

The Invisible Jihad:

THE TREATMENT OF CHRISTIANS BY IRAN PROXIES



Farhad Rezaei

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW
THE PHILOS PROJECT

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Iran's proxy militias in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have played a significant, though largely unrecognized, role in the dramatic decline of Christians in the region. Guided by the theocratic regime's vision of Muslim demographic purity, they labored to create conditions that forced the Christians out. *Invisible Jihad*—demographic reduction through coerced emigration—these militias use extant conflicts to manufacture conditions behind the massive exodus.

Historically, Shia theology, which is strongly opposed to the political involvement of the ulema, the clergy, was quietist. Like their Sunni counterparts, the Shia theologians considered Jews and Christians to be the People of the Book and accorded them the status of dhimmi, a second-class protected minority. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini changed all this when, under the influence of his former student, the arch-conservative Ayatollah Mohammed Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, he introduced neo-Shiism, also known as Khomenism. In this novel reading of the Quran, non-Muslims were not clean enough to live with Muslims because of spiritual pollution. Khomenism called upon the faithful to cleanse Islam and Iran of Judeo-Christian impurity, a stand common to other palingenetic revivalist ideologies.

While Khomeini defined the public discourse on Judeo-Christianity, Mesbah Yazdi formulated and implemented policies to persecute Jews and Christians. Virtually unknown in the West, he wielded power well beyond his official position as the head of Haqqani School, a radical seminary in Qom, and the founder of the prestigious Imam Khomeini Institute (IKI). Khomenism rejected the concept of universal human rights, described as “the secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition.”¹ They were found to be incompatible with the principles of Islam as articulated in the Islamic Human Rights and Obligations which stated that Muslims have the right to kill their religious enemies, however broadly defined. Still, even the arch-conservative Ayatollah understood that the regime could not murder Christians en masse, thus opting for the alternative policy of eliminationism through coercive immigration.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and its foreign operations unit, the Quds Force (IRGC-QF), helped institutionalize the anti-Christian policy. Unsurprisingly, many of its senior commanders hailed from the Haqqani Circle or attended classes in IKI. The Guards were inspired by the coerced mass exodus of Jews from Muslim countries during WWII. Their new motto was “First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people.”²

METHODOLOGY

Reporting on the treatment of Christians by the militias is highly challenging, largely due to confusion over the identity of the perpetrators and the victims' fear of reporting. To account for these problems, data was gathered from a broad variety of sources: designated rapporteurs, witnesses, traditional media (Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Hebrew), social media, and reports by human rights organizations, Christian sites, and questioners distributed in Iraq and Syria.

CASE STUDIES

LEBANON

IRAQ

SYRIA

YEMEN



LEBANON

Lebanon's bloody civil war (1975-1990) offered the Islamic Republic of Iran an opportunity to implement the first phase of its Axis of Resistance, a long-term project to dominate the Middle East by mobilizing Lebanese Shia populations. The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon had strengthened the militia, which depicted itself as a defender of the country. In the early 1990s, following its unexpected alliance with the Maronite Free Patriotic Movement, Hezbollah took command of several government ministries.

The militia created a hybrid sovereignty structure, described by observers as a parasitic system that siphoned resources from the state to the Shia base. According to confessional demography, Hezbollah's hybrid sovereignty hit the Christians particularly hard. Although no official census has been conducted since 1934, findings by various bodies have documented the community's decline. In the 1950s, more than a decade before the beginning of the civil war, out of a population of 1,411,416, some 54 percent were Christians, 2 percent were Druze, and 44 percent were Muslim (Shias and Sunnis). In 2020, Christians declined to 33.7 percent, the Druze constituted 5.2 percent, and the Muslim population went up to 61 percent, virtually evenly split between the Sunnis and the Shias. Several factors account for the precipitous decline of the Christians, but Hezbollah's policies are particularly culpable.³

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP AND EVANGELIZING

Lebanon's Constitution, granting freedom of worship and proselytizing, was bolstered by the International Covenant of Civilian and Political Rights (ICCPR). Taking a cue from its Iranian patron, Hezbollah recognized the legacy Christian denominations such as the Maronite Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church, and even created a committee on Christian-Muslim dialogue. However, in reality, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah took orders from Mesbah Yazdi, who traveled to Lebanon several times. The Path of Truth Institute, one of the Ayatollah's organizations, provided Hezbollah commanders with Arabic translations of anti-Christian screeds to distribute to Hezbollah officials and fighters.

Targeting the new wave of Protestant evangelicals in Lebanon—a product of a resurgence of an American-based missionary wave in the 1990s—was a high priority for Hezbollah from 2000 onwards. Operation Mobilization USA (O.M.), which engaged in humanitarian work in mixed towns, was targeted and its missionary was killed in 2002. Although Nasrallah denied any involvement, he embraced the opinion of the influential Islamic publication “The Pulpit of the Calling” that categorically rejected any attempts at Christian proselytizing.

Refugees escaping the civil war in Syria from 2011 to 2017 reignited Hezbollah's anxiety about conversions. Most of the 1,700,000 refugees who crossed into Lebanon were Sunnis, but Christian Churches provided a disproportional share of help. Heart of Lebanon, an evangelical charity founded in 2006, worked with Syrian refugees, both Christian, and Sunnis, in dozens of camps. Hezbollah created a special task force to impede the conversion of the refugees.

IMPOSITION OF ISLAMIC LIFESTYLE

In an act directly challenging the Lebanese Constitution, Hezbollah began creating “mini-Tehrans” in mixed Muslim-Christian areas under its control by imposing strict dress codes and a ban on alcohol, music, and mixing of sexes in public places. A variant of the Iranian police for “promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice,” Hezbollah patrols had the power to arrest any Christian who broke the behavioral code.

EVICTON, EXPULSION, AND FORCED BUY-OUTS

Ownership of Christian land has shrunk from 8130 square km in 1943 to some 4000 square km today throughout all of Lebanon. While some of the lands were legally sold by emigrants, a sizable part was lost through eviction and expulsion coordinated by Hezbollah. Agricultural land was the primary target, but some plots of urban and mixed-use land also fell victim to the real estate activism of the Shias. The land grab occurred primarily in areas of Hezbollah's strategic interest.⁴

Several conflicts —the Israeli invasion in 1982, the fighting between the Maronites in 1990, and the Second Lebanon War in 2006—bolstered Hezbollah's campaign of religious-ethnic cleansing. As a result, in Nabatiyeh and the South Governorates in South Lebanon, Christians went from pre-war

populations of 30 percent and 13 percent, respectively, to a virtual demographic wipe-out. Hezbollah blocked returning Christians, killed their livestock, and destroyed water reservoirs.⁵

In the 1980s, in the North under the Beqaa Governorate (41 percent Christian, 37 percent Sunni, and 15 percent Shia), Shias were a minority. However, away from the border with Israel and close to Syria, Beqaa offered ideal logistics for training and arms transfers from Syria, triggering rounds of religious-ethnic expulsions. Beirut, where Hezbollah built its headquarters, saw a dramatic demographic transformation in the 1990s, with virtually all Christians pushed out of Dahiye and adjacent suburbs where Shias settled.

When Hezbollah joined the government in 2005, new opportunities for confiscation emerged. Starting in early 2013, the Ministry of Finance ordered the expropriation of common land around some Christian villages, both in the North and South. Having been purchased by proxy Hezbollah buyers, the agricultural land was used to build houses for Shias. The Christian movement, The Lebanese Land-Our Land, protested these practices to no avail, and the World Maronite Union accused Hezbollah and Iran of trying to change “the cultural and demographic face of Beirut.”⁶

DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC RESOURCE ALLOCATION: CHRISTIANS' DWINDLING SHARE OF THE PIE

After securing key ministries in the government, the terror group began siphoning resources from the State. In one popular tactic, Hezbollah's proxy NGOs registered with the Ministry of Interior received millions of dollars from the State for various projects ranging from construction to education. Over time, the militia created a private financial, health, welfare, and educational system to provide municipal services such as garbage collection. The arrangement privileged the Shias at the expense of Christians and Sunnis, forcing them to rely on the dwindling services of the State.

The Hezbollah alternate state has been put on full display following the collapse of the Lebanese economy in 2020. Shias continue to shop in relatively well-stocked stores, bank in Hezbollah's banks, and receive cancer treatments and medicine in short supply with a special Hezbollah card. Furthermore, Hezbollah pays its employees and fighters in dollars, whereas others receive their salaries in the almost worthless Lebanese pound. Neither the Christians nor the Sunnis have come close to creating a similar network. As a result, the Christian villages in the impoverished Beqaa Governorate in the North and the only marginally better South have seen a considerable reduction in the standard of living. The economy also suffered because potential investors in areas controlled by Hezbollah are urged to pay “protection dues” to ward off having their businesses blown up.

Church leaders are alarmed by their dwindling communities. The Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rahi and his associates have had several meetings with Hezbollah's officials to voice concerns about the political paralysis and the economic doldrums that have spurred Christian emigration. The Patriarch has even publicly condemned Hezbollah for creating the financial crisis and chastised it for keeping the country hostage to its wars with Israel and the pro-Iranian foreign policy. Hezbollah's policy has followed Iran's successful blueprint of demographic engineering leading to the Shiafication of the Christian areas. These efforts have inspired the regime's proxy militias in the region.



I R A Q

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 allowed the IRGC-QF to create several Shia militia groups. Initially employed to resist American forces, the militias came in handy when an al Qaeda splinter, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under the Abu Moussa al Zargawi, morphed into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

By 2014, ISIS occupied a large swath of Iraq, bringing it under the savage rule of its Caliphate. With the Iraqi Army in full retreat, Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani issued a fatwa calling for citizens to defend the country. The resultant Al Hashd al Shabi, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), gave the pro-Iranian militias another chance to expand their power at the cost of the shaky central authority. Though ISIS was defeated in 2017, the PMF has played a considerable role in perpetuating chaos in the country.

Once the largest non-Muslim religious minority in Iraq, comprised of 1.5 million (according to Iraq's last census in 1987), Iraqi Christians' numbers have dramatically decreased to 141,000, making them the undisputed losers of sectarian conflict in Iraq.⁷ Between 2003 and 2017, Iraqi Christians suffered greatly under the control of AQI, ISIS, and the Shia militias affiliated with Iran. Unfortunately, because many attacks on the communities were performed anonymously, it is impossible to determine how much violence was perpetrated by AQI/ISIS versus the Shiites. Certain points are clear, however. Muqtada al Sader's Mahdi Army, a former Iranian affiliate,

operated in the Baghdad area since 2003. After 2017, the PMF was indisputably at the forefront of Iranian-prescribed Jihad against Christians. The AAH, the Mahdi Army, the Quat Sahl Nineveh (QSN), later renamed the 30th Brigade of the PMF, Babylon's 50th Brigade, and a local militia made up of the Shabak, a Kurdish-Shia group, have been the main culprits. These militias were pivotal in blocking the return of the Christians to the Nineveh Plains.

SHIA MILITIAS TREATMENT OF CHRISTIANS: KILLINGS, AND SOCIETAL ABUSES (HUMAN TRAFFICKING, RAPE, FORCED MARRIAGES)

Shortly after the American invasion, the Mahdi Army set out to re-engineer the demography of Baghdad. Making the capital "Christian-free" was high on their agenda. Al Sadr's cleansing of certain neighborhoods of Sunnis was a preview of his drive to create homogenous Shiite enclaves. The neighborhood of al Doura was one example. Known as the "Vatican of Baghdad," the area housed more than 5,000 families, making it one of the most prominent Christian centers in Iraq. There were a variety of churches, a monastery, and even a pontifical college. Christians in al Doura were considered a "soft target" and fled in large numbers, either to camps for the displaced or to the Kurdish region.

More atrocities occurred upon their return in 2018. In Baghdad, selective killings, robbery, and sexual harassment created a climate of panic. Father Biyos Qasha of Baghdad's Maryos Church stated these killings were part of the plan to force the Christian population to leave their country for good.⁸

EVICTON, EXPULSION, AND FORCED BUYOUTS UNDER IRANIAN PROXIES

The theft of Christian-owned properties and houses, known as "legalized theft," became a significant issue in the Nineveh Plains (Nineveh Governorate), the home of several ancient Christian communities. During the ISIS occupation, most of its inhabitants fled to Kurdish-controlled territories in search of safety. Subsequently, the PMF militias severely hampered their return, part of the Q.F. plan to "Shiafy" the region. Occasionally the Iranians provided funds to Shabak families to purchase properties, but more commonly, Christians were strongly "urged" to leave their properties, a request backed by the violent record of the Shabaks. Hundreds of Christian houses were attacked, damaged, looted, burned down, or confiscated, and returning Christians often found that their property or agricultural land had been confiscated with the title deeds transferred to Shabak families. The Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes was overburdened because of the massive displacement of populations, a development exacerbated by the political bias of judges, general chaos, and a weak rule of law.

ECONOMIC WARFARE (DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, BOYCOTT, EXTORTION)

Legalized theft in Iraq went hand in hand with economic warfare through destroying and looting property or burning down fields. In 2019, fires broke out across 134,000 acres of land, including the land of Christians, with 20,000 acres of crops lost.⁹

Boycotts of Christian businesses were another way that Shia militias hindered economic revival, and setting up checkpoints on the roads leading in and out of Christian areas offered extortion opportunities since “transfer payments” could reach up to one thousand dollars. Bartella, located on the major thoroughfare between Mosul and Erbil, was particularly coveted by the Shia militias. Some reports indicated that Shiite militants extort between \$1,000 and \$3,000 a month from Christian restaurants in the Nineveh Governorate. Owners who refuse to pay could risk having their restaurant blown up. Priests traveling to churches were targeted, depriving parishioners of services.¹⁰ Finally, in a mafia-style operation, the militias extorted Christian businesses by kidnapping for ransom and conducting illegal arrests.

DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC RESOURCES AND PRIVATE MARKET OPPORTUNITIES: CHRISTIANS’ DECLINING SHARE OF THE ECONOMY

Discrimination in the distribution of public resources by Shia militia to support infrastructure projects such as sewage, water, and electricity has prevented Christian communities from rebuilding or expanding. Government jobs, a significant source of employment in Iraq, have also been beyond the reach of Christians because of political patronage that favored the Shias. Even the private sector is not immune, as Shia militia members consistently harass Muslim employers for employing Christians.

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP AND EVANGELIZING

The Iraqi Constitution of 2005 provides for religious freedoms and the right to religious practices for non-Muslim minorities. However, Shia militia followed neo-Shiism, targeting both legacy churches and Protestant evangelicals, undermining the official government policies. The list of intimidations was extensive: militias destroyed or vandalized church property, stopped clergy members at checkpoints, destroyed Christian monuments, erected Shia shrines, and used loudspeakers to broadcast Muslim prayers outside churches.¹¹

IMPOSITION OF ISLAMIC LIFESTYLE

For Iraqi Shias who followed the strict mandates of Ayatollah Khomeini, the Christian lifestyle in public spaces was an insult. Christian women and girls were admonished to veil themselves under the threat of punishment. Disobeying was hardly an option as militia patrols, and hardline Shias harassed or sexually assaulted Christian women who did not wear the hijab or an Islamic headscarf. Consumption of alcohol was another issue that ran afoul of the Sharia mandates. Shortly after the liberation of Basra, Shia vigilante gangs bearing names such as “The Revenge of Allah” or the “Organization of the Islamic Doctrine” destroyed liquor stores en masse.¹² Hundreds more liquor stores were forced to close. In October 2016, the Iraqi Parliament banned the country’s production, consumption, and sale of alcoholic beverages, unleashing a country-wide assault on liquor stores.



SYRIA

Syria's importance for Tehran's long-term goal of dominating the Middle East cannot be overstated. Syria has linked the IRGC-QF to its proxy in Lebanon through the so-called "land bridge," and it also provides an additional front against Israel. The ruling Assad family of Alawite origin, a minority Shia group in a predominantly Sunni country, has cemented the ties between Iran and Syria due to mutual gains. With Assad losing against the popular uprising in 2011, the IRGC-QF restructured the Syrian Army and created several militias within the Shia Liberation Army (SLA).

Iran's massive intervention saved the Assad regime, but the civil war costs were staggering. Approximately 600,000 people were killed, 6.5 million were internally displaced, and 6.6 million people fled across the borders.

Christians were disproportionately affected. In 2011, the community numbered 2.3 million, 10.5 percent of the total Syrian population divided into numerous denominations. Most of these Christians lived in or around Qamishli, Deir Ezzour, Hasakah, Aleppo, Homs, Damascus, Vadi al Nasarah (Valley of Christians), and Daraa. By 2021, the Christian community of Syria had shrunk by a staggering 70 percent.

KILLINGS, ABDUCTIONS, AND DISAPPEARANCES

Given that dozens of actors were engaged in multiple theaters across Syria throughout the war, assigning primary responsibility for the assault on Syrian Christians is complicated. Nevertheless, a careful examination of witness reports indicates that Assad forces and pro-Iranian militias have killed and kidnapped Christians despite the propaganda portraying the community as allies. Between the beginning of the uprising and 2021, the Syrian security forces backed by Iran killed 118 Syrian Christians, including two children and one woman.¹³

Kidnapping has been another threat facing the community. Since Syrian Christians are often more educated and wealthier than the average population, Christians were a magnet not only for criminal gangs seeking ransom but also for Shia militias looking for a quick fix for their financial problems. Not surprisingly, there was a preference for business people, professionals, and senior clergy who could pay hefty ransoms.

ARBITRARY DETENTION, TORTURE, AND INHUMANE TREATMENT

Many Christians who opposed the Assad regime were detained and subject to torture. From 2011 to 2019, his forces arrested at least 552, according to a report published by the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

The Syrian Army's Security Branch 215 also ran a detention center in Kafarsoosa, Damascus, where Christians were brutally tortured.

In Wadi al-Nasara (Valley of Christians) west of Homs, the regime cut off electricity, drinking water, fuel, and other public services, including landlines and mobile phones. Qassem Soleimani, the QF commander personally involved in directing the war in Syria, believed these tactics would prompt a mass exodus from their historical homeland.

DESTRUCTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

All sides in the civil war attacked churches and church property. However, witness reports indicate that out of 124 assaults against churches between 2011 and September 2019, pro-Assad forces carried out 75 acts of violence, leading to complete or partial destruction. Bombing these churches had no tactical value; it was a deliberate policy to scare the Christians into fleeing.¹⁴

CONFISCATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY

A 2018 legal amendment to property law known as Law no. 10 allowed the Syrian government to declare "redevelopment zones" designed for reconstruction in any country area. Unsurprisingly, the legislature was applied to Christians and other regime enemies. In yet another blow, Christians—many of whom avoided conscription—were likely to lose their assets seized according to an amended

Military Conscription Law. Accordingly, the amendment allowed for the immediate seizure of assets of men who did not serve in the military or could not pay the exemption fee of 8,000 dollars.¹⁵

In the chaos of war, confiscating assets could devolve into a local enterprise. In certain instances, militia commanders bought loyalty from neighboring tribes in exchange for land of absentee Christians. One such case was reported near Homs, with a dozen of other instances possible. Real estate investors with ties to pro-Iranian militias have targeted properties of long-term Christians and Sunni absentees.¹⁶



Y E M E N

Adding Yemen to the Axis of Resistance was a crowning achievement of the Iranian regime, long interested in establishing a foothold in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. The Zaydis, a Shia offshoot comprising some thirty percent of the Yemeni population, launched a rebellion under Baddredin al Houthi and his son Hussein.

Previously, the duo studied in a religious seminary in Qom sponsored by Ayatollah Khamenei. In 2014, the Houthis, helped by the IRGC, attacked the government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and quickly overran large swaths of territory while intensifying cross-border incursions into Saudi Arabia. In 2015, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States launched a counter-campaign. Still, supplied by advanced Iranian weapons, the Houthis turned much of Yemen into a “Lebanon of the South.” The current leader of the militia, Malik al Houthi, has referred to himself as the “Yemeni Nasrallah.”

The Houthis have invested a considerable effort into ending the Christian presence in the territories under their control. A mixture of denominations—Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Ethiopian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox—was estimated at some 40,000. There were also new converts known as Muslim Background Believers (MBB). Today, there are some 3,000 Christian holdovers.

KILLINGS, KIDNAPPING, AND ARBITRARY DETENTION

As part of a campaign to intimidate the Christian community, the Houthis abducted several prominent Christians and held some for ransom. In March 2016, they killed 16 people in a Catholic retirement home in Aden, including four nuns of the Missionaries of Charity, a congregation founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Fear of kidnapping or arrest compelled worshippers to gather in private residences. The MBBs were especially endangered because they were considered apostates and could face the death penalty, as in Iran.

ATTACKS ON CHURCH PROPERTY

Destruction, vandalism, and looting of church property are common and aim to terrify the Christian population and compel it to flee. Several churches in Aden were destroyed or vandalized. The Houthis have also desecrated shrines and cemeteries. Several cases stand out in this context. After firing a barrage of bullets into the air, Houthi fighters looted and vandalized the Church of St. Antonios (known locally as Ras Al-Mus- abat) in the city of Al-Tawahi, Aden, on September 15, 2015. They dismantled the bell and wrecked the statue of Christ atop the church, breaking its head and hands and removing the cross. On December 27, 2018, Houthis destroyed the Catholic Church of Habl Bela Danass (Church of the Rock) and the Catholic Church in the Mualla district of Aden. Around the same time, the Houthis also destroyed the Church of Shelden Bahnoun Catholic in Aden with improvised explosive devices, which leveled it to the ground. Eyewitnesses also testified that the Baptist house of worship, the Church of St. Mary Garrison, in the Crater District of Aden, which housed several shrines but was only used for cultural activities, was set on fire by Houthis.¹⁷

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIETAL ABUSES

Since 2007, Christian community representatives have reported increased harassment by the Houthis. They are not allowed to conduct marriage ceremonies, own a Bible, read a Bible, or distribute Bibles. Houthis also encouraged the burning of Bibles and other Christian literature because it was considered “offensive to the community and religion.” Furthermore, Christians cannot access emergency relief distributed through Muslim charities, and hospitals in Houthi areas also refuse to treat Christians.¹⁸

PUBLIC AND EDUCATIONAL INCITEMENT AGAINST THE COMMUNITY

In schools supervised by Houthis, curricula promote violent extremist ideas to instill hatred for religious minorities, especially Christians, and depict the United States and Israel as the epitome of evildoers. The Houthi Al-Massira TV (operated by Hezbollah in Lebanon) also contains extremist content, including calls to kill Christians.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Driven by the neo-Shia quiet Jihad vision, Iran's proxy militias have diminished much of the Christian population from the territories under their control without most of the world noticing. The exodus that started under ISIS was bolstered by demographic engineering that prioritized Shiafication. The results have been dramatic: in Yemen, Christians were all but wiped out; in Iraq and Syria, the home of ancient Christian denominations, the numbers reached an inflection point on the path of virtual elimination. Once a majority Christian country, Lebanon has lost many Christians because of Hezbollah's dual sovereignty system that diverts resources toward Shias. Despite the virtual collapse of the Lebanese state, Hezbollah is not expected to relinquish power, putting the future of Christian populations at risk.

Iran's systematic program of invisible Jihad has never been recognized, let alone challenged. Religious pluralism is at the core of human rights pioneered by Western democracies. Iran has already undermined the international order in many ways. Failure to respond to its Jihad targeting Christians is a blow to accepted norms of relations among people of different faiths.

Based on the findings of this report, **the following steps are urgently needed** to stop the emigration trend and encourage, whenever possible, the return of respective Christian populations:

(1) Disseminate the study among government officials, human rights groups, and media to raise awareness of the role of Iran and its proxies in pushing Christians out of areas under their control.

(2) Urge the U.N. to appoint a Special Rapporteur to report on Iran's quiet Jihad project.

(3) Urge the State Department to sanction Iran and its proxies for reducing the number of Christians by either forcing immigration or blocking their return.

(4) Urge the State Department to sanction commanders of the IRGC -such as Brig. Gen. Mohammad Jafar Asadi, Brig. Gen Mohammad Reza Fallahzadeh, Brig. Gen Ali Akbar Pourjamshidian, Brig. Gen Rahim No'ei-Aghdam, and Brig. Gen Mahmood Charbaghi - for forcing Christians' immigration or blocking their return.

(5) Urge international bodies and Christian charities to provide financial help to the Christian communities struggling to rebuild.

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