

# origins

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## Current Conflicts in Middle East Not Result of Clash of Civilizations

### Cardinal Sandri

The conflict in which Islamic State fighters are driving out Christians and other minorities from Iraq and Syria must not be seen as a war between Islam and Christianity, said the head of the Vatican Congregation for Eastern Churches. "I do not share this position and I ask, on the contrary, that it never prevail," Cardinal Leonardo Sandri told participants in the inaugural In Defense of Christians summit Sept. 9 in Washington. He said the Islamists are not looking to destroy a foreign Christian culture, but are intent on destroying centuries of "a respectful and useful cul-

*"The unjust assailant must be halted, but let us not limit our thinking to the use of force — in some cases necessary — alone."*

tural coexistence." He also said it was "impossible ... to quell the doubts about how the vast economic interests at stake affect the conflict." Cardinal Sandri said that people also must consider "the control of oil wells and of gas deposits, the safety of the petroleum and gas pipelines, the supremacy of one area of free commercial trade over another, and this is not only in the Middle East but also in Eastern Europe and in other regions of the world." He said this leads to a situation in which someone's personal economic interests are more important than human life, which "can even be annihilated or at least not taken into account." Cardinal Sandri said the situation in which Christians and other minorities were being forced from their homes and executed had to be resolved through the United Nations — and it might or might not involve the use of force. The cardinal's speech follows.

I express my deepest gratitude for the invitation to this inaugural meeting of the In Defense of Christians Association that gathers the heads of the Eastern churches, Catholics and Orthodox, together with other significant representatives of world social and political life to reflect on the means that the international community can adopt on behalf of the sorely tried peoples of the Middle East.

I greet everyone, beginning with Cardinal Wuerl, who has welcomed us in the capital of the United States, together with the Eastern Catholic bishops who work with their respective communities in this nation.

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