

December 31, 2009

INTERNATIONAL

HOLY LAND CHRISTMAS – My first visit to the Holy Land was nearly thirty years ago. What I remember most is all the very visible signs of a vibrant Christian population. Manger Square was surrounded by Christian shops. During Christmas, Bethlehem could be mistaken for any Christian village anywhere in the world because of the decorations. At the time, Bethlehem was under Israeli control. Israel withdrew from Bethlehem under a “peace agreement” forced on it by the Clinton Administration just before Christmas in 1995. Since then, Christians have fled persecution to the point that few remain. Christians still remaining in Bethlehem are often afraid to decorate their homes for Christmas. Most shops at Manger Square are now Muslim owned.

Muslims have created many phony “holy days” to correspond to virtually every other major religion’s celebrations, including Christian, Jewish and even Hindu. During these so-called “holy days” extremist Muslims attack anyone, often with violence, who is celebrating a different religious event than theirs. The Shiite Muslims created a time of mourning called Ashura in late December for the death of the grandson of Mohammed. In areas where Shiites live, they will tear down any outdoor Christmas decorations and replace them with black flags and banners. Most Muslim “holy days” are used by imams to stir up hatred and violence toward “infidels.”

Although Christians continue to flee Bethlehem and other traditional Christian villages in Samaria and Judea, there is a growing Christian population in Israel. The town of Ariel which is located in Samaria to the east of Tel Aviv and north of Bethlehem, is the home of the Ortiz family and a large Messianic congregation of Jewish believers. I have worked with and helped David and Leah Ortiz with their ministry in Ariel for decades and have watched all their children grow up and serve in the Israeli army. The only child who has not yet served in the army is their son Ami who was critically injured in the bombing of their apartment in 2008. The bombing was the act not of Muslim extremists, but of a Jewish madman, an extremist, whose goal was to rid Samaria of Christians.

With all the gloom among Christians in the Holy Land this year, there was a bright spot for the Jewish believers in Israel when Ami was able to return home from the hospital and to find all the repairs completed on his family’s apartment in Ariel. As a result of the kindness of Religious Freedom Coalition supporters, checks totaling \$7,500 were sent to the Ortiz family and their ministry for Christmas. The funds helped David and Leah pay for medical and legal bills from the bombing as well as the repair of their home.

IRAQI CHRISTMAS – The Catholics in Baghdad's small remaining Christian minority were forced to celebrate “midnight Mass” in daylight for security reasons, and all churches were under heavy guard. Just days before Christmas a bombing destroyed a 1,200-year-old church in Mosul and killed two people. A Catholic archbishop discouraged anyone from having Christmas decorations, out of fear of the Shiites in the area. "We used to put the Christmas tree with its bright lights close to the window in the entrance of our home," Saad Matti, a 51-year-old surgeon and Basra city councilman told a reporter. "But this year, we put it away from the window as a kind of respect for the feelings of Shiite Muslims in our neighborhood because of Ashoura." A more accurate word for “respect” would be “fear.”

PAKISTANI CHRISTMAS – The day after Christmas I received an e-mail plea for help from a group of Pakistani Christians facing continued persecution. A few Christians tried to celebrate Christmas at a tent camp 220 miles southwest of Islamabad, Pakistan. The tents had been erected to house Christians left homeless by a rampage of looting and arson by Muslims this past August, which left eight dead. More than 100 homes in Gojra's Christian colony, a neighborhood in Punjab, were destroyed.

At the tent camp Christians received cell phone text messages warning them of a "special Christmas present." They were terrified that the Muslim "gift" would mean their tents were to be torched or that any church service would be bombed. An Associated Press story had this comment from a Pakistani Christian man: "Last year I celebrated Christmas full of joy," said Irfan Masih, cradling his young son among the canvas shelters and open ditches of the camp. But now "the fear that we may again be attacked is in our hearts." Christians in Pakistan live in daily fear for their lives as radical imams preach their vile hatred from pulpits, particularly during Christian holy days such as Christmas and Easter.

On December 22, a Christian man was shot dead by Muslims in Pakistan's tense Punjab province. The attack came just a day after an evangelistic meeting at which the "Jesus" film was shown. Several Christians were severely injured in this attack, which was instigated by an imam. Earlier in the month, Patras Masih was shot because he refused to recant his faith in Christ. He died from his wounds on December 3, in the village of Karol.

Even during Christmas, rape is a huge problem for the Christian community. Rape of Christian women of all ages, even young girls, occurs tragically often and the rapists are given religious permission from imams. Christian females are abducted, raped and then forcibly converted into Islam, after which they are forced to marry Muslim men against their will. Because polygamy is permitted under Islamic law there is a shortage of women, and thus rapes and forced marriages are common in nations where Muslims are the majority.

Pakistani Christian groups have asked the Religious Freedom Coalition and other Christian organizations in the United States and Europe to help. These Christians want most of all some political recognition. Rather than handouts, they are requesting assistance with establishing businesses that can be self supporting. There is an online Pakistani Christian newspaper where more information can be found at: www.pakistanchristianpost.com.

IRANIAN CHRISTMAS - Iranian security forces raided a worship service of 70 new believers and arrested two of the group's leaders. The Farsi Christian News Network said police and undercover officers broke up the pre-Christmas meeting of 70 new believers December 17 in Karaj, Iran. The arrested leaders are Kambiz Saghae and Ali Keshvar-Doostare. Their families cannot contact them and more than likely they are facing torture to renounce their faith in Christ.

SAUDI ARABIAN CHRISTMAS – This is of course an oxymoron. Anyone caught celebrating Christmas in Saudi Arabia, even an American citizen, will be arrested and face torture if not death. Bibles are not allowed in Saudi Arabia, and no religious meetings other than those of Muslims are permitted. If a Christian worker dies in Saudi Arabia, the body must be removed to another nation for burial because the Saudi government does not want their ground "contaminated" with a dead Christian. Although Saudi Arabia is more oppressive than North Korea, the United States sells the Saudis advanced surveillance equipment and weapons systems. The Christian hating, Nazi loving Muslims of Saudi Arabia are allies of the United States.

THE PRESIDENCY AND CONGRESS

OBAMA’S CHRISTMAS GIFT – While Christians were being persecuted, tortured and killed all over the world, Americans lined up for “door buster sales” to buy merchandise mostly manufactured in China, another nation which persecutes Christians. One huge Christmas gift was given to President Barack Obama by the House and Senate, which passed his “Health Care Reform” bill. The bill gave Obama all he wanted. First, it stripped half a trillion dollars from Medicare over the next ten years. It reduced the amount doctors and hospitals would receive from Medicare by about 21%. It repealed Medicare Advantage, the insurance that covered virtually everything for seniors, except in a handful of powerful Democrat controlled states such as New York and Pennsylvania.

The bill will also force insurance companies to accept everyone regardless of pre-existing conditions, which will raise premiums for young healthy people by about 300%. Also, lifetime limits of coverage, normally set at \$1,000,000, will no longer be allowed. The AARP, which receives most of its income from selling insurance, loves the new provisions because seniors will have to buy more supplemental coverage now that Medicare coverage will be reduced. Obama praised the “reform” as he flew to Hawaii for his Christmas vacation.

OBAMA’S CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS – Oh no, someone had a camera! Photos of ornaments on the White House Christmas tree in the Blue Room showed one with the image of murderous Chinese dictator Mao. Another pictured legendary transvestite Hedda Lettuce, who actually signed it! Another ornament showed Obama’s image on Mt. Rushmore. The ornaments were made by “community groups” like maybe, ACORN.

OBAMA AND MUSLIM TERROR – The imam who encouraged Nidal Hasan to murder fourteen people at Ft. Hood and injure more than thirty others, is still operating from Yemen despite reports of his death in a bombing. President Obama refuses to classify the Ft. Hood attack as terrorism, and as a result federal prosecutors cannot use the Patriot Act to prosecute the imam or use its provisions to find and arrest others who may be involved. American born imam Anwar Al-'Awlaki told Arab news agency Aljazeera.net that Major Nidal Hasan had asked him by email about the “permissibility” of killing American soldiers. As soon as the interview on Aljazeera with Al-Awlaki was posted, it began to appear on numerous Jihadi websites with praise for both Al-Awlaki and Major Hasan. Imams throughout the world are asking Allah to heal Nidal Hasan of the wounds he received during his Jihad attack that killed innocent men and women. But Obama doesn’t know if terror was involved and his Administration has refused to furnish Congress any documents about the attack.

As Obama was headed to Hawaii on Air Force One, another Muslim terrorist attempted to blow up a Northwest Airlines flight as it landed in Detroit, Michigan. (This was Obama’s tenth use of Air Force One in December, including two European trips.) The Jihad terrorist on the Northwest flight was subdued by passengers as he tried to set off a bomb he had smuggled aboard the aircraft. The terrorist, Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab of Nigeria, said he was bombing the plane on behalf of Al Qaeda, but the Obama Administration is not sure if that is true and plans an investigation. Obama Administration officials believe that he may have just acted alone and may not be a “real” terrorist despite the bomb and his own admission.

It is now clear that when Obama campaigns for reelection he will declare that no acts of terror occurred in the United States while he was president. Regardless of how many are killed in Jihad attacks, the Obama Administration plans on refusing to declare them acts of terror. This will allow Obama to tout his anti-terror activities regardless of the body count.

OBAMA'S SNOW PROBLEM - As Barack Obama boarded Air Force One for his triumphant return from the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, the blizzard of the century zeroed in on Washington just before Christmas. Washington, DC received a record setting 20.5 inches. The previous December record was a mere 12.1 inches back in 1932. Meanwhile five Eurostar trains were stuck in the tunnel under the English Channel because cold temperatures had stalled their engines. In Copenhagen, Obama had pledged to destroy the American economy in the name of saving the planet from "man made" greenhouse gases that were warming up the planet. NOTE: Only 3% of all greenhouse gases are manmade. Termites produce most of the world's CO2.

CULTURE AND RELIGION

CELEBRATING REAL CHRISTMAS VILLIFIED – While Christians were persecuted all over the world, a battle raged on in the United States at the very mention of Christmas. Retailers who got burned badly advertising such things as “Holiday Trees” just a few years ago, did begin to some extent to admit that Christmas just might exist. But the term “Black Friday” appeared more often in newspapers than the word “Christmas” as American businesses seem to continue to worship the consumption of Chinese made goods.

But, there are some bright spots. You may recall Congressman Joe Wilson shouting out “you lie” as President Obama lied about his health reform bill at a joint session of Congress. At right is a photo of Congressman Wilson, my wife Nancy and myself in front of a genuine Christmas tree. Many congressmen and Senators are actually good Christian men and women. Some congressmen are deacons in their church and others are Sunday School teachers. Many, such as Congressmen Frank Wolf and Trent Franks, work to expose the persecution of Christians throughout the world. Congressman Randy Forbes leads the Prayer Caucus in Congress and is the founder of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation with promotes the Room 219 movement. America is fed up with a lot that happens on Capitol Hill and many incumbents will lose their We must all be alert that the good guys don't get tossed out with the bad apples.



**Congressman Joe
Wilson with Nancy and
William Murray**

AND FINALLY –TEEN CONVERT ALLOWED CHRISTMAS CARDS - Despite a legal filing by her Muslim parents, a court has allowed a teenage girl who converted to Christianity to receive Christmas cards. The fact that Rifqa Bary's parents have tried to stop her from having contact with Christians shows they lied in a Florida court as they sought to have her returned to Ohio. Currently under supervision by an Ohio Court, she may soon be declared independent and allowed to move back to Florida.

As 2009 comes to a close, please be in prayer for our Christian brothers and sisters in Christ who face persecution, particularly those who suffer in Muslim nations. Prayer is also needed that the eyes of American leaders are opened to the real threats facing our nation both external and internal. America cannot survive as a nation if our leaders bury their heads in the sand and pretend that our enemies are really are friends.

William J. Murray, Chairman