

Dr Russell Blacker summarises the September 2019 edition of the Caucus for the Persecuted Church Newsletter. To obtain a copy of the full newsletter please contact him on c.v.r.blacker@btinternet.com.

This edition contains a number of positive developments including the new freedoms being experienced by Christians in Sudan following the overthrow of President Bashir.

In Nigeria the UN special rapporteur nails the ethno-religious basis for the genocide of Christians in the north and middle belt regions.

UNHCR and the UK Govt are finally showing an interest in the plight of Christians who repeatedly get attacked in refugee camps in Greece.

MP Rehman Chishti, who has long been an advocate of religious minorities, is appointed the UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion; he will oversee the implementation of the recommendations in the Bishop of Truro's Report to which many members of the Caucus contributed. European States' commitment to the same is enshrined in the new 'EU Statement and Guidelines on Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion and Belief'.

And there are signs of a thawing of discrimination against Christians and other minorities in Pakistan as Imran Khan and international diplomacy begin to turn the tide; in addition, over 500 Imams sign the "Islamabad Declaration" condemning violence committed in the name of religion and fatwas used by radical Islamic leaders.

From Iran pastors and aid workers report on a growing disenchantment with the religious police as more and more Iranians abandon Islam to convert to Christianity (or forego all religious affiliation).

Finally, the US Senate unanimously passes the "Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act" - the first such legislation in the world to condemn China for its crimes and human rights abuses.

But there is a need for continued vigilance, prayer, lobbying, and support for the victims of persecution whose very survival often depends on the heroic efforts of faith-based NGOs who are listed at the foot of the newsletter. This edition contains appeals on behalf of International Christian Concern and 222 Ministries.

This edition contains appalling accounts of children and teenagers in Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Vietnam, being abducted, abused, beaten and killed because of their faith.

More and more Christians are dragged from their homes and mutilated or slaughtered by well-funded and well-armed Islamists in Nigeria and Cameroon. There are now 2.5 million internally displaced Christians living in appalling camp conditions, making this one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. Echoing the conclusions of the UN rapporteur, Nigerian Archbishop Kwashi identifies that "the plan we see being executed is to wipe Christianity from the face of northern Nigeria." – as was the case under IS and other terrorist groups in the Middle East.

The situation as regards the survival of Christianity in Iraq also remains grave as Shia militants continue their activities and as the Govt continues to sidestep its responsibilities towards the religious minorities. 1 million Christians and half a million Yazidis remain displaced. The number of Christians in Mosul has fallen from 15,000 to just 40. Ambassador Sam Brownback identifies that "Christianity's future in Middle East has reached a defining moment".

And in India a seventh state passes radical anti-conversion laws which will seriously limit the activities and freedoms of Christians - and those who try to support them.

The newsletter ends with the websites of a range of trusted aid and advocacy organisations who care for persecuted minorities – rebuilding homes and lives and articulating ways in which our readers can really make a difference to the plight of literally millions of people worldwide.

Do feel free to pass on this newsletter to friends and colleagues or use the material for presentations, fund-raising, prayer groups, and writing to your political representatives.

Kind regards

Dr Russell Blacker and colleagues:

The Caucus for the Persecuted Church