

Christian genocide declared in Middle East

Kerry determines Islamic State committing genocide in Iraq, Syria

By **MATTHEW LEE**
AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration on Thursday formally concluded the Islamic State group is committing genocide against Christians and other minorities in Iraq and Syria, a declaration long sought by Congress and human rights organizations but likely to change little in the conflict against the extremists.

The determination, for which Congress had set a Thursday deadline, does not obligate the United States to take additional action against IS militants and does not prejudice any potential prosecution against its members.

Officials said the U.S. has already intensified its fight against IS and had effectively recognized the situation as a genocide more than a year ago when it agreed to increase the number of refugees, notably from Syria, that America accepts.

A day after the State Department said the administration would miss the deadline because it needed more evidence, Kerry said Thursday that he had completed his review after all and determined that Christians, Yazidis and Shiite groups are victims of genocide and crimes against humanity by the Islamic State. The House earlier this week unanimously passed a nonbinding resolution condemning IS atrocities as genocide.

Kerry outlined a litany of atrocities that he said the militants had committed against people and religious sites, as well as threats to eradicate what it terms apostates and infidels. Using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group, he said, "Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions — in what it says, what it believes and what it does."

However, he added that he was "neither judge nor prosecutor nor jury with respect to the allegations" and said any potential criminal charges must result from an independent international investigation. Kerry said the U.S. would continue to support efforts to collect evidence and document atrocities.

While his determination does not carry such legal weight, Kerry said he hoped that groups he cited as being victimized would take some comfort in the fact that the "the United States recognizes and confirms the despicable nature of the crimes committed against them."

Lawmakers and others who have advocated for the finding had sharply criticized the State Department's initial disclosure Wednesday that the deadline would be missed. U.S. officials said Kerry concluded his review just hours after that announce-

ment and the criticism had not affected his decision.

On Thursday, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, the author of the House bill, commended Kerry's decision.

"The United States has now spoken with clarity and moral authority," Fortenberry, R-Neb., said in a statement. "I sincerely hope that the genocide designation will raise international consciousness, end the scandal of silence and create the preconditions for the protection and reintegration of these ancient faith communities into their ancestral homelands."

Republican congressional leaders said President Barack Obama should use the declaration to strengthen what they consider an inadequate plan to defeat the Islamic State.

Kerry's determination marks only the second time a U.S. administration has declared that a genocide was being committed during an ongoing conflict.

The first was in 2004, when then-Secretary of State Colin Powell determined that atrocities in Sudan's Darfur region constituted genocide. Powell reached that determination amid much lobbying from human rights groups, but only after State Department lawyers advised him that it would not — contrary to legal advice offered to previous administrations — obligate the United States to act to stop it.

In that case, the lawyers decided that the 1948 U.N. Convention against genocide did not require countries to prevent genocide from taking place outside their territory. Powell instead called for the U.N. Security Council to appoint a commission to investigate and take appropriate legal action if it agreed with the determination.

Kerry's decision followed a similar finding. Although the United States is involved in military strikes against IS and has helped prevent some incidents of ethnic cleansing, notably of Yazidis, some advocates have argued that a genocide determination would require additional U.S. action.

In making his decision, Kerry weighed whether the militants' targeting of Christians and other minorities meets the definition of genocide, according to the U.N. Convention: "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group."

A recent report from the Knights of Columbus and In Defense of Christians identified by name more than 1,100 Christians who they said the Islamic State had killed. The report detailed numerous instances of people kidnapped, raped, sold into slavery and driven from their homes, along with the destruction of churches.



A portrayal of the famous Leonardo da Vinci painting, 'The Last Supper,' is included in 'The Passion,' a musical drama to be presented March 25-26 at Pendleton Baptist Church.

Musical drama brings Easter story to life

East Oregonian

A musical drama depicting scenes from the last week of the life of Jesus Christ is featured in a program presented by Baptist churches in Pendleton, Hermiston and Pilot Rock.

The presentation, which includes a portrayal of the familiar Leonardo

da Vinci painting, "The Last Supper," features a cast, choir and crew of about 50 people. "The Passion" will be presented Friday, March 25 and Saturday, March 26 at 7 p.m. at the Pendleton Baptist Church, 3202 S.W. Nye Ave. There is no admission charge.

Audiences will have an opportunity

to meet the disciples, hear the choir, reach out and touch the Roman soldiers and see Jesus as he carries his cross to Calvary.

As part of the Easter season, the churches have offered the free portrayal for nine years. For more information, call 503-260-6378 or 541-720-8680.

Idaho mulls anti-Shariah law bill year after high-profile vote

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Amid growing concerns about Muslim immigration, state lawmakers Thursday advanced legislation prohibiting Shariah law or any other foreign statutes from influencing Idaho courts. But the bill's future remains uncertain.

Lawmakers are considering the measure despite drawing criticism last year when they rejected an international treaty that made it easier for single parents worldwide to collect child-support payments. The measure was designed to align Idaho's child support laws with those outlined in federal statute, but it drew suspicion from Republicans who worried about the influences of Shariah law in child support cases.

However, under mounting pressure, lawmakers reversed their decision in a special session that cost taxpayers thousands.

The latest bill would keep Idaho

courts and government agencies from basing rulings on foreign laws that don't supply the same rights guaranteed in the U.S. and state constitutions.

Worries about the spread of Shariah have surfaced in several states in recent years, often resulting in proposals to restrict foreign law in state courts.

Opponents say the measures amount to anti-Islamic fear-mongering, and note that Shariah law — a strict interpretation of the Quran and the Prophet Mohammed's teachings — has never trumped U.S. state or federal law. Supporters, meanwhile, say the proposals aim to protect states' rights in a globalized world.

In Idaho, the House State Affairs Committee sent the latest measure to the House floor for amendments Thursday after both Republicans and Democrats expressed concerns about how it would affect international contracts, like adoptions and commercial deals

between the state's agricultural sector and other countries. Shariah law isn't specifically mentioned in the bill but was the center of the discussion and testimony.

It's unknown if House lawmakers will amend and vote on the bill before the Legislature adjourns in the next week.

The bill represents rising fears of Shariah law and Muslim immigration in Idaho. Last year, a former Muslim-turned-evangelical pastor met with several lawmakers in the Statehouse, warning about Shariah law's impact in rural parts of the state, and more recently he has called for restrictions on Syrian and Muslim immigration.

To date, there are no known Idaho court decisions that have been influenced by Shariah law.

Redman says 10 other states have passed similar measures.

<p>Peace Lutheran Church 210 NW 9th, Pendleton Join us Sundays 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class ~Come and be at Peace~ on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday</p>	<p>Faith Center Church Worshiping God Loving People 108 S. Main • 276-9569 Sunday Worship 10:30 am Sr. Pastor, Ray O'Grady pendletonfaithcenter.org</p>	<p>NEW HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH 1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston Sunday Worship Services English- Pastor Dave Andrus 9:00 & 10:45 am Spanish- Pastor Genaro Loreda 9:00 & 10:15 am Classes for kids during all services For more information call 541-567-8441</p>	<p>Seventh-Day Adventist Church Saturday Services Pendleton 1401 SW Goodwin Place 276-0882 Sabbath School 9:20 am Worship Service 10:45 am</p>
<p>Community Presbyterian Church 14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250 Worship: 10 AM Sunday School at 11:30</p>	<p>PILOT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH 585 SW Birch, Pilot Rock, OR 97868 (541) 443-2500 prbconline.blogspot.com Sunday School: 9:30 am Worship Service: 10:45 am Kids' Club: 6:00 pm Wednesday Services: Youth Group: 7:00 pm</p>	<p>GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR www.graceandmercyelca.org Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided) Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information 541-289-4535 Tom Inch, Pastor Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA 164 E. Main St. / P.O. Box 1108 Hermiston, Oregon 97838</p>	<p>Grace Baptist Church 555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497 Nursery provided for all services Sunday School - 9:30 AM Worship - 10:45 AM 6:00 pm Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM "Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"</p>
<p>St. Johns Episcopal Church All People Are Welcome Scripture, Tradition and Reason Family service 9am Sunday Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest, PH: 567-6672</p>	<p>FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH in Mission for Christ LCMC Bible Study.....9:00 AM Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room) www.faithpendleton.org</p>	<p>First United Methodist Church 352 SE 2nd Street Pendleton, OR 541-276-2616 Sunday Worship 9am Open Hearts, Open Hands, Open Doors Facebook: www.facebook.com/FUMCPendleton Services are broadcast every Sunday on KUMA-1290 AM @ 11am Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor</p>	<p>Come meet Jesus at PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH 3202 SW Nye Ave Pendleton, OR 541-276-7590 Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 AM Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM Mon. Community Women's Study 9:30 AM & 6 PM Awana Kids Club (K-6th grade) Wed Men's Study 6 PM MOPS meeting the 1st Thur of the Month 6 PM</p>
<p>a place to Belong Pendleton First INVITING ENRICHING INVOLVING EMPOWERING SUNDAY SERVICES AM Celebration-10:00am AM Kids Place -10:00am The Connection--6:00pm Groups for all ages: Adults, Children, Youth, & College Thursdays Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm Celebration Place-6:00pm Other Groups Available Weekly For more info visit WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM 1911 SE Court Ave 541-276-6417 Assembly of God Church</p>	<p>PENDLETON FIRST CHURCH OF GOD FIRST SERVICE 8:30 AM SECOND SERVICE 10:30 AM 712 SW 27th ST. 541-276-1894 www.fcogpendleton.com</p>	<p>FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) 215 N Main • Pendleton Sunday Worship: 10:40a Bible Class: 9:30a Office: 276-5358 M-F 8:30-12:30 WWW.FCCPENDLETON.ORG</p>	<p>Living Word Christian Center Sunday Worship 10:00am Wednesday Bible Study 7:00pm Youth Classes - Nursery-6th grade Sun & Wed YOUTH GROUPS: Jr Hi, Wed 7pm Sr Hi, Sun after the service Sharon Miller, Pastor 401 Northgate, Pendleton 541-278-8082 www.livingwordcc.com</p>
<p>BAHA'I FAITH "The Unity of All Mankind" Pendleton Baha'i Center at 1015 SE Court Place Devotions Sundays @ 11:00am; Everyone invited! (541) 276-9360 visit us at www.pendletonbahais.org</p>	<p>The Salvation Army Center for Worship & Service Sunday Worship Service 9:30 - Sunday School 10:30 - Worship Service Wednesday Bible Study 5:30 Family Fellowship Meal 6:00 Bible Study COME AS YOU ARE 150 SE EMIGRANT (541)276-3369</p>	<p>Redeemer Episcopal Church 241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809 www.pendletonepiscopal.org Sunday Morning Worship 9:00 a.m. Wednesday Worship Noon All Are Welcome</p>	<p>FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH -Presbyterian Church (USA)- 201 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton Service of Worship - 10:00 am Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am Fellowship - 11:00 am www.pendletonpresbyterian.com Open Hearted...Open Minded</p>

Southern gospel group returns

PENDLETON — Blackwood Legacy, a contemporary southern gospel quartet, returns for a concert in Pendleton.

Blending Southern gospel's traditional sound with contemporary country music, the group is led by Rick Price, former lead singer for the award-winning Blackwood

Brothers Quartet. The performance is Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the First Christian Church, 215 N. Main St., Pendleton. There's no admission charge, but a freewill offering will be taken.

For more information, call 541-276-5358. For more about the group, visit www.theblackwoodlegacy.com.

Nazarene church hosts Good Friday

HERMISTON — The public is invited to celebrate Good Friday during a drop-in event at the Hermiston Church of the Nazarene.

The Good Friday Experience is Friday, March 25 from 7-9 p.m. at 1520 W. Orchard Ave. Everyone is

welcome to enjoy the faith-based Easter gathering. The event includes communion for those who would like to partake.

For more information, contact 541-567-3677, hermistonnaz@gmail.com or visit www.hermistonnazarene.org.

To share your worship times
call Amanda Jacobs
541-278-2683