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Salzburg Blocks Red Week Lights for Persecuted Christians

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"We do not want to set an example for just a single religion,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Salzburg's deputy mayor Kay-Michael Dankl, a 38-year-old member of Austria's Communist Party, blocked the city government from lighting its historic Mirabell Palace red for Red Week, the worldwide commemoration of persecuted Christians. The Christian Post reported the decision on 19 November 2026.

The palace stayed dark this year. Last year, it glowed red like hundreds of other buildings around the world. And in February, the same palace opened its Marble Hall to about 1,000 people for a large Iftar festival marking Ramadan. One faith's festival was welcomed inside. The other's memorial was refused outside. That contrast is what turned a lighting decision into a story.

Dankl instructed his city against lighting Mirabell Palace, the headquarters of the city government, in red to mark Red Week, according to Austrian outlet Salzburg24. Thousands of churches, monuments and public buildings - including at least 130 cathedrals - are being flooded with blood-red light this week as part of the annual initiative organized by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), a Roman Catholic pontifical charity and persecution watchdog. The light stands for the hundreds of millions of Christians worldwide who face persecution for their faith.

Why Salzburg's Mirabell Palace Stayed Dark This Red Week

Dankl took issue with what he called the explicitly Christian nature of the event. "We do not want to set an example for just a single religion," he told Salzburg24. He argued instead that lighting the palace with white on 22 August, to mark the United Nations' day commemorating persecution against all religious beliefs, is more appropriate.

He also announced that orange lighting will illuminate the palace for 16 days starting 25 November, as a sign against violence toward women. The palace, it seems, can be lit for causes. It can be lit in white, and in orange, and it can host an Iftar feast for a thousand guests. What it could not be lit for, this year, was persecuted Christians in red.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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