

# Holy Wisdom

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Peace: Showing that Others Matter!

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. In fulfilling the UN Mission of SOCA, both Orthodoxy and Ecumenism are involved. SOCA is an NGO associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. 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.

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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!

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## Our Work at the United Nations

### News from the NGO DPI Executive Committee

#### REMEMBERING CATHERINE WHITE VICE-CHAIR, NGO/DPI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Last June, after a short illness, the very beloved Vice-Chair of the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, Catherine White, passed away. She was remembered at a moving memorial at the United Nations Chapel, where family and friends from all phases of her remarkable and productive life gave tributes. She was particularly honored by her many United Nations friends and colleagues.

#### **Joan Levy**

NGO Reporter Editorial Board and Friend

Read More [Here](#)

#### FROM THE NGO DPI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR ANNE-MARIE CARLSON

There were a number of highlights at the UN DPI/NGO 65<sup>th</sup>

Conference — *2015 and Beyond: Our Action Agenda* --held 27-29 August 2014 at United Nations Headquarters. Here are some that I feel were most noteworthy --

- Having approximately 2500 NGOs - the largest attendance ever -- representing about 100 NGO organizations around the world coming together at the UN after an absence of 7 years;
- Being part of the many enlightening sessions and excellent workshops offered providing new thoughts, directions and opportunities;
- Hearing the excited buzz coming from the many corners of UN HQ as NGOs networked with others and seeing the many smiles as they moved together from place to place;
- Uniting under the banner of the conference declaration on ways to move forward.



***Anne-Marie Carlson***

#### **Anne-Marie Carlson**

Chair, NGO DPI Executive Committee

Representing The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International

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#### **SPEECH BY SAMANTHA POWER, US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN**

Her Excellency Ambassador Samantha Power, Permanent Representative of United States of America to the United Nations, delivered the keynote speech at this morning's opening ceremony. Her address was punctuated with enthusiastic applause as NGO representatives listened from the Trusteeship Council Chamber and two overflow rooms.

#### **Emma Hansen**

Pax Christi International Intern / University of Toronto Student

Read More [Here](#)

**For Ambassador Power's verbatim address, go [here](#)**

#### DPI/NGO CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Organized by NGOs for NGOs, led by panelists with expertise in the relevant area, workshops offer vital opportunities to share experiences, good practices and common challenges; draw attention to little-known or emerging issues, and foster collaboration and partnership among NGOs.

By **Elisabeth Shuman**

Association for Childhood Education International

Co-Chair, DPI/NGO Conference Workshop Subcommittee, with Exequiel Lira, Rotary International de Santiago (Chile) and Janet Stovin, World Union for Progressive Judaism

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#### Energy and Climate Action Workshop

The Public-Private Alliance Foundation (which has recognized status with DPI and ECOSOC) organized a well-attended workshop on Energy and Climate Action, held on 29 August as part of the 65<sup>th</sup> UN DPI/NGO Annual Conference.

**Ben J. Margolin**, Intern, Public-Private Alliance Foundation and

**Jeanne Betsock Stillman**, President, UNA-Southern

New York State Division

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**The full newsletter can be found here: <http://ngodpiexecom.org/2014/11/november-2014-ngo-reporter/>**

Dr. Anthony DeLuca listening to speech given by Kuwait on Agenda Item No. 107 "Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism" in the Sixth Committee (Legal) during 69th Session of the General Assembly ; October 9, 2014



### An Update on the Ebola Outbreak

9 October 2014

“We must continue to accelerate our response. We must contain this epidemic.” - H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the sixty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly

Over the past months, the ebola virus has turned the world's attention to west Africa, especially the nations of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. The vicious disease has claimed over 4,000 lives in its recent outbreak, with some deaths occurring outside of the continent, creating global unrest. A travel advisory has been issued to those going to and from the region, and there have been numerous hospitalizations for ebola-like symptoms. The United Nations has asked for a plethora of extra funding to halt its spread and rid the world of the disease. A five-pronged response initiative has been installed by the UN, in tandem with other members of the international community. The five goals of the outbreak response are:

1. Stop the outbreak.
2. Treat the infected.
3. Ensure essential services.
4. Preserve stability.
5. Prevent further outbreaks.

At the UN, the General Assembly has been brainstorming on how to combat the disease. It has teamed up with national governments in providing medical aid and research. Dr. David Nabarro is pleased with the

current commitments of governments of UN member states, who are vowing to keep tabs on the outbreak and do everything to stop its spread. He is extremely impressed with the contributions of the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who have created a training center in ebola education and response. This training center, which was created after four citizens were diagnosed in DR Congo, will be at the disposal of other members of the international community to combat the disease.

With constant effort from national governments and the United Nations, ebola will be a thing of the past.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

## An Update on Syria

16 October 2014

As ISIS moves across Syria, more and more natives are fleeing their homes. The widespread violence has pushed many Syrians to Iraq, among other nations. ISIS employs a "take no prisoners" approach as they overtake villages, killing all who are not willing to join them, making murder an honorable task. It has turned to social media to recruit new members worldwide, potentially threatening all in opposition.

To avoid the nearly inevitable violence, convoys of Syrians head towards the border as quickly as possible. Busloads of refugees from the Syrian town of Kobane have been heading to the Iraqi camp of Galiwan, doubling its population, as nearly 5,000 have come in over the past week. These refugees are mostly children, and families left Kobane in a hurry, abandoning most of their possessions. Some families had to make the trek, which lasted three days, by foot. At first, the refugees wished to be granted asylum in Turkey, where they were turned away. If ISIS is not stopped soon, an estimated 50,000 will head to the camp.

Unfortunately, it appears this is the beginning of a massive flow of Syrians, as it seems the conflict will not be resolved soon. UNICEF and other organizations are working to build new shelters; providing food, water, and education to refugees. These efforts are necessary, but are nothing compared to thwarting ISIS and allowing citizens to peacefully return to their homes.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

## 2014 UN Day Concert

In observance of United Nations Day, a special concert entitled "UN Day Concert 2014: Lang Lang & Friends" took place on Friday, October 24, 2014 from 7-9 pm in the newly renovated General Assembly Hall. The concert was organized by the Department of Public Information in cooperation with the Lang Lang International Music Foundation (LLIMF) and featured world-renowned pianist and United Nations Messenger of Peace, Lang Lang. Performing with Lang Lang was an international youth orchestra representing five continents, assembled especially for the occasion, conducted by Manuel Lopez-Gomez. The conductor and many of the youth musicians hail from the renowned El Sistema programme, which provides music education to children from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Opening remarks were delivered by Secretary General H. E. Ban Ki-moon and President of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, H. E. Samuel Kahamba Kutesa. Actor Alec Baldwin was Master of Ceremonies for the concert. Maher Nasser, Acting Head of the United Nations Department of Public Information, introduced all three men. International recording artist Sting was a special guest of Lang Lang and sang his hit song, "How Fragile We Are." The evening served as an occasion to highlight, celebrate and reflect on the work of the United Nations and its family of agencies through the universal language of music. Reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli.

## Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms:

Veteran British diplomat Gerard Russell, fluent in Arabic and Dari takes us to Syria and the middle east, writing movingly in his new book *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms: Journeys Into the Disappearing Religions of the Middle East*, about the Islamic world that is home to some of the world's oldest religious traditions. In a city like Damascus, Syria, "Christian" can mean Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Maronite, Catholic or Armenian. These groups are part of the very fabric of middle eastern society. The book's subtitle calls these religions "disappearing," but a decade from now that may no longer be accurate. Any attempt to grapple with these communities means meeting them where they are today: in exile, many in the United States. Reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli

## United Nations Day: A Message from Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

24 October 2014

Today marks the annual United Nations Day at UN Headquarters in New York. In the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary events, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon discussed the necessity for the organization in today's world. He stated:

The United Nations is needed more than ever at this time of multiple crises. Poverty, disease, terrorism, discrimination and climate change are exacting a heavy toll. Millions of people continue to suffer deplorable exploitation through bonded labour, human trafficking, sexual slavery or unsafe conditions in factories, fields and mines. The global economy remains an uneven playing field.

The founding of the United Nations was a solemn pledge to the world's people to end such assaults on human dignity, and lead the way to a better future. There have been painful setbacks, and there is much work ahead to realize the Charter's vision. But we can take heart from our achievements.

The UN Millennium Development Goals have inspired the most successful anti-poverty campaign ever. United Nations treaties addressing inequality, torture and racism have protected people, while other agreements have safeguarded the environment. UN peacekeepers have separated hostile forces, our mediators have settled disputes and our humanitarian workers have delivered life-saving aid.

At this critical moment, let us reaffirm our commitment to empowering the marginalized and vulnerable. On United Nations Day, I call on Governments and individuals to work in common cause for the common good.

At today's ceremony, world-renowned concert pianist Lang Lang was on hand to perform, along with an international youth orchestra from the empowerment program El Sistema. The event showed the importance and promise of today's youth, but the brief nature showed the significance of the issues threatening our planet, and the vitality of solving those issues.

## Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

02 November 2014

Earlier today, the world received quite disturbing news from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A United Nations report revealed the detrimental effects of human intervention with the environment. Without improved regulation, the report stated; irreversible damage to the environment (and ultimately mankind) is imminent.

The release, called the Synthesis Report has been dubbed the "most comprehensive" study on climate change. Regardless, its findings are highly undesirable as the rises in water temperature, sea level, and

carbon dioxide threaten the planet. These three elements can cause a complete shift in climate, and unstable weather patterns that would ravish underprepared regions.

Results of ecological decisions are not seen immediately. Over the past few centuries, the world has seen much technological advancement, but the advancement has come at a cost paid by the environment. If the world immediately became carbon-neutral, the effects would not be seen for generations to come. Water levels and temperatures would remain high and the excess carbon dioxide would take some time to dissipate. Without immediate action, climate change will be irreversible.

Today, renewable and sustainable energies are being developed to create a better future. At the United Nations, legislation is being drafted up for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, in which stopping climate change will be a top priority. Already, the European Union has vowed to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by the year 2030, and other regions need to follow suit. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon mentioned, our current efforts (or lack thereof) to stop climate change are not nearly enough if the human race wants to remain on planet Earth as we know it.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

## Displaced by ISIS and ISIL, Refugees in Syria and Iraq Could Face a Tough Winter

11 November 2014

Earlier today, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), released some devastating news. With the upcoming winter approaching, UNHCR is facing a budget shortfall of \$58.4 million. This winter is projected to be both cold and long, creating an issue for refugees.

Already, \$154 million has been invested in assisting the displaced, but the \$58.4 million will have to be made up in some way, shape, or form. UN officials are currently having difficulty prioritizing which groups would benefit most from the aid. Higher elevation of camps, number of women and children, and health issues, among other factors would contribute to who would receive sufficient resources.

With the current shortfall, less than half of the displaced would receive enough aid for the winter. As the current civil war in Syria continues, more and more flee to Iraq or the northern and coldest part of Syria. The city of Aleppo and its surrounding region is currently the priority of blanket and warm clothing distribution.

In Iraq, more than half of the internally displaced head to the region of Kurdistan. Here, temperatures frequently fall below zero, and the current shelters are inadequate. With the proper funding, this region would receive sufficient aid as well as northern Syria. Hundreds of thousands of refugees in this region need the resources to keep warm this winter.

The current budget shortfall of UNCHR is extremely unfortunate and quite frankly unacceptable. The international community needs to come to the aid of the refugees, as inaction would result in numerous unnecessary deaths.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

## Religious Minorities Symposium

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, Pax Romana, the Permanent Mission of Italy, the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See, the Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Permanent Mission of the Philippines and the Knights of Malta sponsored a "Symposium on the Protection of Religious Minorities Worldwide" in the UN ECOSOC Chamber from 3-5:30 PM on Thursday, November 13, 2014. H. E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations introduced H.E.

Archbishop Bernadito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN, who spoke of “ISIS intolerance and brutal deeds against ethnic and religious minorities as well as their violation of fundamental human rights, such as the rights to change beliefs.” Mr. Joseph Klee, a former intern with the Knights of Malta, represented Pax Romana. He expressed concern over “the growing persecution of Christians and other religious minorities all over the world.” The panel discussion following the opening remarks focused on freedom of religion and protection of minorities as an inherent human right, and the role of the international community, national governments and religious leaders in preserving those rights and curbing hate speech. Rabbi Roger Ross urged against a view of “us and them based on religion.” He said “Religious leaders must lead in an effort to promote harmony among religions.” Submitted by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli.

### [Friar Francis: Traces, Words, Images - Exhibition at the United Nations, New York, November 17-28, 2014](#)

The exclusive and unique exhibition dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi opened at the United Nations on Monday, November 17, 2014. Archbishop Bernadito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations opened the exhibit in the presence of authorities and dignitaries from Italy, the United States and elsewhere. It is the first time that these rare manuscripts of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and Papal Bulls relating to Saint Francis of Assisi will be shown in the U.S. The exhibit consists of 19 artifacts from the Ancient Fund of the City Library of Assisi, part of the library of the Sacred Convent in Assisi. The heart of the exhibit is Codex 338, which includes a collection of the first writings and documents relating to St. Francis and the order of the Friars Minor, including *The Canticle of the Creatures*, considered the starting point of Italian Literature. The exhibit is divided into three sections. The first, “**Traces**,” includes documents which illustrate the historic journey of the saint. It includes several Papal Bulls, including one from the year 1220 where he saint’s name appears for the first time. “**Words**” includes the oldest biographies of the saint including one by Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. “**Images**” consists of a selection of miniature illustrated codices depicting the saint of Assisi, including a Franciscan breviary, a missal and the Bible of Giovanni da Parma. The exhibit is made possible by the support of the Office of the Prime Minister of Italy; the Embassy of Italy to the United States; the Consulate General of Italy, New York; the Umbria Regional Government, Italy; and the Abruzzo Regional Government, Italy. The exhibit moves from the United Nations to Brooklyn Borough Hall where it will be open to the public from December 2, 2014 –January 14, 2015. Submitted by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli

(Dr. Anthony DeLuca, also examined the exhibit on Thursday November 20; Dr. Antoinette DeLuca attended the evening opening reception given by the Holy See on Monday, November 17.

### [DPI/NGO Briefing 11.20.14](#)

On Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the UN Department of Public Information in partnership with the NGO Committee on Children’s Rights presented a briefing, “Have You Heard Us? Children’s Voices in Creating a World Fit for All: Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.” Welcome remarks were made by Therese Folkes Plair, Co-Chair, NGO Committee on Children’s Rights, followed by opening song from Young at Arts – Amani (Public Charter School) Choir. There were many children of all ages present to ask questions and contribute to the interactive event. Moderator Ravi Karkara, an expert advisor on children and youth working with the UN asked those assembled as the discussion progressed: “Are we listening (to the children)? Are we acting (on behalf of the children)?” The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders of Public School 333 in Manhattan engaged in a storytelling for those present. After Kaylee Beree Weinberg, a senior at Middletown High School asked: “Why should we have a voice? Because it is our right to be heard!” She urged those young people present to write their legislators to have the USA ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There was closing song from the chorus of the Carrie E. Tompkins School. Submitted by Dr. A. M. Riccitelli

## Side Event of the Third Committee of UNGA69

On Friday November 21, 2014 Dr. A.M. Riccitelli attended a high level panel discussion on “Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.” Sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations, The Royal Thai Government and the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ). Keynote addresses were made by HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand and H.E. Ms. Sophie Karmasin, Federal Minister for Families and Youth of Austria. Both leaders urged Member States to address the issue of violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. The side event aimed to present and raise awareness on the *United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, which was recently adopted at the Third Committee. The event also aimed to gather political support from UN Member States in the dissemination and further implementation of this new normative instrument to prevent and respond to violence against children. Also discussed were ways to move forward in enhanced cooperation at the national, regional and international levels.

<http://www.un.org/en/events/childrenday/>

## The US' Loss of its Moral High Ground: the UN Reaction to CIA Torture Techniques

11 December 2014

As more information regarding the Central Intelligence Agency's torture techniques is revealed, the international community is seeing the United States' merit wane. In the United States' “War on Terror,” torture has been used as an intelligence gathering technique. The CIA argues it has been effective, and led to the capture of Osama Bin Laden. Regardless, the methods used have violated basic human rights, according to the United Nations.

This has been a setback to the progress made in eliminating torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, a major goal of the UN. The United States' previous denial of their “enhanced interrogation” techniques has been seen as a slap in the face to the international community. The U.S. is seen as a world leader, whose example is followed by other nations. Around the UN, other member states have now been wondering “if the U.S. tortures, why can't we do it?” Obviously, the United States has lost its moral high ground, but according to UN Official Juan Mendez, resident expert on the subject, the country can quickly regain its reputation through transparency and accountability.

In a stern criticism of the United States' actions, Mr. Mendez stated “As a nation that has publicly affirmed its belief that respect for truth advances respect for the rule of law, and as a nation that frequently calls for transparency and accountability in other countries, the United States must rise to meet the standards it has set both for itself and for others.”

It is believed the enhanced interrogation methods have been ineffective, and have created more enemies for the U.S., lengthening the War on Terror and creating a vicious cycle. The United States has an opportunity to set an example by publicly condemning its own actions, vowing for change, and starting the trend of the eradication torture. Until then, the CIA should be ashamed for the effect its practices have had.

Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

## Inside Look at Major UN Actions & Events

### Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East, October 21, 2014

USUN PRESS RELEASE

October 21, 2014

AS DELIVERED

Thank you, Madam President. I'd also like to thank the Secretary-General for joining us today and for briefing us on his recent trip to the region.

We are living in a time of tremendous turmoil in the Middle East; a time that demands brave and decisive leadership by both regional leaders and the international community. Across the region, we see the need for hard choices. In Syria, the international community must summon the collective resolve to stop the Assad regime's monstrous atrocities, as well as the horrors of ISIL, and find a political solution to the conflict. In Lebanon and Iraq, political leaders must strengthen the institutions necessary to honor the aspirations of their people and to defeat violent extremist threats. And Israeli and Palestinian leaders must recognize that there is no alternative to a negotiated peace and invest the political will to build it. I will discuss each of these critical issues today, in turn.

We have seen how failures in leadership can help foster the conditions in which extremist groups thrive. By failing to make the hard choices necessary to address the grievances of its Sunni population, Iraq's former leaders helped to create conditions that ISIL exploited. The consequences have been horrifying. To cite just one example: earlier this month, ISIL announced strict rules on what can be taught in universities in Mosul, one of the cities it now controls. When Iraqi university professors rejected these restrictions and boycotted, ISIL declared that any professor who did not return to work would be executed.

More than three years ago, Bashar al-Assad lost legitimacy to lead when he responded to peaceful protests with brutal violence. Atrocities committed by his regime – atrocities of the kind and scale this world has rarely seen – played a key role in spurring the emergence of ISIL and other terrorist groups, and Assad's indiscriminate attacks on his own people continue to this day.

Last month, the OPCW released its second report, which found "compelling confirmation that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon, systematically and repeatedly," in three opposition-held villages in northern Syria. The OPCW concluded with confidence that chlorine was used. Witnesses described the attacks as being carried out by helicopters, which only the Assad regime possesses.

The consequences of Assad's actions have been staggering. More than 200,000 Syrians killed. Nearly 11 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance. And yet, despite the valiant efforts of international humanitarian groups, UN agencies, and others, the Assad regime is deliberately obstructing the delivery of crucial assistance to millions of people in dire need. The regime declares itself the antidote to the horrors of ISIL, but its chemical and barrel bomb attacks, its use of starvation as a tool of war, are every bit as indifferent to the fate of innocents and every bit as grotesque.

One community subjected to the Assad regime's merciless attacks has been Palestinians in the refugee camp of Yarmouk, which the regime has sealed since July 2013. The 18,000 residents who remain there have been relying on untreated groundwater and a single well for drinking water for nearly a month. Just yesterday, a spokesman for UNRWA issued a statement that began: "UNRWA was not cleared to distribute humanitarian assistance in Yarmouk today, 20<sup>th</sup> of October." The day before, UNRWA's statement began: "UNRWA was not cleared to distribute humanitarian assistance in Yarmouk today, 19 October." UNRWA notes that since July this year, there has been a steady and significant decline in the quantity of food and other essential items, such as medicine, that the Agency has been able to offer to the Palestinians in Yarmouk. That on any day – let alone so many days – the Assad regime is not allowing aid to flow to the Palestinians suffering in Yarmouk shows extreme cruelty. The international community must be more vocal in its condemnation of these unspeakable tactics. And when the Syrian government hails its leadership on behalf of the Palestinian people, they should be reminded by all of us of the people living in Yarmouk.

Three million Syrians have fled to neighboring countries to escape the regime's and extremist groups' violence – up to 80% of them women and children. The threat posed by ISIL is felt across the region, but especially in Iraq and Syria. And foreign fighters and Syrian nationals who have been recruited and trained to fight in ISIL and other terrorist groups pose a threat to countries far from the battlefield.

Among the countries most severely impacted are Iraq and Lebanon. For example, 180,000 Iraqis fled the city of Heet, in Anbar province, as it fell to ISIL in recent weeks. They are among an estimated 1.8 million Iraqis displaced just this year. Lebanon has taken in 1.2 million Syrian refugees – over a quarter of the country's population – placing immense pressure on its already strained resources.

We know what we must do: we must defeat ISIL and other terrorist groups. We must hold accountable all those in the Assad regime responsible for its widespread atrocities. And we must mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people. But we wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary-General that a political solution is absolutely essential to address the root causes of extremism in Syria, and to address the legitimate aspirations and grievances of its people. A political solution is not an enshrinement of the status quo. The majority of Syrians will not accept being ruled by a regime that has used sarin and chlorine to suppress its own people.

We commend the efforts of UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, who is working urgently to build support for a political solution by engaging multiple stakeholders. The Special Envoy met with Iran over the weekend and is meeting with Russia today – countries whose influence will be critical to reaching this long-sought solution.

Given the massive suffering that Syria's crisis is causing, and the threat it poses to our collective security, leaders in the region must be part of these efforts to forge a political solution. But regional leaders also must address problems closer to home, which impact the rights of their people and are a source of the suffering, disenfranchisement, and intolerance that feeds groups like ISIL.

Yet, some leaders still choose to put short-term interests ahead of the tough decisions needed to best serve their people. Others take divisive steps when they could instead build consensus. The international

community stands ready to help address the region's challenges, but we need partners to exert the political will and courage to seek real solutions.

In Iraq, newly elected leaders must break from the sectarian style of leadership that defined the tenure of the Maliki government, and build institutions that represent the whole nation, rather than advancing one group's interest at the expense of another's.

In Lebanon, the position of president has been vacant for nearly five months, during a time when the country faces considerable security, economic, and humanitarian challenges. Lebanon's political leaders must come together urgently to select a president.

We have seen leaders within these countries willing to choose unity over division and to make great sacrifices for their people. In August, the Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces fought bravely to defend the city of Aarsal from extremists. They served and died for their country – not for any one religious sect. In Iraq, Prime Minister Abadi is taking steps to form a more inclusive government, establishing the country's first complete cabinet since 2010. He is also moving toward decentralizing power and granting greater authority to provinces.

Real leadership is also required to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace. The most recent wave of violence was devastating, both in terms of its enormous human toll and because it was avoidable. Preventing another round of violence requires leaders who are willing to make difficult choices and commit to the hard work of negotiations.

We commend Egypt for helping broker a ceasefire agreement. The Gaza reconstruction conference raised \$5.4 billion and reaffirmed the international community's commitment to rebuilding the lives of Palestinians in Gaza who have suffered so much during and since the recent crisis. The United States is providing \$212 million in assistance to the Palestinian people for relief and reconstruction, atop the \$118 million announced in September.

Of course, as has been said, aid and assistance cannot produce peace in the Middle East – leadership and compromise are needed. For reconstruction not to be required again in the future, there must be a real change on the ground. Even the most durable of ceasefires is not a substitute for real security for Israel or for an independent state for the Palestinians.

This is only more difficult to achieve when both sides continue to take actions that may be politically popular with domestic constituencies, but that come at the expense of advancing the cause of peace. We continue to urge all parties to refrain from such actions, including unilateral steps at the United Nations, Israeli settlement activity, and provocations at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, where we urge all sides to respect the status quo of this holy site.

The United States remains fully committed to achieving a negotiated final-status agreement allowing two states to live side-by-side in peace and security. This is the only viable way forward, and if the parties are willing to go down this path – and are genuinely dedicated to the hard work of peace – we stand ready to support them.

Together, we can and we must support those taking the courageous steps to strengthen the Middle East in these immensely troubling times. The cause of peace in the region and the dignity of its people depend on it.

Thank you.

## Meeting of Religious NGOs

Monday, 27 October 2014

12:30-2:45pm

Baha'i International Conference Room

The meeting was convened at 12:30 by Dr. Vendley, a moment of silence was shared and the Agenda was affirmed.

### **Interfaith Harmony week**

Dr. Vendley reported on the meeting of members of the Bureau with the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa. It had been decided in a pre-meeting to invite the President to express his priorities.

President Kutesa was enthusiastic and committed to Interfaith Harmony Day collaborative leadership. He proposed sustainable development, climate change and environmental protection with attention to the empowerment of women. The rise of violent extremism was also mentioned as a possibility. It was agreed that this would be a major collaborative effort.

### **THEME-**

The bureau members held a debriefing session and agreed to present to the membership the theme, to be refined, of sustainable development, climate change and environmental protection with attention to the empowerment of women. The importance of the rise of violent extremism was acknowledged. Perhaps a separate event could focus on this.

The membership affirmed this theme.

### **SCALE –**

The Trusteeship Council was proposed by the Bureau. The choice of venues, pending availability, includes the GA (1800 capacity), Conference Room 4 (900 cap), Trusteeship Council (550 cap). Interfaith Harmony week is February 1 – 7, 2015. Commission on Social Development is Feb. 4-13. Feb 3 and 4 are dates to avoid because of CSD programming. A date during IHW or the week before or after would be acceptable. The importance of setting a date as soon as possible was repeatedly stated as the most important element to assure maximum outreach, collaboration and participation.

It is felt that the Trusteeship Council would give ample scope for a major event. The final choice will depend on dates and availability.

Collaboration with missions, UN departments and NGO's and outreach to youth and students were affirmed as vital.

In the past, program has been in English only. Expenses in various venues are not that different. Perhaps the office of the President can assist with resources.

**Next Steps - The Bureau will**

- 1. Take the input of the RNGO Committee back to the President.**
- 2. See that a date is chosen as soon as possible.**
- 3. Determine a venue.**
- 4. Develop a committee structure for this project and invite RNGO members and others to join in – ○  
Planning Committee (Steering Committee)**
  - **Program Committee**
  - **Outreach for Partnership and Co-sponsorship Committee**
  - **Invitation Committee**
  - **Registration Committee**
  - **Logistics Committee**
  - **Volunteer Committee**
- 5. Facilitate outreach to Committees and to the UN community to inform, encourage, invite participation, invite co-sponsorship and tangible support.** (The NGO Committee on Sustainable Development requests to cosponsor)
- 6. The Interagency Committee to be contacted.**

All are invited to send suggestions to Bill Vendley.  
Minutes will be circulated as soon as possible.  
A draft committee structure will be developed and circulated.  
An early meeting of the Bureau will be convened.

**LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD**

Past President Hiro Sakurai recounted various past initiatives including 1) programs highlighting various traditions 2) choosing a theme for the year during the MDGs, 3) in 2002 convening an ad hoc religious caucus on Climate Change, 4) compiling data on the religious NGOs to be distributed among the permanent missions (2 copies were given to the secretary for archives) 5) participation in the Tri Partite Forum and modeling interactive dialogue.

Past President Monica Willard spoke of the TriPartite Forum. This was the basis for Interfaith Harmony Week with UNESCO and the Philippines. The UN has no category for religious or spiritual NGOs as such. We are organized by issues.

This committee was involved in refurbishing the Meditation Room at the UN.

Monica went on to talk about how we can best build on past collaboration and keep our relationships as people come and go – continue building bridges. We have the annual luncheon and will have elections for Bureau members in April.

#### THE YEAR AHEAD

The Bureau and the RNGO Committee each meet on the third Monday of each month at the Bahai Conference Room. We are committed to having monthly Bureau meetings and also monthly RNGO membership meetings which include a program. Beth Begley, Farida Ali and Daniel Perell are serving as a program committee for our monthly meetings. Leadership for planning is shared. Farida will coordinate the meeting on Nov. 17 – theme Interfaith Education for Children-Learning Together- Peace Education. November is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rights of the Child. The meeting Dec. 15 will focus on the rise of violent extremism.

Dr. Tageldin Hamad extended the greetings of Amb. Nassir and the assurance that AoC welcomes opportunities to work with the RNGOs. AoC invites all to the Conference on Globalization and Sustainable Development on Oct 31 from 10-12 in the Dag Hammarskjold auditorium.

#### More needed from UN Security Council says ICC prosecutor

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda [briefed](#) the UN Security Council last week on the role of justice in maintaining international peace and security and the constructive role the Council can play in support of the Office of the Prosecutor's independent mandate.

Bensouda underscored the need for the Security Council to follow up on its referrals to the ICC, calling for the appointment of a single focal point for interactions between the Council and the Court.

The prosecutor also urged the Council to use clearer language regarding states' obligation to cooperate with the Court when referring situations to the ICC, and to take a proactive stance on arresting suspects wanted by the Court. Additionally, Bensouda called on the Council to consider the lack of funding for its referrals, stating that it has had an impact on her Office's ability to conduct full and effective investigations in Darfur and Libya.

Read the prosecutor's [statement](#)

[Click here to become a #GlobalJustice advocate](#)

[Help us call on El Salvador to join the ICC](#)

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#### Central African Republic

The CAR government plans to create a [rapid intervention unit](#) to rebuild its army and help stamp out inter-religious clashes. The interim president said that the peace dialogue in the country had been [delayed](#), and that reconciliation and elections are needed. An International Peace Institute columnist argued that ending impunity is [crucial](#) to peacekeeping efforts in the CAR.

#### Kenya

The Kenyan government requested that the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) discuss at its December session [alleged misconduct](#) on the part of the ICC in the Kenya situation.

The **Kenya Human Rights Commission's Esther Waweru** told the Standard that Kenyan criticism of the ICC is [misplaced](#), since judges have yet to rule on the status of President Uhuru Kenyatta's trial, and argued that the Court is the only institution offering any hope of justice to victims.

**Kenyan civil society** said that the government is attempting to [curtail](#) their actions because they support the ICC judicial process. The Kenyan opposition promised to [shoot down](#) legislation increasing government oversight over civil society. The head of Kenya's truth commission said that he is [alarmed](#) by recent violence between supporters of the CORD and Jubilee coalitions, warning that it could lead to widespread violence.

A youth participant in Kenya's post-election violence said that seeing Kenyatta and others at the ICC helped him to realize the [folly](#) of his actions. A Star columnist urged Kenya [not to withdraw](#) from the ICC, arguing that to do so would be to return to dictatorship.

### **Darfur**

At a [symposium](#) convened by the **Darfur Women's Action Group**, ICC Prosecutor Bensouda stressed the importance of bringing to justice the alleged perpetrators of grave crimes in Darfur.

The UN secretary general said that an internal probe found [no evidence](#) to support claims that UNAMID covered up attacks by Sudanese forces on civilians in Darfur, but found that some incidents were under-reported. The whistleblower who made the allegations [decried](#) the UN's internal probe, saying that it was not the 'thorough, independent and public inquiry' the ICC prosecutor had called for.

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir reportedly [ordered](#) a 'decisive attack' to end the rebel movements in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Two peacekeepers and a child were injured in a militia [attack](#) on UNAMID in North Darfur. Sudan's ruling party [finalized](#) its choice of Al-Bashir as its candidate for the 2015 presidential election.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo**

ICC prosecutors asked judges [not to grant](#) Bosco Ntaganda interim release.

### [Call on El Salvador to join the ICC](#)

### **Uganda**

A new [report](#) tracks ICC wanted Joseph Kony's movements over the past 10 years.

### **Libya**

**Amnesty International (AI)** accused Libya's militias of committed widespread human rights abuses, including [war crimes](#). The UN's special envoy to Libya said that factional fighting is pushing the country to the [point of no return](#). [Heavy fighting](#) in Benghazi killed at least 130.

**No Peace Without Justice** called for Europe and the rest of the international community to develop a [concrete strategy](#) to support Libya's transition, with an emphasis on justice and accountability.

### **Mali**

A French soldier was [killed](#) in clashes with Islamist fighters in northern Mali. Three UN peacekeepers were [injured](#) when a blast hit their vehicle near Kidal.

### **Côte d'Ivoire**

The **International Center for Transitional Justice** convened a [high-level conference](#) in Abidjan to discuss Côte d'Ivoire's progress in investigating and prosecuting serious crimes committed during the 2010 post-election violence.

ICC judges [refused](#) to grant Laurent Gbagbo temporary release to attend his mother's funeral due to security concerns.

### **Preliminary Examinations**

British forces [handed control](#) of their last base in **Afghanistan** to Afghan military forces.

**Georgia's** prime minister offered for South Ossetia and Abkhazia to have [autonomous republics](#) within Georgia.

**Colombia's** prosecutor [met](#) with ICC prosecutors to discuss Colombia's progress in investigating and prosecuting crimes alleged committed during the 50-year conflict (in Spanish). One of the FARC rebel groups's senior military figures—who is accused of several alleged atrocities—[joined peace talks](#) in Cuba. According to a [new study](#), about half of FARC fighters were minors when they joined the group.

**Human Rights Watch (HRW)** published a [report](#) documenting the abuses endured by **Nigeria's** Boko Haram abductees. The Nigerian government said that it is [in talks](#) with the group, but the Boko Haram [kidnapped](#) at least 25 girls in northeastern Nigeria and [captured](#) the town of Mubi. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said that allegations of human rights violations by the military are [exaggerated](#).

The **International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)** called for **Ukraine's** newly elected government to [extend the ICC's jurisdiction](#) to include the whole country and to ratify the Rome Statute.

### **Campaign for Global Justice**

**AI** issued a [call for pledges](#) by ICC states parties at the 13<sup>th</sup> ASP session to strengthen their support for and cooperation with the Court. The ASP is [unlikely](#) to discuss Kenya's proposed amendments to the Rome Statute, which would provide immunity for sitting heads of state, during the upcoming ASP session, the Star (Nairobi) reported.

In a suit brought by the **Southern African Litigation Centre** and the Zimbabwean Exiles Forum, South Africa's constitutional court ruled that South African police are [obliged to investigate](#) allegations of torture in Zimbabwe under legislation implementing the Rome Statute.

Palestine's chief negotiator said that Palestine will [join the ICC](#) if the UN Security Council doesn't commit to establishing an independent Palestinian state by 2017. International lawyer Toby Cadman argued that Palestine should [join](#) the ICC, not use doing so as a threat to force concessions from Israel.

### [Call on El Salvador to join the ICC](#)

#### **What else is happening?**

**HRW's Param-Preet Singh** told IPS that the commission of inquiry on North Korea has created [momentum](#) to refer the situation to the ICC. At least [43 countries](#) have lent their support to a draft Security Council resolution that would refer alleged North Korean crimes against humanity to the Court. The UN special investigator for North Korea [urged](#) the UN Security Council to refer North Korea to the Court and asked states to arrest alleged perpetrators. North Korea has indicated that it [may allow](#) a UN human rights investigator to visit the country.

**FIDH, REDRESS, Track Impunity Always** and the **European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights** are launching a [new report](#) on victims of serious international crimes in the European Union.

The **International Bar Association** [awarded](#) **Odhikar's Adilur Rahman Khan** its 2014 Human Rights Award.

The ICC prosecutor spoke at a [conference](#) on child soldiers at the University of Georgia. Meanwhile, the ICC held a [seminar](#) for counsel and the legal profession in Dakar, Senegal.

The ICC [received](#) a communication accusing the CEO of Chevron of alleged crimes against humanity in Ecuador (in Spanish), but law professor Kevin Jon Heller argues that an investigation is [unlikely](#).

Academic and blogger Mark Kersten [examined](#) the risks and benefits of investigations of atrocities by private NGOs in Syria.

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#### **Coalition policy on the referral and prosecution of situations before the ICC**

The Coalition for the ICC is not an organ of the court. The Coalition is an independent NGO movement dedicated to the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a fair, effective, and independent international organization. The Coalition will continue to provide the most up-to-date information about the ICC and to help coordinate global action to effectively implement the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Coalition will also endeavor to respond to basic queries and to raise awareness about the ICC's trigger mechanisms and procedures, as they develop. The Coalition as a whole, and its secretariat, do not

endorse or promote specific investigations or prosecutions or take a position on situations before the ICC. However, individual Coalition members may endorse referrals, provide legal and other support on investigations, or develop partnerships with local and other organizations in the course of their efforts. Communications to the ICC can be sent to: ICC, P.O. Box 19519, 2500 CM, The Hague, the Netherlands.

#### **Disclaimer**

This is an informal and unofficial summary of news coverage. The Coalition does not take a position on or endorse any articles summarized in this email. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the Coalition is not responsible for any omissions or inaccuracies contained within source articles or this email, which is provided for informational purposes only.

#### **[Responding to Religious Repression in North Korea](#)**

[http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/responding-religious-repression-north-korea/p33658?cid=nlc-religion-religion\\_and\\_foreign\\_policy\\_bulletin\\_november\\_2014\\_advancing\\_human\\_rights--link6-20141031&sp\\_mid=47357145&sp\\_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1](http://www.cfr.org/north-korea/responding-religious-repression-north-korea/p33658?cid=nlc-religion-religion_and_foreign_policy_bulletin_november_2014_advancing_human_rights--link6-20141031&sp_mid=47357145&sp_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1)

**Michael Kirby**, former chair of the UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights in North Korea, discusses the commission's recommendations for addressing systematic crimes against humanity in North Korea, including religious repression.

Read the UN Commission of Inquiry's report [here](#).

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For additional coverage on this topic, see:

- Somini Sengupta, "[Coalition Seeks to Send North Korea to International Court Over Rights Abuses](#)," *New York Times*, October 25, 2014.

[Watch the CFR event video here »](#)



### UN sets up mission to handle Ebola crisis



The first-ever UN emergency health mission, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), is being set up in response to the unprecedented outbreak. The Mission will be

temporary and will respond to immediate needs related to the fight against Ebola.

Under the strategic guidance of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, **David Nabarro**, and the operational direction of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Anthony Banbury, UNMEER will harness the capabilities and competencies of all germane UN actors under a unified operational structure to reinforce unity of purpose, effective ground-level leadership and operational direction, to ensure a rapid, effective, efficient and coherent response to the crisis.

The singular strategic objective and purpose of the Mission will be to work with others to stop the outbreak. To achieve this, UNMEER's priorities will be to stop Ebola's spread, treat the infected, ensure essential services, and preserve stability. Advance teams were immediately deployed to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as to the mission headquarters in Ghana.

According to Dr. Nabarro, the Ebola outbreak could begin to be brought under control by the end of this year if international donors act quickly and generously. Find more information in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Research Guide on Ebola: <http://research.un.org/en/ebola>

### Academic community responds to Ebola crisis



Universities and research institutions have an opportunity to work with the World Health Organization (WHO) to collaborate on Ebola and other

infectious diseases. The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), set up by WHO, which acts as the Network's secretariat, is a technical partnership of 150+ existing institutions and networks which mobilize and pool human and technical resources for the rapid identification, confirmation and response to outbreaks of international importance. GOARN provides an operational framework to link this expertise and skill to keep the international community constantly ready to respond to the threat of outbreaks.

Partners include government health departments, health institutions, regional networks (e.g., CDC, HPA, MSF, Institut Pasteur, IRC, ECDC, PacNet), as well as universities. Faculty of the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine are contributing their expertise in the response to the current outbreak of Ebola virus in West Africa.

Imperial College, London is another school actively working with WHO. In a joint study issued about six months ago, experts from Imperial College and WHO predicted that unless Ebola control measures in West Africa were enhanced quickly, numbers would continue to climb exponentially, and more than 20 000 people would have been infected by early November.

## Confronting an Epidemic: Religious Community Responses to Ebola

***Widespread hysteria and misinformation dominate the conversation about Ebola.***

With all this buzz we miss opportunities to make a difference. Religious communities can respond (and some already are!) to meet human needs in the challenge of confronting ebola.

This **Monday, November 17th at 9:30AM ET**, Dr. Katherine Marshall and Ms. Emily Miller will talk about ways religious communities can be more effective in their response, based on reasoned and factual information. As former Country Director of the World Bank's Africa Region and a specialist in conflict resolution, Ms. Marshall offers an expert's perspective on the U.S.'s role in confronting Ebola. Ms. Miller will discuss the United Methodist Church's Committee on Relief's medical missionary work on the front lines in West Africa.

**[So, don't miss it and sign up!](#)**

Dr. Katherine Marshall

Katherine Marshall is a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, where she leads the Center's program on Religion and Global Development. After a long career in the development field, including several leadership positions at the World Bank, Marshall moved to Georgetown in 2006, where she also serves as a visiting professor in the School of Foreign Service. She helped to create and now serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue.

Emily Miller

Emily Miller is the Associate General Secretary of Communication and Development at the United Methodist Church Global Ministries. She has been adjunct faculty for Pace University's Graduate Department of Publishing and the Fashion Institute of Technology in Communications Design. She has won several awards from both the United Methodist Association of Communications and the Religious Communicators Council.

The **United Methodist Church** - a longstanding member of *Religions for Peace USA* - has had significant response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Below is an outreach team from Miller McAllister United Methodist Church, Ganta, Liberia (Photo: Rev. Anna Kaydor Labala, UMNS).

## Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at an Anti-Semitism Conference in Berlin, Germany, November 13, 2014

Thank you, all. Thank you, Foreign Minister Steinmeier, President Burkhalter, for convening this critically important conference. It could not be more timely. Thank you, Director Link, for all of your human rights work across a range of issues, including anti-Semitism.

We are gathered in Berlin -- a great, great city -- that marked two anniversaries this week. The first -- November 9th, 1938 -- was Kristallnacht, "the night of the broken glass," which unleashed savage violence and destruction against Jewish homes, synagogues, schools, and businesses by Nazis in Germany and Austria.

Writing from the American Consulate in Leipzig, an American official named David Buffman recounted events in a diplomatic cable that -- even today, 76 years later -- has the power to shock. Buffman wrote: "In one of the Jewish sections, an eighteen-year-old boy was hurled from a three-story window to land with both legs broken on a street." Firemen made no effort to put out the fires that consumed Leipzig's three synagogues, he wrote, or the pyres of sacred texts burning outside of them. Instead, they hosed down the adjoining buildings to ensure that they did not catch fire. In the Jewish cemetery, tombstones were toppled and graves desecrated. In another part of Leipzig, "the insatiably," he wrote, "the insatiably sadistic perpetrators threw many of the trembling [residents] into a small stream that flows through the Zoological Park, commanding horrified spectators to spit at them, defile them with mud, and jeer at their plight."

As we know, the terror of Kristallnacht was just a prelude to the horror that would follow. In the immediate aftermath, 30,000 Jews were arrested to be sent to the concentration camps. And over the course of the Holocaust, of course, six million Jews would be systematically murdered.

The second anniversary -- November 9, 1989 -- was of course the day, 25 years ago, when the Berlin Wall came down, and along with it, the repressive system that prevented tens of millions of people in Central and Eastern Europe from exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms -- including the freedoms of expression and religion. In many ways, the fall of the Wall also marked the triumph of the ideas undergirding the contemporary European system -- a system built on the values of liberalism, pluralism, and fundamental freedom.

I invoke these anniversaries because they tell us a lot about the moment in which Jews in Europe, and all Europeans, find themselves today. On the one hand, Europe has come a long way -- so very far -- from the horrors of Kristallnacht. Today is not 1938. Genocide of the Jews in Europe is, thankfully, not a threat in 2014.

And yet, on the other hand, in the decade that has passed since 55 countries in the OSCE came together to declare our commitment to combatting all forms of anti-Semitism, we've actually seen an alarming increase in anti-Semitic attacks and attitudes in many parts of Europe. This trend is not only dangerous in and of itself, but it speaks to a deeper, more insidious threat to the European liberal ideal that rose up when the Berlin Wall came down.

Today, I will discuss rising anti-Semitism, the robust steps must be taken to stop it, and the stakes of this effort. Anti-Semitic attacks are not only a threat to the Jewish community; they are a threat to the larger project of European liberalism and pluralism -- and should be treated as such. Anti-Semitism threatens the core principles upon which a peaceful and stable Europe has been built.

Everyone here is familiar with the alarming statistics on anti-Semitism's rise. According to the recent European Union Fundamental Rights Agency survey of eight countries -- the eight countries in which over 90 percent of Europe's Jews live -- approximately one in four of those surveyed reported having

been the victim of an anti-Semitic attack or harassment in the previous year. One in four. Three-quarters of the respondents surveyed said that anti-Semitism in their country had gotten worse over the past five years.

We've seen these alarming trends reflected within individual countries in Europe. In France, for example, where Jews account for less than one percent of the population, in 2013 they were the victims of 40 percent of reported attacks based on race, religion or ethnicity. And since 2000, anti-Jewish violence in France has averaged rates that are seven times what they were in the 1990s, according to the Society for the Protection of the Jewish Community.

And we know well the horrifying physical attacks: the March 2012 attack on a Jewish day school in Toulouse, in which a teacher and three children – ages 8, 6, and 3 – were killed. The attack on the Jewish museum in Brussels in May that killed four people. The July firebombing, in Wuppertal, of the Bergische Synagogue – a synagogue that had originally been burned to the ground during Kristallnacht, and had only been rebuilt in 2002.

We have also seen, particularly since the most recent conflict in Gaza, rallies in favor of the rights of Palestinians or against Israel's policies and actions increasingly feature vicious anti-Semitic rhetoric and, in some instances, even transform into anti-Semitic mobs. At rallies in Dortmund and Frankfurt in July, there were chants of "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas!" The same week, protestors marched on a synagogue in Paris, reportedly screaming, "Death to the Jews," and "Jews to the oven" – and then tried to force themselves inside, where worshippers were gathered. They were held at bay by security guards and police.

This is not without precedent. Indeed, it was a surge in anti-Semitism that led to the 2004 Berlin Declaration, and that was in large part tied to Israeli-Palestinian tensions and the Second Intifada. Taken together – and in the context of rising anti-Semitism across the continent – these incidents and the feelings behind them pose a real threat to the viability of European Jewish communities. Roughly half of Jews living in Europe surveyed by the Fundamental Rights Agency said they have contemplated emigrating as a result of anti-Semitism. Faced with these statistics ten years after the Berlin Declaration, we must ask ourselves: Why are we coming up short? What can we do to reverse these trends?

One way, as has been said, is to swiftly and unequivocally condemn these attacks when they occur, and to make the struggle against anti-Semitism a national priority. In September, Chancellor Merkel not only showed up at a national rally against anti-Semitism in Berlin, but rightly called attacks on Jews "monstrous," and declared: "We are making unmistakably clear with this rally that Jewish life belongs to us — it is part of our identity and culture." Months earlier, President Hollande declared, "the government remains absolutely uncompromising with respect to anti-Semitic acts because they are all attacks on France." And Prime Minister David Cameron said to the House of Commons: "There can never be any excuse for anti-Semitism, and no disagreements on politics or policy should ever be allowed to justify racism, prejudice or extremism in any form."

When leaders show up, nations take notice. So it was a testament to the commitment of the participating OSCE states to the 2004 Berlin conference that 55 countries participated, nearly one-third of whom dispatched ministers or cabinet members, as the United States did by sending then-Secretary of State Colin Powell. That is why President Obama sent me, a member of his cabinet, to Berlin for this conference, as part of the first ever U.S. Presidential Delegation to attend an OSCE conference. It is also

why – the same year as the initial OSCE conference – the U.S. Congress passed, and President Bush signed into law, legislation creating the permanent position of a US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. It is a demonstration of how seriously our government takes this issue. Our current Special Envoy, Ira Forman, is a member of our Presidential Delegation here today.

It is also why, frankly, it is deeply concerning that even as anti-Semitism is rising in Europe, a third fewer countries are participating in the 2014 conference than took part in the 2004 conference; and only one in three of the countries that sent a foreign minister or other cabinet level official in 2004 has sent one at that level to this conference. Now this is not meant in any way to disrespect the high-ranking officials who are here today or the members of parliament who have such an important role to play in this cause. But it does beg the question: Doesn't this issue – at the very least – merit the same show of solidarity and commitment from governments today as it did a decade ago?

[Applause]

That is why it is critically important that OSCE states follow up on the Berlin Declaration this year, and rally around an updated plan of action that charts a concrete, unified path forward, which responds to the problems as we see them in 2014. And make no mistake, we have a problem.

One way to ensure sustained attention to anti-Semitism is to appoint a high-level envoy. There is a lot going on in the world right now: ISIL, Syria, Ebola, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Mali, South Sudan – I could go on and on. Elie Wiesel said to me not long ago: “The winds of madness are blowing.” It’s official. And knowing how consumed senior policy makers are with burning crises around the world, I can personally attest to how useful it is to have a dedicated special envoy, who has the specific mandate to combat and monitor anti-Semitism. Governments who appoint high-level officials to coordinate whole-of-nation efforts to combat anti-Semitism, and give them the political backing and resources they need, will see the difference it makes. And we know the OSCE has benefited tremendously from the leadership of appointing a personal representative on combatting anti-Semitism, a position currently held by Rabbi Andrew Baker.

Governments must also ensure that the perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts are held accountable. This means vigorously arresting, investigating and prosecuting attacks when they occur; passing hate crimes legislation, and strengthening it where it already exists – without, of course, infringing on civil liberties and due process. And it means ensuring that people have the knowledge and trust to come forward when these crimes are committed. It also means making sure law enforcement officers learn how to recognize such crimes, and to build the trust of communities that is critical to such crimes being reported and effectively investigated. Prosecutors must be trained to effectively prosecute hate crimes, as the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights is doing through their workshops and training guides.

Here, too, there is reason for concern: roughly half of European Jews surveyed by the Fundamental Rights Agency had no idea that hate crimes legislation existed. And the vast majority of Jews surveyed, who felt that they were victims of crimes because of their religion, said that they did not report the most serious incidents to authorities. When hate crimes are not reported, impunity reigns, perpetrators are emboldened, and victims become more vulnerable. We have to bridge the trust and the knowledge gaps.

I've spoken a lot about governments and what we can do, but civil society has an absolutely indispensable role to play in this effort – from preventing anti-Semitism through community outreach and education; to building the bridges between religious and ethnic groups that are the foundation to harmonious communities; to joining governments in swiftly condemning anti-Semitic acts when they occur. So our governments must work with energy and creativity to bring civil society groups into this effort, and to amplify the voices of those who are already exercising grassroots leadership on this issue. Without these partners, our efforts cannot succeed.

President Obama's delegation to this conference includes a diverse range of civil society leaders who have been leading advocates for justice in the United States and around the world – and justice of all kinds. The leaders represent groups from the Anti-Defamation League to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP; the American Islamic Congress; Human Rights Campaign, which is the largest US advocacy group for LGBT rights. President Obama and these civil society leaders, who I had the chance to meet with just before coming here, understand that combatting anti-Semitism is not, and cannot be seen as, a Jewish issue – it is a human rights and civil rights issue. When a civil society delegation includes only Jewish representatives, it will be far harder for them and us to break through. It is essential that we -- when we gather, again -- that we broaden the representation in civil society so that it represents a cross section of the human rights community, because those are the stakeholders we need to engage on this issue.

[Applause]

With respect to anti-Semitic rhetoric and attacks that occur in the context of pro-Palestinian or anti-Israeli rallies – and the spikes in anti-Semitic violence that occur when tensions rise in the Middle East – our message must be unified and it must be unequivocal: We liberal democracies hold sacred the right of citizens to express their political views and to offer criticism of government – whether of foreign governments or of our own. Protests and other forms of political expression are cornerstones of our democracies. But we must be equally unified and unequivocal that such protests can never be an excuse for anti-Semitism or incitement to violence. The violence in Gaza in recent months was devastating, and it generated strong reactions from many governments and individuals. Governments must allow space for people's views to be aired in the public sphere – whether in a conversation or at a protest. Just as there is a way to express criticisms of Palestinian policies and actions without expressing Islamophobic views or attacking Muslims; so too is there a way to express criticisms of Israel's policies and actions without making anti-Semitic remarks. Our nations pledged to uphold the clear distinction between anti-Semitism and legitimate acts of political expression when we signed the Berlin Declaration, which states unambiguously that: "international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism." Ten years later, our job as governments is still to guard that distinction vigilantly.

So I have spoken about the robust steps that are needed to address rising anti-Semitism in Europe. But before I close, I would like also to try to grapple a little bit with the question of how the rise in anti-Semitism threatens the greater European project to promote liberal democracy and fundamental freedoms. Just as growing hostility toward Jews in a country tends to dovetail with a rise in illiberalism and other forms of repression, so can efforts to combat anti-Semitism play a critically important role in advancing Europe's most sacred principles – democracy's most sacred principles.

The periods when we see alarming surges of anti-Semitism are often the same periods when we see an erosion of human rights in general, including the repression of members of other minority groups. The recent rise in anti-Semitism has come as right-wing, nationalist parties have made alarming gains in Europe. Look at May's European parliamentary elections. In Denmark, the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party finished first. In France, the far-right Nationalist Front won over a quarter of the vote – more than any other party. In Greece, the overtly anti-Semitic and xenophobic Golden Dawn received 10 percent of the vote. The list goes on.

In Hungary – where the extreme ethnic nationalist Jobbik party finished second in May elections, and where public opinion polling has shown a high level of anti-Semitic attitudes, the government has cracked down as well on the independent press and civil society groups. According to international media watch dog, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Hungarian authorities have pressured the media to tone down or abandon sensitive, critical stories and punish the journalists and media outlets that press ahead. All this at the same time a new government-commissioned monument to the Second World War depicts Hungarian “victims of German occupation” – but makes no mention of the major role the Hungarian government and citizens played in the mass extermination of Jews.

There is an important lesson here: rising anti-Semitism is rarely the lone or the last manifestation of intolerance in a society. Quite the contrary, it is often the canary in the coal mine for the degradation of human rights more broadly. When the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Jews are repressed, the rights and freedoms of other minorities and other sectors are often not far behind. Unique as the horrors experienced by Jews in Europe are, and, as essential as it is to give the Jewish community special vigilance, we must constantly situate our efforts to defend the human rights of the Jewish people within the struggle to advance universal human rights more broadly. And when we promote and defend universal human rights around the world, we must ensure that these efforts always includes the human rights of Jews.

In this sense, we can learn a great deal from the Jewish community, which having borne the immeasurable cost of silence and inaction, takes seriously its responsibility to come to the defense of other minorities to promote and protect their fundamental rights. That is why a decade ago, the American Jewish community was so forceful in its condemnation of the atrocities being committed in Darfur, and why it pressed for the United States to declare that those crimes constituted a genocide. And it is why, two decades ago, when the city of Sarajevo was under siege by Bosnian Serbs, a small Jewish community center, La Benevolencija – whose name meant “good will” and came from the community's Sephardic roots – opened its doors to Muslims, Croats, and Serbs alike. Throughout the 1,400 long days and nights of Sarajevo's siege, the center provided the people of the city – people of all faiths – with free meals, shelter, and medical care.

[Applause]

We have come to Berlin to discuss anti-Semitism in Europe. But the truth is that every region, every country, and every community needs to be talking about this enduring problem, and working to confront it, both in places that have staggering levels of anti-Semitism, and in those where it is less prevalent.

The United States is certainly no exception. Our country has a proud history of religious freedom, which was one of the founding tenets of our nation and is enshrined in the first amendment to our Constitution. We have worked diligently to make ours a nation of respect for civil rights. Yet we too see the ugly manifestations of anti-Semitism. According to a 2000\* report by our Federal Bureau of Investigation, nearly two-thirds of religious-driven hate crimes in the United States target Jews. In April, on the eve of Passover, a neo-Nazi opened fire outside a Jewish community center and assisted living home called Village Shalom in Kansas City. He killed three people: 14 year-old Reat Griffin Underwood; his 69-year-old grandfather, Dr. William Lewis Corporon; and 53-year-old Terri LaManno. Reat and his grandfather were Methodists; Terri was also a Christian. Terri was shot while visiting her mother who, while not Jewish herself, lived in a Jewish assisted-living home.

In upstate New York, less than two hours' drive from where I live, Jewish students attending public schools in the Pine Bush Central School District started to find swastikas everywhere – on the walls of their classrooms, their school desks, their lockers, even a playground slide. Over several years, Jewish students said they heard jokes about the Holocaust, were pelted with coins, punched, called names, and told to get money out of garbage cans. Anti-Semitism is a global problem, and this must -- there must be a perpetual effort, in the United States, Europe, and beyond, to fight it. Our work will never be finished. And it is an effort that will not only advance the human rights of Jewish people, but all of the communities that make up our incredibly diverse nations.

[1] 2012

That is the lesson I take from a final story – a story of a small Jewish patrol group called Shomrim, in Stoke Newington, England. Taking its name from the Hebrew word for “safety,” the Shomrim was formed in 2008, in response to a series of anti-Semitic attacks on the local Jewish community. The group of a few dozen members carried out rudimentary patrols of the neighborhoods where many Jews lived.

Then, in May of 2013, two men brazenly attacked and killed a British soldier in the streets in London, claiming it was revenge for the killing of Muslims by British soldiers in the Middle East. A wave of anti-Muslim attacks in England followed – including 11 attacks on mosques in the week after the killing. Fearing that they would be next, members of the Muslim community in Stoke Newington turned to their Jewish neighbors. They asked if the Shomrim, having suffered similar attacks, would help patrol the mosque and a local Muslim community center as well as their synagogue. The Shomrim said yes and began patrolling immediately.

What the Shomrim understood was that, by patrolling the mosque and community center, they were not patrolling solely on behalf of the Muslim community, but also their own. The rights they were defending were not only the human rights of Muslims, but the human rights of Jews as well. The Shomrim understood that a Europe where anyone feels afraid or endangered because of the actions, beliefs, or speech of a neighbor is a Europe where everyone's rights are at risk. We would all do well to embrace the same lesson.

Thank you so much.

## Remarks by Ambassador Elizabeth Cousens, U.S. Representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, at a United Nations General Assembly Special Meeting on Ebola, November 13, 2014

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, Madame Malcora, Dr. Nabarro, Mr. Banbury, Minister Tolbert, distinguished ambassadors of Sierra Leone and Guinea and other colleagues, the United States thanks you for your briefing today and for your availability when we understand and know well the exigencies of your daily work.

The Ebola outbreak has uniquely tested the global community's capacity for response with its complexity, scale and scope. And we thank the Secretary General for the exceptional team he has put in place. Dr. Nabarro, Mr. Banbury, and your teams, you are in a race against time to support the affected countries in their efforts to get ahead of this disease, and we continue to need you to work across the United Nations and with partners in an unprecedented way.

The United States ambassador to the UN, Ambassador Power, recently visited Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. She saw firsthand where national leadership and the contributions made by the United States, UNMEER, and a wide variety of other partners from UN agencies to key NGOs have begun to save lives and offer the first tangible signs that this virus can and will be beaten. We are acutely focused on aligning our own effort and our resources to support national leadership and the United Nations with its key role for global response.

This epidemic has already inflicted enormous human, economic, and social costs across affected countries in West Africa. It truly is not only a health crisis; it is a multidimensional development and security crisis requiring broad and sustained global cooperation. Recruiting and supporting healthcare workers remains the lynchpin of this fight and should be central to every nation's response. We also need to be responsive to changing needs. You spoke of being nimble, you spoke of collective adjustment, and we will look to you for timely advice about any shifts that we need to make.

We are heartened by growing support from countries around the globe but this fight is far from won. We urge all countries to respond to the UN's appeal for \$1.5 billion and the coalition to battle this epidemic must truly be a global one.

The United States will continue to devote its maximum effort to mobilizing resources and to working with international partners to support the affected countries. U.S. efforts in West Africa, from the Agency for International Development, the Department of Defense, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and others, currently total over \$414 million dollars and more than 2,000 U.S. government personnel are now deployed for Ebola response.

The United States has also focused on private sector mobilization, urging companies doing business in the region to stay; calling on U.S.-based businesses to invest in the region, and convening companies who can provide in-kind donations to assist the response. These actors can not only assist in the short-term but also help provide the ingredients and underpinnings of long-term economic and social recovery.

Across the region, in a matter of months, Ebola has alone reversed years of hard-earned development progress and put at risk vital peace-building gains.

Mr. President, our work has just begun, and we pledge to you our unwavering determination to work with the leadership in the region, with the United Nations, and with all partners to ensure rapid, robust, and decisive response.

I thank you.

### Three Bishops Consecrated at Holy Etchmiadzin

At Holy Etchmiadzin last weekend, His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, consecrated three clergymen as bishops of the Armenian Church.

Among those receiving the episcopal rank was the Very Rev. Fr. Nareg Berberian, formerly a longtime clergyman of the Eastern Diocese who is now serving as the Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Brazil. Bishop Berberian celebrated his first episcopal Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin on November 17. In his sermon, he stressed the importance of carrying forward the mission of the Armenian Church in Armenia and across the diaspora.

The other newly consecrated bishops are Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, Primate of the Diocese of Canada, and Bishop Vardan Navasardyan, director of the Christian Education Center at Holy Etchmiadzin.

[Click here](#) to view photos.

### African tradition blends with religion to illuminate path to forgiveness

Northern Uganda is shattered. After decades of civil war and rebel insurgencies led by Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the northern part of the country is just beginning to emerge from their struggle for survival and take stock of their enormous losses. According to a United Nations [report](#), the LRA kidnapped up to 100,000 children and brainwashed them to stay in bush camps during Kony's reign of terror, which started in 1987.

Everyone in northern Uganda agrees that these children, who were snatched from their homes, are victims of this conflict. But these children are also the soldiers who perpetrated horrific atrocities, at times storming villages and killing hundreds of people, raping women and girls, burning down entire towns.

With international pressure, including a [warrant](#) from the International Criminal Court in 2005 and peace negotiations attempts with the government in 2008, Kony has withdrawn from northern Uganda and is now in hiding in the Central African Republic, Sudan or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

And as the children of northern Uganda emerged from the bush and tried to come home, the scarred communities they left struggled to absorb them. The children's presence is a reminder of the things that they did and people they killed, a reminder of impossible loss. But at the same time, the community cannot reject an entire generation of children.

Sr. Pauline Acayo, a Little Sister of Mary Immaculate of Gulu, was the director of [Catholic Relief Services](#) in northern Uganda for 14 years before moving to another post with CRS. She calls these children "returnees."

“Returnees” is a purposefully neutral term. Terms like “ex-soldier” stigmatize the children, tying them to identity they want to forget, while calling them “victims” ignores the pain of the communities.

“The cultural justice system brings people together unlike the Western court system, which only brings polarization,” explained Rev. Macleord Baker Ochola II, a Protestant archbishop and one of the founders of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative ([ARLPI](#)). “There, the victim and the perpetrator are pushed far away from each other. Here, they are pushed together.

“We show that you are me, that you are a human being, that you cannot do this again. Cultural justice is not imposed on people . . . In these days with guns and bullets, it’s impossible to know who killed someone. But if a person accepts responsibility, it’s very effective because you didn’t impose it. If you kill and don’t accept responsibility, the tribes will fight. But in our culture once someone confesses, you have no option except to forgive.”

Acholi is the dominant tribe in northern Uganda, part of the Luo-speaking people that encompasses tribes in Uganda, Sudan and Kenya, including Barack Obama’s [father](#). The Acholi have a wealth of traditions and ceremonies dealing with forgiveness.

There’s the concept of chuluquwe, of paying for damage you have caused, followed by reconciliation. There’s the mato oput ceremony, named for a tree that grows with two trunks but one root, for when one tribe member has murdered another tribe member. There’s also nyonatongwheno, a ceremony of stepping on an egg to symbolize the recognition of the purity of human life.

When there’s been a murder, a murderer cannot return home with blood on his or her hands, Ochola explained. The murderer must wait at the gate and give testimony, after which it becomes “community-based collective responsibility,” Ochola said.

When one person murders another person, tribes engage in the mato oput ceremony. This requires years-long arbitration by a third tribe to determine compensation and a final ceremony where female relatives from the two sides drink the bitter tree root from a calabash gourd with their foreheads touching. But this ceremony is only for a single murder. Traditional Acholi practices did not have a precedent for the mass killings of the LRA.

“The LRA has no comparison in the past, this is a completely new situation,” said Ochola, who lost his wife and a daughter to atrocities. “An abduction is tantamount to murder. The enslavement of a girl child as a sex slave is like murder.” Uganda’s web of victims and perpetrators was too tangled for this single ceremony.

The process started as returnees coming out of the bush were brought to temporary reception centers run by organizations like World Vision and GUSCO (Gulu Serving Children Organization). “I’d have to prepare the community, talking about acceptance then organizing a way to reconcile publically with these children,” she said. “Only then we could begin reintegrating them into the community.” Acayo worked together to create reconciliation ceremonies with ARLPI, the Catholic Church’s [Justice and Peace Commission](#), Caritas International, People’s Voice for Peace and village chiefs.

While the children were in the reception centers re-acclimating to life outside of the bush, leaders worked with the community. “I trained them using the Ugandan constitution translated into local

language, and we developed peace-building training manuals, which entailed things like mediation, acceptance, and dialogue,” Acayo explained.

“Then we set a day for reconciliation, a day people came out in great number,” Acayo said. “On one day we would reconcile 800 kids, and we were doing this almost every two weeks. We were using the traditional Acholi reconciliation with an egg [symbolizing purity of life]. They also jump over a reed that is very slippery; this symbolizes being washed from the atrocities, the killing, the burning of houses, whatever you've done to the communities.



Left, Santa Monica administrator Charles Opira points out bullet holes in the ceiling of a classroom there. Hundreds of children called "night commuters" came to sleep at the Santa Monica center during the height of the war with Joseph Kony to protect themselves from abduction. The bullet holes are from when Kony's soldiers burst into the compound and thought the children were hiding in the ceiling. They were hiding in a different area and were not found. Right, Sr. Poline Ochida, Sacred Heart of Jesus, shows some of the bags made out of soda pop cans that girls create at the Santa Monica center. (Melanie Lidman)

“We also had a pole that they use for opening a granary; this symbolizes that today you are welcome to the community, you'll not only be fed by your family but by everyone in the community. After that they go and sit with the community. The Acholi religious leaders lead prayers after the ceremony. We have an archbishop and the khadi [Muslim leader] and Protestant leaders and others.

“After the prayer, we gave the community a chance to ask for forgiveness, and the returnees ask for forgiveness also,” she continued. “Then the community embraces them. In our culture when food is put on the ground and we eat together, it's a sign of unity.”

Acayo noted that the balance between traditional ceremonies and religious prayer, from all religious leaders, helped the reconciliation appeal to both aspects of the community's identity. Acayo helped

organize reconciliation ceremonies for more than 5,000 returnees, earning her a slew of awards, including [Woman Peacemaker of the Year](#) from San Diego University, a Beacon of Peace from CRS, and an [Outstanding Leadership Award](#) from the Association for Conflict Resolution.

The reconciliation ceremony is important, but it does not heal every wound. “These returnees, they were forced to come and kill their own family members, and sometimes people in the community are still reacting,” Acayo said. “They say, ‘You killed my mother and father, how can you come back to the community?’ So we have to continue sensitizing that community.”

There was also pushback from some religious leaders over the use of traditional ceremonies. “Some Christians believe that [these ceremonies] are not a Christian thing to do,” said Ochola, the archbishop with ARLPI. “But our culture is more Christian than anything. This ceremony is not done by a witch doctor, it’s done by the community.”

Ochola said some people were also surprised by ARLPI’s cooperation between all religions, including Catholic, Anglican, Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Seventh-day Adventist. Uganda is about 12 percent Muslim, 40 percent Catholic, and 40 percent Protestant, according to the [CIA World Factbook](#). “Some Christians were taken aback, and asked, ‘Why should we pray with Muslims? We can understand uniting between Catholics and Anglicans, because both are Christian, but Muslim?’”

ARLPI [started](#) in 1997 in response to the LRA massacres of 400 people in Kitgum. Kony is from the Acholi tribe, and residents of Kitgum wanted to start killing all Acholi members. Additionally, Kony’s claims that he was spiritually anointed to lead the LRA confused some people into thinking Kony was connected to the church. The religious leaders had been trying separately to plead tolerance and understanding in their congregations, but they were losing the fight. “Then we said, ‘Why can’t we speak with one voice? The people being affected are all our flock,’” Ochola said.



A young boy in Gulu. (Melanie Lidman)

“Because of our consistency and credibility, the government, the LRA, and the international community have trust in us [religious leaders],” said Ochola. “We were not bending to the role of the LRA or the government; we were completely impartial in the middle, trying to protect our people.”

“The rebels were much more responsive to neutral organizations that looked towards bringing peace, because they weren’t acting in a harmful way,” explained Charles Opira, an administrator and counselor at the Santa Monica Girls Tailoring School.

Santa Monica hosted peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government, and also served as a destination for hundreds of children looking for protection. There are still bullet holes strafed across a classroom ceiling from LRA soldiers who broke into the compound trying to abduct children. In April, *TIME* magazine named Santa Monica’s director, [Sr. Rosemary Nyirumbe](#), one of the 100 most influential [people](#) of 2014, and she was featured in the documentary “[Sewing Hope](#),” narrated by Forest Whittaker.

Female returnees faced special challenges, because many returned from the bush with children from Kony’s soldiers, and they had no education because they were kidnapped in the middle of their schooling. “When these girls came, they didn’t have anything,” said Opira. “They were even rejected by their own parents . . . . The stigmatization caused worse problems than being in the bush.”

Santa Monica offered vocational training, counseling and a place to live as the female returnees struggled as single mothers. “Most of the girls were soldiers, some were even commanders,” said Sr. Poline Ochida, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who is the head teacher of the kindergarten at the center. “In the beginning, it was not easy to reach them. Other girls could provoke them, pick a quarrel, by pointing out things that are very delicate about their past . . . . They felt out of place. They did such terrible things to their communities.”

Religious leaders still have a long journey towards healing their communities from such deep trauma. But they continue using the lessons learned from the aftermath of the war with the LRA, including how to blend traditional and religious practices to solve conflicts.

Today, since the majority of the children have returned, Acayo and Ochola are using this combination of religion and tradition to resolve land disputes. Land ownership is deeply connected to tribal conflicts and identity, but ownership was thrown into disarray during the war years. In many cases, boundaries were delineated by things like a large tree, which could have been destroyed during the war.

But rather than costly court battles that thrust farmers even deeper into poverty and take years to resolve, Acayo and Ochola are promoting mediation, where both sides talk with a local religious leader for four or five meetings and then end with a traditional land ownership ceremony and shared meal. Acayo and the organizations she works with have overseen more than 3,000 land mediations in the past five years.

Ochola believes that Ugandans will emerge from the tragedy of their latest war stronger and more resilient, despite the deep wounds. He likes to tell a traditional story, the story of two Acholi brothers who got into a terrible argument, a bitter dispute that led to the murder of one of their daughters.

The brothers were so enraged they decided never to talk to each other again, and they did a ceremony to nullify their family ties. They stood back to back in the Nile River that runs through northern Uganda and marched away from each other angrily, without once looking back, representing a severance in their family tree. But the village elders said it didn't matter what the brothers did or what the brothers said. They were standing in the same water, and it swirled around both their ankles, linking them forever.

"They are sharing the same water," Ochola said. "Even if people think they have nothing in common, they are still connected, because they are sharing the same water."

### Syria: Humanitarian Briefing

Tomorrow afternoon (25 November), Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos will present to the Council the Secretary-General's latest report which identifies the trends in humanitarian access in Syria since resolution 2165 was adopted on 14 July (S/2014/840). The public briefing will be followed by consultations. The authorisation in resolution 2165 for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access, including the monitoring mechanism, expires in early January 2015. It seems that Australia and Luxembourg, two leading Council members on the Syria humanitarian track, may be interested in renewing the authorisation in December before they rotate off the Council.

The civil war continues on its devastating course, and the escalating militarisation of the conflict has contributed to the continual deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria. Amos is expected to provide updated numbers of civilians impacted by the conflict at tomorrow's briefing. When resolution 2165 was adopted in July, the death toll was 162,000 and is now conservatively estimated at 200,000. At that time there were 2.9 million refugees and 6.4 million internally displaced persons. Those numbers have since increased to 3.2 million and 7.6 million respectively. The number of those requiring humanitarian assistance is now 12.2 million, up from 10.8 million in July and those in hard-to-reach areas have increased from 4.7 million to 5 million in the same period.

Council members will be interested to hear from Amos if resolution 2165 has helped to ameliorate the humanitarian situation. Amos is likely to report that this resolution has enabled more aid to enter the country and for such aid to be more widely distributed. There have been 30 cross-border aid deliveries since resolution 2165 was adopted. Additionally, humanitarian assistance has entered more hard-to-reach locations as a direct result of not requiring the government's consent for cross-border and cross-line access. Before resolution 2165, only 38 hard-to-reach areas could be accessed per month and that number has increased to 66. She is also expected to announce that the UN and its partners are planning to scale up deliveries in the weeks and months ahead.

Council members will also want to hear more about the challenges that have kept the UN and its partners from reaching more people in need. Amos is likely to report that because of the security situation only three of the four authorised border crossings are operational. Council members will likely want an update from Amos on the current status of one of these crossings, Bab al-Hawa on the Turkish border. There are reports that the Al-Qaida affiliated Al-Nusra Front has made significant gains near the crossing, putting in jeopardy one of the major conduits for humanitarian aid into Syria.

Amos is also likely to convey that the needs in Syria outpace resources, access to deliver available aid inside Syria is still severely constrained and that several key elements of resolutions 2139 and 2165 remain unimplemented. Cross-line deliveries are inherently difficult due to the security situation and the government's use of administrative obstacles to slow aid delivery. Medical neutrality is not observed

with the government withholding approvals, removing medical supplies from convoys, attacking medical facilities and the targeted killing of medical personnel. Armed opposition groups and terrorist groups shell civilian areas and block access to each other's areas of control. Indiscriminate aerial bombardment by the government has been constant and since the US-led airstrikes began against ISIS in late September the Syrian military has dramatically ramped up its own air campaign against rebel-held areas. The report also notes that ISIS has responded to the strikes against it by spreading its fighters amongst populated areas.

Many Council members will be keen to hear Amos's views on the humanitarian situation in Aleppo. Rebel-held Aleppo is of particular interest since Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura suggested to the Council it would be the first test of his plan for a UN-mediated "freeze zone". President Bashar al-Assad said the plan was "worth studying". However, Aleppo has been bombarded by the government almost daily for a year, and at press time, the government had cut off all but one route in and out of the city, foreshadowing the siege-and-starvation tactics it has employed in other areas, such as Homs. Amos is likely to echo the Secretary-General's report and characterise de Mistura's plan as an opportunity for a strategic de-escalation of violence. And while not directly related to the "freeze" plan, Amos may also report on discouraging developments that negotiations toward local agreements elsewhere have recently been halted.

The significant increase in aerial bombardment by the Syrian government has led several Council members, particularly the P3, Australia, Jordan, Lithuania and Luxembourg, to reiterate their view that, without underestimating the threat terrorist groups pose, the Assad regime remains responsible for the majority of violations in the conflict. These members have also continually expressed concern that there has been no progress in implementing any of the other key demands of resolution 2139 regarding human rights and protection of civilians, such as observing medical neutrality, ceasing aerial bombardments and easing administrative hurdles that slow or block humanitarian access.

Council members expect the Secretary-General's report and Amos's briefing tomorrow will be a key moment to assess the achievements of resolution 2165, and to discuss how to improve on those achievements while reiterating the need for full implementation of resolutions 2139 and 2165. It seems a significant majority of Council members are supportive of renewing the authorisations granted in resolution 2165 for a further period.

**Source:** <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2014/11/syria-humanitarian-briefing.php>

## Pope calls for 'vigorous' Europe to stay true to its roots



By Jonathan Luxmoore | Nov. 26, 2014

When the pope entered the packed chamber of the European Parliament on Tuesday, he was widely expected to reiterate the Catholic church's long-standing support for a united Europe.

But Francis also issued a rebuke for current attitudes and practices, leaving many members of the Parliament reeling at the force and vigor of his words.

"The pope is always frank and sincere, whether with church people or with politicians -- it's good he delivered such a strong message at this time of crisis," said Thierry Bonaventura, spokesman for the Swiss-based Council of Catholic Bishops of Europe.

"His analysis of [the] situation is shared by many Europeans," he said. "But his aim, even so, was less to criticize than to recall the key principles the EU should uphold if it wishes to maintain a spirit of service and commitment to peace and justice."

The Argentine pontiff was in Strasbourg, France, at the invitation of the Parliament's German socialist president, Martin Schulz, who thanked him profusely for providing "orientation in times of disorientation."

It was the first papal visit to the EU's legislative branch since 1988, when Pope John Paul II famously invoked the spiritual unity of a still-divided continent and defended the right of subject nations in its communist-ruled east.

### **Growing citizens' distrust**



Yet it was clear from the outset that Francis hadn't just come to admire and praise.

"As the European Union has expanded, there has been growing mistrust on the part of citizens towards institutions considered to be aloof, engaged in laying down rules perceived as insensitive to individual peoples, if not downright harmful," he told his listeners.

"In many quarters, we encounter a general impression of weariness and aging, of a Europe which is now a 'grandmother,' no longer fertile and vibrant. As a result, the great ideas which once inspired Europe seem to have lost their attraction, only to be replaced by the bureaucratic technicalities of its institutions."

The pope said he wanted to offer a "hope and encouragement" by reliving the "ambitious political project" of the EU's post-war founding fathers.

But the EU's commitment to human rights and dignity had been threatened, he cautioned, by a view of human beings as "objects whose conception, configuration and utility can be programmed" and who could be "discarded when no longer useful, due to weakness, illness or old age."

A notion of individualistic rights had also taken root, he added, which took no account of any broader social context and risked becoming "a source of conflicts and violence."

He reminded European legislators they had a duty to "protect and nurture Europe's identity" by tending to the needs of individuals and people against a "throwaway culture and an uncontrolled consumerism."

This meant acknowledging the legacy of Christianity.

It also meant standing up for family life, education, human ecology and the rights of labor, speaking out for migrants when the Mediterranean Sea risked becoming a "vast cemetery" of boat people from Africa and the Middle East, and not allowing democracy to be eroded by "multinational interests" and "systems of economic power at the service of unseen empires."

"The time has come to work together in building a Europe which revolves not around the economy, but around the sacredness of the human person, around inalienable values," Francis said.

"The time has come for us to abandon the idea of a Europe which is fearful and self-absorbed, in order to revive and encourage a Europe of leadership, a repository of science, art, music, human values and faith as well -- a Europe which contemplates the heavens and pursues lofty ideals."

The pope's speech was broadly welcomed.

Gianni Pittella, who heads the Social-Democrat group holding second place in the 751-seat Parliament, said he believes its "tough and severe message" will remind Europe to put "human dignity and fundamental rights" first and fight harder against "discrimination, unemployment, fundamentalism and extremism."

Manfred Weber, whose larger conservative European People's Party holds 219 seats, said he thinks it will "take Europe to a new beginning, based not only on money and the economy, but first and foremost on ideas and values."

"Pope Francis reminded us that European values are rooted in Christianity -- it's our global responsibility to keep these values alive and make sure they're respected," Weber said in a statement.

"In these difficult times, when tensions are rising within and outside our continent, Europeans should not give in to fear of others and mistrust, but stand for peace, respect for human dignity, solidarity and the fight against poverty."

The EU has faced growing criticism for what many Europeans see as a "democratic deficit," which has enabled its unelected governing Commission in Brussels to extend power via decrees and directives within the 28 member-countries.

Crisis and dislocation in the Euro single currency have contributed to rising poverty and unemployment, currently averaging 20 percent across the continent.

Members of the European Parliament have also been criticized by the Catholic church for backing abortion, assisted suicide, same-sex marriages and embryo research, while Catholic bishops and aid agencies condemned plans in October to scale down the rescue of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean, where hundreds drown each month attempting to reach Europe.

The pope repeated his critique of Europe's "throwaway culture" in a later address to the nearby Council of Europe, whose membership, now totaling 47 countries, has promoted human rights, democracy and the rule of law since 1949.

Tensions still existed in Europe, he said, in an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine, and a "great toll of suffering and death" was still being exacted.

Meanwhile, peace was threatened by "religious and international terrorism" as well as by human trafficking, "the new slavery of our age," against which Europeans needed "memory, courage, a sound and humane utopian vision."

### **'Where is your vigor?'**

He listed two concepts -- multipolarity and transversality -- that should shape Europe's response to current issues and commended the Christian vision, with its dual emphasis of faith and reason, religion and society, as a corrective to both "religious fundamentalism" and a "reductive rationality which does not honor man."

"Where is your vigor? Where is that idealism which inspired and ennobled your history? Where is your spirit of curiosity and enterprise? Where is your thirst for truth, a thirst which hitherto you have passionately shared with the world?" Francis continued.

"Europe should reflect on whether its immense human, artistic, technical, social, political, economic and religious patrimony is simply an artefact of the past, or whether it is still capable of inspiring culture and displaying its treasures to mankind as a whole."

As expected, the pope's visit was protested by groups opposed to any religious presence in Europe's institutions.

A topless member of the feminist group Femen leapt on the altar of Strasbourg's historic cathedral Monday, and the leader of France's Left Party, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, defended his own country's "strict separation of the religious and political" and told French TV the European Parliament was "not a place for preaching."

However, presidents of the Council of Europe and its affiliated Parliamentary Assembly, Thorbjørn Jagland and Anne Brasseur, both welcomed the pope's defense of values and principles and pledged dialogue with the Catholic church.

With more than half of the MEPs (members of the European Parliament) newly elected in May and a new European Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg now in office, there are hopes the pontiff's warnings and admonitions will have some impact.

On the day of the pope's visit, MEPs took part in a Strasbourg "human chain in solidarity with migrants" and voted to make eradicating poverty, fighting inequality and protecting human rights key to a new global development framework.

On Wednesday, Juncker presented a new 300 billion Euro (\$375 billion) EU investment package to boost business and cut unemployment, while the EPP pledged to make "every effort" to apply the pontiff's advice in a range of areas.

"The semi-circle of the European Parliament had rarely been so full -- and so well-behaved," France's center-left *Le Monde* daily commented Wednesday.

"It was difficult to believe this was the same room, with the same faces, had earlier echoed to the usual murderous words between those wishing to destroy the union and those wishing to keep it alive. ... But the sovereign pontiff accompanied his 'encouragements' with an extended hand, bearing what he said were values held in common by Europe and the church."

Bonaventura is cautiously optimistic.

He said he believes the pope's words will be "understood in a special way" by his listeners, which takes account of secularization and church-state separation, but also acknowledges the continued importance of religious faith and the Christian tradition to millions of Europeans.

"Francis didn't offer practical solutions to our problems -- church and state can no longer think and act together at this level," Bonaventura told *NCR* on Wednesday.

"But he did set out deeper principles and parameters which will be useful in tackling them, in which the human person must always occupy center-ground. If some parties and politicians now wish to use these in their work, that will be welcome."

[Jonathan Luxmoore is a freelance writer covering European church news from Warsaw, Poland and Oxford, England. His latest two-volume book, *The God of the Gulag*, will be published in 2015.]

**Source:** <http://ncronline.org/news/global/pope-calls-vigorous-europe-stay-true-its-roots>

## Announcements: United Nations Events

### 1. United Nations International Volunteers Day 2014 - Friday, 5 December

**Venue:** Trusteeship Council Chamber (CB)

**Time:** 10 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

[More Information](#)

### 2. Human Rights Day Commemoration - Tuesday, 9 December

**Venue:** The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture  
515 Malcolm X Boulevard, (Harlem), New York, 10037

**Time:** 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

[More Information](#)

### 3. SPECIAL EVENT: "Children, Sport and Development CRC@25: achievements and looking to post-2015" - Monday, 15 December

**Venue:** Trusteeship Council Chamber (CB)

**Time:** 3 p.m. - 6 p.m.

[Invitation](#)

[Concept Note](#)

### 4. Pre-registration for CSW59 is OPEN

Official pre-registration for the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held from 9 to 20 March 2015 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, is open through 27 January 2015. NGOs that are accredited to and in good standing with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may designate representatives to attend the annual sessions of the CSW. To **pre-register** your representative(s), please go to <http://bit.ly/113e3tc>

All participants must be pre-registered by **27 January 2015**.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/ngo-participation>

## 5. Launch of the Online Consultation for "Europe and Others Regional Grouping

You are invited to participate in an online consultation launching this week to gather your ideas and recommendations on how to keep humanitarian action fit for future crises. The discussion will inform the Regional Consultation Meeting for the "Europe and Others" group taking place in Budapest, Hungary on 3 - 4 February 2015 and runs from **26 November - 19 December 2014**. To participate, visit the website: [www.whsummit.org/whs\\_eog](http://www.whsummit.org/whs_eog) and post your response to the discussion questions below.

[More Information](#)

## Synthesis Report

### 1. A Universal Call to Action to Transform our World beyond 2015

1. The year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders and people to end poverty, transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting our environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights.
2. We are at a historic crossroads, and the directions we take will determine whether we will succeed or fail on our promises. With our globalized economy and sophisticated technology, we can decide to end the age-old ills of extreme poverty and hunger. Or we can continue to degrade our planet and allow intolerable inequalities to sow bitterness and despair. Our ambition is to achieve sustainable development for all.
3. Young people will be the torch bearers of the next sustainable development agenda through 2030. We must ensure that this transition, while protecting the planet, leaves no one behind. We have a shared responsibility to embark on a path to inclusive and shared prosperity in a peaceful and resilient world where human rights and the rule of law are upheld.
4. Transformation is our watchword. At this moment in time, we are called to lead and act with courage. We are called to embrace change. Change in our societies. Change in the management of our economies. Change in our relationship with our one and only planet.
5. In doing so, we can more fully respond to the needs of our time and deliver on the timeless promise made at the birth of the United Nations.

Advance unedited 4 December 2014 10:00 a.m.

6. Seventy years ago, in adopting the Organization’s founding Charter, the nations of the world made a solemn commitment: “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, to establish conditions under which justice and respect for international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

7. Building on this core promise, the Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) called for an approach that would guarantee the meaningful participation of all in development, and the fair distribution of its benefits.

8. Humankind has achieved impressive progress in the past seven decades. We have reduced violence and established global institutions, a code of agreed universal principles, and a rich tapestry of international law. We have witnessed stunning technological progress, millions upon millions lifted from poverty, millions more empowered, diseases defeated, life expectancies on the rise, colonialism dismantled, new nations born, apartheid conquered, democratic practices take deeper roots, and vibrant, economies built in all regions.

9. Since the 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro, we have identified a new pathway to human wellbeing – the path of sustainable development. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals articulated in the year 2000 placed people at the center, generating unprecedented improvements in the lives of many around the world. The global mobilization behind the MDGs showed that multilateral action can make a tangible difference.

10. Yet conditions in today’s world are a far cry from the vision of the Charter. Amid great plenty for some, we witness pervasive poverty, gross inequalities, joblessness, disease and deprivation for billions. Displacement is at its highest level since the Second World War. Armed conflict, crime, terrorism, persecution, corruption, impunity and the erosion of the rule of law are daily realities. The impacts of the global economic, food and energy crises are still being felt. The consequences of climate change have only just

begun. These failings and shortcomings have done as much to define the modern era as has our progress in science, technology and the mobilization of global social movements.

**Full Report:**

[http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5527SR\\_advance%20unedited\\_final.pdf](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5527SR_advance%20unedited_final.pdf)

**Statement by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the Lord's Resistance Army, December 10, 2014**

Today, the Security Council held consultations on instability in central Africa, including the threats posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to international peace and security. For more than two decades, the LRA has marauded across central Africa, displacing millions of civilians, torturing, raping, and murdering tens of thousands of men, women, and children, and swelling its ranks with abducted children to serve as porters, sex slaves, and weapons of war.

President Obama has made it a priority to end the threat posed by the LRA and its leader, Joseph Kony, and he has committed significant U.S. resources to the African Union-led effort to removing Kony and his top commanders from the battlefield. The United States continues to provide over 100 U.S. military advisors to assist regional forces, and we are providing critical intelligence, logistics and airlift support to ongoing military operations.

In the nearly three years since the African Union launched this effort, we have made significant progress to erode the capacity of the LRA to wreak havoc on civilians. The number of people displaced by the LRA has dropped to less than 135,000, significantly down from the 1.8 million displaced at the height of the conflict. The 250 people who have defected or been released since 2012 have done so in large part due to a comprehensive approach that combines an expanded military campaign with enhanced efforts to promote the defection, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of remaining LRA fighters and increasing humanitarian access to affected communities. We commend regional governments, especially Uganda, for their steadfast efforts to end the LRA threat.

Despite this progress, however, LRA activities continue to threaten peace and security in the region. The United States is deeply concerned about continued LRA activity in border areas between Sudan and South Sudan, and we encourage the Government of Sudan to follow through on its commitment to allow a visit to the disputed Kafia Kingi area by an AU assessment mission. We also remain concerned by reports of increased LRA links to poaching and diamond smuggling networks in the region, and call for a redoubling of efforts to strengthen enforcement and promote partnerships to combat wildlife trafficking and deny extremist groups a funding stream for their activities.

As the LRA moves between countries in the region, UN missions and the African Union-led Regional Task Force (AU-RTF) must ensure more rapid information-sharing between the AU-RTF, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), to respond both to civilian attacks and to reports of defectors seeking assistance to reintegrate into normal life.

While much work remains to end the scourge of the LRA, the United States and our partners look forward to the day when no child is stolen from his or her family, robbed of his or her dignity, and forced into a life of violence.

## Religious News from Around the World

### Second Bishops Synod Convenes at Holy Etchmiadzin

Armenian bishops and archbishops from around the world, representing the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin and the See of the Great House of Cilicia, gathered at Holy Etchmiadzin this week for the second Bishops Synod. His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, presided over the meeting from November 11 to 13.

The 134 church leaders reviewed the process for the canonization of the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. They also discussed the ongoing work on standardizing the baptism service and the preparations for the 100th year of remembrance of the Genocide.

“The church is fortified by her saints,” His Holiness Karekin II said. “The enlightened example of their lives and their intercession on our behalf strengthens our faith. The canonization next spring will revive a tradition that will continue as the Armenian Church enters the next chapter of history.”

In a statement released at the conclusion of the Bishops Synod, the church leaders encouraged Armenians worldwide to take part in remembrance events throughout 2015, and called on world leaders to work toward the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. They also stressed that “the canonization of our martyrs will bring spiritual renewal and consolation to our people.” [Click here](#) to read the statement in Armenian.

Prior to the start of the meetings, the bishops visited the Dzidzernagapert memorial, where a requiem service was held. Catholicos Karekin II and Catholicos Aram I laid wreaths at the memorial.

From the Eastern Diocese, Diocesan Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and ecumenical director Archbishop Vicken Aykazian have been taking part in the proceedings.

[Click here](#) to view photos.

### Kenya bus attack: Al-Shabaab militants slaughter 28 non-Muslims who failed to recite Koran

Terror organisation al-Shabaab have claimed an attack that killed 28 people on a bus in Northern Kenya.

Around 100 gunmen, who are believed to have travelled over the border in Mandera county from Somalia, took the bus off the road before separating the passengers.

It is believed they asked travellers to recite passages from the Koran, shooting dead those who were unable to prove they were practising Muslims.

A statement on a website linked to the extremist organisation said the attack was carried out in retaliation for security raids on mosques in the coastal city of Mombassa earlier this week.

Kenya's Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government claimed on their official account earlier today: "Attackers camp has been destroyed by KDF using helicopters and jets, many killed, operations continue."

The bus was travelling to the Kenyan capital Nairobi when it was stopped in the northern county that borders Somalia.

Around 60 people were on the bus at the time of the attack, and it is thought that among the dead are Kenyan public servants – including four police officers - who were heading to the capital for the Christmas holiday.

Mandera East deputy County Commissioner Elvis Korir said the passengers were then separated into two groups. The Somali passengers watched in horror as non-Somalis were herded away from the bus and then killed.

Mr Korir added that many details over the attack remain unclear, but the deaths underscore fears over the lack of security, especially in the remote parts of northern Kenya.



**Al-Qaeda linked al-shabab recruits walk down a street in the Somali capital, Mogadishu**

Abdullahi Abdirahman, the Arabiya Ward Representative, [told the Daily Nation](#): "This place has been prone to attacks, this is not the first time the government has totally ignored us, and you can now see the how many innocent precious lives have been lost".

In early November, gunmen killed 20 police officers and two police reservists in an ambush in Turkana county in the northwest of Kenya.

The northern region of Kenya is awash with guns due to its proximity with Somalia and Ethiopia, from where the armed Oromo Liberation Front has made incursions into Kenya.

Since 2011 the Somalia-based terror group al-Shabaab, which is linked to al-Qaeda, have carried out a series of attacks in Kenya, including the Westgate Mall attack in which 67 people were killed.

**Source:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/kenya-bus-attack-28-nonmuslims-killed-after-being-unable-to-recite-koran-in-suspected-alshabab-attack-9877181.html>

### Indian Catholics find spiritual inspiration in two new saints

Vatican City, Nov 22, 2014 / 05:25 pm (CNA/EWTN News).- Two new Indian Catholic saints to be canonized by Pope Francis on Sunday were known for their deep spiritual life and their intercession in helping families, say two Catholics who find deep inspiration in their sanctity.

Fr. Isaac Arickappalil C.M.I. told CNA Nov. 14 that the canonization of the soon-to-be saint Blessed Kuriakose Elias Chavara is “an inspiration for all of us.” He said the Nov. 23 canonization is an inspiration for the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, the order which Bl. Kuriakose founded, as well as for the Church in India as a whole.

“It gives us inspiration to be more spiritual,” the priest said, calling the canonization a time “to re-dedicate ourselves for the cause of the church, for the service of human beings and also (the) glory of God.”

The priest is a member of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, which Bl. Kuriakose founded in 1836. It is the first Catholic religious order founded in India. Fr. Arickappalil also serves as director of the Chavara Institute for Interreligious Studies in Rome, which is named after the religious order’s founder.

Bl. Kuriakose also founded an order of religious sisters called the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel.

This congregation will also receive a new saint, Bl. Euphrasia Eluvathingal, during the Nov. 23 canonization. Bl. Euphrasia, who died in 1952, served as the superior general for the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel for three years.

Among Bl. Euphrasia’s devotees is Sister Mary Julit C.M.C., who came to Rome from India in order to help the postulator of Bl. Euphrasia’s cause prepare for the canonization. The sister echoed Fr. Arickappalil’s excitement for the canonization of both her founder, as well as her order’s previous superior general.

The canonization of the two saints is a great moment for the Indian church, she said, because while the presence of saints and blessed is common in Italy, they are not as frequently found in Asian countries.

“I think there are many saints without calling them by name,” she said, adding that to have the official recognition of two saints from India is significant.

The religious sister praised Bl. Euphrasia's spiritual life, saying "she lived the Carmelite spirituality and also humanity in its fuller sense."

"It is said that another word for love is mercy and forgiveness, and she showed that a lot in her community life, to the sisters and the people she connected with," she told CNA Nov. 17.

Bl. Euphrasia was "a real model" for the sisters of the congregation, Sr. Julit said. Although she mostly stayed inside of the convent for 50 years, she was able to attain the deep union with God implied in the phrase "be perfect as I am perfect."

Known during her life as the "Praying Mother," Bl. Euphrasia is frequently petitioned for problems with the family or fertility, Sr. Julit explained. She said that many childless couples who come to pray at the site of the blessed's death end up having children afterward.

Sr. Julit recounted that when she traveled to the blessed's place of death four months ago, she encountered an energetic little girl whose name was Euphrasia.

"I thought, in this age, why did her mother give her this name? And the mother told me they did not have children for 17 years, and then they prayed to (the saint) and the next year they had this baby-girl, so they vowed to give her the name of Euphrasia."

Fr. Arickappalil explained that Bl. Kuriakose was a man similarly known for his efforts in building-up family life.

"He had a special devotion to the Holy Family. In another words, he was a person of families, he tried to renew them. He knew the Catholic life, the Christian life, is possible only if families are good," the priest said.

Bl. Kuriakose gave parents concrete instructions on how to raise their children. He also instructed children about how to be obedient, devoted and respectful to their parents. He offered a series of retreats for families, particularly in schools and poorhouses.

"So he was very much devoted to families, and he tried to spread this devotion to the Holy Family and the Blessed Sacrament, and to Our Lady."

Born in 1805, Bl. Kuriakose founded the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate with the help of a few friends. He was known for his efforts in bridging a schism that happened after the First Vatican Council, during which an unauthorized bishop came to India's Kerala province and ordained priests without the Pope's approval.

When Bl. Kuriakose saw what was happening, he fought against the bishop "for the unity of the church and he Catholic life," Fr. Arickappalil observed. If the schism had not been eventually resolved in India, "the whole church in Kerala would have gone away from the Catholic church by now."

“Only because of (Bl. Kuriakose’s) dedication, courage and selfless service to the Catholic Church, are Catholics still there in Kerala.”

It is important for the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate to have their founder canonized, the priest explained, because it means that the Church recognizes his spiritual accomplishments.

The two new saints are from the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, an India-based Eastern Catholic Church in union with Rome.

The Indian community has organized several celebrations for the event, including a prayer vigil the night before the Nov. 23 canonizations. Sr. Julit is preparing the vigil’s texts.

Fr. Arickappalil explained that close to 20 bishops are coming from India for the celebration, including Cardinal George Alencherry, the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, and Cardinal Baselios Cleemis, the major archbishop of India’s Syro-Malankara Church.

In addition to the bishops, nearly 800 Indian priests will concelebrate in the Mass, while an estimated 10,000 pilgrims will come from all across India, primarily from its Kerala province.

Festivities for the Indian saints will conclude with a Mass of Thanksgiving on Nov. 24, which will be celebrated at the Pope’s altar in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Pope Francis will visit to greet the Indian community before the Mass.

Four Italians will be also be canonized on Sunday.

**Source:** <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/indian-catholics-find-spiritual-inspiration-in-two-new-saints-98844/>

## As Francis heads to Turkey, dialogue with Muslims a key focus



Pope Francis will wade into a complex mix of ecumenical, interreligious, and global political affairs as he visits continent-straddling Turkey through the weekend.

But one issue sure to be central to the trip -- which will see the pontiff stop Friday in the political capital of Ankara before heading to the historic Christian center of Istanbul on Saturday and Sunday -- is dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

Of the 76 million people who live in Turkey, 97 percent identify with the Islamic faith. And given the country's position in Asia (bordering Syria and Iraq to its east) and Europe (bordering Greece to the west), it is seen as a key testing ground for interreligious encounter, especially in the face of the violence being perpetrated by the Islamic State group.

After greeting Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara on Friday afternoon, Francis is to meet with the head of the country's Presidency of Religious Affairs, a government ministry known commonly as the Diyanet that is charged with providing and regulating religious services in Turkey.

One Turkish academic said the pope's visit could be a chance to repair what has effectively been eight years with little substantial Catholic-Muslim dialogue in the country -- which from there could spark wider dialogues throughout the region.

Hakan Olgun, an associate professor of theology at Istanbul University, said Francis has an opportunity first of all to mend divisions created in Catholic-Muslim dialogue after Pope Benedict XVI's 2006 speech in Regensburg, Germany.

In that speech, the pope quoted a 14th-century Byzantine emperor who had criticized forced conversions of Christians to Islam, then generalized that the religion itself was "bad and inhuman."

Benedict's speech "deeply hurt Muslims," and his visit later in 2006 to Turkey "was not enough to overcome the disappointment," said Olgun, a Muslim who has focused his research on the Protestant Reformation and conducted an interreligious dialogue project in 2006 with 30 other scholars at the Diyanet.

"The interreligious dialogue process in Turkey, initiated by [Pope] John Paul II, ended with the speech of Benedict XVI," he continued. "This issue also quietly withdrew from not only [from the] public's agenda but also the academic field."

Olgun said economic and social reality in Francis' native Latin America are "largely similar" to those in Turkey.

"Pope Francis can turn a new page in the way of dialogue," he said.

Francis, he said, "may criticize secularization, limitless consumption, limitless freedom, unfair share [of goods], injustice and dictatorship, and thus he can provide a common ground for dialogue with Muslims again."

A. Rashied Omar, a U.S.-based academic and Muslim leader, also said the pope's visit could serve to boost dialogue between the two faiths but placed emphasis on the need for his religious leaders to reciprocate Francis' efforts.

Saying that Christian-Muslim relations "have reached one of its all-time lows" because of "unjust global geopolitics and the attendant rise of religious extremism," Omar said Francis' trip "could serve as source of healing and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims."

"In order to maximize this invaluable opportunity for dialogical engagement ... however, Muslim leaders in particular need to do much more to reach out, engage and embrace Pope Francis' invitation to interfaith dialogue and solidarity," said Omar, a scholar of Islamic studies and peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Omar, who also serves as an imam at the Claremont Main Road Mosque in Cape Town, South Africa, said Francis' focus in his papacy on speaking for the globally impoverished and those suffering from violence could create a unique opening for interfaith efforts.

"Pope Francis' papacy has inaugurated a constructive platform for credible Muslim leaders to enter into a renewed dialogue with Catholics on the critical question of interpretations of sacred Scripture and the roots of violence in our contemporary world," he said.

"By locating such a conversation within the broader framework of Pope Francis' theology of compassion for the poor, which offers a powerful social critique of our global culture of consumerism, covetousness and opulence, interreligious dialogue will find even greater resonance among Muslims," he continued.

During Francis' visit to Ankara on Friday, he will meet only with government officials. After visiting the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul on Saturday, he will say Mass for the small Latin Rite Roman Catholic community at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

Following those visits, the pontiff will host an ecumenical prayer and then have a private meeting with Orthodox Christian leader Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.

The meeting will be the third for Francis and Bartholomew, considered "first among equals" in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, following the patriarch's historic visit to Rome in 2013 for Francis' inauguration and their joint trip to the Holy Land in May.

The two are to meet again Sunday for lunch and are expected to sign a joint declaration about the visit.

Mentioning the trip in [his general audience Wednesday](#) at the Vatican, Francis asked those present at St. Peter's Square to pray that "Peter's visit to his brother Andrew may bring fruits of peace, sincere dialogue between religions and harmony in the Turkish nation."

Catholics trace the lineage of the pope to the foundation of the church in Rome by St. Peter. Orthodox Christians trace the lineage of their patriarch to the foundation of the church in Constantinople (now Istanbul) by Peter's brother, St. Andrew.

For all the symbolism held in the visit between Francis and Bartholomew, one Orthodox theologian said one of its impacts might also be toward dialogue with Muslims.

Noting the past tensions held among Orthodox Christians and Catholics following the split of the churches in 1054, Aristotle Papanikolaou said the modern meeting of their two leaders shows how reconciliation can be achieved.

"The instability in the region will not be greatly impacted by this visit, but it does point in a small way toward the kinds of efforts that one-time 'enemies' could take toward reconciliation," said Papanikolaou, a senior fellow at and co-founder of the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University.

"In that sense, it is a call not simply to Christians but to all peoples to realize a reconciliation that is possible for humans," he said.

Omar, the Muslim imam and theologian, related the pope's trip to accounts that the 13th-century St. Francis of Assisi traveled through the Crusades-era Middle East to seek out a Muslim leader and pursue dialogue.

"It is my sincere hope that Muslim leaders will take up the dialogical invitation and solidarity in a comparable spirit of reverence and hospitality with which the 12th-century Muslim leader, Sultan al-Kamil, welcomed the saint of Assisi from whom the current pope takes his name," he said.

[Joshua J. McElwee is *NCR* Vatican correspondent. His email address is [jmcelwee@ncronline.org](mailto:jmcelwee@ncronline.org). Follow him on Twitter: [@joshjmac](#).]

**Source:** <http://ncronline.org/news/global/francis-heads-turkey-dialogue-muslims-key-focus>

## Istanbul bishop: Pope visiting an unseen Christian community



One unique aspect of Pope Francis' visit to Turkey this weekend? That some in the overwhelmingly Muslim country may not even know there are Christians here for the pontiff to visit.

Illustrating that point in an interview Thursday, the bishop who leads Istanbul's Latin Rite Roman Catholic community said a Turk stopped him a few days ago as he was heading to church to ask why the building had a bell that was ringing.

"I said it was to ask for prayer," said Bishop Louis Pelâtre. "He said, 'I am Muslim; we don't do that.' I said, 'You are Muslim, I am Christian.'"

"Not everybody can understand it," said Pelâtre. "They think here, in Turkey, they think everybody is Muslim."

"They know there are Christians, but they do not know they are here," he continued. "For them it is something special, something outside the ordinary life."

Pelâtre, who serves as the apostolic vicar for the Latin Rite community in Istanbul, was speaking in an *NCR* interview ahead of the pope's visit to Turkey Friday-Sunday.

After landing in the political capital of Ankara Friday afternoon to greet Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Francis will spend Saturday and Sunday in the historic Christian center

of Istanbul, largely focusing his time on meetings with Orthodox Christian leader Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Throughout the visit, the pontiff will find himself in a different environment from the European Christian context. A country of some 76 million, 97 percent of Turkey's population identifies with the Islamic faith and there are estimated to be less than 150,000 Christians in the country.

Pelâtre's community, however, is even smaller. One of four main Catholic groups in Istanbul in full communion the Roman Catholic church -- among Armenian Catholics, Syrian Catholics, and Chaldean Catholics -- there are estimated to be just 15,500 Latin Rite Catholics in the city.

Pelâtre, a native of France who has lived in Turkey for 44 years and served in his role in Istanbul for 22, said that many Latin Rite Catholics who historically lived in Istanbul have now emigrated abroad. Much of his community, the bishop said, is composed of refugees from other parts of the world -- primarily Africa and other parts of Asia.

Because the community is so small, said the bishop, it cannot offer refugees all they need.

"The refugees are in need of everything," said Pelâtre. "But we do not have the possibility to give them enough. We have [the Catholic aid agency] Caritas here, but it is not sufficient."

But the biggest problem facing the Latin Rite community in Istanbul, said Pelâtre, is that the Turkish government does not recognize them legally.

While the Turkish constitution protects freedom of belief, most Christian churches are not designated as places of worship and are instead legally instituted as cultural places or centers of association. The Latin Rite community, however, does not even have that recognition.

Pelâtre said that means his community does not have legal title to the 12 parishes it operates in Istanbul.

"Our problem is the problem of property, because we are not recognized as a community under the law," said the bishop.

"Everyone talks about religious freedom," he continued. "I say it's not a problem of religious freedom."

"We have freedom of worship here," he said. "Inside of the church, we can do what we want. Outside of the church we don't have any freedom -- not any."

Recalling how one person had summarized the situation to him, Pelâtre said: "We have the water as we want but we have not the cups to drink water with. What can we do?"

"It is a big problem when we need to have restoration or repair of the churches," said the bishop. "It is always difficult to get permission from the municipality."

Asked if he thought the pope might raise some of these issues with the Turkish president in their meeting, Pelâtre said he did not think so.

"It's not the time and the place for that," he said.

Mostly, said Pelâtre, the pope's visit "is an opportunity to share who is the pope, what is the Catholic church. Because some Muslims don't know that."

After visiting Ankara Friday, Francis will head to Istanbul Saturday morning, where he will say Mass for the Latin Rite Roman Catholic community at their Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

The pontiff will then host an ecumenical prayer and have a private meeting with Orthodox leader Bartholomew, considered "first among equals" in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

The meeting will be the third for Francis and Bartholomew, following the patriarch's historic visit to Rome in 2013 for Francis' inauguration and their joint trip to the Holy Land last May.

The two are to meet again Sunday for lunch, after signing an expected joint declaration about the visit.

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**Source:** <http://ncronline.org/news/global/istanbul-bishop-pope-visiting-unseen-christian-community>

### Pope in Turkey: Military solutions cannot solve Middle East violence



Pope Francis has said military solutions cannot stop violence in the Middle East, using his first remarks during his visit to Turkey to call instead for wider inter-religious dialogue and a "solidarity of all believers" to counter religious fundamentalism.

Speaking to the leadership of the continent-straddling country in the capital of Ankara Friday, the pontiff said flatly that the "grave conflicts" in Iraq and Syria "cannot be resolved solely through a military response."

"What is required is a concerted commitment on the part of all, based on mutual trust, which can pave the way to lasting peace, and enable resources to be directed, not to weaponry, but to the other noble battles worthy of man," said Francis.

The pope was speaking Friday hours after touching down in Turkey, where he is visiting Ankara Friday before heading to the historic Christian center of Istanbul Saturday and Sunday. Francis was addressing Turkish leaders, including president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at the presidential palace Friday afternoon.

While the pontiff did not mention any perpetrators of the violence in the region by name, his remarks seemed to be focused on the violence perpetrated by the so-called "Islamic State" militant group.

Mentioning "hundreds of thousands" of minority populations like Christians and Yazidis in Iraq and Syria who have been forced to flee their homes "in order to survive and remain faithful to their religious beliefs, the pontiff sharply critiqued the ongoing violence.

"The Middle East ... has for too long been a theater of fratricidal wars, one born of the other, as if the only possible response to war and violence must be new wars and further acts of violence," said the pontiff.

"How much longer must the Middle East suffer the consequences of this lack of peace?" he asked forcefully. "We must not resign ourselves to ongoing conflicts as if the situation can never change for the better!"

To counter what he labeled "fanaticism and fundamentalism," Francis called for a "solidarity of all believers" based on four principles:

- Respect for human life;
- Freedom of worship and "to live according to the moral teachings of one's religion;"
- "Commitment to ensuring what each person requires for a dignified life;" and,
- Care for the environment.

"The peoples and the states of the Middle East stand in urgent need of such solidarity, so that they can 'reverse the trend' and successfully advance a peace process, repudiating war and violence and pursuing dialogue, the rule of law, and justice," said the pontiff.

Francis also subtly criticized the leader of Turkey in his address, telling them to grant the same rights of expression to all people of faith in the overwhelmingly Muslim nation.

Calling on the country to serve as an example of inter-religious dialogue and encounter, the pontiff told the leaders it is "essential that all citizens -- Muslim, Jewish, and Christian -- enjoy the same rights and respect the same duties both in the provision and practice of the law."

"Freedom of religion and freedom of expression, when truly guaranteed to each person, will help friendship to flourish and thus become an eloquent sign of peace," said the pontiff.

"The Middle East, Europe, and the world all await this maturing of friendship," said the pope.

A country of some 76 million, 97 percent of Turkey's population identifies with the Islamic faith.

While the Turkish constitution protects freedom of belief, in recent years Turks critical of Erdoğan's government have said those protections are not practiced in fact. In one example, most Christian churches are not designated as places of worship and are instead legally instituted as cultural places or centers of association.

One popular Turkish academic and inter-religious dialogue expert said in an interview Thursday that Erdoğan's government was even practicing a version of authoritarian Islam.

"Through the centuries, Islam in Turkey has always had [a] liberal and humanist interpretation," said M. Niyazi Öktem, a professor of law at Fatih University in Istanbul and a Muslim who has worked for decades on inter-religious dialogue with Catholics and Christians.

But Erdoğan, said Öktem, "is showing the authoritarian aspect of the Islamic religion."

Erdoğan, who was elected the Turkish president in July and took office in August, previously served as the prime minister of the country from 2003 to 2014. While the Turkish constitution hands most powers of government to the prime minister, leaving the president a largely ceremonial figure, some analysts say Erdoğan is attempting to consolidate more power into his new office.

Öktem also said he did not "have any hope" that Erdoğan would "reopen a new door with moderate Islam and the Western world." Continuing, the academic said, "that's the reason I don't see any political influence of the Holy Father [coming] to Ankara."

Another critic of the Turkish government agreed that it seemed unlikely Francis' visit would address criticisms, but said he thought the papal visit could have unseen impacts.

"I believe religious leaders setting example for their communities matters a lot," said Fatih Ceran, external affairs director for the Journalists and Writers Foundation in Istanbul, a group that focuses on inter-religious dialogue.

"It's a principled attitude," said Ceran. "That dialogue is good; it's worth promoting; it's valuable."

Ceran, whose group is the only non-governmental organization in Turkey with consultative status at the U.N., also said Francis' visit could have an impact in combating an increasingly isolationist attitude taken by the Erdoğan government.

"We are going through some kind of isolation and isolation goes hand in hand with xenophobic attitudes," said Ceran. "Pope Francis' visit in such a context is a very positive message, both on behalf of his institution and his person."

Following his address to the political leaders Friday, Francis met that evening with the head of the country's Presidency of Religious Affairs, a government ministry known commonly as the Diyanet that is charged with providing and regulating religious services in Turkey.

In remarks to the Diyanet, Francis largely restated his earlier address but said: "As religious leaders, we are obliged to denounce all violations against human dignity and human rights."

"The world expects those who claim to adore God to be men and women of peace who are capable of living as brothers and sisters, regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural or ideological differences," said the pontiff.

In the speech at the Diyanet the pope also expressed gratitude to Turkey for housing refugees from conflicts in other places, particularly Iraq and Syria.

"This is a clear example of how we can work together to serve others, an example to be encouraged and maintained," said the pontiff.

Francis will travel to Istanbul Saturday morning, where after visiting the famous Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sophia the pontiff will say Mass for Istanbul's small Latin Rite Roman Catholic community at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

Following those visits, the pontiff will host an ecumenical prayer and then have a private meeting with Orthodox Christian leader Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.

The meeting will be the last in several for Francis and Bartholomew, considered "first among equals" in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, following the patriarch's historic visit to Rome in 2013 for Francis' inauguration and their joint trip to the Holy Land last May.

The two are to meet again Sunday for lunch, after signing an expected joint declaration about the visit.

There has been very little notice as yet of the pope's visit in Istanbul, where there are no banners announcing the visit and news stations have rarely mentioned the pope's arrival.

The head of Istanbul's Latin Rite Catholic community said in an interview Thursday that his community, comprised of just 17,000 people in the city, was [virtually unseen](#).

Turks, said Istanbul's Apostolic Vicar Bishop Louis Pelâtre, "think everybody is Muslim."

"They know there are Christians, but they do not know they are here," he continued. "For them it is something special, something outside the ordinary life."

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**Source:** <http://ncronline.org/news/global/pope-turkey-military-solutions-cannot-solve-middle-east-violence>

## Francis decries forced uniformity, receives blessing from Patriarch Bartholomew



Visiting the ancient Christian community that is now but a small minority in overwhelmingly Muslim Turkey, Pope Francis on Saturday called on the church to leave its "comfort zone" and to "throw off defensiveness" to overcome misunderstanding and division.

Speaking to a varied congregation of Latin Rite Roman Catholics, Eastern Rite Catholics, and Orthodox in a homily in Istanbul's small Latin Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Francis praised diversity in the church and warned against trying to "tame" God by forcing uniformity.

The pontiff's remarks came just hours after he prayed with a Muslim leader at one of Istanbul's most famous mosques. Later, he visited Orthodox leader Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and asked for the patriarch's blessing, bowing in front of him to receive a kiss on the back of the head.

"The temptation is always within us to resist the Holy Spirit, because he takes us out of our comfort zone and unsettles us; he makes us get up and drives the church forward," the pontiff said at the Latin Rite church.

"In truth, the church shows her fidelity to the Holy Spirit in as much as she does not try to control or tame him," said Francis. "We Christians become true missionary disciples, able to challenge consciences, when we throw off our defensiveness and allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit. He is freshness, imagination and newness." "In our journey of faith and fraternal living, the more we allow ourselves to be humbly guided by the Spirit of the Lord, the more we will overcome misunderstandings, divisions, and disagreements and be a credible sign of unity and peace," he continued.

Francis' remarks Saturday came on the second day of his three-day visit to Turkey during a Mass with the Latin Rite Catholic community in Istanbul, which has just some 17,000 members.

Bartholomew was present at Saturday's Mass, along with a metropolitan bishop of the Syro-Orthodox church and representatives of Istanbul's Protestant communities.

Of Turkey's population of 76 million, 97 percent are Muslim.

Later Saturday, Francis visited the patriarchal church of St. George, where Bartholomew and the ecumenical patriarchate are centered. The bishops led a joint ecumenical prayer together before addressing one another.

After his remarks, Francis turned to Bartholomew and said he wanted to ask a favor: "to bless me and the church of Rome."

Walking toward the patriarch, Francis bowed to Bartholomew's chest, at which point the Orthodox leader planted a kiss on Francis' white skullcap.

In his remarks to Bartholomew, Francis meditated on the joy and hope given from God to God's people, as foretold by the prophet Zachariah. The pontiff related that promise to the roles of Sts. Peter and Andrew, brothers and apostles of Jesus from whom the Roman pontiff and the Constantinopolitan patriarch trace their respective lineages.

"Andrew and Peter heard this promise; they received this gift," said Francis. "They were blood brothers, yet their encounter with Christ transformed them into brothers in faith and charity."

"What a grace, Your Holiness, to be brothers in the hope of the Risen Lord," said the pope.

For the Latin Rite Catholics at the Mass earlier Saturday, Francis' visit was unusually intimate and personal given their small number in the city. One member of the community said the pope's visit reminded her that their group is part of the larger church.

"It's good to know that even though we are a small flock, we are not forgotten," said Arusyar Safa, who spoke prior to the Mass.

"When you live in a country where you are a minority, it's like most of the time you live the Bible," said Safa, an Istanbul native. "Besides just proclaiming it, you live it. And that's how you give your Christian life."

Perhaps envisioning the pope's homily, another member of the community praised the different Catholic and Christian rites present in Istanbul.

"We have many different faces, different churches, different communities, different congregations," said Isabelle de Mannoury de Croisilles, a Frenchwoman who has lived in Istanbul for eight years.

"It makes many differences, but this gives us an opportunity to discuss together and to share something in common," she said.

Francis' visit to Istanbul comes after he spent Friday visiting the Turkish capital of Ankara, where he met and spoke with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

### **Prayers at mosque, interreligious agreement**

The pontiff's remarks at the Catholic cathedral came after he had visited two of Istanbul's most historic sites Saturday morning: the Sultan Ahmed Mosque, commonly known as the Blue Mosque, and the Hagia Sophia, a sixth-century Orthodox basilica that was converted into a mosque in the 15th century before becoming a museum in the 20th.

Arriving at the Blue Mosque, Francis was greeted by the Muslim Grand Mufti of Istanbul, Mehmet Görmez, along with another mufti and two imams. Following Muslim custom, the pontiff removed his shoes on entering the worship space.

The group toured the mosque together. Vatican spokesman Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi said upon seeing the grandness of the space, Francis told Görmez, "Not only must we praise God and glorify him, but we must also adore him."

Accompanied by dozens of photographers, the two religious leaders then paused for a moment of what Lombardi classified as "silent adoration." For more than three minutes, the two stood motionless in prayer or contemplation before the mosque's Mihrab, a niche in the wall present in mosques that helps Muslims identify the direction of Mecca.

Francis stood with his head bowed and his hands intertwined across his waist. Görmez had his hands open, palms facing up.

Lombardi said the adoration was "a beautiful moment of inter-religious dialogue." At one point in the religious leaders' brief visit, said Lombardi, Görmez asked Francis: "God is a God of justice and of mercy. We are in agreement on this?"

"Certainly," Lombardi said Francis replied.

Security for the pope's visit has been extraordinarily tight. Officials estimated that an estimated 6,000 police officers had been mobilized in Istanbul for Francis' visit. As the papal motorcade drove through the city, many police cars had their doors open, with suited officers standing in the doors as the cars moved so they could see the surroundings more clearly.

### **Francis a 'revolution' for Orthodox-Catholic unity**

Francis, the fourth pope to visit the patriarchal church in modern times, will visit the patriarchate's church of St. George again Sunday to participate in the Orthodox celebration of the Feast of St. Andrew.

Some Orthodox bishops said that Francis' visit represents a new spirit of collaboration and possibility between the two traditions, which split from each other in the year 1054.

One Orthodox metropolitan, the rough equivalent of a Catholic archbishop, said the way Francis has been acting as pope has been a large step forward in Catholic-Orthodox relations.

"Historically speaking, I would call it a revolution," said Metropolitan John Zizioulas, leader of the Eastern Orthodox community in Pergamon and a noted theologian who has been co-chair of dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. "It's a very, very important development."

Taking the example that Francis refers to himself much more as the bishop of Rome rather than as pope, Zizioulas said that was "very important, theologically and ecclesiology."

"That brings the papacy very close to the Orthodox understanding because for the Orthodox every patriarch is a bishop, fundamentally," said Zizioulas, speaking at a press conference hosted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate Friday evening.

"The main thing is that he's the bishop of Rome and therefore the primacy is not the primacy of an individual, but the primacy of the local church and this is extremely important," he said.

Zizioulas also said that the recent synod of bishops in Rome on family life issues emphasized the important role that the Orthodox place on synodality, or the notion that a bishop or patriarch leads in communion with his brother bishops.

"One of the problems that we have to solve in our relations is whether the synod has a consultative role or a decisive role -- to what extent the synod can really decide or it is simply a body that suggests to the pope certain ideas and the pope then still decides," said Zizioulas.

"I think in the way things are developing, and particularly with the present pope, we're moving very much in the direction of giving to the synod, to synodality, a decisive and not just a consultative role," he said.

The Orthodox, said Zizioulas, "are watching to see how this synod has been functioning and we notice the openness and the freedom of expression ... which are really very positive steps."

Another Orthodox metropolitan speaking at the Friday press conference focused on the struggles that Christian community faces with issues of religious freedom in overwhelming Muslim Turkey, particularly an ongoing attempt to reopen the historic Orthodox seminary on the island of Halki.

The seminary, which traces its roots to the first millennium, was closed in 1971 when the Turkish parliament banned all private institutions of higher education.

"Halki seminary is not just a minor problem," said Metropolitan Elpidophoros, leader of the Eastern Orthodox community in Bursa and abbot of the school. "It's not just a school that is closed. Halkiseminary is the possibility of this church to renew itself."

"If we have the freedom of worship in this country ... this is not enough if the church does not have the possibility in this worship to educate a priest who would then lead this worship, who would preach, who would bless the faithful," said Elpidophoros.

"If there is no possibility to educate this priest, this clergy, then the freedom of worship has a time limit that will end with the life of the priest leading the community," he said.

Religious freedom is a key issue for Christians in Turkey. While the Turkish constitution protects freedom of belief, in recent years Turks critical of president Erdoğan's government have said those protections are not practiced in fact.

In one example, most Christian churches are not designated as places of worship and are instead legally instituted as cultural places or centers of association. Orthodox churches, however, do not even have that designation and do not hold even hold legal title to most of the churches and property they hold.

"This institution legally does not exist," said Elpidophoros. "It exists only de facto in this country. There is no legal personality of this institution. This is the main issue that brings then all other problems related to the exercise of our faith."

"When human rights here are violated, this is an issue for our brothers in the west," he continued. "We are not brothers only on the theoretical issues ... but also the human aspects of life in our respective countries where we exercise our faith."

Both Elpidophoros and Zizioulas said there is much more today that connects Orthodox and Roman Catholics than separates them.

Mentioning the violence and struggle Christians face in the Middle East, where hundreds of thousands have fled ancient centers of the religion seeking refuge from groups such as the so-called "Islamic State," Zizioulas said no one bothers to ask what denomination a Christian belongs to.

"The difficulties which the Christians are facing bring us closer to each other because in those areas ... nobody asks whether you are Catholic or an Orthodox," said Zizioulas.

"It's enough that you are a Christian," he continued. "And therefore if those outside Christianity regard us as one family without the divisions with which we are accustomed ... whether we like it or not we are coming closer to each other."

"We live in a very important time ecumenically speaking with the present pope and the present circumstances and I hope this will make it more easy for us to unite also at a theological level," he said.

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**Source:** <http://ncronline.org/news/global/francis-decries-forced-uniformity-prays-mosque-turkey>

## Francis and Bartholomew issue resounding, historic calls for church reunification



Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, leaders of the millennium-long separated Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, have issued resounding and historic calls for the reunification of their global communities.

Speaking to one another after a solemn Orthodox divine liturgy at the Church of St. George Sunday, both leaders pledged to intensify efforts for full unity of their churches, saying such unity already exists among Christians dying in conflicts in the Middle East.

For his part, Francis made what appears to be the strongest and most encompassing call yet from a Catholic pontiff for unity. Seeking to assure Orthodox leaders that restoration of full communion between the churches would respect Eastern traditions, he said reunion would "not signify the submission of one to the other, or assimilation."

"I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic church does not intend to impose any conditions except that of the shared profession of faith," said the pope.

Continuing, Francis said: "The one thing that the Catholic church desires, and that I seek as Bishop of Rome, 'the church which presides in charity,' is communion with the Orthodox churches."

Bartholomew called the process for reunification of the two churches -- started by Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras with a meeting in Jerusalem 50 years ago -- "irreversible" and said the two communities have no option but to join together.

"We no longer have the luxury of isolated action," said Bartholomew. "The modern persecutors of Christians do not ask which church their victims belong to. The unity that concerns us is regrettably already occurring in certain regions of the world through the blood of martyrdom."

The addresses by Bartholomew and Francis came on the last day of the pope's stay in Turkey, which the pontiff has been visiting since Friday. They spoke to one another at the patriarchal church of St. George, where Bartholomew and the ecumenical patriarchate are centered.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, which together are estimated to have some 2 billion adherents, have been separated since the year 1054. Serious efforts for reconciliation between the traditions did not start until the 1964 meeting of Paul and Athenagoras, which eventually led to the opening of joint theological dialogues on reunification in 1980.

Francis and Bartholomew also issued a joint declaration following the liturgy Sunday, pledging "to intensify our efforts to promote the full unity of all Christians, and above all Catholics and Orthodox."

But the strongest words of the day came in the leaders' earlier speeches to one another, in which they both stressed the similarities between their persons and the focus of their communities and made poetic and serious commitments to seeking unity.

Saying that as a result of the Paul and Athenagoras meeting "the flow of history has literally changed direction," Bartholomew said until then "cold love" between the churches had been rekindled and their desire to reunify "galvanized."

"Thenceforth, the road to Emmaus has opened up before us – a road that, while perhaps lengthy and sometimes even rugged, is nonetheless irreversible," said the patriarch.

Asking a series of rhetorical questions, Bartholomew then seemed to pick up on a key phrase of Francis' papacy so far, that the church "cannot be self-centered, revolving around itself."

"What is the benefit of boasting for what we have received unless these translate into life for humanity and our world both today and tomorrow?" asked Bartholomew. The church, he said, "is called to keep its sight fixed not so much on yesterday as on today and tomorrow.

"The church exists not for itself, but for the world and for humanity," he continued.

"Even as we are preoccupied with our own contentions, the world experiences the fear of survival, the concern for tomorrow," said the patriarch. "How can humanity survive tomorrow when it is severed today by diverse divisions, conflicts and animosities, frequently even in the name of God?"

"Nowadays many people place their hope on science; others on politics; still others in technology," he continued. "Yet none of these can guarantee the future, unless humanity espouses the message of reconciliation, love and justice; the mission of embracing the other, the stranger, and even the enemy."

"This is precisely why the path toward unity is more urgent than ever for those who invoke the name of the great Peacemaker," said Bartholomew. "This is precisely why our responsibility as Christians is so great before God, humankind and history."

Francis took a similar theme, saying that in today's world "voices are being raised which we cannot ignore and which implore our churches to live deeply our identity as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ."

The pontiff mentioned particularly the voices of:

- The poor, "who suffer from severe malnutrition, growing unemployment, the rising numbers of unemployed youth, and from increasing social exclusion."

"As Christians we are called together to eliminate that globalization of indifference which today seems to reign supreme, while building a new civilization of love and solidarity," he said.

- Victims of conflicts, saying: "We hear this resoundingly here, because some neighboring countries are scarred by an inhumane and brutal war."

"The cry of the victims of conflict urges us to move with haste along the path of reconciliation and communion between Catholics and Orthodox," said the pope. Citing Paul VI's encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, he asked: "Indeed, how can we credibly proclaim the message of peace which comes from Christ, if there continues to be rivalry and disagreement between us?"

- Young people, many of whom "seek happiness solely in possessing material things and in satisfying their fleeting emotions."

"New generations will never be able to acquire true wisdom and keep hope alive unless we are able to esteem and transmit the true humanism which comes from the Gospel and from the church's age-old experience," said Francis. "It is precisely the young who today implore us to make progress towards full communion."

Bartholomew also took a personal tone with Francis, saying his brief papacy had "already manifested you in peoples' conscience today as a herald of love, peace and reconciliation."

"You preach with words, but above and beyond all with the simplicity, humility and love toward everyone that you exercise your high ministry," Bartholomew told Francis. "You inspire trust in those who doubt, hope in those who despair, anticipation in those who expect a church that nurtures all people."

Mentioning that the Orthodox are preparing for a Great Council of their bishops in 2016, Bartholomew also expressed hope that once the Orthodox and Catholics reunified they could host a Great Ecumenical Council together.

"Let us pray that, once full communion is restored, this significant and special day will also not be prolonged," he said.

In their joint declaration together, the patriarch and pope also expressed "common concern" for "Iraq, Syria, and the whole Middle East." While not mentioning specifically any particular group such as the Islamic State, the two lamented the estimated hundreds of thousands who have been forced to flee violence in the region.

"Many of our brothers and sisters are being persecuted and have been forced violently from their homes," said the two leaders.

"It even seems that the value of human life has been lost, that the human person no longer matters and may be sacrificed to other interests," they continued. "And, tragically, all this is met by the indifference of many."

Because of the violence against Christians, they said, "there is also an ecumenism of suffering."

"Just as the blood of the martyrs was a seed of strength and fertility for the church, so too the sharing of daily sufferings can become an effective instrument of unity," they continued.

Bartholomew and Francis also called for renewed efforts at Christian-Muslim dialogue, saying "we also recognize the importance of promoting a constructive dialogue with Islam based on mutual respect and friendship."

"Muslims and Christians are called to work together for the sake of justice, peace and respect for the dignity and rights of every person, especially in those regions where they once lived for centuries in peaceful coexistence and now tragically suffer together the horrors of war," they said.

The two leaders also mentioned continued turmoil in Ukraine, where some 30 percent of the population is estimated to be Orthodox, calling on "all parties involved to pursue the path of dialogue and of respect for international law."

Francis was to depart Istanbul for the Vatican Sunday afternoon, after meeting with a group of Syrian refugees living in Turkey after fleeing violence in their home country.

During his three-day trip to Turkey, in which Francis visited the capital of Ankara on Friday before heading to Istanbul Saturday, the pontiff also met with Turkish leaders, toured a mosque and the historic Hagia Sophia, and said Mass for Istanbul's small Catholic community.

The pontiff's visit to the continent-straddling nation was keenly watched both for its significance to ecumenical relations and to western outreach to the Middle East, where many have been the victim of violence from the Islamic State group.

Speaking to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Friday, [Francis said](#) military solutions cannot stop violence in the Middle East and instead called for a "solidarity of all believers" to counter religious fundamentalism.

To Istanbul's small Catholic community Saturday, the pontiff [called on the church](#) to leave its "comfort zone" and to "throw off defensiveness" to overcome misunderstanding and division.

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 باب توما - ص.ب ٢٢٢٦٠  
 دمشق - سورية



Dearly beloved in Christ, inspired by this Christmas spirit of joy and love, we wish to express our profound love for all of you, the faithful children of the Holy Church of Antioch in Malankara and all over the world. Your strong faith in the Lord and unflinching loyalty to the Holy Throne of Antioch is greatly appreciated. Whenever we hear the statement, *“Even if we forget our mother we will not forget Antioch”*, our heart throbs with joy and thanksgiving to Our Lord for the true faith, which is inscribed in the heart of every faithful. The faith of St. Peter, the first Patriarch of Antioch; the faith of St. Thomas, the apostle of India; the faith of our church fathers, prelates, hermits, monks; the faith of countless number of martyrs who gave up their lives for the sake of the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back at the recent history of our church in India, especially the last fifty years, we recognize and admire the tireless work of our dear brother-in-Christ, His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I, the Catholicos of India. We truly believe that in His foreknowledge, the Good Lord appoints from time to time *shepherds after His own Heart (Jeremiah 3: 15)*, who are entrusted with His divine work on earth. His Beatitude the Catholicos has proved that he is such a shepherd through his hard work and commitment. Our dear spiritual children, we are looking forward to meeting you during our forthcoming Apostolic Visit. Our love to you and eagerness to visit you is best expressed by prophet Isaiah who speaks to Zion on behalf of the Lord with the following words: *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me” (Isaiah 49:15, 16)*.

Our beloved spiritual children, when we celebrate this feast of the Incarnation of the Lord, let our hearts be filled with the love of God, the love which is self giving, forgiving and ready to sacrifice for the sake of all humankind. There is no greater love than this. We exhort all of you to embrace the spirit of forgiveness at this time of Christmas. God knows the pains and wounds in our hearts. When we forgive in our hearts, God will comfort us and fill us with His unfathomable love. May the intercession of the Mother of divine love, along with all the prophets, apostles, saints and martyrs be with us to be empowered by the Spirit of Love in this Christmas. Once again we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We exhort all of you to pray for our suffering people in the Middle East especially in Syria and Iraq. We remember our two kidnapped brother Archbishops with much pain and seek prayers for them too at this occasion. Pray for us too that we may fulfil the will of God in everything we do. May the Grace of God be with you all. We extend our Apostolic Blessings to you all.

## Other Related News

[The UAE and Saudi War on the Muslim Brotherhood Could Be Trouble for the U.S.](#)

The UAE Cabinet approved a list of 83 designated terrorist organizations on Saturday, including al Qaeda

and the Islamic State. Much more significant, though, was the inclusion of many Muslim organizations based in the West that are believed to be allied with the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Prominent among them are two American Muslim groups: the Council on American Islamic Relations and the Muslim American Society.

The decision to put two mainstream U.S. Muslim groups on its list of terrorist organizations is part of an initiative, together with the Saudis, to undermine the Islamist movement known as the Muslim Brotherhood. The move is unlikely to succeed, but it could cause problems between the U.S. government and the American Muslim community.

Ever since the Muslim Brotherhood's rise in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have felt deeply threatened by the Islamist movement. Both countries supported the July 2013 coup that toppled the Brotherhood-led government of Mohammed Morsi in Egypt. They continue to use their financial might to prop up the government of former military chief President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. In addition, they are trying to make sure that the Brotherhood in the region is generally weakened, or even decimated.

[Read more »](#)

### [Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly – December 19](#)

Turkey's Refugees – Rising violence by ISIS and the ongoing civil war in Syria have generated what the United Nation's calls the "worst refugee crisis since World War Two." Nearly 1.6 million refugees have fled to Turkey. Managing editor Kim Lawton traveled to Istanbul and to Kilis, on the border between Turkey and Syria, for our special report about the challenges facing the refugees and how people of faith are trying to help them.

**Source:** <http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2014/12/18/religion-ethics-newsweekly-december-19/>

## The Tricky Path to a Global Climate Agreement



The Conference of Parties (COP 20) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will convene a critical session in Lima December 1–12. It precedes COP 21, to be held in Paris in December 2015, at which a post-Kyoto global agreement (post 2020) on climate change must be finalized, in accordance with the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. The outline of the Paris agreement is expected to begin to take shape in Lima. This agreement will determine the ambition and contours of the global response to climate change in the years ahead.

### **Expectations and Challenges in Lima**

The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) is mandated with reaching a global agreement by COP 21. Such an agreement would include a vast range of issues including mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, transparency of action, and support for capacity building.

Since the ADP is under the convention, the contours of a new agreement will need to be in consonance with the principles of the UNFCCC, including Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR/RC). While the principles are meant to guide efforts toward the [ultimate objective](#) of the Convention —to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations—they have not necessarily been fully observed by Annex 1 countries, the countries that had committed to take the lead in these efforts, per [Article 4 of the Convention](#).

Alongside eliciting a renewed commitment from all parties to the mandate from Durban, the Lima meeting should also establish robust processes to consider scientific [assessments](#) and [reviews](#) (on climate change effects and responses) that are being developed or have recently been submitted to the

convention, including the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The Lima meeting is also expected to lead to decisions on the contours, time lines, and anchoring in ADP, of the so-called [Intended Nationally Determined Contributions](#) (INDCs).

### **Factors Conditioning a Global Agreement**

There are at least four developments that may influence any global agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These include the domestic political challenges in the United States, the evolving global energy scenario, the European impulse to reindustrialize and regain competitiveness, and the dynamic and evolving role of emerging powers.

Today there are 192 parties to the Kyoto Protocol, yet the world's second largest emitter, the United States, has failed to ratify the protocol. It has, however, in a [submission](#) to the UNFCCC stated that it "supports a Paris agreement that reflects the seriousness and magnitude of what science demands." Earlier in the year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency unveiled ambitious regulations on emissions mitigation for new and existing power plants as part of President Barack Obama's [Climate Action Plan](#).

While a global agreement without U.S. participation cannot be considered a success, Republican leaders including Senator Mitch McConnell—who is likely to become Senate Majority Leader in the new Congress in January 2015—have [publicly](#) criticized the Obama administration's climate change policies. The U.S. submission on the elements of a 2015 agreement outlines clearly that the country expects certain elements of the Paris agreement to be internationally legally binding. Yet the possibility of the U.S. Congress agreeing to commitments that fulfil the ambitious policy response envisioned in the AR5 remains bleak.

The United States is the world's largest oil consumer, and oil prices are at multi-year lows. For the first time since January 1994, the United States imported less than three million barrels of crude oil per day from the members of the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in February 2013. In addition to the shale gas revolution that has inevitably led to an [impulse to industrialize](#) in the United States, there is weak demand from China and the EU that has added to the [downward pressure](#) on the price of oil. OPEC members are split on establishing a floor price for oil in this scenario, and high energy prices cannot be expected to act as a trigger for industrialized countries to invest heavily in alternative energies.

Adding to the energy sector realities is the fact that the European Commission has explicitly [stated](#) that industry will be brought back to the core of European policies. In the midst of burgeoning unemployment, particularly among the youth, the EU agenda is set on bringing industry's weight to 20 percent of GDP by 2020, from around 16 percent today. To fulfil this agenda, EU member countries are already consuming more hydrocarbons.

According to recent [reports](#), Germany has increased coal consumption by 13 percent and the UK by 22 percent in the last four years. The EU is also negotiating an expansive free trade agreement with the United States

(the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) that could give further impetus to reindustrialization. In the midst of these fundamental structural shifts, it is unlikely that EU leaders will commit to aggressive and bold climate change measures required of developed countries.

The rise of rapidly growing developing countries and their different development trajectories will also complicate a global agreement. These countries, including China and India, which together account for nearly three billion people, face domestic imperatives to develop further, albeit of different dimensions and scale. India for one has to provide energy to [300 million](#) of its people that have no access and millions more who have only notional access. It also has to provide jobs to nearly [twelve million](#) people who enter the workforce every year; a large share of those jobs will need to be generated by the manufacturing sector. This means that India will continue to negotiate for space and time to ensure its broad-based economic development and would ideally like to have the support of Brazil, South Africa, India, and China on this.

It remains to be seen how the [recent](#) bilateral agreement between the United States and China could impact the group dynamics and whether this club of countries will continue to weigh in on the climate debate together in the run-up to the Lima and Paris meetings.

### **The Way Ahead**

The COP 20 at Lima will be an exercise in creating trust and credibility mechanisms under the convention. To avoid replicating mistakes from COP 15 at Copenhagen—where negotiations on the draft text fell through in the final hours—the discussions at Lima should be aimed at producing the draft negotiating text for the COP 21. This will enable a transparent and goal oriented process, which will be able to meet many of the expectations and constraints outlined above, at least in the short term.

The factors discussed above indicate that the national contributions as agreed in Paris must be substantive without being burdensome. This can be achieved through an innovative global response that targets three low hanging fruits, assuming the Annex 1 countries demonstrate a new willingness toward fulfilling their commitments on financial and technological flows as per Article 4 of the Convention:

- **Improvement of energy consumption efficiency per unit of revenue earned (energy intensity) of large, energy-intensive corporations operating in industrial and energy sectors across the globe.** Industry and energy sectors account for [45 percent](#) of global emissions. Even relatively nominal gains in these sectors through policy incentives for enhanced energy intensity performance can yield large emission mitigation gains. Only corporations that are over a certain predetermined revenue, profitability, or turnover threshold, across the globe, should be considered within an incentives framework to ensure that actions are commensurate with respective capabilities.
- **Realization of end-use efficiency through demand-side management.** For instance, India's Bureau of Energy Efficiency [estimates](#) that up to 50 percent efficiency gains (relative to current levels) can be realized through such processes domestically in case of commercial buildings alone. Given that the buildings sector accounts for around [8 percent](#) of global emissions, there is significant scope for purposeful collaboration between developed and developing countries in demand side management.
- **If it is understood that the principles enshrined in the UNFCCC should act a barometer for success, the conception of these principles must not be limited to procedural matters.** An example would be the equitable transfer of financial and capacity building assistance from first-

tier cities toward towns and rural areas within and across national geographies. Initiatives such as the [C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group](#) show that multi-stakeholder responses can be leveraged toward an ambitious climate change response and private sector stakeholders are ready to participate. Such initiatives both between countries and within countries would act as a robust means toward achieving sustainability.

In Lima and Paris, the global community must ensure that obsession with the legal nature of the post-Kyoto agreement does not detract from achieving what is eminently possible. The next year will in any case determine whether or not climate multilateralism will work.

**Source:** [http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global\\_memos/p33835?cid=nlc-religion-religion+and+foreign+policy+bulletin--link4-20141218&sp\\_mid=47657098&sp\\_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGfVbC5jb20S1](http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global_memos/p33835?cid=nlc-religion-religion+and+foreign+policy+bulletin--link4-20141218&sp_mid=47657098&sp_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGfVbC5jb20S1)

### Friar Francis: Traces, Words, Images







Source: NY Times

## Top Ten Most Significant World Events in 2014



Every year has its share of significant world events. Two thousand fourteen is no exception. Here is my list of the top ten most significant events of the year. You may want to read what follows closely. Several of these stories could continue to dominate the headlines in 2015.

**10. Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 Disappears.** The disappearance of [Malaysia Airlines Flight 370](#) is a mystery for the ages. How does a plane just vanish? Especially in an age of instant global communication? Nine months after the plane carrying 239 people from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing disappeared we are no closer to any answers. It might have been a tragic accident. Or it might have been [hijacked](#). No one knows. The plane lost contact with air traffic control over the South China Sea, where [territorial disputes abound](#). Nonetheless, Malaysia, China, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Australia, and the United States all [contributed to the search effort](#), making it a great instance of [international cooperation](#). That's not to say everyone was happy with how things unfolded. China in particular [criticized Malaysia's efforts](#) to find the plane, accusing the Malaysian government, which operates [Malaysia Airlines](#), of [stonewalling](#). It didn't help that the search shifted from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean after investigations showed that the plane might have [flown on autopilot for five hours](#) after it lost contact with air traffic control. Because coverage of the plane's disappearance [dominated the news media](#), people around the world learned that floor of the Indian Ocean is [poorly mapped](#) and that modern technology still [can't find everything on the seabed](#). The disappearance of MH-370 has prompted calls for better technology to [track the location of](#)

[planes around the world](#). We [may never know](#) what happened to MH-370. But answers might come with time. An [Air France](#) plane disappeared over the Atlantic Ocean [in 2009](#). It wasn't [located until 2011](#).

**9. Scotland Votes to Remain Part of the United Kingdom.** When British Prime Minister [David Cameron](#) agreed [back in 2012](#) to allow Scotland to hold a referendum on leaving the United Kingdom, [he expected](#) that the "[Better Together](#)" campaign would win in a runaway. He was wrong. Britain had a near-death experience this summer as [pro-independence sentiment surged in Scotland](#). Serious discussions began on [how the break-up of the Union would proceed](#) and what the consequences would [be for England](#). That talk became moot when Scots [voted 55 percent to 45 percent](#) on September 18 to remain in the 307 year-old Union. But the price of victory [was high](#). In the run-up to the referendum, Westminster [promised](#) to give Edinburgh substantial new powers if Scots voted no. Now, Cameron must make good on those promises, as well as deal with their ripple effects. Voters in [England](#), [Wales](#), and Northern Ireland are asking for [special deals](#) like the Scots will get. Meanwhile, the [Scottish National Party \(SNP\)](#) is now [riding a new wave of popularity](#) that might break the [Labour Party's](#) hold on Scotland's seats in the House of Commons come [next May's parliamentary elections](#). That would [shake up British politics considerably](#). There's at least one place in Europe saddened by Scotland's no vote: Spain's Catalonia region. Catalans had hoped that a yes vote in Scotland would put pressure on Madrid to allow them a similar vote. Catalonia held an informal independence referendum last month, and a [majority voted for independence](#). Madrid didn't recognize the vote as legitimate, though, and the status quo holds for now. But expect Catalonia to [continue to push for independence](#).

**8. Eurozone Economies Falter—Again.** Things aren't looking great for the eurozone. European economies look [poised to slide](#) into their third recession in five years. Overall eurozone growth was only 0.2 percent between July and September. Italy is already in recession, and France and Germany are [teetering on the brink](#). Some reports are [more optimistic](#) than [others](#), with [third quarter growth rates up](#). Greece looked to be [emerging from its recession](#), but then a call for [snap elections](#) sent [the Greek stock market crashing last week](#). Even if Europe as a whole manages to stay out of a recession, sluggish growth isn't enough to bring down [high unemployment rates](#), and the even higher [youth unemployment rates](#), plaguing most eurozone countries. The European Central Bank may propose a [new stimulus plan](#), but the details aren't settled yet. If Europe doesn't see robust growth soon, the [nationalist, populist, and outsider parties](#) that did so well in the [European Parliament elections](#) last May will likely [grow in strength](#). If so, you can write off efforts to negotiate a [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership \(TTIP\)](#), the proposed trade deal between the EU and the United States.

**7. Pro-Democracy Protests Erupt in Hong Kong.** "[One country, two systems](#)" has been the operating principle for Chinese rule of Hong Kong since the British returned the city to Chinese control in 1997. The "special administrative region" of seven million people [is promised certain privileges](#) not afforded to other Chinese citizens. However, Beijing has not always held up its end of the bargain. Tensions rose this summer after [Beijing's harsh response](#) to a June demonstration commemorating the [twenty-fifth anniversary of the riots in Tiananmen Square](#). Beijing added fuel to the fire in August by [announcing](#) that only candidates it approved would be allowed to run in the 2017 election for [Hong Kong chief executive](#). The "[Occupy Central](#)" protests demanding that Beijing allow democratic elections in Hong Kong took off. The protesters were met with tear gas, which only [prompted more people join the demonstrations](#). Participation in the protests [peaked in early October](#), and under pressure from

authorities the number of protestors dwindled to [several hundred](#). On December 3, [three protest leaders surrendered themselves](#). After that, police [cracked down](#) on the remaining protest camps. As of today, [all of the camps have been cleared](#). That hardly signals that Hong Kong's dissatisfaction with Beijing's decisions has dissipated. So keep an eye on Hong Kong in 2015.

**6. Narendra Modi Wins in India.** [Narendra Modi](#), the son of a poor tea seller, led the [Bharatiya Janata Party](#) (BJP) to a historic victory in India's May parliamentary election, making it the first party in thirty years to win an [absolute majority](#) of seats. Modi ran on [his record for bringing economic development to the Gujarat state](#) when he was its chief minister. Indian voters hope he can bring the same success to India as a whole. But he faces two immediate problems: political power is decentralized in India, meaning that his opponents will have many ways to derail his plans, and the overall global economy is slowing, meaning that the Indian economy might underperform even if he does everything right. Not surprisingly, [Indians have yet to see](#) significant economic results. Modi has focused on [taming inflation](#) and [improving India's dilapidated infrastructure](#), efforts that could take years to pay off. He has also made progress on trade, reaching [an agreement with President Obama](#) in November that may lead to the implementation of the [WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement](#). Although the economy is job number one for Modi, he devoted plenty of time to foreign policy during his first six months in office. He took [a hard line on Pakistan](#), which [alarmed some critics](#). He also tried to raise India's visibility on the world stage. In September, he [spoke at](#) the opening of the UN General Assembly, stopped by [Madison Square Garden](#) to address a crowd of almost twenty thousand cheering fans who [chanted his name](#), and attended a [state dinner at the White House](#) where [he fasted while his host ate](#). The international buzz Modi has generated could help him in his goal of [making India more attractive to investors](#). Indians may be more impressed, however, with one of his domestic innovations: a website that allows ordinary Indians to track the [comings and goings of more than 50,000 Indian public servants](#). So much for long lunches, short work days, and three-day weekends.

**5. Negotiations on Iran's Nuclear Program Stall.** Optimism ran high in November 2013 when the P5+1 (the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, and Germany) struck an [interim deal to freeze Iran's nuclear program](#). A year later that optimism is giving way to [pessimism](#) that a comprehensive deal will ever be reached. Iranian President [Hassan Rouhani](#) may be more moderate than his predecessor, [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#), but he has been just as unable to get Iran's hardline elements to [concede on the country's nuclear ambitions](#). In January 2014, a six-month [joint plan of action](#) was launched in an attempt to conclude a [negotiations process that has been on and off since 2002](#). As part of that joint plan of action, the United States [began to unfreeze some Iranian assets](#). When the negotiations hit the initial six-month deadline in July with no deal in place, the parties cited the progress they had made and [agreed to extend the talks for another four months](#). Despite [a last minute push](#), the negotiators didn't reach an agreement by the November 24 deadline either. So they [kicked the deadline back to July 1, 2015](#). The [main sticking points](#) in negotiations are [how much uranium](#) Iran will be allowed to enrich and the speed at which [Western sanctions will be rolled back](#). Iran maintains that its uranium enrichment program is for peaceful purposes and has called Western demands "[excessive](#)." The United States, which contends that Iran is seeking nuclear weapon capability, is "[disappointed](#)" with Iran's hardline position. A deal, if one is to be had, likely won't come until negotiators are faced with the next impending deadline.

**4. Oil Prices Crash.** What goes up can come down. Case in point: oil prices. Back in July oil cost over \$100 a barrel; today that barrel costs [just \\$60](#). Some experts predict that prices could soon drop [to \\$50 a](#)

[barrel](#) and stay there for a while. Oil prices have dropped in part because supply is increasing; the advent of hydraulic fracturing has sent [U.S. oil productions soaring](#), Libyan oil has [come back on line](#), and OPEC [can't agree on production cuts](#). The other side of the equation is that demand is falling as growth slows in many parts of the world. Lower prices is great news for consumers and importing countries. Money not spent buying gasoline can be spent or invested on other things. But lower prices is bad news for oil producers. They make less money, and if prices fall far enough, they will even lose money. Oil producing countries like [Norway](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#) that have built up ample rainy day funds during good times should be able to ride out a sustained period of lower prices. But [countries like Iran, Nigeria, and Venezuela](#), which don't have substantial rainy day funds and which rely heavily on oil revenues to fund government programs, could be in a heap of trouble.

**3. Ebola Strikes West Africa.** Few people noticed when [outbreaks of Ebola were officially declared](#) in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone in March. Perhaps because in the [twenty-four previous outbreaks](#), the death toll from the disease, which was [first discovered in 1976](#), seldom exceeded a few dozen victims and never exceeded three hundred. So far in 2014, more than six thousand people have died from Ebola, and a few isolated cases have appeared in [Europe](#) and the [United States](#). This year's outbreak was different partly because it began in a more densely populated area and partly because the international response was slow. [Doctors Without Borders](#), which has had [its teams on the ground since the beginning of the outbreak](#), called the response to the outbreak "[lethally inadequate](#)" and "[slow and uneven](#)." The eventual international response has made some difference. Liberia has made [progress against the virus](#), though more cases are being [reported in Sierra Leone](#). There are major dangers in [declaring victory too soon](#). Researchers around the world are scrambling to [produce a vaccine](#), but it will be a long time before it is ready. And the economic costs of the epidemic could persist long after it ends. The World Bank reports that [economic growth is rapidly decreasing](#) in all three Ebola-plagued countries and [food shortages](#) in the region are becoming increasingly worrying. (For continuing coverage of the outbreak check out [eboladeeplly.org](#).)

**2. ISIS Declares an Islamic Caliphate.** When the [last U.S. combat troops left Iraq](#) in December 2011, Americans thought they had closed the book on Iraq. But the emergence in 2014 of the [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria](#) (ISIS), also known as the [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL\)](#), or simply [the Islamic State](#), showed otherwise. Formerly known as [al-Qaeda in Iraq](#), ISIS has acted so brutally toward its enemies that [al-Qaeda has denounced it](#). But despite that brutality, or perhaps because of it, ISIS took control of a considerable swath of [territory](#) in Iraq and Syria in 2014. Then on June 29, ISIS [declared itself an Islamic caliphate](#). While ISIS clearly threatens [the people living under its rule](#), disagreement exists over [how much it threatens the United States](#). Americans in the region certainly are at risk. ISIS beheaded [three Americans](#) in late summer and early fall. That prompted [President Barack Obama](#) to order [air strikes first against ISIS targets in Iraq](#) and then [in Syria](#). Obama also [dispatched some 3,000 U.S. troops](#) to Iraq to advise the Iraqi army and the Kurdish [Peshmerga](#) on how [to regain the territory](#) that ISIS has taken. Iran [launched its own air strikes](#) on ISIS earlier this month, making it and the United States [uneasy allies](#). The [air strikes have slowed ISIS's advance](#), but the group still controls a sizeable amount of territory, including Iraq's second largest city, [Mosul](#). ISIS also continues to draw [pledges of allegiance from other jihadi groups](#), and foreign jihadists, including [some Americans](#), continue to flock to Syria to join ISIS. Stay tuned.

**1. Russia Annexes Crimea and Threatens the Rest of Ukraine.** Russia's [mid-March annexation of Crimea](#) raised the [specter of a new Cold War](#). The crisis was triggered by the collapse of the government

of Ukraine's pro-Russian President [Viktor Yanukovich](#). He resigned from office in February and [fled the country](#) in the [wake of protests](#) that began three months earlier over his decision not to sign a [much anticipated trade deal with the EU](#). Ukraine, which has been [caught between the East and the West](#) for much of its history, quickly found itself at the mercy of its much larger Russian neighbor once again. On February 27, pro-Russian militants, in all likelihood acting at the direction of Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#), seized [the Crimean capital](#). In a [questionable referendum](#), 95 percent of the Crimeans who voted favored rejoining Russia, which had controlled the peninsula before 1954. Moscow's efforts did not stop there. In May, pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine [declared independence](#); six months later they [held their own elections](#). Meanwhile, the rest of Ukraine elected pro-Western "chocolate king" [Petro Poroshenko](#) in May as its new president. The West immediately recognized Poroshenko's victory. Western criticism of Moscow's aggression was more bark than bite until late July when a Malaysian passenger jet was [shot down over rebel-held territory](#). The United States and EU responded by ratcheting up [sanctions](#) against Russia. The moves did little to change Russian behavior. [Conflict persists](#) despite a ceasefire agreement reached in [September](#). So far more than [four thousand people](#) have been killed in the fighting in eastern Ukraine. Even if the crisis ends soon, we will be living for years with its fallout: increased tensions between Russia and the West that [could potentially remake the geopolitical map](#).

So that's my top ten world events of 2014. You may have a different list. If so, please use the comments below to let me know what significant event you think I left out or how you would reorder the list.

*Rachael Kauss and Corey Cooper helped prepare this post.*

**Source:** [http://blogs.cfr.org/lindsay/2014/12/15/top-ten-most-significant-world-events-in-2014/?cid=nlc-public-the\\_world\\_next\\_year-special\\_edition-link18-20141226&sp\\_mid=47696552&sp\\_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1](http://blogs.cfr.org/lindsay/2014/12/15/top-ten-most-significant-world-events-in-2014/?cid=nlc-public-the_world_next_year-special_edition-link18-20141226&sp_mid=47696552&sp_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1)

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