

## Prince Charles 'deeply troubled' by plight of Christians in Middle East

**Prince of Wales tells audience of religious leaders that divisions with Muslims have been achieved 'through intimidation and persecution'**



*The Prince of Wales visits the Syrian Orthodox Church in West London*

Relations between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East have reached crisis point, according to [Prince Charles](#), who is "deeply troubled" by the plight of Christians in the region.

The heir to the British throne told a reception for Middle East Christians at Clarence House on Tuesday that the divisions have been "achieved through intimidation, false accusation and organised persecution, including to the Christian communities in the Middle East at the present time".

Charles, who spoke of his work to promote understanding between the two religions, said bridges between Christians and Muslims were being deliberately destroyed by people with a vested interest.

He said this affected Arab Christians in countries such as [Syria](#), [Iraq](#), Palestine and [Egypt](#), as well as those from other Arab countries.

"I have for some time now been deeply troubled by the growing difficulties faced by Christian communities in various parts of the Middle East," he said. "It seems to me that we cannot ignore the fact that Christians in the Middle East are increasingly being deliberately targeted by fundamentalist Islamist militants.

"[Christianity](#) was literally born in the Middle East and we must not forget our Middle Eastern brothers and sisters in Christ," he added. Charles said Christians now accounted for 4% of the population in the Middle East and North [Africa](#) – the lowest concentration in the world.

The archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis and archbishop of Westminster Vincent Nichols were all present at the reception.

Syria's minority Christian community has faced growing violence during the bloody civil war, which has claimed more than 100,000 lives and displaced millions from the country.

In an interview in October, the Melkite Greek Catholic patriarch Gregorios III said almost a third of Syria's Christians had fled their homes. A report by the charity Aid to the Church in Need, published in October, said there were now "grave questions" about the long term survival of Christianity in the Middle East.

Earlier, the prince visited the Coptic Orthodox church centre in Stevenage, Hertfordshire, where he was presented with an icon of St George for himself and his baby grandson Prince George.

[Link to video: Prince Charles highlights plight of Christians in Middle East](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/video/2013/dec/18/prince-charles-christians-middle-east-video)  
<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/video/2013/dec/18/prince-charles-christians-middle-east-video>

## **The Bishop of London on Islamist threat to Middle East Christians**

[m.youtube.com/watch?v=M2EUvGdRiJ0&feature=youtu.be&a=&desktop\\_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DM2EUvGdRiJ0%26feature%3Dyoutu.be%26a%3D](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=M2EUvGdRiJ0&feature=youtu.be&a=&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DM2EUvGdRiJ0%26feature%3Dyoutu.be%26a%3D)

