reported on [December 23, 2019](#) from [Gaza](#) on the granting of visas by Israel for travel to Jerusalem and Bethlehem for pilgrimage: "[Christians are in] a condition of hyper-surrealism: a thousand people, 117 of whom are Catholics, compared to a total population of 2.3 million, there is no possibility of moving, of perennial war")

Hany Khayo (church administrator, said of the pressures to move the Calvary Baptist out of its rented building in the [Shofat neighborhood, East Jerusalem](#) in [July 2014](#) "Some of those in the community were from traditional Christians, believe it or not. Traditional Christians did not want us there. They said, 'You guys are not Christians. What Christianity do you represent? If you're not an official church, then God doesn't hear your prayers.'")

Hiba Abu Dawoud (reportedly [as of [July 16, 2012](#)] forced to convert to Islam in [Gaza](#))

Huda Al-Amash (mother of Ramez Al-Amash, said on [July 16, 2012](#) "If things remain like this, there'll be no Christians left in [Gaza](#)...Today it's Ramez. Then who, and who will be next?...People are locking up their sons and daughters")

Fr Ibrahim Nairouz (on [April 8, 2016](#) protested the destruction of the archeological remains of a 1,500 year old Byzantine church in [Gaza](#) for a shopping mall, wrote "If they had found the remains of a mosque or a synagogue or any other ancient structure would they have handled the situation in the same way?")

Sr Ibraxia (complained to the government on [July 16, 2013](#) about escalating acts of intimidation against her [Bethany](#) convent: thrown stones, broken glass, theft and looting)

Fr Issa Musleh (said in [Jerusalem](#) on [October 7, 2014](#) that continued emigration of Christians will make their churches into museums)

Johnny Jildeh (activist, Israeli citizen, wrote on Facebook [on or about February 11, 2021](#): "What happened today in Bethlehem to Dr Qumsiyeh is the outcome of clear corruption inside the Palestinian security apparatuses. We, the Christians, are not safe in light of the presence of this corrupt authority which also practices cronyism. We all are violated, without exception, and the reason is the silence of the church and the clerics in regard to what is happening to us. We ask the clergy: if you are unable to protect your people, close the churches and help us emigrate";

reported on [February 16, 2021](#) to have been illegally detained in [Ramallah](#) for eight hours by Palestinian police in retaliation for his previous Facebook post, released after signing a pledge to not make any further posts critical of the police)

Kamal Teresi (reported on [March 8, 2020](#) to have fled from [Gaza](#), said "The Hamas people took over my house and turned it into a war room. I was put in a number of prisons, and the Hamas prison is nothing but beating and psychological torture. We Christians are not bystanders in Palestine; we have been in Palestine for 2000 years: we are not guests. They [Hamas] are harassing and hurting the Christian public and Christian institutions, churches and associations. I can't go back to Gaza, returning would be a death sentence")

Pastor Karen Dunham (assaulted by an Islamist on [September 21, 2014](#) in [East Jerusalem](#) "The man ran up from behind me and with both fists hit me as hard as he could in the back", suffered a broken arm and teeth, knee damage, and extensive bruises;

young Palestinian militants in [East Jerusalem](#) wired shut a church door on [September 29, 2014](#) and sprayed an irritant gas into the church thus forcing members to flee into a hall, this was the second such attack in two weeks)

Sr Maria Ramsis (assaulted on [May 4, 2017](#) along with her driver over a land dispute regarding her [Jerusalem](#) monastery)

Marian al-Hajal (daughter of of Terez Ta'amneh, brother of Yusef and another sister, later said of the [October 5, 2019](#) police beating of her brother: "My mother told them that Yusef suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure. She begged them to stop beating him. In response, the commander of the force, Jamal Hmeid [nephew of Bethlehem's governor], pointed a pistol at my brother's head and threatened to open fire. He told my mother: We all have orders to open fire at him. I don't know what happened to her, but she fell to the ground and died...The next day, my sister and I went to the hospital to retrieve my mother's body and prepare her for burial. We were shocked to find that my mother's body was not in the morgue. We were told that the body was sent for autopsy. Who gave them the right to perform an autopsy on our mother's body without our knowledge? As a Palestinian citizen, I have no confidence in the Palestinian forensic institute. I also have no confidence in the Palestinian law. I'm sure the results of the autopsy will be in favor of the police, and not in favor of my mother...The Palestinian Authority has been offering us money to remain silent. They are trying to bribe us so we would remain silent about the crimes of the police", appealed to the King of Jordan for assistance)

Fr Mario da Silva (Brazilian citizen, pastor of the only Latin-rite Catholic church in Gaza, said on [February 28, 2017](#) of his 350 families "The situation in Gaza is hard. After the [2014] war, we received international aid. However, six months later they forgot about us, as if everything had been resolved. Instead, problems remain, like the lack of jobs, gas, water, and electricity. On some days, there is electricity only for three hours. It's cold here and people do not know how to heat their homes. We have no drinking water because what comes out [of the tap] is salty, hence, we have to buy bottled water...People here are starting to think seriously that it would be better to get into another war because then at least there would be aid. It is a sad and terrible thought but it shows how tragic things are. The world pays attention to us only when there is a war...The young people who were authorized to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem last Easter did not return. They remained in the city where Jesus was born and found a job, laying the foundations for a new life. That is why, here, people want to leave...Christians live mainly with debts, buying on credit from the supermarket and promising to pay later. Christian charities help

out by paying off the debts. The jobless are forced to beg and count on the generosity of others...Preserving the Christian faith is the foundation of our social work. We have to give them a decent life. Our attention goes to the sick, the suffering, those in difficulty with this spirit...preserving the integrity of the faith, defending it, and teaching Christians how to live amid hardships and a Muslim majority...upholding Christian values like forgiveness, charity, and fraternal love is hard. That is why Christians here are heroes. They know how to keep the faith in a hostile environment and stand more and more as an example for those, even in the West, who experience dimly and superficially their Christian faith";

said on or before [April 20, 2017](#) "The situation is very difficult. Easter celebrations did not go well. There is a lot of fear among Christians because of the attacks in Egypt. Few, Catholic and Orthodox, have attended Mass, both. Only 50 people came to our church. As far as I know, 25 were Orthodox...There are fewer and fewer. Those who manage to get out do not come back. They seek peace elsewhere. On feast days, the church is increasingly empty")

Mosab Hassan Yousef (convert, announced in [Jerusalem](#) that he as of [June 18, 2012](#) is now making a movie on Muhammed and Islam)

Nashat Filmon (Bible Society general director, said in [East Jerusalem](#) on [June 11, 2014](#) "The dark ideology of ISIS is spreading all over the region like cancer. This is also including the Holy Land. Christians, overall, live here in peace and harmony with Muslims in Jerusalem and the West Bank, but incidents do happen from time to time, and it's true that these incidents have recently increased, especially in the Old City of Jerusalem...Pray for the relationships between Muslims and Christians to be good despite all of the problems. Pray that the Christians would act as they are called to be, 'salt and light' and a living testimony. Pray against this dark, satanic, and attacking spirit of fundamentalism, and for the Christians to respond in a way that reflects Christ")

Fr Peter Vasko (President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, stated on [July 18, 2013](#) that Catholic schools in [Gaza](#) will need to close due to a new decree prohibiting coed classes for children over 10 years of age)

Ramez Al-Amash (reportedly [as of [July 16, 2012](#)] forced to convert to Islam in [Gaza](#))

Rami Fellemon (director of Jerusalem Evangelistic Outreach, described a [May 4, 2015](#) mob attack on an Ethiopian Orthodox monastery in [East Jerusalem](#) on that began after a dispute between a Christian and a Muslim "When they came, it was a wave of anger that was - you cannot describe it, you cannot understand it. Because when one kid is fighting with another kid, and 60 to 80 people come and start smashing doors and throwing stones on windows and doors of Christian families and smashing the cross of the convent, this is totally not about a kid hurting a kid. This is more about Islam and Christianity. It's more about persecution", the rioters spray-painted on the monastery the same slogans used by ISIL when beheading the Ethiopian refugees in Libya)

Rami Khader Ayyad (Christian bookstore owner, **stabbed to death**)

Rifat Kassis (wrote on [April 16, 2014](#) on how large numbers of Palestinian Christians are denied permits to attend Holy Week services in Jerusalem)

Dr Salameh Qumsiyeh (gynecologist, pulled from his automobile in [Bethlehem](#) by four masked men and beaten with clubs and sharp tools on [February 18, 2020](#), hospitalized in serious condition;

attacked on a [Bethlehem](#) street [on or about February 11, 2021](#), the attacker hit him in the head and neck and attempted to cut off his hands, hospitalized, tendons and veins in his hands repaired in 10 hours of surgery but will not be able to resume his medical practice; reported on [February 16, 2021](#) to have been released from the hospital, received death threats)

Samer (aged 30, reported on [December 27, 2013](#) to have been denied permission by Israel to travel from Gaza to Bethlehem at Christmas)

Samir Qumsieh (journalist, head of Al-Mahed Nativity TV, described on [December 20, 2012](#) the tensions in [Bethlehem](#) surrounding the celebration of the Nativity this year)

Sobhy Makhoul (condemned the [September 27, 2015](#) arson attack on St Charbel Maronite Monastery in [Bethlehem](#))

Pastor Steven Khoury (on [May 6, 2012](#) recounted acts of persecution he has seen or experienced: beatings, church firebombings, and murder [including his uncle], called on Middle Eastern Christians to remain faithful to the Bible;

Calvary Baptist church in [Jerusalem](#) vandalized on [November 12, 2012](#);

moved his congregation's church out of its rented building in the [Shofat neighborhood, East Jerusalem](#) in [July 2014](#) after Islamist threats against the landlord)

Suzy (aged 22, reported on [December 27, 2013](#) to have been denied permission by Israel to travel from Gaza to Bethlehem at Christmas)

Metropolitan Swerios Malki Murad (arrested without charge in [al-Khader](#) on [April 2, 2016](#), released on bail after a few hours)

Terez Ta'amneh (aged 63, Jordanian citizen, mother of Marian al-Hajal and Yusef, **collapsed and died in an October 5, 2019 police raid on her home** in [Bet Jala](#) when the police held a gun to her son's head and threatened to shoot him)

Bishop William Shomali (protested the brief illegal occupation of a hermitage and chapel in [Taybeh](#) by Israeli settlers on [April 20, 2013](#);

said "The episode is serious, however the parish priest and his assistants refuse to be intimidated" after a church in [Zeitun, Gaza](#) was bombed amid threats on [February 27, 2014](#))

Yusef (son of Terez Ta'amneh, brother of Marian al-Hajal, beaten by police and threatened with death during an [October 5, 2019](#) raid on his home in [Bet Jala](#), placed under arrest for a financial dispute)