

**BERKLEY CENTER**  
*for Religion, Peace & World Affairs*  
**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY**

**Georgetown's Religious Freedom Project and Notre Dame Awarded Grant to Study Christian Persecution**

WASHINGTON (September 8) – The [Religious Freedom Project](#) at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University is collaborating with the [Center for Civil and Human Rights](#) at the University of Notre Dame on a new study examining the persecution of Christian communities around the world. The study is made possible by a \$1.1 million grant from the Templeton Religion Trust.

[“Under Caesar's Sword: How Christian Communities Respond to Repression”](#) is a topic that has gained increasing urgency in recent months. According to a recent report by the Department of State, numerous minority religious communities are suffering from record-high levels of displacement, persecution, and violence. The study will look at the specific example of Christian minorities, and commission a team of 15 prominent scholars to study some 100 Christian communities in over 30 countries, including those in the Middle East, including Israel, and other nations such as China, India, Indonesia, and Nigeria.

Thomas Farr, director of the Religious Freedom Project, notes that “the ancient Christian communities of Syria and Iraq are in danger of being wiped out, the result of brutal execution, forced conversion, or forced emigration. Other Christian communities are under great pressure as well, including in Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iran. Their continued repression represents a tragedy for Christianity, the countries where they have lived for millennia, and the entire world.”

“Christians are far from the only religious group that suffers severe denials of their religious freedom,” says Daniel Philpott, director of the Center for Civil and Human Rights. “But studies show that they are the largest: the lion's share of the lion's den. Understanding how they respond to repression will yield lessons for all religious communities in similar circumstances.”

The findings of the research will be publicized through a wide range of media, including scholarly publications, a public report, the websites of the sponsoring organizations, blogs, social media, a documentary film, and curricula for schools and churches. It will be presented publicly at an event in Washington, DC in September 2016. To mark the fiftieth

anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, the project will culminate in an international conference in Rome in December 2015.

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