

Dear Friends and Supporters.

The **December 2023** issue of the **Caucus Newsletter for the Persecuted Church** is now available from c.v.r.blacker@btinternet.com . It is, inevitably, a fuller newsletter than normal since Christmas is a time when Christians are more visible and more frequently attacked.

The newsletter opens with a tragic account of one of the worst massacres in Nigeria in what was clearly a coordinated attack on 20 separate villages. Open Doors reveals that over 90% of the 5,500 Christians killed for their faith last year were from Nigeria.

Also in Nigeria a Christian mother of 5 children is released from 19 months in prison for sharing a video that condemned the Muslim lynching of Christian college student Deborah Yakubu, which her critics called "blasphemous." She has yet to face trial.

With a decades-long history of Islamic extremist attacks in Bauchi state, Nigeria's Christian community continues to suffer oppression and killings, as described by a long-serving pastor.

Two evangelists in Uganda were jailed and charged under a blasphemy law after Muslims - upset at their street preaching with quoted the Koran - beat them up and summoned the police. Muslim preachers regularly quote from the Bible with impunity.

There then follow an appeal by Aid to the Church in Need on behalf of Palestinian Christians suffering in Gaza and the West Bank. 22 of the 1000 Christians remaining in Gaza have been killed in the current conflict. Many more are now homeless. This is followed by an article from Dr Martin Parsons showing how Palestinian Christians have suffered. For those with little grasp of history Parsons provides a timely review of the political situation since 1948 as seen from the eyes of Palestinian Christians and why the majority fear a two-state solution. Many Christians are leaving or wish to leave: a century ago Bethlehem was 84% Christian, now it is now less than 20%.

This is followed by a blog review from Methodist Minister Rev'd Bruce Thompson of the causes of rising antisemitism in the West. This is not just due to Islamic extremism; an article reveals a shocking increase in left-ist antisemitic attacks in Germany where a third of Jews report having experienced attacks since October 2023 - whilst another article looks at the rise of

antisemitism in Universities which is again linked to left-ist ideology which seems to be shared by many church leaders.

There are then several more articles reporting on the growing number of attacks on churches in Europe. Two-thirds of fires in religious buildings are due to arson. More than two Christian monuments in France are targeted every day two-thirds of which involve theft and the remaining third, desecration. There were 877 attacks on Catholic places of worship in France in 2018 and more than 800 anti-Christian incidents in 2021. These figures have increased fivefold in 10 years. Physical attacks on Christians in Europe have also soared by 70% in the last year. The worst five countries effected by anti-Christian incidents were the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Sweden.

The report on which these findings are based also found growing discrimination (and physical assaults) against Christians in the public sphere – including dismissals and suspensions from work, no-platforming, calling police and counter terrorism officers over the expression of biblical faith - a situation that arises from a political weaponisation of the 2010 Discrimination Act and EDI training. The UK emerges as the country with the most cases of legal prosecutions for alleged “hate speech” involving Christians. Churches and church leaders in the UK need to be paying much closer attention to all of this.

There is then an article looking reactions to the Christian conversion of celebrated New Atheist, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She identifies that *Christianity is the only cultural force able to resist the three great threats to Western civilisation: wokeness, Islam and the great power authoritarianism*. Unfortunately, many church leaders either avoid addressing this or look the other way thereby *facilitating* the growing persecution in Europe and the UK. Hirsi identifies that *today’s Christianity is dormant and intimidated by the politically correct*.

There then follows a review of whether the Pew Research Report is correct in identifying a decline in the number of Christians, as a result of persecution, in China, and where church services are now forced to be a celebration of the Communist Party.

There is another violent attack on a church in the Philippines.

In India 400 Christians are arrested under the new anti-conversion laws, many of them under false allegations. Persecution of Christians is increasing month on month egged on by nationalist beliefs and seeming impunity of violence against

minority groups. A mass burial of held for the 133 Christian victims of the Manipur riots (*previously reported here*); meanwhile, 50,000 Christians remain displaced from their homes. Finally, four Christian missionaries are brutally attacked in Jharkhand.

There then follows an informed presentation by Lord Alton of the deteriorating situation in North Korea – a country with one of the very worst human rights records and where 100,000 people are believed to be incarcerated in brutal forced-labour death camps.

Finally, a Christmas message from Wycliffe Bible Translators.

The newsletter ends with the usual list of NGOs who provide vitally important aid advocacy spiritual and practical support for persecuted Christians; clicking on their websites reveals the many *positive* things they do and which represents a welcome antidote to the discrimination and violence within the main report.

Thank you for your continuing interest and 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.

Dr Russell Blacker / Caucus for the Persecuted Church - TR17 0AF