



CONCILIUM

Quick Brief

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Coronavirus and the Rise of Xenophobia

The word Xenophobia is drawn from the Greek words xenos and phobos. Xenos means foreign or foreigner (αλλοδαπός, ξένος, μέτοικος), outsider (ξένος, αμύητος), or strange (παράξενος, ξένος, μυστήριος). Xenos appears approximately 14 times in the New Testament. Phobos (φόβος) means "fear" and appears approximately 93 times in the New Testament. Thus, xenophobia is the fear or hatred of that which is perceived to be an outsider, foreign, or strange.

Xenophobia in its modern examples reflects an expression of perceived conflict between an ingroup and an outgroup, manifested in suspicion and fear of other's activities. This, in turn, can lead to a desire to eliminate the presence of the other group, often through persecution, subjugation, or even murderous cleansing actions.

While xenophobia and racism often overlap, racism differs in that one's prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism is directed specifically against someone of a different race. Xenophobia, however, is based on the perception that the other originates from outside the community or nation and should be resisted or removed altogether.

CONCILIUM RESPOND

Empowering Great Commission Advance Through
Biblically Based Crisis Management Solutions

OUR CONCERN

Reports continue to roll in of a rise in xenophobia in East and West Africa. But this rising phenomenon is not limited to Africa. Reports of xenophobia (including state sponsored examples) have been witnessed across the Middle East, South and East Asia, and South America. The result of these xenophobic attitudes has been an increase in threats and risk to Christian expatriates of Western and Asian ethnicity around the world.

ANALYSIS

The quick rise in xenophobia around the world caught Christian expats by surprise. The second and third order of effects of the COVID-19 pandemic well reflect the [Ecclesiastes 9:12 conundrum](#). Initial incidents of xenophobia globally focused mainly on Asian peoples. But quickly these incidents began to include Western expatriates as well.

By March, 2020, reports of xenophobia against Westerners began to about equal those reported against Asians. In East Asia, reports out of China documented [by The Guardian](#) reflected this trend. Gospel workers in China have reported similar incident as to the Guardian story requiring Western Gospel workers to adjust accordingly.

Reports of xenophobia in Africa increased dramatically in March. Local reports began to surface [documenting xenophobia in East Africa](#). Those reports began to grow to include incidents in Southern Africa and West Africa, including both missionaries and NGO workers. In these cases, Asians and Westerners are both bearing the brunt of xenophobic comments, actions, and attacks.

While there are media reports in the Middle East of COVID-19 related xenophobia, Concilium has received no specific notification of Western or Asian Gospel workers being directly targeted. However, [reports of Asian humanitarian workers in Ramallah being harassed](#) were publicly documented.

Finally, reports of xenophobic acts in South Asia have been reported. However, Concilium is not aware of any activities directly targeting Gospel workers there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Unfortunately, there is little a person can do (apart from the life-transforming power of the Gospel message) to change hearts driven by fear and hate. In some cases, the COVID-19 crisis has allowed some individuals and groups to capitalize and refocus their animosity towards foreigners with more local support (or at least more of a blind eye from authorities). That being said, Concilium recommends the following:

Acceptance/Support: Gospel workers should utilize support from local believers to shop for food and supplies in order to limit their exposure on the streets. Shop with a local partner if and when it is appropriate.

Communication: When leaving the home, make sure mobile phones are fully charged and have more than 60 minutes of time on them in case of an emergency.

Accountability: Remember the adage: "Isolation leads to victimization." Maintain accountability by not traveling alone and letting others know where you are going, when you are leaving, AND when you intend to return.

PRAY! It goes without saying, but pray. Every time you pray for safety, pray also for those who persecute you ([Matthew 5:44](#)). Let God make your path straight.