

## REFUGEES IN GERMANY CONVERTING TO CHRISTIANITY DESPITE DEATH THREATS



Ex-Muslim refugees in Germany are converting to Christianity despite extreme persecution and death threats leveled by Muslims.

Christians are telling stories of mistreatment, threats and outright attacks from Muslims in the camps, as well as from camp officials. A 1.1 million-refugee influx in 2015 led to hastily constructed camps that are now largely empty owing to Germany's limits on immigration. Despite fewer refugees, attacks are increasing in frequency.

Many of these refugees are converts from Islam brought in by other Christians and are of Iranian and Afghan descent. "Many were also in private, house-held congregations in Iran or were touched by the Christian faith during their escape journey," explains Gottfried Martens, a pastor at the Protestant Trinity independent church in Berlin, who began ministering to the refugees in 2008, when he had his first request for baptism from an acquaintance of two Christian refugees.

Trinity Church has become well known to refugees and baptisms have swelled nearly tenfold, with the number of participants in the baptismal classes near 250. Before the refugee crisis, class size was only around 30. Catholic baptism numbers haven't been reported, but Protestant baptisms in 2015 numbered 178,408, not including those at independent churches, like Marten's Trinity Church.

"Right now, we have five people with us who have been assaulted," said Martens, who is sheltering refugees in the church because they are no longer safe at the camps. "One has lost some of his teeth, and one of the others has a wound that had to be sewn up."

Martens also noted the security personnel side with the attackers and the police do not investigate.

Ramadan is a particularly difficult time for Christians. For this religious period, Muslims must fast during daylight hours, eating and drinking only after sunset. Christians are reporting that the Muslims are increasingly irritable and hostile towards even moderate Muslims. Anyone attempting to eat during the daylight hours is harrassed viciously, leading to many Christians forsaking breakfast to avoid confrontations. In the evenings during Ramadan, the Muslim refugees have boisterous gatherings lasting until 4 a.m. or later.

Another report from 2016 provides 32 case stories of the hostility experienced by Christians throughout the refugee camps on a daily basis, as well as documenting a violent brawl that occurred on June 3. Christians noted the incident was planned to give Muslims an opportunity to kill a Christian so as to be allowed entry into paradise.

Media reports say claims of conversions have nothing to do with religion and everything to do with obtaining asylum. Christians who convert do not have a better chance of asylum. In reality, it is usually worse.

Martens explained, "I make it very clear from the beginning, that conversion and baptism do not increase the chances of receiving

asylum, rather, it could make it worse."

"The [Federal Office of Migration and Refugees] BAMF will hardly look at the application if they see it is a Christian from Iran," notes Martens, mentioning some refugees he has baptized have already been deported.

He says the persecution Christians face at the hands of Muslims is not new; the only change is that it has been "normalized."

Source: Church Militant