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**Mission and Persecution**

# International Journal for Religious Freedom (IJRF)

## Journal of the International Institute for Religious Freedom

IJRF is the journal of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF). It is published bi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issue of religious freedom in general and the persecution of Christians in particular. It is an interdisciplinary, international, peer reviewed, scholarly journal, serving the interests of religious freedom and contains research articles, documentation, book reviews and academic news on the issue. The editors welcome the submission of any item that could contribute to the journal.

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# International Journal for Religious Freedom

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IJRF is now also available as an ePublication from Sabinet. 2009 carried the first full volume of IJRF. There was only one issue in 2008, as the pilot issue appeared late in that year.

## **Cover art**

Jesus' peaceful mission led to persecution and eventually his death by crucifixion at the hands of his opponents. He advised those who follow him to expect a similar fate. At the same time the cross of Christ is the symbol and benchmark from which all Christian mission is to take its pattern of a peaceful, humble and friendly invitation that refrains from the abuse of power.

The illustration on the cover is taken from the crucifixion scene, enacted by the Mafa people, a north Camerounian ethnic group, and painted by an anonymous French artist.

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# Contents

International Journal for Religious Freedom

Volume 3, Issue 1, 2010

ISSN 2070-5484

Editorial ..... 5

Tribute to Glenn M Penner ..... 7

## **We Introduce**

Open Doors International ..... 9

## **In my Opinion**

Wishing for persecution?

*Gordon L Heath* ..... 15

Why Evangelicals need a code of ethics for mission

*Thomas Schirrmacher & Thomas K Johnson* ..... 23

## **Academic Articles**

Global restrictions on religion: A 2010 summary

*Brian J Grim* ..... 39

The trauma of persecution: Responding to survivors of the post-traumatic wounds of extreme violence and inhumane treatment

*Roger Foster* ..... 47

Mission in bold humility

*Christof Sauer* ..... 65

## **Interviews**

An analysis of the current crises in Northern Nigeria

*Khataza Gondwe* ..... 81

## **Documentation**

Cyprus Statement on the Crises in Northern Nigeria

*Religious Liberty Partnership* ..... 89

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Peaceful steps despite political pressure: The challenges of Chinese House Churches <i>China Aid</i> .....	95
The Bad Urach Call: Toward understanding suffering, persecution, and martyrdom for the global church in mission .....	107
Missionary activities and human rights <i>The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief</i> .....	113
<b>Noteworthy</b> .....	123
<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	135
The International Institute for Religious Freedom .....	149
Call for submissions and instructions to contributors .....	151
Subscriptions .....	154

## Editorial

There are a number of global Christian mission conferences happening in 2010. In addition, the discussion on how the propagation of one's world view and the issues of religious freedom, persecution and even martyrdom are related, has increased. Therefore we have chosen to focus in this issue of the *International Journal for Religious Freedom* on "mission and persecution."

To start with, *we introduce* Open Doors International, one of the global players that has come to the support of persecuted Christians since 1955. Gord Heath from Canada deals in his *opinion piece* with the misguided wish for persecution of some Christians in North America who hope this would stimulate the life of the church. Thomas Schirrmacher and Tom Johnson state in eleven theses why we need an evangelical ethics code for mission, thereby contributing to an ongoing international discussion. They call for an integration between the peaceful witness to one's faith and respect of religious freedom. The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief has recently issued the statement "Missionary activities and human rights – recommended groundrules for missionary activities" which we document for discussion.

The *academic articles* are opened by the latest comparative global study on restrictions on religion presented by sociologist Brian Grim. Roger Foster deals with the trauma of persecution. He works toward developing a best practice standard for organisations responding to survivors of the post-traumatic wounds of extreme violence and inhumane treatment.

Christof Sauer deals theologically with the issue how Christian mission can be conducted in bold humility, even in the face of suffering, persecution and martyrdom. His reflections try to present some highlights of the *Bad Urach Consultation* in 2009 on that topic. The Bad Urach Call "Towards understanding suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission" can be found in the *documentation* section. The extensive theological "Bad Urach Statement" on the same issue is too long to be reproduced in IJRF. However it is contained in the conference compendium "Suffering, persecution and martyrdom – theological reflections" which we warmly recommend to our readers (see advertisement).

The two countries highlighted in this issue are Nigeria and China. We *interview* Khathaza Gondwe on the root causes of the

current crises in Northern Nigeria and we document the statement of the Religious Liberty Partnership on that same matter. China Aid supplied us with another documentation on the challenges of Chinese “House Churches” in pursuing their peaceful initiatives despite political pressure.

The *Noteworthy* section has again been compiled by Dr Byeong Hei Jun. He has also sourced book reviews from various reviewers. For an interim period Hans-Dieter Büttner helpfully stepped in as associate editor and contributed from his life time of publishing experience. Dr Kristine Whitnabe joined in at the last minute with editorial assistance. As Dr Mirjam Scarborough continues to be unable to resume her responsibilities, we have made her honorary editor and hope to be able to appoint a new managing editor soon. Nan Muir has acted as language editor and Barbara Felgendreher volunteered as layout proof reader. The editors wish to thank all those who have contributed to bringing this issue of *IJRF* to the light of day.

Please note that *IJRF* has new contact details. We value your subscriptions and recommendations to colleagues and libraries. *IJRF* is now also available as an ePublication through the library support service *Sabinet*. As always it remains freely available as PDF on [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu). We appreciate your comments and submissions of articles.

Your for religious freedom

*Dr Christof Sauer*

*in cooperation with Prof. Dr Dr Thomas Schirmacher*

## Tribute to Glenn M Penner (1962-2010)

The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) of the World Evangelical Alliance pays tribute to the member of its Academic Board, Rev Glenn M Penner, MA, who succumbed to leukemia at the age of 48 on 26 January 2010. In his advisory function he focused on the theology of persecution and curriculum development.

Glenn has authored *In the Shadow of the Cross: A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship* (Bartlesville: Living Sacrifice Books, 2004), which has been translated into several languages, among others Chinese and Korean and will shortly be published in German by the IIRF.

He has also contributed a series on the biblical theology of persecution and discipleship to the International Journal for Religious Freedom since 2008, which he could unfortunately not maintain beyond two instalments.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Voice of the Martyrs in Canada, Glenn was the first to provide sponsorship for the major research project of the IIRF on theologies of suffering, persecution and martyrdom and followed the progress with great interest.

He also submitted a paper to the Bad Urach Consultation organized by the IIRF on the same topic in September 2009, but was kept from attending.

Glenn pioneered the teaching of a biblical theology of persecution as a regular course in theological education as a visiting Professor of Oklahoma Wesleyan University 2003-2006 and developed a curriculum for it. He has taught on this topic to Christian leaders in religiously restricted and hostile nations in South America, Africa and Asia as well as in seminaries and colleges in Europe and North America.

We remember Glenn Penner and his valuable and lasting contributions for the sake of the persecuted and to related academic research with deep gratitude.

As Christians, we believe that Glenn has now been promoted to glory and gone ahead of us to be part of the 'cloud of witnesses and martyrs' who are watching on as we complete our race.



“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely; and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Glenn wrote in this context:

*The testimony and example of those who have successfully faced and overcome persecution should provide inspiration and hope to those who are wavering, as it reminds them of the constancy of God.*

*(Glenn Penner, In the Shadow of the Cross, p. 232)*

Prof. Dr Thomas Schirrmacher and Dr Christof Sauer  
as directors of the International Institute for Religious Freedom  
on behalf of its boards and staff

## We Introduce ...

This section provides a platform for organisations working in the area of religious liberty to introduce themselves. In this way we seek to raise awareness of the various players in the field. We hope this will lead to appreciation of their work and will ultimately serve the persecuted.

## Open Doors International

Open Doors International seeks to strengthen and equip the Body of Christ living under or facing restriction and persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ, and to encourage their involvement in world evangelism by:

1. Providing Bibles and literature, media, leadership training, socio-economic development and through intercessory prayer;
2. Preparing the Body of Christ living in threatened or unstable areas to face persecution and suffering; and
3. Educating and mobilizing the Body of Christ living in the free world to identify with threatened and persecuted Christians and be actively involved in assisting them.

We do so because we believe when one member suffers, all members suffer with it (1 Corinthians 12:26), all doors are open and God enables his body to go into all the world and preach the Gospel.

## History

The ministry of Open Doors began in 1955 through the call of God to one man, Brother Andrew, a native of Holland, to “Awake and strengthen that which remains and is at the point of death” (Rev 3:2).

Fifty years on, the ministry continues through an active band of full-time workers and volunteers accepting that there are no closed doors to the Gospel and the Word of God is not in chains.

Brother Andrew’s first book, ‘God’s Smuggler,’ (1967) has not just been a best-selling book but an agent for change. It has helped redefine the boundaries of modern missionary endeavour and has aroused millions to the awareness of the Suffering Body of Christ in areas of limited access.

1955 Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors, makes his first trip behind the Iron Curtain to take Bibles to persecuted Christians.

1955-65 Open Doors expands its network throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

1965 The first Open Doors team travels to China.

1965-78 Open Doors expands to bring Bibles and encouragement to Christians in the difficult areas of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

1978 Contact with churches in the Middle East begins.

1980's As persecution grows worldwide, Open Doors intensifies its prayer and Bible distribution campaigns, and begins holding pastoral training seminars.

1990's With the fall of the Iron Curtain, Open Doors accelerates its work to take advantage of the new opportunities. Involvement intensifies in China, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

The Present: With intensifying spiritual conflict and increasing persecution, Open Doors will continue to go where faith costs the most, to equip and encourage Christians who are suffering for their faith world-wide. Open Doors is currently ministering through partners in 45 countries worldwide and is operating from offices in 21 supporting countries with a total staff of about 740 and an annual global budget of 69 million US dollars.

## **Core values**

We are part of the Body of Christ, a 'people-to-people' people.

We are persecuted church driven.

We are people of the Bible.

We are people of prayer.

We live and work by faith.

We are devoted to Jesus Christ and His commission.

We are motivated solely for the glory of God.

## A Few Ministry Policies

The determining factor for Open Doors involvement anywhere in the world is the presence of a Persecuted Church. We stand alongside when the Body of Christ has run into problems because of its own identity. To quote Brother Andrew, “We have voluntarily limited ourselves to the needs of the Persecuted church – we have chosen for the Body of Christ.” We go where others do not go, and do what others do not do. Ours is not a competitive vision. If others are doing the job, we leave it to them. We want to concentrate our limited resources on the most needy parts of the world.

As Open Doors is “pro Jesus” and not “anti” any specific world system, communication does not center on political systems, parties, policies or philosophies. If a system is threatening or restricting the Church, reference to the system focuses on the actual restrictions.

Publicity should not be sought if to do so would hamper the effort to assist the persecuted church.

## Structure

Open Doors International (ODI) nowadays is an entity formed by two separate legal entities: Stichting Open Doors International, a foundation that is organized and operated under the laws of the Netherlands, and Open Doors International, Inc., a corporation organized and operated under the laws of the State of California in the United States of America. The two entities operate as one, having the same people serving as their Boards of Directors and having the same management team.

Since 1979 ODI has entered into and renewed from time to time charter agreements with affiliates around the world under which ODI and those affiliates have operated in cooperation towards the fulfillment of the ministry’s Purpose Statement for the benefit of the Persecuted Church. Under the charter agreements ODI has been primarily responsible for research in locating and relating with the persecuted church in the field and developing the necessary networks required to insure a “people to people” ministry. The affiliates have been primarily responsible for research in locating and relating with churches and individual believers in the free world living or located within their individual countries or geographic regions who are

interested in or committed to learning about the persecuted church around the world, praying for the believers and the churches of the persecuted church and raising financial support to fund the operational programs of ODI. While the affiliates are primarily responsible for the above, they are integral to the fulfillment of the full purpose statement, working in unity with each other and ODI.

The operations are conducted in pursuit of unity and in keeping with the *Guiding Principles and Best Practices of Affiliation between Open Doors International and Its Affiliates*<sup>1</sup>. These consist of (1) adherence to the statement of faith, the Apostolic Creed, (2) commitment to the purpose statement, (3) dedication to the core values, (4) pursuit of excellence in governance and organizational practice, (5) stewardship and accountability to their relationship as required by the affiliation agreement. ODI and affiliates' plans are directed toward strategic prioritization, including best use of available resources to maximize grants to the field in the short and long term, as well as quality, excellence and timeliness.

## Challenges

The Persecuted Church is being strengthened to boldly reach out to their neighbours in the world's most difficult areas, living under the world's most oppressive systems, and thousands are coming to faith in Christ. It's the paradox of persecution of Christians – the light is brightest in the darkest places. Without a doubt, however, the battle is intensifying. And because the real battle is spiritual, it must be fought with spiritual weapons. That's why we so greatly value the prayers of our partners. We must stand together to strengthen the Persecuted Church. That's why we continually challenge each other – board and staff members, partners, and our networks worldwide, to spend more time in the Lord's presence, relying on His power and guidance, knowing that without Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

After several years of strong growth, Open Doors was impacted by the worldwide economic downturn over the last two years. However, we are grateful the impact was not severe, and we were able to maintain our field ministry projects at previous years' levels. In every office our teams work diligently to use the resources God

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on the July 2009 version of the said document.

provides to effectively meet the needs of the Persecuted Church and establish a strong foundation for future growth and ministry in keeping with our purpose, core values and strategic priorities.

Often Persecuted Christians cannot speak for themselves, so we must be their voice. From grassroots writing campaigns that encourage more freedom for Persecuted Christians to behind-the-scenes work with government leaders worldwide, Open Doors is committed to speaking out for our brothers and sisters.

## Further information

The website [www.od.org](http://www.od.org) will lead you to the various national offices. Look in the respective online store for the books of Brother Andrew, Johan and Anneke Compañen, Paul Estabrooks and Ronald Boyd-MacMillan.

*God's Smuggler* by Brother Andrew with John and Elizabeth Sherrill (35th anniversary edition 2001). The classic story with a new prologue and epilogue describing Brother Andrew's life and work in the new millennium.

*Faith That Endures* by Ronald Boyd-MacMillan (2006, 336 p.) compiles and discusses what we need to know about the persecuted church.

*Standing Strong through the Storm* compiled by Paul Estabrooks and Jim Cunningham (2004, 374 p.) Comprehensive study on lessons learned from the persecuted church.

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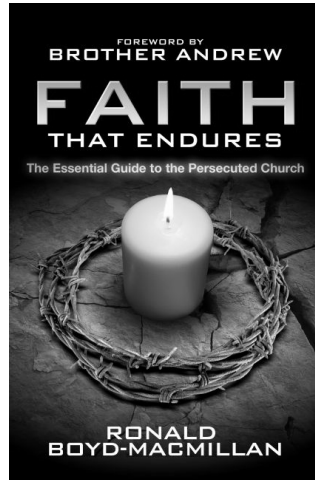
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# Faith That Endures

The Essential Guide to the  
Persecuted Church

Ronald Boyd-MacMillan



The comprehensive and authoritative guide on understanding the Persecuted Church. This book answers the questions:

- What does contemporary persecution look like?
- What is persecution?
- Where is the persecuted church?
- How do we help the persecuted?
- What can we learn from the persecuted?

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Fleming H. Revell  
Ellel, Lancaster: Sovereign World  
2006, 336pp, paperback, US\$9.00  
US ISBN 9780800731199, UK ISBN 9781852404499

“Dr Ronald Boyd-MacMillan has been visiting and reporting on persecuted Christians for more than 25 years. His degrees in political science and theology as well as his training as a journalist enable him to process his rich experience and thorough research into what is in my opinion currently the best and most comprehensive handbook on facts, background and complexity of persecution of Christians today.”

*Dr Christof Sauer, International Institute for Religious Freedom*

Available from various national offices of:

**Open Doors International**

<http://sb.od.org/>

[usa@opendoors.org](mailto:usa@opendoors.org)

## Wishing for persecution?

Gordon L Heath\*

### Abstract

This article identifies four myths associated with the wishing for persecution that is frequently a part of North American evangelicalism. The argument developed is that besides being naïve and completely out-of-touch with the reality of persecution, wishing for persecution is unbiblical. What is even more sobering is that the history of Christianity indicates that the arrival of persecution could be a disaster and lead to the church's complete eradication in a particular geographical region.

**Keywords** Evangelicalism (North American), persecution, church growth, early church, martyrdom.

There is glee among some North American Christians over the demise of Christendom that is striking for its naivety (Hauerwas & Willimon 1989:18). What is particularly perplexing is when some look forward to the persecution that so often follows disestablishment, or even long for what persecuted Christians in other parts of the world are experiencing. The ones most prone to such zeal are evangelical Protestants,<sup>1</sup> a Christian subculture with its own forms of often

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\* Gordon L. Heath (\*1964) is associate professor of Christian history at McMaster Divinity College, and also serves as Director of the Canadian Baptist Archives. He received his PhD. from St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. His publications include *A war with a silver lining: Canadian Protestant churches and the South African War, 1899-1902* (McGill-Queen's University Press 2009), *Doing church history: a user-friendly introduction to researching the history of Christianity* (Clements 2008), and *The lost Gospel of Judas: separating fact from fiction* (Eerdmans 2007). He is an ordained minister with the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. This article arose from his ongoing research into trends within Western post-Christendom discourse. An earlier version was presented at a Theology Conference at McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, 2009. Email: gheath@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca.

<sup>1</sup> The most commonly accepted description of the evangelicalism that has its origins in eighteenth-century Britain is that it is a movement marked by four characteristics: Conversionism (a stress on the New Birth); Activism (an energetic, individualistic approach to religious duties and social involvement); Biblicism (a reliance on the Bible as ultimate religious authority); and Crucicentrism (a focus on Christ's redeeming work as the heart of essential Christianity). See Bebbington 1989.



contradictory and paradoxical popular religion (Jorstad 1993).<sup>2</sup> For instance, internationally recognized American evangelical preacher John MacArthur declared: “There is nothing negative about persecution. It is a positive thing... It is victorious for us to endure persecution. It causes us to grow, receive blessing, and have joy.”<sup>3</sup> Such positive descriptions of persecution can be found in evangelical music, blogs, and other forms of popular religion, as well as sermons. But should such Christians in America be so enthusiastic about – or wish for – persecution? I say no, for such popular level excitement for persecution is rooted in four myths.<sup>4</sup>

## Myth #1: Persecution can be handled

While seekers of persecution often recount examples of faith and bravery exemplified in the lives of saints who zealously went to their deaths in the coliseums of Rome, they often forget that numerous early Christians succumbed to the pressure and denied Christ. Perhaps the most well-known example from the New Testament of such bravado in the face of danger is that of Peter, one of the twelve disciples. Peter declared twice that he would remain loyal to Christ, even in the face of death. When the moment of crisis arrived, however, Peter denied Christ, not once, but three times. The evidence for numerous other lapsed Christians is clear and compelling. Tertullian, Origen, and Lactantius all noted how the local Roman magistrates rejoiced when Christians recanted (Tertullian: 2; Origen: 8.44; Lactantius: 5.11). Cyprian lamented the numbers of Christians who succumbed to the pressure (Cyprian), and Eusebius wrote a sobering account of the lapsed during the reign of Diocletian (Eusebius: 8:3).

What needs to be considered when reading about the zeal of the martyrs is that many early Christians were wary of seeking after persecution. The early church learned quite quickly that those who sought after it were usually the ones unable to stand it. For instance, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* includes a story about a man named Quintas that illustrates the danger of seeking after persecution (*Martyrdom*: 4).

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the extent, role and power of popular religion among evangelicals, see Jorstad 1993.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/sg1715.htm> (accessed June 2010).

<sup>4</sup> For a helpful discussion of five other contemporary misconceptions of persecution, see Tieszen 2009b.

## Myth #2: Persecution is romantic

The zeal with which some want persecution is reminiscent of recruits in the opening days of the First World War who celebrated the outbreak of hostilities. Those young recruits, so excited about marching off to battle, were indoctrinated with romantic images of soldiers going off to fight a glorious and noble war. Of course, their visions of war belonged to a world of fantasy, not the real world of trenches, gas, artillery, machine guns and rotting flesh. That was the point of Wilfred Owen (WWI soldier) in his anti-war poem *Dulce et Decorum Est*.

As Charles Tieszen notes, persecution can range from “mild to intense levels of hostility” (Tieszen 2008a: 48). And while there are less violent forms of persecution such as economic penalties or travel restrictions, persecution is often a very bloody affair. Beatings, rape and devilish tortures go hand-in-hand with much persecution, but such horrors are often glossed over by those wishing for persecution.

Christian identity has been “indelibly marked by the collective memory of the religious suffering of others” (Castelli 2004: 4), and accounts such as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Martyrdom of Perpetua*, and other early Christian martyrdoms played a central role in the development of such a collective memory. While many of the martyrdom accounts that shaped Christian identity were vivid descriptions of violence, because of the eventual success of the church over its pagan opponents, and through the “process of continual commemoration”, the stories eventually morphed from a bloody account of human suffering to a “pious and uplifting spectacle” of God’s victory over Satan’s power (Castelli 2004: 125).<sup>5</sup> The focus shifted from the blood shed to the faith exhibited, and from the violence perpetrated to the victory gained.

The nature of hagiographic writings was to inspire faith and shape conduct (even at the expense of historical accuracy), and this pattern continued in the centuries that followed. The instructional value of such works seems obvious, but the danger is that they create and perpetuate myths regarding the nature of persecution that are simply not true, nor adequately prepare people for the real bloody thing. Persecution needs to be seen as it really is – bloody, painful, and a tragedy. Any description of it that glosses over or idealizes it is a lie.

<sup>5</sup> For a helpful work on the development of Christian identity and ideals of martyrdom, see Leemans 2005.

### **Myth #3: Persecution automatically brings numerical growth**

The North African church father Tertullian stated to the Roman authorities: “Your most refined cruelties are to no purpose. We become more numerous each time you reap: the blood of the martyrs is a seed” (Tertullian: 50). But was Tertullian right? Does persecution always lead to numerical growth?

I have surveyed elsewhere in more detail the places where Christianity has been virtually wiped out (Heath 2011). Philip Jenkins has also recently identified the regions where Christianity has been eliminated (Jenkins 2008). Suffice it to say here that persecution has often been quite effective in destroying the church in a specific region. Of course, there are places where the church survived brutal persecution or legal restriction: Tertullian’s North Africa experience is one example. Other examples are the Coptic Church in Egypt, the Russian Orthodox Church under communist rule, or the present-day “underground” church in China. These and other accounts are success stories of churches that did not die. Nevertheless, not all stories have such happy endings. The churches in Nubia (modern-day Sudan), Central Asia, China, and Japan all suffered profound losses as a result of persecution. In the case of China, the church was wiped out twice in the medieval period. Even today, Christian communities such as those in Indonesia or Orissa (India) are in danger of being systematically persecuted and eliminated. Ironically, even Tertullian’s North African church did not survive the Arab invasions of the seventh and eighth centuries.

The elimination of these once dynamic communities is sobering. Vast swaths of land in Africa and Asia, that at one time had a numerically significant indigenous Christian presence, are now devoid of any sizeable indigenous Christian presence.<sup>6</sup> Through genocide, persecution, forced migration and other factors, regions that once contained millions of Christians now contain – at best – a handful.

<sup>6</sup> I am thinking of Asia Minor/Turkey (once the heartland of Christianity, now approx. 99% Muslim) as one example. Perhaps the Nestorian churches in central Asia would be another example of Christianity taking a serious blow in regards to numbers, visibility, and even presence. African examples would be North Africa (yes, there are some Christians, but any visible indigenous presence such as was in the 4-7th centuries has been eliminated), or Nubia (in today’s Upper Egypt and Sudan) that at one time had Christianity as the established religion and a vibrant church.

While some North American evangelicals wish for persecution to purify the church, grow it, and then restore it to its previous cultural dominance, they are sorely mistaken: a quick study of the church's history reveals that persecution does not automatically bring about numerical growth.

Jesus did say to his followers, "If they persecute me, they will persecute you" (John 15:20), and the Apostle Paul indicated that Christians would experience persecution: "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12). But note that neither Jesus nor Paul said that they would necessarily survive it. The New Testament does indicate that the global church will not be wiped out before Jesus' return, but it makes no promises about the survival of every church in every geographical region.

#### **Myth #4: It is biblical to wish for persecution**

It is beyond the scope of this brief article to provide an exegesis of every biblical passage that relates to persecution, nor even provide a detailed summary of the New Testament passages. Suffice it to say, the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus' followers should expect persecution. Jesus said, "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:20). Paul wrote "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12), and he invited Christians to join with him in suffering for the gospel (2 Tim 1:8). Peter stated that Christians were called to suffering, since they were following his example (1 Pet 2:19-21), and that persecution was an identification with Christ in his sufferings (1 Pet 4:1-6). The book of Acts shows that Christians repeatedly faced persecution, and the book of Revelation shows that Christians are locked in a cosmic battle that means martyrdom will be a reality for many. But there is nothing that indicates that Christians are to wish for persecution, or seek it out. In fact, the examples of persecution indicate the exact opposite.

There are many New Testament examples of Christians fleeing persecution, or hiding from it. Jesus expected his followers to flee persecution (Matt 25:16-20), Jesus walked away from persecution (Luke 4:28-30), the early church fled persecution (Acts 8:1-4), Paul fled from potential persecution (Acts 9:23-25), Paul and Barnabas fled from potential persecution (Acts 14:4-7), Paul and Silas hid from persecutors (Acts 17:10), and Peter (Acts 12) and Paul and Silas (Acts

16) did not stick around when God broke them out of prison. Paul's Christian convictions did not mean that he had to take mistreatment. In fact, Paul claimed his rights as a Roman citizen in order to gain protection or a fair hearing (Acts 22, 25-28). There are certainly many examples of persecution, and in many cases it seems that it was unavoidable. When it did come, and they could not escape, they were to stand firm. However, they did not seek it out. There are also numerous examples from the early church of Christians fleeing persecution. In regards to voluntarily giving oneself up to the authorities for martyrdom, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* states, "We are not taught anything of that kind in the Gospel" (*Martyrdom*: 4).<sup>7</sup>

The error of wishing for persecution seems to reside in a blurring of biblical teachings. On the one hand, there is the recognition that some type of spiritual blessing comes from persecution (Matt 5:10-12), that God in his sovereignty uses persecution for his purposes, that persecution may bring about numerical church growth, and that Christians should expect persecution. On the other hand, all that is not to say that Christians should seek it out or wish for it. If it comes and cannot be avoided, then suffer. But if it does not come, do not wish for it or bring it about. Christians need to think carefully about what the Bible teaches, and not make a sloppy connection between the former biblical realities, and the latter distortion of it.

## Conclusion

North American Christians live in unsettling times – the rapidly changing religious landscape makes it look to some like persecution is on its way. Whether or not it is can be debated, but what should not be debated is wishing for it. Besides being naïve and completely out-of-touch with the reality of persecution, wishing for persecution is unbiblical. What is even more sobering is that the history of Christianity indicates that the arrival of persecution could be a disaster and lead to the church's complete eradication in a particular region or continent. In other words, be careful what you wish for.

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<sup>7</sup> While there were still those who sought after martyrdom, the church authorities generally condemned such practice.

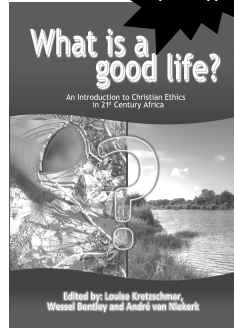
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# Why Evangelicals need a code of ethics for mission

Thomas Schirmmacher\* and Thomas K Johnson\*\*

## Abstract

The authors claim that now is the right time for the global evangelical movement to formulate a public code of ethics for Christian mission. Occasionally mission work has been marred by actions that do not demonstrate a proper level of respect for people. A code of ethics in mission would establish a standard of accountability and also become an evangelical contribution to the global effort to establish standards for the relations among religions which should help protect the freedom of religion. The complementary principles informing this code should be the need of all people for the gospel and the God-given dignity of all people created in his image.

**Keywords** Ethics, code, mission, evangelicals, witness, conversion.

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Some of this material was in Dr Schirmmacher's speech entitled "*But with gentleness and respect: Why missions should be ruled by ethics – An Evangelical Perspective on a Code of Ethics for Christian Witness*", when he represented the World Evangelical Alliance at the international theological consultation "Towards an ethical approach to conversion: Christian witness in a multi-religious world" at the Institut de Science et de Théologie des Religions in Toulouse, France, 8-12 August 2007. The text of the speech, including an extensive bibliography, is available at [www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/news/Conversion.pdf](http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/news/Conversion.pdf).

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## 1. Mission can be corrupted

“There was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted,” says the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1549). This is even true of Christian mission, spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, the “Prince of Peace.” The *Lausanne Covenant* (1974), that most influential evangelical public statement, calls heartily for mission and then addresses the moral framework in articles 12 and 13 respectively:

At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church.

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference.

There have been times when evangelical Christians have attempted to follow Jesus’ command to evangelize the world but have done so in a worldly, sinful manner; there have been other times when a mistaken worry about peace or personal comfort has led evangelicals to neglect the mission Jesus gave. Some Christians have manipulated people, have been dishonest, and have taken actions that do not promote the peace, justice, and liberty of society because of a desire to lead people to faith in Christ, while others have neglected the spiritually lost condition of their neighbours. Evangelicals must not in any way pull back from evangelistic or mission activities. As Christians we must carry out our God-given mission in a God-fearing manner, trusting that the way we carry out our work will be used by God for his good purposes, including peace, justice, and liberty in society. Therefore, it would be very beneficial to have a written code of mission ethics, which would be globally endorsed and taught by evangelical organizations, to set a high standard toward which we should strive and by which evangelicals could hold each other accountable. Such a code of ethics could become an important part of the evangelical contribution to global political culture, part of an effort to “seek the peace and prosperity” (Jer 29:7) of the global village.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All should note the leadership of the Evangelical Fellowship of India in this

## 2. The Bible teaches a demanding balance of witness and respect

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak badly against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (1 Pet 3:15-17).

Here one sees complementarity: the necessity of witness, even apologetics (the Greek text says *apologia*, originally a defence in court), joined with the dignified treatment of the other human being in “gentleness and respect.” The truth of the need for the gospel is complementary with the truth of the God-given dignity of the people who hear the gospel. People are alienated from God and in serious need of the gospel of reconciliation with God by faith in Jesus; people are created in God's image and therefore worthy of respect and able to both recognize and take many respectable actions.<sup>2</sup> Both sides of the truth must be obeyed. The complementary sides of the truth make an ethics of mission both necessary and possible.

Christians should always see other people as images of God, assuming that God sees their treatment of people as an indication of how they want to treat God, even if Christians totally disagree with others and believe them to need the gospel of Christ. According to Christian ethics, human rights are given by God to all people, regardless of their religion or their lost spiritual condition. (This stands in contrast with some religions which have said that only members of their religion have rights.) Christians should defend the basic human rights of all while also praying for them to come to faith in Christ. To repeat: these complementary truths could be expressed in a code of mission ethics which evangelicals teach and seek to follow. The influence of such a code could extend well beyond evangelical circles. One can hope that such a code, along with improving practice on the part of all Christians, may make the gospel more attractive, reduce religious persecution (of all religions), and also encourage followers of other religions to set public standards for the proper

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area. See their *Statement on Mission Language* (October 2000). Online: <http://tinyurl.com/efi2001>.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the contributions of Christians to political culture arise from their two-sided view of a human being, as created in the image of God but fallen into sin.

treatment of their neighbours; nevertheless, the Christian's motivation must focus on glorifying God.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. The Bible teaches self-criticism in light of God's forgiveness**

In a time of religious violence, when Islamists pour violence on Christians, and Hindu or Buddhist nationalists oppose Christians in India and Sri Lanka, it would be too easy to criticize others. But the Christian faith is very self-critical: the Old and New Testaments especially criticize the people of God, not other people. One should not say with the Pharisee: "God, I thank you, that I am not like the others," but one should say with the tax collector: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:11-13). Because our hope is in God's mercy, not our goodness, Christians are free to be self-critical, more self-critical than are adherents of most other religions. If we have sinned, we should confess our sin, accept God's forgiveness, and move on with the mission he has given us. This sin can be either neglecting the God-given dignity of our neighbours or neglecting their need for the gospel. A Christian's first question should never be, "What do other religions do?" Rather, as Peter says, in the middle of false accusations, a Christian should ask, "Am I gentle and full of respect for my neighbours, to whom I am explaining the hope and faith which we all need?"

### **4. Different cultures emphasize opposite sides of the truth**

Within the Christian movement some churches and cultures emphasize the opposite sides of these complementary truths, that people need the gospel and that the image of God is worthy of respect. Compare India and Germany, using over-generalized stereotypes: From the point of view of an Indian Catholic evangelist, any evangelical evangelist in Germany seems to be lacking vitality because of a weak awareness of people's need for the gospel. From the point of view of an evangelical

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<sup>3</sup> Missionaries in Africa and Europe report that some people become interested in Christ after they first hear of or experience the Christian conviction that people have a God-given dignity, which stands in sharp contrast with many other religions and philosophies.

evangelist in Germany, every Catholic evangelist in India seems to be putting too much pressure on people because of a weak awareness of the God-given dignity of those people. It is too simple to tell Christians from other cultures to change, if this is mostly a demand to be like one's own culture. We must temporarily accept some cultural diversity while Christians instruct each other about what it means to both respect the God-given dignity of their neighbours and also see their serious need for the gospel. A global code of mission ethics could be a tool for mutual exhortation.

## **5. Good and bad examples can be identified**

In history and in the present, Christians recognize both problems and lessons in this realm. As a good example of respecting the dignity of others, modern evangelicals have been highly dedicated to religious freedom, including the religious freedom of non-evangelical churches. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when pastors of state and free churches in Europe began to meet across boundaries forming the earliest ecumenical movement, in a context in which formal church membership in national churches was often compulsory, religious freedom became a major goal. In 1852, for example, a high-ranking delegation of the Evangelical Alliance visited the Ottoman sultan on behalf of persecuted Orthodox churches; following this tradition today, well-equipped evangelical religious freedom lawyers have won cases in the European Court for Human Rights for several non-protestant churches, including the Bessarabian Church and the Greek Orthodox Church. Today the orthodox churches in Turkey and the dying old churches in Iraq find their greatest help in evangelical organizations, as evangelicals effectively use the media and speak to governments.

Religious freedom in its modern, peaceful form (not the anti-religious, violent form of the French Revolution) was invented by the Baptist Roger Williams at the end of the seventeenth century in Providence (now in the US). This version of freedom of religion contributed significantly to the modern practice of freedom of speech. Evangelical groups, often with an Anglo-Saxon background, have sometimes transported the American idea of total freedom of speech for the individual, joined with low levels of respect for traditional

structures and cultures.<sup>4</sup> Christians can be grateful for these roots of freedom of religion and speech, but not all countries are prepared for the versions of freedom of speech that the US, Canada, or Australia now practice. While we endorse a high level of legal freedom of speech, in a code of ethics Christians should commit to higher standards for truth and respect of their neighbours in public speech. Not all legal speech is morally acceptable. It can be legal but morally wrong to say things that are false or which deny the dignity of one's neighbours.<sup>5</sup>

A painful example: Consider the statement by US-evangelist Pat Robertson that all Muslims should leave the US, which was a headline in many major Indian newspapers the next day, arguing that if Christians want Muslims to leave 'their' country, Christians should not object if Hindus want Christians to leave India. One of us (TS) happened to be in India that day and was shocked. The legal freedom of speech does not lead to a moral right to say things that disrespect other people made in the image of God, in this case assuming they cannot be good citizens of the US.<sup>6</sup> This assumption is false, which makes such public statements an attack on the God-given dignity of our neighbours, a way of bearing false witness against our neighbours.<sup>7</sup> A written code would make it easier to identify good and bad examples and provide a basis for good teaching.

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<sup>4</sup> Since American evangelicals now make up only 8% of evangelicals in the world, this is rapidly changing.

<sup>5</sup> Evangelicals should defend human rights in general without neglecting other ways of describing our obligations to each other, such as honesty, loyalty, and mercy. Some of our obligations are not easily expressed in the language of human rights.

<sup>6</sup> See Reuters News reports from January 18, 2007, especially the report by Tom Heneghan.

<sup>7</sup> This criticism of Robertson must not be misunderstood to mean we think we must refrain from criticizing the actions or disagreeing with the beliefs of people of other religions. Some attempts to criminalize "defamation" of religion appear to be inappropriate attempts to restrict the freedoms of religion and speech. We should follow the example of Jesus and the biblical prophets who criticized sinful actions and beliefs, while we follow Peter's command to practice gentleness and respect.

## 6. The rapid numerical growth of evangelicals poses challenges

The number of evangelical Christians in the world is large, rapidly growing, and they often find themselves in the middle of confrontations between non-Christian religions and Christians, as well as conflicts among Christian traditions.<sup>8</sup> Evangelical groups overall have the highest percentage of Christians who come from a non-Christian background and became Christians by decision.<sup>9</sup> This rapid growth, especially in Africa and Asia, means many new Christians and new churches face situations of potential conflict and have not yet had good opportunities to appropriate the considerations of the rest of the Body of Christ on matters of the relation of the faith to force and conflict. In Turkey, for example, 95% of all evangelicals are converts from Islam. They (and other new evangelical believers in similar social situations) draw more attention and threats than the historic churches in Muslim countries, which have often paid the price of not preaching to their neighbours in order to gain a degree of tolerance. Evangelical groups seldom represent old churches which have established patterns for how they relate to their cultures and other religions. There are no 'evangelical' countries like there are Catholic, Orthodox, or Lutheran countries. Evangelicals should establish good patterns by means of a code of ethics.

In spite of this potential for conflict, evangelical groups are highly dedicated to defending religious liberty worldwide, are rarely involved as a party in civil wars, and are not connected with terror groups in any way. In general, evangelicals represent the Prince of Peace, despite the unrest and turmoil (on the personal, family, and political levels) that often accompany religious conversions. These principles can be taught in a code of ethics.

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<sup>8</sup> The estimates for the number of evangelicals range from 300 to 700 million; the World Evangelical Alliance seeks to serve a global constituency of 420 million.

<sup>9</sup> Only sects like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses have higher percentages of first-generation adherents.

## **7. Evangelicals should publicly consolidate their spiritual growth in regard to the use of force in matters of faith**

In the past, Christians demanded that people leave another religion and convert to Christianity but did not allow Christians to leave the faith (as some religions still do), punishing apostasy with civil penalties, including losing family, civil rights, reputation, jobs, or even one's life.<sup>10</sup> In that situation, in Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist societies, not changing one's religion was more often due to societal pressure than to conviction. In history, probably more people were forced to accept a religion than there were people free to choose their religion. We are still experiencing the end of this situation (called the Constantinian Era in Christian history), which includes the end of safeguarding Christianity by political means and forcing or manipulating people into the church by political, economic, or other external pressures. Most Christians consider this spiritual growth, not a catastrophe. The Christian faith can live by the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit; real faith does not come from worldly powers, whether armies, governments, or business.

Overall, Christianity and its churches have taken the right course in the last hundred years, increasingly abstaining from violence, from being involved in religious or civil wars, and from using political means or economic pressure for mission. One cannot deny some continuing problems, but if 2010 is compared with previous decades or centuries, the situation is much improved. Conflict situations, such as Northern Ireland or with the so-called Christian terrorist organisation 'National Liberation Front' (NLFT) in Northeast India or with the Nagaland rebels, come from the fringe of Christianity, and the Christians involved are criticised by other Christians around the globe. In contrast, during the First World War in Europe, many major churches fuelled the war from both sides and gave undue religious endorsement to both sides in that war. Praise God, there no longer is a broad acceptance of force in propagating one's own message in the Christian world, and no longer the automatic endorsement of the use of force by the nations in which Christians have public influence. (Note the contrast with Islam, where the Islamists' acceptance of

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<sup>10</sup> Probably the worst example would be the inquisitions in Europe in the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries.

violence to conquer the world has made inroads into the Muslim community, even though Muslims previously lived peacefully with other groups for centuries.)

The forced conversion of the Saxons by the German emperor (and other forced conversions to Christianity) is old history from which Christians have repented; such events belong to the darkest pages of church history. Today millions who do not come from a Christian cultural background are becoming Christians by pure conviction and persuasion. More people are converting to Christianity than at any time when Christians allowed external pressure to corrupt its mission. What the gun boats of Western colonial powers did not achieve in China is now being achieved by God's Word and Spirit alone.<sup>11</sup>

## **8. Everybody should separate religious persuasion from political force**

Today the Christian community is suffering heavy persecution in several countries. The number of martyrs is distressing. It is noteworthy that almost all "Christian" or "post-Christian" countries grant religious freedom to all religions, while the number of "non-Christian countries" that do not grant the same rights to Christians is still high. If we want to oppose the persecution of Christians, if we want to promote the right to testify to our faith and practice it in public, we should be even more careful to ban any means of practicing our faith and witness in ways which violate the human rights of others! All must see that evangelicals genuinely affirm the human right of choosing one's religion.

In Islam, Hinduism, and partly in Judaism, religious law applies directly to government affairs. Such traditions make a separation between religious institutions and the state more difficult and thereby

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<sup>11</sup> We offer the following perspective on military force: "The State (and its army) has the duty to defend peaceful Christians if they become the victims of illegal violence, but it does not do it specifically because they are Christians; it should do so for any victim of violence. An army should never have the task to defend Christianity, propagate the gospel, or conquer land for Christianity. In history many Christian areas were conquered by armies, but this was wrong. Using an army to spread a religion is always a confusion of the different tasks of the Church and the State."



make freedom of religion more difficult. Christians have taken the lead and have declared that they will no longer use the state for church purposes. Christians would also encourage leaders of other religions to find suitable ways to make distinctions between religious institutions and the state, so that states are encouraged to allow freedom of religion for multiple religions.

## **9. We face challenging global changes**

Globalization is making these questions urgent. There is a growing interaction among religions, from the private level to world politics, some peaceful and fruitful, some senseless and harmful. A higher percentage of the world population changes religious affiliation every year. Children today leave the profession and lifestyle of their parents, move to different countries, and feel less obliged to follow old traditions. What started in the West is expanding into other cultures. Religion will not be the exception to this trend (Taylor 2005). In the Western world it is now common that children change their religion and political orientation. In other regions of the world this phenomenon is rising and often shocks cultures.

Global communications (radio, TV, internet, and newspapers) can confront every adherent of each religion with all the other religions in the world, whereas 100 years ago the vast majority of the world's population had little contact with the message of another religion. Simultaneously, the number of cross-religious marriages is growing because young people meet more possible partners than they did a generation ago, including more possible partners from other religions.

This complex relationship among parents, children, and globalization is supplemented by the growth of democracy. In democracy there is religious freedom and religious pluralism. This normally helps small religious communities without political influence more than the majority religions, which previously relied on social pressure to keep people in the religion of their birth. Latin America is a typical inner-Christian example, as the longstanding Catholic dominance is giving way to growing Protestant churches, as well as to various sects. In democracies, young people often choose their religion as they choose their favourite music or cell phone

company, with no grasp of the impact this has for society, culture, and tradition.

When a country becomes democratic or extends religious liberty rights, people who had previously hidden their religion often surface. These “crypto-religionists” outwardly followed the official religion or ideology while hiding their true beliefs, frequently in totalitarian or authoritarian societies. When the emperor allowed Protestantism in Catholic Austria in the eighteenth century, thousands of crypto-protestants began to demand their own public worship. In Islamic countries like Egypt there are many secret Christians; in Shiite Iran there are many crypto-Sunnites. Even in India there may be many crypto-Christians among the officially Hindu Dalits.

Globalization, the human rights revolution, and the growth of democracy accompany a growing competition for souls which will not be restrained by anti-conversion laws or religious persecution. Christians must combine a clear *YES* to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ and to prayer that the Holy Spirit convinces the hearts of people, with a clear *NO* to unethical ways of doing it, ways that go against the command and the spirit of their Saviour.

## **10. Evangelicals should contribute to the global moral discussion**

At the inter-faith meeting “Conversion: Assessing the Reality,” (Lariano, Italy, 12-16 May 2006), 27 people, representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and the Yoruba religion agreed that a code of conduct for propagating one’s faith is needed. This event was held by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Vatican and by the Office on Interreligious Relations and Dialogue of the World Council of Churches as a first step in a multi-phase process. At this meeting Christians listened to the complaints of non-Christian religions. The process envisioned at Lariano was that the various branches of Christianity would develop a code or codes of mission ethics, leading to a later inter-faith phase, to promote the idea of codes of conduct for all religious groups, so far as they are willing to participate.

The valuable results of Lariano are in two paragraphs:

Freedom of religion is a fundamental, inviolable and non-negotiable right of every human being in every country in the world. Freedom of religion connotes the freedom, without any obstruction, to practice one's own faith, freedom to propagate the teachings of one's faith to people of one's own and other faiths, and also the freedom to embrace another faith out of one's own free choice. (Lariano Report 2006, no. 2)

We affirm that while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating other's [sic] rights and religious sensibilities. (Lariano Report 2006, no. 3)

The theme of the second phase was agreed to be "Towards an ethical approach to conversion: Christian witness in a multi-religious world." Thus a significant task facing the World Evangelical Alliance would be to add details to thesis 6:

A particular reform that we would commend to practitioners and establishments of all faiths is to ensure that conversion by 'unethical' means is discouraged and rejected by one and all. There should be transparency in the practice of inviting others to one's faith. (Lariano Report 2006, no. 6)

### **10.1 The current phase is an intra-Christian phase**

The need is for Christians (Protestants, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, and Orthodox) to first develop similar codes of conduct among themselves (relating to the other branches of the Christian tradition) to which they bind themselves and which they also apply in their relations with other religions. If Christians are unable to find peaceful ways of doing mission among themselves in a way that respects both the human dignity and the spiritual needs of others, how could it be found in relation to other religions? But if Christians *can* write good moral codes, this process should encourage other world religions to write similar codes, and these codes could contribute to global standards, which would promote the peaceful freedom of religion.

Christians should start with self-obligation, not to negotiate with other religions, but because they want to live honestly before God; the mistakes of others do not give them the right to act unethically. If Christians agree to codes of conduct, they can start to teach them to their members. Local Christian groups of any persuasion will not always listen to their representatives on a world level, and this may be especially true of evangelicals because of their flat hierarchy. But a biblical code is a good starting point for teaching, giving moral

guidance to Christians who could combine mission with unethical economic and political pressure, or who could combine mission with respect for people in a manner that contributes to peace, justice, and freedom in society.

## **10.2 This process has a moral goal, not a religious goal**

Christians (Evangelicals, Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics) can then ask other religions to agree on codes of conduct for themselves, without denying the distinctiveness of the biblical gospel. Codes of conduct to ban ways to urge conversion by unethical means only make sense if they are not oriented toward any one group. The Lariano Report is right when it states, “We acknowledge that errors have been perpetrated and injustice committed by the adherents of every faith. Therefore, it is incumbent on every community to conduct honest self-critical examination of its historical conduct as well as its doctrinal/theological precepts. Such self-criticism and repentance should lead to necessary reforms inter alia on the issue of conversion.” (Lariano Report 2006, no. 5)

## **10.3 The global moral discussion relates to human rights**

A code of conduct (even if formulated only by Christians) would be of great value in talking to *governments* that want to know how to permit religious freedom legally, including the right to do mission. It must also safeguard against the use of religion for suppressing human dignity or for promoting social unrest. Many governments fear that religious conversions will fuel strife or violence. Christians can help by speaking with one voice, offering practical, balanced codes (Guntau 2007). This is the political dimension of mission ethics. How can we preserve the human right of religious freedom, while also preserving the same rights for others and preserving all other fundamental rights?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Such a code is being developed with the World Evangelical Alliance. Another good contribution to the global discussion is “Missionary Activity and Human Rights: A Code of Conduct for Missionary Activities,” published by the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion and Belief (2009), ([www.oslocoalition.org](http://www.oslocoalition.org)). To their code we would wish to add that truth telling about other religions is an important moral duty which is difficult to express in the language of human rights, while we note that evangelicals often see their entire lives as an act of gospel proclamation, making it difficult to separate any activity from the invitation to others to accept the evangelical faith.

Article 18.2 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says: “No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.” We want this to be true for us, but we also want this to be true for all our neighbours (Lerner 1998:483). Christians may use the legal system of their states to defend their rights (Schirrmacher 2008). But equally they should not use laws and courts to hinder the rights of other religious groups when they practice their freedom of religion legally.

## **11. We should summarize our convictions in a short code**

Christians need a code of conduct acceptable in mission, including what conduct needs to be banned. From the view of Christian ethics, these are universal moral principles; this code should not be intended for evangelicals only.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure this code of ethics is not opposed to evangelism, active missionaries must help write it; its purpose is to improve the quality of mission work and the evangelical contribution to society, not inhibit mission. The WEA must ask all churches and branches of Christianity to then stand together to publicly endorse similar principles.<sup>14</sup> One can seriously hope that such steps will, with time, reduce religious persecution and also give reason for governments to eliminate laws against religious conversion. Past mistakes by Christians comprise one reason why some governments try to legally restrain religious conversions.

All Christian confessions agree that a true conversion is a personal, well-considered move of the heart in dialogue with God. A forced conversion is not something Christians should want. If people want to convert, Christians should give them time for discernment and not baptize them prematurely. Pastors should be assured that converts know what they are doing. There should be transparency concerning

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<sup>13</sup> For the sake of completeness, we must add that violence and undue pressure cannot only be used to get people to leave a religion, but also to stay in it. To force young people to stay in a natural religion in a Brazilian tribe is as bad as to force them to become Christians.

<sup>14</sup> See earlier statements of the Roman Catholic Church Vatican II, *Ad Gentes*, article 2, paragraph 13, and by the World Council of Churches in “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness” (1995). Online <http://tinyurl.com/wcc1995>.

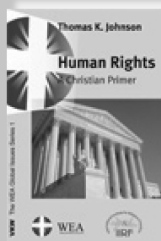
what Christianity is and what is expected of Christians after their conversion. Christianity is not a secret cult but is open to the public. We do not have anything to hide (Matt 10:26-27). Jesus said concerning those who want to become his followers: “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28; cf. 27-33). Christians should help people who are considering becoming Christians to calculate the costs, not rush them into churches at the risk that later, as new converts they will feel cheated.

When people today see on TV that some religious groups will use any means to further their cause, true Christians have to state what means they will never use; and if some Christians use inappropriate means, they should receive the disapproval of other Christians on the basis of a public code of ethics. The motto WWJD (“What would Jesus do?”), recently popular among some teenagers, has to guide us especially when we fulfil Jesus’ Great Commission.

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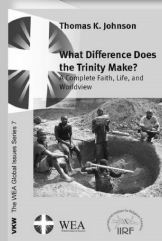


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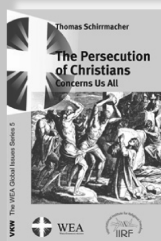
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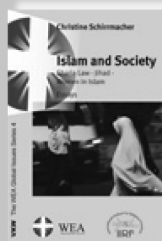
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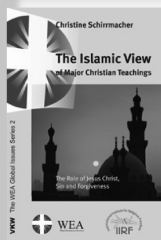


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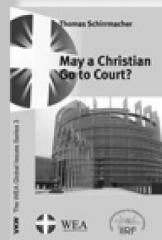
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# Global restrictions on religion: A 2010 summary

Brian J Grim\*

## Abstract

This article summarizes key findings from the Global Restrictions on Religion report,<sup>1</sup> a study released in December 2009 by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life. The report covers 198 countries and territories, representing more than 99% of the world's population for the two-year period of July 2006 through June 2008. It distinguishes government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion before combining them in a joint index.

**Keywords** Religious freedom, index, statistics, sociology, government restrictions on religion, social hostilities involving religion.

## General comments

First, the study recognizes that religious beliefs and practices may be infringed upon not only by government actions but also by social groups, organizations and individuals. And, indeed, our study shows that in some places social hostilities may have an even greater impact than do government actions.

Second, government restrictions include not only national laws and policies, but also actions by local governments and officials,

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life: Global Restrictions on Religion. Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center 2009, 69 p. Online: <http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/restrictions/restrictionsfullreport.pdf>.



which we find account for a sizeable portion of government restrictions worldwide.

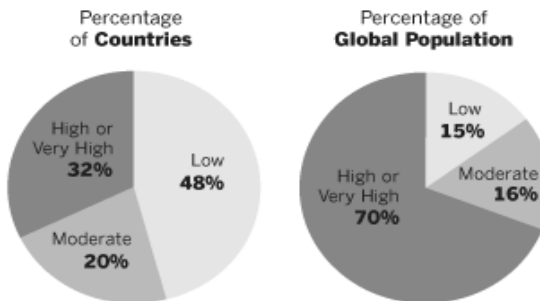
Third, when people think of religious freedom, they may have in mind the degree of religious dynamism and diversity in a country, which the Pew Forum has measured in previous studies. This report, however, focuses on the other side of the coin, that is, impediments to religious beliefs and practices.

And fourth, the Pew Forum takes a strictly non-advocacy role in this research, recognizing that every country studied has some restrictions on religion, and that there may be strong public support in particular countries for certain restrictions. We'll leave it to others to consider how these findings might or might not affect advocacy and policy.

With these points in mind, our study finds that 64 nations, or about one-third of countries today, have high restrictions on religion either as a result of government restrictions or social hostilities involving religion, or both.<sup>2</sup> Because some of the most restrictive countries are very populous, that means about 70% of the world's population lives in countries with high or very high restrictions on religion, the brunt of which often falls on religious minorities.

### Global Restrictions on Religion

A minority of countries have high restrictions on religion, but these countries contain most of the world's population.



Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life  
Global Restrictions on Religion, December 2009

<sup>2</sup> Global Restrictions on Religious Freedom, 53ff. Summary of Results: <http://tinyurl.com/3ypm895>.

## Methodology

This overall finding is based on a series of more than 30 measures phrased as questions, such as, “Is public preaching limited by any level of government?” And on the social side, “Is there mob violence related to religion?” We answered the questions for each country by combing through two separate years of 16 widely cited and publicly available reports on international religious freedom by the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the United Nations Special Rapporteur, the Council of the European Union, and numerous other reports by other organizations, including Human Rights Watch and the Hudson Institute.<sup>3</sup>

## Government restrictions on religion

Before discussing overall scores for countries, a few findings on the extent of different types of restrictions are worth mentioning. First, considering government restrictions:<sup>4</sup>

In two-thirds of countries, some level of government interfered with worship or other religious practices, including religious expression and affiliation. In nearly half of countries, members of one or more religious groups were killed, physically abused, imprisoned, detained or displaced from their homes by some state or local government actor. In more than a quarter of countries, there was widespread government intimidation of one or more religious groups. In nearly a quarter of countries, the national government did not intervene in cases of discrimination or abuses against religious groups. In more than 80% of countries, governments clearly discriminated against one or more religious groups by giving preferential support or favors to some religious group(s) and not others. In 60% of countries, registration requirements for religious groups adversely affected their ability to operate, or the requirements clearly discriminated against certain religious groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Global Restrictions on Religious Freedom, 31-52. Methodology: <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=500>.

<sup>4</sup> Global Restrictions on Religious Freedom, 6-16. Government Restrictions Index (GRI): <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=492>.

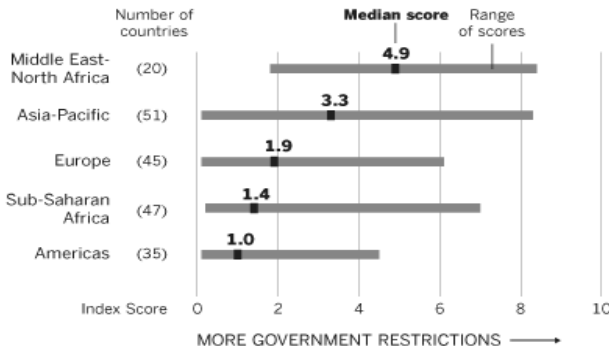
## Social hostilities involving religion<sup>5</sup>

In more than 70% of countries, there were crimes, malicious acts or violence motivated by religious hatred or bias. In more than 10% of countries, there were acts of sectarian or communal violence between religious groups. In nearly 90% of countries, public tensions between or within religious groups were present, and these tensions involved violence in more than six-in-ten countries. In 30% of countries, religion-related terrorist groups were active in recruitment or fundraising. Such groups committed violent acts in nearly one-in-ten countries. In more than half of countries, religious groups themselves attempted to prevent other religious groups from being able to operate. In nearly a third of countries, individuals were assaulted or displaced from their homes in retaliation for specific religious activities considered offensive or threatening to the majority faith, including preaching and other forms of religious expression.

## Geographical comparisons

Looking at how these restrictions play out across the world, the region of the world with the highest level of restrictions is the Middle East and North Africa, which has nearly five times the median level of government restrictions and more than seven times the level of social hostilities involving religion as are found in the Americas region, which has the lowest overall average on both measures. The Asia-Pacific region has the

Government Restrictions on Religion by Region



Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life • *Global Restrictions on Religion*, December 2009

<sup>5</sup> Global Restrictions on Religious Freedom, 17-26. Social Hostilities Index (SHI): <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=494>.

second highest average level of government restrictions, more than three times the average of the Americas, and more than half again as high as Europe's average. Sub-Saharan Africa has, on average, slightly lower government restrictions than Europe.

The situation in the Asia-Pacific region, however, is mixed because it includes some countries and territories with low restrictions – such as Japan and Taiwan – but also includes some countries with very high government restrictions, such as China and Burma. Also, of the 10 countries with very high government restrictions, only two are in the Middle East and North Africa (Saudi Arabia and Egypt), while seven are in Asia (Iran, Uzbekistan, China, Burma, the Maldives, Malaysia and Brunei). Only one is in Sub-Saharan Africa (Eritrea). A similar picture is seen when looking at the 11 countries with very high levels of social hostilities involving religion. Six are in Asia-Pacific (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) and four are in the Middle East and North Africa (Iraq, Israel, Sudan and Saudi Arabia). One is in Sub-Saharan Africa (Somalia).

#### Government Restrictions

##### **Very High**

*Top 5% of scores*

##### SCORES FROM 6.7 TO 8.4

Saudi Arabia

Iran

Uzbekistan

China

Egypt

Burma (Myanmar)

Maldives

Eritrea

Malaysia

Brunei

#### Social Hostilities

##### **Very High**

*Top 5% of scores*

##### SCORES FROM 6.8 TO 9.4

Iraq

India

Pakistan

Afghanistan

Indonesia

Bangladesh

Somalia

Israel

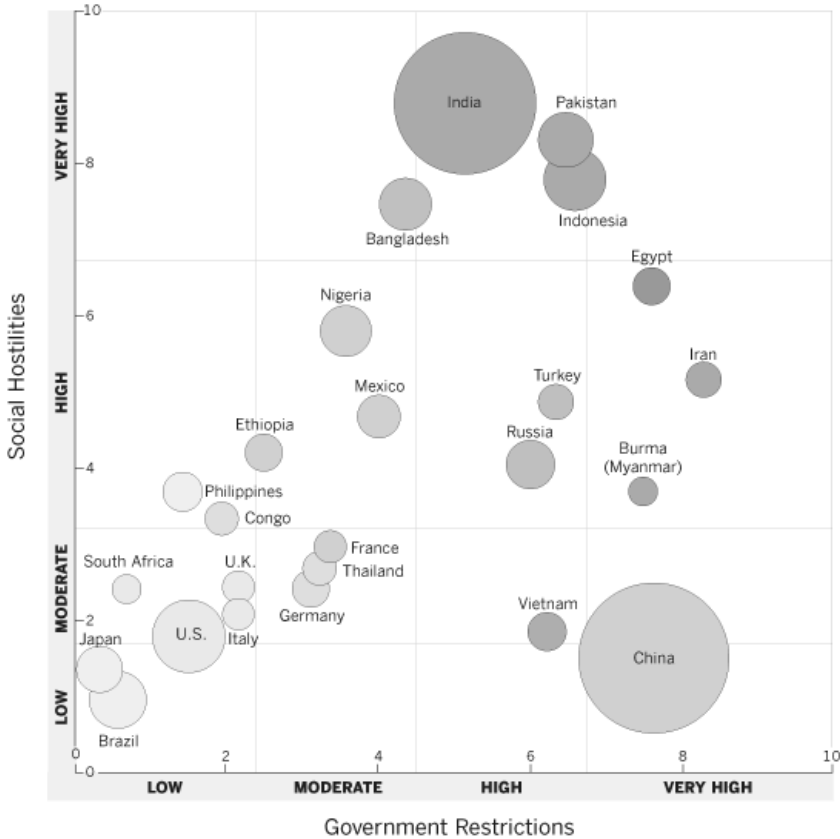
Sri Lanka

Sudan

Saudi Arabia

The highest overall restrictions are found in countries where government restrictions on religion and social hostilities involving religion are both high. In the Global Restrictions on Religion report, we've plotted the 25 most populous countries by their scores on both measures, with increases in social hostilities going up the chart and increases in government restrictions going to the right. If a country has both high government restrictions and high social hostilities, it will be

located more toward the top right corner of the chart, as are Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt and Iran. Since Saudi Arabia has a relatively small population, it is not included on this chart, but if it were, it would be located in the top right square.

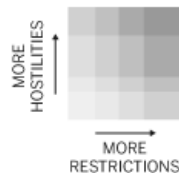


Note: The Pew Forum categorized the levels of government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion by percentiles. Countries with scores in the top 5% on each index were categorized as "very high." The next highest 15% of scores were categorized as "high," and the following 20% were categorized as "moderate." The bottom 60% of scores were categorized as "low."

Circles are sized proportionally to each country's population (2009)

- 1 billion
- 500 million
- 100 million
- 50 million

Colors are based on each country's position on the chart.



While government restrictions and social hostilities tend to move in tandem, there are some notable exceptions.<sup>6</sup> China and Vietnam have extremely high restrictions on religion imposed by the government but relatively fewer restrictions coming from people and groups in society. Although social tensions over religion appear to be on the rise in Chinese society, particularly in the Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous Regions, China is on the low end of the Social Hostilities Index for the period covered by this study, which may help explain the religious growth and dynamism present in China today.<sup>7</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, you can see India in the top-center part of the chart, indicating that social hostilities tend to be higher than government restrictions, though both tend to be high. Nigeria is another example of a country where social hostilities are a more potent force than government restrictions on religion. In the bottom left-hand corner of the chart is a cluster of countries. Only two of the 25 most populous countries are low on both measures – Japan and Brazil. The United States falls into the moderately restrictive category in terms of social hostilities, primarily due to frequent, religiously-biased hate crimes. For instance, each year law enforcement officials report about 1,400 religiously-biased hate crimes in the United States, spread across nearly all 50 states. So, in sum, the scatter plot provides a way to understand the main sources of restrictions on religious groups within a given country.

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<sup>6</sup> Although it is very likely that more restrictions exist than are reported by the 16 primary sources, taken together the sources are sufficiently comprehensive to provide a good estimate of the levels of restrictions in almost all countries. The one major exception is North Korea. The sources clearly indicate that North Korea's government is among the most repressive in the world with respect to religion as well as other civil and political liberties. (The U.S. State Department's 2008 Report on International Religious Freedom, for example, says that "Genuine freedom of religion does not exist" in North Korea.) But because North Korean society is effectively closed to outsiders and independent observers lack regular access to the country, the sources are unable to provide the kind of specific, timely information that the Pew Forum categorized and counted ("coded," in social science parlance) for this quantitative study. Therefore, the report does not include scores for North Korea.

<sup>7</sup> Brian J Grim: Religion in China on the Eve of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. 2 May 2008. <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=301>.

## Conclusion

Finally, the overall results generally show that where government restrictions on religion are high, so are social hostilities involving religion though with some exceptions. It is important to remember, however, that our study is just a snapshot of a particular time period, and situations can and do change. For instance, although Malaysia was among the countries with the highest government restrictions, it had low social hostilities involving religion during the time period studied. However, had the recent social violence<sup>8</sup> surrounding the dispute over whether Christians can use the word “Allah” for “God” happened during the study period, Malaysia’s social hostility score would have been higher.

As noted sociologist Peter Berger has stated, 21st century is a “global age of explosive, pervasive religiosity.”<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, this study is part of a larger, ongoing effort – the Global Religious Futures Project, jointly funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation – that aims to increase knowledge and understanding of religion around the world. You can find additional resources on this and other related issues at our website: [PewForum.org](http://PewForum.org).

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<sup>8</sup> Associated Press: Malaysia king warns of crackdown on religious hate. 15 March 2010. <http://pewforum.org/news/rss.php?NewsID=19819>.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Berger: Religion in a Globalizing World. Pew Forum’s biannual Faith Angle Conference on religion, politics and public life. Event Transcript. 4 December 2006. <http://pewforum.org/events/?EventID=136>.

# The trauma of persecution:

## Responding to survivors of the post-traumatic wounds of extreme violence and inhumane treatment

Roger Foster\*

### Abstract

Many survivors of various forms of persecution carry the wounds and symptoms of post-traumatic stress and would benefit from evidence-based care and therapeutic assistance. This article refers mainly, but not exclusively, to survivors of war, torture, genocide, gender-based violence and false imprisonment. My premise is that organizations responding to issues of religious persecution need to think and act beyond the competent work that many are now doing in terms of communication, advocacy and basic spiritual and material assistance. A best practice standard for organisations that assist survivors of persecution is recommended.

**Keywords** Trauma, persecution, post-traumatic stress, post-traumatic growth, survivors, best practice, resilience.

A local ministry manager flees with his family from a city ravaged by war and threats against the small Christian population. A couple of years later he is kidnapped, held in captivity and eventually released. After a year of struggling with post-traumatic stress symptoms he receives some group counselling and eventually goes to work in a “safer” country. He continues to have symptoms, but is able to continue ministry. In another country, a Pastor is placed in solitary confinement and is interrogated, tortured and subject to mock executions. Upon his release almost two years later, he is barely able to function and keeps a very low profile in ministry. However, others in his church are able to secretly continue the work that he started.

In terms of these two cases, the literature regarding religious persecution may discuss the theological issues related to their suffering (Penner 2004), or others would effectively delineate how to

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advocate on behalf of these men (Boyd-MacMillan 2007:254-283), or speak of the type or level of persecution they were under (Tieszen 2008:67-80). Historical treatises can help us to better understand the fragile intricacies of the layers of historical trauma even to the point of possible extinction (Jenkins 2009). However, what is often missing from research and scholarly articles on religious persecution is dialogue on how to assist those suffering with post-traumatic stress reactions and fallout especially as it relates to extreme violence and inhumane treatment. My premise is that Christian organizations responding to issues of religious persecution need to think and act beyond the competent work that many are now doing in terms of communication, advocacy and basic spiritual and material assistance (including ministry of “presence”).

The Religious Liberty Partnership document on “Best practice for ministry to and with the persecuted church” (RLP 2008) describes minimal standards and does an excellent job describing core issues such as “do no harm”, cross-cultural values and partnership, but makes no mention of trauma related to persecution or the need to respond in terms of any form of direct ministry. Also known as The Code for Best Practices, it was designed as “a benchmark document to guide the policies and practice of organisations” that work for and with the persecuted church. The Code is more focused on “steps in the process” recognising that organisations that work with survivors of persecution are also in the process of various stages of development. To this end, The Code is seen as a “living document” and amenable to potential additions of new, “cutting edge” best practices. It is my intention in this paper to describe some of the main issues related to the trauma of persecution and to propose additions to The Code.

There is mention of “the need to work with persecuted church leaders as equals as opposed to primarily seeing them as victims” and while I agree that this is an admirable basis for ministry, there are still criminal atrocities of extreme violence that are perpetrated against these very same leaders. In addition, a number of these leaders deserve our very best in terms of best practice assessment, trauma-focused treatment and on-going care. They also need capacity building, training and coaching that is cross-culturally sensitive and that will lead to complete self-sufficiency in their churches and countries. However, if the traumatic aspects of persecution are never mentioned on any level this will never be realised.

It seems that, at this point, organisations which work with the persecuted church only have guidelines to help expatriate Christian workers who may run into a crisis on the field and not for the church that faces a constant onslaught of terror and tangible threats. “Member care” or staff care guidelines are inadequate to address the psychological effects of those suffering from flashbacks, hallucinations, dissociation, nightmares, panic attacks, chronic depression, complex grief and other debilitating post-traumatic stress reactions. Some member care guidelines, including “debriefing within 72 hours of a crisis” have been proven potentially harmful in the research (Rose 2002). Although debriefing can be helpful for expatriate workers under certain conditions, there are other proven methods of assisting and treating survivors of persecution.

Religious liberty organisations can learn a great deal from the fields of trauma psychology, social work, and trans-cultural psychiatry. This paper refers to the post-traumatic wounds of extreme violence and inhumane treatment in an attempt to bring the subjects of trauma and persecution together. H. Norman Wright notes that the word “trauma” comes from the Greek word that means “wound”. He relates that, “it wasn’t until World War I that the term ‘shell shock’ was coined. It came to the forefront after the Vietnam War and became known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.” This definition used by the fields mentioned above describes this post-traumatic reaction that may include symptoms such as nightmares, difficulty sleeping, “flashbacks”, hyper-vigilance or social avoidance. However, it should be noted that post-traumatic symptoms may also present differently in various non-western cultures (Hassani 2007:6-7).

In 2001, “a longitudinal study of Bosnian refugees revealed, for the first time, the serious disability associated with the mental health effects of mass violence” (Mollica 2001). This group had previously measured strong associations of PTSD and depression among this cohort (Mollica 1999), but found “continued psychiatric disorder and morbidity” three years later. In his book, “Healing Invisible Wounds”, Mollica later describes both the cultural and religious annihilation that he witnessed in his work in Cambodia and the Balkans, revealing what he calls “religious intolerance in its most extreme form”. These studies help us to understand the nature and association of PTSD in areas of intense levels of religious persecution, but Gozdiak and Shandy (2002) state that “despite the fact that religious persecution features so

strongly in the UN definition”, research in this area is not systematic and is often neglected.

## **1. An approach to treatment and training**

The organization that I became involved with started to work with Iraqi Christian refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), both in neighbouring countries where they fled to and within the “safer” areas within the country. The objective was to build capacity for lay counsellors and responders within the persecuted church. A trauma counselling-based, psycho-educational model was used and interwoven with a range of narrative, group, cognitive, prayer and expressive therapies. The psycho-educational approach is known to be an evidence-based practice shown to facilitate recovery of those with mental illness (Dixon et. al. 2001:903). It includes an opportunity for group discussions, group support, and education, especially around trauma and trauma reactions. This approach has been used with war-traumatized children and parents in Kosovo in combination with expressive therapies and group support (Möhlen 2005:81-87).

The training modules were given for those involved in direct relief ministry to refugees and IDPs and those who held various positions in the community and who ministered to the refugee population (teachers, psychologists, physicians, youth workers, church leaders, priests, nuns and, at times, government workers). Many of those who minister to this group are Christian refugees and IDPs themselves and have witnessed many traumatic events. Since early 2008 this has expanded into several other countries where the threat and violence against Christians is pervasive and on the increase.

Within the program there are intensive psycho-educational training groups ideally of between 6 and 8 people, however, larger didactic groups of 24 are sometimes organized due to the need for basic information on trauma. Our aim is to provide: 1) information about the nature of traumatic incidents (especially in relation to the area), the grief process, post-traumatic symptoms (including self-assessment); 2) an opportunity for art-based group therapeutic exercises, storytelling, prayer and dialogue; 3) an understanding as to the basics of psychological first aid to increase their ability to provide relief assistance and support to other trauma survivors in the area. It is also important for trauma survivors to be able to share their “story”, in

their own time, within a safe environment and with the assistance and support of trained counsellors.

Special attention is also given to group discussion of cultural concerns such as expressions of grief/loss, stigmatisation of counselling services, and “do-no-harm” issues. A potentially harmful practice could include the development of a counselling centre, whereby women who come for services are targeted for further violence by certain members of the community. It should be the aim of organisations to help the situation of violence against women and not to increase it. Therefore, “do no harm” standards (Wessells 2008) and training are introduced. Follow-up training with the groups includes a course on helping traumatised children and a third training on specific issues depending on the need (e.g. addictions, child abuse, rape, witness of extreme violence, torture and other specialized areas).

Future strategies include: 1) development of a lay counsellor network in the regions where such resources are very few; 2) a fourth level training in the form of a case conference to discuss difficult issues and 3) case managers who can review serious cases and ensure proper referral, treatment and follow-up.

Our methodology was to initially provide trauma counselling training to those caring for and within the persecuted church, rather than to first offer direct counselling services. This was due to the high level of stigma associated with counselling in the Middle East, especially within the church where there are very few training models that go further than basic pastoral or practical theological education courses (we would like to see these institutions add courses on the trauma of persecution). Those who attend the training can receive counselling from the training staff or be referred for further assistance. There is also a therapeutic value in the creation of a “safe place” environment for the week and in creatively expressing or narrating their own trauma story during the training.

It is important that we safeguard survivors from further exploitation or abuse. Those who elicit the “trauma story” for 1) legal human rights cases, 2) record keeping or statistical information, 3) human rights advocacy, or 4) journalistic purposes should either have training in lay counselling (with professional support) or work in partnership with trauma professionals. We strive to follow international guidelines such as the IASC Guidelines on Mental

Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings (IASC 2007). Ethical journalists also follow similar guidelines developed, for example, by the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at Columbia University (Hight and Smyth 2003).

## **2. Persecution and the nature of complex trauma**

Although it is true that many in the persecuted church will find healing and restoration through prayer and connection with God, support of family and friends and other means, there are some who are more vulnerable and do not have the same level of resilience. Biographies of Christian martyrs and those involved in ministry to the persecuted church often highlight stories of overcoming incredible odds through divine intervention, but often fail to mention the multi-generational, post-traumatic effects on families, ministries and even people groups.

Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela (2008:10-11) highlight two types of trauma (originally documented by LaCapra 2001): “a) historical trauma, which refers to a single huge disaster, which can be personal (for instance, a rape) or communal (like a flood); b) structural trauma, which refers to a pattern of continual and continuing traumas (also known as complex trauma).” This is very often the situation with those who suffer multiple traumatic events due to religious persecution in the form of continuing, pervasive political oppression, captivity or occupation. Many of the people that we work with have not only experienced various levels of persecution (as Tieszen has outlined), but have continued to live in areas where safety and security have little or no guarantee. In trauma mental health terms, it would be said that these survivors continue to be in a vulnerable state where even the most resilient have difficulty with even basic survival.

Part of the nature of trauma is that our first reaction is either “fight, flight or freeze”. We automatically do whatever we need to do to survive and our bodies are made in such an intricate manner that certain parts of the brain and nervous system are activated and other systems are shut down. Many trauma survivors recall that they felt shock, numbing and an inability to remember certain parts of horrific events. Those who go through the trauma of persecution follow the same patterns that many other trauma survivors go through. Victor

Frankl, an Auschwitz concentration camp survivor who developed a therapy to find meaning in the midst of suffering, “spoke of this post-traumatic condition as a ‘vacuum state’ of existence – void of the capacity for the creation of meaning and realising a tangible future” (Wilson 2004:119-120).

Some survivors of religious persecution tell me that, speaking to me or our small therapeutic group, was the first time that they had ever told anyone about the story especially in any detail. The instinctual response is to try to forget a traumatic incident, however, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, panic attacks, depressive bouts and recurrent nightmares do not allow for any type of relief or healing. At the same time, even though fearful or anxious, fighting feelings of shame and guilt, the survivor wants someone to listen, pray, understand and plead on their behalf for some justice to be done. But, often justice doesn’t seem to come and, worse, their story does not get told and the perpetrator is able to continue atrocities against a minority of people who have a different belief system.

Concerning the genocide of 1.5 million Armenian Christians in and after 1915, Peter Balakian writes about his grandmother Nafina Aroosian who had “witnessed mass murder and endured a death march into the desert, with her two babies, the death of her husband, and the disease-filled refugee quarter of Aleppo (Syria)”. Earlier he writes about two generations of silence: “The scalding facts of the genocide had been buried, consigned to a deeper layer of consciousness, only to erupt in certain odd moments, as when my grandmother told me a story or a dream.”

At the end of the book he describes how he was the one person that his grandmother trusted to tell the trauma story:

“I was her companion, her captive audience, her beloved witness. Her bits of memory and encoded stories were tips of ice spills from the frozen sea within, a sea that thawed a bit at the end of her life. In odd isolated moments – moments that seemed to be out of time – I had been privy to some of her intense sensory images, to her telescopic memory, to genocide flashbacks. This was how she told me about her past. “

Van der Merwe and Gobodo-Madikizela describe this traumatic “freeze” response and the silence that follows:

The silencing is more than a lack of words; it is also a lack of understanding of what has happened to them. Trauma overwhelms the

psyche; it contains no reference point in terms of one's former experience. The word "frozen" comes up many times in the story of women who have been raped, because they do not know how to deal with the experience; they do not have the resources to deal with it or the capacity to respond to it.

By minimizing the trauma of persecution and by not providing the best treatment for survivors that are in need, we contribute to this conspiracy of silence as perpetrators continue to terrorize and dehumanise their citizens. The goal of perpetrators of extreme violence is to render their prey completely and utterly helpless. Judith Herman (1992:33) states that, "psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by an overwhelming force. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities." The problem is that many months and years after a kidnapping, rape or false arrest survivors continue to have debilitating symptoms. Herman (1992:48) quotes a Dutch study of hostages whereby 75% had symptoms of post-traumatic stress after six months to one year. "The longer they were in captivity, the more symptomatic they were, and the slower they were to recover." My concern for survivors of religious persecution is that religious liberty organizations are not looking at the post-traumatic factors that survivors are going through and are not giving the full range of best practice assistance for them to be restored to all that God has planned for them.

This completely overwhelming event or succession of events paralyses not only the victim, but also those who are potentially in the greatest position to help. In several countries where I work those who are released from imprisonment and torture are often not able to contact friends, family or members of house churches for fear that the authorities will target them next. However, early studies of veterans of World War II demonstrated that the greatest protection that they had against overwhelming terror was the closeness of their fighting unit and their leader (Kardiner and Spiegel in Herman, 1992:25). When all sense of closeness, community and social support is taken away it becomes that much more difficult to find resolution or protection from intrusive thoughts and feelings of further abandonment. Compacting this is a sense of shame and guilt that needs to be worked through and expressed within a safe and loving community.

### **3. Persecution and violence against men and women**

In working with Iraqi Christians for example, the majority of those who were victims of kidnapping, extreme violence and torture were men. Many Christian families were given death threats and a high number of families experienced the death of one or more family members. Many in our groups related stories of being a witness of extreme violence. Despite the targeting of men, there are women who seem to quietly carry the deep wounds of gender-based violence. It was documented by the UNHCR (UN-OCHA 2009) that women not only experienced rape and inhumane treatment in Iraq, but also experienced similar dehumanising treatment in neighbouring countries to which they had fled. In addition, young women were subjected to prostitution and human trafficking.

A former UNHCR official told me that those fleeing from North Korea seem to follow only two migratory tracks on the way into a neighbouring country. The refugees are either rescued by a church group or snatched by an armed group of those involved in human trafficking. Mike Kim (2008) documents the imprisonment, torture and sex trafficking of those daring to escape the country. In certain areas, it is important for organisations to work together on behalf of those who are enslaved. If we do not address these trauma-related issues, then we are not addressing the full needs of the persecuted church.

Violence against women also includes many who are victims of domestic violence, who often continue to live with men who beat them and who generally have no legal recourse for protection in their countries. This problem is compounded if a woman has made a change of religious affiliation. The threat of “honour killing” looms over women who are in this category and our efforts to help women must contain proactive “do no harm” standards, so that women do not continue to be targeted. Further, human rights frameworks, and protective / contingency planning strategies need to be discussed with those involved in assisting women in troubled areas.



#### **4. The issues of false arrest, captivity and torture**

Probably the most pin-pointed area where the trauma of persecution is most profoundly felt is at the point when a threatening family member, terrorist or someone in authority takes the person against their will into “captivity”. The individual being held will have a wide range of stress responses in various degrees. The person being kidnapped may be blindfolded, drugged, handled roughly, or may encounter or witness sudden violence directed toward people in the area where the kidnapping took place. A person who is falsely arrested may face torture or interrogation for a “confession.”

The following are a few of the stress reactions experienced in these situations: fear, denial, withdrawal, shock, hyper-arousal, and feelings of helplessness, confusion, constriction (feelings of paralysis, numbing and emotional detachment) and despair. Upon release they may also have difficulty sleeping and may have flashbacks or recurring nightmares (Herman 1992:33-35 and Wright 2003:223-227).

Based on our experience, several issues can contribute to stress and these can be:

- Lack of awareness of the status of other survivors, family or co-workers;
- Possible involvement of governmental authorities without legal due process;
- On-going threat of kidnapping;
- Possible interrogation with the use of violence / torture;
- Demand of ransom money from organization or family;
- The possibility of “disappearance”;
- Witness or threat of extreme violence.

Again, the goal of those who hold people against their will in captivity is to use overwhelming force to strike terror into the mind and heart of those taken (and even those who are in the area) and to achieve some objective, either political, religious or personal. The desire is to have total control over the persons being held against their will. Even when a person is released from captivity it may take a long while for mental, physical and spiritual healing of these control responses.

The perpetrator, according to Herman (1992), “seeks to induce fear and to destroy the victim’s sense of autonomy. This is achieved by

scrutiny and control of the victim's body and bodily functions. The perpetrator supervises what the victim eats, when she sleeps, when she goes to the toilet and what she wears. When the victim is deprived of food, sleep or exercise, this control results in physical debilitation." Also, many survivors may be convinced that they are about to be killed, only to be spared at the last moment.

In addition to destruction of autonomy there are generally steps taken to cut off the victim from the outside world, access to information or any type of emotional, moral, medical or material support. There are usually statements made by the perpetrators that there is no one coming to their aid or that no one cares about them. The fact is that Christians who are imprisoned for their faith have numerous people praying for them and organizations and churches who advocate for their freedom, but this is often not known by the victim until release. A compounded problem is that some Christians who have been released may not feel much initial support due to on-going security concerns.

Perpetrators also seek to cut off attachment to any objects of symbolic importance. This is especially done to Christians as interrogators attempt to take away or destroy any Bibles, crosses, photographs, Christian literature or letters passed from other believers.

Biderman (1973), who investigated treatment of prisoners of war for Amnesty International, delineated the following coercive control tactics:

- Isolation
- Monopolization of perception
- Induced exhaustion
- Threats
- Occasional indulgences
- Demonstrating "omnipotence"
- Degradation / humiliation
- Enforcing trivial demands

These coercive methods seem to be consistent across cultures and for prisoners of both political and religious conscience. Former prisoners of conscience in our training groups have alluded to all of these tactics used at various points of detention, interrogation or imprisonment.

Some Christians who have been subjected to this form of psychological domination are sometimes not aware that they also treat subordinates in ministry in these and often more subtle ways.

The survivors, and particularly close family members, also experience a huge amount of stress. In fact, survivors can have similar stress reactions in addition to “survivor guilt”. Even though a person held captive may still be alive, their immediate family (and others close to the situation) go through the grief/loss process. They may also have either experienced violence, threats and/or intimidation during the onset, just before or just after the initial incident.

Family survivors are also further distressed by information challenges, for example: 1) lack of information, 2) disinformation or 3) long periods of no information. Governments or organizations may attempt to gain “proof of life” information and/or negotiate potential release or medical attention, while the person held captive is generally unaware of these efforts.

Meanwhile, captives who are not released after a short period of time start to have waves of despair and depression and then hope, usually followed by long periods of silence and isolation. It is in these times that meditation and prayer play a key role. When human contact has been taken away there is often a stronger sense of God’s presence. One Christian prisoner in North Africa told me that while being placed in a pitch black room underground for many days “you could literally reach out and touch the grace of God”. At the same time there is either the desire to communicate with others or the ability to communicate in some small way through scratching or leaving messages, etc.

Sing-Kiat Ting and Watson (2007) studied nine Chinese pastors who were arrested and imprisoned for their faith. “Results showed that the suffering in religious persecution involved losses of personal freedom, physical trauma, spiritual isolation, and collapse of social support. Eight themes emerged as unique ways to respond and cope during the suffering: experiencing God’s presence, letting go and surrendering to God, identification with the passion of the Christ and His disciples, preparing to suffer, normalizing their suffering, worshipping and reciting Scriptures, fellowships and family support, and believing in a greater purpose.” The study documented both times of feeling spiritual emptiness, but also times of standing firm in their faith. They also mentioned a newly developing term called “post-

traumatic growth” and this is a focus on how some people are able to grow through the experience and find some meaning in the face of overwhelming difficulties.

Other people, however, may feel completely broken and not able to withstand any additional violence or isolation. They may become completely passive, suicidal or even start to view the perpetrator, paradoxically, as the saviour or as having some positive qualities (known as the Stockholm syndrome). Others may be asked to make statements about the group, political issues or their situation for the media. These statements are always made under extreme duress, but the viewing public is often led to believe that the statements are true. This causes additional difficulty upon release when people either ignore the victim(s) or question their integrity.

Those who are released from captivity may have many conflicting feelings about their release and about where they are now, as opposed to the harrowing experience that they just went through. They often feel that no one understands them. Some may have to wait for many weeks before other Christians can feel safe enough to approach someone just released from confinement by authorities. Many come out extremely hyper-vigilant and unable to ascertain if they, and their immediate family, are still in a safe place. This vigilance may occur for many years, often accompanied by flashbacks and nightmares. This is frequently the testimony of Iraqi Christian refugees and IDPs.

Trust and identity will be two areas that those released from captivity will deal with upon release. However, this is difficult when the survivor continually re-experiences the traumatic events or feels that he or she cannot trust the environment in which he or she is living. It also depends on the length of time that the person was held in captivity and how they were treated.

## **5. Strengthening resilience through trained lay counsellors**

Each person reacts to the trauma of persecution differently, research has shown that some people are more resilient than others and some are more vulnerable. Women and children are more vulnerable as are those with a previous history of physical or mental disorder. Factors such as church,

community and relational support, maturity as a Christian, the ability to stay calm and focused under stress and individual spiritual or relational gifts increase what are known as resilience factors. Daud, af Klinteberg and Rydelius (2008), for example, list several resilience factors among parents of refugee children including: adequate emotional expression, supportive family relations, good peer relations, and pro-sociality. People without such types of support or who have experienced trauma in the past, for example, are much more vulnerable. Our goal is to try to assist in a way that resilience is strengthened, usually under substantial security considerations.

In order to strengthen resilience for survivors and to respond to the needs of those who have faced persecution it will be necessary to have a properly trained cadre of lay counsellors who have access to professional supervision, consultation and support. Many of these cases occur in areas where there are relatively few trained professional counsellors.

The best initial support that a lay counsellor can provide is reflective listening, empathy, relational support, prayer and attention to immediate needs that survivors may have. It is also important for the lay counsellor to have an understanding of the normal grief process and to assist the survivor in understanding (or “normalising”) what he or she is going through, as well as what they might experience in the future, including hope and reconnection. However, the individual may also feel guilty about what happened, compounded by guilt at being angry with God or the fact of what happened. This needs to be processed and prayed through in time, including the concept of forgiveness as a process – and not only as a one-time event.

It is additionally important for lay counsellors to know that with survivors of captivity it will be a very long and slow process of recovery. If torture was involved it will be even longer, but there is hope. Survivors need a chance to grieve and will most likely go through waves of wanting help and communication with others and times of wanting complete isolation. It is good to respect the wishes of survivors, but also good to monitor them to know if they are able to take care of basic tasks. It is also good for them to know that they have someone to talk to when they are ready.

Lay counsellors should, at minimum, have courses in reflective listening / basic counselling skills, grief assistance and psychological first aid. They should also know when to refer to a more experienced, trusted

counsellor or mental health professional. A physician should also give a full medical examination if there are any physical / medical concerns. Counsellors may also need to refer to other professionals or community services, if needed. At all times, counsellors should practice “do no harm” standards, should always be aware of security issues and should make sure that their assistance does not cause any additional problems for the counsellee. Finally, staff care guidelines should be firmly in place for those who hear the trauma story and are involved in their restoration.

Therefore, a best practice standard should be considered for organisations that assist those who are survivors of persecution. I would like to suggest the following minimum standards.

## 6. Best Practice

- To train lay counsellors who can provide culture-specific support, prayer, grief counselling, basic assessment and possible referral to mental health and allied health professionals;
- To network competent, professional counsellors who can respond to a range of post-traumatic stress symptoms in or near regions where persecution is the most prevalent;
- To give trauma counselling training to those who work in community and religious institutions in areas such as reflective listening skills, the use of empathy and other basic counselling skills, psychological first aid, work with traumatised children and youth and trauma/persecution-related issues;
- To link and collaborate with human rights organisations who specialise in advocacy, communications, legal procedures, and documentation;
- To establish caseworkers who have a caseload of those suffering from persecution who need psycho-social, spiritual, medical, legal, community, and faith-based support.
- To call attention to “do no harm” and other humanitarian, refugee, post-conflict or post-disaster standards.
- To consider evidence-based counselling and therapeutic methods for facilitating the healing process especially for victims of torture, rape and other forms of extreme violence.
- To adhere to staff care guidelines for those who hear the trauma story and who need protection from vicarious traumatisation

(including time off, peer and supervisory level mentoring/coaching and clinical supervision for professional counsellors).

In the future it would be comforting to see organisations that address the needs of survivors of persecution coming together to develop a community of practice to share the joys and difficulties of providing assistance. It would be good to know that the local ministry manager, the pastor and others under threat would receive the best possible support and therapeutic care.

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# Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom

Theological Reflections

**Christof Sauer and  
Richard Howell (editors)**

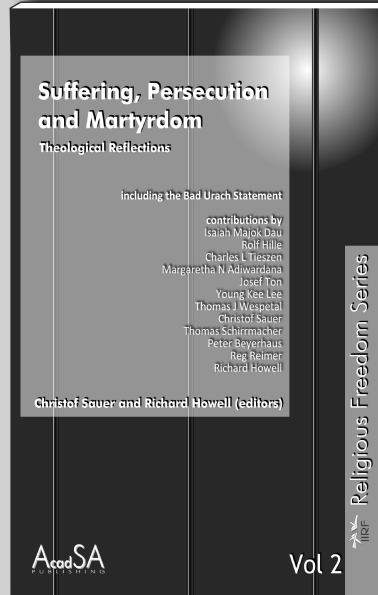
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# Mission in bold humility

Christof Sauer\*

## Abstract

Mission theology must integrate a theology of the cross and of glory. The *Bad Urach Statement* of 2010 contributes “Towards an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission”. The article gives an outline of a theology of suffering in mission, looks at practical applications for mission and for theological education.

**Keywords** Mission, martyrdom, persecution, suffering.

## 1. Introduction

Much of popular missiology in recent decades has been dominated by lopsided emphases, sometimes called a managerial missiology, asking “what must we organise?” or a pragmatic missiology, claiming “if it works it must be good”. Often these approaches have in common a tendency towards a “theology of glory and success”, sidelining a “theology of the cross.” The reality of suffering, persecution or martyrdom is bypassed.

By contrast the life work of famous South African missiologist David Bosch was rightly honoured with a book entitled “Mission in bold humility”, which inspired me for the title of this essay. He repeatedly highlighted that “suffering is a mode of missionary involvement” (Bosch 1991:176-177). “True mission is the weakest and least impressive human activity imaginable, the very antithesis of a theology of glory” (Bosch 1979:76).

Rarely have theologies of mission dealt in much detail with the reality of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for Christ<sup>1</sup> and its

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<sup>1</sup> For the most comprehensive descriptions of persecution of Christians see Boyd-

significance for mission. In September 2009, possibly for the first time, an international group of theologians and missiologists gathered to develop an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission.<sup>2</sup> A major rationale for this consultation was that the church seems ill-equipped for the suffering that comes with its mission in the world (cf. WEA 1996). The participants have issued the extensive *Bad Urach Statement* “Towards an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission”.<sup>3</sup> As its leading editor, I have taken the liberty of presenting selected material, beginning with definitions, mostly sketching a theology of suffering as it relates to mission, and concluding with practical applications for mission and theological education.

## 2. Definitions

In terms of the variety of reasons for which Christians may *suffer* in their relationship with the world, we are concerned here with suffering that Christians endure *because of or by* the world, or *for* the world, in fulfilling their service. We do not mean the broader suffering of Christians *in* the world in the same way as all other people when they encounter war, natural disasters, difficult political or economic circumstances, poverty or sickness (cf. Dau 2001). Nor do we here mean the suffering of Christians *with* the world, as they have compassion for the world as God does. Suffering for Christ’s sake is a fundamental characteristic of the church that remains true to the faith (1 Thes 3:3; 2 Thes 3:12). Distinctions must be made between general suffering and persecution so that neither experience is mitigated, nor is

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MacMillan 2006 and for restrictions of religious freedom see Marshall 2008 and Pew 2009. On the various approaches for researching persecution see Sauer 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The consultation was organised by the International Institute for Religious Freedom ([www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu)), sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, in co-operation with a number of other commissions.

<sup>3</sup> The *Bad Urach Statement* has been summarized in *The Bad Urach Call*, which is a short and more popular appeal. Both can be found at [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu) and are published as part of the compendium on the Bad Urach Consultation: *Suffering, persecution and martyrdom – Theological reflections*, edited by Christof Sauer and Richard Howell, (Religious Freedom Series, vol. 2), Kempton Park: AcadSA Publishing / Bonn: VKW, 2010, 360 p.

one emphasised over the other, and both get the response from the church they require as serious issues.

A definition of *persecution* should not be limited to any specific period of time or restrict persecution to any particular geographical region. It should be comprehensive and universally valid, applicable both to history and to the present, and unlimited in its geographical scope. Therefore persecution of Christians is understood as any unjust action of varying levels of hostility perpetrated primarily on the basis of religion and directed at Christians, resulting in varying levels of harm as it is considered from the victim's perspective (cf. Tieszen 2008). Unfortunately persecution has also been and still is to some degree even today perpetrated by people claiming to be Christians against Christians of differing convictions.

Christian *martyrdom* is voluntarily, but not intentionally (through unnecessary provocation), losing one's life to those hostile to the faith in proclamation or defence of Christian belief, for abstaining from actions that would constitute a denial of the faith, or in execution of a special prophetic commission by God (cf. Wespetal 2005). Contemporary secular usage equates martyrs with suicide bombers, who, motivated by hatred, try to kill as many innocent bystanders as possible while giving up their own lives for some cause. Our definition of martyrdom is almost precisely the opposite.

### **3. Outline of a theology of suffering in mission**

This can merely be a sketch of the structure and a summary of the main statements of the consultation statement which is much more detailed.

#### **3.1 The drama of God's history with the world (epistemological aspects)**

Only a comprehensive view of God's cosmic plans as far as they are revealed to us in scripture will help us to properly interpret suffering, persecution and martyrdom and its relation to mission. A salvation-historical approach to interpreting the Bible and to doing theology seems very helpful in that regard.<sup>4</sup> The suffering of the church for

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<sup>4</sup> In exegesis this approach was propagated by Oscar Cullmann, in missiology by Peter Beyerhaus.

Christ is so much a part of her mission in this period that suffering has been declared a mark of the church by theologians.

### **3.2 Old Testament models of faithfulness (typological aspects)**

Suffering, persecution and martyrdom have been the lot of God's people over and over again, all through the Old Testament scriptures, beginning with the martyrdom of Abel. Job exemplifies the suffering of the righteous allowed by God, and he serves as a typology of Christ. Conflict, persecution, and martyrdom were all characteristics of true prophets (Neh 9:26; Matt 23:37). The election of Israel as the people of God brought along with it suffering for its calling at the hands of the nations, beginning with her slavery in Egypt. However, often the cause of Israel's suffering was God's punishment for Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh (e.g. Lev 26:14-39).

### **3.3 Christ, the suffering servant (Christological aspects)**

The way of Jesus the Messiah through suffering to glory is exemplary for his disciples. All Christian martyrdom has its basic foundational orientation and footing in Jesus Christ, the "faithful and true witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:14; cf. 1 Pet 2:21-24; Heb 2:14-18, 5:8). Since his earliest childhood, Jesus was persecuted, and his first sermon met with bitter resistance. Finally, he stood up as a witness to the truth during his questioning before the judges (John 18:37). To Jesus the crucifixion was not at all a tragic failure of his mission, but rather its very fulfilment.

### **3.4 Discipleship: following in the footsteps of Christ (mimetic aspects)**

The death of Jesus on the cross is both unique, compared to the cross of his followers, and at the same time serves as a model for his followers. Jesus' death on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world as a substitutionary act is unique, completely sufficient, irreplaceable, unrepeatably and cannot be copied. However, this does not negate that as our representative Jesus gave us a model to follow (cf. Lee 1999). Therefore Christian suffering for Christ is a continuation of the suffering of Christ, and it is from him only that it receives its characteristic mark (John 17:18; 20:21). His disciples are treated today as he once was, because Christ lives in them and they

speak and act with his authority. Their fate is united with his. The core meaning of taking up one's cross in the discipleship of Jesus (Lk 9:23) is witnessing to Jesus Christ, even in a situation of persecution and martyrdom (cf. Penner 2004).

### **3.5 Super-human conflict (antagonistic aspects)**

From a sociological inner-worldly perspective the leading cause of persecution of Christians is social hostility against Christians, followed by state hostility and religious violence, while armed conflicts add to the suffering of Christians (Grim 2009). From a theological perspective, the world's hatred toward Christians is ultimately inspired by the even deeper hatred of Satan, who has been fighting against God ever since his primeval rebellion against him. Because Jesus totally stripped him of his power on Calvary, the anger of the dark powers is directed completely against Jesus and all who confess him.

Jesus saw his ministry as an assault on the rule of Satan in the world with the purpose of bringing in the rule of God or the kingdom of God. He confronted Satan's lies with the truth of God, Satan's evil with the goodness of God, Satan's hatred with the love of God, and Satan's violence and murder with God's self-sacrifice out of which arise new creativity, healing, and restoration. Yet Jesus understood his own ministry as simply the beginning of a very long war that he was going to fight through his followers, who share his own nature, weapons, and methods. This is the way in which Jesus fought and defeated evil, and this is the kind of conflict into which he sends his disciples. Jesus was sent as the Lamb of God to defeat the great dragon and to destroy his works (1 Jn 3:8). In the same way, he sends us as lambs to defeat the wolves by transforming them into children of God. Christ's ultimate weapon is self-sacrifice and our ultimate weapon must be the same in order to draw people to Jesus (John 12:24,26,32; cf. Ton 1997).

The church suffers because of the hatred towards Christ by the world in rebellion against God (cf. John 15:20a). It is difficult to fully explain the irrational brutality of the persecution of Christians without taking into regard a demonic component in it. The preaching of the gospel is the reason for much of Christian suffering. The more clearly the church knows and witnesses to Christ, the more certainly she will have to expect the opposition, protest, and hate of the Antichrist (Matt

24:15; 2 Thes 2; 1 Jn 2 and 4; Rev 13-19). In the midst of such a stark realism of conflict, the church can be assured that no enemy or adversity is able to separate the believer from the love of Christ (Rom 8:31-39; cf. Sauer 1994).

### **3.6 God's salvation and comfort (soteriological aspects)**

This aspect deals with the eternal destiny of both the Christian, particularly the confessor and martyr, as well as of the persecutors. It also deals with God's help for his messengers in this world as well as the instrumental role those suffering and martyred play in God's plan of salvation.

Jesus points out the seriousness of remaining faithful to him and confessing him in moments of trial. He warns his disciples that he would reciprocate their public acknowledgement or denial of him in front of men on this earth before his father in heaven (Matt 10:32-33). While the love of many will grow cold, those who endure to the end and remain victorious will be saved, contrary to the fate of the cowards (Matt 24:13, Rev 21:7-8).

While Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as God's angels, comfort and help the afflicted Christian (2 Cor 1:3-11; Heb 2:18; Matt 10:17; Acts 5:18), God's helping presence does not dispense one of one's own responsibility to bear and to stand fast. God's help does not necessarily always have to consist of sparing lives. Some, like James (Acts 12:2) receive God's help to remain faithful, despite torture and execution.

The persecutors will either be hardened further or in some instances led to repentance through the witness of the faithful confessors and martyrs (Acts 8:1; Phil 1:28; Matt 5:44; 10:55).

There remains the question what the suffering and martyrdom of a Christian can contribute to the salvation of others (Col 1:24; 2 Tim 2:10; Phil 1:12-26). While the work of the messianic martyr Jesus is complete, Christ's suffering in the members of his body is not yet complete (Rev 6:11). Paul's apostolic suffering is instrumental suffering, because it serves to bring the gospel to those who need to be saved, and to keep faithful those who have been saved.

### **3.7 The body of Christ (ecclesiological aspects)**

A Christian never suffers alone and a Christian martyr never dies alone, but is always a part of the body of Christ which sustains him or her. The body of Christ needs to be understood in three dimensions, across time, across space, and across divides. The Christian confessors and martyrs of past and present need to be rightly remembered. Those who are currently suffering, are to remember that Christians all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering (1 Pet 5:9). The body of Christ throughout the world participates in the suffering of members of the body of its time, through information, prayer, support, suffering and rejoicing with them. If one part of the body suffers, all parts are equally concerned (1 Cor 12:26). There is the potential of ecumenical solidarity being built, when Christians of different confessions and denominations suffer together for Christ. In addition, a healing of memories is necessary concerning persecution and martyrdoms caused by other Christians in history. Equally, advocacy for persecuted Christians must never be sectarian, only focussing on those from one's own denomination or confession, by ignoring the plight of those with differing theological convictions. Martyrdom serves to build up the church because those suffering and martyred are blessed by God (cf. ICN 2006, Beyerhaus 1992).

### **3.8 God's mission for the church (missiological aspects)**

Suffering and martyrdom are not ends in themselves, but serve God's mission right to "the end of time", and are linked to mission by multiple relationships (Matt 24:14). Suffering and the weakness of the witness are a mode of mission (2 Cor 12:9f; 4:7-10) and martyrdom becomes the most radical form of witness. Witness to Christ is a core cause of suffering. While we might be perfect in contextualising our message and in avoiding any unnecessary offence, as messengers of Christ, we must face the fact that the message of the cross has been and always will be a stumbling block to those without Christ (1 Cor 1:18,23), and will attract the hostility of the world that does not accept the light coming into the world (John 1:4,11).

Suffering is also a test for the genuineness of our mission rather than a mishap to be avoided at all cost. Even the catastrophes of world history can be used by God as vehicles for the progress of his kingdom and he seems to use them in particular. The willingness to suffer for Christ can give the message of those suffering a more



convincing power. While the seed that falls into the ground will bear much fruit over time according to God's promise, martyrdom does not automatically produce visible and immediate church growth. The "fruit" of martyrdom remains a grace from God (John 12:24). While in some places persecution has led to the multiplication of the church, sometimes heavy persecution has completely destroyed or marginalised churches in other parts of the world. Martyrdom brings to a violent end the voice of that particular witness and might discourage the witness of others, or have the potential to silence the last and only witness.

### **3.9 The victory of the kingdom of God (eschatological aspects)**

The period in which we live is marked by the tension between the victory of Christ that has already been accomplished and its visible consummation which has not yet taken place (Matt 5:45; Rom 8:19-22). Because Christ was raised from death, ascended to heaven and was installed as sovereign, we may rightly hope for a resurrection to a better life which gives us reason to stand firm and immovable in affliction, and reassures us that our work for God is not in vain, though deadly forces might seemingly destroy it (1 Cor 15:58).

In contrast to optimistic visions of the future dreaming of seamless transformation, the prophecies of the Bible foresee clearly an altogether troubled final stage of human and church history (Deut 7; 1 Thes 2; 2 Tim 3:1-13; Rev 13-19). Both the worldwide proclamation of the gospel to all ethnic groups and distress reach a climax with the passing away of the old world and the completion of the new (Matt 24:9-25; Rev 17:6; 6:9-11). This encourages each generation to discern and endure historically and locally-restricted preliminary forms of persecution in their own times as anticipations on a smaller scale of what is to follow later (1 Jn 2:18; cf. ICN 2006).

Christians should not focus on the horrors of the coming end times, but they should joyfully<sup>5</sup> expect their returning Lord, as bridegroom, judge and king (Rev 19:6-10; 21:1-5; 16:5-6). God is not in a hurry with his final victory. Rather he is patient with humankind because he does not want anyone to perish, but wants to give everyone an opportunity for repentance (2 Pet 3:4,9).

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Fernando 2007.

### **3.10 The honour of God and his martyrs (doxological aspects)**

There are two perspectives to describe the connection between the glory of God and those suffering and martyred for his sake. The one perspective is about the honour God receives. The other is about the honour and glory God bestows on his servants in this life and in the life to come.

God is honoured both by the life and by the death of his witnesses (Rom 14:8; 12:1; Phil 1:20; Ac 20:24). God is honoured by the witness in weakness (2 Cor 12:9-10) to a foolish gospel (1 Cor 1:18:31) and the faithfulness of the martyrs (John 21:18-19), as well as by the church's confidence in his reign (Acts 4:23-30) and the occasional conversion of persecutors (1 Pet 2:12; Phil 2:6-11). Honouring God is the eternal destiny of God's children (Rev 7:9-17; 15:2-4; 19:2). The glorification of God is the ultimate goal of mission, and everything must in the end serve his glory.

God bestows his glory already in this life on those who suffer for him, lets some martyrs have a glimpse of his glory in their hour of trial, and in heaven lets them share the glory of Christ (1 Pet 4:14; Acts 7:55). But beyond the association with God's glory in this life, those suffering and martyred are led through temporal suffering to eternal glory and are honoured by God (1 Pet 1:11; Heb 2:9; Rom 8:17-18; 1 Pet 4:13-14).

More specifically, the Bible promises a heavenly reward to the faithful (cf. Ton 1997). The character formation and the testing of our faithfulness accomplished in suffering, persecution or martyrdom for Christ have clear corresponding results in heaven (Rev 3:12,21; 20:4; Lk 22:28-30; 2 Cor 4:17). The content of the promised reward is being heirs with Christ, being glorified with him (Rom 8:17) and reigning with him (2 Tim 2:12). These promises are a great source of inspiration, courage and strength for the Christians who are called to face persecution and martyrdom. Suffering and martyrdom are not human achievements to boast about, but it is the grace of God that enables us to go victoriously through these sufferings.

## 4. Practical applications for mission

Skipping important practical applications for the individual Christian, the local and the global church, mission<sup>6</sup> and Christian networks (cf. Sookhdeo 2005) developed in the document, I will here focus on the practical applications for mission and theological education.

### 4.1 Avoiding and exposing the corruption of mission

The international *Lausanne Covenant* of 1974, probably the most influential Evangelical document in existence, says in a very self-critical article 12:

At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church.

The guideline for uncorrupted mission can be found in 1 Peter 3:15-17:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak badly against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (NLT)

Christian mission seeks to avoid unnecessary offence. We should apply wisdom to our behaviour. Mission is spreading the message that God loved the world so much, that he gave his only son Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation (John 3:16). Thus not only the message, but also the way in which this message is spread, always has to mirror God's love and our love for God and to everyone.

### 4.2 Avoiding the use of unethical means in mission

If we want to fight for the right to witness to our faith and practice it in public, we should start by banning among ourselves any means of practising our faith and witness that would violate the human rights of others.

We consider as unethical means:

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Adiwardana 1999 and van der Meer 2005, and look out for Taylor et al 2011.

- Offering people non-spiritual rewards for conversion, such as money, goods, medical treatment, opportunities or offices.
- Threatening people with civil consequences, putting undue psychological pressure on them or pressing them for decisions, consequences of which they cannot foresee, e.g. because they are too young or mentally ill.
- Using the authority of a state function while in office, e.g. as police or state school teacher.
- Preaching to “captive audiences”, who cannot freely leave, e.g. as army officers to their soldiers or as prison director to inmates.

We condemn the use of violence, coercion, threat, harassment, enticement, lies or pretences to win people for Christ, who otherwise would not follow him. A forced conversion would be of no use. Ethics and mission belong together (Schirmmacher 2001).<sup>7</sup>

## **5. Practical applications for theological education**

Theological education has the potential of shaping the faith and life of current and future Christian generations. This section discusses the place of this topic in theological curricula, domains to be included and steps for implementation.

### **5.1 The place of the topic in theological curricula**

It is imperative that biblical teaching on persecution and martyrdom becomes an essential element in our curricula of theological education. This should include both the theoretical reflection on this topic as well as practical and pastoral application in training of future trainers for the body of Christ.

The integration of this topic into presently used curricula could be advanced by either creating new courses and seminars, which deal concretely and specifically with this topic, or by permeating the existing courses on broader topics with references and applications to this topic.

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<sup>7</sup> Look out for an evangelical ethics code on mission/evangelism by the World Evangelical Alliance.

## 5.2 Domains to be included

The theological studies on this subject should include the following domains:

- In-depth study of the persecution of the church throughout history, including the cultural surroundings, concrete events, and the response of the church to this persecution in preparing the believers for a walk of faith.
- Training for pastoral care and counselling for the persecuted, including post-trauma recovery. This should encompass preparation of the entire church both for suffering and assisting the suffering.
- Studies on the role of the state and international relations in situations of persecution. This should deal with the God-ordained role of the government and standards of justice for this authority, as well as human rights and the role of the international community in advancing and protecting such rights.
- Reflection on the role of the church vis-à-vis the government concerning persecution, e.g. the options of exercising pressure for transformation, the role of prayer and spiritual battle, passivity and civil disobedience, etc.
- Teaching solidarity of the entire body of Christ with those suffering for his sake throughout the world and across denominations. This could incorporate travels to regions of rampant persecution, exchange of ideas, and building of lines of communication and fellowship for mutual encouragement.
- The option of self-defence should be examined and compared critically with the alternative of pacifistic resistance. These choices have been insufficiently studied and researched, in particular the hermeneutical questions concerning violence, justice and retribution in the Old Testament. This is particularly relevant in the light of religious violence and extremism in the present context.

## 5.3 Steps for implementation

In each and all of these models, concrete steps could be implemented to enrich our theological education. These could incorporate the following:

- Designing specific courses to deal with the areas enumerated above.
- Initiating a dedicated teaching position for this subject, possibly for someone with practical and personal experience and exposure to persecution. This person, if personally involved, should dispose of sufficient distance to the persecution, in order to assist and equip others.
- Holding faculty seminars with a view of sensitising teachers and professors to this need of the church.
- Preparing and executing short-term involvement of students and faculty in the church suffering more intense persecution.
- Assigning appropriate literature to required reading lists, leading to research projects in this field.

Realising the intrinsic value of theological education in influencing the entire body of Christ throughout the world by adequate preparation of its future leaders, we encourage those involved in training and teaching to integrate this subject matter into all aspects of curricula.

## 6. Conclusion

The authors of the statement are specifically calling on theologians, missiologists and Christian leaders to consider this message in view of fulfilling together in joint obedience the mission to which God has called us. They encourage you to:

- study it personally in the light of scripture,
- assess what relevance it has for you and your ministry,
- reflect how this statement could be used at your level of responsibility,
- discuss it in your group,
- respond to the editors,
- implement what is relevant in your context and position of responsibility.

In presenting these thoughts on a theology of suffering and mission in bold humility, I personally want to encourage all readers to boldly pursue the witness to the crucified and risen Christ, even in the face of

suffering, persecution and martyrdom. Boldly, but not triumphalistically. And doing so humbly, inspired and enabled by Christ to loving sacrifice.

“May the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thes 3:16 NLT).

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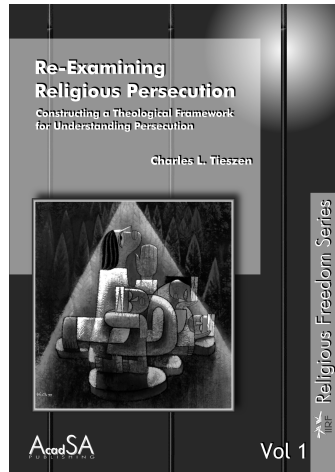
# Re-Examining Religious Persecution

Constructing a Theological Framework  
for Understanding Persecution

**Charles L. Tieszen**

This innovative study examines the shortcomings evinced by many modern studies of religious persecution. Noting the gaps in current theological reflection, Tieszen offers a theological framework in which the religious persecution of Christians can be properly and theologically understood and responded to. Perhaps most importantly, a definition of persecution is put forth that seeks to incorporate necessary and often over-looked elements.

Todd M. Johnson, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, South Hamilton, MA, USA



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## An analysis of the current crises in Northern Nigeria

### An interview with Dr Khataza Gondwe

Dr Khataza Gondwe heads the sub-Saharan Africa team at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and is based in Surrey, United Kingdom. CSW is a human rights organisation that specialises in religious freedom, works on behalf of those persecuted for their Christian beliefs and promotes religious liberty for all ([www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)). The interview was conducted in July 2010 in written form.

*Dr Gondwe, could you please put the recent violent incidents in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, in context?*

The current violence in Jos cannot be viewed in isolation. Violence with a religious component has been occurring sporadically in northern and central Nigeria since 1987. However, chronic unrest in these areas began with the initial election of Obasanjo in 1999 and the subsequent Shari'a crisis. The 2010 violence in Jos needs to be viewed within this wider context.

*Reports in western media often portray Christians in Jos either as the aggressors or as equally responsible for the violence. What is your perspective?*

There has been a lot of inaccurate information in the media. Take, for example, the incident in Kuru Karama, or Kuru Jenta. Initially, the story as narrated by Human Rights Watch<sup>1</sup>, the BBC and others appeared valid, namely, that Christian attackers, or rather, attackers who may have had Christian allegiances, brutally murdered up to 150 members of this Muslim community, stuffing many of their bodies into wells. However, upon closer inspection, several questions arose.

Kuru Karama, like all communities, is structured thus: there is a district head who answers to the Local Government Council Chairman, who is in turn responsible to the Governor. The name of Kuru Karama's District Head is Patrick Mandung, and he holds the

<sup>1</sup> Nigeria: Investigate Massacre, Step Up Patrols; Hundreds Killed by Mobs in Villages in Central Nigeria, Human Rights Watch, 8 March 2010, <http://tinyurl.com/HRW-2010>.

title of Gwom Rwei. Beneath him and directly answerable to him is the village head, then beneath come the heads of the various tribal communities living in the area.

In Kuru Karama, the Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba and other tribes each have their respective community leaders, but these people only have a say amongst their own ethnic group. However, those in charge of the entire people within the villages are the village heads, who are answerable to the local Gwom Rwei.

Western organisations covering Kuru Karama appear to have spoken only to the leader of Kuru Karama's Hausa-Fulani community, not to the village head, who ought to have been one of their primary ports of call. They therefore received and issued a one-sided version of events. Any investigation into this case ought to have included a weighing up of evidence from all parties to the conflict, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

A press release by the Kuru Development Association<sup>2</sup>, issued in response to the reports in the western press, underlines this point, and indicates the deep disappointment at international coverage of the violence in Kuru Karama. In it, the Development Association decries the one-sidedness of journalists and researchers who covered the story. Worse still, the media's version inflamed sentiments in the Muslim world, causing the head of Al Qaeda in the Maghreb to issue an offer to train and arm Nigerian Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

*So, what are the main reasons to doubt the conventional reading in the media of events in Kuru Karama?*

First of all, as the Citizens Monitoring Group<sup>4</sup> clearly states, Kuru Jenta/Karama was a multi-ethnic village with people drawn from Urhobo, Tiv, Tangale, Ngas, Maghavul, Kanuri, Yoruba, Igbo, Nupe, Hausa and Berom tribes. The population included Christians, Muslims, and others from a variety of tribes, even though the Muslims

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<sup>2</sup> "The Media Reportage of the 2010 Jos Conflict", Press Release from the Kuru Development Association, c/o Gwon Rwei Kuru Palace, Kuru, Jos South Local Government Area, received 1 February 2010.

<sup>3</sup> North Africa Qaeda offers to help Nigerian Muslims, Reuters, 1 February 2010. <http://tinyurl.com/monitor-2010>.

<sup>4</sup> Plateau Under Attack – Jos Crisis 2010, Citizens Monitoring Group, February 2010. Particularly see p 64, footnote 4). <http://tinyurl.com/citizens-2010>.

were in the majority. There were at least three mosques and four churches in the community.

The village head, Mr. Ajala Gambo, a non-Muslim, was also forced to flee the “Christian attackers”. His own house was set ablaze during the attack, and as I have said, he was never sought out for an interview by any of the agencies that reported this as a massacre by Christians. He too has expressed deep disappointment at the behaviour of international media and agencies. They never asked for him, or for the security men that were stationed there at the time of the violence. Mr. Gambo also claims that most of the burnt houses and possessions shown on video belonged to Christian villagers rather than Muslims.

Further, according to the Citizens Monitoring Group, the Muslim inhabitants of Kuru Karama were well armed with guns and ammunition. This was never mentioned in media broadcasts. During a visit to the area, CSW was shown the remains of a house owned by a man named Dambaturi where these arms were being stockpiled, allegedly in preparation for an attack on the non-Muslim villagers of Kuru Karama that was to occur despite a peace meeting convened by local security men between community leaders on the morning of the violence. We learned that as church leaders criss-crossed the village appealing for calm and stating that peace had been brokered, non-Muslim youths from the surrounding area that had gotten wind of impending violence were beginning to descend on the village to strike pre-emptively, while Muslim youths gathered at Dambaturi’s house, where machetes and guns were passed out to them to shouts of “Allah u Akbar”. The two groups met head to head at the village’s commercial centre, where battle commenced, destruction was great, and the Muslim group came off worse. Later, and not for the first time in Nigeria’s history – as any Christian living in Kano City in 2004 can attest<sup>5</sup> – bodies were discovered in wells. While the Muslim community is variously reported as claiming to have suffered up to 150 casualties, we were informed by church leaders that they could not give definitive figures as the bodies were not identified before removal, and the many missing members of their congregations could either be dead or displaced.

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<sup>5</sup> Nigeria deploys soldiers to quell religious killings, Declan Walsh, *The Independent*, 14 May 2004. <http://tinyurl.com/indep-2010>.

*This is interesting, as in the western media the attacks on Dogo Nahauwa and other villages that took place in March and April were depicted as retaliation for the Kuru Karama incident.*

The word “retaliation” is frequently mentioned to explain violence in Northern Nigeria that is committed by the Fulani. The assumption that the attacks on Dogo Nahauwa and other Christian villages were in retaliation for Kuru Karama was initially mooted only by the western media. However, the people arrested for these attacks did not speak in terms of reprisal, but said instead that they were hired to do a job.

It appears, an effort is underway to shift blame for the genesis of this year’s outbreak of crisis away from its actual cause, and onto an event where the Fulani can be portrayed as the primary victims.

In reality, the attack on Kuru Karama was not the starting point of the recent spate of violence. On 18 January 2010, a significant number of armed young Fulani Muslims who claimed to be undertaking repairs on a house, attacked a group of church goers and triggered this violence. There followed a string of subsequent episodes, all preceding Kuru Karama, including attacks on non-Muslim communities in Jos North, Bukuru Central and Bisichi, as a consequence of which these areas are now largely inhabited solely by Muslims. Surprisingly, there are no similar media claims that Kuru Karama was retaliation for these incidents – yet that ought to be the logical conclusion of those espousing the retaliation theory.

*The latter seems to indicate that there was indeed a religious agenda driving the violence. Do you agree?*

It would be folly to deny there is a religious element to the violence in Plateau State and elsewhere in northern and central Nigeria. How else would you explain, for example, what occurred in Jos in late 2008, when after a peaceful Election Day in Jos, violence broke out in the early hours prior to the announcement of results? The violence was blamed on election rigging, however, not one political party headquarters or politician was attacked. Instead, the targets were the homes of pastors and other Christians, churches, and particularly non-Muslim men and boys.<sup>6</sup> More recently, in Jigawa State (Kazaure), a Muslim motorist died after being assaulted by a Muslim traffic officer,

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<sup>6</sup> Nigeria: Death Toll in Jos Riot Rises to 350, allAfrica.com, 30 November 2008, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200811300001.html>.

yet churches were targeted and set on fire.<sup>7</sup> Then in June, attempts by the Plateau State government to enforce the registration of commercial motorcycles resulted not only in the death of a policeman, but also in an attack on a church.<sup>8</sup>

*You have been referring to Fulani Muslims, not just Muslims. So, what is the role of ethnicity in the conflict?*

The Hausa-Fulani, and particularly the Fulani, are the sole common ethnic denominator in the violence in these areas. In Plateau State they are involved in attacks on every indigenous tribe, as occurred most recently in Mazah, ancestral home of the Anaguta.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it is now accepted wisdom in the West that Hausa-Fulani youths are restive because they are considered non-indigenous to Plateau State and are therefore treated as second class citizens. However, indigeneship is a national provision found in the 1999 Federal Constitution. The provision restricts certain official posts in every state to tribes that are indigenous to the state, and gives other social advantages to them also. The Hausa-Fulani in Plateau State are not the only settler tribe in Nigeria – long or short term – to be subject to this clause. Nevertheless, they are the sole tribe demanding – often with violence – a change in this provision that they appear to limit to Plateau State alone. A reciprocal lifting of this provision in states where the Hausa-Fulani are indigenous and in the majority – such as Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara and so on – does not appear to be on the table. It is only in Plateau State, the majority non-Muslim one, where discrimination is said to be a major issue.

In reality, the reserved posts are not that many. Plateau State has Hausa-Fulani representatives in state and federal houses of assembly, and the current deputy speaker of the House of Representatives in Plateau State is Hausa-Fulani. They occupy around 28 political posts in Plateau State altogether. Attributing violence in Plateau State entirely to the indigeneship issue is therefore misleading. It subtly excuses violence on the part of the “disaffected” Hausa-Fulani youths, and also facilitates the process of decoupling violence in Plateau State

<sup>7</sup> Muslim Mob Burns Down Christian Shops, 8 Churches in Nigeria, 23 February 2010, International Christian Concern, <http://tinyurl.com/icc-Feb-2010>.

<sup>8</sup> Nigeria: ECWA laments Attack on its Churches, Seriki Adinoyi, *This Day*, 12 June 2010. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201006141198.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Nigeria: Children amongst injured in village attack in Jos, CSW, 19 July 2010. <http://tinyurl.com/CSW-Jos-2010>.

from the violence occurring in most northern and central states where the Hausa-Fulani are indigenous, in the majority, and are the sole common denominator. It also distracts attention from the far more extreme and systematic marginalisation of non-Muslims in these states, where even indigenous non-Muslim tribes suffer comprehensive repression.

*Why did they make this distinction between indigenes and settlers in the Federal Constitution?*

The Indigene/Settler policy was put in place to protect the interest of Nigeria's smaller tribes in their local areas, who would otherwise be squeezed in terms of competition for jobs etc. by the three biggest tribes that dominate most aspects of Nigerian society, of which the Hausa Fulani are one. It may be a far from perfect system; however, if this provision is to be revised, it must be done on a national basis and at federal level, with changes applied to every state in the federation, including those of the core north.

*I have been informed of examples where Muslims were persecuted in southern Nigeria. A mosque was destroyed by government functionaries, and Christian leaders boasted that they would never allow a mosque to be built in that area. Don't the Hausa-Fulani youth in Plateau have reasons to complain?*

I am not personally familiar with the case you mention. However, while I do not doubt – and would deplore – the fact that such instances may occur sporadically in southern Nigeria, they are very far from being the norm. Comparing occasional discrimination experienced by Muslims in the south with the comprehensive suffering of non-Muslims in northern and central states is in no way comparing like with like. It is effectively minimising the systematic repression and marginalisation of non-Muslims in these areas, including indigenous ones. For example:

Are Muslim women and children abducted, forcibly converted and married off as second, third or fourth wives to Christians in Plateau State (or, indeed, in southern Nigeria), as occurs in remote areas of the Yauri Emirate of Kebbi, Katsina, Bauchi and elsewhere where the Hausa Fulani are indigenous and in the majority?

Also, are even Muslims that are indigenous to Plateau (such as Muslim members of the Berom, Anaguta and other local tribes)

deliberately deprived of educational opportunities or accused of blasphemy and hounded out of schools as occurs in Kano and elsewhere?

Has any Muslim teacher been lynched by their students and townsfolk on a false charge and with no recourse to justice for their family, as occurred in the case of Christianah Oluwasesin in Gombe in 2007? This was the worst, but by no means the first attack on Christian students and teachers in that area.

Are Muslim villages in Plateau State deprived of solar electricity, wells and other social amenities, while nearby Christian ones have access to all of these at government expense, as in Kano, Katsina and elsewhere?

Are any small-scale Muslim subsistence farmers – or herders for that matter – who fall into arrears to Christian shop owners taken to courts of law that are not of their religion or choosing and forced to give up their means of livelihood and even in some instances hand over a child for conversion, as occurs in a remote part of Bauchi?

Do riots regularly break out in Plateau State or in the south over unproven rumours of blasphemy that result in the destruction of Muslim lives and property without compensation, and is this violence subsequently justified by the international media precisely on the grounds of these false or unproven allegations?

As I said earlier, the Fulani occupy around 28 political posts in Plateau State ranging from councillors to the deputy speaker of the House. This is the largest representation of all non-indigenous groups in the area. Off hand, I cannot similarly point to one non-indigenous non-Muslim in any of the other northern/central states elected to such political offices, let alone an indigenous one. Following the untimely demise of President Yar' Adua, the Muslim governor of Kaduna became vice president of Nigeria and was replaced by his deputy governor, who happens to be a Christian. Immediately, a state that had experienced the most appalling religious violence but was now seen as a model of reconciliation and peace building became tense again, with flurries of text messages calling on Muslims to rise up and resist this supposed Christian coup d'état.

*So, what should be done about all this?*



The Religious Liberty Partnership recently issued a comprehensive statement on this issue, and although each point is salient, I would like to highlight five in particular. Firstly, the Nigerian authorities must ensure an end to the impunity surrounding such violence by bringing perpetrators and planners to justice swiftly. This process would be greatly enhanced by the initiation of an internationally-facilitated and truly independent human rights investigation into violence and repression in northern Nigeria as a whole, and its principle sponsors. Thirdly, it is vital that the right to freedom of religion and belief is upheld in every state of the nation, with punitive action taken by individual state governments against violators, or alternatively by federal authorities, if a state shirks its responsibilities. This is a constitutional and international legal obligation. Fourthly, it is also vital, given continuing allegations of complicity and/or inaction on the part of the armed forces, that current security arrangements in Plateau State are reviewed, revamped, and transformed from being merely reactive to preventative and proactive. Finally, given the fact that news reports can often foment further violence, the international media needs to become more aware of its responsibilities in volatile circumstances, and must take care to verify with all parties and to report in an accurate and unbiased manner, issuing clear and timely retractions whenever necessary.

*Thank you.*

# Cyprus Statement on the Crises in Northern Nigeria

Issued by the Religious Liberty Partnership

**March 2010**

As members of the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus, we are deeply concerned by the continuing loss of life in violence that has affected northern and central Nigeria since 1999, and particularly, the recent murders of hundreds of men, women and children in Plateau State. We stand with our brothers and sisters in Nigeria who seek the restoration of justice, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and peace in their nation, and who uphold fundamental human dignity and rights, including religious freedom. We specifically call on all Christians worldwide to respond to this appeal for prayer and action in recognition that we are One Body united in Christ.

## 1. The RLP acknowledges

- Nigeria's leading role in peace keeping operations on the African continent, most recently in Darfur.
- The stated commitment of the Federal Government and National Assembly to investigate and bring an end to the violence in Nigeria.
- The preservation of constitutional democracy and the prevention of a power vacuum, a total breakdown of law and order or even a return to military dictatorship despite the challenges engendered by President Musa Yar'Adua's prolonged illness.
- That the Church in Jos, Plateau State, representing all ethnic communities, is making every effort to care for and meet the humanitarian needs of all religious and ethnic groups.
- That the Church in Nigeria is committed to the Biblical response of non-retaliation to violence.

- The Federal Government's initiation of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC),<sup>1</sup> where Christian and Muslim leaders are working together for peace, reconciliation and an end to religious conflict.

## **2. The RLP calls on the Nigerian government**

- To urgently launch an investigation into the army's inadequate enforcement of the curfew, and its failure to provide protection to vulnerable communities in remote areas of Plateau State.
- In view of the grievous consequences of recent security and intelligence lapses, to suspend Saleh Maina, General Officer Commanding the Third Armored Division,<sup>2</sup> pending an investigation into the reasons for these failures, and into serious allegations of partisan behavior on his part
- To review and adjust the current security arrangements for Plateau State, strengthening the security apparatus.
- To ensure that all of Nigeria's religious communities enjoy freedom of religion, including the right to manifest and propagate their beliefs as enshrined in Article 38.1 of the Nigerian Constitution,<sup>3</sup> and in international statutes to which Nigeria is party.
- To track down the planners and perpetrators of violence, bringing them swiftly to justice, and thereby contributing towards ending impunity.
- To ensure that the National Assembly applies any changes to the constitutional provisions that promote the indigene/settler dichotomy on a national basis, as this is a national issue.
- To ensure that victims of violence receive timely and adequate compensation, regardless of their religious affiliation.

## **3. The RLP calls on the Nigerian church and religious leaders**

- To continue to promote and practice non-violent responses to attacks, in line with Biblical principles.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://allafrica.com/stories/200806230739.html>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://odili.net/news/source/2009/jan/10/19.html>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/Nigeria-Const>.

- For the Nigerian Christian Diaspora, to stand in solidarity with, and take action to assist their brothers and sisters who are suffering religious liberty violations in their home country.
- For the spiritual leader of Nigeria's Muslims, Sultan of Sokoto<sup>4</sup>, to continue to publicly denounce the killings of civilians in Dogo, Nahauwa, Ratsat, Zot and Byei villages in Plateau State, and to call on those responsible to embrace reconciliation.

#### **4. The RLP calls on the worldwide church**

- To stand with our brothers and sisters in Nigeria in prayer, and to provide long-term practical humanitarian support, pastoral care and trauma counseling, particularly those who have lost family and loved ones, livestock and livelihoods.
- To pray for the health of the Nigerian President, and for wisdom for the Acting President, who face many responsibilities and challenges at this time.
- To engage with Nigerian diplomatic missions in their respective countries, challenging them to ensure the Nigerian government takes timely and effective action to tackle abuses of human rights and religious freedom.
- To call upon the international community to support an international fact-finding human rights investigation into religious violence and repression in northern Nigeria.
- To support a justice monitor to track the progress of prosecution and trial of perpetrators in the legal system in order to ensure that justice is both done and is seen to be done.

#### **The RLP commits**

- To support efforts to ensure the religious rights of all Nigerians, including the rights to freely change one's beliefs and to manifest and propagate these beliefs, as per Article 38.1 of the Nigerian Constitution.
- To support credible international, regional, and local efforts to end hostilities, resolve conflict, and seek an enduring peace.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/Sokoto>.

- To support local and international initiatives for peace-building and youth economic empowerment across the faiths that would engage the youth in gainful activity, rendering them less susceptible to extremism and conflict.
- To call for accurate and unbiased reporting on Nigeria by the international media, and for clear and speedy corrections of any errors likely to enflame an already tense situation.
- To call on the Church worldwide to partner with the Nigerian Church in extending assistance to victims of violence.
- To call for all of our constituencies, including the Nigerian Diaspora and the Church worldwide, to pray for the Church in Nigeria as it seeks to respond in a Christ-like manner to religious liberty violations.

## **Members of the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP)**

- Advocates International, USA: [www.advocatesinternational.org](http://www.advocatesinternational.org)
- All India Christian Council, INDIA: [www.indianchristians.in/news](http://www.indianchristians.in/news)
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- International Christian Concern, USA: [www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org)
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- Set My People Free, EGYPT: [www.petitiononline.com/2010smpf/petition.html](http://www.petitiononline.com/2010smpf/petition.html)
- The Voice of the Martyrs, CANADA: [www.persecution.net](http://www.persecution.net)
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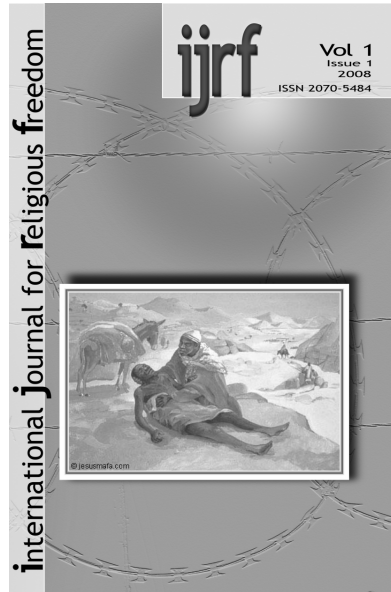
The Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations from around the world focused on religious liberty. The RLP seeks to more intentionally work together in addressing advocacy and in raising the awareness of religious persecution globally. Members of the RLP are primarily involved (that is the majority of their time, personnel, and resources) with ministry to persecuted Christians and/or on religious liberty issues in whatever context and strategy. For more information on the Nigeria Statement or on the Religious Liberty Partnership, contact Brian O'Connell, RLP Facilitator at: [Brian@REACTServices.com](mailto:Brian@REACTServices.com); +1 425-218-4718.



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## Peaceful steps despite political pressure: The challenges of Chinese House Churches

**Editors' note:** The IJRF is publishing this documentation by multiple authors in the knowledge that no single statement on China is true for the whole country. We also point to the Zurich Statement on the Church in China by the Religious Liberty Partnership in 2008 which includes a differentiated acknowledgement of advances regarding religious freedom in China over the past decades (<http://tinyurl.com/zurich08>). Regretfully the situation reported in this documentation must equally be noted. Also see recommendations for background reading at the end.

### 1. Introduction (Bob Fu\*)

Only 400 kilometers<sup>1</sup> from the famed Terracotta Army in Xi'an, China, there are brave "Christian soldiers" in the Fushan county, Linfen City Church. Their aim is not political control, their "struggle is not against flesh and blood"<sup>2</sup>; yet, bruised and bloodied, with their leaders sentenced in November 2009 to prison and labor camps, they stand with faithful Christian witness before their countrymen and before leaders positioned in China's government and worldwide.

The religious freedom situation in China continues to be a complex challenge for those seeking to worship freely. How can those who are daily faced with illegitimate requirements restricting their God-given right to religious freedom obey God first, and also give appropriate respect due to their law and officials?

The recent testimony of the Linfen Church demonstrates well, I believe, a church which is faithfully following the "obey and respect" charge. This church's situation, though unique in the level of repression it experienced, reflects challenges and risks common to house church Christians across China (the total number of house

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\* "Bob" Xiqu Fu (\*1968) is President of ChinaAid, Editor-in-Chief of the *Chinese Law & Religion Monitor*, a bi-annual journal on religious freedom and rule of law in China, and the guest editor for *Chinese Law and Government*, a journal by University of California, Los Angeles. Background resources: [www.ChinaAid.org](http://www.ChinaAid.org), [www.MonitorChina.org](http://www.MonitorChina.org), [www.HelpLinfen.com](http://www.HelpLinfen.com), [www.FreeGao.com](http://www.FreeGao.com), [www.FreeAlim.com](http://www.FreeAlim.com). Email: [info@ChinaAid.org](mailto:info@ChinaAid.org).

<sup>1</sup> Approximately equivalent to 250 miles.

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:12 NIV.



church Christians is over 80 million<sup>3</sup> by some estimates). This church's Christian witness is emboldened and strengthened by the servanthood of a brave team of Christian lawyers and legal researchers who represented the cases of the accused 10 church leaders. Despite their remarkable defense work, in November, 5 leaders were sentenced to 2 years in "Re-education through Labor camp", and another 5 leaders were sent to prison with sentences of 3½ years up to 7 years.

The situation for the Linfen Church is described below by several Christians on-the-ground who are supporting this church especially with legal defense. Presented first is a succinct overview of the legal context in which the church is operating, with an introduction to the harsh crackdown the members experienced in September 2009. Presented second is an in-depth discussion analyzing the cultural and political context the church faces and the faithful position and response of Christians in this situation.

Please join us in prayer for strength for the church in China, and for those in government to pursue justice.

## 2. The legal backdrop and the case of Linfen Church (Dai Jinbo<sup>4</sup>)

Since the release of the *Regulations on Religious Affairs* (hereafter abbreviated as *Regulations*) by China's State Council in 2004, house

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<sup>3</sup> It is extremely difficult to get an accurate estimate given the information censorship and lack of official structure in the house church movement. It was estimated by Professor Yu Jianrong from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences after several years' studies as an official scholar on Chinese churches that the number of Christians could reach to more than 90 million (about 16-20 million Christians associated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Churches and 70-80 million Christians in the house church movement). Also, a recent surprising article in the official English language China Daily openly admitted for the first time that there are over 50 million unregistered Protestant house-church Christians in China. (*China Daily* 2010-03-17, p. 28. <http://tinyurl.com/Daily10-03>).

<sup>4</sup> Dai Jinbo is a Chinese lawyer and a member of the Linfen Church's legal defense team. The text is Mr. Jinbo's statement on record to the U.S. Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on 29 October 2009; his recommendations are unedited, but the footnotes are provided by ChinaAid for the reader's convenience.

churches<sup>5</sup> and other unregistered religious organizations have all been regarded as illegal by the ruling administration. House churches that do not want to join TSPM (Three-Self Patriotic Movement)<sup>6</sup> churches, due to disagreement concerning their beliefs, have become targeted because they refuse to acquire administrative approval by registering their house church as a religious organization. The *Regulations* have become the basis for government departments to carry out selective law enforcement on unregistered religious organizations including house churches. This is also a result of China's institutionalization of religious issues.

Therefore, with the official implementation of the *Regulations* in 2005, house churches in various places have all faced or have experienced being banned, fined and/or requested to suspend their religious activities by the government. This can cause such administrative sanctions against them on the grounds that they are not registered. In terms of banning, there are various kinds of different rulings authorizing the ban. These rulings include administrative penalties meted out by the religion management departments to ban illegal religious organizations, ban illegal venues for religious activities and ban illegal Bible training workshops. The religious affairs departments also manage civil affairs departments and use their capacity as a governing entity for social organizations and religious organizations to ban and crack down on house churches on grounds that they are illegal social organizations. An example is the persecution experienced by the Autumn Rain Church in Chengdu in June 2009.<sup>7</sup> Even public security agencies would also interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations and prevent them from making progress towards autonomy. Further evidence of this type of religious persecution is the case in Baixiang, Wenzhou, in March 2009.<sup>8</sup>

While the Chinese government was attempting to control and crack down on unregistered religious organizations, including house

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<sup>5</sup> House churches are Christian fellowships which are independent of Chinese government control.

<sup>6</sup> The TSPM is the government-controlled Protestant Church in China.

<sup>7</sup> See case #7 at ChinaAid (Online), "Top 10 Chinese Christian Persecution Cases of 2009 Report," 19 January 2010.

<sup>8</sup> ChinaAid (Online), "Authorities Continue to Detain Christian Huang Lemin," 02 August 2009.

churches, these unregistered religious organizations did not succumb. Instead, they took the path of defending their rights in accordance with Chinese law. By defending their rights, they have exposed the Chinese government's violation of the rule of law and the principle of human rights. While cracking down on unregistered religious organizations on grounds that they are not registered, it is a violation of the international convention<sup>9</sup> and the relevant provisions concerning religious freedom in China's constitution.<sup>10</sup> This has also made more religious organizations reach a consensus, that is, whether being registered or unregistered is not a criterion for defining a religious organization as legal or illegal. [Even] [i]f they are not legally registered, this should not deprive the citizens of their right to religious freedom.

An excessive number of cases involving violations of citizens' religious freedom would negatively affect China's international image. Controlling unregistered religious organizations by banning them could not achieve the desired effect. Some local governments have changed their strategies of cracking down on the unregistered religious organizations and turned religious issues into non-religious issues, thus, trying to control unregistered religious organizations by means of limiting their access to venues. This is mainly reflected in two approaches. One approach is targeted at urban religious organizations that primarily rent their venues. The government departments often secretly force the landlords to cancel the lease or not to renew their lease so that the religious organizations will not have stable venues for religious activities. The second approach is to forcefully demolish unregistered facilities for religious activities on grounds that they were illegally built. The religious case in Xiaoshan in 2006<sup>11</sup> was evidence, as was the case in 2009 where the Land and Resources Bureau in Jinghai County, Tianjin, ordered the party concerned to demolish their newly-built church facilities.<sup>12</sup> They also fined the church in excess of

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<sup>9</sup> China is a signatory to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which acknowledge, among other rights, the right to religious freedom in Article 18.

<sup>10</sup> *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, Article 36.

<sup>11</sup> ChinaAid (Online) "Large House Church Destroyed in Zhejiang," 31 January 2006.

<sup>12</sup> ChinaAid (Online) "Korean Pastor Files Lawsuit Against Government Agency in Tianjin..." 6 August 2009.

10,000 Yuan<sup>13</sup> on grounds that they had violated the law of land management. Therefore, the unregistered religious organizations in China cannot obtain legal church assets. This has caused a breakdown in achieving religious freedom in China.

The recent case in Linfen, Shanxi,<sup>14</sup> will produce a profound impact on China's religious freedom; this is also an issue of church assets. Since according to the current *Law of Land Management* and the relevant provisions in the *Urban Planning Law*, a construction project not only requires a certificate of land use but also requires a planning permit for the construction project. However, the government departments would absolutely not want to process these procedures for houses that may be used for gatherings of house churches. Churches are often unable to obtain approval when they are trying to resolve the problem of meeting venues by building new houses, this includes some TSPM churches. Some registered legitimate historical facilities, used for religious activities, also found it very hard to obtain approval for construction of new churches. If houses are built without approval, they would be considered "illegal constructions" and would face the risk of being demolished at any time.<sup>15</sup>

At dawn, on September 13, 2009, more than three hundred police officers, without producing any legal paperwork, stormed into "Gospel Shoes Factory," a gathering venue for house churches in Fushan County, Linfen, Shanxi. The government broke into the gathering place of the church members and used military weapons, wood sticks, bricks, iron hooks and other sharp instruments to beat the people, while smashing and looting the property. They severely beat more than one hundred Christians who were caught entirely off guard. Many lost consciousness and many more collapsed in pools of their own blood. At the same time, bulldozers and other heavy machinery were dispatched to destroy and demolish many buildings. All this had occurred because the government departments deemed their meeting venue as "illegal buildings" for the sake of cracking down and oppressing house churches.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Approximately equivalent to 1,100 Euro or 1,450 USD.

<sup>14</sup> See [www.HelpLinfen.com](http://www.HelpLinfen.com).

<sup>15</sup> See U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), *Annual Report 2009*, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> See the CECC report regarding Linfen Church, <http://tinyurl.com/2w2egjk>

The local government has tried to negotiate with local church leaders since this religious incident. The negotiations between the government departments and the church failed. On September 23, Yang Rongli of Linfen Church and six other church members decided to report the situation to the provincial government. On their way to the province capital they were stopped by the local government. A large number of PAP<sup>17</sup> officers were stationed at the Cathedral in Linfen city, blocking the entrance to the church and confiscated important items in the church. They also prohibited believers from going to meet there. Many church members, including the pastor of the Linfen Church, Huang Xiaoguang, were detained illegally, put under house arrest, or closely monitored. It seemed that the local government wanted to completely destroy the house churches in Linfen. At present, the situation is still developing yet the media has not reported any incidences on this case.

[...] Mr. Fan Yafeng, who is rather familiar with the situation, states that house churches in Linfen, Shanxi, are one of China's ten major house church systems<sup>18</sup> in China. If house churches in Linfen were destroyed by the government through the use of illegal force, this would be the ultimate invasion in the Chinese government's crackdown on house churches and persecution of citizens. According to Professor Li Fan's research at the World and China Institute, a non-governmental think tank, house churches in China make up at least half of China's NGO resources. If such respectful and honorable house churches are destroyed, this will be a major regression of China's religious freedom and a serious violation of citizens' religious freedom. This would cause a massive blow to China's non-governmental forces of freedom and would seriously hinder China from making any progression toward religious freedom and the rule of law.

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<sup>17</sup> People's Armed Police.

<sup>18</sup> A house church "system" is a network of house churches; some are more closely affiliated than others.

### 3. The cultural and political context and a faithful response (Fan Yafeng and Xia Kejun<sup>19</sup>)

#### 3.1 Three crackdowns on Chinese civil society since the Olympic Games

Dr. Fan Yafeng sees that the three crackdowns on civil society by the Chinese Communist Party and State after the 2008 Olympic Games are as follows. The first crackdown was the pressure on the Charter 08 Movement, which was represented by the arrest of Liu Xiaobo.<sup>20</sup> The second crackdown was the law license revocation of rights defense lawyers and shuttering of the Open Constitution Initiative.<sup>21</sup> The third crackdown was to pressure the house churches: in this third crackdown, the first stage was the Linfen Church Case<sup>22</sup> and the second stage was the outdoor assembly of Beijing's Shouwang Church,<sup>23</sup> followed by the eviction and banning of Shanghai's Wanbang Church.<sup>24</sup> Currently, this stage is under development.

Regarding Charter 08, Mr. Liu Junning observed that someone said it was a dangerous embryonic formation of a party program. After the 2008 Olympic Games, in response to toxic milk powder crises,<sup>25</sup> the Open Constitution Initiative formed an attorney group of more

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<sup>19</sup> The observations were primarily made by Dr. Fan Yafeng, former legal researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and member of the Linfen church's legal defense team, and by Professor Xia Kejun. This text is an abbreviated review of their 21 November 2009 discussion with other legal scholars; the full text is available at <http://tinyurl.com/Linfen09>. Footnotes are provided by ChinaAid.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. CECC, *Annual Report 2009*, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> CECC, *Report*, pp. 203, 205.

<sup>22</sup> See [www.HelpLinfen.com](http://www.HelpLinfen.com).

<sup>23</sup> The Shouwang Church is a major house church, primarily composed of intellectuals, which was refused continued rental by the apartment complex due to political pressure; hence the members were forced to meet for worship outdoors; see the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom *Annual Report 2010*, p 112. See also case #3 at ChinaAid (Online) "Top 10 Chinese Christian Persecution Cases of 2009 Report," 19 January 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Re: initial 2009 pressure, see CECC's *Report* pg 137 (printed before the Nov 2009 developments); see also case #5 at ChinaAid (Online) "Top 10 Chinese Christian Persecution Cases of 2009 Report," 19 January 2010.

<sup>25</sup> See Reuters, "China toxic milk powder kills 3, thousands sick," 17 September 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSPEK27908420080917> (accessed May 2010).

than 110 lawyers. In 2009, for the case of Deng Yujiao, two attorneys were assigned to his case in the name of Open Constitution Initiative. This case was extremely influential, which made the Party and State feel threatened by the Open Constitution Initiative. Therefore, after the case of Deng Yujiao and after the July 2009 unrest in Xinjiang, the two “spiritual control systems” of the Party and State in Tibet and Xinjiang have completely declined. The total solar eclipse, which happens once every five hundred years, also had a great psychological impact on government officials; on the surface, the members of the Party and State leadership are atheists, but on a deeper level they are superstitious and idolatrous. Afterwards they launched a large-scale suppression on these regions due to their “unsafe sense.” These developments are the cause of Open Constitution Initiative Event. Twenty days after this Event ended on August 23, the Linfen Church Case in Shanxi province happened (September 13). Therefore, the lead-up and context for the persecution on the Linfen Church is seen from Charter 08 to the Open Constitution Initiative Event and suppression of rights-defense lawyers to the crackdown on house churches.

### **3.2 The three stages of the crackdown on house churches**

The crackdown on house churches can be divided into three stages. The first stage was from September to early November 2009, during which the Party and State gained ground and seemed to have been totally won – except that in the late period of this stage, the witness of the rights-defense lawyers in U.S. Congress played a big role. Ten days after that, the situation changed sharply. In the second and third stage, the authorities made a mistake in assessing the situation, in overestimating their capacity and perceiving they had made a deal with President Obama, and they selected a wrong time to pressure the Beijing and Shanghai churches. During the period of these two stages, the Shouwang Church, the Wanbang Church, the Shengshan legal rights-defense team, and the Linfen Church overall responded properly. After President Obama’s departure, the situation may become even worse.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> President Obama had departed China only a few days before this meeting.

### 3.3 The five contradictions in understanding the house churches' situation

Dr. Fan highlighted five contradictions to provide better understanding of the position of house churches. The most important contradiction is the difference between spiritual and temporal. Both Dr. Fan and Pastor Tianming considered the current situation a spiritual struggle and an “Exodus” for the Chinese house churches. In view of the temporal dimension, Dr. Fan put forward four contradictions – the contradictions between the government and people, between the world and China, between the two cores, and between the central and local government. He said that the crackdown on Charter 08 stopped due to the internal conflict of the power system, which is now rather profound and has a tendency to intensify. Xu Zhiyong<sup>27</sup> was released mainly due to political pressure from the world and from within China. The strength of the crackdown on the house churches is much more powerful than that experienced in the first two crackdowns.

### 3.4 Comparison with other civil society sectors

Considering five sectors of civil society, the first sector is the Internet media, which is adequately mobilized to move toward more freedom. The second is the legal profession, which is also properly mobilized. The third is the house churches, which can be internally mobilized. The fourth is the basic rights-defense movement, which is mainly meant for appealing to the higher authority and community. The fifth is citizen diplomacy, in which the house churches are rather strong. We may observe that the neutral rights-defense route has primarily made certain achievements. We can see that it is hard for the party state to overpower the inward strength of the house churches: love among brothers will shake the world. We hope all the house churches, including Wanbang, Shouwang, Linfen and Autumn Rain (in Chengdu, Sichuan) and other house churches, will take the proper opportunity to integrate the urban churches and rural churches.

### 3.5 Connections between the space for civil society and the three crackdowns

Professor Xia Kejun analyzed the current situation in regard to timing and space<sup>28</sup>; in terms of space, he mentioned these three spaces: (1)

<sup>27</sup> A founder of the Open Constitution Initiative

<sup>28</sup> “Space” can be defined as *the typical or allowed sphere of operation*, e.g. in



The space under the total control of the party state's ideology; (2) The public space, which is not yet adequate and is a fuzzy zone; (3) The religious space, which is a space of belief.

From the three spaces listed above, we may look at the three events Dr. Fan discussed: (1) The crackdown on Charter 08, which is associated with the first space because only one ruling party is allowed: a second party is not allowed to "play the game" of politics; (2) The Open Constitution Initiative Event: an attempt to make the public space shrink; (3) The Linfen Church Case, which is a problem in the religious space of belief.

Professor Kejun said that regarding the evolution of churches in association with biblical theology there are two aspects we may discuss. One is the discussion strictly limited to political theology. The other is the discussion of such political theology placed in a public space, which is also a discussion of the social possibilities in China. House churches have expanded, in number of people, from the private space of the family to a public space. The additional increase of the number of people will naturally result in formation of its own new space; to some degree, the space will naturally grow. The problem with Chinese house churches is still a problem of the domain between families and the state, and thus it is rather difficult to acquire a public space. In practice, the public space in China is the court. It is hard for a public space, such as the court, to acknowledge the space of belief. The first step is for the house churches to exist by breaking through this illegitimate blockage by the state. With an increase in the number of people, a church will lease and even buy an office building as the second step towards the public space; such public space will accommodate more people (literally and figuratively). However, what is really critical is the third step of moving from the public space into the space of belief, before being released from being controlled by the state law and from being pressured at any time in the public space.

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regard to religious freedom, space is that sphere of invisible freedom – the realm in which certain components of fundamental freedoms are *allowed in fact* by the government; in China's situation, this is typically in contrast to those freedoms which are *protected by law* (hence highlighting the need for increased space for civil society).

Professor Xia Kejun emphasized further, “House churches failed to break away from the control of the state because the space of belief had not been established.”

### **3.6 Appropriate “space” for the house churches and their responsibility**

In conclusion, Dr. Fan remarked that what house churches should really possess is a free space of belief simultaneously with their construction of a hall and/or buying an office building. In this space of belief, the tangible religious assets and the intangible free space should be integrated. This is a question of developing a space of belief, and simultaneous construction of the public space and belief space is a theological problem for the Chinese churches. The current Party State, which will not tolerate coexistence with such a “mystic community,” will surely crack down on it. However, to “cross the Red Sea” (in the “Exodus” referred to earlier) is to actually walk from the public space controlled by the Party State to establish the self-owned space of belief.

While it is not necessary to literally move to the public area of the plaza or the street (nor should we fixate just on that), for the healthy existence of the church, it is essential to move from the “house structure” to that organized, corporate state under the Lord’s leadership. In a long-term view – for Chinese churches take homes as a temporary dwelling place – house churches must be really independent from the State: the church is a group of people called out by God and the place where the church worships is the holy mountain of God. The dwelling for the holy mountain involves the mysterious relationship between mountain and sea in the Chinese culture: in other words, to establish the holy mountain, it is necessary to “cross the Red Sea” of Communism. As of yet, we have no clear, full picture of the public space and the holistic perspective in regard to the belief space.

There are many complexities in the house churches’ situation. To look at one church’s example – the Shouwang Church did not respond in the mode of dialog, but in a typical rights-defense mode, e.g. interaction. At present, such a temporary balance point – even just for meeting indoors – is also interaction achieved through street-based action, and such interaction is achieved when both sides make a

concession. However, how can the problem of house churches be eventually resolved?

A rights-defense lawyer needs to play a double role: he is a defender for the house churches as well as a constitutionalist. The Cai Zhuohua Case<sup>29</sup> used the court as an approach to walk out from the house, while Shouwang Church took the plaza and square as an approach to walk out from the house. It may be hard for the two extremes of such dialog to create a new space. However, the group of Christian defense lawyers uses the move from the house to the court as the main line, and deems the integrated rights-defense mode including media network as another idea for the transformation of the political-religious relationship.

### **Editors' recommendations for background reading**

Lambert, Tony 2006. *China's Christian Millions*. Monarch.

Aikman, David 2006. *Jesus in Beijing*. Monarch.

Sung, Peter 2008. Time to Shine: The Chinese Church, Church Planting, and World Missions. *Lausanne World Pulse*, August 2008. Source: <http://tinyurl.com/Sung08>. [Comment by Bob Fu: Despite continuous attempts to register house churches independently according to the Chinese government regulations, so far these attempts had proven unsuccessful. Beijing Shouwang Church is a good example.]

Wu Yiyao and Cui Xiaohuo. House churches thrive in Beijing. *China Daily* 2010-03-17, p. 28. <http://tinyurl.com/Daily10-03>.

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<sup>29</sup> A high-profile case of an imprisoned house church pastor, see ChinaAid (Online), "Comment on a Case against Pastor Cai Zhuohua," 16 January 2006.

# The Bad Urach Call

## Toward understanding suffering, persecution, and martyrdom for the global church in mission<sup>1</sup>

### I. Preamble

By any definition of persecution, the worldwide Body of Christ can count many millions of Christians experiencing persecution today. Their sufferings range from violent death and martyrdom, to physical or psychological torture, to invasive rules confining their worship activities to church buildings, to lower- level forms of discrimination in countless other countries, including many with strong rules protecting religious freedom. Due to the massive rise in population and the explosion in the numbers of Christians, never in the history of the Church have so many of Christ's followers experienced persecution as today, though the number of those who die as martyrs for the faith is not often so large. This situation gives three tasks to the Body of Christ:

- **Remembrance:** The persecuted are not remembered, prayed for, and assisted by the general Body of Christ as well as they should be.
- **Understanding:** There is a complex blend of ancient cosmic antagonisms and contemporary factors that drive persecution. These are not well enough understood, which results in ineffective intervention. While the persecution of Christians is ultimately due to the enmity between Christ and the fallen spiritual realm joined with human rebellion, four secondary forces deliver persecution to the church: religious extremism, totalitarian insecurity, religious nationalism, and secular intolerance. Thoughtless public statements or symbolic actions

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<sup>1</sup> This is a short popularized summary of some of the points of the extensive *Bad Urach Statement* by evangelical leaders from many lands who gathered on September 16-18, 2009, in Bad Urach, Germany, on the invitation of the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance and other bodies, organized by the International Institute for Religious Freedom. The summary was edited by Pastor Dr Thomas K Johnson, Prague.

by Christians in contexts with substantial freedom of speech can unleash violent reactions against Christians in other contexts.

- **Transformation:** Persecuted Christians have learned truths about God that Christians under less pressure need to hear in order to experience the fullness of God. The spiritual insights of the persecuted are vital to the transformation of the lives of the rest of the Body of Christ. One of these essential insights is that we will all be – if witnessing for Christ – in some sense persecuted. There is a grander, greater narrative of God’s action underneath the stories of individual pain, suffering, deliverance, and endurance.

**Our *call* to the Church of Jesus Christ:  
We must willingly, actively, and corporately  
take up the cross of Christ in our time.**

## II. Explanation

### 1. We need to respond to suffering appropriately.

We should distinguish between general human suffering, in which Christians partake, and the suffering of Christians for the sake of Christ. We recognize that much suffering has nothing to do with persecution, but obedience to God and allegiance to Christ lead to additional suffering. We must always respond to suffering with compassion, but suffering for Jesus requires additional responses.

The mature Christian knows that all suffering can become meaningful. No one wishes to suffer, but many Christians who have suffered do not regret it. God also suffers because the people he created suffer, and he suffers for their redemption. He suffers because he loves us. The suffering of God in Christ can shape our thinking on the suffering of the Church. Christians should suffer in sympathy with others who suffer. Because Jesus commands us to love, we should voluntarily suffer to help others who are suffering, to reduce their suffering. We suffer as part of the general human condition and also because we must take up the cross as disciples of Jesus Christ. If we participate in the sufferings of Jesus, we will also share in his glory. Some of us must choose to make sacrifices and to suffer on behalf of fellow Christians who are being persecuted.

## **2. We need to properly understand religious persecution of Christians.**

Religious persecution is an unjust action against a believer or group of believers of a certain religion or worldview. This may be by systematic oppression, genocide, discrimination, annoyance, or other means. Persecution may not prevent victims from practicing their beliefs. Religious persecution has religion (not ethnicity, gender, political persuasion, etc.) as its primary motivation, though other factors can be involved. Persecution of Christians is a form of religious persecution in which victims are targeted primarily because they are Christians. Victims may be of varying levels of commitment to Christianity and be subject to varying levels of animosity and harm.

## **3. We need to understand our place in history.**

The persecution of Christians is rooted in our place in salvation history. A new age has been inaugurated by Christ, overcoming the age of sin and death which began with the fall. The second coming of Christ will visibly usher in God's rule and victory, making all things new. Until then the old age is still present, waging its war against the new age; the life of the Christian is marked by this tension. In this sense, suffering is a mark of the Church. This suffering of the Church was prefigured by the suffering of God's people in the Old Testament, from Abel through the prophets, leading to Herod's pursuit of Jesus, reaching its high point in the murder of Jesus on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross was as a substitute for our sins, making full payment; by his death Jesus was also our representative, calling us to follow him to suffer in order to fight against sin and the devil.

## **4. We need to react properly to the conflict.**

The nature of the conflict in which we are involved is characterized by the nature and methods of the two leaders in the conflict. Jesus reveals the character of Satan as evil, which brings forth the weapons of hate, lies, deception, falsehood, violence, and murder to bring destruction and death. Jesus confronted Satan's lies with the truth of God, Satan's evil with the goodness of God, Satan's hatred with the love of God, and Satan's violence and murder with God's self-sacrifice, out of which arise new creativity, healing, and restoration. This is the way in which Jesus fought and defeated evil, and this is the kind of war into which he sends his disciples. They must love their enemies, do good

to those who hate them, and, like their heavenly Father, show goodness, mercy, and forgiveness to those who are evil and ungrateful. They must stop the chain of poisoning God's creation with Satan's deadly products by absorbing it in union with Christ, responding in love and goodness, thereby demonstrating God's character in the world. Jesus was sent as the Lamb of God to defeat the great dragon and to destroy his works. In the same way, he sends us as lambs to defeat wolves by transforming them into children of God. Christ's ultimate weapon is self-sacrifice, and our ultimate weapon must be the same, to draw people to Jesus.

### **5. We must remain faithful to Christ.**

Jesus points out the seriousness of remaining faithful to him and confessing him in moments of trial. He warns his disciples that he would reciprocate their public acknowledgement or denial of him on this earth before his Father in heaven. While the love of many will grow cold, those who endure to the end and remain victorious will be saved. In order that his disciples do not fall away from him when persecution arises, Jesus has given advance warning and prays that God will keep them safe from the evil one.

### **6. We need to embrace suffering as part of our mission.**

Jesus described suffering as a normal part of discipleship. Not all suffer equally; not all are persecuted equally, and only a relatively small proportion of Christians suffer martyrdom. In the mission that is the central purpose of the interim period in God's history of salvation, Christians must engage with their whole lives, including a readiness for suffering and martyrdom. Suffering is not just something that has to be endured passively, but it becomes a mode of mission, a mission that is done in weakness, focusing on service, and by its nature is accompanied with sorrow and affliction. The precious gospel treasure comes in perishable containers, in our weak bodies, so that everyone can see that the light that shines in us is not our own but God's. Martyrdom is the most radical form of discipleship and missionary witness. While Christians will not seek martyrdom, it is a risk of discipleship we must accept.

Witness to Christ can be a main cause of suffering, persecution, and martyrdom. The gospel certainly brings with it liberation from all kinds of slaveries and can lead to the improvement of the quality of

living. This even may translate into material blessings. At the same time, it brings the hatred of the world, persecution, suffering, and martyrdom. We must keep these two aspects of the gospel in balance. The mission of God needs to be accomplished in spite of and through suffering, persecution, and martyrdom.

## **7. We need to stand up for religious freedom and human rights.**

As a part of our proclamation of Christ we should always mention two truths about people, that people are both sinners in need of the gospel and also created in the image of God, carrying a God-given dignity. This dignity requires that we call on governments and all in positions of public authority to protect religious freedom and all fundamental human rights. When there is severe religious persecution, there is often a government that is failing to protect justice. Like the apostle Paul, Christians should appeal to legal rights to protect themselves and their fellow Christians.

We therefore call on the Body of Christ to take up the cross of Jesus actively, willingly, and corporately, in order to implement the mission of Jesus. This will include remembrance of those persecuted (with prayer and assistance), understanding (joined with informed efforts to reduce persecution), and transformation (so that the entire Body of Christ is renewed through the insights of those who are persecuted and martyred). May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all!

The biblical and theological foundations, along with practical implementations, are developed in great detail in the extensive *Bad Urach Statement*, which can be found at [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu) and which is published as part of the compendium on the Bad Urach Consultation: *Suffering, persecution and martyrdom - Theological reflections*, edited by Christof Sauer and Richard Howell, (Religious Freedom Series, vol. 2), Kempton Park: AcadSA Publishing / Bonn: VKW 2010, 360 pp.

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# **Missionary activities and human rights: Recommended ground rules for missionary activities (A basis for creating individual codes of conduct)**

A document prepared by the project group  
on missionary activities and human rights

## **The Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Oslo, November 2009<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords** Human rights, mission, ethics, code of conduct, charity, education, vulnerable.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

This document is the result of a project on missionary activities and human rights at the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion and Belief (the Oslo Coalition). With human rights as a basis, the project aims to contribute to preventing conflicts arising from missionary activities. To this end and through a long consultative process a project group and its advisory committee have created this document of Recommended Ground Rules. The consultative process started in 2005 and has included a number of national and international seminars under the auspices of the Oslo Coalition, with representatives from Norwegian and foreign academic bodies, faith communities and missionary organisations.

The Oslo Coalition acknowledges the limitations of this process and must emphasise that the Recommended Ground Rules are not intended as a list of rules to be followed by all. The intention of this document is to stimulate internal debate and ethical reflection within networks and organisations that have the propagation of religion among their main objectives, or are affected by or subjected to missionary activities. It is the hope of the Oslo Coalition that

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<sup>1</sup> The IIRF has given input to this document and its director Prof. Dr Dr Thomas Schirmacher has attended the meeting. The document is available online: <http://www.oslocoalition.org/mhr.php>.

organisations and individuals will use the Recommended Ground Rules as a basis for examining their own activities and producing their own Code of Conduct based on universally accepted interpretations of human rights.

Followers of different religions and world views differ in their doctrines and with regard to the content of their faiths and beliefs. To some, mission may seem morally objectionable, to others it may be perfectly justifiable, and to others again it may have the character of an ethical imperative. However, it is precisely because of different convictions that there is a need to stimulate ethical reflection on missionary activities. The challenge ahead is to connect the inter-religious and/or intra-religious initiatives in this area (which are still very few) to the Oslo-coalition project, so as to establish a broad network of concerned groups that may effectuate real changes in the thinking and practice of those who are involved in or affected by missionary activities.

## **1.2 Those who engage in missionary activities and those who are affected**

This document is directed to organisations and individuals involved in missionary activities and to those who are affected by such activities. The term “organisations and individuals involved in missionary activities” applies to those who engage directly as well as those who engage indirectly through various forms of support. It also includes both those who engage in mission as a primary activity and those who promote a religion or world view as a secondary activity, such as some NGOs engaged in development or humanitarian activities.

The groups that are affected by or subjected to missionary activities vary greatly as to their level of formal religious organisation. Many groups have no formal organisation connecting them to a religious leadership beyond the local community. Many groups, especially those belonging to indigenous peoples, do not distinguish between secular and religious leadership. Thus, there is a need to focus on individuals as well as various local communities as partners in a dialogue on how to conduct and respond to missionary activities.

The Oslo Coalition is fully aware of the fact that governments themselves sometimes engage in missionary activities or act as the representative of religious communities to whom missionary activities

are directed. The role of governments in missionary activities is a controversial one, and there are many issues left to be discussed here – for a later project. In this project the Oslo Coalition primarily encourages governments to make sure that their reactions to missionary activities are in accord with the Human Rights Conventions.

### **1.3 The concept of missionary activities**

The concept of *Mission* arose in Christian environments, but is now also used as a religious science category. Other concepts like “proselytism” or “propagating a religion or belief” are also often used to describe this activity. In the context of this project it is important that the terminology used is understood as neutral – in the sense of not implying approval or disapproval of the phenomenon referred to – and that it is easily understood. By the term “missionary activities” this document understands the *activity of communicating a religion or world view through verbal communication or through various related activities as an invitation to others to adopt the religion or world view.*

The range of activities that are referred to as “missionary activities” is broad. Some activities are specific to particular religions. Cultural differences also make it difficult to clearly delimit what falls within the framework of missionary activities. The ground rules presented in this document take this into consideration. The categories have been developed during the international consultative process.

### **1.4 Human rights and ethics**

The project and the Recommended Ground Rules are grounded on the idea that the human rights conventions should provide the framework for missionary activities. However, the conventions do not provide ready-made answers to all the kinds of conflicts and situations that may arise in connection with missionary activities. Thus, the Recommended Ground Rules seek to encourage reflection on the ethical dimension related to the legal framework of the human rights, addressing how ethical considerations may lead to commonly agreed norms for missionary activities. This will be an ongoing discussion. The Oslo Coalition is aware that in actual situations, political, institutional or practical obstacles can make it difficult to adhere to ethical guidelines for mission. Hopefully, these Recommended Ground Rules and the Codes of Conduct developing from it, will serve

to keep the discussion and the awareness of the ethical dilemmas alive.

The organizations and individuals working in this field are continually challenged by ethical dilemmas and different interpretations of the “grey zones” of the human rights conventions. Article 18 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR ) affirms a person’s right “to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching”, and makes no distinction between the individual’s right to practice his/her religion in private, and his/her right to approach others in various ways with a view to promoting his/her religion. The right to engage in faith persuasion is also grounded in article 19 of the CCPR regarding freedom of expression, which reads as follows: “Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference” (art. 19.1) and; “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds...” (art 19.2). There are limitations in the CCPR as to how far these rights extend, in terms of the means used to convey the message to the target group. On the basis of these human rights articles, people have a right to choose a religion, to hold religious opinions and to present these opinions to others. In order to discuss what constitutes an ethical or an unethical way of carrying out mission there is no need to agree completely on the extent to which missionary activities are covered by the human rights framework. The very fact that missionary activities take place is reason enough for this.

## **1.5 Acknowledgments**

The working group would like to thank all scholars and resource persons from faith communities and missionary organisations who have contributed to the long consultative process and to this document. A number of different contexts have been highlighted during the process thanks to the varied religious and national backgrounds of the participants in the discussions.

The working group would like especially to thank Gard Lindseth, who was chairperson of the working group 2008-2009, as well as the Oslo Coalition secretariat and coordinator Barbara Sivertsen for facilitating the process. It would also like to thank the members of the advisory committee for their valuable input during the process: Lars Gule (the Norwegian Humanist Association), Ernst

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### **The working group**

Guro Almås, Sven Thore Kloster, Egil Lothe, Dag Nygård and Ingunn Folkestad Breistein (chairperson)

## **2. Recommended ground rules for missionary activities**

### **2.1 For those who are involved in missionary activities**

#### **2.1.1 Communicating belief ethically**

- The missionary organisation should focus on its own religion and should not misrepresent or denigrate the faith of others for the purpose of turning followers away from their religion.
- In the interest of freedom of intellect, criticism of other religions cannot be prohibited, but should be limited to well-reasoned, persuasive critique and rational comparison between alternative faiths.
- Making truth claims is inherent in missionary activities, but the presentation of these should take into consideration the feelings of others. Hostility and ridicule are unacceptable, but well-reasoned, persuasive critique should never be so.
- If propagating a religion by potentially controversial means, such as door-to-door canvassing, the organisation doing so will ensure that this is done in ways that respect the right to privacy and are also acceptable according to local social norms.

#### **2.1.2 Communicating belief in cross-cultural situations**

- When coming from the outside to another society, the missionary organisation should be sensitive to cultural differences within that society and avoid actions that are considered disrespectful and objectionable there, including those defined as such for religious reasons. However, no-one needs to be bound by cultural and/or

religious norms that are opposed to the freedom to promote and receive ideas or that promote inequality between groups.

- The missionary organisation should be careful in adopting terminology, rituals and customs from other religions, so as not to create misunderstandings about its identity. It should not attempt to achieve acceptance through adopting the outward appearance of other religions.
- The newly converted may in some cases be aggressive towards the religion they have left. It is the responsibility of the missionary organisation to help those who have been converted to its faith to heal the wounds of parting and to come to terms with their religious past.
- Missionaries should be aware of the feelings of others and should avoid a confrontational language of conquest in relation to countries dominated by other religions.
- Coercion and manipulation should never play a part in missionary activities.
- Missionary organisations should be careful in promising worldly benefits as a result of joining their religion.
- The undertaking of undercover missionary activities is not recommended. The laws of a country should be respected. However, when freedom of religion or belief of the target group is seriously violated, such activities could be considered.
- Missionaries should not talk about other religions or their followers in terms that may be perceived as hate speech. They should avoid creating hostility between religious communities.

### 2.1.3 Communicating belief through education and charity work

Missionary activities not only communicate a religion or world view through verbal communication, they also include a wide range of related activities employed to promote the religion or world view as an option for others to accept. The following sections look at some of these activities.

### 2.1.3.1 Missionary activities and educational services

- When providing education for others, religious organisations should be transparent about their religious affiliation and/or objectives.
- Missionary organisations maintain the right of those who run schools to promote their own belief traditions. However, religious organisations should never use the offer of education merely as a tool to gain a foothold within another religious community.
- When running preschools and schools, religious organisations should respect the religious affiliation of the pupils and not involve them in religious activities or expose them to religious propagation without explicit and voluntary consent of their parents or legal guardians. The schools should not prevent or discourage such children from practising the religion of their family while attending the institution.
- Where such instruction is customary, organizations that run schools which provide religious instruction should allow access to alternative religious instruction for pupils with different religious affiliations.

### 2.1.3.2 Missionary activities and charity work

- Charity is an end in itself, and should not be regarded as a means to convert people.
- Missionary organisations that carry out charity and development work should be transparent with regard to their religious affiliation and their mission. It is appropriate and permissible to respond to genuine enquiries about the organization's affiliation.
- Missionary organizations should always be willing to respond to enquiries about its affiliation.
- Missionary organisations should not combine charity and preaching in ways that impair the freedom of the recipients to choose whether or not to listen.
- Charity should be given without any explicit or implicit religious obligations upon the part of the recipient, e.g. demands for participation in the religious activities of the donor community or for expressing acceptance of its religion.
- Religious charity organisations should acknowledge the difficulty felt by many of the destitute to assert their religious identity. The



organisation's staff should assure themselves that expressions of acceptance and participation in religious activities are genuine.

- When helping people in vulnerable situations, religious organisations should give them time to consider carefully any new religious choice. The organisation's staff should assure themselves that any serious steps taken to adopt the religion of the organisation spring from a genuine and non-coerced conversion.

## 2.1.4 Communicating belief to vulnerable and/or disempowered groups

### 2.1.4.1 Children

Missionary organisations should acknowledge that children belong to a vulnerable group, and it is essential that cultural differences in the status of children are understood so that conflicts due to these are avoided.

- In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art 14), missionary organisations should respect the rights of parents to give their children an upbringing in accordance with their beliefs in all relevant circumstances.
- As a general rule, missionary activities should not be directed at minors without informed, explicit and voluntary consent by the children themselves and their parents/guardians.
- Missionary organisations should be sensitive to the development of the child as a free adherent to any religion or none.
- Religious tuition should be directed at children with a similar religious background. In the case of children with other backgrounds, the class organisers should be particularly careful to obtain genuine consent to participation from the children's parents or legal guardians.
- In the case of a minor wanting to convert to the religion of a missionary/charity organisation, the organisation should establish a dialogue with its parents with the aim of maintaining a good relationship between the parents and their child.
- Missionary organisations should accept that the age of maturity varies from culture to culture and from legal system to legal system, and should respect the view of the target group in this matter.

#### 2.1.4.2 Gender perspectives

- Missionary organisations should acknowledge that women may be disempowered in many cultures and religions.
- Missionary organisations should recognize that women “have the right to have or adopt a religion or belief of her choice” (CCPR, art 18), and the “freedom to change her religion or belief” (DHR, art.18) independent of decisions taken by her husband or family. This also includes the right to retain her own religion in cases where her husband or family converts.
- Missionary organizations should act with care in cases where they know that there is a danger that a woman will come into conflict with her family (husband/father) if she should choose to convert as a result of their activities. Organisations must do their utmost to ensure that such a conflict does not arise, and provide help if problems should occur.

#### 2.1.4.3 Refugees, Asylum Seekers

- Missionary organisations should acknowledge that asylum seekers and refugees living in temporary camps are vulnerable groups.
- Missionary organisations should be aware of the fact that if an asylum seeker converts to a different religion, this may create serious difficulties if the person has to return to his/her homeland, and/or to the rest of his/her family.
- Missionary organisations and religious communities should reflect on how their message is interpreted by asylum seekers so that their message is not perceived as a promise of residence permission or other benefits. They should therefore be very careful if approaching asylum seekers so as to avoid any risk of manipulation.

### 2.2 For those to whom missionary activities are directed

- Target groups need to recognise that the most fundamental of all human rights connected with freedom of religion of the individual is “the right to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice” (CCPR, art. 18) or “freedom to change his religion or belief” (DHR, art. 18).

- Target groups need to recognise that the right to manifest religion or belief in teaching (CCPR, art. 18) and the right to freedom of expression (CCPR, art. 19) also apply in the context of missionary activities.
- Target groups should recognize that women “have the right to have or adopt a religion or belief of her choice” (CCPR, art 18), and the “freedom to change her religion or belief” (DHR, art.18) independent of decisions taken by her husband or family. This also includes the right to change her religion when her husband or family chooses to retain their original religion.
- In a situation where another religion is disseminated in a community by means that community members consider unethical, the community members should first try to solve the issue by direct contact with those involved.
- If the problems persist, the community members should bring the problem to the attention of leaders of the missionary organisation.
- In order to encourage mediation or dialogue as a means of dealing with problems connected with missionary activities, broadly based inter-religious councils should be established.
- When mediation or dialogue do not lead to satisfactory protection of the rights of community members to maintain their religion or belief, or in other situations where they feel that their rights are being violated through the missionary activities of others, the community members should appeal to legal measures in accordance with international human rights standards.

**Editorial note:** The IIRF has issued a press release on 27 September 2010: “The International Institute for Religious Freedom and the World Evangelical Alliance would like to publicly welcome the Oslo Coalition for the Freedom of Religion or Belief into the international dialogue ...”. For full text see: [www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu).

**Call for papers:** We invite the submissions of papers related to the Oslo Coalition’s Statement which are suitable to promote the academic discussion, such as critical assessments, comparisons with other human rights documents, history of the discussion, applications to various contexts, etc.

## Noteworthy

The noteworthy items are structured in three groups: Annual reports and global surveys, regional and country reports (sorted alphabetically), and specific issues. They are preceded by an item of current concern. Though we apply serious criteria in the selection of items noted, it is beyond our capacity to scrutinise the accuracy of every statement made. We therefore disclaim responsibility for the contents of the items noted. The compilation was produced by Dr Byeong Hei Jun and edited by Dr Kristine Whitnable, with additions made by Dr Christof Sauer.

### Annual global surveys

#### World Report 2010

Human Rights Watch, New York, 612 p. <http://tinyurl.com/hrwwr10>. Over the past 20 year, this organization has been so successful at putting pressure on governments that do not observe the human rights of their citizens that these governments are increasing the suppression of those people and organizations who are working for human rights. The current issue of World Report summarizes key human rights issues in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide, drawing on events through November 2009. Each country entry identifies significant human rights issues, such as freedom of the press, gender equality and freedom of political dissent. While Human Rights Watch does not specifically track freedom of religion, its strong defense of human rights supports the freedom of person to choose to worship as he or she desires. And such a defence depends on the vitality of the human rights movement that is now under assault. Governments have long used murder to silence human rights criticism. “Russia was at the forefront of murderous retaliation against human rights defenders,” and Kenya, Burundi, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Malaysia, India, Uzbekistan as well (:3-5). “Some governments are so oppressive that no domestic human rights movement can exist openly,” for example, Eritrea, North Korea, Turkmenistan, Burma, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Libya, Syria, etc. A number of governments block access to independent experts and rapporteurs from the UN human rights machinery, for example, the governments of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, etc. (:6-7).

## **Annual Report of USCIRF 2010**

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), Washington, May 2010, 373 p. <http://tinyurl.com/USCIRF10>. This report covers the period of April 2009 through March 2010, and was prepared in compliance with section 202(a)(2) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA). USCIRF's 2010 Annual Report documents serious abuses of freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief around the world. The report highlights 13 countries which USCIRF has recommended that the State Department designate as "countries of particular concern" (CPCs) for severe violations of religious freedom: Burma, China, North Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Secondly the report focused on countries USCIRF has placed on a Watch List for violations of religious freedom not meeting the CPC threshold but requiring very close attention: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Laos, Russia, Somalia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Venezuela. USCIRF is closely monitoring. The report also includes sections on countries the USCIRF is closely watching as well as sections on multilateral organizations; and the U.S. policy on expedited removal of asylum seekers (:2).

## **Hall of Shame Report for Year 2009 - The world's ten worst persecutors of Christians**

International Christian Concern (ICC), Washington, December 2009, 24 p. <http://tinyurl.com/ICCHSR09>. International Christian Concern (ICC) exists to raise awareness of Christian persecution throughout the world. Its annual "Hall of Shame" reports on persecution of Christians around the world, focusing on the ten countries that have the worst record of treatment of Christians in 2009. The historical, political, cultural and religious conditions of each country are present along with a personal testimony from a Christian who was or is being persecuted. The report includes a graph of the source of persecution, intensity, scope and trend across the ten countries reported on.

## **World Watch List - Where faith costs the most**

Open Doors, USA, January 2010, 16 p. <http://tinyurl.com/WWL1>. The World Watch List (WWL) represents the 50 countries where persecution of Christians is the worst and is compiled from a

specially-designed questionnaire of 50 questions covering various aspects of religious freedom. The focus is on persecution for the faith, not persecution for political, economic, social, ethnic or accidental reasons (:1). In the No. 1 spot for the eighth straight time is North Korea.

## **Regional and country reports**

### **Afghanistan: Letter to the Body of Christ around the world**

Written by members of the Afghan Christian Community <http://tinyurl.com/LBCAC>. A plea from the Afghan Christians in exile in India for world Christians to realize the extreme persecution of Christians being proposed by the government in Afghanistan and asking for prayer and support.

### **Afghanistan: Age of Apostacy**

Richard Fernandez. <http://tinyurl.com/Ageofapostacy>. Report of the growing issue of strong enforcement of laws against conversion from Islam in Muslim Afghanistan. Includes links to a You Tube video of a protest in Australia against these laws.

### **Africa: Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Washington, April, 2010, 324 p. <http://tinyurl.com/PFICSSA10> This survey contributes to a better understanding of the role religion plays in the private and public lives of the approximately 820 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa. “Across the sub-Saharan region, large numbers of Christians and Muslims alike express strong support for democracy as well as for religious freedom. At the same time, there is strong backing among both groups for government based on the Bible or sharia law” (48).

### **China: 2009 Annual Report - Top ten cases of Christian persecution in China**

China Aid Association, Texas, January 2010, 8 p. <http://tinyurl.com/CAACPC09>. China Aid Association begins with a holistic review and analysis of persecution of house churches across

China. From this ten representative cases were selected to give the public a more personal understanding of this persecution. Among these globally recognized cases, five are specifically church-related; four involve the persecution of individual faith practitioners; and one involves the persecution of Christians who rescued refugees out of their commitment to Biblical principles (:1). These 10 persecution cases reveal the Chinese political trend and attitude towards religion. The government's anti-religion policy indicates its growing hostility towards Christianity, as it increases its "Religious Gray Market", religious activity that is neither government sanctioned nor underground. The government's furious persecution of both registered and non-registered churches indicates its confusion, fear, and sense of being threatened. The report concludes with the caution that Christians and churches should endeavor to avoid conflict with the government by operating under the law and holding on to their basic faith creed (:8).

### **China: Congressional-Executive Commission on China Annual Report 2009**

U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, October 2009, 464 p. <http://tinyurl.com/CECCAP09>. Chinese officials and central government directives continued to warn against foreign groups "using religion" to "interfere" in China's "internal" affairs and to "sabotage" the country. The government continued to use legal measures to restrict rather than protect the religious freedom of Chinese citizens (:6). "The Chinese Government continued... to strictly control religious practice and repress religious activity outside of state-approved parameters. Local governments implemented measures to prevent "illegal" religious gatherings and to curb other "illegal" religious activities, in some cases destroying sites of worship and detaining or imprisoning religious believers" (:14).

### **China: Annual Report of Persecution by the Government on Christian House Churches within Mainland China**

China Aid Association, Texas, January 2010, 37 p. <http://tinyurl.com/CAAPR09>. This report covers Christian persecution, specifically of House Churches, in China. After careful analysis of the 77 reported cases of persecution of House Church and Three-Self Christians in China, results indicates 19% overall increase in

persecution in comparison with the data from 2008. This marks a total increase in persecution levels of 120% within the last two years.

The Annual Persecution Report contains five main parts: 1) Introduction to International and Chinese contexts; 2) Review and Summary of Persecution in 2009; 3) List of Persecution Cases in Charts; 4) Diagrams Illustrating the Level of Persecution; and 5) Epilogue: A Sociological Approach and Speculative Analysis.

China Aid analysts further introduce a new theoretical model in understanding church persecution trends in China. The tri-colored market model describes various stages of church growth and status in society. Churches and religious groups are categorized as being in the red market (officially and legitimately approved by the Chinese Communist government), the black market (officially banned or illegal), and the gray market (ambiguous legal status).

### **Iran: Nature of the Persecution against the Bahá'ís in Iran**

February 2010, 15 p. <http://tinyurl.com/BICPI09>. This document briefly presents the historical and legal context of the persecution that has targeted Bahá'ís in Iran since the Islamic Revolution, as well as re-examining the major upsurge in human rights violations against them since 2005. The abuses involve not only civil and political rights, but also a wide range of social, economic and cultural rights (:1)... “The Islamic Republic did not cooperate with the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for over 15 years” (:15).

### **Malaysian Indian Minority & Human Rights Violations Annual Report 2009**

Hindraf Makkal Sakthi, Kuala Lumpur, January 2010, 58 p. <http://tinyurl.com/MIMHRVAR09>. “The third, fourth and fifth generation Malaysian born Indians all courageously made a stand against the tyranny of the ethno-centric Malay Muslim UMNO party led Malaysian government on that historic day. Their stand was to highlight the extent of the state-sanctioned tyranny, bullying tactics, racial and religious discrimination with few parallels in the world today, maybe comparable to what is happening in Zimbabwe, or what may have happened in recent history in the Balkans” (:7). “Forced religious conversions and religious intolerance are evidence of



creeping Islamization of Malaysia. Whenever there is a crossing between Islam and Hinduism, there is a tendency for the Islamic perspective to dominate regardless of the merits of the case” (44).

### **Nigeria and Religious Liberty**

Benjamin A Kwashi (Archbishop of Jos), March 2010, 15 p. <http://tinyurl.com/CSWNGNRL>. Muslim attacks on the church in northern Nigeria seem to be unrelenting. But the issue is that after each attack many Christians are left with the immediate loss of lives of their relations, and property and the more lasting suspicion, mistrust, hatred, and revenge that last for generations. Religious fanaticism by Muslim revivalists has caused untold harm to responsible and innocent Christians. The “core North” of Nigeria is intolerant of anybody from the area who becomes a Christian (:8).

### **Turkey: Report on Human Rights Violations of 2010**

Association of Protestant Churches Committee for Religious Freedom and Legal Affairs, Turkey, 30 January 2010, 6 p. [www.protestan.kiliseler.org](http://www.protestan.kiliseler.org). “Many problems and difficulties continue even though freedom of religion and belief is generally under the protection of international human rights and constitutional law” in Turkey. This report presents the problems experienced by the Protestant Community in Turkey during 2009 in the areas of freedom of religion and belief.

The problems include hate crimes directed toward Christians as well as serious barriers in efforts to establish places of worship even though legal status is gained. The removal of the backdrop of intolerance should be urgently taken up by the Ministry of Justice as a priority. This report appeals to the eradication of the root causes of the crimes against the right to life, to worship, to establish a place of worship; to propagate religion; to train clergy; to associate/legal entity.

### **Somalia: Eligibility guidelines for assessing the international protection needs of asylum-seekers from Somalia**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), May 2010, 50 p. <http://tinyurl.com/UNHCR10>. “Over the past several years, a series of threats have been made by radical Islamist groups in Somalia against Somali Christians and especially Somalis who have converted to Christianity from Islam. Although, in many cases,

religious affiliation is the main factor for ill-treatment, political opinion is increasingly linked to religious affiliation” (17). “Christians and Somalis who have converted to Christianity in southern and central Somalia are likely to be subjected to ill-treatment at the hands of Islamic insurgent groups... UNHCR considers non-Muslim individuals or those who have converted from Islam to Christianity to be at risk on account of their religion” (18).

### **USA: Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2010 - Report to the Congress**

United States Department of State, 59 p. <http://tinyurl.com/USPRA10>. This report to the Congress is submitted in compliance with Section 207(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). It contains information as required by Section 602(d) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRFA) about religious persecution of refugee populations eligible for consideration for admission to the United States. This report meets the reporting requirements of Section 305(b) of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 by providing information about specific measures taken to facilitate access to the United States refugee program for individuals who have fled countries of particular concern for violations of religious freedoms, identified pursuant to Section 402(b) of the IRFA.

### **USA: Strategic Plan - Fiscal Years 2004-2009**

U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Washington, 54 p. <http://tinyurl.com/USSP0409>. “Advance the growth of democracy and good governance, including civil society, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and religious freedom (19)... Promote freedom of religion and conscience worldwide. The Department will encourage the recognition of freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as a fundamental human right and as a source of stability for all countries. In particular, we will assist newly formed democracies in protecting freedom of religion and conscience while identifying and denouncing regimes that are severe persecutors of their citizens or others on the basis of religious belief. We also will assist faith-based and human rights NGOs in promoting religious freedom” (20).

## **Uzbekistan: Human Rights Watch Concerns**

Human Rights Watch, February 2010, 23 p. <http://tinyurl.com/HRWU10>. “Authorities in Uzbekistan continue to clamp down on media freedoms and suppress religious worship” (:1). “Authorities in Uzbekistan continue their unrelenting, multi-year campaign of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment and torture of Muslims who practice their faith outside state controls or who belong to unregistered religious organizations, with thousands incarcerated for non-violent offenses. Peaceful religious believers are often branded “extremists,” with dozens of new arrests and convictions on charges related to extremism each year. Human Rights Watch has documented allegations of ill-treatment in a number of these cases” (:8).

## **Special issues**

### **Chinese Law & Religion Monitor**

China Aid Association, Washington, July-December 2009, 99 p. <http://tinyurl.com/CAACLRO9>. The Chinese Law & Religion Monitor is a biannual publication containing policy documents and academic works involving law, religion, and politics in China, with English translation. “Around the time of the 20th Anniversary of the June 4th Tiananmen Massacre, the Autumn Rain Church in Chengdu experienced severe persecution from the local government. The Autumn Rain Church incident becomes a typical case in discussing the relationship between politics and churches. Also, given the backdrop of conflicts between the government and house churches on religious control and religious freedom, discussion on this incident becomes more meaningful, and therefore the details and developments of the Autumn Rain Church incident are published herein” (:3).

### **Digital Activism Decoded - The New Mechanics of Change**

International Debate Education Association, New York & Amsterdam, February 2010, 228 p. <http://tinyurl.com/IDEADAC10>. Over the past few years, citizens around the world have become increasingly aware of and interested in the expanding use of digital technologies – mobile phones and Internet-enabled devices, for example – in campaigns for social and political change. These practices are referred to as “digital activism.” The goal of this book is to move beyond surface anecdotes

to underlying mechanics (:vii) ... governments track online political speech and block applications used by digital activists. Often such online obstruction leads to offline persecution and even imprisonment (:6). Religious discrimination is particularly concentrated in Islamic countries, where evangelizing for any other religion or converting to another religion is often considered to be a crime... belonging to a particular religious group is not the only reason for government repression of digital activists (:171). Arrests are not the only form of persecution; in many cases, government officials intimidate activists through harassment, which can range from phone calls and insulting or threatening comments on blog posts to visits at the home or workplace of an activist. Authorities threaten to harm not only the activist, but also his or her family, to try to silence critical voices (:173).

### **Freedom in the World 2010: Erosion of freedom intensifies**

Freedom House, 2010, 17 p. <http://tinyurl.com/FW10EF>. “Freedom in the World assigns one of three broad category designations to each of the countries and territories included in the index: Free, Partly Free, and Not Free. A Free country is one where there is broad scope for open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media. A Partly Free country is one in which there is limited respect for political rights and civil liberties. Partly Free states frequently suffer from an environment of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic and religious strife...” (:3).

### **Focus Paper on Defamation of Religions**

Human Rights First, New York, March 2010, 13 p. <http://tinyurl.com/HRFDR10>. The “defamation of religions” concept is inconsistent with universal human rights standards that protect individuals rather than abstract ideas or religions. The organization warns that the “defamation of religions” concept risks promoting an atmosphere of intolerance by providing for a context in which governments can restrict freedom of expression, thought and religion, actions that prevent the peaceful expression of political or religious views. By restricting these essential freedoms in the name of protecting religion from defamation, governments are able to stifle debate and dissent. By purporting to prohibit controversial discussion

of religious beliefs, the concept permits states to determine which ideas are acceptable. The loose and unclear language of defamation empowers majorities against dissenters and the state against individuals; focuses too narrowly on Islam (:2).

### **Global Restrictions on Religion**

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, Washington, December 2009, 69 p. <http://tinyurl.com/PFGRR10>. This study finds that 64 nations – about one-third of the countries in the world – have high or very high restrictions on religion. And, since some of the most restrictive countries are very populous, nearly 70 percent of the world's 6.8 billion people live in countries with high restrictions on religion, the brunt of which often falls on religious minorities. Some restrictions result from government actions, policies and laws. Others result from hostile acts by private individuals, organizations and social groups. The highest overall levels of restrictions are found in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran, where both the government and society at large impose numerous limits on religious beliefs and practices. But government policies and social hostilities do not always move in tandem. Vietnam and China, for instance, have high government restrictions on religion but are in the moderate or low range when it comes to social hostilities. Nigeria and Bangladesh follow the opposite pattern: high in social hostilities but moderate in terms of government actions (:1).

### **Religious Freedom, Democracy, and International Human Rights**

Emory University School of Law, 2009, 26 p. <http://tinyurl.com/RFDIHR>. Religion and freedom do not yet coincide in many countries, however rosy their new constitutional claims are as to religious rights and freedoms for all. Apostasy, Blasphemy, Conversion, Defamation, and Evangelization – these are the new alphabet of religious rights violation in a number of regions around the world (:584).

### **Violence against abortion clinics**

Thomas Schirrmacher. <http://tinyurl.com/WEAVAAC>. In light of a recent murder of a physician who performed abortions, Dr Schirrmacher argues that this action is not supported by anti-abortion

organizations and that the popular press attempt to paint all those who would fight to save the unborn as assassins does not represent the truth.

### **“Insulting Islam”: One Way Street in the Wrong Direction**

Nina Shea. <http://tinyurl.com/HNYII>. From Hudson.org, a think tank dedicated to preserving freedom around the world, this article argues against a recent decision by a Dutch court.” “Amsterdam’s Court of Appeals has decided to take up the hate speech case against Dutch Parliamentarian Geert Wilders for his provocative 15-minute film *Fitna*, which calls on Muslims to reject the Quran, comparing it to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. “The court considers this so insulting for Muslims that it is in the public interest to prosecute Wilders,” a summary of the court’s January 21 decision said.” The author argues that this approach is one-sided and based on a theological mandate that is unevenly applied even in Islamic nations.

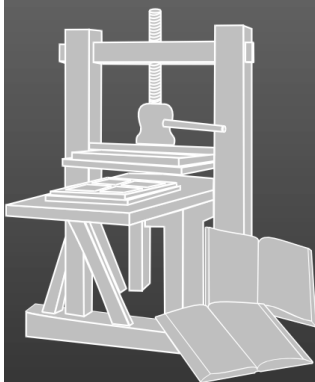
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- Journals
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## Book reviews

**Todd M Johnson & R Kenneth Ross (ed.): Atlas of Global Christianity.** Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 361 p. (large format), ISBN 9780 748632671. £150.00, US\$200.00, €184.99.

The *Atlas of Global Christianity* maps changes in the geographic spread of world religions, Christianity and Christian mission over the past one hundred years. In the section on religious freedom (p. 36-43) reviewed here, Brian J Grim provides a more differentiated set of indicators than in his Pew study, “*Global restrictions on religion*” (reviewed above). Moreover, a set of maps helps to visualize, even on the sub-national level of regions, the degree of infringement of religious liberty worldwide.

In an introductory article on “religious freedom” (p. 36-37), Grim defines the challenge of religious liberty in a holistic perspective and traces its development in the past decades. He argues that social and government restrictions on religious freedom drive a vicious circle, the so-called “religious violence circle”. Furthermore, he suggests a close correlation between religious freedom in a country and its level of human and economic development.

Based on the GRI and SHI indices of the Pew study, Grim has developed a somewhat simplified Government Restriction Index (GRI; 8 instead of 20 underlying questions) and a Social Restriction Index (SRI; 5 instead of 13 questions) which provide the basis for a composed Religious Freedom Index (RFI). All countries, subdivided into states or other regional administrative regions, are displayed on a large world map of religious freedom. The author suggests categorizing all countries by using a set of six levels of religious freedom, ranging from “deregulated countries” to “social-political monopoly.” The strength of Grim’s contribution lies not only in the clear visualization of restrictions on religious freedom in thematic maps, but also in the provision of further socio-governmental and religious violence indicators that capture the challenge in a more differentiated way. However, the “War on Terror”, instigated by the



9/11 attacks (p. 43), which Grim mentions as an example for a “religion-related armed conflict”, shows how difficult it is to draw a clear line between types of conflicts that may be interpreted variously, let alone to exactly quantify and categorize these complex issues.

The table on “indices of religious violence, 2010” (p. 43) pulls together all developed indices regarding the restriction on religious freedom for different regions and subregions. Reading the values of the five indices side by side in one line, one assumes that the values are comparable. However, the individual scales are not standardized and maximum values vary between 3, 5, and 10.

The *Atlas of Global Christianity* provides important information and visualization material both for research, education and for the raising of public awareness on religious freedom issues. An interactive CD is included and avails itself for presentations. All graphics can be exported. This book is therefore a must for any reference library.

*Dr Rainer Rothfuss, Professor of Human Geography,  
University of Tübingen, Germany*

**Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (ed.): Global Restrictions on Religion.** 72 p., published in Dec. 2009 on the internet with complementary country details and annual up-dates: <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=491>.

This study by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life that covers 198 countries, representing more than 99.5% of the world’s population. Based on the incidents of religious violence or intolerance from mid-2006 to mid-2008, it finds that about one-third of the countries in the world have high or very high restrictions on religion, representing nearly 70% of the world’s 6.8 billion people. It is intended to revise on an annual basis to be able to chart changes and trends for single countries and regions over time.

The study provides important added value for awareness raising and research on religious liberty which is generally the most neglected field of human rights. Its main strength has to be seen in the development of quantifiable, objective measures for the infringement on religious liberty rights that are combined into two comprehensive indices, the “Government Restrictions Index” (GRI) and the “Social

Hostilities Index” (SHI). The study measures obstacles to the practice of religion in each country by answering a comprehensive set of questions (20 for GRI and 13 for SHI) on the basis of publicly reported incidents of religious violence, intolerance, intimidation and discrimination by governments and private actors (16 renowned human and religious rights reports are taken into consideration). The differentiation between countries where restrictions stem mainly from government actions, policies and laws (e.g. China) and those where threats from society prevail (e.g. Iraq) allows a closer understanding of the underlying causes. There is only one country in the world, Saudia Arabia, where both GRI and SHI have been rated “very high” at the same time. Among all regions, the region of the Middle East and North Africa has the highest government and social restrictions on religion.

Obviously, the strength of the Pew study lies in its provision of a simple and fairly precise picture of the religious liberty situation in all countries worldwide. For the first time, government and social restrictions have been visualized in maps and combined in one chart covering all countries. Nevertheless, the study does not replace a qualitative in-depth analysis of the situation, the specific underlying causes and potential future threats in an individual country or sub-national region. These may well remain hidden behind the quantitative indices that represent countries as homogeneous blocks. Seeking to be neutral, the *Pew* study does not attempt to determine whether particular restrictions are “justified” or not. The study does not judge how peaceful and tolerant are the religions or sectarian groups on which restrictions have been imposed in a given country. Therefore, individual countries may be perceived as rated too rigidly and others too leniently: e.g. Germany has a GRI of 3.2 on the scale from 0 to 10, mainly for favoring the two traditional churches and banning Scientology members from government positions whereas Nigeria scores 3.6 even though the national government tolerates the severe oppression of Christian minorities by Sharia law in one-third of its states contrary to its own constitution.

*Dr. Rainer Rothfuss, Professor of Human Geography,  
University of Tübingen, Germany*

**Gerlinde Groitl: Evangelical Internationalism. The American Christian Right and Global Human Rights.** (Regensburger Studien zur Internationalen Politik, 4). Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2007, 200 p., € 68.00, ISBN 978-3-8300-2823-9.

“While evangelical Christians are usually identified with policies of unilateralism, militancy, and controversy only, the [American] Christian Right recently presented itself as a genuine force that fights against injustice and human rights abuses abroad” (p.19). In her thesis the author attempts to clarify the reasons “why evangelical Christians turned to and engage in global human rights advocacy” (p.20). Among the American Christian Right and its key organizations (p.20), Groitl identifies the National Association of Evangelicals as “of particular importance for the new foreign affairs activism” (p.27). The human rights concern within American evangelicalism are the fight against religious persecution, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and poverty (p.34-41).

Groitl sees one of the reasons for this growing involvement in recent years on a structural level: evangelicals found favorable political allies and opportunities, inside and outside the US Congress which led to “direct legislative outcomes” (p.113), something they did not see happening on key moral domestic issues before. What “the Christian Right desperately needed at the time were political successes in order to prove its own political power and to reconcile the grassroots” (p.84). These they found in a new focus on global human rights issues. Beyond this, a cultural dimension also has to be taken into account: a strong evangelical collective identity based on a strong emphasis on mission and evangelism with religious freedom as a prerequisite, draws evangelicals together for global human rights, and much more even demands an engagement with these issues. The author concludes that “Evangelical internationalism initially gave the Christian Right new vitality and sophistication. Meanwhile [in 2006], it has developed its own dynamic and creates great tensions in the evangelical community” (p.159). This book offers a well-informed, balanced and fair overview on the history, development and motifs of American evangelical involvement for global human rights for which it deserves wide recognition.

*Drs Frank Hinkelmann, Petzenkirchen, Austria, Central European Director  
OM International, Chairman Austrian Evangelical Alliance*

**Stephen B Bevans and Jeffrey Gros: *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad Gentes, Dignitatis Humanae*.** Mahwah, New Jersey, USA: Paulist Press 2009, 259 p., ISBN 978-0-8091-4202-6; US\$ 21.95.

The watershed in the Roman-Catholic church's stance on religious liberty occurred at the Second Vatican Council and it was the greatest seismic shift in its thinking and theology. Religious freedom was dismissed as modernism by Pope Pius IX in 1864 and was thus regarded by official Catholic theology for nearly two centuries as an undesirable permission to promote errors that could not be endorsed. There were only two options in the policy pursued by the Vatican, called "thesis and hypothesis": 'Thesis' signified the 'Catholic state' where the Roman-Catholic church was privileged as the only true religion while 'error' had no rights. In all other societies, in which Catholics were in a minority position and a 'Catholic state' was therefore out of reach, the agenda of the church was religious tolerance ('hypothesis').

With *Dignitatis Humanae (DH)*, the 'Declaration of Religious Freedom' of Vatican II, this changed profoundly. From then on Catholic theology no longer focussed on the 'rights' of the 'truth' but on the rights of the individual, embracing the modern understanding of human rights. As part of a wider series, 'Rediscovering Vatican II', Gros sheds light – primarily from an American perspective – on the historical background and the history of the actual text of this remarkable document, including a short commentary on major points. The closing 50 pages on its implementation and open questions are probably of greatest interest at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These cover the changed policy in the concordats with different countries, the promotion of religious freedom especially by Pope John Paul II, ecumenical dialogues, the legacy of John Courtney Murray, who drafted the new doctrine and died shortly after the council, and the Catholic stance on pluralism and education. Even though Gros's essay is rather descriptive than critical, the book is highly recommendable, providing quick and comprehensive information, suggesting a wide range of areas to work on and literature for additional reference.

*Dr Thomas Weissmuller, Marburg, Germany*  
*Author of "Religionsfreiheit: Christliche Wahrheit*  
*und menschliche Würde im Konflikt?", Francke 2003*

**Timothy M Monsma: Hope for the Southern World: Impacting Societal Problems in the Non-Western World.** Loveland, CO: CCW Books, 2006, 135 p., US-ISBN 1-4243-11624, US\$ 12.95.

This is mainly a book of lists, trying to confront the well-known and enormous problems of the Two-Thirds-World. In such a short book, the treatment of each problem inevitably borders on the superficial. And in respect to persecution, the author is not so sure-footed. He recycles Barrett's dubious figure of martyrs per year without a qualm, and – tellingly – does not include any missions with a persecution focus in his appendix of potential partner agencies. That said, the book is a fair introduction to the main issues, particularly for younger Christians taking their first steps to understanding how to fit in to the church's work in the world. Monsma divides persecution into two types – sporadic and deadly, and provides lists of ways to deal with each. The problem with this list approach is that it runs the risk of merely stating the obvious. If written for southern Christians, would it really not occur to them during persecution to “seek government protection” or “stay united?” Or when dealing with deadly persecution, it is not helpful to simply suggest, “flee to another place.” The issue surely is, *when* is it appropriate and God's will to stay, and when to go? The essential nuancing that would turn Monsma's lists from the merely helpful to absolutely vital is missing. The book accordingly has limited value for the persecution specialist, but retains its value as a wide-ranging, fast-paced introduction to the general challenges of the church in the southern world.

*Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Chief Strategy Officer, Open Doors International,  
Edinburgh, Scotland*

**Tibebe Eshete: The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience.** Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press 2009, 480 p., ISBN 978-1-60258-002-2, US\$ 54.95.

This ground-breaking study (PhD in history, University of Michigan) presents various responses of three diverse streams of Ethiopian Christianity to the 1974-1991 Ethiopian Marxist Revolution. Eshete, a former Orthodox adherent and subsequently a convert to Ethiopian Pentecostalism, describes this movement as rising from many tributaries, internal as well as external, and considers it as part of the broader evangelical movement. It eventually developed into a vibrant youth phenomenon with strong indigenous leadership in urban areas,

mainly drawing young people of Orthodox Church background. The fact that thousands of youth were changing their religious allegiance eventually resulted in bringing this neophyte religious movement into serious conflict with the Orthodox Church and eventually the State.

The closure of the majority of evangelical churches and persecution forced the evangelical movement to go underground. Clandestine house churches, led by ordinary men and women, became vibrant Bible teaching locations where spiritual gifts were nurtured. The Ethiopian Marxist Revolution, antagonistic to Christianity, inadvertently made several significant contributions to the maturation of the evangelical movement: development of a distinctly national identity, gifted and tried leaders, a tested and internalised faith, an authentic ecumenical church movement, and an indigenous Ethiopian hymnody grounded in the Amharic scriptures. Presently, nearly a third of all Christians in Ethiopia call themselves *Pente*, formerly a pejorative designation intended as an insult towards the Pentecostals. Eshete persuasively presents evidence that the present Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia is not an imported model but an authentic spiritual response of resistance to modern Marxism and a tradition-bound Church. This book is highly recommended for libraries of theological training centres located in countries dominated by repressive regimes.

*Dr E Paul Balisky, Grande Prairie, AB, Canada, served with SIM Ethiopia with his wife Lila from 1967-2005 and is author of "Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975" (Wipf & Stock 2009).*

**Anto Akkara: Kandhamal - a blot on Indian secularism.** New Delhi: Media House, 2009, 121 p., ISBN 8179453515, Rs.150, US\$ 15.

This book is one of the important, significant and critical documents on the anti-Christian violence that erupted within the state of Orissa in 2008. The author has worked as a journalist for 21 years in Indian and international media. He is also a specialist in human rights, social and religious affairs. In the course of 14 chapters he argues the violence in Orissa indicates that Indian secularism has been weakened as an institution.

The anti-Christian violence was triggered by the killing of a prominent Hindu leader on August 23, 2008. The author made half a

dozen arduous investigative visits to the Kandhamal jungles and thus, this book is unique in terms of presentation of evidence to the facts. He gives the reader several shocking and rare facts which had not been picked up by the mainstream media. The sum total of the death and devastation in Kandhamal amounts to more than 75 Christians killed, 5000 Christian houses looted and destroyed along with 250 churches and Christian institutions desecrated and reduced to ashes. An attempt has been made to compare the list provided by the author with the record issued by the Government of Orissa. The facts and figures presented by the author raise serious questions on the secularism of India.

The account of shocking facts such as rape, murder of clergy, pastors and ordinary Christians are a mockery of the constitutional guarantees of secularism, equality and freedom of faith. The government of Orissa has done little to protect the lives of Christians through interim compensation and rehabilitation programs as the author has pointed out in chapter 6, "How the Christians are protected." The role of Hindutva forces in the killing of Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa is apparent. The author's contention is that the government has failed to maintain law and order in the areas. Finally, the Christians have ended up living in refugee camps. Such immunity, Akkra pointed out, "raises serious questions about the secular credentials of the nation that prides itself in the fundamental freedom of faith and equality under Indian constitution."

Only a few major issues could be addressed in this book. The issue of conversion continues to play a major role behind attacks on Christians in Orissa. Christians are accused of being "rice Christians." Hindu fundamentalists have accused Christians of being involved in conversion activities. The author attempts to claim that in spite of democracy in the country, constitution, and law, the lives of Christians are in danger. The author's treatment of the topic is open and balanced. Each chapter provides very adequate information that is complex, important and controversial in relation to the atrocities in Orissa. The work is clear, concise, challenging, and stimulating. This book is suitable for individuals of all religions because it talks about human issues. The author's arrangement of the map, figures will help the readers to delve deep into the issues connected with the lives of the people in Orissa.

*Abhijit Nayak, PhD student of Intercultural Studies,  
Fuller Theological Seminary, USA*

**Craig Hovey: To Share in the Body - A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church.** Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2008, 157 p., ISBN-10: 158743217X, US\$ 22.00.

Craig Hovey's book is a profound yet accessible meditation on the gospel of Mark refracted through the lens of martyrdom. Hovey is convinced that an awareness of the gospel enactment that martyrdom represents, is necessary for the church to live faithfully in the modern world. 'The true church', Hovey contends, 'is still a martyr-church despite its relative shortage of martyrs' (p. 40). Martyrdom is not essentially different from Christian discipleship: 'The virtues necessary to be a martyr are no different from the virtues necessary to be a faithful Christian' (p. 60).

Hovey's reading of Mark's gospel uncovers its martyrological core. From the baptism of Jesus to the mystery of the empty tomb, he traces the life of Jesus in Mark's rendition as a pattern for discipleship in the contemporary world. Naturally enough, it is the body of the crucified Christ that is the focal image. The word 'body' is allowed its full ecclesiological reference – hence, to 'share in the body' (as in the title of the book) points not only to the disciple's union with Christ but also to his or her membership in his persecuted Church.

Hovey is effective in explaining what martyrdom is *not*. It is not heroism; nor is it a deliberate making of a statement. It is not an opportunity for a kind of perverse triumphalism. In his final and most stimulating chapter, 'Martyrdom and Promise', Hovey argues astutely that the church must remember its martyrs 'non-instrumentally'. That is to say, martyrdom does not accomplish anything. It is not a strategy to be pursued, but a form that obedience takes in certain circumstances. 'Martyrs do not die in order to make a point' (p. 143).

There is a certain vagueness in Hovey's conception, as there often is in contemporary Protestant theology, regarding the term 'the Church'. It is terminology that allows him to borrow freely from Roman Catholic writers like W.T. Cavanaugh; but one would assume that the two authors mean very different things when they refer to 'the Church'. This imprecision is significant, given the prominence of ecclesiology in the book.

Nonetheless, *To Share in the Body* would make a terrific study book for a small group, prompting prayer and reflection.

*Rev Dr Michael P Jensen, Lecturer in Theology,  
Moore College, Sydney Australia*



**Joshua J Whitfield: Pilgrim Holiness - Martyrdom as Descriptive Witness.** Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2009, 134 p., ISBN 13: 978-1-60608-175-4, US\$ 17.00.

For a relatively short book, this publication covers an enormous amount of ground. Whitfield surveys Islamic and secular views of martyrdom, spars with Hegel and Wittgenstein and finds support from Augustine, Kierkegaard, Barth, Yoder, Milbank and a couple of Popes. In addition, he is abreast of most of the recent literature on martyrdom.

Yet this is also a book that draws from a profoundly spiritual conviction about the value of the self-descriptions of the martyrs for the life of discipleship in the postmodern world. Whitfield begins with a pointed, even polemical account of the ways in which Christian martyrdom is ‘policed’ in contemporary liberal secular politics; and enters a plea for voices of the martyrs themselves to be heard ‘within the martyrs’ own horizon of meaning (p. 44):

... in order to discover something approximating a genuine understanding of martyrdom, one should attend to the coherent stories of the martyrs themselves – by definition a subversive act. Simply, this is to listen *to the martyrs*, to believe them for a moment and to test the coherence of their claims with the horizon of the stories that have spoken these martyrs (p. 43).

Whitfield draws attention, therefore, to the early Martyr Acts and the remarkable events that they narrate. Martyrdom, which either makes little sense or appears as an outrage from a secular point of view, when considered christologically turns out to be a witness to eternal peace and radical hope. The martyrs are not heroes, to be considered individualistically, but rather they narrate the story of Israel, Jesus and the Church. Whitfield argues that the christological analysis of martyrdom must also result in a renewal of the ecumenical impetus. He is able to do this, one feels, because he doesn’t consider some of the most famous martyrdoms of the church’s history which were inflicted by one church on another.

So much is packed into this brief book that, at times, important steps in the argument are accomplished with a quick sentence or two. It would be interesting for Whitfield to expand on some of the ideas that he introduces here. The omission of an index is an irritation.

However, *Pilgrim Holiness* is an enormously stimulating, judiciously argued and very timely work.

*Rev Dr Michael P Jensen, Lecturer in Theology,  
Moore College, Sydney Australia*

**Ajith Fernando: The call to joy and pain. Embracing suffering in your ministry.** Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books 2007, 191 p., ISBN 9781581348880, US\$ 14.99.

Fernando's book is not a classical work on persecution of Christians. The national director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka provides the broader picture: Suffering in all its aspects is an integral part of the Christian calling.

Fernando tries to "follow the biblical practice of not talking about pain without also talking about the blessings of it" (p. 10). Joy is one of the blessings of Christian suffering; but without a proper "theology of suffering" (p. 11), the believer will not be able to experience this joy.

Fernando tries to give a "practical Christian theology of suffering" (p. 11), which he splits up in 30 chapters, designed as readings for one month's personal devotional time. After explaining the fundamental meaning of suffering and its relationship to joy (Part One "Suffering and joy are basic to Christianity") he deals with the personal gain (Part Two: "Suffering brings us nearer to Christ"). Fernando's main focus however is the church: Part Three ("Our Suffering helps the church") proves how suffering Christians add credibility to the church and its message. Part Four ("Servants of the church") is talking about the special burden of sufferings in Christian ministry. It is helpful to embrace the difficult sides of serving other people, like being misunderstood, being disappointed by other Christians or just getting very tired in ministry (p. 161) as genuine Christian suffering with the promise of joy.

Throughout this biblically well grounded study it is obvious that Fernando writes with the very practical background of having led and discipled other Christians for many years. As a non-Western theologian who knows Western Christianity well, he is able to point to one of the blind spots in Western thinking that is more concentrated on "escape from and therapy of suffering" (p. 51) than on proper biblical

teaching on suffering. "I trust that this book will help people look at suffering biblically and by so doing help them to be happy and obedient Christians" (p. 11).

I hope that many Christians in the Western world will read and meditate on their "call to joy and pain".

*Wolfgang Häde, author of "My brother-in-law, a martyr" (German)*

## Christian devotional books

**Emir Fethi Caner & H Edward Pruitt: The costly call. Modern-day stories of Muslims who found Jesus.** Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005, 158 p., ISBN 0825435552, US\$ 8.79.

This book presents real testimonies of 16 men and 4 women from 17 countries of 3 continents. It demonstrates various religious perspectives of people in traditional Muslim lands. They are the first-generation believers in Christ, who converted from Islam and kept their Christian faith in the midst of persecution triggered by their defection from Islam. Their stories consistently convey the power of the gospel in experiential way. It enabled each of them to make great sacrifices for their faith and to love all people unconditionally, even their enemies. It emboldened them to risks to share the gospel with their loved ones.

**David Witt & Mujahid El Masih: Fearless love. Rediscovering Jesus' spirit of martyrdom - With meditations of Christ and his love.** Greenville, TX: Casscom Media, 2009, 242 p., ISBN 978-0615240336, US\$ 15.00.

A former Pakistani Mujahid, who became a Christian, and now considers himself a "Mujahid for the Messiah", teamed up with an American pastor who serves the persecuted to teach about martyrdom from a Christian perspective. This 29-chapter-book with questions for group discussions is the material used for their courses. They consider themselves 'living martyrs' (witnesses) who rediscovered Jesus' spirit of martyrdom. This book presents their zeal and heart for the persecuted church. They are contrasting biblical martyrdom (a call to purposeful living and a bold witness of faith) with Islamic martyrdom. From a Christian perspective, the greatest action is 'love' which is

willing to sacrifice oneself. This book teaches that fearless love is the tool which God gives to overcome the fear of suffering and death, and that a relationship with Jesus brings us to a growing fearless love.

**The Voice of the Martyrs: Heroic faith. How to live a life of extreme devotion.** Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008. 176 p., ISBN 978-0785296775, US\$ 11.04.

This book seeks to strengthen Christians to “extreme devotion” and courage in the face of harsh persecution. It demonstrates eight qualities of “heroic faith” and developing devotional life in the face of persecution, such as self-sacrifice, endurance and radical joy in Christ. Each quality is illustrated in a chapter by looking at living examples of heroic faith, serving Christ in persecution. This book challenges Christians to lay down their lives for God and points out steps on how to incorporate these qualities into their own Christ-centered lives.

**John Foxe & The Voice of the Martyrs: Foxe. Voices of the martyrs - 33 A.D. to today.** Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2007. 475 p., ISBN 978-0882703305, US\$ 29.95.

In 1559 John Foxe wrote his first collection of martyr accounts from a protestant reformation perspective. But the book of Christian martyrdom was not closed then and religious persecutions and martyrdom are continuing for Christians in many parts of the world until today. This publication is a good update of this classic history of Christian martyrs. In addition to an edited selection of Foxe’s reports and from “The martyr’s mirror”, it presents 200 pages on Christian martyrs up to and including the twenty-first century. A survey of persecution 2000-2006 covers 53 countries in South Asia, Near East and North Africa, Central Asia, Europe, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Christians in every generation have given witness to their faith in Jesus Christ with the sacrifice of their lives as the Christian martyrs followed the loving example of Christ.

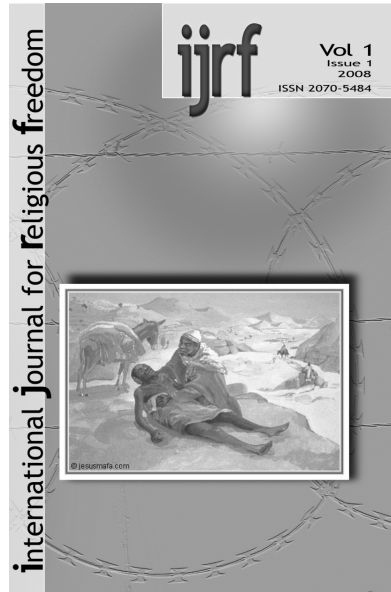
*Dr Byeong Hei Jun, Cape Town*



# International Journal for Religious Freedom (IJRF)

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IJRF is the journal of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF). It is published bi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issue of religious freedom in general and the persecution of Christians in particular. It is an interdisciplinary, international, peer reviewed, scholarly journal, serving the interests of religious freedom and contains research articles, documentation, book reviews and academic news on the issue. The editors welcome the submission of any item that could contribute to the journal.

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## Introducing the International Institute for Religious Freedom

The International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) is an Institute of the World Evangelical Alliance and its Religious Liberty Commission with the aim of working towards:

- The establishment of reliable facts on the restriction of religious freedom worldwide;
- The introduction of the subject of religious freedom into academic research and theological curricula;
- The study of pastoral issues relating to those who are affected.

**IIRF** exists to cultivate the understanding of religious freedom. It affirms the right to religious freedom for all people, particularly for Christians.

**IIRF** maintains a global network of researchers and experts and seeks to ensure that:

- Its work covers religious freedom concerns wherever they occur in the world,
- It serves persecuted believers and academics studying religious freedom wherever they are located. Publications and other research will be made available as cheaply and readily as possible.

**IIRF** aims to work collaboratively with all who share its aims of supporting religious freedom through providing the necessary foundations of accurate information and understanding.

**IIRF's** academic approach is inter-disciplinary, appreciating the contributions that different disciplines add to the understanding of and response to religious freedom issues. It will maintain a balance, in particular, between theological, legal and political study.

**IIRF** differentiates between advocating the rights of members of other religions (religious freedom) and evaluating the truth of their beliefs (religious truth). Advocating the freedom of others can be done without accepting the truth of what they believe. IIRF encourages all activities that contribute to the understanding of religious freedom. These include :

1. Dissemination of existing literature, information about archives, compilation of bibliographies etc.
2. Production and dissemination of new papers, journals and books
3. Gathering and analysis of statistics and stories

4. Supplying of ideas and materials to universities, seminaries and Bible colleges to encourage the inclusion of religious freedom issues into curricula
5. Networking to find, support and involve researchers in the work of IIRF, including the creation of research groups
6. Attendance at key events that provide an opportunity to strengthen connections with the wider religious liberty community and with politicians, diplomats and media with an interest in human rights

The IIRF is guided by the principles (1) of the Old and New Testament, which anchor human freedom in the person and nature of the creator God, and (2) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which enshrines the universality of human rights, including such core values as non-discrimination, equality and fairness. We recognise the need to affirm and proclaim the divinely appointed universal principles of justice, freedom and equality for all in a world threatened by religious division.

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## Call for submissions and instructions to contributors

The *IJRF* aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issue of religious freedom in general and the persecution of Christians in particular. The term persecution is understood broadly and inclusively by the editors. The *IJRF* is an interdisciplinary, international, peer reviewed, scholarly journal, serving the practical interests of religious freedom and is envisaged to become a premier publishing location for research articles, documentation, book reviews and academic news on the issue.

The editors welcome the submission of any item that could contribute to the journal. All research articles are expected to conform to the following requirements:

### Criteria for articles

Focus	Does the article have a clear focus on religious freedom/ religious persecution/ suffering because of religious persecution? These terms are understood broadly and inclusively by the editors of <i>IJRF</i> , but these terms clearly do not include everything.
Scholarly standard	Is the scholarly standard of a research article acceptable? Does it contribute something substantially new to the debate?
Clarity of argument	Is it well structured, including sub-headings where appropriate?
Language usage	Does it have the international reader in mind and avoid bias and parochialism?
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2. The **deadlines** for the submission of academic articles are 1 February and 1 August respectively for the next issue and a month later for smaller items such as book reviews, noteworthy items, event reports, etc.
3. A statement whether an item is being submitted elsewhere or has been previously published must accompany the article.
4. Research articles will be sent to up to three independent referees. Upon receiving the reports from the referees, authors will be notified of the decision of the editorial committee, which may include a statement indicating changes or improvements that are required before publication.
5. Should the article be accepted for publication, the author will be expected to submit an electronic version of the article.
6. Include the following:
  - An abstract of no more than 100 words.
  - Between 3 and 10 keywords that express the key theological concepts used in the article.
  - Brief biographical details of the author in the first footnote, linked to the name of the author, indicating, among others, year of birth, the institutional affiliation, special connection to the topic, and e-mail address.
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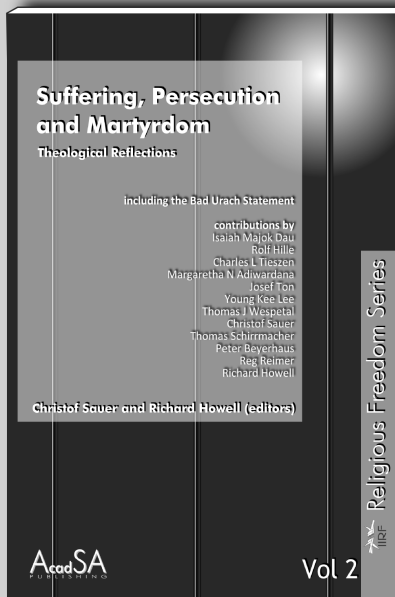
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