

# Christians 'disappearing' from lands of origin: Center for American Progress

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Christian communities in the world are “disappearing” from their lands of origin, the Center for American Progress reported Friday.

The Middle Eastern Christian community is estimated between 7.5 and 15 million, the Center reported, noting that they now comprise less than 5 percent of the population, due to an explosion in the non-Christian population. Many Christians have also emigrated from their traditional homes due to threats of violence from terrorist or fundamental Islamic groups.

Christians in Syria and Iraq have been consistent targets of the Islamic State group, and in mid-February an estimated 200 Assyrian Christians were kidnapped by the Islamic State group, which gave an ultimatum to Christians under its control in 2014 to pay jiyza (a tax on non-Muslims,) convert to Islam, leave their homes, or be killed.

“The overall picture looks grim, and the reactions from the United States, Europe, and other key powers to this new wave of destruction have been marginal,” the center reported.

There are campaigns to counter the effect of militant groups, but “the implementation of these strategies has been mixed and not as integrated as it needs to be with overall U.S. foreign policy approach, including military and diplomatic efforts to respond to the crisis in the Middle East,” the center report read.

“The United States needs to engage on these issues with great

care and sensitivity. The fact that extremists accuse the United States and other outside powers of being so-called 'crusaders' who promote an agenda supporting Christians is a reality that creates many potential pitfalls for engaging directly on this issue. But accusations from extremists should not be used as an excuse for silence or for taking action only on the margins."