

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

For years we in Australia have viewed the sorrows and tragedies of the rest of the world as spectators, sympathetic spectators, but spectators nevertheless.

Shielded by distance from bombs in Bali, blitz kreig and Belsen we gave our support and sympathy, but such things seldom reached our shores.

Bad things like we read in the news just did not happen here in our pleasant land girt and protected by sea.

We stand today, however, as likely participants in all the pain of a world in turmoil.

Of particular concern is the alarming rise in the harassment of Christians around the world. Indeed one bishop in USA reportedly said, "I shall probably die in my bed. My successor will probably die in jail, and his successor will in all likelihood die by execution, probably beheading!"

The once vibrant Iraqi church, that had existed for nearly 2000 years, is now on the verge of extinction.

All over the Middle East Christians are at this moment making a choice whether to bow in subservience to Islamist demands or to stand firm for Jesus at the threat of their very lives.

Anguished mothers appear on our TV screens sitting in terrified bewilderment in makeshift dwellings, innocent children are made to witness sights that no child should ever have to experience.

What is happening to Christians is simply a moral outrage that we can no longer ignore.

Chaldean Bishop Amel Nona recently made a troubling prediction: "Our sufferings today are the prelude of those you, European and Western Christians, will also suffer in the near future".

At the crucifixion bystanders stood by blithely watching "just one of those things".

To stand by today and similarly watch the suffering of Christ's body the Church and to do nothing or to dismiss it as those callous bystanders of the first century did, will not see us judged kindly.