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A FREE monthly, online magazine that provides you with missions and evangelism news, information and analysis.

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WORLD NEWS BRIEFS

BELARUS

Two months after a regular Sunday morning service of the New Life Church in Minsk was raided by police, a court fined the church's administrator Vasily Yurevich the equivalent of 160 times the minimum monthly wage for organizing what the court called an "illegal" service. Yurevich told Forum 18 News Service that Judge Natalya Kuznetsova ignored church members' insistence that he had not organized the service, while the court decision maintained that the judge "believes offender Yurevich is trying to evade responsibility for what has been committed." This is Yurevich's second massive fine and he fears further fines in the wake of a recent police raid of a church service. (Forum 18 News, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=661)

BELARUS

After spending more than thirteen years in Soviet labor camps for his faith, Pastor Ernst Sabilo has promised that the Belarusian Evangelical Church he leads in Minsk will continue to meet for worship despite the recent liquidation of its legal status by the city court. Belarus' restrictive 2002 religion law bans unregistered religious activity. The liquidation came a month after the same court liquidated a Calvinist church. Other religious communities which failed to gain re-registration by the deadline also remain uncertain as to the legality of their parishes as well. (Forum 18 News, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=664

CANADA

After serving with Christian Reformed World Missions in the Philippines for nearly a decade, Ontario native Rev. Bruce Adema has been appointed as the Christian Reformed Church Director of Canadian Ministries (DCM). He currently works as missionary professor and interim director at Koinonia Theological Seminary in Davao City, Philippines, but will be returning to Canada to start his new position in summer 2006. Adema has previously pastored several CRC congregations in Canada. His responsibilities will include overseeing CRC's Canadian ministries, such as the Urban Aboriginal Ministries and the Committee for Contact with the Government. He will also help congregations with questions of church polity and ecclesiastical matters. (Christian Reformed Church, http://209.200.88.167/pages/2005sep29_adema.cfm)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

After nearly twenty years of service in the Covenant-Free Church mission office in Bangui, Rev. Jean Bete was installed as president of the new Communaute Evangelique de l'Ubangi en Mission en Afrique (CEUMA), (the Evangelical Community from the Ubangi, in Mission in Africa). Leaders of the Covenant Church in Congo laid hands on Bete and consecrated him into the newly formed sister church that will serve in the Central African Republic. The installation service also included music, with a men's chorus singing two pieces written specifically for the event. (The Evangelical Covenant Church, http://www.covchurch.org/cov/news/item4531.html)

CENTRAL AMERICA

Evangelical churches and schools are temporarily housing more than 70,000 people who have been left homeless as the result of massive flooding and landslides left by Hurricane Stan. More than 2,000 people died when Stan slammed into El Salvador, Guatemala and southern Mexico in early October. Rains from

the hurricane also caused flooding in Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica. Churches have been providing shelter, food and supplies to others in need. (Assist News Service, http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s05100067.htm)

CHINA

A Muslim in the Ili-Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture in China's northwestern Xinjiang region has complained of tightening restrictions on Muslims since the ban on the Sala Sufi order in August and the closure of two local mosques. "Now that the Sufi believers have been dealt with, traditional Sunni Muslims are being persecuted," local businessman Abdu Raheman told Forum 18. He said authorities have arrested some Muslims in possession of "unauthorized" religious literature and have ordered some Muslim young men to shave off their beards. Priests and those active in Catholic parishes have been put under surveillance, while Orthodox Christians--without a native priest at the moment--complain they are still being denied a priest from abroad. One Protestant said an underground church would not even try to register for fear of repercussions on church members when registration is refused. (Forum 18 News, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=662)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Figures from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that one in three women in the Eastern DRC have been raped. Over 3.8 million people have died as a result of the conflict in DRC, which has been called "Africa's World War." It is the deadliest conflict since World War II, with a death toll exceeding Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda and Darfur in Sudan. The conflict began in 1998 when troops from the DRC (formerly Zaire), Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe began fighting with troops from Rwanda and Uganda. A 2002 ceasefire, enforced by United Nations peacekeeping forces, has been violated by all sides. (Assist News Service, http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s05090131.htm)

INDIA

More than two and a half million people were left homeless by the earthquake that shook the Kashmir region between Pakistan and India on 8 October, reports the United Nations. With the death toll potentially exceeding 30,000, Christian organizations and churches are pooling resources to provide shelter, food and other resources to those in need. Doctors in the affected area warn of the possibility of a massive outbreak of disease. (Mission Network News, http://www.mnnonline.org/article/7856)

IRAQ

The 300-member Kurdzman Church in Iraq is collecting money to help the New Orleans (USA)-based Adullam Christian Fellowship Church, which was devastated by hurricane Katrina. Although the two-year-old congregation in Iraq is half a world away, church members were motivated to reach out to their fellow Christians after seeing the destruction on television. Adullam Christian Fellowship was in one of the hardest hit areas of Louisiana. The 350 parishoners are now spread across Louisiana, Texas and other states. (Assist News Service, http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s05090118.htm)

KOREA

Nearly 160 Christian leaders from countries such as Peru, Israel, Russia, Belgium, the United States, India, Spain, the Congo and Egypt met in Seoul to officially launch the Christian Global Network. CGN exists to present the gospel message to various cultures through family-friendly programming. Future plans by the GCN team include satellite station broadcasting in five languages. (Assist News Service, http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s05100055.htm)

MACEDONIA

The fourth trial for Archbishop Jovan, head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Macedonia, began in Veles on 29 September. Only six days earlier, the court found him guilty of embezzling 57,180 Euros donated for church reconstruction when he was bishop of the Macedonian Orthodox Church three years ago. Archbishop Jovan's two-year sentence will be in addition to the two and a half year sentence he has already received. He is expected to be in a prison in Skopje for four and a half years. Goran Pavlovski, spokesperson for the cabinet of ministers, refused to explain to Forum 18 why his government is so hostile to Macedonian parishes of the Serbian Orthodox Church and declined to say if Macedonian citizens are allowed to belong to the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Serbian Orthodox Church has called its followers to a week of fasting in response to the third sentence in a row against Archbishop Jovan. (Forum 18 News, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=663)

MEXICO

A group of Nazarene leaders have organized "Border Initiative," a project designed to strengthen churches along the Mexico/United States border. Churches and districts from northern Mexico and southwestern United States will be partnering through short-term mission trips called "Maximum Mission." The goal is to discover, train and send leaders from both sides of the border to develop house churches, organize new churches and eventually reach out into areas where there are not yet Nazarene congregations. (Nazarene Communications Network News, http://www.ncnnews.org/Article.aspx?id=1977)

PAKISTAN

The Roman Catholic Church in Pakistan is calling for the abolition of the country's blasphemy law, following recent attacks on Christians and Hindus accused of blaspheming the prophet Muhammad. "We hold the government responsible on account of their passivity in repealing the blasphemy law and allowing such incidents to take place at frequent intervals," the Church's National Commission for Justice and Peace said in a statement. (Ecumenical News International, www.ecunews.org)

ROMANIA

Several minority communities are expressing concern over the current draft of a new religious law that may affect their ability to have legal status. Set to replace the religious law established in 1948, the draft law has been rushed to parliament under an "emergency procedure." The law will divide religious communities into three categories with differing rights. Only groups with more than 22,000 members will be recognized as "religious denominations." Those with less than 22,000 will be granted "religious association" status, while those with less than 300 members will have no legal status. The draft law is now in the Committee on Human Rights, Religious Denominations and Minorities of the Senate, the upper chamber of parliament. (Assist News Service, http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s05100036.htm)

SRI LANKA

The Sri Lankan parliament is getting ready to debate a proposal to amend the Constitution to make Buddhism the state religion. Currently, the Constitution gives Buddhism the foremost place as a religion; however, it is not classified as the "state religion." If passed, this proposal would make Buddhism the official religion, and would make conversion of Buddhists to other religions prohibited and would require Buddhists to raise their children as Buddhists. Although the proposal states that "other forms of religions and worship may be practiced in peace and harmony with Buddha Sasana," many Christians fear that religious freedom could be undermined and that anti-conversion legislation would become more common. (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, http://www.csw.org.uk/latestnews/article.php?id=442)

TAIWAN

Nearly eighty delegates representing Asian Covenant churches and ministries in Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines, India, China, South Korea and New Zealand recently met for the Fourth Asia Covenant Churches Consultation in Taipei. This year's theme, "Reaching Youth," focused on how ministries and churches are reaching today's youth. The three-day conference included discussion time, keynote speakers, worship time and a visit to a large urban church in Taipei. Previous consultations have been held in Udon Thani, Thailand; Tokyo, Japan; and Bangalore, India. (The Evangelical Covenant Church, http://www.covchurch.org/cov/news/item4539.html)

UNITED STATES

Southern Baptist churches are partnering with the International Mission Board to pray for missionaries around the world through the year-long prayer call, "Life Up Your Voices." The partnership is centered on Beth Moore's Voices of the Faithful, a new 366-page devotional book which includes nearly 300 Southern Baptist missionary stories from the around the world. The call encourages individual church members to use the booklet at home to strengthen devotional times. Church groups can also meet monthly to pray and discuss what God is teaching them. The invitation to join the prayer call is open to all churches and is designed to deepen the prayer lives of Christians worldwide. In addition to the booklet, resources such as a small group facilitator's guide, a poster, a map, bulletin inserts and a companion CD and worship DVD are available. (Southern Baptist News, http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=21764)

WORLD EVANGELISM & MISSIONS REPORTS

The Growing Persecuted Church in Indonesia

By Jim Jacobson

On 27 August 2005 Father Iwan Rusbani Setyawan was finishing the 5 p.m. mass at St. Anthony Chapel in Margahayu, a suburb of Bandung in West Java, Indonesia. This is what happened next: "After mass, five men entered my chapel and asked me who had responsibility of the house. They asked me to sign a letter stating that I had to close the chapel. Two church members refused. Many people with swords and stones entered my chapel. They pressed us to sign the letter. They were from AGAP."

AGAP is an abbreviation for Aliansi Gerakan Ant Pemurtadan, (Anti-Apostasy Alliance Movement). AGAP is led by Muhammad Mu'min Al-Mubarak, a Muslim radical who advocates the abduction of westerners. Mu'min is a former Christian who converted to Islam and has a passion to eradicate Indonesia of Christianity, which is rapidly growing throughout the country. He is a Paul who has become a Saul.

AGAP has a mission to close, in their words, all the "wild churches." These are churches that they feel are not complying with AGAP's interpretation of Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1/1969. This degree, called the Regulation on Building Houses of Worship, states that official religions must comply with a number of Ministry of Religious Affairs and other ministerial directives in their registration and activities.

Father Iwan signed the letter to close his chapel. "There are two reasons I signed this letter," said Father Iwan of the incident. "I would save the lives of my church members and I would save my chapel. They said they would kill us if we did not close. They came in with swords on their backs and backpacks full of stones. Their faces were covered with white and black handkerchiefs. The presence of them made me so scared."

In West Java AGAP operates with full cooperation from the local government. "An official from the local government accompanied the AGAP raiders and a local police official accompanied the group too," Father Iwan said. "The officials kept silent and allowed this to happen. After I signed the letter they left."

Like many churches in Indonesia, St. Anthony Chapel has tried for years to obtain a permit from the local government. However, no permits have been approved in the past twenty-five years. This means that no church has been allowed to build for twenty-five years in West Java. Because Father Iwan could not get a permit to worship in a house he had brought in 1986, he obtained signed letters from all neighbors which stated they would allow worship which was pursuant with local law.

Recent erroneous media reports indicated that Joint-Ministerial Decree No. 1/1969 had been modified. According to reports, Indonesian "interfaith forums" are now authorized to issue permits to establish places of worship. According to the reports, religious groups were previously required to obtain permission from local communities as well as the local government before building places of worship. These reports implied that it would be easier for churches to obtain permits and that Indonesia was becoming more tolerant of different religions.

Nothing could be further from the truth. According to Father Iwan, the 1969 regulation is currently being reviewed, but is still in the revision process. However, Father Iwan warned that interfaith forums would make it even more difficult for Christians: "If the decision falls under the 'Religion Forum' it will be even more difficult. The policy should be eliminated, not modified."

For Father Iwan, the main question concerns who gave AGAP permission to close his church: "The police do nothing to stop them; did nothing to stop. No action. This is happening to many churches in West Java, both Catholic and Protestant."

Indeed, the forced closure of churches in West Java is occurring at an alarming rate. According to West Java Christian leader John Simon Timorason, at least thirty-five churches in Bandung and neighboring regions have had been closed by Islamic mobs during the past twelve months.

Jacob

On the night of 21 August 2005, Jacob was cleaning the sanctuary after the service at his church in Dayeuhkolot, a suburb of Bandung. He was scared to even talk about the incident.

"I was cleaning up after the 5:00 p.m. worship service and AGAP came through the doors. These were not our neighbors; they were from the outside. More than fifty of them came into the church, wearing masks and carrying swords and backpacks of stones. I was so afraid. They were very angry and they were shouting 'Allah Akbar.' I went out to call for help. The police came but did nothing."

Jacob continued. "The AGAP came in around 10:00 p.m. and left at 3:00 a.m. the next morning. They said that this was the last time we could worship there. They told us to not worship there again."

According to Jacob, the pastor who lived next to the church got away and is in hiding. He said the AGAP are trying to get the pastor to sign a letter to close the church but he refuses. Jacob's 200-member church has had a good relationship with their neighbors for years and has provided food and aid to the community. The forced closure of churches is taking a heavy emotional toll on minority Christians in the world's largest Muslim nation.

Formaningrum

Formaningrum, 66, has been extremely upset since the 27 July 2005 forced closure of the church she helped to found in Bajem Katapang, a suburb of Bandung.

"We met in my home starting in 1988, but we grew and so we built this church in 1996," Formaningrum said. "We applied for a permit five times, but never received a permit. We built without permission. Most of my neighbors are Christians, some are Muslims, but we had permission from the community."

More than 200 people attended the church before its closure. According to Formaningrum, AGAP pressured the local government to close the church.

"We had no choice but to sign the letter. They threatened us, saying 'if something happens we don't want to be responsible. If you continue to worship, we are not responsible for what will happen to you.' They were sending us a message that harm would come. They said people would come in from outside our area and hurt us. We have no expectation that the church will be allowed to reopen. This is happening to many, many other churches."

For Formaningrum and many others, this is a time of uncertainty and fear: "When this happened I collapsed, crying for two days. Did I do something wrong? Did I sin? Why did God allow our church to shut down?" Formaningrum was even hospitalized for a week due to stress and depression.

Seeking Freedom of Worship

The situation for Christians in Indonesia should be a cause of major concern for all caring Christians and freedom loving people. If we silently stand by and allow the eradication of Christians in Indonesia, then we all will suffer the consequences.

President of the United States, George W. Bush, warned in a speech to the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington D.C. on 6 October 2005 that "the militants believe that controlling one country [Iraq] will rally the Muslim masses, enabling them to overthrow all moderate governments in the region and establish a radical Islamic empire from Spain to Indonesia."

Persecution of Christians in Indonesia is both systematic and systemic. It must be condemned. Religious freedom and tolerance in these front line areas represents the best hope of stopping the establishment of a radical Islamic empire. As Christian Siswanto, a Christian leader in West Java said, "Please urge the Indonesian government to change the law so that we can have the right to worship. We should have a right to build our church, to worship. Freedom of worship should be a fundamental human right."

Jim Jacobson is president of Christian Freedom International, www.christianfreedom.org, a US-based human rights organization helping persecuted Christians. Before joining CFI, Jacobson served as a policy analyst in the White House and as a legislative aide in the US Senate. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan.

Her Husband Assassinated; He Loved Muslims Too Much

by Jeff King

went to meet Mrs. M. today. Her husband was a wonderful pastor who loved and reached out to Muslims. He was assassinated recently. I met her in a secluded place overseas because her husband's murder had been widely published and the security service did not allow her to meet with foreigners. Because my host was also a target of the security services, the whole scene was nerve-wracking.

Pastor M. was an outspoken pastor and incredibly bold for Christ. He lived in a Muslim country where people heard the call to prayer five times a day. Not to be outdone, Pastor M. received permission to install a loudspeaker on top of his church in which he broadcasted short prayers and scripture readings to the neighborhood.

He was known for greatly loving Muslims and many came to Christ as a result of his outreach efforts. Because of this, he was warned to stop converting Muslims. Strangers came to his home to inform him that he should not try to bring people to Christ. The threats grew stronger until he was finally told he would be killed if he didn't stop. After each visit, his wife would ask him, "Who were those people and what did they want?" Pastor M. would answer, "It's nothing dear, just business." He did not want her to worry.

Early one morning Pastor M. was martyred for Christ at a train station. Neither his watch nor his money was taken. It was not a robbery; it was an assassination. Mrs. M. was experiencing jetlag when I interviewed her regarding the death of her husband. She stoically related what happened, not showing any emotion. I was unmoved as I listened to her story and began to feel ashamed that I could not feel her pain.

I asked her if International Christian Concern (ICC--the organization I am president of) could help with her living expenses since she had six children, four of whom still lived in the home. Three of the children were girls, and in a Muslim culture a girl without a father is very vulnerable. I told her that I knew the money wouldn't solve her problems but that Christians in America wanted to help. I felt uncomfortable offering her the money because it was such a small response to such an overwhelming situation. Her husband was murdered for Christ and here I was offering her money.

Before I left, I took pictures, shot video footage, gave financial support and prayed for her. As I prayed, I was moved to place my hand on her shoulder. I wondered if I would be crossing a cultural boundary in this fundamentalist Muslim country, but I felt the need to help lift this woman's broken spirit. I began to pray aloud, "Father, sometimes you ask us to carry loads that are too heavy for us. My sister here has one of those loads. Could you touch her and let her know the peace that passes all understanding? Lord, she has a desert to walk through and I pray she would feel your hand holding hers as she walks through."

As I prayed, her shoulder began to gently shake. This was followed by outright heaving and lastly by muffled sobs. I stopped praying and sat with my hand on her shoulder. The muffled sobs turned to uncontrolled weeping. She cried in her own language, "How could they murder him! All he did was love people. He loved the Muslim people." She continued on: "How am I going to live without him? What if they kill my son too?"

My host and a helper immediately started patting her on the back and telling her it would be okay. I think they were embarrassed that I saw this display of emotion. I silently prayed for her. The word says, "Weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15) and I did just that.

Finally I got ready to leave. I stood up and reached down for her hand and she took my hand in both of hers. She looked at me with tear-filled eyes and said thank you in such a way that nearly broke my heart. I left knowing that she had a long road of grief to walk--and that she would most likely do this alone. I also know that one heart was restored that day . . . mine.

Jeff King is president of International Christian Concern, (). King spent eleven years with Campus Crusade for Christ, where he was involved with The CoMission, a ministry which instructed educators of the former Soviet Union on how to teach a Christian-based morals and ethics curriculum to students. King has traveled to nearly forty countries and is committed to supporting the worldwide persecuted Christian Church. This article was edited from a recent story in CONCERN, the free newsletter of International Christian Concern.

Burma: Why Did Military Authorities Close Protestant Churches?

By Benedict Rogers

Three Protestant Full Gospel churches in the capital of Rangoon and a series of Protestant house churches elsewhere in the country have been closed down in the capital of Rangoon since early August, Burmese protestant sources told Forum 18 News Service. Churches reported closed are in the Shan, Chin and Karen states and in the divisions of Mandalay, Yangon (Rangoon) and Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy).

"Church leaders were called in by the military authorities and told to close their churches," one Protestant told Forum 18. "The authorities are worried Christians are going out to the Buddhists, and that they are spreading Western ideas."

However, one Rangoon-based protestant pastor told Forum 18 that the Full Gospel churches were closed because they used to make a lot of noise during services that disturbed neighbors. He said Catholic and other protestant denominations had not been affected.

Until its closure, one of the Full Gospel churches in Rangoon operated several programs, including Bible training courses, women's and youth meetings, weekly worship services, and monthly fasting and prayer. "At present we are not allowed to do any activities - even weekly worship service," a pastor who wished to remain anonymous told The Irrawaddy on 9 September. The Irrawaddy is an exile Burmese news website based in Thailand.

Yet, the Rangoon-based protestant pastor who spoke to Forum 18 believes the recent church closures were not the result of increased religious persecution, but rather a consequence of cultural insensitivity on the part of the Full Gospel Church and its network.

"The problem over the past two or three years has been that the Full Gospel Church, which does not have its own buildings but rents buildings from other people, worships very loudly," he told Forum 18. "They play drums, jump and dance--and so many neighbors have complained. They have held all-night prayer meetings where they pray and worship loudly. Almost the whole city complained. When people complained, the authorities acted and closed these churches down. Other denominations which worship more quietly do not have these problems."

The pastor added that the churches closed down in Chin, Shan and Karen were "new" churches with a similar worship style. None are registered churches.

Although the closures appear to relate mainly to Full Gospel and other pentecostal congregations, the crackdown seems to be wider. One protestant leader in the north of the country from another denomination, whose church has not been closed down, told Forum 18 that he was summoned by a police intelligence officer in August and warned that worship can take place only in a registered church and not in private homes.

"If a church is not registered it is illegal," the leader reported. "I was also warned that working with foreigners or inviting foreigners to preach in the church is likewise illegal."

Several protestant pastors told Forum 18 that in the last three years it has become impossible for protestant congregations without their own building to build a church, or for ones that do have a church to enlarge it to accommodate new members. Six Baptist congregations across the country that have tried to build churches for themselves have been denied permission and were forced to find other places to meet. The Irrawaddy reported that construction on a new Baptist church in Tachileik, a town in Shan state near Burma's eastern border with Thailand, was recently halted. Although the Burmese government has a religious affairs ministry with a network of officials at the local level, protestant sources say it has little authority and that orders to close churches and warnings are delivered directly by the military.

Military authorities closed several protestant churches in 2002- 2003, on the pretext of ending conflicts

within individual congregations but sources told Forum 18 that the closing were mainly an attempt to halt the growth of the churches. Despite the halt imposed on new church buildings three years ago, this is the first major wave of protestant church closures since that time. Conditions continue to vary from one place to another. In some regions, only those who are already Christians are allowed to attend Christian churches, one source reported.

Most of the population of the country is of Buddhist background, while Christians—both Catholic and protestant—make up only 6%. Among protestants, the largest churches are the Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and Assemblies of God.

Military intelligence routinely conducts surveillance on religious meetings and services. "They need to report back to higher authority," one leading protestant told Forum 18. "They secretly bring tape-recorders to services or write down what is said. This is a regular thing - it's no big deal here."

Asked how this was known, the protestant responded: "Our town is small, so we know all the spies." The source believes that the military authorities find such covert surveillance more difficult in mosques, where the community knows other members. Instead military intelligence relies on spies within the Muslim community.

Religious publications are censored by the authorities, with permission required from the censorship board, then from the publications department of the central government in Rangoon, regardless of where the religious community is based in the country.

"If I'm very far from Rangoon I need to go there to present the text of the proposed publication," one source told Forum 18. "If the work is in a minority language it must first be translated into Burmese, then presented to the censorship board. That takes three to six months. Then it goes to the publications department. That takes between six months and a year. And this takes money. You have to pay bribes to each official."

A protestant complained to Forum 18 that "there is no freedom to publish religious literature. If it is against the government it is refused--or if you use the term 'Eternal God' too often, they don't like that in books because of Buddhist teaching."

The source estimates that about a third of proposed publications presented to the authorities are refused permission.

This article was edited from the original story published by Forum 18 News, . Benedict Rogers writes for Christian Solidarity Worldwide, , a human rights organization specializing in religious freedom.

First National Consultation on International Students Ministry in Singapore

By Yvonne Choo

Singapore held their first National Consultation on International Students Ministry (ISM) on 1 October 2005 in St Andrews' Cathedral. The consultation was initiated by representatives of the Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES), Campus Crusade For Christ (Singapore), International Students Inc, Pasir Panjang Hill Brethren and Varsity Christian Fellowship. The objectives of the consultation were:

- 1. To compile a database for the ministry profile of churches and agencies involved in ISM
- 2. To build relationships between the various churches and agencies participating in this ministry
- 3. To establish a common understanding of the guidelines and governing principles for this ministry
- 4. To gain a better understanding of the current situation and challenges of ISM in order for churches and agencies to employ effective strategies for outreach

More than seventy participants from nearly forty churches attended. Mr.Leiton Chinn spoke about the strategic importance of ISM and offered suggestions for future goals of ISM. Miss Yvonne Choo talked about the local context and its challenges. Following this, there was a panel that addressed church and para-church agency collaborations. There was lively interaction between the speakers and the participants.

Conference leaders anticipate an exponential growth in the number of international students in the country over the next few years.

This consultation generated interest in ISM and will hopefully impact world missions. Participants are more informed of the developments in this ministry and hope that there would be adequate follow-up to the consultation. The next consultation is currently being organized. More importantly, all participating churches and agencies hope to see more collaborative and coordinated efforts as a result of this consultation. We continue to pray and hope that God will move mightily among the churches, agencies and students in Singapore.

Yvonne Choo has been the assistant general secretary for Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES, www.fessingapore.org since 1997. Choo is involved with strategizing, training and mobilizing students to reach out to their fellow students.

November 2005

WORLD PERSPECTIVES

Disaster Relief Jesus' Way

By Ginny Feldmann

earing of a disaster in your homeland is hard. Watching helplessly on television while your countrymen are suffering is excruciating. This is how I feel when watching news of the earthquake in Pakistan. This is how I felt on 11 September when the World Trade Towers crumbled to the ground while I was serving in Pakistan.

I was a missionary kid from Pakistan and returned there as a missionary, where I worked in the southern Punjab for eighteen years. I've spent more than half of my life in Pakistan. However, if you are a tall, blonde, single women, you're never quite Pakistani—no matter how familiar you are with the language and culture. And you are never quite American when you return "home." This is how Third Culture Kids often feel.

Yet when tragedies happen to either of my countries, I feel them deeply. The Pakistanis have a fitting word for compassion in Urdu: *humdardi*. *Hum* means "we" and *dard* means "pain." When you are in "we-pain" there's no easy cure for it. You have to let yourself feel it. This is what Jesus felt when he saw the crowds. They were like sheep without a shepherd. It's how he felt when he mourned over the stubbornness of Jerusalem.

You are also compelled to help--whatever is needed, no matter how difficult it may be. This usually involves sacrifice, like it did with Jesus. This time, it seems I may be able to go to back to Pakistan and sit with women who have lost homes, children, husbands, sisters or brothers. Some may have lost an arm or a leg. They may cry while I hold their hand and listen. This is what Job's friends did for seven days before they spoke. Lord willing, I will be able to share some of the comfort I've received from the Spirit. I hope to have the opportunity to pray with them and for them, in Jesus' name. It may not seem heroic, but it's what I can do right now. This is what's needed right now.

Most of these dear folks are Muslims, with a deeply rooted belief in Allah is. They may be thinking: Why did this happen to us? Our life is tough enough as it is, but we dare not complain against Allah. It is his will. These things are supposed to happen to punish wicked people, like Americans who are so immoral. We are trying our best; we were even keeping the fast of Ramadan. The bottom line is you have to accept it. It's how things are. It's how Allah is.

Some may be thinking they need to repent from something sinful.

I have heard my Pakistani Muslim friends express some of these reactions. Other reactions they would never express, especially to me.

As followers of Christ, this is our opportunity to share his love in different and practical ways. We can encourage our churches to give financially and we can give ourselves. We can pray for the suffering. If you're in Pakistan, you can gather donations and money to either distribute yourself or send with another. You can volunteer in a local medical hospital, listen, pray and offer hugs. You can also cook or feed the hungry. You can share the good news as the Lord leads.

We must not allow this time to pass. We must not stand by and do nothing. We must do something because we call ourselves by the name of Jesus, who ordered us to "love your enemies and do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). When I lived in Pakistan, there were many times that I read headlines and graffiti stating hatred of the West. For a variety of reasons, the United States has been their Public Enemy #1 for years.

I plead with you to let yourself feel the "we-pain" and then let Jesus turn it into a love that leads to action. Let us all show these lost sheep that the way to true life is love in action. This is the Jesus way.

To donate to the relief efforts of either the earthquake or Hurricane Stan, please visit:

Serving in Missions (www.sim.org)
Salvation Army (http://www1.salvationarmy.org/)
MAP International (www.map.org)
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Samaritan's Purse (www.samaritanspurse.org)

Ginny Feldmann served in Pakistan with SIM (Serving In Mission) for eighteen years, mentoring young girls in Bible teaching and evangelism. Feldmann also led: Bible studies with believing women; neighborhood visitations; and children's evangelistic Bible classes. She is currently working among South Asians in the Chicago, IL, USA.

Divine Intervention among Diaspora Iranians: A Brief Look at United Kingdom "Asylum Seekers"

By Monroe Brewer

The Assyrian Empire inhabited the Fertile Crescent for seven hundred years and was the dominant power in the Middle East from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C. The prophet Jonah ministered to the northern tribes of Israel (II Kings 14:25) during the midpoint of Assyria's Mesopotamian domination. Around 755 B.C. Jonah traveled to Ninevah, the capital of Assyria, to proclaim judgment against it for its wickedness and violence (Jonah 3:8). Because everyone from the king to the common man repented, God withheld his judgment. It was indeed a great time of turning to the Lord.

Nearly thirty years later, Shalmanezer, king of Assyria, began a three-year siege against Samaria, the northern capital of Israel (II King 17:1-6). During the siege, Shalmanezer died. Sargon II eventually led Israel into captivity in Assyria (II Kings 17:6, 18, 23) and repopulated the empty cities of Israel with residents from cities outside Ninevah (II Kings 17:24). Because the new Assyrian residents in Samaria found themselves terrorized by lions, they went to Sargon II for help. He sent an Israeli priest back to Samaria to teach the Assyrians in Israel the fear the Lord (II Kings 17:25-28). In the midst of judgment, God's love shone through.

Lessons of Samaria and the Assyrians

Throughout history God has used the forced migrations and disruptive movements of peoples for his purposes. We must look at this concept from two viewpoints. In regard to the Assyrians, we see that God loves all peoples and wants all peoples to hear of his love. The Assyrians in Ninevah had heard the message from Yahweh, but those living in outlying cities had not yet heard. God used Sargon II to move the Assyrians to a place where they could learn about the nature and character of God.

Because of their disobedience and unbelief (II Kings 17:7-18), God removed the Jews in Samaria from their homes and sent them into captivity. They experienced great suffering and death; however, God made good come from evil by bringing a priest of Israel back from exile to teach the Assyrians the ways of the Lord. These events occurred over 2,700 years ago. However, God works in similar ways today.

Modern Day Diaspora Movements and Divine Intervention

Diaspora refers to any dispersed segment of a people group living apart from the main body of their people. That God uses such dispersements for his glory is evident in every period of history. We will look at two examples: Afghanistan and Algeria.

First, God used the 1979 Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan to further the spread of the gospel. During the early 1980s, the decision was made to send as many "expendable" evangelical army soldiers as possible from the USSR into the most volatile areas of warfare. It was viewed that if more soldiers were going to die, at least they would be persecuted evangelicals. That decision generated increased prayer support for Afghanistan and helped prepare the way for worldwide prayer support for Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002. Beginning in 1979, over five million Afghan refugees fled their country, possibly the largest forced migration in history at the time. Many landed in refugee camps in northern Pakistan. It was here the refugees first heard the gospel message. Many would have never heard this message had they remained in Afghanistan.

Second, Algeria has suffered through a decade-long civil war that has claimed the lives of 200,000 people. The Algerian military government negated the results of an election that had appeared to swing in favor of fundamentalist Muslims. As a result, Algerian terrorists began brutally murdering fellow citizens in a calculated effort to embarrass, destabilize and overthrow that government. Islamic terrorists murdered up to 2,000 innocent Muslims in a single night. This sometimes happened in towns less than thirty miles from Algiers. Such acts have led millions of Algerians to flee North Africa, resettling in countries like Great Britain, Spain and France. By French government estimates, there are between six and twelve million Muslims in France, the majority being from Algeria. Evangelicals in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Grenoble and elsewhere are planting churches and training leaders among the Algerian diaspora. All this would have been extremely difficult to do within Algeria itself.

The 7 July 2005 Bombings in London

On the morning of 7 July in downtown London, more than fifty people were killed by Muslim terrorists in three bombings in the city's subway system. A fourth bombing also occurred on a bus in Travistock Square. The men were later identified as having grown up in England. They were from families known as "asylum seekers," people from outside the United Kingdom who sought asylum as political and religious refugees. All asylum seekers are financially supported by the UK government and most have never worked a day in their lives.

London newspapers and television stations were aflame with controversy for months after the bombings. Muslim clerics continued to preach hate and mayhem, urging followers to murder British subjects in their Islamic war against the West. In the first round of raids ordered by Charles Clarke, UK's Home Secretary, ten asylum seekers were detained. Eight of the ten men were Algerians. Three Muslims gloated that their lawyers would easily defeat the Home Secretary's attempts to throw Muslim extremists out of the UK. One of these asylum seekers lives with his wife and four children in a \$1.1 million home. Another brags that he has been fully supported by the UK government for nineteen years. Those in Britain are divided in how to proceed. Muslim terrorists appear to be masterfully using the system to wage jihad against the very system that financially supports and protects them.

The Iranian Diaspora in the United Kingdom

Iranians have been flooding into Great Britain for years, seeking financial and political asylum. Here is the story of one such Iranian. Mehrdad (not his real name) came to Christ in the 1970s. He soon became pastor of the largest Muslim-convert church in Iran. Years later the Islamic revolution under the Ayatollah Khomaini was underway and Mehrdad was scheduled to surrender to prison authorities on charges of subversive actions. On the morning he was to surrender, the Ayatollah Khomaini died in the night and the country was thrown into chaos. Christians throughout Iran saw this as God's intervention. At the encouragement of his congregation, Mehrdad fled Iran and landed in the UK, where he began to pastor diaspora Iranians.

The British government had recently begun assigning thousands of Iranian asylum seekers to Glagow, Scotland. Three years ago, a group of these individuals went before a Scottish magistrate in an effort to convince him they had come to the UK as religious refugees and needed protection as persecuted "Christians." Uncertain of the validity of their claims, the judge tested them on basic Christian doctrine; details about the apostles; and the story of Jesus. All failed and the judge denied their request for asylum. Having heard of Mehrdad and his ministry, these Iranians asked for a "crash course" in Christianity.

Mehrdad agreed to help and organized an "Alpha" weekend at a remote conference center. By the end of the weekend, nearly fifty Iranians gave their lives to Jesus Christ. None had ever heard the gospel message.

Mehrdad became their pastor and began discipling each of them. The gospel has spread to their families and friends and there is now a church with over 200 baptized Iranian believers. Each month Mehrdad goes before a magistrate (one of three different judges) as a character witness. He validates the mens' petitions and vouches for the transformation that has occurred in each life. Not one asylum seeker has been turned down in three years. All are now financially supported by the British government and very few are allowed to work. Indirectly, the British government is supporting several hundred Iranian church planters throughout the UK. Churches have been planted in Newcastle and London, and plans to plant Iranian churches in every major city in the UK are underway.

Perhaps the 7 July bombings and the controversy over Muslim asylum seekers in the UK was seen as a victory for Islamic jihad. In reality, God has intervened in the affairs of men to create opportunities where people who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel may hear. And they are hearing in the diaspora.

Dr. Monroe Brewer is Global Missions Pastor at Crystal Evangelical Free Church in Minneapolis, MN USA. He has traveled to over 125 countries, teaching at eleven Bible colleges and seminaries; serving on various organizational boards; and working with hundreds of mission agencies and thousands of missionaries. Brewer has a passion for training leaders in emerging and underground churches in countries such as China, Iran, Algeria and northern India.

Lessons of the Persecuted Church

by Todd Nettleton

"It must be understood that there are no nominal, halfhearted, lukewarm Christians in Russia or China. The price Christians pay is far too great. The next point to remember is that persecution has always produced a better Christian—a witnessing Christian, a soul-winning Christian. Communist persecution has backfired and produced serious, dedicated Christians such as are rarely seen in free lands. These people cannot understand how anyone can be a Christian and not want to win every soul they meet."

—Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, in Tortured For Christ (1967)

pastor Samuel Lamb, one of the great men of China's underground house church movement, often says, "Persecution good for church." He knows this from firsthand experience. During more than twenty years in Communist Chinese prisons, his church grew exponentially.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, founder of The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), saw the same thing in Communist Romania. He once wrote, "I have found truly jubilant Christians only in the Bible, in the Underground Church and in prison."

For Christians in the Western world, this concept is a foreign one. How can persecution be good for the church? How can Christ's followers in restricted nations be truly jubilant in the face of terrible suffering? Wouldn't prosperity, large new gospel palaces and overflowing congregations be a greater sign of God's blessing and lead to more and happier, healthier Christians? The reality is that the church in restricted nations and hostile areas is indeed growing faster—much faster—than churches in the West.

God is using persecution—as he always has—to build and purify his church. He is using it to call more people into sacrificial service to the kingdom. He is using it to spread his love and reach new people with the gospel message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Persecution has purified God's servants in restricted nations. But how do they prepare and persevere? In my travels for VOM, I have met with and interviewed many believers who have endured in spite of persecution. I have seen the smiles of pure, holy joy on their faces, even as they recount incredible pain and suffering. Here are five qualities I've seen that enable believers to flourish.

1. A focus on eternity. Persecuted believers choose not to focus on present circumstances or surroundings. Because they don't, they are able to worship from a jail cell or witness to a policeman

beating them with rods. They focus on the promise that they will spend eternity in the presence of God. This allows them to smile from a prison yard and to feel blessed as they are persecuted. They know that in eternity their rewards will be great. They have seen the truth that Jesus promised--that his followers would face persecution (John 15:20). Now they eagerly await the fulfillment of his promises and the hope of eternity with him (Revelation 22:12).

- **2. A passion for soul-winning.** As with Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, believers in restricted nations are willing to become all things to all men in order that they may win as many as possible to Christ. Their passion for soul-winning is producing an incredible harvest, as thousands are coming to Christ in hostile nations every day. Earlier this year I met a man in Bangladesh named Hasim. He had been a Christian only six months, and he didn't even know how to read. Yet already he'd led more than thirty Muslims to Christ. He had also been beaten for his Christian witness. The persecution didn't slow him down; it deepened his desire to share the gospel with those who haven't yet heard.
- **3. A God-centered (not self-centered) spirit.** John Piper wrote an essay in *World* magazine in which he stated that many American believers have lost their enjoyment of God. "In place of this (enjoyment of God), we have turned the love of God into a divine endorsement of our delight in being made much of," he wrote. His essay points out that Western believers often get far more blessing out of what they get from God than what service they can do for him. Underground church believers don't have this luxury. They are not "made much of," in the worldly sense. In fact, they are beaten down at every turn. But they have a different focus--God. Rather than material blessings, their joy comes from knowing him and doing his work (Matthew 6:33).
- **4. Dedication to God's word.** Bibles in restricted nations often have more value than gold to believers. I have seen Christians in restricted nations smile and laugh like children at Christmas when they open a suitcase of smuggled-in Bibles and other Christian literature. Many feel blessed to have just one page of God's word. They memorize their page, then trade with another believer and memorize that page as well. They know that if they go to prison, the only Bible they will have is the one hidden in their hearts (Psalm 119:11). Therefore, they make it their goal to memorize as much of Scripture as possible.
- **5. Readiness to serve.** Chinese believers know that the Public Security Bureau could come at any time. Believers in Indonesia know that their pastor could be killed. If the pastor is unable to minister in a given gathering, someone else stands up with a message, Scripture or word from the Lord. Believers in house churches seem to have left behind the "here we are; entertain us" attitude prevalent in many Western churches today. Instead, they have grasped Isaiah's words of dedication, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

A careful reading of the scriptures reveals that if we passionately follow Christ, we should not be surprised by suffering. Paul wrote to Timothy that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will endure persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4, "Dear friends, when (not if, but when) the fiery ordeal arises among you to test you, don't be surprised by it, as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah rejoice, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of his glory."

The message is clear: persecution is a not an abnormal part of the Christian walk. Whether we endure direct persecution or not, may we dedicate our lives to growing the qualities in our churches that are so evident among Christians in restricted nations. These qualities will indeed help us to serve our king of kings more passionately and effectively.

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Learning from Persecuted Christians... and Joining in the Struggle

By Carl Moeller

n 1 September 2005, the Indonesian Indramayu local court found Dr. Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun guilty of breaching the 2002 Child Protection Law and sentenced them to three years in prison. The three Christian women were convicted for running a religious education program for children in their community. Islamic leaders became angry when several Muslim children (non-Christians) began to regularly attend the class. According to reports, the Muslim parents consented to the children attending the class and themselves participated in certain activities.

Before hearing the verdict before sentencing, Bangun said, "My hope is, of course, for the judge to set me free, but if his verdict is not so, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, I will continue to love God more than anything. He will give me the best because he is in control."

In Nigeria (another dangerous country for Christians) Ladi, her husband and seven children were doing daily chores in their village when they suddenly heard gun shots. The news quickly spread that fundamental Muslims were attacking the village.

Ladi and her Christian household usually attended morning devotions as part of their daily routine. They had stayed home that morning. Some in the village were at the prayer meetings when the attack started and others were at home. All the men attending the prayer meeting were murdered.

Soon after the initial gun shots were heard, Ladi saw the attackers sweeping through the village – killing, looting and burning. Ladi witnessed the murder of one of her sons. He was running away from Muslim attackers but he was soon caught and hacked into pieces with machetes. Ladi also lost her husband. Her house was looted and burned to the ground. Indeed, the attackers destroyed the entire village. But Ladi remained strong in her faith.

These are only two of the many stories of the Persecuted Church. There are many more. In fact, more than 200 million Christians are being persecuted worldwide for their faith in Jesus Christ. That is more believers than in any previous century. During my two years as president of Open Doors USA, www.opendoorsusa.org, I've learned three wonderful lessons from suffering brothers and sisters in countries such as China, Vietnam, Pakistan and Colombia.

First, persecuted Christians are joyful people. That joy is an exuberance that comes from walking with the Lord during times of persecution. Many pastors I know in Vietnam have been imprisoned at least once for their faith. But they continue to press on with a joyful and grateful heart. Christ can indeed fill us with joy, even during trial, testing and opposition.

Second, persecuted Christians are generous individuals. Most believers have very little. I had lunch with a Christian family in Columbia once and it was only after I left that I realized the lunch probably cost 30% of the family's monthly income. Yet they willingly shared because I was their brother in Christ and part of the family of God.

Finally, persecuted believers are people of faithful prayer. Prayer is the foundation of every step they take. Prayer is their lifeline—the source of their strength. I have learned to be much more dependent on personal prayer.

When I think of what I've learned from persecuted Christians, I can understand why some say persecuted Christians are the ones who are truly blessed. To some degree this is true. However, God allows all things for a purpose. He has given Christians in the West an abundance of resources which can be used to help suffering brothers and sisters around the world. I Corinthians 12:26 says that "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it."

One of the greatest privileges and opportunities in life is to join the awesome work God is doing as he changes lives and redeems the world. Yes, the task may seem overwhelming. But we can partner with thousands of believers who are being used by God. We can all help Christians who are being persecuted in one or more of the five following ways:

- **1. Praying.** Prayer is always the first request we receive from our persecuted brothers and sisters. Our prayers are like long-range missiles. We can make a difference in the lives of persecuted believers in countries such as North Korea, Nigeria and China.
- **2. Staying Informed.** Learn about the needs of suffering believers. Read what is happening to Christians in countries like Iraq. Keeping informed will also help make your prayers more pointed and powerful.
- **3. Giving Of Your Resources.** Our gifts help missions organizations provide Bibles, literacy training, pastoral training, Sunday School materials and much more.
- **4. Mobilizing Others.** Many believers in the West don't know that millions of Christians are being persecuted for their faith. We have the tremendous opportunity to tell others and to mobilize our churches or prayer groups into action.
- **5. Advocating.** Advocacy often takes the form of writing directly to imprisoned Christian prisoners or to officials in countries where prisoners are being held. Indonesia Pastor Rinaldy Damanik, who was released from prison last fall, said he received over 26,000 letters during his two-year imprisonment. The letters encouraged him and strengthened his faith.

Another way to support and strengthen persecuted Christians is by having our churches observe the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. This worldwide event brings together thousands of churches in a special day of prayer. This year IDOP will be held Sunday, 13 November in the United States (Sunday, 6 November in some countries). For more information on IDOP, go to www.opendoorsusa.org.

Remember, our battle is not to end persecution. Our battle is to strengthen the Church to maintain its testimony by professing Christ in the midst of persecution so that others might come to know our Lord as their personal Savior.

Dr. Carl Moeller is President/CEO of Open Doors USA, www.opendoorsusa.org. Open Doors is an international ministry which has supported and strengthened persecuted Christians for fifty years. Moeller formerly ministered with Campus Crusade for Christ and Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA USA.

Islam and Christianity: Why Muslims Dominate and Christians Suffer

By Patrick Sookhdeo

ver since Islam began in the seventh century, there have been Christian communities living as minorities in Muslim-majority contexts. Their circumstances have varied at different times and in different places, but almost always Christians experience some degree of discrimination or hostility. This repeated pattern is not a coincidence—it arises from some of the teachings of Islam.

Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb

A basic precept of classical Islamic teaching divides the world into two kinds of territory, Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb. Dar al-Islam or "the house of Islam" consists of those areas under Muslim control. The rest of the world, which is under infidel (non-Muslim) control, is significantly known as Dar al-Harb, "the house of war." This name is given to infidel-controlled areas because Muslims are obliged to subdue Dar al-Harb and turn it into Dar al-Islam.

This process has often been done through physical warfare, particularly in the early days of Islam. Today many Muslims interpret this obligation not in physical but in spiritual terms, and see it as the task of converting others to Islam by persuasion and argument. For Muslim communities in the West, this includes making the most of the freedoms and opportunities available in democratic societies. This is done by peacefully lobbying and calling for laws and institutions to be reformed to make them more Islamic.

Jihad

The term jihad, often translated in its narrowest sense "holy war," encompasses a wide range of meanings and has been the subject of a vast amount of Muslim literature. Its general meaning is "striving" or "struggling."

Traditionally, jihad has meant physical aggression towards unbelievers with the object of converting them to Islam and installing rule by Islamic law (shari'a). It is the means by which Dar al-Harb is turned into Dar al-Islam. During the twenty-one-year civil war in Sudan which ended earlier this year, the Sudanese government repeatedly declared itself to be engaged in a jihad against the Christians and other non-Muslims of South Sudan. The point at issue was the government's desire to impose shari'a on the South.

Jihad is commanded in the Qur'an:

But when the forbidden months
Are past, then fight and slay
The Pagans wherever ye find them,
And seize them, beleaguer them,
And lie in wait for them
In every stratagem (of war);
But if they repent,
And establish regular prayers
And practice regular charity,
Then open the way for them:
For God is Oft-forgiving,
Most Merciful.¹

In this context "repent" means accepting and converting to Islam. A number of other similar Qur'anic verses take up the same theme. These verses, dating as they do from later in Muhammad's life, are considered to abrogate or cancel out earlier verses with a more peaceable attitude towards non-Muslims.

However, some contemporary Muslims understand jihad in other ways (i.e. only to fight in self-defense, as a struggle for justice or simply the spiritual struggle against one's own sinful inclinations). Most Muslims see no contradiction in holding together the concept of a broad spiritual, social and military struggle in their understanding of jihad. Conflicts such as those in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya and Kashmir are considered to be jihads by many Muslims around the world.

Dhimmi

Classical Islam teaches that Christians, Jews, Sabeans and Zoroastrians who refuse to become Muslims when Dar al-Harb is being turned into Dar al-Islam must be subdued and forced to pay jizya, a special poll tax, and acknowledge the supremacy of Islam. If any refuse to pay this tax, the men are to be killed, the women and children enslaved. It is understood that pagans are to be killed outright unless they convert to Islam.

Non-Muslims who have been subdued in this way are known as dhimmi (literally "protected"), and their Muslim conquerors guarantee their security. This system was exceptional for its time, in that normally a conquered people would be treated far less leniently by their conquerors. Muslims often call this "tolerance" of non-Muslims, meaning they are permitted to live. This "tolerance," however, does not imply equality.

The details of the conditions imposed on dhimmi in return for their protection has varied from place to place and from century to century. But an essential feature was always the humiliation of the dhimmi and their inferior position in Muslim society. This is made clear in a key Qur'anic text:

Fight those who believe not In God nor the Last Day, Nor hold that forbidden Which hath been forbidden By God and His Apostle, Nor acknowledge the Religion Of Truth, (even if they are) Of the People of the Book, Until they pay the Jizya With willing submission, And feel themselves subdued.²

Typically dhimmi would be free to practice their own religion provided they did so discreetly, without causing offense to Muslims. For example, Christian singing should not be audible to the Muslim population.

To build a new church or synagogue, permission had to be obtained from Muhammad himself (and after his death from the very highest authorities). Dhimmi would not be allowed to propagate their religion, especially amongst Muslims. Dhimmis could not hold a position of authority over the Muslim community. Although a Muslim man was allowed to marry a dhimmi woman, a dhimmi man could never marry a Muslim woman. These and many other rules and regulations existed to indicate and reinforce the inferior position of the dhimmi.

Naturally these restrictions tended to breed an attitude amongst Muslims that dhimmi were "unclean," contemptible and not true citizens of the Muslim state. On the other hand, there were occasions when Muslim rulers did faithfully seek to protect and care for their non-Muslim peoples.

The *dhimma* (protection) concept evolved from customs existing in pre-Islamic Arabia, where a strong nomadic tribe would grant protection to a weaker tribe (i.e. would give it military support against an enemy). On at least one occasion Caliph Umar (634-644) returned the jizya which a group of Christians had paid when he found he could not give them the protection from their enemies which he had promised.

However, our Qur'anic text indicates the way in which the practice of dhimma soon developed. Islam would fight the non-Muslims in its territory unless they submitted to dhimmi status. The non-Muslims had no choice about terms and conditions. Dhimma, normally translated "protection," might perhaps be better translated "protection racket."

Some of the dhimma practices were officially abolished in 1856 during the Ottoman Empire. Yet the condition of "dhimmitude" (as it has come to be known) continues. Many of the restrictions and conditions imposed on dhimmi in the early days can still be found in a variety of Muslim countries.

The jizya tax referred to in the Qur'anic quotation above has been revived in Iraq, as Islamic militants visit Christian homes demanding payments. In urban parts of Algeria, Christians must meet discreetly in basements and make sure neighbors cannot hear their singing. In Egypt, Christians must obtain presidential permission to build a new church. They must also get the consent of local governors to effect even minor repairs to an existing church building. In February 2002 a church in Upper Egypt was attacked by a Muslim mob throwing stones and Molotov cocktails. Their rage was provoked by the ringing of church bells before a service to celebrate the completion of some renovation work.

In 1993 a Saudi newspaper published the opinion of learned Muslim scholars that Christians should never be in authority over Muslims, and that the Christian manager appointed at a company should be fired and replaced by a Muslim. Christian officers are not allowed in the Iranian army for this reason. Hamid Pourmand, a convert from Islam to Christianity is currently serving a three-year prison sentence for allegedly failing to inform his army superiors of his new faith and rising to the rank of Colonel while a Christian. In many Muslim countries Christians may propagate their faith amongst non-Muslims but not amongst Muslims. In June 1993 all Christian churches in Iran were ordered to sign a statement saying they would not evangelize Muslims. This was followed by a ban on holding church services in Farsi, the official language of Iran (and the language spoken by all Iranian Muslims).

Most Muslims today would regard the detailed dhimmi system as rather antiquated. Nevertheless the existence of the dhimmi system for hundreds of years has left widespread social prejudice against Christians in place in many parts of the Islamic world. Throughout much of the Muslim world there is an attitude of disdain towards non-Muslims, which is often manifested through the media and through forms of unofficial discrimination. Many minority Christian communities today face prejudice and unofficial discrimination. In modern Western terms, this might be called marginalization, social exclusion or institutional racism.

Apostasy

Not all non-Muslims under Islam can be accorded dhimmi status. Those who have left Islam to embrace another faith are not entitled to any protection. The shari'a specifies that adult male Muslims who embrace another faith must be killed.

There are several references to apostasy from Islam in the Qur'an. The three main ones can be found in Sura 3:86-91, Sura 16:106-109 and Sura 88:23-24. All three references indicate that converts will be punished. Sura 16:106 says:

- but such as Open their breast to Unbelief, -On them is Wrath from Allah, And theirs will be A dreadful penalty.³

However no Qur'anic verse specifies whether this punishment will occur in the afterlife, or whether it is to be carried out by the Muslim faithful before death. Neither does any specify exactly what the punishment will be.

Yet, it is a different matter in the hadith, the secondary source for shari'a after the Qur'an, which includes traditions recording the words and deeds of Muhammad and his first followers. The hadith contains many references to apostasy from Islam, all of which agree that converts from Islam should be put to death. This makes the death sentence for apostasy a very well attested part of orthodox Islamic law and teaching, not a distortion or later addition by extremists. Death for apostasy is still practiced today.

Dr Y. Zaki, a leading British Muslim and a Scotsman who converted to Islam, has succinctly explained the reason: "Islam is not just a religion, it's a state, and Islam does not distinguish between sacred and secular authority ... apostasy and treason are one and the same thing." Since treason is punishable by death, he argued, so too is apostasy.

There is some disagreement amongst the various schools of law concerning the treatment of a female apostate (typically she should be imprisoned until she returns to Islam) and also lesser punishments concerning issues such as property and inheritance which presuppose that the apostate has been permitted to live. Capital punishment for apostasy from Islam is the law in some Islamic countries today. In Saudi Arabia Sadiq 'Abdul-Karim Malallah was publicly beheaded in September 1992 after being convicted of apostasy and blasphemy for converting from Sunni to Shi'a Islam. It is reported that a Saudi convert to Christianity was executed earlier this year (2005). In Iran Hussein Soodmand was hanged for apostasy in 1990. In 1993 Mehdi Dibaj was sentenced to death for apostasy, but was released a few weeks later due to international publicity of his case. He was abducted and killed in under mysterious circumstances the following summer. Mahmoud Mohamed Taha was a renowned Islamic scholar, moderate and reformer who was executed in Sudan in January 1985 because he published a leaflet calling for the reform of Islamic law. Qatar also has the death penalty for apostasy, but it is not known to have been enforced.

Even where the death sentence for apostasy is not the law of the land, converts from Islam are in danger of being murdered by zealous Muslims who believe they are pleasing God and fulfilling his law. In recent years this has increasingly been by beheading (as in the 2004 death of Abdul Gani, a medical doctor in Bangladesh who had converted from Islam nine years earlier).

Blasphemy

Closely related to the Islamic understanding of apostasy is Pakistan's modern blasphemy law. This law has been made increasingly severe. The crime of defiling, damaging or desecrating a copy of the Qur'an is punished with life imprisonment, while "defiling the name" of Muhammad carries a mandatory death sentence (Sections 295-B & C of the Pakistan Penal Code).

Since such defilement is not defined in the law, Christians (and others) are very vulnerable to malicious accusations. Dozens of Christians have been accused of this crime. Although no one has yet been officially executed for blasphemy, several Christians have been murdered before or during the legal process by zealous extremists who took the law into their own hands. Those who survive the legal process must go into hiding permanently. In October 1997 a Lahore High Court judge was killed by Islamic gunmen for acquitting two Christians on blasphemy charges. Often the family of the accused, or even the whole local Christian community, also receive threats and are forced to leave their village or town and move in secret to a new area.

Voices in Bangladesh are calling for a similar blasphemy law to be introduced in that community. Even in the United Kingdom, some Muslim leaders have made it clear they hope the proposed new law which bans incitement to religious hatred will be in effect a blasphemy law to protect Muhammad from criticism.

Shari'a (Islamic law)

The regulations laid down in the shari'a cover political, military, social, economic and family matters, indeed every aspect of life. The cornerstone of conservative Islamic belief is a desire to return to the

early days of Islam, with shari'a as the basis of all legislation. This is the goal for which Islamic militants are fighting, and which many other Muslims are also working for by peaceable means. Countries where extremists or conservative Muslims are either in power or are very influential, such as Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Iran, have introduced laws which by modern Western standards are illiberal and harsh.

Introducing such legislation affects the general attitude of the Muslim majority in that the former tend to become less tolerant and the latter more contemptuous and hostile. Difficulties of the Christians increase not only in official and legal ways but also in terms of unofficial discrimination, which leads to violence.

Even countries not ruled by extremists, such as Malaysia or Pakistan, have moved towards stricter legislation in line with shari'a in attempts to placate conservative Muslims. In lawless regions such as Somalia (and Chechnya during its de facto independence from Russia in the 1990s), Islamic militias and warlords imposed shari'a law which brought some order to regions in chaos, but also brought serious human rights problems.

In places such as Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, this trend towards increasing strictness goes beyond what shari'a requires. In Muslim-majority Northern Nigeria, twelve states have moved from partial shari'a (i.e. covering family and inheritance matters for Muslims only) to full shari'a in the last six years. Christians in the region find themselves obliged to conform to regulations which should only apply to Muslims, affecting for example, what they wear and how they travel on public transport. In Iraq many Islamic militants have the avowed aim of cleansing the country of Christians altogether; this is contrary to shari'a, which does permit Christians to live in Islamic societies. Similarly the Laskar Jihad's genocidal campaign in Indonesia in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries sought to cleanse certain areas of Christians by killing them, expelling them or forcing them to convert to Islam. Laskar Jihad did not offer Christians the shari'a-sanctioned option of submitting to Islam and living as dhimmi. The same now seems to be happening in Indonesia's Aceh Province, which is ruled by shari'a. Many Muslims are attempting to prevent Christians who fled the December 2004 tsunami from returning to the province.

Conclusion

The subjugation of Christians by Muslims is a phenomenon repeated around the world from the seventh century to the twenty-first century. Effectively, there is a cycle in which discriminatory laws reinforce discriminatory attitudes, which in turn leads to calls for more discriminatory laws. Unlike Christianity, Islam has no teaching about loving your enemy, nor that all human beings are of equal worth. There is nothing to break this cycle--unless Islam itself can be reformed in line with modern concepts of human rights and religious liberty. Although such a reformation is unthinkable to Islamic radicals, there is a small but growing body of Muslims calling for reform. They need the prayers of Christians as their task is dangerous and lonely. They could pay for it with their lives, whether by execution by a radical state (as for Taha) or murder by a radical individual. But without their lead, it is unlikely that the plight of Christians under Islam will ever really improve.

Such a reformation should introduce to Islam the concept of genuine tolerance of non-Muslim minorities, as understood to include equal status with the Muslim majority. The oft-repeated myth of Islam being already a religion of peace and tolerance must be exposed as wishful thinking, for the more it is repeated, the more the lines between truth and fiction become blurred. Where Islam is a minority, it favors tolerance (in the Western sense) and peace, but whenever it becomes a majority, it moves into a position of domination, power and inequality.

No doubt there are those who will take issue with Barnabas Fund on this point. But what we are trying to do is reflect the reality of daily experience for millions of Christians living in the Muslim world.

Endnotes

- 1 Sura 9:5 (A. Yusuf Ali's translation) 2 Sura 9:29 (A. Yusuf Ali's translation)
- ³ A. Yusuf Ali's translation

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Persecution of Christians in the Muslim World

By Patrick Sookhdeo

While most Muslim states have signed United Nations declarations on human rights, they usually add caveats stating these are accepted as long as they do not contradict Islamic law (shari'a). Shari'a is inherently discriminatory to non-Muslims and strongly influences the thinking and behavior of most Muslims, whether or not it has any formal place in a country's legislation.

Christians face a variety of situations and attitudes in Muslim majority countries. The experience of Christians in stable moderate states like Jordan is quite different from that of Christians in Iran, Saudi Arabia or Sudan.

Root Causes of Persecution

The first generation of Muslims was a minority in the non-Muslim world it set out to conquer. For the Muslims, this created a sense of defensiveness and a fear of being overwhelmed by the conquered communities that persist today in spite of centuries of Muslim dominance. Even in modern secular Muslimmajority states, Islam and shari'a have such a hold on public perceptions that attitudes of contempt and practices of discrimination against non-Muslims are accepted as normal.

1. Traditional Muslim Attitudes as Set Out in the Shari'a

Christians and Jews ruled by Muslims had the legal status of dhimmis (they were allowed to keep their own faith and given protection in return for submitting to Muslim rule). However they were considered subordinate and inferior, not a part of the mainstream community of the Islamic state. The limited rights belonging to non-Muslim communities in a Muslim state are set out in the shari'a.

Behind these restrictions lay the conviction that Muslims are superior to other religious groups, and that this is ordained by God. Therefore only Muslims are full citizens.

Shari'a restrictions on dhimmis included a ban on public displays of Christian symbols. Dhimmis were required to dress in distinctive fashion so as not to be mistaken for Muslims. They were not allowed to carry arms, have higher public positions than Muslims or insult Islam in any way. They could not give evidence in court against Muslims, and were not permitted to marry Muslim women. They could not build new churches except by special permission from the head of state. They had no political rights and had to pay a special poll-tax. These shari'a restrictions still influence public and government attitudes to Christians even in states with secular constitutions.

Any non-Muslims who sought equality with Muslims were considered to have broken the protection pact, and therefore could be attacked by military force. This is why modern Christian demands for a secular state with equal rights for all citizens regardless of religion are seen by some Muslims as a rebellion against God's law. This opens the way for persecution.

2. Rising Power of Islamism

The post-colonial period has seen a rising tide of radicalism within Islam, often called Islamism. This has fuelled hostility towards Christians and has eroded the hard-won freedoms gained in the colonial and independence era. The Islamist program includes:

- **1. Islamization of Muslim-majority states** by destabilizing secular regimes and replacing them with systems based on shari'a. In Iran and Sudan this has already taken place. Algeria and Egypt are examples of countries where violent attempts have thus far been thwarted, but the danger remains.
- **2. Implementation of shari'a.** There is widespread and often violent agitation for implementation in most Muslim states and in countries with large Muslim minorities. This would herald a return to the traditional dhimmi status of Christians.
- **3. Destabilization of the border areas of Islam.** This is carried out by radical Islamist movements with the aim of expanding the area of Muslim dominance. Examples include the Philippines, Thailand, Nigeria, Sudan, Indonesia and Ivory Coast. Sometimes the radical Islamists try to cleanse a region of Christians by killing them or forcing them to convert to Islam.

Christian Response to Pressures

Christians in Muslim lands face an identity crisis as they seek to be loyal to their nations while facing persecution by dominant Islam. Christian attempts to influence internal politics or to seek western pressure on their governments often backfire. They are seen as "proving" to Muslims that they are western collaborators who have forgotten their rightful subservient place in Muslim society.

Sources of Persecution

- 1. The State. In some countries it is the state that persecutes Christians through unjust laws; restrictions on church activities; and arbitrary arrest, torture and imprisonment. In several Muslim states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran and Sudan, the law specifies the death sentence for a Muslim who converts to another religion. In Iran the government has severely restricted the activities of Protestants, closing several churches and the Bible Society. Churches are forbidden to hold services in Farsi, the national language. Several Christian leaders have been abducted and killed, apparently by the secret services. One convert from Islam has been executed. (See below for examples from Saudi Arabia and Sudan.)
- **2. Radical Islamist Groups.** Islamists are pressuring governments to become more Islamic; implement shari'a; and take a more negative stance towards Christians. Armed Islamist militias attack Christians to reinstate Muslim superiority and dominance in all areas. In parts of Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan and other states this has been an ongoing and intensifying process. Governments are often unwilling to defend their Christian citizens effectively because of the powerful influence of radical Islamists.
- **3. Communal and Mob Violence.** Following incitement by radical preachers, mob violence has repeatedly erupted against Christians in various contexts where Christians had previously lived in relative peace with their Muslim neighbors. This has happened in Nigeria, Indonesia and Egypt, among others.

Types and Stages of Persecution

Disinformation. Disinformation about Christianity is widespread in the Muslim media and in mosques. Articles, radio, television broadcasts, sermons and pamphlets often parody the Christian faith and rob Christians of their good reputation. Offensive language, insults and unfounded accusations about Christians are often heard in public discourse. Traditional Muslim views of Christians as impure, unbelievers and second-class citizens are reinforced.

Discrimination. Public opinion fed with disinformation results in discrimination against Christians in education, employment, the judicial system and allocation of resources. Official and unofficial bureaucratic hurdles are placed before Christians seeking their constitutional rights. Appeals and complaints by Christians are typically ineffective and often counter-productive.

Christians often find it difficult to get jobs in the civil service, security forces and higher education. Christians may be excluded from the political system. They often do not get merited promotion. Legal discrimination based on shari'a means that in some states the witness of a Christian in court is worth less than that of a Muslim. Therefore, compensation is less for Christians than for Muslims. Blasphemy and apostasy laws are sometimes used to threaten Christians with the death penalty or imprisonment.

Outright Persecution. The effects of disinformation and discrimination are cumulative and mean that persecution can be practiced without public outcry or opposition.

- **1. Repression.** In many Muslim states it is difficult or impossible to repair churches or to build new ones. Churches may be closed down. Christian schools, hospitals, clinics and orphanages may be nationalized or their work obstructed by bureaucracy and legal hurdles. Christians often face threats, intimidation, loss of employment and other forms of harassment.
- **2. Violence.** In certain contexts violence is perpetrated on Christians and their property. These raids may be implemented by Islamist extremists, security forces, paramilitaries or mobs. Christians are arbitrarily arrested, beaten, jailed and tortured.

Examples of Persecution

Indonesia. The "Pancasila" state philosophy established a fairly tolerant modern state identity. However, Islamic revival has seen the growth of radical groups demanding an Islamic state under shari'a and the formation of Islamist militias such as Laskar Jihad and Jema' a Islamiyya.

The loss of majority Christian East Timor (1999-2002) was a source of deep shame in Indonesia. It generated a desire for revenge against the West (which had supported East Timor's demands for independence). Indonesian Christians were accused of separatist sentiments and of being allies of the "Christian" West.

Central Sulawesi, the Malukus and Papua have been infiltrated by thousands of radical Indonesian and foreign militias. Militant Islamists have engaged in brutal ethnic cleansing of Christian regions in which perhaps as many as 30,000 have been killed. Forcible conversions of Christians to Islam, including forced circumcisions, were carried out. Christian women were raped. The security forces in these regions have often been complicit in violence against Christians.

Nigeria. Although almost equal in number, Muslims and Christians are unevenly distributed. There are three belts: the Muslim majority north; the Christian majority south; and the middle belt where Christians and Muslims are approximately equal. Ethnic, religious and regional differences combine to form an explosive mixture.

Nigerian politics have been mainly dominated by Muslims since the 1960s. The rapid spread of Christianity and the election of Christian president Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 caused Muslims to fear losing their supremacy. This was coupled with growing Islamist infiltration. The imposition since 1999 of full shari'a in twelve states was seen by some Muslims as a license to discriminate against Christians. There has been much inflammatory preaching resulting in mob violence and riots. Muslim leaders stated that shari'a would not apply to non-Muslims, but in reality, gender segregation, Islamic dress and other Islamic practices are being forced on them.

During Obasanjo's first four years in office (1999-2003), over 10,000 people (mainly Christians) were killed in the anti-Christian violence.

Egypt. Historically the Christian Copts (now approximately 12% of population) were dhimmis in an Islamic state. Christians face great difficulties in obtaining permits to repair churches. To build a new church still requires presidential permission, which is slow and difficult to obtain. Islam is taught in all state schools to all pupils, but Christianity cannot be taught to Christian children. Coptic teachers cannot teach Arabic. Copts are encouraged to convert to Islam, but Muslims who convert to Christianity face harassment and severe persecution.

There has been a rising tide of violence by radical Islamists against Copts – riots, destruction of property, killings, abductions and forced conversions.

Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government enforces a strict and puritanical form of Islam called Wahhabism. Non-Muslims are not allowed any public expression of their faith, and many have been arrested simply for meeting for prayer in private homes. No church buildings, pastors, Bibles or crosses are allowed. House church leaders and believers have been harassed, arrested, abused, beaten by religious police, imprisoned and finally deported. Filipinos, Sri Lankans and others from the developing world are especially targeted.

Sudan. North Sudan is dominated by Muslim Arabs, and the Khartoum government has tried hard to Arabize and Islamize the mainly African Christian and animist South. This led to a civil war which raged from 1983 to January 2005.

The 1989 coup brought to power an Islamist government that declared a jihad against the South. It is estimated that the civil war caused the death of two to three million people and led to the displacement of a further four to five million. Many atrocities were reported, including the aerial bombardment of civilians and of humanitarian facilities; deliberate denial of international assistance; abduction and enslavement of women and children; and rape. Large refugee camps sprouted around Khartoum, where Southerners (mainly Christians) lived in the most primitive conditions due to intermittent harassment by authorities. While peace treaties bring hope for a better future, only time will tell whether they will be implemented.

Pakistan. The Christian community (3% of the population) is mainly descended from low-caste Hindus who have converted to Christianity. They form the poorest class and do menial jobs. Poverty and discrimination restrict their access to education, employment and to justice in the courts.

The notorious "Blasphemy Law" decrees death for anyone who "defiles" the name of Muhammad.

This law has been abused by Muslims seeking to settle personal grudges against Christians. There is no penalty for false accusations of blasphemy, and law courts have a tendency to believe Muslims rather than Christians. Many Christians have been accused of blasphemy, and some accused have been murdered by zealous Muslims.

Since the American attack on Afghanistan in 2001, armed militant Islamists have attacked churches and other Christian institutions and murdered many Christians. In 2002 alone, more than forty Christians were killed and more than 100 injured in such attacks.

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November 2005

PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Corresponding with Christians across the World amidst Restrictions and Persecution

by Justin Long

estrictions and persecution are two realities that cast long shadows over work amongst unreached peoples. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity, www.globalchristianity.org, estimates there are 1.8 billion unevangelized people in our world. Nearly 24% reside in forty-one majority-unevangelized (World A) countries where restrictions are severe. Nearly 73% live in fifty-three majority-evangelized, minority-Christian (World B) countries where restrictions, although lighter, remain present. Only 2% of the world's least-reached peoples live in mainly Christianized Western countries.

In general, persecution is less today than it has been under other world empires. Researchers estimate that 175,000 people are martyred each year. Under the Roman Empire, the rate of martyrdom was much more severe, and under some world empires (such as that of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane) it was catastrophic. Although more people have died for their faith in this century than in all previous centuries combined, this is not because persecution is more severe. Rather, it is because the church today is much larger, consisting of hundreds of millions of people. Even a small percentage of Christians being martyred can mean tens of thousands of people. Also, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the average rate of martyrdom, according to missiologists, has been cut nearly in half. Satan's forces are hard at work against the Church, but the victory is through Christ Jesus is assured. Already our world has seen divine breakthroughs, and we know the best is yet to come.

However, persecution is a reality today and it reaches those who work among unreached peoples. The following is a small sampling:

- **Afghanistan** used to be as restrictive as Saudi Arabia. Christians were often rooted out and summarily killed. The situation is now muddled with the entrance of United States and allied forces; however, Christians in Afghanistan still face heavy restrictions, a block on open evangelism and a threat from radicals and general lawlessness.
- In **Algeria** Muslims may not convert to Christianity and converts may be arrested, imprisoned and ostracized. Christianity's presence in Algeria is very small and is currently declining.
- In **Azerbaijan** there is "officially" freedom of religion; however, an Islamic revival has caused many to be less open to Christianity. Church growth is perceived as a threat to national culture. The government pressures converts both directly and indirectly, and the church's share of Azerbaijan's population is in decline.

- **Bhutan** has a restriction on evangelism and conversion and Buddhism continues to form significant social and official barriers to Christianity. Converts face serious consequences for their decision to trust in Christ.
- In **Brunei** evangelism is illegal and there is only limited freedom of worship. The enormous influence of government subsidies form significant social barriers to the gospel.
- **Cambodia** is experiencing a new freedom after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. Yet, although there is freedom to worship and evangelize, Christians are generally looked upon as second-class citizens. However, the church is growing rapidly.
- In **Djibouti** there is freedom of religion and freedom to evangelize; however, the church is very small and often harassed. Islam continues to put up strong social barriers to evangelism.
- **Iran**'s government is nearly as restrictive as Saudi Arabia, with secret police forces ruthlessly rooting out all Christian presence. Many horror stories of arrest, torture and executions have emerged.
- **Iraq**'s government under Saddam Hussein was both restrictive and somewhat amenable to Christians. Humanitarian aid was allowed and some Bible distribution was permitted. The future of governmental decisions is still unclear. There is a window of opportunity to share the gospel; however, Christians must be careful in how they go about this.
- In **Israel** there is freedom to evangelize within one's own community; however, Jewish Christians are granted no rights and often denied entrance. There is freedom to evangelize, but it is frowned upon. The government has unsuccessfully pressed for new restrictions on evangelism with a significant piece of anti-missionary legislation posed in the mid-1990s that did not pass. The paradox is that although many Christians support Israel, many Jews see Christians as the destroyers of their nation (either through the Holocaust or proselytization).
- **Jordan**'s constitution establishes Islam as the state religion but guarantees freedom to worship and evangelize. Christians are even represented in the government. Evangelizing Muslims is illegal but Muslims may convert on their own, however, those who do so will face discrimination. Anyone may be a Christian without registering with the government, but registration is required to purchase and use property.
- **North Korea** remains one of the most closed nations. The government is solidly opposed to religion and quashes Christian groups with regularity. However, Christian groups are permitted in if they are bringing aid and relief.
- In **Nepal** there is constitutional freedom of religion, freedom to change religion and freedom to worship. Although not permitted, evangelism still occurs. The church in Nepal is rapidly growing—so much so that it is "growing into persecution."
- In **Oman** expatriates have freedom to worship; however, there is no freedom to change religion. Christians may evangelize other expatriates but may not evangelize Muslims--and Muslims may not attend Christian services. Although there are restrictions, there is little immediate personal danger.
- **Pakistan**'s blasphemy law prevents Muslims from converting. There are separate electorates for religious minorities. Evangelism is not permitted and the Christian community as a whole is very fragmented. Although there are thousands of secret believers, few openly share their new faith for fear of retribution.
- **Saudi Arabia**'s government remains one of the most ruthless and restrictive in the world. A bounty of a year's salary is offered to anyone who reports a Bible study. Westerners are expelled if caught at a Bible study, but others—Asians, for example—are arrested, imprisoned, often tortured and sometimes killed.
- In **Tajikistan** freedom of religion is protected by the constitution and missionaries are allowed to evangelize openly. However, they are often opposed by local Muslims. Some churches have been attacked by radicals. Persecution is isolated but growing, and the church is in rapid decline.
 - Tunisia's constitution proclaims Islam to be the state religion and stipulates the chief of state must

be a Muslim. However, it does guarantee freedom of conscience and freedom of worship. The government tolerates Christians but does not favor evangelism, and although there is little overt, harsh persecution, Islam has thoroughly permeated the society.

- In **Turkey** there is freedom to worship and discreet evangelism is possible; however, the church continues to struggle with the strong grip of Islam. Legal recognition of the church, although possible, is very slow, and some expatriates have been expelled from the country.
- In **Turkmenistan** there is limited freedom to evangelism and the church is often harassed. The number of Christians is declining rapidly, and for the foreseeable future it is likely that the size of the church will be determined by the size of the expatriate community.

Anyone wanting to contact workers in these countries would be advised to first work carefully to establish a security protocol. This is sometimes difficult. It is hard to garner support for something you cannot talk about—and yet talking about it can threaten the lives of individuals. When writing to someone, do not speak too frankly and intimately in the first email. Explain who you are and that you share their interests. Ask whether the current address is okay to use for conversation and correspondence. They may give you a different address. Also, think twice before posting their prayer letter to your church's website. Remember that anyone may have access to this information, including people who don't necessarily want to see the gospel message preached.

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November 2005

TRENDS AND STATISTICS

Analysis of the growth in the church and missions

World Christian Trends 2005

By Todd M. Johnson

The starting point for a clear assessment of where the church is in the world is to make sense of the enormous amount of information collected by churches every year. Every year they hold a huge census (a megacensus!) costing \$1.1 billion, for which they send out ten million questionnaires in 3,000 languages covering 180 religious subjects. This includes church surveys such as the Roman Catholic Annuario Pontificio and detailed country studies done by Evangelical Alliances and others. Over half of the world's governments include a question on religion in their decennial censuses as well.

Two Contrasting Views of Church Statistics

Two contrasting views of church membership censuses have emerged. The first is the so-called objective view. In the 1960s sociologists often predicted the complete demise of organized religion, including Christianity. In 1968, Peter Berger told the New York Times that by AD 2000 "religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture." At the same time, a second view was emerging as missionaries around the world noticed the rapid expansion of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Anglican Missionary David Barrett published an article in the International Review of Mission in January 1970 projecting that by AD 2000 there would be 350 million Christians in Africa.

In 2005, we see that this latter view was a more accurate depiction of what Christianity and religion would look like around the world. Nonetheless, there is still a latent tendency to consider church statistics as exaggerated and notoriously unreliable. Fortunately, the annual documentation of church members around the world provides strong evidence that counting Christians is a thorough and reliable discipline.

Bookkeeping vs. Accounting

If churches are collecting this valuable information, what is the role of a research center dedicated to collecting and analyzing church statistics? One parallel is the distinction between bookkeeping and

accounting. Bookkeeping is "recording financial transactions," whereas accounting is defined as "the system of classifying and summarizing financial transactions and analyzing, verifying and reporting the results." In the financial world, only accounting is seen as essential in making sense of financial transactions. Similarly, researchers in global Christianity make sense of information collected by churches. One example is from a web site which states there are 2.3 million Episcopalians in the United States, compared to sixty-two million Roman Catholics and sixteen million Southern Baptists.¹ The three numbers quoted above are not comparable. Roman Catholics and Episcopalians count baptized infants and children, whereas Southern Baptists do not. Without adjustments, the numbers are not accurate in comparing one denomination to another.

Global Religious Demographics

The intersection of demographic data with religious affiliation (shown in Table 1) provides us with several interesting trends.² Note that Christians (or Evangelicals) take up twice as much floor area per person as ethnoreligionists or Muslims. Another trend is that Christians and Buddhists are approximately forty times richer than Hindus.

Religion	Floor Area	Human Devel- opment Index	Male Literacy	Female Literacy	Gross National Product pc	
Christians	23	73	88	81	\$8,224	
Evangelicals	22	64	82	72	\$8,038	
Atheists	15	67	92	79	\$3,544	
Buddhists	17	69	92	82	\$8,951	
Ethnoreligionists	11	48	75	56	\$998	
Hindus	12	45	65	38	\$441	
Muslims	11	54	68	48	\$1,655	
Nonreligious	16	68	91	78	\$4,176	
Non-Christians	13	58	78	60	\$2,907	

TABLE 1: Global Religious Demographics

The megacensus of global Christianity reveals at least seven signposts of God's initiative in our day.

Signpost #1: The Size, Diversity, and Vitality of Global Christianity

There are today more than 37,000 denominations. These are listed for each of the world's 238 countries in the World Christian Database, www.worldchristiananddatabase.org and can be grouped into six major ecclesiastical megablocs:

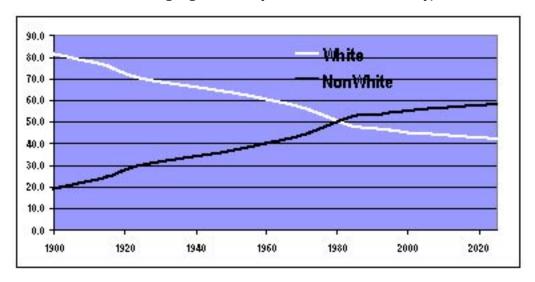
Roman Catholics	1,119 million
Independents	427 million
Protestants	376 million
Orthodox	220 million
Anglicans	80 million
Marginal	34 million

The fastest growing bloc is the Independents which now make up 20% of Christians. We are witnessing some of the fastest Christian expansion in China with 10,000 new converts (babies born to Christians, adult conversions) every day.³ At the same time, Christianity is also growing in the form of non-baptized believers in Christ (NBBCs). In 2005 there are approximately twelve million (counted as both Hindus and Christians).⁴

At the same time, Philip Jenkins has highlighted the consequences of the southern shift of gravity of Christianity.⁵ In 1900 81% of all Christians were Caucasian. By 2005 this has dropped to 43%. Graph 1 illustrates this phenomenon.⁶

Though it may be fashionable to speak of Southern Christianity or non-Western Christianity, it is important to realize that this is by no means a monolithic, homogeneous category. In fact, Christians in the South⁷ are comprised of 22,500 denominations, 6,000 peoples and 10,000 languages. In a similar

GRAPH 1: The Changing Ethnicity of Global Christianity, AD 1900-2025



fashion, Christians of the North⁸ represent 11,300 denominations, 3,000 peoples, and 3,500 languages. Table 2 illustrates that although the largest Christian countries are shifting to the South, by 2050 the largest Christian country in the world will still be the USA.

TABLE 2: Countries with the Most Christians, 1005, 2025, 2050

2005	Christians (millions)	2025	Christians (millions)	2050	Christians (millions)	
USA	252	USA	295	USA	329	
Brazil	167	Brazil	193	China	218	
China	111	China	173 Bra.		202	
Mexico	102	Mexico	123	DR Congo	145	
Russia	85	India	107	India	137	
Philippines	74	Philippines	97	Mexico	131	
India	68	Nigeria	95	Nigeria	130	
Germany	62	DR Congo	91	Philippines	112	
Nigeria	61	Russia	85	Ethiopia	104	
DR Congo	53	Ethiopia	67	Uganda	95	

However, there are still unique roles for Northern Christians in the future of global Christianity. The following are a few examples:

- 1. Engaging culture on a missiological, philosophical, theological and ecclesiastical level
- 2. Bioethics and genetics
- 3. Financial accountability
- 4. Reaching postmodern youth
- 5. Radical contextualization beyond Christianity
- 6. As members of multinational churches and missions
- 7. Science and theology
- 8. Pilgrimage sites
- 9. Scholarship on pre-modern Christianity

Another reality is that Christianity has yet to be represented among the 13,000 cultures not yet penetrated with the gospel and therefore not represented among the "ethne" of Matthew 28.

Signpost #2: The Massive Evangelistic Enterprise of Global Christianity

Every year Christians expend enormous amounts of time and energy in global evangelization. For example, regular listeners to Christian programs over secular or religious radio/TV stations rose from 22% of the world in 1980 to 30% in 2000. Scripture distribution has also grown dramatically. There are

more than 227 million Bibles in certain non-Christian countries--more than needed to serve all Christians. These, however, are poorly distributed.

Christian martyrdom also plays a unique role in world evangelization. Seventy million Christians have been martyred since Christ—over half of these in the twentieth century.9 The five most dangerous vocations (greatest likelihood of being martyred) include bishops, evangelists, catechists, colporteurs and foreign missionaries.

The most significant conclusion in a survey of evangelization is that with 1.27 trillion hours of evangelism produced by Christians in 2005, there is enough evangelism for every person to hear a one-hour presentation of the gospel every other day all year long. The irony cannot be lost that over 1.7 billion people still have no opportunity to hear of Christ, Christianity or the gospel.

Signpost #3: The Challenge of Managing Resources

The personal income of Christians globally exceeds \$17 trillion (US). Seventy-eight countries have Great Commission Christians whose personal incomes exceed \$1 billion a year. Nonetheless, emboldened by lax procedures, trusted church treasurers are embezzling \$21 billion out of church funds each year. Only 5% is ever recovered. Annual church embezzlements by top custodians exceed \$20 billion—the entire cost of all foreign missions worldwide.10

Signpost #4: The Continuing Challenge of the Unfinished Task

Throughout the twentieth century, Christians of various traditions were offering books, conferences, pamphlets and ideas on how the world could be evangelized in a relatively short period of time. We call these "global plans." A short list appears here.11

1900 1908	The evangelization of the world in this generation The modern crusade
1900	The whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world
1912	Reaching every home
1914	Inauguration of the Kingdom of God on earth
1929	Each one teach one
1930	Bringing Christ to the nations
1934	Evangelize to a finish to bring back the king
1943	Into all the world
1946	Complete Christ's Commission
1950	Help open paths to evangelize
1956	The gospel to every creature
1957	Global conquest
1959	Two thousand tongues to go
1963	The master plan of evangelism
1967	Crusade for world revival
1974	Let the earth hear his voice
1976	Bold Mission Thrust
1980	A Church for Every People by the Year 2000
1984	Strategy to Every People
1986	One million native missionaries
1990	Decade of Evangelization

There is a strong tendency to recreate plans without reference to previous plans. The most significant problem with this list of plans is the passage of time. One can see this in Samuel Zwemer's Unoccupied Mission Fields of Africa and Asia (1911). He wrote this book in response to a request for a pithy survey on the unfinished task from the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. Much has stayed the same in the nearly 100 years since the book was published. His description of the unfinished task in 1911 stretching from Morocco to Indonesia is largely true today.

There is one simple explanation for the failure of all of these global plans: Over 90% of all Christian evangelism is aimed at other Christians and does not reach non-Christians. As long as this is the case, the world will not be evangelized and the unreached peoples will not be reached.

Signpost #5: The Responsiveness of the Least-Reached Peoples

At the same time, recent research has uncovered a remarkable fact. A study of the responsiveness of the world's peoples (baptism rate divided by hours of evangelism) has revealed that the most responsive are the least reached. For populations over one million, the top five are the Khandeshi of India, the Awadhi of India, the Magadhi of India, the Bai of China, and the Berar Marathi of India.¹²

Signpost #6: The Suitability of Postmodern Youth for World Mission

Converging with these trends is the changing nature of today's global postmodern youth. Many church and mission observers see this as negative, fearing issues such as encroaching relativism. A positive of postmodernity is found in the title of a recent conference: "Out of the Christian Ghetto: French Roast Tall Latte Evangelism in a Decaffeinated, Nonfat, Post-Christian World." This conference (and dozens of books)¹³ illustrate how Christian youth are making missiological adjustments in their evangelism. This will result in more effectively reaching people of all cultures.

As a result, a new vocabulary is emerging in theology, missiology and philosophy. Consider the following phrases: critical realism, epistemological humility, generous orthodoxy, chastened rationality, faithful uncertainty and non-modern metanarrative.¹⁴

This vocabulary does not imply relativism. It is an admission that even in a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ, there is a great deal that we will not know. According to Millard Erickson, "It is one thing to have absolute truth; quite another to understand it absolutely." This leads one to admit that global youth today are developing some unique tools for mission in the context of postmodernity. These include: (1) a celebration of the world's cultures; (2) an openness to dialogue with and learn from other cultures and religions; (3) a desire for community; (4) a comfort with uncertainty and doubt; and (5) no need to have all the answers. These five characteristics could make today's youth the most effective missionaries in Christian history.

Two other trends need to be considered in light of these opportunities in a postmodern world. The first is globalization which can have a negative top down effect. The second is tribalism that pushes local culture up to the global level. In both cases, mission is impacted.

Signpost #7: The Emerging Face of Jesus

Books about Jesus in today's libraries number More than 175,000 different titles in 500 languages about Jesus fill libraries today. Nearly four new books are published each day. We must also look at the changing face of Christianity, reflected in the changing ethnicity of Christians around the world and in how each culture offers a unique perspective of Jesus. No culture has as an unhindered view of Jesus. Only when all peoples worship him will we see his face clearly. In this way, we can speak of the missing faces of Jesus belonging to those peoples not yet reached with the gospel. We can conclude, in accordance with Scripture, that every tongue, tribe, nation and language will be represented at the throne of God.

Endnotes

- 1. University of Southern California Online, Kelly McBride, (www.usc.ed/schools/annenberg/asc/projects/soin/poynteronline.html) accessed March 2004.
- 2. Most of the statistics in this report can be found in one of four places: (1) Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, World Christian Encyclopedia, 2nd edition (Oxford University Press 2001); (2) Barrett and Johnson, *World Christian Trends, AD 30-AD 2200* (William Carey Library 2001); (3) Barrett, Johnson, and Crossing, "Status of Global Mission, 2005, in Context of 20th and 21st Centuries", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 29, No. 1, January 2005, page 29; (4) World Christian Database, online subscription service found at www.worldchristiandatabase.org.
- 3. Recent documentation on the house churches includes D. Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*, Regnery, 2003, Brother Yun with P. Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man*, Monarch Books, 2002, and T. Lambert, *China's Christian Millions*, Monarch Books, 1999.
- 4. See H. Hoefer, Churchless Christianity, William Carey Library, 2001 and D. Bharati, Living Water and Indian Bowl, ISPCK, 1997.
- 5. The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity, Oxford University Press 2002.
- 6. For a more detailed analysis of the centre of gravity of Christianity throughout its entire history see Johnson and Chung, "Tracking Global Christianity's Statistical Centre of Gravity, AD 33- AD 2100" in *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 93, No. 369, April 2004, pages 166-181.

- 7. South is defined as sixteen current United Nations regions (185 countries): Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa, Eastern Asia, South-central Asia, South-eastern Asia, Western Asia, Caribbean, Central America, South America, Australia/New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.
- 8. North is defined here in a geopolitical sense by five current United Nations regions (fifty-three countries): Eastern Europe (including Russia), Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Western Europe and Northern America.
- 9. See Part 4 "Martyrology" in World Christian Trends for complete documentation.
- 10. See Part 20 "Finance" in World Christian Trends.
- 11. For a more complete list see Part 27 "Geostrategies" in World Christian Trends.
- 12. Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism, Baker Books, 1998, page 39.

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LAUSANNE REPORTS

Traveling the World to See the Movement of Lausanne

Doug Birdsall
Co-publisher, Lausanne World Pulse

These past few months have been wonderfully productive and encouraging times for the Lausanne movement. I have had the privilege of traveling to several continents to meet with Christian leaders in order to better understand the developments and concerns in various regions of the world. I am greatly encouraged by what I have seen.

In August I met with leaders and friends in seven countries in each region of Africa who share the vision and spirit of Lausanne. While in Nairobi, Kenya, I had the opportunity to meet with Judy Mbugua, the director of the Pan-African Christian Women's Association. Her vision and dynamism is a tremendous gift to Lausanne, where she serves as a member-at-large on the Administrative Committee.

Lausanne's international deputy directors for Francophone Africa and Anglophone Africa, Dr. Daniel Bourdanne and Dr. John Azumah, are planning consultations to bring together leaders to discuss the findings of the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization and to refine priorities for evangelization with respect to the African context and the African church. Dr. Kwame Bediako, considered by many to be the leading evangelical theologian on the continent, is planning to convene a consultation of between twenty-five and forty theologians who will examine missiological issues from a solid theological perspective.

In September, I was in Sydney with the Australia Lausanne Committee. They installed a new chairman, Dr. Ross Guilford, a leader in the Baptist Union in Australia. We were pleased to be joined that evening by Leighton Ford and John Reed, a long-time leader for Lausanne in Australia. Former international director, Dr. David Claydon, and Mrs. Robyn Claydon, vice chairman for the Lausanne Administrative Committee were there as well. The meeting was hosted by Glenda Weldon, chair of the Lausanne Intercessory Working Group. The meeting was organized by Daniel Willis, International Deputy Director for Australia and Oceania.

We also recently met with Lausanne leaders and friends in Frankfurt, Germany; London, England; and Helsinki, Finland. The German Lausanne Committee, a bedrock of strength for Lausanne over the years,

has also installed a new chairman, Rev. Mrs. Birgit Winterhoff. We were joined by outgoing chairman, Rev. Ulrich Parzany, leader of the YMCA (German's largest Christian organization). The meeting was organized by Mrs. Elke Werner, International Deputy Director for Western Europe.

In London, Dr. John Stott, honorary chairman for the Lausanne movement, hosted a luncheon which included Dr. Chris Wright, chairman of the Theology Working Group, and several other evangelical leaders in the United Kingdom, including Rev. Nicky Gumbel, founder and president of ALPHA, and Dr. David Coffee, the new president of the Baptist World Alliance. Dr. Wright will be hosting a planning session for the Theology Working Group in February 2006. Also in attendance were Dr. Fergus MacDonald, former International Chairman for Lausanne, and Dr. Thomas Wang and Dr. Gottfried Osei Mensah, both of whom have served as International Directors for the Lausanne movement.

Lausanne has a rich history of godly leadership. As we move ahead in the coming months and year, in addition to the leadership provided by the Lausanne Administrative Committee, we are harnessing the wisdom and experience of those who have formally served as Chairmen or as International Directors for Lausanne. These individuals will serve as Senior Advisors to Lausanne. They include former Chairmen Leighton Ford, Fergus MacDonald and Paul Cedar, along with former International Directors, Gottfried Osei Mensah, Thomas Wang, Tom Houston and David Claydon.

During my time in Europe, I was also privileged to participate in meetings in Helsinki, Finland that brought together Lausanne leaders from the Nordic countries. Once again it was encouraging to be with leaders who have provided vision and strength for the past thirty years for the ministry in Northern Europe.

I am also planning a trip to Latin America, during which time I will meet with Lausanne leaders such as Dr. Norberto Saracco, our International Deputy Director for Latin America, as well as leaders from Argentina and Mexico. A focal point will be a five-day consultation in Guatemala, during which I will talk with evangelical leaders from South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

From 10-12 November, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization will co-sponsor a North American Consultation on the Role of the Church in the HIV/AIDS Pandemic, www.medicalmissions.com, at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY, USA. This will be under the leadership of Dr. Ted Yamamori, Lausanne International Director. It is my hope and prayer that as global leaders gather to focus on the HIV/AIDS epidemic that we may more effectively reach out to a hurting and dying world. And that we will do this with Christ's compassion, truth and hope.

I thank you for your partnership in the gospel and for the fellowship we enjoy through the Lausanne movement. At a time when the church has experienced a trend towards fragmentation, now more than ever it is important to work for the unity of the church and the advance of the gospel. We pray that this joint venture of LausanneWorldPulse.com is a blessing to you as together we commit to the vision of "the whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world."

May God continue to wonderfully bless you.

Doug	Birdsall	is (co-pul	blishe	r of	Laus	anne	World	Pulse

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