

OUR VIEW: PERSECUTED

Posted: April 4, 2013

By the sheer volume of words lavished on such issues, one would think this nation is a hotbed of persecution, all of it emanating from fevered right-wing precincts. Consider, if you will, how many trees have been killed to promote the impression that homosexuals are wantonly discriminated against because certain states won't allow them to marry, or that anti-abortion absolutists (Gov. McDonnell stands accused) are waging a "war" on women.

Meanwhile, throughout the world — but particularly in the Middle East — genuine persecution is taking place. And the folks targeted are Christians simply practicing their faith. Recognition, at long last, of such "religious cleansing" cuts across partisan boundaries, catching the attention of such philosophical opposites as conservative columnist Ralph Peters and liberal pundit Kirsten Powers.

Sadly, though, most media members have turned a blind eye to the systematic oppression of certain religious populations — Egypt's Coptic Christian community, for one. As *The Atlantic's* Jeffrey Goldberg, a Middle East expert, told Ms. Powers, persecution of Christians in that region is "one of the most undercovered stories in international news."

Mr. Peters employs words such as "methodical" and "exterminate" — not to mention "oppression," "threats," and "deadly violence" — to describe these "cleansing" campaigns. While he acknowledges that persecution has long been a fact of life for Christian sects residing in, yes, the cradle of Christianity, Mr. Peters says the savagery has metastasized with "the rise of Wahhabi and Salafist terror." A civilization is being erased before willfully unknowing eyes.

All across the Middle East, Christian populations are shrinking — in Iraq, in Syria, in Egypt (which the United States continues to shower with foreign aid), and even in Lebanon which, until recently, claimed a Christian majority. And the world hardly notices.

In fact, as Ms. Powers noted in her piece, such activity is not confined to the Middle East. She cited a 2011 Pew Forum study stating that Christians are routinely "harassed" in 130 countries, "more than any of the world's other religions."

Still, you'd never know it from what passes as reportage in this country. As Mr. Peters says, "If a Michigan mosque is defaced with graffiti, it makes national news and the Justice Department views it as a hate crime. It's time for our government and media to apply the same standard abroad on behalf of Christians."