



## Facts about the Christians of the Holy Land

*The Israeli media has recently reported allegations in which it said that Palestinian Christians are being subject to harassment and persecution under Palestinian Authority in Palestine. It reported that Palestinian Christians are being persecuted by their Muslim nationals. The allegations made by the Israeli media and others are totally untrue aimed at covering up the real facts of current oppression and political instability in the area, aiming to provoke hostility and breaches within the Palestinian people. The easiest way for that is to hammer on the religious feelings of both parties. Nonetheless, it is ironic for the Israeli media to spread such unbased rumors when all Palestinian citizens, Christians and Muslims alike, are subject to general instability due to the continuing Israeli occupation. – Latin (Catholic) Patriarchate of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>*

Despite American misperceptions based upon unjustified stereotypes and deliberate misrepresentations of reality by people advancing political agendas, Palestinian Christians are a fully integrated element of the Palestinian people. While it is true that there have been sporadic tensions between Palestinians Christians and Palestinian Muslims, the reason that most Palestinian Christians have left the Holy Land relates to the Israeli Occupation, not conflicts between Christian and Muslim Palestinians. From noted Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi to the Christian Sabeel Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, Palestinian Christians constitute an integral aspect of the search for peace with justice for the Palestinian people in general, be they Christian or Muslim.

See the other side of this leaflet for more information – by Palestinian Christians themselves - about the Palestinian Christians of the Holy Land and their plight under Israeli military occupation. Despite claims to the contrary it is the Israeli Occupation – and U.S. support for it - that is driving the Christians from the Holy Land, not problems with their fellow Palestinians of the Islamic faith.

<sup>1</sup> “Statement By the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem Regarding the Allegation that Christians in Palestine are being Subject to Persecution [at] the Hand[s] of their Muslim Nationals”, Jerusalem, November 13, 1997, <http://www.al-bushra.org/latpatra/nopersecution.htm>

## Did you know that...<sup>2</sup>

1) “Palestinian Christians have deep roots in the land. The great majority, estimated at 400,000 worldwide or roughly 6.5 percent of all Palestinians, are of indigenous stock, whose mother tongue is Arabic and whose history takes them back, or at least some of them, to the early church. At present, the 50,000 Christians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip make up only 2.2 percent of the total population estimated in the mid-nineties at 2,238,000. Palestinian Arab Christians in Israel were estimated, for the same year, at 125,000 or 14 percent of all Arabs in Israel. Christians in Palestine and Israel make up 175,000 or 2.3 percent of the entire Arab and Jewish population of the Holy Land.”

2) “The 1967 War heralded drastic changes for the whole of Palestinian society in the West Bank and Gaza. ... Christians, tending towards the mainstream and secular political organization, took part in the efforts of their society to end occupation and to establish Palestinian national rights. But Christians, with their middle class background and occupational preferences, got increasingly sensitive to the instability and uncertainty which accompanied long Israeli military rule. Palestinian Christians, judging from the rate of emigration among them, which was double the national rate between 1967 and 1993, were especially susceptible to the practices of Israeli occupation authorities as more than 12,000 of them left East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip to go abroad.”

3) “The intense political relationships between Israelis and Palestinians came to a head-on clash with the outburst of the Intifada in December 1987. Christians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip actively participated in it; some became martyrs, others were imprisoned and still others had to hide from Israeli pursuit. Christian communities reacted collectively as they pressed, like other Palestinians, for an end of occupation and for a new relationship with the Israelis based on mutual respect and recognition of rights.”

*“The problem has never been Muslims, ... Egypt, Syria, Iraq are all Christian and Muslim, so there is no problem with Islam, per se, for Christians. The problem is fanaticism, which can be a Christian phenomenon as well as a Muslim one. There are Christian Zionists, for instance, who are very supportive of Israel and do not even recognize that Christians in the Holy Land are persecuted and have their human rights violated.” -- Father Labib Kobti, Arab-American Catholic Community<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> The following (1-3) excerpted from: "Palestinian Christians: Challenges and Hopes" by Professor Bernard Sabella, Bethlehem University, Palestine, <http://www.al-bushra.org/holyland/sabella.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in “The Middle East Peace Process: Patriarch Michel Sabbah's View” by Renée Schaefer Horton, St. Anthony Messenger, <http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Feb2002/feature2.asp>  
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