

# Holy Wisdom

*Peace: Showing that Others Matter!*

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. This publication is disseminated to the entire membership of the Church throughout the world on a quarterly basis. Please bring this information to the attention of your parishioners and all those under your care. The Earth is holy and a manifestation of God. Pray for peace and the UN.

Anne Riccitelli, Litt, D. United Nations Representative  
Rev. Fr. George McBride, D.D, Alternate UN Representative &  
Holy Wisdom, Editor  
Rev. Fr. Michael E. Verra, D.D. Assistant

Antoinette A. DeLuca, Psy.D. President  
H.E. Rev. Ambassador Anthony J. DeLuca, Advisor  
2295 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, New York 10314  
(718) 698-0700 IgnatiusU@aol.com <http://IgnatiusU.com>

*EDITOR'S NOTE: It is necessary through the collaboration of NGOs to raise awareness among communities as we promote peace. If you will, the need for community consciousness is a way we can connect parties and others. It is important at this time that all parties begin to realize that they are a part of a larger picture, that they are in it together and they have common concerns. If there is a conflict all parties have contributed to the conflict and they have the power to come together to develop a non-violent intervention to result into a resolution. It is time for us as people to acknowledge that there is something more that exceed our own individual positions and needs. The United Nations, religious institutions and NGO can be an avenue to promote community consciousness to encourage global consciousness, clear and realistic decisions as they promote non-violent solutions to conflicts!*

**[H. H Ignatious Zaka I at Manarkad. A must watch video for all Syrian](#)**

**Posted by: "Issac K Joseph" [Issac K Joseph](#) [issacjoseph\\_k](#)  
Sun Aug 29, 2010 3:23 pm (PDT)**

His Holiness Ignatius Zakka I Iwas at Manarkad. A must watch video for all Syrian

Orthodox Christians

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGFusqGAWl8&feature=rec-exp\\_stronger\\_r2-2r-1-HM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGFusqGAWl8&feature=rec-exp_stronger_r2-2r-1-HM)

Let enemies of Holy Church also watch this video and confess for their mistakes.

In Christ

Issac K Joseph

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## **JOINT UN-NGO CONFERENCE IN AUSTRALIA TO FOCUS ON GLOBAL HEALTH**

New York, Aug 29 2010 3:10PM

The joint conference of the United Nations department of public information and non-governmental organizations, which gets under way in Australia tomorrow, will this year focus on global health in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aiming to attract greater participation of civil society from the Asia-Pacific region.

The 63rd annual DPI/NGO Conference, which will take place in the city of Melbourne, has attracted more than 2,200 participants from some 70 countries.

The effort to give priority to non-governmental organizations in the Asia-Pacific region in the annual DPI/NGO conference and increase geographic diversity bore fruit when an unprecedented number of the region's NGOs joined the department on 30 June.

In all, 41 such organizations from the Asia-Pacific region were associated this year, including 32 from Australia, one from Fiji, five from the Philippines, and three from the Pacific Islands.

The new UN policy to offer association to non-governmental organizations in the region where the conference is being held also presents a chance for "solidifying the trend of increasing geographic diversity and greater networking opportunities for NGOs affiliated with the Department of Public Information," said UN Chief of NGO Relations Maria-Luisa Chavez.

Holding the Conference away from United Nations Headquarters "offers a unique opportunity to intensify and strengthen our partnerships with the NGOs and civil society different regions of the world, in this case, the Asia-Pacific region," she said. Ms. Chavez noted that this year the Conference has been organized against a backdrop of challenges posed by a 15-hour time difference, geographical distance and even the elections in Australia. Despite this, she declared the list of participants "impressive".

"This Conference will be different because it is the first time that a UN Conference of this size has been hosted in Australia. We are very excited to meet in this part of the world and to have the strong participation of NGOs from this country," said Kiyoko Akasaka, UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

Setting the stage for tomorrow's opening of the conference, which will last until 5 September, will be a series of public events in Melbourne under the banner "Making Health Global."

The programme is directed by Professor Philip Batterham, Convenor of the Australian NGO Focal Group.

"Melburnians already play a role in global health. We give, we volunteer and our medical researchers are tackling the big killers like HIV, malaria, diarrhoea and dirty water," Mr. Batterham said.

World Vision Australia, the Australian Football League and Melbourne Football Club, among others, hosted an event on today at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to mark the end of the football season before the finals in a game that saw Melbourne versus North Melbourne. The game was dedicated to raising awareness around the issue of child health.

A media event featured statements and a question-and-answer period with the press and Mr. Akasaka, Tim Costello, the Chief Executive Officer of World Vision, Jim Stynes, President of the Melbourne Football Club, and Glenn Archer, former North Melbourne champion.

23 August 2010

### **Church warns of Malawi 'dictatorship' after leader's arrest**

Mzuzu (ENI). Malawi is quickly sliding into a dictatorship where it is a crime to hold dissenting views to government policy, leaders of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian - Livingstonia Synod, have warned. The charges come after the arrest and subsequent release of the synod's general secretary, the Rev. Levi Nyondo. "We are shocked and surprised that government could stoop so low to arrest a general secretary of a reputable church," synod moderator the Rev. Mezuwa Banda told journalists on 23 August in the northern region city of Mzuzu. Nyondo was arrested on 20 August after speaking at the funeral of former Cabinet minister Moses Chirambo, who died just days after being dismissed from the government. [

### **Scottish church official supports decision to release Libyan bomber**

Edinburgh (ENI). The Scottish government was right to show compassion and to release the Libyan man convicted of the 1988 bombing of a U.S. plane over Scotland, an official of the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland has said. The principle behind the release of Abdul Baset Ali al-Megrahi a year ago was right, compassion, and my views haven't changed since I welcomed his release on 20 August last year," the Rev. Ian Galloway, the convener of the denomination's church and society council, told ENInews.

### **Turkish PM defends Christian rights against nationalist protests**

Warsaw (ENI). Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has defended his government's attempts to strengthen minority religious rights and criticized opposition to the staging of a Christian service at one of its oldest monasteries. "We lose nothing if 500 or 2000 people meet to hold a service together," Erdogan told an Ankara press conference on 16 August. "Our country will gain more if it allows greater religious freedom. Turkey itself is seeking permission for a mosque in Athens, and this process could be speeded up if the situation improves here."

## **Philippines Christians mourn missionaries killed in bus crash**

Baguio City (ENI). Christians in a northern Philippines community are mourning the death of a local missionary couple, who died in a bus accident that claimed 42 lives. "I did not know that his sermon last Sunday would be his last," said Eileen Bandonill, a physician and member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in Baguio City. Bandonill led the service in her local church on 15 August, and was referring to the Rev. Albert Anthony, who had preached. Anthony, an evangelical missionary from Mumbai, India, and his Filipino wife Carlota died when the bus on which they were traveling on 18 August fell into a 150-foot (46-metre) ravine in Sablan, Benguet province, in northern Philippines.

24 August 2010

## **Discontented U.S. Lutherans to form new church body**

New York (ENI). Dissatisfied members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are forming a new church body they say will "uphold confessional principles" after disagreements on issues such as the ordination of clergy in committed same-sex relationships. The new body is to be called the North American Lutheran Church and is scheduled to be formed at a 26-27 August meeting in Grove City, Ohio. In 2009, the ELCA agreed to change its denominational rules to "open the ministry of the church to gay and lesbian pastors and other professional workers living in committed relationships".

## **Cross at Warsaw palace divides church and nation**

Warsaw (ENI). A huge makeshift wooden cross in front of Warsaw's presidential palace honoring former president Lech Kaczynski, who was killed in a 10 April air crash, continues to cause tension in Poland. The dispute over the cross has led the primate of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, Archbishop Jozef Kowalczyk, to criticize Catholic protesters who had been refusing to allow the cross to be removed. "None of this has anything to do with a true Catholic conscience or the genuine attitude of a Christian, of a believing person who loves the cross and finds inspiration in it," said Kowalczyk, who was installed as archbishop of Gniezno and the church's primate on 26 June. "What we are seeing is an unedifying, shameful manipulation of the cross. I ask everyone involved in any way to stop."

## **Religion root of homophobia says Latin American academic**

San Jose (ENI/ALC). The aversion to homosexuality, and the violence that can accompany it, appears to originate less in political ideologies than it does in, "religious doctrines of power transformed into cultural sensitivity", says Latin American political scientist Helio Gallardo.

25 August 2010

## **French Protestants criticize government over Roma repatriation**

Geneva/Paris (ENI). France's main Protestant grouping has added its voice to criticism of a government programme aimed at repatriating Roma migrants and demolishing unauthorized Roma camps. The Protestant Federation of France (FPF) said it was "concerned about the new direction of policies concerning the Roma population, one of Europe's most impoverished populations". The French government began a crackdown on Roma and Traveller communities at the end of July, after outbreaks of violence between Roma communities and police following an incident in which a Traveller was killed by security forces. The statement by the Protestant grouping follows criticism by Roman Catholic leaders of the government policy. [514 words, ENI-10-0592]

### **Indian forum says state agencies colluded in anti-Christian violence**

New Delhi (ENI). A "people's tribunal" that heard testimonies from victims of anti-Christian violence in India's eastern Orissa state in 2008 has criticized state agencies for aggravating the suffering of those caught up in the attacks. "There is a shocking level of institutional bias on the part of state agencies (including police) leading to their collusion in the violence, connivance in efforts to block the subsequent process of justice and accountability," declared the jury in New Delhi at the end of the unofficial 22-24 August National People's Tribunal on the violence in Orissa's Kandhamal jungles.

### **Future of destroyed Ground Zero Orthodox Church in doubt**

New York (ENI/RNS). Buried by falling rubble from the World Trade Center towers after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, all that remained of the tiny St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church were some candles, two icons and a bell clapper. These artifacts are being kept at the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America while the church's 70 member families worship at a cathedral in Brooklyn, praying for the day they can return to a new sanctuary in lower Manhattan, Religion News Service reports.

### **Hong Kong and Philippines churches urge action after tragedy**

Hong Kong (ENI). Church officials in Hong Kong and the Philippines have called for justice and forgiveness after eight Hong Kong tourists were killed in Manila when police stormed a bus in which they had been held hostage. Hong Kong's Roman Catholic diocesan justice and peace commission urged the Philippine authorities "to conduct a thorough investigation of this most appalling and most sad event. How the Philippine police conducted the rescue operations must be fully-probed."

### **Religion now among top 10 exam subjects says Church of England**

London (ENI). Religious studies has entered the top 10 league of subjects in exams taken by most 16-year-old school students in Britain, the (Anglican) Church of England said in a statement marking the publication of examination results. The results published on 24 August also showed the number of school students taking religious studies for the General Certificate of School Education increasing for the 12th year running, said Nick McKemey, the church's head of school improvement. "This is a phenomenon that indicates students' appreciation that exploring faith and belief help them to understand the world and become better global citizens," said McKemey.

31 August 2010

## **Russian Patriarch unveils Kremlin icon hidden since 1917**

Moscow (ENI). A fresco of Christ on the Kremlin Wall in Moscow rediscovered after being plastered over during the 1917 Bolshevik revolution has been presented in a ceremony attended by Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev. "The history of these icons is a symbol of what happened with our people in the 20th century," said Kirill at the 28 August ceremony. "It was claimed that true goals and values and genuine shrines were destroyed, and that faith had disappeared from the lives of our people." The fresco of Christ is located over the Spasskaya, or Saviour, tower of the Kremlin, near St Basil's Cathedral on Red Square. Experts say it dates to the middle or second half of the 17th century.

## **Indian churches hail halting of permission for Vedanta's mining**

Bangalore, India (ENI). Churches in India have welcomed the government in Delhi's decision to withdraw its permission for a mining project of the Vedanta group in the remote tribal areas of eastern Orissa state that stirred controversy. "The decision of the Ministry of Forests and Environment is an achievement and a fruit of the peoples' struggle. It is proof that the peoples' movement and struggle is still powerful," said the National Council of Churches in India in a statement. Vedanta's mining project in the Niyamgiri Hills had drawn criticism from environmentalists and human rights activists who said it was destroying the area's ecosystem and would have wiped out the Khond people's sacred mountains while displacing thousands of other people.

## **SECURITY COUNCIL HOLDS FIRST STRATEGIC REASSESSMENT IN NEARLY 20 YEARS**

New York, Sep 23 2010 6:10PM

Presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers gathered today at the Security Council, the primary United Nations body responsible for keeping the world at peace, for its first meeting in nearly two decades devoted to updating the tools at its disposal for its ever-expanding role.

Chaired by President Abdullah Gül of Turkey, which holds this month's presidency of the 15-member body, the session was called "to conduct a strategic review, at the highest political level, of the evolving international security environment and of the Council's growing role in the maintenance of international peace and security."

The core threat that the UN was created to prevent 65 years ago, war between States, has been largely overtaken by regional and global security threats of unprecedented complexity, including intra-State armed conflicts with regional dimensions, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and trans-national organized crime.

Moreover, growing recognition of the linkages between security and development has given new prominence to the impact of poverty, global economic crisis, infectious diseases and environmental degradation on the security environment, demanding a strengthened UN and a renewed commitment to effective multilateral cooperation through the Council.

It is customary for the Council to meet at the highest level each year on the opening day of the General Assembly's annual General Debate, when scores of heads of State and government are

in New York. But this was only the first session since January 1992 focused on re-energizing the whole process by providing a comprehensive and integrated political framework and restoring confidence in the UN's ability to prevent and resolve conflicts.

<http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=4801>>Addressing the Council, whose decisions are legally binding, while those of the 192-member General Assembly are advisory, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cited four critical areas, beginning with the need to move beyond the idea of a clear-cut sequence of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building.

“These tools should be deployed in integrated fashion, not kept in separate silos,” he said. “Conflict seldom follows a tidy path. We must continue to evolve, toward a faster and more flexible architecture of response that allows us to customize our assistance to the real and immediate needs on the ground.”

“Second, there is no quick fix for broken societies, which demands patience, resources and a long-term commitment. Third, greater coherence must be achieved among the many pieces of the UN system that make up the peace-building picture. Fourth, we must expand our work on prevention, in particular to improve our ability to read the warning signs and trigger early action,” he said.

The Council presidency noted that the body must play a stronger and more comprehensive role in addressing all challenges to international peace and security, not confining itself only to peacekeeping, but paying even more attention to preventive diplomacy and peace building, and doing so in a coherent manner.

Sep 23 2010 6:10PM

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## **UNICEF RUSHING RELIEF SUPPLIES TO FLOOD-HIT INDIAN STATES**

New York, Sep 24 2010 1:10PM

The United Nations Children's Fund

([http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/media\\_56197.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/media_56197.html)>UNICEF) and its partners are assisting the Indian Government in rushing relief supplies to millions of people who have been uprooted from their homes in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Uttarakhand by heavy floods.

The agency has supplied tarpaulin sheets, jerry cans, water purification tablets and mosquito nets, among other items, to more than 8,000 displaced families in Uttar Pradesh. It has also pre-positioned its supplies in 10 high-risk districts to help 10,000 families.

Heavy rainfall and floods in the major rivers of the state have affected nearly 1.7 million people in Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF noted in a news release.

The state Government there has set up 276 relief posts to distribute food and health supplies.

Meanwhile, the breach of support embankments of the Gandhak River has resulted in the flooding of 35 villages in Gopalganj and Siwan districts in Bihar.

UNICEF sent supplies to Gopalganj, including 282 bags of bleaching powder, 208,000 water purifying tablets, 5,000 oral dehydration salt sachets, 1,000 hygiene kits and soap, following a

request by the state Government.

In Uttarakhand, close to half a million people in 369 villages across the state have been affected. A number of roads including national highways have been damaged or blocked due to landslides.

The central government has rushed in relief to the affected areas and deployed battalions from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to Haridwar and Rishikesh in Uttarakhand, Gopalganj in Bihar and Rampur in Uttar Pradesh.

Sep 24 2010 1:10PM

## **AT UN, DEVELOPING NATIONS URGE BOOST IN GLOBAL SUPPORT TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE**

New York, Sep 28 2010 9:10PM

Developing nations took to the podium today at the General Assembly's annual high-level debate to press for greater global support in responding to climate change.

Ghanaian Foreign Minister Muhammad Mumuni

["http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634212699462656250GH\\_en.pdf"](http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634212699462656250GH_en.pdf) warned world leaders that poorer nations may soon experience a "promise fatigue" if developed countries do not carry through pledged funds, including the \$30 billion of fast-track funding for developing countries through 2012 committed at December's Copenhagen climate change meeting.

At the gathering in the Danish capital, industrialized countries further pledged to find ways and means to raise \$100 billion annually by 2020.

"For developing countries, the early delivery and transparent allocation of this money will boost our confidence in the dialogue and also show that industrialized countries are truly committed to progress in the broader negotiations," Mr. Mumuni said.

Not only must developed countries honor their commitments to provide financial and technological to poorer nations in the fight against climate change, they must also "take the lead to cut their respective carbon dioxide emissions so that the conference in Cancun could produce tangible results," ["http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/63421189975500000KH\\_en.pdf"](http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/63421189975500000KH_en.pdf) said Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong.

The next conference of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (["http://unfccc.int/2860.php"](http://unfccc.int/2860.php) UNFCCC) is set to take place in the Mexican city in November.

"The fruitful outcomes in Cancun rely on efforts by all to save humankind from much more serious catastrophes," the Cambodian official said.

Foreign Minister Maxine Pamela Ometa McClean of Barbados acknowledged that a comprehensive pact will not be achieved in Cancun, but ["http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634212833423281250BB\\_en.pdf"](http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634212833423281250BB_en.pdf) said the November gathering must conclude with the world committing itself to prioritizing the most vulnerable and providing the fast-track funding.

"Critical to success at Cancun is arriving at a common understanding of how, when and where an



ambitious and legally-binding international climate agreement will be finalized,” she stressed.

Theodore Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Bahamas, <"http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634212608166875000BS\_en.pdf">called for special attention to be paid to the needs of small island developing States (<"http://www.sidsnet.org/">SIDS) and other vulnerable countries.

The Bahamas, he said, is the fifth most vulnerable country to sea level rise. “We are a country of negligible greenhouse gas emissions, still we suffer catastrophic results of emissions are not stabilized and reduced worldwide.”

According to science, a temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius will result in the sea level rising two metres, Mr. Symonette said. “Such an occurrence will submerge 80 per cent of our territory.”

Also calling for urgent action for SIDS today was Arvin Boolell, Foreign Minister of Mauritius.

With climate change inextricably linked to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (<"http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/">MDGs), the SIDS should be given simplified access to both fast track and longer-term resources, he <"http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634212729543281250MU\_en\_fr.pdf">emphasized.

“Those adaptation fundings should be in the form of grants and not loans,” Mr. Boolell added.

President Desiré Delano Bouterse of Suriname, in his address to the Assembly on Saturday, <"http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634211870689687500SR\_en.pdf">said that climate change will have a “devastating” effect on developing countries.

His country, he said, can serve as an example for the world “as its laws to save [forests] and biodiversity date back from the middle of the past century.”

It is called the “greenest country on Earth” for its 90 per cent forest cover, Mr. Bouterse said.

“It seems that the standing forest and the wealth of Suriname’s biodiversity are being taken for granted by the global community as there are no structures in place to provide incentives to continue on the path of sustainability,” he said.

For his part, Grenada’s Prime Minister Tillman Thomas <"http://gadebate.un.org/View/SpeechView/tabid/85/smld/411/ArticleID/209/Default.aspx">called for climate change, which is already undermining small economies, to remain at the top of the global diplomatic and negotiating agenda.

Fast track funding has only reach a small percentage of developing countries, and “clearly, this has to be corrected,” especially for SIDS, he said.

30 September 2010

**Christians call for calm after Indian verdict on holy site**

Bangalore, India (ENI). Churches in India have joined other faiths and political leaders in calling for calm after a court ruled that a religious site, vigorously and violently disputed by Hindus and Muslims, should be split between the two groups. On 30 September, the high court of northern Uttar Pradesh state handed down its verdict in the protracted case that concerns the ownership of the site of the former Babri mosque at Ayodhya, 700 kilometers (420 miles) southeast of New Delhi. The case has been pending for more than half a century. In a majority verdict, two of the three judges declared that Hindus have the right of ownership to the main disputed area, where the main dome of the Muslim Babri mosque once stood. The court granted Muslims and a Hindu group control of other parts of the site. Hindus consider the location the birthplace of the god Ram, and placed a Ram idol inside the mosque in 1949

### **Southern Africa bishops disturbed by Swaziland's rights abuses**

Cape Town (ENI). Bishops of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa say they are deeply disturbed by news of growing human rights abuses in Swaziland, a kingdom sandwiched between South Africa and Mozambique. The bishops, meeting in Benoni near Johannesburg from 27 to 29 September for their twice-yearly synod, challenged their church to become more involved in the quest for democracy in Swaziland. Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of Cape Town, the leader of the church, said on 30 September he could not remain silent on the issue of democracy in Swaziland, "where power and wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and political debate is hardly permitted". A state of emergency has existed in Swaziland for the past 37 years. Freedom of expression is severely limited, opposition political parties are banned, and reports of police arresting and beating up critics are frequent.

### **Evangelical Christian pilgrims converge on Jerusalem**

Jerusalem (ENI). Thousands of evangelical Christians from 100 countries have participated in a 30th "Feast of Tabernacles" event, organized by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, a group strongly supportive of a united Jerusalem under Israel. The ICEJ says the event, held from 23 to 29 September to coincide with the Jewish holiday of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot), has become Israel's largest annual tourist event, and the largest solidarity mission to Israel. Organizers expect the festival to have injected an estimated US\$15 million into the local economy. The event takes place with the assistance of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, and, in 2010, about 1000 pilgrims from Brazil made up the largest group at the embassy event.

6 September 2010

### **Cost of fixing Delhi for Commonwealth Games worries churches**

New Delhi (ENI). Indian church leaders say the billions of dollars being spent on sprucing up the capital city, New Delhi, for the Commonwealth Games in October is wasteful. "There is a whole lot of public money that could have been used for the welfare of the poor that is being wasted on Delhi's streets," John Dayal, Delhi-based secretary general of the All India Christian Council, told ENInews. "The politicians and officials have once again proved that the welfare of the poor is not a major priority for them," noted Dayal, a member of the National Integration Council chaired by the Indian Prime Minister. India's leading English daily newspaper, The Times of India, released the

results of a survey on 1 September that said that 76 percent of the people of Delhi feel that the Commonwealth Games expense is "unjustified", while many more are worried about their tax liability for the prodigious spending. The games take place every four years.

### **Mini Luthers on Wittenberg market square cause offence to some**

Trier, Germany (ENI). Eight hundred colorful miniature figures of the 16th-century Protestant Reformer Martin Luther on display on the central market square of Wittenberg, where he lived and worked, are causing offence. Visitors have been walking around the market place between the black, green, red and blue figures, picking them up and placing them in other parts of the town. This art show has, however, been heavily criticized by prominent theologians such as Friedrich Schorlemmer from Wittenberg, who played a prominent role in the peaceful protests that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall more than 20 years ago. Schorlemmer told the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, a newspaper in eastern Germany, in August, "This is theological and aesthetic rubbish. Martin Luther cannot be mass produced." The installation by German artist Ottmar is part of the Luther Decade celebrations commemorating the period between Luther's arrival in Wittenberg in 1508 and the beginning of the Reformation in 1517.

14 September 2010

### **India churches in appeal for Christians targeted in Quran protests**

Bangalore (ENI). Churches in India are asking for support after Christian institutions became the target of violent protests linked to the reported desecration of a copy of the Quran in the United States. At least 16 people were killed and more than 60 injured in clashes on 13 September with security personnel in India-ruled Kashmir. Most of those people were killed after police opened fire to quell violent mobs, S. S. Kapur, the chief secretary, or highest official, of Jammu and Kashmir State, told media. Kapur said the crowds had come out on to the streets after a "foreign" television station had reported that a copy of the Quran had been desecrated in the United States. Tension had been rising in Muslim-majority Kashmir after the announcement by the Rev. Terry Jones, pastor of a tiny church in Florida, of plans to burn copies of the Quran on 11 September, the ninth anniversary of the terror attacks in the United States.

### **Church grouping says action needed, if one sixth of world hungry**

Geneva (ENI). An international grouping of churches and Christian organizations says that if one sixth of the world's population is hungry when there is sufficient food to feed the world, then action to address the problem's root causes is needed. The Geneva-based Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, which campaigns for food justice, said in a statement on 14 September that new figures on world hunger highlight that the food crisis is still acute for one-sixth of the world's population. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme had on the same day announced that 925 million people are estimated to be suffering from chronic hunger in 2010, down from the 1.023 billion estimated in 2009. The release of the statistics from the U.N. organizations came in advance of New York's 20-22 September United Nations Millennium Development Goals summit and the publication of FAO's annual flagship report, "The State of World Food Insecurity", known as SOFI.

### **Russia's prisons look to faiths to bring moral guidance**

Moscow (ENI). Russia's prisons, struggling with a growing crime rate, overcrowding and shortfalls in funding, are turning to religion to bring moral guidance to inmates. The move marks a dramatic change from the Soviet system, when clergy and believers were often imprisoned for their faith. "We have signed agreements with all of the leading confessions of our country," said Aleksandr Reimer, the director of Russia's Federal Correctional Service, in an interview with the Rossiiskaya Gazeta, an official government newspaper. Although the Russian Orthodox Church has become increasingly close to the State in recent years, Reimer said that imposing Russia's largest religion on inmates was not the goal.

## **UN AGENCIES ISSUE TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING**

New York, Aug 1 2010

To unlock the lifesaving potential of breast milk, two United Nations agencies have unveiled 10 steps to help mothers successfully breast feed, kicking off World Breastfeeding Week today.

According to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), breast milk is the ideal food for newborns and infants because it is safe and gives them the nutrients necessary for healthy development. It also contains antibodies to protect infants from common childhood illnesses.

Although exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is on the rise in many countries, the agency believes that further improving these rates is crucial to bolster the nutrition and health of infants and children.

Too many mothers, WHO said, stop breastfeeding exclusively a few weeks after delivery for many reasons, such as lack of breastfeeding counseling.

Some 35 per cent of infants between the ages of 0 and 6 months are solely breastfed worldwide, said Elizabeth Mason, Director of WHO's Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development.

"But if all babies and young children were breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life and then given nutritious complementary food with continued breastfeeding up to two years of age, the lives of an additional 1.5 million under five would be saved every year," she added.

Developed by the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding are aimed at providing the right start for every infant and are currently used in hospitals in more than 150 countries.

They include helping mothers begin breastfeeding within half an hour of birth, allowing mothers and infants to remain together for 24 hours a day, and giving no artificial teats or pacifiers to breastfeeding infants.

One third of the nearly nine million deaths every year among children under the age of five are due to malnutrition, which causes disease and deaths. Most of these deaths occur during the first few months of life and are often linked to inappropriate feeding practices such as bottle-feeding.

"Increasing breastfeeding rates is a key component of the plan to improve infant and young

children nutrition," said Rand Saadeh, Coordinator of the Nutrition in the Life Course unit at WHO.

"A renewed effort to make more hospitals 'baby friendly' has the potential to give millions more babies a healthy start in life."

First observed in 1992, World Breastfeeding Week -- which seeks to encourage exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life -- is now observed in more than 120 countries and is celebrated from 1-7 August annually.

Aug 1 2010 1:10AM

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## **UN RIGHTS EXPERT URGE STATES TO COMPLY WITH CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE**

New York, Oct 20 2010

The Chairperson of the United Nations independent committee of experts against torture today urged States to recommit themselves to the values of the global treaty that prohibits the practice, which, he stressed, cannot be justified under any circumstances and has to be eradicated.

"The Convention embodies very important values of humanity. Confessions extracted by torture cannot be used in judicial proceedings," Claudio Grossman, who chairs the Committee Against Torture, told reporters at UN Headquarters after presenting its annual report to the General Assembly.

The UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was adopted by the General Assembly in 1984 and has been ratified by 147 States to date.

"Still today, 26 years after the adoption by UN Member States of the Convention Against Torture, we have not yet achieved our shared objective to eradicate torture and inhuman treatment," said Mr. Grossman.

"The absolute prohibition of torture – a non-derogable obligation under the Convention which means that under no exceptional circumstances whatsoever can torture be justified – is not yet a reality in many States who have ratified the Convention," he adds.

He called upon all UN Member States to say "no to torture; no to torture during emergency situations; no to torture by any means."

The Convention provides that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."

It also obliges States that have ratified the Convention to refrain from deporting or returning people to countries where they would face the risk of torture, and requires ratifying States to extradite or prosecute perpetrators of torture.

Under the Convention, victims of the scourge have the right to redress, including compensation.

In its recommendations to States parties, the 10-member Committee has repeatedly denounced the vulnerability of women in situations of armed conflict.

He expressed concern at the failure of States to comply with their reporting obligations under the Convention.

“Initial reports are the essential springboard for ongoing dialogue with States parties, and I call upon the 32 States which have not yet submitted their initial reports to do so in order for the committee to contribute to the realization of the convention,” Mr. Grossman said.

He also reiterated the Committee’s regret that only 64 out of the 147 State parties to the Convention have accepted its competence to examine individual complaints alleging violations of the Convention.

“The individual complaints procedure is an important tool for achieving the goals of the Convention by enabling victims of torture to present their cases before the international community. It also allows the Committee to apply the Convention to real-life situations,” Mr. Grossman stressed.

This year, the Committee determined that deporting people to countries where they run the risk of sexual violence amounts to a breach of the prohibition of deportation or return to countries where they would face the risk of torture.

Oct 20 2010 10:10AM

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## **MOST OF WORLD’S 200 MILLION MIGRANTS DENIED BASIC RIGHT TO HOUSING – UN EXPERT**

New York, Oct 22 2010 7:10PM

With most of the world’s estimated 200 million migrants facing discrimination in housing, a United Nations independent expert today called on nations to view the issue through the lens of human rights.

Raquel Rolnik, the Special Reporter on the right to adequate housing, told reporters that in her work, she has seen first-hand the “situations of migrant workers living in metal containers without electricity or water or services,” as well as others sleeping in bathrooms, closets or the kitchen.

They are also oftentimes subject to violence, sexual harassment and forced confinement, she told reporters in New York after briefing the General Assembly on her latest report.

Migrants are sometimes obliged to live in in-service, unplanned settlements within or on the outskirts of cities because of the impossibility of accessing public housing or due to discrimination they face in the private market, the expert said.

The “inadequate and often appalling” housing conditions migrants face can only be redressed through a “truly human rights-based approach which is based on international human rights law that protects the rights to adequate housing of international migrants and prohibits discriminatory,

unfair and degrading treatment," she stressed.

22 October 2010

### **Turkish aide wants Hagia restored for Muslim, Christian worship**

Warsaw (ENI). A Turkish government adviser says Christians and Muslims should be allowed to worship again in Istanbul's Hagia Sophia basilica, eight decades after it was turned into a museum by the country's secularist authorities. "Hagia Sofia was built as a place of worship. It served people this way as a church and mosque for more than a thousand years," said Mehmet Akif an expert with the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which monitors religious sites in Turkey, including more than 80 000 mosques. "As a Muslim, I'd like it to become a mosque. But if Hagia Sofia were opened to Muslim worshippers on weekdays, it should also be opened to Christians on Sundays. It disturbs me that it's become just a museum and tourist destination." The expert was commenting on calls for the sixth century landmark to be reopened for religious events. Turkey, which has witnessed several attacks by Islamic militants on Christian clergy, including the June killing of Bishop Luigi Padovese, president of the country's Roman Catholic Bishops Conference.

### **Spanish Muslim, who advocated tolerance, religious liberty, dies**

Cordoba, Spain (ENI). The death of a Muslim leader, who had converted to Islam and sought to build bridges between people of different faiths, is being mourned in Spain and has been especially praised in a Spanish newspaper article. Mansur Escudero, 62, "was considered one of the most important mediators between the Muslim community and the different government administrations in Spain", the English-language edition of the El Pas newspaper reported on 7 October. "He was considered an excellent and creative orator, who defended laity as well as freedom of religious practice." In one of his best known acts of interfaith activism, Escudero asked the Vatican to allow Muslims - there are around 1.3 million in Spain - to pray at the Cathedral of Cordoba, one of the most unusual religious sites in the world.

### **Anglican congregation's plan for Roman exit not seen as exodus**

London (ENI). The decision by an Anglican parish in southeast England to leave the Church of England to become Roman Catholic has taken some by surprise. The elected parochial church council of St Peter's, Folkestone, south east England, which has taken the unanimous decision to secede, is seeking a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to discuss procedure. Earlier this year Pope Benedict XVI offered special provisions for members of the Church of England unhappy with the prospect of female bishops. The Rev. Stephen Bould, the parish vicar, and the church council said they regretted having to take such action and called for a smooth transition in the interest of both parties. Bould said he was proud of the courage and faith of the lay people concerned. He told journalists after the morning service on 17 October he did not know how many of the congregation would join the Catholic Church.

19 October 2010

### **Anglican head concerned for failed Zimbabwe asylum seekers**

London (ENI). Human rights activists have praised the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams,

for showing concern about the safety problems failed Zimbabwean asylum seekers face if they are forced to return and live under the regime of President Robert Mugabe. "I would love to see more and more Christians and church leaders follow his example and warn the British government that there must be checks and monitoring systems in place before these people are sent home," Sarah Harland, co coordinator of the Zimbabwe Association told ENInews. "This is not the time for enforced returns."

### **Tanzanian theologian says 'Saint Nyerere' is important for Africa**

Nairobi (ENI). Some Roman Catholics are making a new push for the beatification of the former Tanzanian president, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, describing this as important for Africa due to his example of good leadership. The Rev. Laurent Magesa from Tanzania's Musoma diocese, where the leader came from, said that in today's political context where many African leaders have been criticized for embezzling public funds, Nyerere is remembered for his honesty. The process of beatification in the Catholic Church is often seen as a step towards making a person a saint. A person who is beatified is given the title "Blessed".

### **Church of North India turns 40, with Archbishop of Canterbury**

Nagpur, India (ENI). The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has led celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of the Church of North India, which was formed by six Protestant denominations, including Anglicans, in 1970. The six uniting churches in 1970 represented Anglican, Baptist, and Brethren, Congregational, Disciples, Methodist and Presbyterian traditions. The visit by Williams visit comes as a time of tension in the worldwide Anglican Communion after the 2003 consecration by the Episcopal (Anglican) Church in the United States of a homosexual bishop who has a male partner. The Episcopal Church has since consecrated as a bishop an openly lesbian cleric, who has lived with a female partner for 22 years.

United Nations • **NEW YORK, NY**

10 September 2010

Dear Sub-Committee Co-Chairs, As we all return from our voyage Down Under, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all of you for participating in the highly successful 63rd Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference in Melbourne. Your participation in the Planning Committee meetings and then your individual Sub-Committee meetings assured the worldwide NGO community of an outstanding Conference on advancing global health and achieving the MDGs. More than 1,700 representatives from 260 NGOs and 70 countries, as well as representatives of academia, media, the UN system and Member States participated in this year's Conference. This year's gathering was historic in that it was the largest UN event to be held in Australia. Most importantly, the high level of interest and participation at the Opening and Closing ceremonies, Roundtable sessions, Workshops and Exhibits by the attendees highlighted the importance of addressing the equally important issues of advancing global health and achieving the MDGs. I am confident that all the participants felt the same way. Finally, the Outcome Document, which



you helped shape, will help all participants in presenting the Conference's recommendations to their national governments so that they could be included in the MDG Summit that will be held 20-22 September 2010 at UN Headquarters. For your information, as has become traditional, regional NGOs were given priority in associating with the DPI in advance of the Conference. As a result, DPI/NGO Relations associated 41 NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region, including: Australia – 32, Fiji – 1, Philippines – 5, Tonga – 1, Vanuatu – 1. There are a lot of lessons to be learned from the Conference, and I urge you to give this some thought, as we will discuss these lessons at an upcoming meeting. I hope that you also found the Conference to be valuable and I look forward to sending you the Final Report. The webcast can be seen at [www.undpingoconference.org](http://www.undpingoconference.org).

Warm regards,  
 Maria-Luisa Chàvez, Chief  
 NGO Relations, Outreach Division  
 Department of Public Information

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## **EIGHTEEN COUNTRIES ELECTED TO SERVE ON UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

New York, Oct 25 2010

The General Assembly today elected 18 members to the key United Nations forum tasked with discussing international economic and social progress.

Australia, Cameroon, China, Ecuador, Finland, Gabon, Hungary, Latvia, Malawi, Mexico, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russia, Senegal and the United Kingdom were elected, and in some cases re-elected, to serve on the Economic and Social Council (<"<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/>">ECOSOC).

The Council, comprising 54 members elected by the General Assembly, meets yearly to further economic and social cooperation and development. Those elected today will begin their three-year terms on 1 January 2011.

The other current members of the ECOSOC are Argentina, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Estonia, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, India, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Malta, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United States, Venezuela and Zambia.

Among the many issues discussed in the ECOSOC is progress in reaching objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals (<"<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>">MDGs), eight targets for tackling poverty, hunger and other social ills by 2015, as well as international development cooperation and the global financial situation.

ECOSOC's week-long high-level segment this year featured the Development Cooperation

Forum, which centered on development cooperation in times of crises, the Annual Ministerial Review, which focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and a policy dialogue on the state of the world economy.

Oct 25 2010

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**Sikhs Join Interfaith Efforts in Support of Peace, Tolerance and Religious Liberty**  
**UNITED SIKHS Promotes Unity & Acceptance in Memory of 9/11**

**Highlights:**

- **Sikhs join Interfaith organizations in solidarity against intolerance, discord and prejudice**
- **Sikhs and other minority communities asked to be vigilant in light of recent hate crimes, and to educate their communities through 'know your rights' campaigns**

**New York, NY:** Members and volunteers of UNITED SIKHS joined Interfaith organizations in solidarity against intolerance, discord and prejudice to commemorate the lives lost on September 11, 2001. Through these events and in support of communities unfairly targeted in the backlash of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, UNITED SIKHS and other organizations stand in support of the fact that religious intolerance is not in line with American values.

On Friday, September 10, 2010, UNITED SIKHS attended the “Vigil for American Values”, coordinated by the New York Neighbors for American Values and supported by the Interfaith Center of New York. Centered on the theme of “Understanding, Acceptance and the Love of Neighbors,” the event was attended by elected officials and religious leaders. Dr. Tejal Kaur, UNITED SIKHS volunteer, spoke on the importance of unity among people of different faiths and our duty to protect others from the Sikh perspective. The vigil took place on the corner of Church Street and Park Place in Downtown Manhattan from 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm. Click [here](#) to see a part of the event.



*The Vigil attracted nearly 2000 people, who*

***Dr. Tejal Kaur, speaking at the Candlelight Vigil******attended to show their support***

Lately, New York City has watched while members of different communities have been victims of hate crimes, including a Muslim Taxi Driver, numerous members of the Latino community, and most recently, members of the Gay community. As Dr. Tejal Kaur says in her speech at the Candlelight vigil, "Sikh head coverings provide the equally important purpose of serving to create an external identity so that a Sikh may always be distinguished in a crowd as someone who must act in the defense of others. Ironically, it is that same external identity which has placed Sikhs at risk for hate crimes and civil liberties violations. Yet, instead of saying, "Do not discriminate against us, we are not Muslim," the values of the Sikh faith demand that a Sikh stand up and demand that **NO ONE, REGARDLESS OF FAITH OR CREED BE BARRED FROM PRACTICING THEIR FAITH FREELY. THAT NO ONE, BE DENIED JUSTICE AND COMPASSION.**"

On Saturday, September 11, 2010, UNITED SIKHS Volunteer Satkiran Kaur Khalsa joined members of different faith communities and represented Sikhs by reciting verses from the Gurbani in reflection for the loss of life and in the spirit of promoting unity and acceptance at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Floating Lanterns Ceremony. New York Buddhist Church led the ceremony with the assistance of the Interfaith Center of New York at **South Side of Pier 40 (W. Houston St. & West Street) from 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm**. The ritual replicated the one in Hiroshima Japan, which commemorates the victims of the atomic bombings during WWII. As one of the key partners, UNITED SIKHS provided langar to attendees at the ceremony.



***Satkiran Kaur Khalsa, reciting verses from the Gurbani***

***Members of different faiths who also led attendees in an Interfaith Prayer session***

**UNITED SIKHS urges community members to be alert, be aware and know your rights.**

To notify UNITED SIKHS of a hate crime or to know more about your rights, please contact us at [law-usa@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:law-usa@unitedsikhs.org).

IN CASE OF A HATE CRIME CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT FIRST!

## **30th Enthronement anniversary celebrations of His Holiness The Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas**

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### **Program Schedule:**

**Venue:** *Monastery of St. Ephraim in Ma'arat Saydnaya, Damascus.*

**13 September 2010; Monday, 7:00 pm:** Performance by St. Ephrem Syriac Choir, followed by Syriac Orthodox Scout March to Salute HH, Firework.

**14 September 2010; Tuesday - 10:00 am:** Holy Qurbano - Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Enthronement day of HH the Patriarch - felicitations.



*New Guesthouse nearing completion to the St. Aphrem Dayro, to be consecrated on 14*

*September 2010*

**14 September 2010 - Tuesday - 6:00 pm** - Consecration of the new guesthouse building - Saint Ignatius Patriarchal center and also the consecration of the associated chapel devoted to Saint Ignatius of Antioch.

**15 - 19 September 2010:** Holy Synod

**19 September 2010 Sunday - 10:00 am:** Consecration of Holy Mooron (Chrism).

**Celebrations held at Monastery of St. Ephrem, Ma`arat Sayyidnaya, Damascus.**



**14 September 2010, Ma`arat Sayyidnaya, Damascus:** 30th Enthronement Anniversary of His Holiness Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka 1st celebrated at Monastery of St. Ephrem, Ma`arat Sayyidnaya, Damascus yesterday. Metropolitans of sister churches, various dignitaries, Metropolitans of Syrian Orthodox Church, Rembans, Priests, Nuns and faithful participated. The message from His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of Alexandrian Patriarchate was read during the function. His Eminence Geevarghese Mor Athanasius & His Eminence Eldho Mor Theethos represented Malankara. His Beatitude Aboon Mor Baselios Thomas 1 and other metropolitans of church in India will reach Patriarchate to take part in the celebrations and Holy Chrism on Friday.



In Malankara the Anniversary of Enthronement of Holy Father celebrated at Puthencuriz Patriarchal Center (Head Quarters of Syrian Orthodox Church in India). Catholicose Aboon Mor Baselios Thomas I lead the Thanksgiving Holy Qurbano at St. Athanasius Cathedral here assisted by H.E Mathews Mor Aprem here. Baretho Mahero Thambu George Thukalan (Church Secretary), Rembans, Priests, Deacons, Nuns, Church officials & lots of faithful attended the Holy Mass & the celebrations held here there after. Catholicose cut the cake, which marked the celebrations at the Church Headquarters in India

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### **His Holiness Patriarch to consecrate the Holy Mooron on 19th September**

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*10 September 2010, Ma`arat Sayyidnaya, Damascus:* The His Holiness Patriarch of Antioch & All the East Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka-I Iwas will lead the consecration of Holy Chrism assisted by His Beatitude Catholicos Aboon Mor Baselios Thomas-I & other Metropolitans of Holy Syriac Orthodox Church on 19th September 2010. Catholicos will participate in the Holy occasion as per the special invitation of Holy Father the Patriarch.



The preparation for the consecration of Holy Chrism has been started on 10th September at Patriarchal Head quarters here. The Holy Father along with H.E Philexinos Mathias Nayis (Patriarchal Assistant & Director of St. Ephrem Theological seminary here), the Rembans & Priests combined the materials for preparing Holy Chrism on 10th September in an atmosphere filled with prayers & hymn.



*Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the 122nd successor to St. Peter in the Apostolic See of Antioch.*

Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the 122nd successor to St. Peter in the Apostolic See of Antioch, completes 30 years in the Patriarchal See on the day of the Feast of Holy Cross, 2010. The Universal Syrian Church with its flocks spread over many nations, celebrates this unique historic occasion, of His Holiness's Silver Jubilee of the Patriarchal enthronement, with great fervor and enthusiasm. It was on September 14, 1980, the Holy Father was enthroned as the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East and the Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. He is one of the very few primates of the Syrian Church who have been in the Patriarchal office for an entire quarter of a century. As a true Shepherd, His Holiness has led the Holy Church to greater glories in these years of his Patriarchal See.

His Holiness was born on April 21, 1933 into the faithful family of 'Iwas' in Mosul, Iraq. He was born as the fourth child and was named 'Seenaherib' (name of the father of St. Behnam). His Holiness had three brothers and three sisters. The forbears of Patriarch Zakka, the Iwas family, originally belonged to Jessera on Tigris; they migrated to Mosul about three hundred years ago. Some of his ancestors adorned very important posts in the Kingdom. His grand father has received an award from King Faisal I of Iraq for his excellence in his job as Chief craftsmen and architect of the State.

The father of His Holiness, Basheer Iwas, who graduated from the University in Istanbul, the then capital of Ottoman Empire, later became a Professor in the Military Engineering College there. A faithful member of Church, he was very enthusiastic in attending the Church Services regularly and also inspired others to follow his path. It was his ardent desire to mould one of his sons as a priest to serve the Holy Church. After a few years of teaching, he left for his home state in Iraq where he started a woodworking factory of his own. But unfortunately, misfortune struck the family a few years later; Basheer Iwas died of a Cardiac arrest. His Holiness was only 10 at that time. Two years later in 1945, his wife, the mother of His

Holiness, also passed away. Thus the young Seenaherib, who later came to be known as Zakka, becomes parentless at a tender age of 12.

### **Ecclesiastical life & Graduation**



After the death of his parents, Young Zakka decided to enter into the ecclesiastical life, thus fulfilling the wishes of his beloved father. But then some of his family members who felt bad about the parentless child being dragged into difficult circumstances, tried to discourage him. However our holy father, who from the age of six dreamt of becoming a monk, remained determined in his choice that finally paved the way for the family too to comply with his decision. Thus he joined the St. Ephrem Theological Seminary in Mosul in 1946 at the age of 13 and was henceforth came to be called 'Zakka'.

On November 28, 1948, young Zakka was ordained 'Koroyoo' (Deacon) by H. E. Mor Athanasius Touma Kasseer and on February 8, 1953, he was elevated to the rank of 'Afodyaknoh' (Half Deacon) by H.E. Mor Gregorios Paulos Behnam. The very next year he graduated with a diploma from the seminary.



June 6, 1954, is an important date in the life of His Holiness. The Holy Father accepted the order of monastic life on that day. He was then 21. It was Mor Gregorios Paulos Behnam who ordained him Rabban (monk). His Holiness recalls this as a very special day in his life. He used to say that he always felt the God caring him greatly



though his parents left him in his childhood; he prayed to God and He cared him greatly.

On December 18, 1955, H.E. Mor Divanasious Jirges Behanam promoted the new monk to the rank of full deacon. In the year 1955, he joined the Patriarchal Staff in Homs as an assistant to the Patriarchal Secretary.



Young Zakka's performance in schools was always excellent; he consistently scored high marks. His elementary education was in the schools at the Al-Tahra Al-Dakhilyah's church (Our Lady's church) and Mor Touma's school (St.Thomas school) at Mosul. In 1957 he graduated from the college with 97 % of marks. Thus he completed his studies with success on the fields of history, philosophy, theology and church-law. He advanced in Syriac, Arabic and English languages, and received diplomas in each of these fields.

Soon after the graduation, he joined the faculty of the seminary where he taught Syriac, Arabic and the Bible. Little later, Rabban Zakka was called to the Patriarchate by the then Patriarch of Antioch Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem I, one of the most erudite scholars and efficient administrators the Church has seen in modern times. Rabban Zakka became the second, and later the first, Secretary to the Patriarch. After the demise of Moran Mor Aprem I, he continued as First Secretary to the new Patriarch, Moran Mor Ya`qub III

On November 17, 1957, Patriarch Mor Ya`qub III ordained him a priest. On April 15, 1959, the Patriarch decorated him with 'the Holy cross of the grand monk.

From 1955 to 1958 Rabban Zakka studied journalism as a part-time student and took a diploma in journalism. In 1960, he joined the General Theological College of the Episcopal Church in New York in the United States, where he studied oriental languages, philosophy and pastoral theology and mastered in the English language. The college, later in 1983, offered His Holiness an Honorary Doctorate in theology.

Rabban Zakka traveled widely, both on his own and in the company of Patriarch Ya`qub III. He was at that time fortunate to visit all the countries in the Middle East and the America. In 1962 and 1963 he was delegated by the late Patriarch to attend the two Sessions of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council as an observer. It was while at the Vatican that he was called to the Episcopal office.

### **Metropolitan.**



On November 17, 1963, Rabban Zakka was ordained Metropolitan by the Patriarch Mor Ya`qub III for the Mosul Archbishopric with title 'Severious'. Thus he came to be known as Mor Severios Zakka.

The very next year in 1964 he visited India along with the Patriarch where he participated in the Universal Synod of the Syrian Orthodox Church, held in Kottayam. He later assisted the Patriarch Mor Ya`qub III during the consecration of the first canonical Catholicos of Malankara, Mor Baselios Augen I, on May 21, 1964.

### **Discovery of St. Thomas relic.**

On September 1, 1964, during the renovation of the Madboho of the ancient St. Thomas Church at Mosul, Mor Severious Zakka discovered the remains of Apostle Thomas in the sanctuary wall. It was a memorable event in the Episcopal life of the Holy Father. In the first sermon of



the Holy Father when he visited India as Patriarch of Antioch in 1982 he said, "When we think of St. Thomas, our heart is particularly thrilled because we are very closely connected to St. Thomas. Even though St. Thomas enjoyed his martyrdom here in India, and

was entombed in Mylapore, we were the Metropolitan of the church in which the holy relics of St. Thomas have been kept for the past many centuries. One day, unexpectedly, by the grace of God, we were led to reveal the Holy Relics of St. Thomas once again to humanity. It was unknown to the present generation, as to where the holy relic of St. Thomas was kept. But in 1964, according to the will of God, we were able to discover the Holy Relics which were kept in the walls of the sanctuary of our St. Thomas' church in Mosul, Iraq which is the Cathedral church of our Archdiocese of Mosul."

A portion of this Holy relic discovered by Mor Severios Zakka was presented to Malankara Church when Catholicos Mor Augen I paid a visit to the Patriarchate in 1965. In 1994, a small portion of the Holy Relic was again presented to Malankara to be kept at the ancient Mulanthuruthy Marthoman Church that is known as the 2nd Jerusalem of the Syrian Church. Three fathers of the Syrian Church who arrived from Near East were entombed in this church. The Holy Mooron was consecrated in this church once by Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Abded 'Aloho, in 1911. This ancient church has also been the venue for two historical Synods of the Malankara Church, one in 1876 and the other in 2004; both were held under the auspices of the Patriarchs of Antioch.

### **Additional charges as Metropolitan**

As Metropolitan of Mosul the Holy Father took special interest in youth activities. Under him, the diocese flourished spiritually and materially. In 1967 he was given additional charge of the European Diocese. In 1969 he was transferred to the Archdiocese of Baghdad and Basra, perhaps the most prestigious archbishopric in the Middle East. In Baghdad he built churches and opened secondary schools and high schools. As in Mosul, in Baghdad also he took keen interest in the spiritual life of the youth.



Following the demise of H.E. Thimotheos Yacoub, Metropolitan Mor Severious Zakka was given the additional charge of the ancient monastery of St. Mathew (Mor Mattai Dayro) in Iraq. In 1976, he was appointed as the Metropolitan of Middle Europe and

Scandinavian countries and in 1978 Mor Severios Zakka was given additional responsibility for the new diocese in Australia. He consecrated several churches and organized congregations in Melbourne, Sydney and a few other places.

On June 26, 1980, the Patriarch Mor Ya`qub III passed away and was entombed at the St. George Cathedral, Damascus. Consequent to this, the Episcopal Synod was called to choose the new successor to the Apostolic See. The Holy Synod held on July 11, 1980, with His Beatitude the Catholicos of the East Mor Baselios Paulose II in the chair, unanimously elected Mor Severios Zakka, Archbishop of Baghdad and Basra as the new Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. This marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the Church.



**Catholicos Mor Baselios Paulose II presiding the session of the Holy Episcopal Synod at Damascus that elected Mor Severios Zakka as the 122nd Patriarch of Antioch and All the East**

### **Patriarchal Enthronement**

On September 14, 1980, Mor Severios was installed as the 122nd Patriarch of Antioch & all the East, by name IGNATIUS ZAKKA I, in a rite officiated by the late lamented Catholicos of the East Aboon Mor Baselios Paulose II, along with the archbishops of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church. It was for the first time in the history of the Universal Syrian Church that the chief celebrant for the Patriarchal enthronement was an Indian.



**Catholicos of the East H.B. Mor Baselios Paulose II heading the Enthronement ceremony of His Holiness Ignatius Zakka I Iwas as the 122nd Patriarch of Antioch and All the East at the Patriarchal Cathedral, Damascus, on 14th September 1980.**

Since that blessed day, the Syrian Orthodox Church has witnessed a remarkable revival through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the pastoral care of H. H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. The 25 years of Mor Ignatius Zakka's Patriarchate have been eventful and significant. In his very first address after adorning the Patriarchate, he stressed the need for a major seminary and center for the Church. This was a great dream of the new Patriarch. The Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate after moving from the Monastery of Mor Hananyo (Deir ez-Za`faran/Kurkumo Dayro) in Turkey, to Syria in the last century, lacked a proper center in the new circumstances. It was the Holy fathers' vision that filled this gap. He acquired extensive lands, about 20 miles away from Old Damascus, where he built a magnificent Seminary with all facilities for theological students, accommodations for the visiting dignitaries, residence of the Patriarch etc. Though officially, the Patriarchate still functions in the St. George Cathedral, Bab Touma, in the city of Damascus, His Holiness resides at the Mor Ephrem Seminary in Ma`arat Sayyidnaya, in the suburb of Damascus, Syria.



صورة تذكارية من حفل التتويج القام في كاتدرائية القديس جورج في دمشق في ١٤/٩/١٩٨٠

The Church that was in turmoil for a while because of persecution is now witnessing a revival with establishment of churches and institutions in all parts of the world where the Syrian Christians has migrated. The largest congregation of the Church outside the Middle East and India is now situated at Germany where about 100,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians has settled. Similarly the Church has grown to other nations like Holland, Australia, USA, Canada and South America. And in all such countries, Monasteries, churches and other institutions have come up. Young bishops selected and ordained by the Holy Father increased the pace of growth in all these place.

On July 26th 2002, His Holiness installed Mor Dionysius Thomas, the president of the Episcopal Synod of Indian Church, as the Catholicos of India with the title Baselios Thomas I. This was a great event in the history of the Church in India.



*Holiness Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East consecrating His Beatitude the Catholicos Aboon Mor Baselios Thomas I*

The new Catholicos was consecrated as the immediate successor to the late Mor Baselios Paulose II who led the enthronement ceremony of His Holiness in 1980. Now the Holy Synod of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church consists of 64 prelates besides the Patriarch and the Catholicos, of which 34 were ordained by our Patriarch Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas.

6 October 2010

### **New Orthodox patriarch says Kosovo remains Serb 'sacred land'**

Warsaw (ENI). The Serbian Orthodox Church's new patriarch has reiterated his country's claim to Kosovo during an enthronement service in the newly independent republic that was boycotted by the Kosovo government. "Kosovo and Metohija are today without hundreds of thousands of expelled Serbian people. All traces of their spiritual historical roots are being eradicated," said Patriarch Irinej, whose sermon was published by the Serbian church's information service. "There

are still tens of thousands of refugees from this sacred land," said the Patriarch. They remain turned toward their age-old bosom, and with tearful eyes and painful hearts anticipate the day and possibility in which they can return to their destroyed and burned homes." The 80-year-old church leader was preaching on 3 October at the 13th century monastery of Pec, traditionally regarded as the see of Serbian patriarchs. In January he had been enthroned in Serbia.

### **South African churches among exhibitors at 'Sexpo' show**

Johannesburg (ENI). Three churches were among exhibitors at a sex exposition in South Africa, saying they aim to promote healthy sex within marriage. The churches were among non-sex industry organizations at the four-day Health, Sexuality and Lifestyle Expo – South Africa that included, a cancer prevention group, rhino protection charities and cosmetic companies. In 2009 there had been strong criticism about the exposition from some religious groups, but those churches that had exhibits felt the time was opportune to preach about the word of God, and sex, within marriage.

### **Inter-faith council condemns West Bank mosque burning**

Jerusalem (ENI). The Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land has expressed "grave concern" over the 3 October burning by militant Israeli settlers of a mosque in the West Bank village of Beit Fajar near Bethlehem. "The CRIHL strongly condemns these and similar acts of vandalism and arson which have taken place in the past year," said the council in a 5 October statement. It added, the council, "calls upon people from all faiths - Christians, Jews and Muslims - Palestinians and Israelis - to refrain from any assault on places of religious significance and not to resort to extremism and the exploitation of religion for a political and territorial gain." The religious council represents the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the Palestinian Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Palestinian [Islamic] Sharia Courts and the assembly of the Heads of [Christian] Churches of Jerusalem.

7 October 2010

### **South African 'moral compass' Tutu officially retires**

Cape Town (ENI). Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, often described as South Africa's moral compass, officially retired on his 79th birthday saying he wishes to devote time to his wife, Leah, and family. Tutu, who was a major figure in the struggle against apartheid, announced in July that he would step down from public life, and would stop giving media interviews, from 7 October, his birthday. "I have got a wife and family that help to keep my head the right size. Just when I am thinking that I am the cat's whiskers, they remind me that, 'you are just

daddy for us and husband'," Tutu was quoted saying by the South African Press Association. South Africa's Daily Dispatch newspaper editorialized on 7 October, "He has epitomized tolerance and understanding, popularizing the African concept of ubuntu, which calls for forgiveness and to the ability to always show 'humanity to others'." U.S. President Barack Obama congratulated Tutu saying in a written statement, "For decades he has been a moral titan - a voice of principle, an unrelenting champion of justice, and a dedicated peacemaker. "

### **African churches can play key role in Middle East, says WCC head**

Nairobi (ENI). African churches can play a key role in addressing the crisis in the Middle East, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, has said. "This is also a call for you as African churches," Tveit said, in addressing the All Africa Conference of Churches in Nairobi. "You have something to contribute in the reflection about access to land as a matter of justice and they [Palestinian Christians] also are very encouraged by your way of expressing your faith, that it is possible to pray and see results." Tveit, a Norwegian Lutheran was in Kenya and Ethiopia in late September as part of his first visit to Africa as WCC general secretary. He noted the vibrancy of Christianity on the continent. He said, during his 23 September speech in Nairobi, that the Middle East is a region where many conflicts in the world get constant fuel.

### **Bedroom must be 'playground' say Filipino Christian counselors**

Manila (ENI). Three Filipino evangelical Christian counselors have designed a course for married parishioners evolving around a topic that pastors cannot discuss openly from their pulpits – sex. "The Bible, not pornographic magazines, can teach us how to enhance and enjoy our sexual life and help strengthen our relationships as married couples," said the Rev. Clemente Guillermo, one of the counselors. He was speaking during a seminar attended by more than 50 married couples and ENInews on 2 October. The Philippine Council for Evangelical Christians, which groups evangelical churches and fellowships nationwide, supported the seminar.

### **Ban on school Christmas carols upheld in US district**

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). "Silent Night" and other religious songs will remain off the programme at holiday concerts in one New Jersey school district - and possibly others across the country - after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of a school ban on religious holiday music. By deciding on 4 October not to hear the case, the high court ended a six-year legal battle that started when parent Michael Stratechuk sued the School District of South Orange and Maplewood over a policy that barred religious songs at public concerts, Religion News Service



reports. The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the ban last year, and Stratechuk attempted to take the case to the higher court.

8 October 2010

### **Hong Kong Christian leaders urge release of Nobel laureate Liu**

Hong Kong (ENI). Hong Kong Christian leaders have urged the government in Beijing to release 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Liu Xiaobo, who was honored for his "long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China". Representatives from the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong and the Christian Concern Hong Kong Society joined activists in petitioning the Chinese government's liaison office in Hong Kong soon after the announcement of the prize in Oslo on 8 October. They asked Beijing to release Liu, who initiated the "08 Charter" that asked for greater democracy and respect for human rights. More than 10 000 people in China and overseas had signed the charter. In 2009, one year after the release of the charter, Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison and two years' deprivation of political rights for "inciting the subversion of State power". Liu has consistently maintained that the sentence violates both China's constitution and fundamental human rights.

### **Catholic bishops to discuss Middle East Christianity**

Rome (ENI). A special meeting of Roman Catholic bishops will be held at the Vatican beginning 10 October to discuss the declining number of Christians in the Middle East. Monsignor Nikola Eterovic, general secretary of the bishops' synod, told journalists on 8 October that the meeting will take place from 10 to 24 October, on the theme "The Catholic Church in the Middle East: Communion and Witness". A total of 185 Roman Catholic clerics will participate, most of them coming from the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Syria, Turkey, the Palestinian Territories and Yemen. While 356 million people live in the region, Eterovic said only 5.7 million, or 1.6 percent, are Catholic, and 20 million, or 5.6 percent, are Christian. Pope Benedict XVI will open the synod, to which he has also invited 12 "fraternal delegates" from the Oriental and Eastern Churches of the Middle East, known as Orthodox churches.

### **Malawi multi-faith group condemns Bible tearing in Muslim area**

Blantyre (ENI). Faith groups in the southern African nation of Malawi have condemned the tearing up of Bibles by people at Mangochi, a predominantly Muslim district in the country's southern

region. Gideon International, a Christian organization that distributes free Bibles in conjunction with the Bible Society of Malawi, early in October handed out the Christian holy book to students in the district, angering parents who thought the two organizations were planning to convert their children. "The Holy Bible was being given to children at a school and all the children seemed to have been given [the Bible], which infuriated some Muslim parents who tore the holy books," the acting chairperson of the Public Affairs Committee, a multi-faith pressure group, the Rev. MacDonald Kadawati told the Nation newspaper on 7 October. "Others from the same faith quickly mobilized each other and collected the Bibles and returned them to Gideon International," said Kadawati.

### **Europe's Catholic bishops establish Christian rights watchdog**

Warsaw (ENI). Europe's Roman Catholic bishops have set up an organization to defend the rights of Christians as well as monitoring prejudice and injustice across the continent. "Our first task will be to provide people around Europe with objective and reliable data about the anti-Christian discrimination which is taking place, as well as to alert Catholic bishops' conferences and other religious institutions," Thierry Bonaventura, media officer of the Council of Catholic Bishops of Europe, told ENInews. "But we also want to encourage local church groups to be involved and take concrete steps against intolerance, such as by presenting reports to the United Nations and the Council of Europe, and encouraging them to take appropriate measures." Bonaventura was speaking after the announcement of the formation of the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination, headed in Vienna by Bishop Andras Veres of Hungary, and Austrian lay director, Gudrun Kugler, during a meeting of the bishops in Zagreb.

11 October 2010

### **Muslims, Christians can tackle conflicts together, says WCC head**

Geneva (ENI). Muslim and Christian leaders need to set up permanent structures of relating to each other to head off potential conflicts in a world where religion is often seen as having a divisive role, the head of the World Council of Churches has said. "The role of religion in emerging geo-political contexts is rapidly changing," WCC general secretary the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, said in a speech to a meeting in Albania of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. "While religion often plays a commendable role as a force for promoting justice, peace and reconciliation, in the 21st century its role has been much more divisive," said Tveit, a Norwegian theologian who took up his WCC post in January.

### **Pope denounces violence in God's name at meeting on Middle East**

Vatican (ENI). Pope Benedict XVI has denounced violence committed in God's name, when he addressed around 250 people attending a special meeting of bishops from the Muslim-majority Middle East. In off-the-cuff remarks, the Pope referred to, "The power of the terrorist ideology that carries out violence in the name of God, but this is not God. These are false divinities that must be unmasked, because they are not God." At the 10 October Sunday service Benedict spoke about the future of Christians in the Middle East who made up 20 percent of the population a century ago, but today account for less than 6 percent, as war and poor economic conditions have triggered their departure. Jewish and Muslim representatives are also attending the 10-24 October gathering, called a synod.

### **Mother Teresa's tomb is Anglican leader's first Indian stop**

Bangalore, India (ENI). The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has begun a 16-day visit to India by paying tribute to Mother Teresa at her tomb in Kolkata, the north eastern city once known as Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal state. "The Archbishop of Canterbury had expressed a desire to visit Mother Teresa's tomb first when the trip was planned," Ashoke Biswas, the Church of North India bishop of Kolkata told ENInews on 11 October. After praying on 9 October at the tomb of Mother Teresa, Williams visited the room of the Roman Catholic nun who would become a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and the exhibition on her life at the Mother House of her Missionaries of Charity.

### **Report on the UN-NGO Briefings - Dated October 28,2010**

[http://www.lightmillennium.org/undpi/diversity\\_world\\_cultures.html](http://www.lightmillennium.org/undpi/diversity_world_cultures.html)

**Briefing presented by:** [Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organizations](#)

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Promoting Diversity of World Cultures and the Links that United Them  
(*In Observance of 2010 International Year of Rapprochement of Cultures*)  
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**Report and photos by:** Sirin CENGIZALP, Lightmillennium.Org  
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27 October 2010

### **No tolerance for caste discrimination, says India church gathering**

Bangalore (ENI). Churches in India need to show zero tolerance concerning caste-based discrimination within their ranks, a gathering of Christian leaders in New Delhi has said.

"Casteism is a sin and caste-based discrimination is a crime," said a statement issued from the conference in New Delhi. "Since discrimination is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, churches will have to be zero tolerance zones with regard to the practice of caste discrimination." Though the caste system has been officially abolished in India, discrimination against Dalits - low castes treated as "untouchables" - persists. They often have to survive by scavenging and doing menial jobs, while living segregated from higher castes in rural areas.

### **Ukraine minority churches back rights for Greek Catholics**

Warsaw (ENI). Minority churches in Ukraine have urged authorities in the capital Odessa to allow the construction of a church for Greek Catholics, after an Orthodox archbishop who sits on the local council intervened to block the project. "Our joint address to you was provoked by the atmosphere of unhealthy aggression artificially created in this city by certain circles," the church leaders said in a letter to the city mayor and head of regional administration in Odessa.

### **Bishop of ancient Christian church warns on Protestant dialogue**

Hong Kong (ENI). The Assyrian bishop in the United States says his ancient church that was one of the first in China will not have any official dialogue with Protestant churches that support the blessing of homosexual partners or the ordination of women. Bishop Mar Awa Royel, the president of an inter-church relations commission of the Assyrian Church of the East, told a Hong Kong audience earlier in October that the church is committed to ecumenical dialogue but that it will not support dialogue with churches that it believes deviate from the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Assyrian Church was once referred to as the Nestorian Church, and had earlier been regarded as heretical and faced persecution.

### October 7, 2010 – St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, New Rochelle, NY



Attendees: Archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim, Archbishop Abune Zekarias, Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian, Archbishop Mor Titus Yeldho, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Fr. John Meno, Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Fr. Anthony DeLuca, Fr. Kess Mahitama Selassie, Fr. Tateos Abdalian, Fr. Ambe Tsion, Fr. David Bebawy, Fr. John Rizkalla, Fr. Joseph Chamoun.

### **COMMUNITY ALERT: Turbans to Always be Searched at Nation's Airports** **Sikh Organizations Coordinating Joint Action**

**WASHINGTON, DC:** Early last month, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officials told representatives of UNITED SIKHS, the Sikh Coalition, and the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) that Sikhs should now expect turbans to always be searched at American airports.

While procedures which allow Sikhs to pat down their own turbans and have their hands swabbed by a TSA screener shall remain in place, what has changed is that Sikhs must go through an additional hand wand scan of the turban as an extra screening procedure 100% of the time. This is true for Sikh travelers who voluntarily choose to be screened by going through the new [Advanced Imaging Technology \(AIT\)](#) machines. The AIT machines (otherwise known as whole body imaging machines) are being placed in airports nationwide over the coming years.

UNITED SIKHS, Sikh Coalition, and SALDEF oppose this policy and question its necessity. Targeting turbans for additional scrutiny sends a message to other passengers that Sikhs and their articles of faith are to be viewed with suspicion by fellow travelers. The policy is a serious infringement on our civil rights and liberties.

### **What to Expect at the Airport**

Air travel checkpoints in the United States employ different screening technologies?

While most checkpoints only have metal detectors, many airports are now installing AIT machines. The AIT machines are new whole body imaging devices that will be installed in every airport in the United States over the coming years.

According to the TSA, regardless of whether a Sikh clears the metal detector or the new AIT machines, **they will still have to go through an additional procedure in which their turban will be checked for non-metallic items.** During this second screening procedure, a Sikh will have a choice of either:

1. a pat-down of their turban by a TSA screener;
2. patting down their own turban and having their hand swabbed for traces of chemical explosives; or
3. requesting a private screening (in a room outside of public view) of their turban.

In addition, after this extra screening of the turban, a third screening procedure (under AIT screening policies) will subject Sikhs to a metal detecting wand that will be scanned over the turban.

Please remember, that under current procedures, a Sikh can always ask that they pat down their own turban rather than have a screener pat it down.

If a Sikh traveler opts out of the AIT screening, **they will immediately be subjected to a full body (rigorous) pat-down by a TSA official plus a hand wand screening.** If you are asked to undergo a full-body pat down, you have the right to ask for this screening to occur in a private room or other setting away from the rest of the traveling public.

## The TSA's Rationale

The TSA says that because a turban is "non form-fitting," it is more capable of concealing dangerous items than other forms of clothing. The TSA also says that its new AIT machines cannot see through the folds of a turban to determine if it is concealing a dangerous item.

Our organizations vigorously question these rationales. First, the Department of Homeland Security's own website states that the AIT machines are capable of screening threat items "concealed under layers of clothing." Second, on Christmas Day 2009, a person was able to smuggle explosives onto a plane headed to the United States in his undergarments. If explosives can be concealed in undergarments, all garments should be targeted for extra scrutiny, not just turbans.

## Going Forward

Each one of our organizations will continue to oppose this unjust policy. We will call upon Sikhs in the coming weeks to communicate directly with the TSA and their members of Congress.

Each one of our organizations are also aware that the Sikh American community is as invested in

the national security of the United States as any other community.

Nevertheless, the TSA cannot target turbans for extra scrutiny without cause. We will continue to vigorously question the necessity of this policy given the weak rationales presented for it.

### **Coordination Amongst Sikh Organizations**

Our three organizations would like the community and government to know that it is our intention to work together to combat unlawful profiling of Sikhs by the TSA. We will jointly strategize and communicate with both the government and the Sikh community about our work on this issue.

4 November 2010

### **Christian and Muslims want to mobilize joint crisis group**

Geneva (ENInews). Global Christian and Muslim leaders meeting in Switzerland have jointly called for the formation of a group that can be mobilized whenever a crisis threatens to arise in which Christians and Muslims find themselves in conflict. In a closing statement from their 1-4 November meeting at Geneva's Ecumenical Center, the leaders of the two faiths said, "Religion is often invoked in conflict creation, even when other factors, such as unfair resource allocation, oppression, occupation and injustice, are the real roots of conflict." The meeting at the Geneva center, which houses the World Council of Churches and other Christian organizations, was convened by the WCC, the Libyan-based World Islamic Call Society, the Jordanian-based Royal Aal al Bayt Institute and the Consortium of "A Common Word", a group that includes Muslim scholars from around the world.

### **German churches to bridge former iron curtain in merger**

Trier, Germany (ENInews). Three regional Protestant churches in northern Germany have cleared a key hurdle to forming one united church that will stretch from the Danish border to Poland. A majority of 266 delegates from all three churches voted overwhelmingly on Reformation day, 31 October, in favor of a draft constitution and a church law that provides for the merger. The church will be officially called the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Northern Germany or in its shortened form the Nordkirche, the Northern church.

### **UN ENVIRONMENT CHIEF CALLS ON G20 TO BUILD ON PREVIOUS PLEDGES OF GREEN GROWTH**

New York, Nov 9 2010

As world leaders gather in the Republic of Korea for the latest meeting of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies, the head of the United Nations environmental agency is calling on them to build on their previous pledge to move towards a green and more sustainable recovery from the financial crisis with more concrete action.

“A year ago in London, G20 leaders articulated this vision as building an ‘inclusive, sustainable and green recovery,’” wrote the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), Achim Steiner, in an opinion piece published today in the Korean JoongAng Daily newspaper.

“In Seoul, this vision needs to be evolved toward not only a green recovery, but to inclusive, sustainable green growth underpinned by clean technologies and the economic importance of maintaining nature's multi-trillion dollar services.”

## Features

### **More Iraqi Christians Consider Leaving Iraq After Attack on Baghdad Cathedral**



Christians carry coffins of their slain relatives during a funeral service at a church in Baghdad on November 2 for victims of the attack at the Assyrian Catholic Church of Our Lady of Salvation on the evening of October 31.

November 04, 2010

By Maysoon Abo al-Hab, Ron Synovitz

BAGHDAD -- Vian Jabburi, a 22-year-old Roman Catholic, was celebrating Mass in Baghdad with her father on October 31 when Al-Qaeda militants stormed the church.

Shot through her shoulder during the ensuing siege, Jabburi survived. Her father was also shot



and slowly bled to death, while she lay helpless at his side in a pool of her own blood.

"Nothing resembles this experience. Nothing," Jabburi tells RFE/RL as she breaks down in tears at her father's funeral. "The situation was very, very difficult. I still don't know whether it was reality or just a nightmare. I do not know. I really don't know.

"We were bleeding for four or five hours without receiving any help," she adds. "I will leave it to God. He is the only one who can take our revenge."

Jabburi is among thousands of Iraqi Christians who suffered through years of sectarian violence in Iraq but is now considering whether to stay any longer.



A funeral Mass for the victims of the attack was held at Baghdad's Mar Yusuf Church. Raad Ammanuel, head of the Office of Christian Endowment in Baghdad, says the attack has caused many Iraqi Christians to rethink whether they have a long-term future in Iraq.

"Those who have an injured member of their family or lost a loved one, they are talking about leaving the country," Ammanuel says. "We do not want this to happen and we do not encourage it. But still, we can not stop people from thinking this way. I have been discussing this with them. But what can I say and how can I reply when they ask me if I am going to bring back the ones they have lost?"

### **'This Is Our Country'**

But other Iraqi Christians are adamant in their determination to stay. Among them is the family of Hanan Fadhil, a math teacher in the Karrada district whose cousin was killed in the October 31 assault.

"They want to destroy the country and create divisions and conflicts," Fadhil says. "We've been living here all our lives and we are not going to leave Iraq. We will stay. This is our country. I was born in 1956 and I'm now 54 years old. I've been here since then. How can I leave this country?"

Baghdad's heavily fortified Karrada district has been an island of tolerance in Baghdad, where Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims have continued to live alongside Christians in relative harmony.

Luis al-Shabi, a Chaldean priest at the Mars Polis Church there, says most residents blame criminals and extremist fanatics for violence that has targeted Iraqis of all faiths.

"When a country is not stable, such things can happen. It happened many times in mosques and it happened also in [Christian] churches many times," Shabi says. "One of them is this recent

disaster.

"But I have to say that Muslims do not do such things," he continues. "Those who commit such acts are not believers of Islam nor Christianity and not even in God. When they have the chance, they come to kill and to massacre people regardless of whether the victims are Muslims or Christians."

## Targets Of Al-Qaeda

Indeed, Iraqi Christians have faced the same pattern of beheadings, kidnappings, rapes, and extortion that plagued Iraq's Shi'ite and Sunni communities during the years of chaos after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and before the surge operations of 2007 brought relative stability.



An Iraqi Christian woman (right) holds a picture of her son who was killed in the attack. That violence caused many Muslims to leave their homes, along with the hundreds of thousands from Iraq's Christian minority who have fled the country.

During the rule of Saddam Hussein, there were an estimated 1.4 million Christians living in Iraq -- many of them Chaldean-Assyrians and Armenians, but also a smaller number of Roman Catholics.

Exact figures are impossible to confirm, but some estimates say two-thirds of Iraq's Christians have left the country since 2003 -- leaving fewer than 450,000 Iraqi Christians there today.

Al-Qaeda militants want the exodus to continue. On November 3 they threatened to carry out more attacks against Iraqi Christians.

The Islamic State of Iraq, which claimed responsibility for the Baghdad cathedral assault, linked its warning to allegations that Egypt's Coptic Church is holding women captive if they convert to Islam.

The group -- an umbrella organization that includes Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other allied Sunni insurgent factions -- is also demanding the release of Al-Qaeda prisoners held in Iraq.

## Inflaming Sectarian Strife

Abu Gaith, a 28-year-old Sunni Muslim from the Karrada neighborhood, thinks Al-Qaeda has a deeper motive for targeting Christian churches.

"Everything is clear. The goal is to create problems and aggravate the already tense situation,"

he says. "The attackers are trying to create new opportunities and light a fire near a barrel of oil. They want the situation to go back to how it was two or three years ago, when there were sectarian conflicts between Sunnis, Shi'a or battles between Muslims and Christians".



Are Iraqi security forces able to protect Christians, or any other Iraqis, from violence? Western security analysts have come to the same conclusion, saying a weakened Al-Qaeda in Iraq is now trying to rebuild its reputation through high-profile terrorist attacks.

Jane's Security and Military Intelligence Consulting -- part of the British-based Jane's Information Group -- says Al-Qaeda in Iraq is trying to reignite large-scale and prolonged sectarian violence through focused attacks, particularly in Baghdad. It also warns that a wave of attacks across the country in late August suggests the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities has given the terrorist organization the space it needs to rebuild.

The analysis from Jane's concludes that the inability of Iraqi politicians to agree upon a new governing coalition has been detrimental to the abilities of Iraqi forces to maintain security.

Residents of the Karrada district agree. "The only reason for what happened, not only [at the cathedral] but for what is happening every day, is the incompetence of [Iraqi] security forces, especially those deployed in the Karrada district," says Ahmad Jassim, a 40-year-old Shi'ite Muslim who owns a minimarket close to the cathedral in Karrada.

"We know there is a checkpoint or a police car in front of every church," he continues. "Now, how did the gunmen enter the church? Were there clashes before? We did not hear about clashes, which means [the gunmen] entered very easily. Again, how did this happen, especially in Karrada, which is almost like a military camp now?"

That sentiment reflects the concerns of many Baghdad residents -- whether Shi'ite, Sunni, or Christian -- who say they have little confidence in the protection provided by Iraqi security forces as the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq continues.

## UN MARKS WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY WITH CALL FOR GREATER USE OF REASON AND DIALOGUE

New York, Nov 18 2010 12:10PM

The United Nations marked <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/human-rights/philosophy/philosophy-day-at-unesco/philosophy-day-2010/> World Philosophy Day today with a call for greater efforts to guard against the politics of polarization and the rejection of stereotypes, ignorance and hatred.

“Let us instead fortify our societies through reason and dialogue – the lifeblood of philosophical debate,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a video message for an event marking the Day at the Paris headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). “And let us recognize the critical role that the age-old tradition of philosophy can play in our modern, interconnected world.”

World Philosophy Day is celebrated every third Thursday of November since 2002, with the aim of making philosophical reflection accessible to all – professors and students, scholars and the general public – thereby enlarging the opportunities and spaces for the stimulation of critical thinking and debate.

“Philosophy deals routinely in universals – in broadly shared questions about human existence, beliefs and behavior. That gives it uncommon power to help build bridges between people, and to open channels of communication among cultures,” Mr. Ban said.

“So let us use this essential expression of the human mind to change the minds of men and women – for that is where, as UNESCO’s own Charter so memorably states, true peace begins.”

Celebrations to mark the Day were organized by academics in more than 80 countries, in all regions of the world. A special event was held at UNESCO Headquarters, interweaving philosophy, cultural diversity and the rapprochement of cultures – with the latter tying in to the 2010 celebration of the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

Since its creation, UNESCO has used philosophy to implement the ideals that inspired its Constitution; these ideals stem from philosophical tradition.

UNESCO’s Director-General, Irina Bokova, inaugurated the Paris event, which included an international forum on the topic “Philosophy, Cultural Diversity and Rapprochement of Cultures,” with the participation of internationally-renowned philosophers and eminent figures, in addition to a series of symposia and round-table discussions.

“Philosophy actually teaches diversity lessons through its numerous schools of thought in all eras and on all continents,” Ms. Bokova said in her [message for the Day](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001899/189970e.pdf). “In view of the intricacies of current issues, we should tap into that wealth in order to build our capacity to analyze reality.”

She also called for intensified efforts to provide everyone with quality education and an enabling environment in which every man and woman can express his or her ideas and enrich public debate in furtherance of justice and peace.

## THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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### MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**25 November 2010**

As we observe the 2010 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, let us acknowledge the widespread and growing efforts to address this important issue. No longer are women's organizations alone. From Latin America to the United States, from Asia to Africa, men and boys, young and old, musicians, celebrities and sports personalities, the media, public and private organizations, and ordinary citizens are doing more to protect women and girls and promote their empowerment and rights.

The social mobilization platform "Say NO-UNiTE" has recorded almost 1 million activities implemented by civil society and individuals worldwide. In August this year at the fifth World Youth Conference in Mexico, young activists from around the world were clear in their message: "It's time to end violence against women and girls!" Member States, too, are engaged. As of November 2010, my database on the extent, nature and consequences of violence against women, which also logs policies and programmers for combating the pandemic, has registered more than 100 reports from governments.

This year's observance highlights the role the business community can play – from developing projects to providing direct financial support to organizations working to end violence and embracing the principles of corporate social responsibility. The "Women's Empowerment Principles", an initiative of the UN Global Compact and UNIFEM, recognize the costs to business of violence against women and are now supported by more 120 leading companies. A growing number of media outlets are bringing light to bear on so-called "honor-killings", trafficking of girls and sexual violence in conflict, and are raising awareness about the benefits to society of empowering women. Yet much more needs to be done. In homes, schools and the office, in refugee camps and conflict situations, the corporate sector can help us to prevent the many forms of violence that women and girls continue to face.

My UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, and the Network of Men Leaders I launched last year, have generated welcome momentum and engagement. The word is spreading: violence against women and girls has no place in any society, and impunity for perpetrators must no longer be tolerated. On this International Day, I urge all – Governments, civil society, the corporate sector, individuals – to take responsibility for eradicating violence against women and girls.

22 November 2010

### **Pakistani minister denies release of Christian blasphemy accused**

Thrissur, India (ENInews). There is confusion about the fate of a Christian woman sentenced to

death under Pakistan's draconian blasphemy law after a minister in the country's government denied reports that President Asif Ali Zardari has ordered her release. "This is not true," Shahbaz Bhatti, the federal minister for minorities, told ENInews on 22 November from his office in Islamabad regarding the release of Aasia Bibi, who was sentenced to death on 9 November for blasphemy. The verdict had led to widespread international criticism ranging from human rights groups to the churches, with Pope Benedict XVI calling for her release.

### **Europeans feature in Pope's new list of cardinals**

Rome (ENInews). In his selection of 24 new cardinals, Pope Benedict XVI has ensured that half of the college that elects the pontiff will be Europeans, although the number of Roman Catholics is growing in Africa and Asia, whilst declining in Europe. Of the cardinals created on 20 November by the Pope, 15 are Europeans, of whom 10 are Italians, while nine come from the Americas, Africa and Asia. One of the newly created cardinals is Kurt Koch, 60, who was bishop of Basel in Switzerland until June, when he was named by Benedict as the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. There are now 203 cardinals, but only 121 of them are eligible to elect a pope, after Pope Paul VI decided that only cardinals under the age of 80 have the right to take part in the conclave.

### **Terrorists attack Christians too!!! It is worth knowing it and seeing it....**

<http://caritasveritas.blogspot.com/2010/11/baghdad-massacre-more-reports-from-iraq.html>

**Rivka Bertisch Meir, Ph.D., MPH., LMHC**

<http://www.doctorrivka.com/>

23 November 2010

### **UNAIDS says Pope's condom move makes HIV cooperation easier**

Geneva/Rome (ENInews). The head of UNAIDS, Michel Sidib, says a statement by Pope Benedict XVI that the use of condoms is justified when intended to reduce "the risk of HIV infection" will make it easier for international organizations to cooperate with faith-based organizations in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Sidib is the executive director of UNAIDS, the United Nations programme on HIV and AIDS. He was answering a question about the Pope's statement during a 23 November media conference in Geneva. "The announcement will make cooperation easier with faith-based organizations, in the fight against HIV and AIDS," said the

head of UNAIDS. "This is an important step forward." The Roman Catholic Church rejects condoms as a means of birth control and had for many years said they are not a means of preventing AIDS.

### **Police raid Sudan churches' offices during referendum build-up**

Nairobi (ENInews). The head of the Sudan Council of Churches has been calling for close scrutiny of out-of-country referendum registration processes in Kenya, Uganda and Egypt, while also reporting that police recently stormed the council offices breaking down doors, and conducted a search. The Rev. Ramadan Chan Liol, the general secretary of the council, said police forced their way into the council's offices in Amarat Khartoum on 14 November, a Sunday, as 200 men who arrived in seven trucks cordoned off the building. The churches' leader said one police officer had said the building was suspected of being a hideaway for weapons. The raid came as Africa's biggest country is preparing for a plebiscite on 9 January to determine if the north and south will split, Chan noted.

### **German Protestant head says a European Islam needed for dialogue**

Trier, Germany (ENInews). A European form of Islam needs to develop before a meaningful interfaith dialogue can take place on the continent, the new leader of Germany's 24 million Protestants has said. "We are only at the beginning of a serious inter-religious discussion on a theologically high level and that is because there are problems with finding counterparts," the Rev. Nikolaus Schneider told ENInews in an interview in Trier. "The imams who come from Turkey to Germany can hardly speak German and that means that we need to train imams in Germany at our universities," said Schneider, who was elected the new chairperson of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) on 9 November during a meeting of its governing synod in Hanover. Schneider said that one of his priorities in his new post is to set up as soon as possible a meeting with representatives of Islam in Germany, which has about four million Muslims.

### **Pope says he looks forward to meeting with Russian Patriarch**

Rome (ENInews). Pope Benedict XVI has in comments made in a newly published book says he hopes for a meeting "in the not too distant future" with Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church. The book, "Light of the world", was presented on 23 November to international media at the Vatican. It is the text of an extended interview with the pontiff conducted in July by German journalist Peter Seewald. Benedict's predecessor, Pope John Paul II, spoke repeatedly about his dream of visiting Russia, but met resistance from the Moscow Patriarchate, which had accused the Vatican of aggressively seeking converts among Russian Orthodox faithful.

## **WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN CYPRUS AND ITALY GRANTED SPECIAL PROTECTION STATUS BY UN**

New York, Nov 26 2010

A United Nations committee tasked with safeguarding the world's valued cultural heritage that might be threatened in times of armed conflict has granted enhanced protection status to three sites in Cyprus and another one in Italy, it was announced today.

The sites – Choirokoitia, Paphos and the Painted Churches of the Troodos region in Cyprus, as well as the Castel del Monte in Italy – were declared as being in need of enhanced protection by the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) during a meeting in Paris this week.

“We do not ever want a repeat of the destruction of cultural sites such as the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or attacks like those against the old city of Dubrovnik in Croatia during the Balkans conflict,” said Committee Chairman Nout van Woudenberg.

“Enhanced protection status reinforces the legal measures in place to prevent such terrible losses to the world's cultural heritage,” he added after the status was granted, the first such decision by the Committee.

The “enhanced protection” status is one of the features of the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

The granting of such protection by the Committee to sites in countries that are party to the Second Protocol can be made under three conditions – that the site be of the greatest importance to humanity; that it be protected by adequate domestic legal and administrative measures recognizing its exceptional cultural and historic value and ensuring the highest level of protection; and that it not be used for military purposes or to shield military sites.

The protection means that States cannot fall back on the argument of “imperative military necessity” for using or targeting cultural sites in times of conflict. It also obligates States to make intentional attacks against identified sites a criminal offence or to penalize use of such sites or their immediate surroundings in support of military action.

Nov 26 2010

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Please also go to our website: <http://IgnatiusU.com> in order to see our programs in theology, philosophy, psychology and diplomacy (at the United Nations). In addition,



there are programs leading to the Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor, CASAC and Licensed Psychoanalyst, LP.