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DISAPPEARANCE OR RECONFIGURATION? THE FUTURE OF MIDDLE EASTERN CHRISTIANS

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For more than a decade, American politicians, advocacy groups, and Christian leaders have sounded alarms that Christianity in the Middle East is "vanishing." Headlines warn of ancient communities "on the brink of extinction," and policy forums frame Middle Eastern Christians primarily as victims of persecution at the hands of the region's Muslims whose survival depends on Western intervention. Political speeches in Washington, DC—across administrations—have invoked the plight of Middle Eastern Christians to justify foreign policy priorities, from counterterrorism initiatives to international religious freedom diplomacy, positioning these communities as existentially threatened relics of a fading Christian East.

Although Christian communities across the region have indeed declined in numbers, sometimes dramatically, the picture is more varied than headlines suggest. Egypt still has the region's largest Christian population, roughly 9–10 million Copts. Smaller communities remain in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, and Jordan.[1] Iraq's Christian population, estimated at 1.4–1.5 million before 2003, has fallen to perhaps fewer than 120,000. Syria's pre-2011 community of 1.5–2 million has also declined sharply, with current estimates ranging from 300,000 to upwards of 600,000. Palestine has around 47,000 Christians, including just over a thousand in Gaza before October 2023. These figures indeed reflect real demographic decline, but they also show the ongoing presence and geographic diversity of Christian communities across the region.

That Christian communities in the Middle East have experienced violence, displacement, and political marginalization is undeniable. But focusing on disappearance alone obscures another reality, which is that Christian presence in the region is not simply collapsing; it is *changing*. This Brief argues that Christianity in the Middle East must be understood not simply as loss but also as *reconfiguration*—a process that has included pragmatic accommodation with authoritarian states; new modes of survival and resilience amid destruction, conflict, and state collapse; and the growing centrality of diaspora advocacy networks that shape political and moral debates across borders.

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Drawing on examples from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine, this Brief examines three interlinked dynamics—authoritarian bargains, war and displacement, and diaspora politics—to show how Christian communities remain politically and socially consequential despite population decline. Rather than disappearing, Middle Eastern Christians are finding new ways to assert their presence and authority amid the region's shifting political transformations.

AUTHORITARIAN BARGAINS

Across the Middle East, authoritarian regimes have long invoked the protection of Christians as evidence of tolerance and pluralism. In return, church leaderships have often positioned themselves as loyal partners to the state, trading political autonomy for security and institutional access. This dynamic is most visible in Egypt, where the Coptic Orthodox Church and the government of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi have cultivated a relationship of mutual recognition since the military overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi in 2013. Earlier versions of this pattern also shaped Christian life in Saddam Hussein's Iraq and, to a degree, in pre-2011 Syria. These cases demonstrate how regimes use Christian visibility to bolster state authority even as such bargains leave Christian communities vulnerable.

In Egypt, Coptic Pope Tawadros II stood beside el-Sisi on national television within hours of the 2013 military coup, symbolically aligning the Church with the state's promise to restore stability after the upheaval of the revolution and the short presidency of the Muslim Brotherhood's Morsi. Since then, el-Sisi has publicly embraced the Church: attending Christmas liturgies, announcing the construction of a massive cathedral in the new administrative capital as a "gift" to Christians, and signing the 2016 Church Construction Law, which legalized thousands of previously unlicensed churches.[2] These actions signaled state recognition in a country where Christians have long faced bureaucratic hurdles to building or repairing churches, and where sectarian tensions simmer in rural Upper Egypt.

Yet beneath this symbolic inclusion lies a more ambivalent reality. These highly visible gestures have not stemmed periodic violence against Copts, nor addressed the structural inequalities that shape their everyday lives. Although Coptic representation in Parliament has increased modestly in recent years—hovering around 5–7 percent—it has not translated into meaningful debate on daily forms of social discrimination or sustained policy reform.[3] In fact, the state's embrace has narrowed the field of permissible political engagement, encouraging a model in which public celebration of Christian "recognition" substitutes for substantive protections or accountability.

Following the 2011 revolution, young Coptic activists organized protests, documented sectarian attacks, and articulated demands

for equal citizenship—including after the 2011 Maspero massacre, when Egyptian security forces killed dozens of peaceful Coptic protesters. But by 2014, political repression had expanded, and dissenting Coptic voices faced pressure not only from the state but also from Church authorities, who urged restraint and loyalty to the political direction of the clerical hierarchy.[4]

The 2019 arrest of Ramy Kamel, a prominent Coptic activist, illustrates the stakes of this bargain. Accused of spreading false news and joining a terrorist organization, Kamel was detained after documenting sectarian violence and communicating with international human rights bodies.[5] His case signaled the limits placed on Copts seeking redress beyond Church channels, and underscored how the state equates criticism with disloyalty. Meanwhile, many Copts who once saw the revolution as a path toward equal citizenship now viewed emigration as the only viable future.

This dynamic is not unique to Egypt. Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq's Christians—primarily from the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East—occupied a similarly complex position within an authoritarian order.[6] Tariq Aziz, a Chaldean Christian, having served as minister of information, was subsequently appointed deputy prime minister and later minister of foreign affairs by Saddam Hussein, serving as one of Saddam's closest confidants and as the international face of the regime. His prominence projected an image of inclusivity abroad, reinforcing the claim that Christians could flourish under Baʿathist rule. In Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra, many Christians participated in professional and commercial life, operating schools, running businesses, and contributing to Iraq's cultural landscape. For middle-class urban families, the centralized order of the Baʿathist state provided a measure of stability that allowed religious institutions to function openly, even as political freedoms were tightly curtailed. Meanwhile, some Assyrians became active in movements opposed to Baʿathist rule, whether through the Iraqi Communist Party—which drew heavily from Assyrian intellectuals and workers, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s—or by fighting alongside the Kurdish Peshmerga in the north.

As in Egypt, however, the regime's tolerance was contingent on loyalty.[7] Assyrians, for example, suffered directly during the Anfal campaign of the late 1980s, when Saddam's forces destroyed villages, displaced rural populations, and carried out chemical attacks in an effort primarily targeting Kurds but devastating to neighboring minorities as well. Christian communities in rural areas were uprooted, their villages razed as part of a broader effort to depopulate territories considered sympathetic to opposition groups. Thus, even as figures like Tariq Aziz symbolized minority inclusion at the highest levels of government, many Assyrians and Chaldeans simultaneously experienced dispossession and state violence, illustrating the limits of authoritarian accommodation. High-level representation coexisted with deeper patterns of marginalization and insecurity for those who did not support the regime in Iraq—a tension that was not confined to Iraq but characteristic of authoritarian governance across the region.

Syria under Hafez and Bashar al-Assad followed a similar but distinct pattern. Before 2011, Syria's Christian population numbered between 1.5 and 2 million, roughly 10 percent of the population, and were concentrated in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and historic towns such as Maʿaloula. They enjoyed a visible role in Syria's professional and cultural life. Churches operated openly, parochial schools flourished, and Christian leaders were included in state ceremonies. Yet, as in Egypt and Iraq, this "protection" rested on acquiescence to authoritarianism and came with little space for dissent. The war following the 2011 revolution made clear how precarious this arrangement was.

Across these cases, authoritarian bargains functioned as both shield and constraint. They delivered institutional visibility and episodic protection, but at the cost of political autonomy and grassroots activist movements within Christian communities that often challenged Church authority. When regimes were overthrown—whether in Iraq after 2003 or Syria after 2011—the legacies of these bargains became clear, leaving Christians exposed to the upheavals that followed.

WAR AND DISPLACEMENT

If authoritarian bargains have structured Middle Eastern Christian life in periods of state stability, wars and state fragmentation have transformed the terrain of belonging, authority, and survival. Conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Palestine have uprooted communities, reorganized religious authority, and pressed Christians to improvise new forms of collective life amid mass violence and uncertainty.

When the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, it dismantled the authoritarian order that had both integrated and repressed Iraq's Christians, leaving them acutely vulnerable in the violence that followed. As Sunni and Shiʿi militias fought for dominance in the post-invasion vacuum, Assyrian

and Chaldean Christians, lacking militias of their own, became frequent targets of kidnappings, bombings, and intimidation. Beginning in 2004, churches in Baghdad and Mosul were bombed in coordinated attacks.[8] High-profile killings, such as those of Father Paulos Iskander in 2006 and Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho in 2008, intensified fears.[9] By 2010, the community had shrunk dramatically, from an estimated 1.4–1.5 million Christians before 2003 to fewer than half that number just seven years later—many seeking refuge in Syria, Jordan, Europe, North America, or Australia.[10]

The rise of ISIS in 2014 marked the gravest blow to Iraq's Christians since the fall of Saddam. As the militants swept across Mosul and the Nineveh Plain, they made Christians an explicit target of their campaign. In Mosul, ISIS fighters painted the Arabic letter "N" for *Nasara* (Nazarene or Christian) on homes, giving residents an ultimatum: convert to Islam, pay a punitive tax, or leave. By 2017, when ISIS was finally defeated, entire Christian communities had fled, abandoning houses, businesses, and churches that had stood for centuries, with many families scattered in camps across the Kurdistan region or abroad.

Yet ISIS's defeat did not resolve the vulnerabilities it exposed. Security in post-ISIS Iraq remains fragile, particularly in the Nineveh Plain and in the broader Kurdistan region, which now holds the majority of Iraq's Christians and is widely regarded as essential to their future presence in the country. Yet this critical region is divided among competing armed actors: Shiʿi paramilitaries aligned with Iran, Kurdish Peshmerga, and smaller Christian militias like the Nineveh Plain Protection Units—each asserting overlapping claims to authority.[11] This fractured sovereignty leaves communities uncertain about their long-term protection, while their daily life is marked by limited economic opportunities. Although some homes and churches have been rebuilt, infrastructure remains weak, jobs are scarce, and many families rely heavily on remittances from abroad.

Before 2011, Syria offered Christians institutional visibility but little space for dissent. The war following the 2011 revolution destabilized this arrangement and presented Christian communities with stark choices. Many patriarchs and bishops aligned with the Assad regime, seeing it as a guarantor of pluralism against the threat of Islamist militancy. Televised appearances of church leaders alongside Assad reinforced the image of Christians bound to the state, even as large parts of the country descended into violence. In Damascus and Latakia, churches continued to function, and Christmas liturgies were highlighted on state television as evidence of national unity. But this proximity to power came at a cost: It tied much of the hierarchy to a regime accused of widespread atrocities and left Christians divided, with some clinging to the promise of state protection, others disillusioned by the regime's repression and destructiveness, and still others actively fighting against it.

Syria's protracted war dismantled long-standing social configurations and deeply unsettled Christian communal life. Aleppo and Homs—once major centers of Christian cultural and ecclesial life—were devastated by bombardment and urban combat, triggering large-scale displacement. The 2013 assault on Maʿaloula, a historically significant town known for its Aramaic-speaking Christian community, further exposed these vulnerabilities. After Islamist factions briefly seized the town, regime airstrikes aimed at reclaiming it inflicted extensive damage on monasteries, churches, and residential areas—illustrating a recurring conflict dynamic in which opposition incursions into neutral communities were met with overwhelming state force that placed civilians and heritage sites at grave risk. Residents recounted young men attempting to protect their neighborhoods with limited means, along with the flight of families once the fighting penetrated residential and historic areas. Such events reflected a broader dilemma for Syria's Christians: fear of armed Islamist groups on the one hand, alongside deep frustration with a regime whose tactics often sacrificed civilian life and cultural heritage. As a result of this cumulative insecurity, and as noted earlier in this Brief, well more than half of Syria's pre-war Christian population is now estimated to have left the country.

In December 2024, Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former Islamist insurgent and al-Qaeda commander, emerged as Syria's de facto ruler after the fall of Bashar al-Assad. Sharaa has molded himself into a politician and national leader, pledging to preserve pluralism while consolidating power through a transitional authority. While many Syrians, including minorities like Christians and Alawites, welcomed the promise of stability after years of destruction, others doubted that a former Islamist rebel could truly safeguard minorities. The June 22, 2025, bombing of Mar Elias Church in Damascus, attributed to remnants of the Islamic State (though security officials also pointed to Saraya Ansar al-Sunnah, a splinter jihadist faction opposed to Sharaa's leadership), underscores that the overthrow of Assad did not end Christian vulnerability.

In Palestine, the destruction of Christian life in Gaza since 2023 has marked one of the most dramatic ruptures in Christian presence in the region. Before the onslaught of mass violence and destruction, Gaza's Christian population numbered barely over a thousand, concentrated around Gaza City's St. Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church, which dates to the fifth century, and the Holy Family Catholic Church, the only Catholic parish in Gaza. These communities were small but resilient, running schools, clinics, and charitable programs that served both Christians and Muslims.

The campaign that began in October 2023 has not only devastated Gaza's Christian community; it has transformed its churches to be among the last sanctuaries for life. With civilian neighborhoods destroyed and hospitals overwhelmed, St. Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church and the Holy Family Catholic parish became sites of refuge, prayer, and emergency shelter for hundreds of displaced Palestinians, Muslim and Christian alike.

This sanctuary was repeatedly violated. On October 19, 2023, an Israeli strike hit the compound of St. Porphyrius, killing at least 18 civilians. Subsequent strikes on church compounds—including at the Holy Family Catholic Church, where women and children were killed—shattered longstanding assumptions that sacred sites might offer even minimal protection, and underscored that in Gaza no place of worship could be guaranteed to be safe. Global church leaders condemned the attacks and emphasized the endangerment of one of the world's oldest Christian communities, and the church's role as a last sanctuary for a population struggling to survive.

Across these contexts, war and displacement have reconfigured Christian life and presence in ways that depart sharply from pre-conflict patterns. Churches have become humanitarian hubs; clergy have assumed roles as crisis managers and advocates; and lay networks have stepped into leadership roles where formal structures faltered. Displacement camps and diaspora-based aid organizations have emerged as new centers of authority. In some areas, local Christian militias mobilized to defend towns; in others, international NGOs and church networks filled governance gaps left by collapsing state institutions. Taken together, the cases of Iraq, Syria, and Palestine show that violence does not simply threaten Christian communities with disappearance: It compels them into altered, fragile configurations that reflect both the limits of endurance and the shifting terrain of belonging.

DIASPORA NETWORKS AND TRANSNATIONAL RECONFIGURATION

As authoritarian bargains fray and wars reorder political and social life, diaspora networks have become central to Christian futures in the Middle East. Emigration is not simply a measure of decline; it is a medium by which communities build new institutions, articulate political claims, and shape policy discussions across borders. Diasporic activism has transformed minority advocacy into a transnational enterprise, wherein identity, security concerns, and contested narratives of communal history and past violence converge.

While the Coptic Orthodox Church remains a powerful transnational institution, diaspora Copts[12] have cultivated parallel spheres of political engagement—especially since the 2011 revolution. In the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, Coptic activists formed NGOs, mobilized interfaith coalitions, and engaged lawmakers on issues ranging from political imprisonment and sectarian violence to freedom of worship and equal citizenship in Egypt. Organizations such as Coptic Solidarity in Washington, DC, and grassroots networks founded by younger activists leverage congressional hearings, State Department consultations, and human rights mechanisms at the United Nations to draw attention to incidents of discrimination and state repression. Advocacy campaigns have also expanded into digital spaces, where social media networks have helped coordinate transnational responses, disseminate documentation of abuses, and cultivate a new generation of Coptic voices operating outside church structures.

The detention of Ramy Kamel for documenting sectarian attacks galvanized these networks. Diaspora organizations coordinated petitions, appealed to UN special rapporteurs, and issued public letters demanding his release, demonstrating the rise of a distinctly diasporic Coptic political sphere grounded in rights-based language and international accountability mechanisms.[13] After nearly two years in pretrial detention, Kamel was released in early 2022, a move widely understood as a response to sustained diplomatic and advocacy pressure. His case nonetheless underscored the structural limits facing minority rights defenders inside Egypt, where restrictions on documentation, expression, and civic organizing persist—highlighting the continued need for sustained oversight by international bodies and consistent international accountability measures.[14]

Yet this expanding civic activism has also produced internal friction. For many younger Copts, the diaspora is a rare arena within which to articulate visions of equal citizenship and minority protection that feel unattainable inside Egypt—whereas Church-aligned voices often view such external pressure as potentially endangering the Church's carefully managed relationship with the state. This tension between grassroots advocacy and institutional diplomacy marks a key site of contemporary reconfiguration: Coptic political presence is no longer centralized within ecclesial authority but increasingly negotiated across borders, and shaped by generationally different experiences of displacement, civic participation, and the search for security and belonging.

Among Assyrian and Chaldean Christians from Iraq, diaspora networks in the West predate the 2003 war but expanded dramatically thereafter. Today an estimated 300,000–400,000 Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac people reside in the United States—nearly half of them in metro Detroit, which is considered the largest such community outside the Middle East.[15] Significant populations have also formed in Australia (roughly 60,000[16]) and across northern Europe, especially in Sweden and Germany, where the population of combined communities exceeds 200,000. These diasporas mobilize remittances, fund reconstruction initiatives in ancestral towns in the Nineveh Plain, and lobby U.S., Australian, and European policymakers on behalf of those who remain in Iraq.

Assyrian organizations in the United States press Congress for recognition of past atrocities and for policies that ensure local security,[17] while local Assyrian and Chaldean groups in Michigan and elsewhere have raised millions to rebuild schools, clinics, and churches.[18] In framing their case, diaspora activists and scholars emphasize not only persecution but also indigeneity, presenting Christians as the original inhabitants of Mesopotamia and linking their struggles to global debates about minority rights and cultural survival.[19] In Chicago, Assyrian-language media preserve language and culture for younger generations, reinforcing a shared sense of peoplehood across borders.[20]

In the wake of Syria's destruction after 2011, Syrian Christian communities abroad—particularly in the United States and Europe—have become crucial nodes of communal resilience and political mobilization.[21] While assisting newcomers, these networks have also taken on the role of documenting humanitarian crises, advocating for religious freedom, and raising funds for reconstruction efforts. For example, Syriac Orthodox communities from Syria in Sweden have submitted testimony to the European Parliament on forced displacement and property loss,[22] while U.S.-based associations participated in congressional briefings on the future of Syria's minorities.

Diaspora politics, however, is far from uniform. Some activists emphasize regime atrocities and support international accountability mechanisms, while older diaspora members—often tied to business networks or church hierarchies—advocate for community protection and incremental return under transitional governance. These divisions reveal that diasporic life is not simply an extension of homeland politics but a reconfiguration of identity and authority, producing new modes of influence and communal life without privileging one dominant political orientation.[23]

Diaspora engagement also shapes responses to Palestine. Palestinian Christian leaders and communities across the world have drawn attention to the plight of Christians in Gaza and the West Bank in church statements, civil society petitions, and congressional meetings.[24] Rather than presenting themselves as apart from Muslim Palestinians, Christian advocates have emphasized shared suffering and a common struggle under occupation. Transnational Palestinian initiatives such as the 2023 "A Call for Repentance: An Open Letter from Palestinian Christians to Western Church Leaders and Theologians" urged policymakers to recognize the nature of Palestinian dispossession in the midst of the war on Gaza and to protect civilian life regardless of religious affiliation.[25] These efforts highlight how Palestinian Christians as a transnational and inherently diasporic community leverage theological language, human rights frameworks, and interfaith and ecumenical coalitions to situate Palestinian Christianity within a broader call for justice and collective liberation.

What unites these diasporic and transnational interventions is not uniformity of political stance but the reorientation of communal authority and identity. Churches abroad have become hubs of social and at times political as well as pastoral life; secular advocacy organizations have built alliances with human rights groups; and progressive youth leadership has emerged from digital platforms as well as university and community organizations. Diaspora politics has articulated claims that are often constrained in home states, from equal citizenship in Egypt and indigenous rights in Iraq to political accountability and transitional justice in Syria and international law and human rights issues in Palestine.

Crucially, diaspora activism also reshapes understandings of home. For many Middle Eastern Christians, permanently returning home is unlikely; rather, maintaining religious, cultural, and political ties becomes a transnational project. Pilgrimages to the homeland, heritage preservation campaigns, charity and philanthropy, and political activism for rights bind generations raised abroad to ancestral communities. Advocacy is not simply about securing protection "there" but about defining identity "here." In this way, diaspora networks constitute not the end of Middle Eastern Christian life, but one of its most dynamic contemporary expressions.

CONCLUSION

Middle Eastern Christians today stand at a crossroads of profound transformation. Popular narratives of disappearance capture genuine loss—shrinking populations, destroyed communities, and deep trauma—but they cannot fully explain what is happening: Christian presence has not only contracted; it has reconfigured. Authoritarian bargains once presented security in exchange for loyalty, yet they narrowed political space and left communities exposed when states failed. Wars in Iraq, Syria, and Palestine shattered long-standing social orders, but they also generated new forms of survival and resilience. Migration dispersed communities—yet diasporic activism has produced new institutions, new political strategies, and new forms of transnational belonging.

Understanding Middle Eastern Christian futures requires looking beyond narratives of decline to considering how communities have adapted to shifting landscapes of power and violence. Their experiences illuminate broader regional dynamics: the fragility of state protection, the improvisations required amid war and mass violence, and the growing importance of diasporas in shaping political and moral claims. Whether in Cairo, Erbil, Damascus, Gaza City, Stockholm, Sydney, Detroit, or New York, Middle Eastern Christians continue to maintain their presence and reconfigure new forms of belonging. Their futures will depend not only on demographic endurance, but on how the communities that remain—and the global actors who engage them—confront the structural forces of authoritarianism, war, occupation, and displacement that shape the region today.

ENDNOTES

1. Lebanon represents a distinct case: Christians constitute one of the country's largest demographic blocs and occupy key constitutionally mandated positions in the state, making Lebanon a foil to prevalent narratives of Christian marginalization and disappearance. Because its confessional political system produces dynamics unlike those explored here, Lebanon lies beyond the scope of this Brief and merits its own analysis.
2. Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, "TIMEP Brief: Church Construction Law," July 29, 2019; Paul S. Rowe, "Copts, Church and State in Contemporary Egypt," *Manara Magazine*, March 17, 2022; and BBC News, "Egypt Opens Middle East's Biggest Cathedral near Cairo," BBC, January 6, 2019. For a pre-2011 perspective, see also Mariz Tadros, "Vicissitudes in the Entente between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the State in Egypt (1952–2007)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 2 (May 2009): 269–87.
3. Ishak Ibrahim, "Beyond Numbers: Egypt's Christian Quota Fails to Deliver Representation," *Al Manassa*, November 13, 2025.
4. For tensions between lay Coptic activists and the Church after 2013, see Mada Masr "Coptic Activists Outraged by Pope's Remarks on Maspero Massacre," *Mada Masr*, December 25, 2014, and Jayson Casper, "The Decline of Coptic Activism in Egypt" (Middle East Institute, February 4, 2015).
5. Roxanne Stone, "Egypt Arrests Coptic Community Rights Activist Amid Heightened Surveillance Measures," *Religion News Service*, December 5, 2019.
6. The Chaldean Catholic Church is an Eastern Catholic church in full communion with Rome, historically centered in Baghdad and numerically the largest Christian community in Iraq. The Assyrian Church of the East, by contrast, is an independent apostolic church with ancient roots in Mesopotamia; though it shares language and ethnic heritage with Chaldeans, it is not aligned with the Vatican and maintains distinct liturgical and ecclesiastical traditions.
7. Interview with Alda Benjamin, "The Assyrians, Between the State and the Opposition," *Kluge Blog*, Library of Congress, September 26, 2019.
8. "Car bombs target churches in Iraq," *CNN*, August 1, 2004.
9. Erica Goode, "Kidnapped Iraqi Archbishop is Dead," *The New York Times*, March 14, 2008.
10. Frank Gardner, "Iraq's Christians 'close to extinction,'" *BBC News*, May 23, 2019.
11. Assyrian Policy Institute, "Contested Control: The Future of Security in Iraq's Nineveh Plain" (June 1, 2020).
12. The Coptic community in the United States is estimated to be the largest such community to permanently settle outside the Middle East. Yet official statistics regarding the actual number of Copts in the United States are unreliable. The advocacy group Coptic Solidarity notes, "According to the 2010 US Religion Census, just over 92,000 Copts reside in the US—a remarkably low number considering that the US Coptic population now exceeds half a million." The 2020 US census results show that 313,720 people marked "Egyptian" as their race/ethnicity, and the 2020 US Religion Census noted that across 292 Coptic Orthodox congregations, there were 179,155 adherents. But the US census does not differentiate based on religious affiliation, and other studies have been unreliable in accurately documenting the number of Copts in the United States. For example, according to Pew Research as per the New Immigrant Survey, 62 percent of Egyptian immigrants to the United States identify as Christian. Yet only fifty-two adult respondents were interviewed for the survey.
13. Coptic Solidarity, "Coptic Solidarity & 14 NGOs Urge Immediate Release of Coptic Activist Ramy Kamel," December 21, 2020.
14. U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), "USCIRF Welcomes Egypt's Release of Coptic Activist Ramy Kamel," January 12, 2022.
15. As with the Coptic diaspora, estimates for the Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac diaspora in the United States vary. See, for example, Assyrian International News Agency, "Assyrian Genocide Resolution Read in Arizona Assembly, AINA News," March 3, 2020, and from the Chaldean Community Foundation in Metro Detroit: "2023 Chaldean Household Survey" (n.d.).
16. See the following estimate from 2022: SBS Assyrian, "Assyrian/Chaldean Community Populations in Australia Hit 60,000, Census Shows," (June 29, 2022; updated July 1, 2022).
17. Assyrian Policy Institute, "Assyrian Genocide Recognition in the United States" (2021).
18. See, for example, Shlama Foundation, "Rebuilding Our Homeland" (n.d.), and Nineveh Rising, "Where Christianity Began, a New Future Is Rising."
19. Sargon George Donabed and Daniel Joseph Tower, "Reframing Indigeneity: The Case of Assyrians in Northern Mesopotamia," *Perspectives on History* 56 (2020): 18–20 (published January 1, 2018).

20. Yasmeen Altaji, "In a Historic First, the Assyrian Language Enters a US Public School District," *Middle East Eye*, November 4, 2022.
21. "Syrian Christians" here denotes Christians from Syria. But "Syrian Christians" also includes Assyrians across denominational divides, as in the Iraqi context.
22. "European Syriac Union Urges Sweden to Act against Persecution of Syria's Christians and Minorities," SyriacPress, October 9, 2025.
23. Basma Alloush, "Syrians in the USA: Solidarity despite Political Rifts" (Arab Reform Initiative, December 5, 2018).
24. "CMEP in Washington: Christians from the Holy Land Advocate for Peace and Comprehensive Cease-Fire," *Global Ministries*, December 1, 2023.
25. Kairos Palestine et al., "A Call for Repentance: An Open Letter from Palestinian Christians to Western Church Leaders and Theologians" (petition created on October 20, 2023).

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