

PM Erdoğan likens Syrian crisis to Karbala Massacre

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Criticizing the Syrian regime for the ongoing violence in the country, Erdoğan tells a religious summit: 'What is happening [in Syria] is exactly the same as Karbala.' AA photo

Turkish Prime Minister [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#) has compared the current situation in Syria to the battle of Karbala that took place 1,332 years ago.

"I say it very clearly, what is happening in Syria right now is exactly the same thing as what happened in Karbala 1,332 years ago," Erdoğan said during his opening speech at an international conference on "The Arab Awakening and Peace in the Middle East: Muslim and Christian Perspectives" held in [Istanbul](#) on Sept. 7.

"The victims might be different and the cruelty might be different here, but what is

happening [in Syria] is exactly the same as Karbala."

In the Battle of Karbala, the supporters and relatives of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussein ibn Ali were all killed by the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph, who Hussein had refused to recognize as caliph. The dead are regarded as martyrs by Muslims, and the battle has a central place in Shiite Islam history and tradition.

Erdoğan said that while a cruel and dictatorial regime was committing massacres against its own people, there were people who stay silent or who applaud these cruelties out of sectarian fanaticism.

He said the killing, torturing and massacring of innocent children were inhuman actions both in his religious sect (Sunni) and in the sects of the people committing and supporting these crimes.

"I know it very well that killing is religiously forbidden for Shiites as it is forbidden by religion for Sunnis. I know very well that killing is forbidden in Christianity and Judaism, as it is forbidden in Islam," Erdoğan said.

"These innocent children are not from our sect or religion. So let them die.' For god's sake what kind of understanding is this? How can a human explain this with his values and with his conscience?" Erdoğan said.

Erdoğan also said different religions and sects within the [Ottoman Empire](#) were seen as a great richness and welcomed with great tolerance by the Ottoman Empire.

"Starting from Mardin, Hatay and Istanbul, I see every religion and sect within the Turkish Republic as a great richness," he said.

Assyrians in Syria worry

The Chaldean-Assyrian community's spiritual leader François Yakan, who attended the conference, said they feared that the situation of Christians in Syria might become like the situation for Christians in Iraq.

"The population of the Christian minority Chaldeans has decreased from 1.1 million people to 500,000 after the radical Islamist groups' threats following the war. If the Islamist radical groups do the same thing in Syria, we fear that we might have to face a similar situation for the Christian Chaldeans in Syria," Yakan told the [Hürriyet Daily News](#) in an interview on Sept. 7.

Meanwhile the secretary of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, said the Syrian people were living in a tragedy and that it was also their responsibility to end this violence in Syria.

"It is unacceptable for the Christians to withdraw and stay silent instead of showing courage and making an effort for the establishment of peace," he said.

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