

Dear Friends and Supporters.

The **October 2023** issue of the **Caucus Newsletter for the Persecuted Church** and other religious minorities is now available from c.v.r.blacker@btinternet.com.

It opens with a reminder of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church which take place next Sunday - November 5th – to which it is possible to attend *on-line*. Also coming up is *#Red Wednesday* – a time of vigil when concerned people across the country gather, wearing red, to witness to and honour the victims of this growing and global persecution.

This is followed by an article reporting on a consortium of NGOs who are calling upon the UN to recognise and condemn the grotesque practice of Forced Organ Harvesting in China.

A report on the growing antisemitism in the West shows that 90% of Jewish students at French Universities and Colleges have experienced and/or witnessed antisemitic hostility and violence. Meanwhile antisemitic and Islamophobic offences “soar” in London in recent weeks – and in the US. This has caused great unease and concerns that full-on religious persecution could break out in Western countries.

From Nigeria comes the usual round of abductions, killings, rapes and forced conversions of Christians at the hands of Islamists. Nigeria remains the country where Christians, numerically, appear to experience the most persecution although data is missing from countries such as China and North Korea.

The situation continues to worsen in Uganda where three Christian tourists and a tour-guide are shot by Islamists.

This is followed by the main findings of the annual Religious Freedom Report published by Aid to the Church in Need.

An appeal by Mosaic Middle East highlights the desperate plight of the remaining Christians in Iraq. There are many such appeals from NGOs out at the moment; this is because Christians are often bypassed by the multilateral aid organisations the reasons for which are multiple but include the mindset that chooses to regard Christians in post-colonial countries as ‘token whites’.

Two investigations are now underway to examine the reasons (and hopefully, solutions) for the rising tide of violence against Christians in India.

And in Myanmar the military kill 29 Christians by bombing an IDP camp in the Christian-majority Kachin state.

Meanwhile, almost all of Nagorno-Karabakh's 120,000 population have been driven out of their country following invasion by Muslim-majority Azerbaijan.

Where are the massed protests about this – or the 1.5 million Uyghurs in concentration camp style detention, and the thousands of Falun Gong and Church of Almighty God members who are subject to imprisonment, beating, torture and eventual death through forced organ harvesting in China? Or, indeed, the thousands of Christian girls and women who are abducted raped and forcibly converted to Islam in Pakistan and Egypt each year? It is hard to resist the conclusion that the massed protests about the Israel / Palestine conflict is because one half of the equation are Jews. Freedom of Religion or Belief is a fundamental human right on which many other rights depend; unfortunately, there are too many bad actors who seek to overturn that; it will not end well for those societies because, ultimately, everyone stands to suffer loss of freedoms.

The newsletter ends with a list of the heroic NGOs who provide vitally important aid advocacy and support for persecuted religious minorities; clicking on their websites will reveal the many *positive* things they do which represents a welcome antidote to the descriptions of discrimination and violence within the main report.

Thank you for your continuing support. Do use this information to bring these matters to the attention of your MP or other political representative, to friends and family, and to your churches mosques temples and synagogues.

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