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**The Human Rights Dimension: Addressing the Rise of Global Genocidal Anti-Semitism and Vatican II’s Nostra Aetate**

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SAMMY APPLE, consultant and political analyst, journalist, member of Inter American Press Association, columnist for Venezuelan major newspaper *El Universal*: Thank you, Laurie. Radical takeover of Christian communities in Latin America. 100 years ago the Christian population of the Middle East was 26%. Today it's approximately 2%. What happened to those millions of Christians? They now constitute a diaspora that spans the world. It probably started as a trickling in the 19th century and then there were events that created spikes.

One was probably the Armenia genocide that took place in Turkey during World War I. It stands to reason that Christian communities in other Middle Eastern countries that were under the domination of the Ottoman Empire immigrated when news surfaced of the slaughter of the Christian brothers.

In my part of the world, Latin America, there are close to 25 million Christians of Arab descent. In Brazil, there are more Christians of Lebanese ancestry than there are actual people in the whole country of Lebanon. Because they were Christians, they integrated with the native population of the same faith. They are generally well-educated, hardworking, so they prospered and became a welcome addition to those societies.

So far so good. One community stands out: the Christian Palestinians in Chile. Most came from Bethlehem and Beit Jala and started arriving around 1850. By 1920 they were 100,000 strong with well-established institutions, churches, social clubs and even a Premier League football team. By 1948 there were 200,000. By 1967 there were 300,000. And now there are over 400,000.

In spite of representing only 2% of the Chilean general population they manage over 10% of the overall economy and are overrepresented in most civil society institutions. There is no need to overstate that they have done well for themselves and are a definite plus to the country of Chile. They now quadruple the Christians in the West Bank and Gaza, which are 53,000. They could easily be a prime good example of successful immigration and integration.

It is obvious from the above timeline that their exile was never caused by Jews or even the State of Israel, never. That makes it all the more remarkable the militant and anti-Israeli and sometimes anti-Semitic attitude and actions of the public figures that represent the community. I'll just give you a couple of examples.

They are now financing a study with archaeologists, historians, trying to prove 11,000 years of Palestinian history. Well, 11,000 years ago was the Paleolithic era. There were only cave people but they're financing this. They have pledged their money.

Also a month ago the Palestinian Ambassador to Chile, speaking to a mainly Palestinian Christian group stated that the Jewish people never existed. Everybody cheered. I mean this is incredible. I mean if a Christian group cheers that the Jewish people never existed, they're actually negating their own Christianity. Maybe somebody should go and explain this to these people.

Now with ample funding, because it's a very prosperous community, like I said they have 10% -- they manage 10% of the Chilean economy. They're hugely successful. They have become the prime providers of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic professional-grade media content in Spanish for much of the continent. We receive that all the time.

Now how did that happen? The answer is institutional takeover by the radical element. This was obviously well orchestrated over many years. This model, institutional takeover is being copied in other Arab Christian communities in Latin America. Another example is the 1.6 million-strong Arab Christian community in Venezuela, my country. They came mainly from Lebanon and Syria, also wealthy and well-integrated.

Now their umbrella organization, called FEARAB, was taken over by a group led by Adele El Sabajar, a rabid anti-Semite. He now presides over all Arab institutions in the country. He's a government official, being a member of the National Assembly. He actually traveled to Syria to fight alongside Hezbollah and was photographed in military fatigues and holding and AK-47. When he came back to Venezuela, he was hailed as a hero.

I am sure that most of those 25 million Christians of Arab ancestry in Latin America are not anti-Semitic but when their institutional agenda becomes radicalized the rest, which is funding, discourse and teachings, will inevitably follow. Now the answer to that situation is religion, talking about Christian religion. So far the religious leadership has refused to get involved and therefore the message of Nostra Aetate has become lost by being ignored.

Anti-Semitism is a social disease that if not stopped it will eventually infect humanity. The message should be clear: anti-Semitism isn't a Jewish problem, it's a human rights problem and, as such, it should be confronted.

Now the Church, mainly the Catholic Church, which is the main religious group in Latin America, most Latin American countries are Catholic countries, the Church has to be more militant. They are simply trying to be politically correct. That is wrong. Religion has to be about principles and has to answer to ethical and moral values even if it means going against politics. Thank you.