

# Holy Wisdom

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Peace: Showing that Others Matter!

VOLUME XXV

FALL 2015

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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

### The United Nations 2015 Year in Review



Working Together: Making a Difference.

Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organizations

Dear NGO Colleagues,

The United Nations 2015 Year in Review will give a glimpse of what can be achieved, when we all work together. Please find below the link to look back some of the year's major moments.

<http://www.un.org/en/year-in-review/>

Sincerely,

NGO Relations and Advocacy

Department of Public Information

United Nations Headquarters in New York

<http://outreach.un.org/ngorelations>

Ambassador Anthony DeLuca attended this meeting on Monday November 23, 2015. The "World Against Violent Extremism, (WAVE) meetings were sponsored by the Mission of Iran

**From: Permanent Mission of Iran (I.R.)**

**Dear Colleagues**

**I am pleased to advise that the wave draft resolution, attached herewith, is now agreeable to all delegations, and the only delegation, who had requested a few extra hours, got back to me informing that it is acceptable for them too. Thus, the only change during the silence procedure remains to be the one that I already advised (the removal of the reference to the HRC res.)**

**I congratulate all of you and once more thank you very much for your constructive engagement in the process of updating the WAVE resolution. We will submit it on Monday to the GA Sec. and the action is scheduled for upcoming Thursday.**

**On Monday, we also let you know about the procedure for signing the sponsorship sheets. Given the importance of this resolution at the present time, we hope that a large number of delegations could join in as sponsors.**

**With best wishes**

**Kourosh Ahmadi**

**Mission of Iran (IR)**

United Nations A/RES/68/127

20 February 2014

Sixty-eighth session

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2013

[without reference to a Main Committee (A/68/L.31 and Add.1)]

68/127. A world against violence and violent extremism

The General Assembly,

pp1 Guided by the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>1</sup>

pp2 **Reaffirming** its resolutions 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970, 36/103 of 9 December 1981, 39/11 of 12 November 1984, 49/60 of 9 December 1994, 53/243 of 13 September 1999, 55/282 of 7 September 2001, 56/6 of 9 November 2001, 60/288 of 8 September 2006, 64/14 of 10 November 2009, 66/171 of 19 December 2011, 67/99 of 14 December 2012 and 67/173, 67/178 and 67/179 of 20 December 2012, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>2</sup> **also reaffirming the latest review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/68/276 of 13 June 2013) in which the General Assembly reiterated the call on Member States, urging them "to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, [A/RES/69/174](#) of 18 December 2014 and [A/RES/69/175](#) of 18 December 2014, and reaffirming further [A/HRC/RES/30/15](#) of 11 October 2015**

**pp2ter** Recalling, **with appreciation**, the High-Level General Assembly Thematic Debate on "Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation: Fostering Peaceful, Inclusive Societies and Countering Violent Extremism", held on 21-22 April 2015,

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

pp3 Reaffirming that the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter include, inter alia, to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace, and to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of any kind such as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

pp4 Underlining that all Member States have undertaken to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations,

pp5 Alarmed by the acts of intolerance, violent extremism, violence, including sectarian violence, and terrorism in various parts of the world, which claim innocent lives, cause destruction and displace people, and rejecting the use of violence, regardless of any motivation,

pp6 Reaffirming the commitment made by all States under the Charter to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction, and reaffirming also that States are under the obligation to protect and respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons,

pp7 Convinced that wars and armed conflicts can lead to radicalization and the spread of violent extremism and disrupt development of human societies and thwart the well-being of humankind,

pp8 Recognizing that a primary responsibility of each State is to ensure a peaceful and violence-free life for its people, while fully respecting their human rights without distinction of any kind, to live together in peace with its neighbours, in full respect for political independence and the principle of sovereign equality of others, and to help maintain international peace and security,

pp9 Recalling that, as affirmed in the Preamble to the Charter, the practice of tolerance is one of the principles to be applied to attain the ends pursued by the United Nations of preventing war and maintaining peace, and convinced that the respect for and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, as well as tolerance, the recognition and appreciation of others and the ability to live together with and to listen to others, form a sound foundation of any society and of peace,

pp10 Welcoming the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations to promote greater understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures and religions,

pp11 Reaffirming that violent extremism constitutes a serious common concern for all Member States, threatening the security and well-being of human societies, and convinced that there is no justification for violent extremism, whatever the motivation,

pp12 Recognizing the need for a comprehensive approach to **prevent** and counter violent extremism and to address the conditions conducive to its spread, **and encouraged by increasing awareness in this regard,**

pp13 Stressing that States must ensure that any measure taken to combat violent extremism complies with their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law, and underscoring that counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing, and are an essential part of a successful effort to counter violent extremism,

pp14 Recognizing the commitment of all religions to peace, and determined to condemn violent extremism, which spreads hate and threatens lives, Reaffirming that violent extremism, in all its forms and manifestations, cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group,

**pp14 bis Recognizing also local, national, regional and multilateral initiatives aimed at addressing both directly and indirectly the grievances that drive violent extremism,**

1. Stresses the international obligations of all States under the Charter of the United Nations and international law, in particular refraining in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations and settling their international disputes by peaceful means on the basis of the Charter;

2. Condemns the targeting of civilian populations, including women and children, in violation of international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian law, including by violent extremists, as well as the attempts to disrupt and divert the popular quest for political reform, moderation and inclusive development in different societies and drive it away from the hard work of development towards violence;

3. Deplores attacks on religious places and shrines and cultural sites in violation of international law, in particular human rights and humanitarian law, including any deliberate destruction of relics and monuments;

4. Urges all Member States to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations as well as sectarian violence, encourages the efforts of leaders to discuss within their communities the causes of violent extremism and discrimination and to evolve strategies to address these causes, and underlines that States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance and respect for religious and cultural diversity;

5. Stresses that it is important that States strongly condemn all forms of violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination, as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women;<sup>3</sup>

6. Encourages all States and international organizations to generate public awareness, to enlighten the public about the dangers of intolerance and sectarian violence and to react with renewed commitment and action in support of the promotion of tolerance and human rights, and invites them to

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<sup>3</sup> Resolution 48/104

continue to pay attention to the importance of mutual cooperation, understanding and dialogue in ensuring the promotion of moderation and tolerance and respect for human rights;

7. Calls upon all States to respect and protect, in their fight against violent extremism, all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law and to support all actions at the local, national, regional and international levels, in cooperation with civil society, to foster understanding, tolerance and non-violence, inter alia, through programmes and institutions in the fields of education, science, culture, communication and information, strengthen democratic institutions, ensure the all-inclusiveness of the development process, eliminate all forms of intolerance and violence, eradicate poverty and illiteracy and reduce inequalities within and among nations in order to leave no one behind;

8. Underlines the vital importance of education, including human rights education, as the most effective means of promoting tolerance, in preventing the spread of extremism by instilling respect for life and promoting the practice of non-violence, moderation, dialogue and cooperation, and encourages all States, the specialized agencies of the United Nations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute actively to this endeavour by, inter alia, placing emphasis on civic education and life skills as well as democratic principles and practices at all levels of formal, informal and non-formal education, **and in this regards, recognizes the effort made by UNESCO, including through organizing the Conference, held in June 2015, on "Youth and the Internet: Fighting Radicalization and Violent Extremism";**

9. Recommends promoting community engagement in countering violent extremism, including by strengthening ties between communities and emphasizing their common bonds and interests;

10. Calls upon Member States to advocate for and disseminate information on tolerance and mutual respect, and underlines the potential contribution of the media and new communications technologies, including the Internet, to promoting respect for all human rights, to developing a better understanding among all religions, beliefs, cultures and peoples, to enhancing tolerance and mutual respect and thus to strengthening the rejection of violent extremism;

11. Recognizes the positive contribution that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, particularly by the media and new technologies, including the Internet, and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information can make to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and reiterates the need to respect the editorial independence and autonomy of the media in this regard;

12. Strongly condemns any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;

**OP 12 bis Encourages Member States to increase their understanding on the drivers of violent extremism, particularly for women and youth, so as to develop targeted as well as a comprehensive solutions to this threat;**

13. Invites all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, regional and non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders to endeavour to fulfil, in an appropriate manner, the objectives set out in the present resolution;

**13. bis Takes note of the intention of the Secretary-General to propose a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to be presented to and considered by the General Assembly;**

14. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its **seventy second** session on the implementation of the present resolution and to recommend ways and means by which the United Nations system and the Secretariat could assist Member States, upon their request and within existing resources, in generating public awareness about the dangers of intolerance, as well as in fostering understanding and non-violence.

69<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting

18 December 2013

## Election Ballots



Ambassador Anthony DeLuca was present in the General Assembly Oct 15, 2015 for this election. He was able to speak briefly with the Syrian Ambassador to the UN about the church in Syria.

The following were elected as non-permanent members of the Security Council for a two year term:

Egypt, Senegal, Uruguay, Japan, Ukraine. (Outside the General Assembly, the Ukrainian Ambassador thanked everyone for the world wide support for his government.)

### Anne Marie Riccitelli: U.N., 70 today, stands proud

The year of my birth was a momentous year, not just for me but for the world. It was 1945. That April, the nation's wartime president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, newly elected to an unprecedented fourth term, died of a cerebral hemorrhage after complaining of a terrible headache. Less than a month later, in May, Germany surrendered to the Allies. In August, Japan also surrendered unconditionally.

Out of the ashes of that terrible war, on Oct. 24, 1945, the United Nations rose into existence. FDR first coined the term "United Nations" during World War II. The "Declaration by United Nations" was a pledge by 26 nations to fight together against the Axis powers. Today, the United Nations are 193 sovereign states.

I've been a fan of the United Nations since childhood but was never sure why. We had no Model U.N. group at school. In fact, I can't recall that the United Nations was ever mentioned in school at all. My siblings and I never visited the United Nations when we were growing up, but my father made an annual pilgrimage there every winter when his landscaping business slowed down.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-'70s, he took a bus to New York City for one day every winter to buy U.N. stamps. Since these stamps could only be used within the United Nations, they were quite popular with collectors. Dad, who never went beyond grade school, always said he got his education from collecting U.N. stamps.

And what stamps they were! We kids marveled at their subjects as much as their beauty: human rights; world heritage; social justice; new nations. Dad, who lost his youngest brother, 2nd Lt. John Riccitelli, age 20, in combat in France during World War II, always believed in the United Nations. Many in his war-weary generation pinned their hopes for peace on the global efforts of this deliberative body. The U.N. seemed aglow with that hope.

Today, the United Nations turns 70. The wonder of its existence is not that it has had so many failures, but that it has had so many successes.

In April 2008, I was in the audience when Pope Benedict spoke to the General Assembly on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a remarkable document which took two year to write and whose drafting chair and lead writer was Eleanor Roosevelt.

Pope Benedict called upon all present to recognize "the innate dignity of every man and woman" and to support "the responsibility to protect." At the conclusion of his 43-minute speech, he offered his blessing, "Peace and prosperity with God's help," in the six official languages of the United Nations: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

I heard His Holiness Pope Francis speak at the United Nations last month. It marked the first time a pope had addressed the opening of the General Assembly at the annual gathering of world leaders. Among those in the audience were 18-year-old Malala Yousafzi, the Pakistani activist for female education and youngest ever Nobel laureate, and actor Daniel Craig, the U.N. Global Advocate against Landmines.

Francis reaffirmed the “importance which the Catholic Church attaches to this institution and the hope she places in its activities.” The pope highlighted many important achievements of the United Nations, including “the codification and development of international law, the establishment of international norms regarding human rights, the resolution of numerous conflicts, ... achievements (that) are lights which help to dispel the darkness of the disorder caused by unrestrained ambitions and collective forms of selfishness. ... I assure you of my support and my prayers.”

After 70 years, popes, global leaders and many, many others still place their hopes in this world body and its efforts at, as it proclaims, “tackling global challenges and helping those in need since 1945.” Happy birthday, United Nations. Keep on.

*Anne Marie Riccitelli, a former spokesperson for ABC-TV, represents the Syrian Orthodox Church in America at the United Nations. She grew up in the Silver Lake section of Providence.*

Source: <http://www.providencejournal.com/article/20151024/OPINION/151029613/13831>

## [The NGO Reporter, December 2015](#)

December 2015 NGO Reporter

November 24, 2015 · by [NGODPI](#) · in [NGO Reporter](#)

[The NGO DPI Executive Committee](#)

[SISTER JOAN KIRBY, 1926-2015](#)

[Welcome from the NGO/DPI Executive Committee Chair](#)

[Executive Committee’s Strategic Planning Retreat](#)

[NGO Conference 2015: Honoring the Past, Recognizing the Present, Imagining the Future](#)

[Coaniquem / A Newly Associated NGO](#)

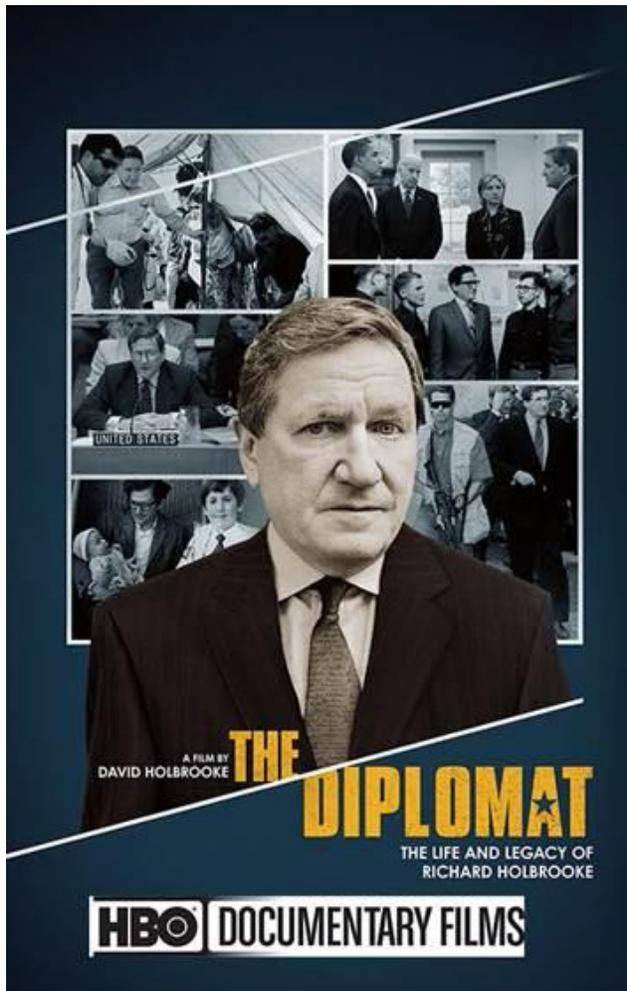
[NGO Recruitment Drive in Central America and the Dominican Republic](#)

[Annual Review](#)

[NGO Reporter Article Guidelines](#)

[Greetings to UN DPI’s Newly Associated NGOs](#)

While Ambassador Holbrooke was at the United Nations and Princeton University, Ambassador DeLuca spoke with him several times. The writings of the distinguished Holbrooke are used in several courses in School of Diplomacy of Ignatius University.



The U.S. Mission to the United Nations

Cordially Invites You to a Screening of the HBO Documentary Film

## THE DIPLOMAT

David Holbrooke explores the legacy of his larger-than-life father, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, traveling across the globe to present an inside view of U.S. foreign policy. His film is a sensitive portrait of fatherhood, ambition, and the force required to effect change throughout the world.

Featuring Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power,  
U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations  
and a  
Moderated Discussion with Filmmaker David Holbrooke

December 8, 2015  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

United Nations  
Trusteeship Council Chamber  
Please Use the Entrance on 1st Avenue at 46th Street

Please RSVP here

## Single Form



*This large sculpture, titled "Single Form", is by the renowned sculpturess Barbara Hepworth of England. The sculpture stands on a granite plinth mounted on the site of the ornamental pool in front of the UN Secretariat building. It was installed in 1964. \* UN Photo/ESKINDER DEBEBE*

## Sphere within a Sphere



*Partial view of the sculpture "Sphere within a Sphere" by Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro, located at the Visitors' Entrance to the UN Headquarters complex in New York. The work was presented as a gift to the United Nations by Italy in 1996. • UN Photo/RICK BAJORNAS*

## Good Defeats Evil



*A partial view of the sculpture "Good Defeats Evil" on the UN Headquarters grounds, presented to the UN by the Soviet Union on the occasion of the Organization's 45th anniversary. Created by Zurab Tsereteli, a native of Georgia, the sculpture depicts St. George slaying the dragon. ■ UN Photo/ RICK BAJORNAS*

## Non-Violence



*The "Non-Violence" (or "Knotted Gun") sculpture by Swedish artist Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd on display at the UN Visitors' Plaza. ▪ UN Photo/ RICK BAJORNAS*

### Statement by Madia Murad Basee, an Iraqi woman of the Yazidi faith, at SC meeting on Trafficking on 12-16-15

Mr. President

Ladies and gentlemen, Delegates of the Security Council, Good afternoon.

I would like to thank United States for calling for this debate and for inviting me to speak.

It is with great sadness, gratitude and hope that I stand before you today as one of the few survivors of one of the world's oldest ethnic and religious group now threatened by extinction.

I am here today to speak on the way the so-called Islamic State trafficked us, transformed the Yazidi women into Sex slaves, and the way IS committed a genocide against my people. I am here to tell what has happened to me and my community that lost hope is headed to the unknown, I am here also to speak on behalf of those who remain in captivity.

I am here to speak about a global terrorist organization that came to end our existence, culture and freedom, to speak about the nightmare that change life for a community overnight.

Before August 3, 2014, I was living with my family in Kocho village with my single mother and brothers and sisters, our village was beautiful, we were living in peace. But on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, the militants of the Islamic State, attacked our areas and we found ourselves faced with a brutal genocide. These large

groups of armed men of various nationalities in uniforms with weapons, had decided that the Yazidis were infidels and had to be eradicated.

The Islamic State didn't come to kill the women and girls, but to use us as spoils of war, as objects to be sold with little or to be gifted for free.

Their cruelty was not merely opportunistic. The IS soldiers came with a pre-established policy to commit such crimes.

Islamic State had one intention, the destroy the Yazidi identity by force, rape, recruitment of children, and destruction of holy sites they captured, especially against the Yazidi woman where the used rape as a mean of destruction for Yazidi women and girls and ensuring these women will never return to a normal life.

On August 15th, the Militants called us to the school building, where the separated men from us; I witnessed from the second floor of the school, they took the men and killed them, including 6 of my brothers and step brothers who were killed, and 3 who escaped the mass killing with Creator Blessing.

We, the women and the children, were driven away to another area. Along the way, they insulted us, they were forcefully touching women and girls.

I was taken with some other 150 girls to Mosul, in a building in Mosul, there were thousands of Yazidi women of children and who previously captured by ISIL to be offered as gifts.

A militant approached me, he said they would take me, I was looking down, I was terrified, when I looked up, I saw a big man, he looked like a minister. I cried, I said I won't want you, I told him you are too big for me, I am a little girl. Another militant walked in, I was still looking down, I saw his feet, he had small feet, I begged him to take me for himself, I was so scared from the big militant.

The one who took me asked me to convert, I did not, he then one day asked me for "marriage", I told him I am sick, most of the captive women there had their menstrual period due to the fears. Then he one day forced me to dress for him and put make up, I did, and in that black night, he did it.

He forced me to serve his militant squad, he insulted me by forcing me to dress improperly. And I was unable to bear more rape and torture, I decided to escape, but I failed and I was captured by on the guards.

That night, he beat me up, forced to undress, and put me in a room with 6 militants. They continued to commit crimes to my body until I became unconscious.

After three months of abduction, finally I was able to escape. Now I live in Germany. Thanks to Germany who accepted to treat me.

But it was not only me who suffered, it was a collective suffering, The Islamic State gave us two choices, covert of die, for those who accepted to convert fearing their lives, their men were killed, women were enslaved and children were recruited.

To date, 16 mass graves have been found, including a mass grave of 80 women who they didn't desire, therefore decided to kill. more than 400,000 Yazidis are displaced, more than 40 percent of our areas

remain under control of IS, and the liberated areas are not habitable because of the destruction and Yazidi fears to return and live in their homes with peace.

Over the past week only, more than 70 Yazidi women and children drowned on their way through dangerous paths to Europe, thousands are seeking and exit, a great percentage see immigration in the only choice.

Mrs. President, Ladies and gentlemen

The Islamic State have made the Yazidi women a fuel for human trafficking.

I am presenting to you our requests and I have hope that humanity has not died, yet:

- 1- Bring back more than 3400 women and children currently suffering under the mercy of those who lost every bit of mercy.
- 2- Recognized the mass killing, enslavement and human trafficking committed as a genocide, I appeal to you to find a way to open a case before the International Criminal Court.
- 3- Liberate our land, Liberate Kocho so that Kocho people can bury the remains of their dead, provide Yazidi Areas and other threaten minorities Areas with international protection so we can return one day and live in peace, I also request that you allocate an international fund to compensate victims and build our areas.
- 4- Open your borders for my community, we are victims of a genocide and we have the right to seek a safe place where our dignity will be preserved. We request that to give Yazidis and other threatened minorities the choice to resettle, especially to the victims of human trafficking, as Germany Did.
- 5- Bring an End to ISIL, I have seen them, I have lived the pain they caused. We have to bring all human traffickers criminals and Those who committed a Genocide to justice so that the women and children in Nigeria, Syria, Somalia, and everywhere in the world can live in peace. These crimes against women and their freedom shall stop now.

## Protecting the Rights of LGBT People in Latin America: A Decade of Progress

United Nations, Friday, November 20, 2015

The permanent Missions of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, and Uruguay, Outright Action International and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented an event titled, *Protecting the Rights of LGBT People in Latin America: A Decade of Progress*. Opening remarks were made by H.E. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, who urged all to “celebrate diversity” and to remember that human rights are for everyone. He introduced Charles Radcliffe, Officer in Charge, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights who announced the world premiere of keynote speaker Daniela Mercury’s new music video for the UN Free and Equal Campaign. Singer and activist Daniela Mercury is one of Brazil’s most popular and best known singers, selling over 20 million albums worldwide. After two marriages and two children, Daniela recently married journalist and gay rights activist Malu Vercosa Mercury. A video of their wedding, which was attended by 200 people, was presented. The women have adopted three children and the family works together for LGBT equality. Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA representative to UN/DPI.

## How the Nuns of New York Tamed the Gangs of New York, Exhibit and Solemn Vespers, Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York Presiding

The Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, Sunday, November 22, 2015

In honor of the Bicentennial of both the Sisters of Charity of New York (1817-2017) and of Saint Patrick's Old Cathedral (1815-2015), the Sheen Center for Thought and Culture presented a theatrical presentation of spoken word, song and dance based on the Sisters of Charity of New York 12-panel exhibit *"How the Nuns of New York Tamed the Gangs of New York"* on display at the Basilica of Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral from November 22 through January 2016. The performance was followed by Solemn Vespers with His Eminence Cardinal Dolan presiding. Blessings and the dedication of the Archbishop John J. Hughes memorial in honor of the first Archbishop of New York (1850-1864) followed. Present at both the Sheen Center performance and the Vespers service were Barbara Jones, Consul General of Ireland in New York, The Knights of Columbus, The Ancient Order of Hibernians, and the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. This event was by invitation only and was attended by Dr. A. M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI.

## Global Refugee Crises: Opportunities and Challenges

United Nations, Monday, November 23, 2015

Women's International Forum presented Ms. Ninette Kelley, Director of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Liaison Office in New York to discuss the *"Global Refugee Crisis: Opportunities and Challenges."* Ms. Kelley described the 60 million persons forced to flee their homelands as being the highest number of refugees since WWII, with 82% women and children. These refugees, taken together would make up the 24<sup>th</sup> largest country in the world. In Syria alone, over one-third of the country has fled. The Syrian crisis has produced more refugees than any situation in the world today. Children who were in school in Syria, are denied a future as they must now work to help feed their families. The burden of the displaced is carried by those states with the least resources. Ms. Kelley urged all present to help move forward by hosting a person or student in their home, solo or with a group and to donate money, no matter how small. Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI.

## Iran Rejects UN Restrictions On Its Missile Tests

**By RFE/RL**

December 17, 2015

Iran will not accept any limitations on its missile program, Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan said on December 16 after United Nations experts concluded Tehran had violated UN missile sanctions by testing an Emad rocket.

"We tested Emad to show the world that the Islamic Republic will only act based on its national interests and no country or power can impose its will on us," Dehghan said on the ministry's website.

Dehghan called Emad a "conventional missile," repeating Iran's contention that the projectile was not designed to carry nuclear weapons and Iran does not intend to use it that way.

"Since the nuclear deal we have not stopped our [missile] tests, production and research even for a day, an hour or a second," he added.

Iran insists a missile must be specifically "designed" to carry a nuclear payload, not simply "capable of" doing so, to be in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1929, which prohibits Tehran from launching ballistic missiles that can deliver nuclear weapons.

The Council's panel of experts on Iran determined otherwise, however, concluding that Iran's October 10 missile test violated the resolution.

The United States has vowed to push for enforcement of the sanctions, along with Britain, Germany, and France. Russia and China have been reluctant to enforce the missile sanctions, however.

Most U.S. Republican senators on December 16 cited the UN report finding Iran in violation as evidence of Iran's "blatant disregard" for international obligations and said the United States should not lift economic sanctions on Tehran next year as called for under a July nuclear agreement with world powers.

"It is a mistake to treat Iran's ballistic missile program as separate from Iran's nuclear program," 36 of the U.S. Senate's 54 Republicans said in a letter to President Barack Obama.

The senators said the ballistic missiles that Iran is testing will enhance Tehran's ability to target Israel and U.S. troops in the region. Iran has one of the largest missile programs in the Middle East.

#### **With reporting by AFP and Reuters**

Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/iran-rejects-un-restrictions-on-missile-tests-sanctions/27432699.html>

### **Our Rights Our Freedoms Always: Human Rights Day 2015**

United Nations, Thursday, December 10, 2015

*"On Human Rights Day, let us recommit to guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and protecting the human rights of all." United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.*

Freedom underpins the International Bill of Human Rights – freedom from fear, freedom of speech, freedom of worship and freedom from want. On Human Right Day 2015, a panel discussion, "Our Rights Our Freedoms Always," was moderated by Anthony Cordon, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. On the panel were Richard Bennett, Director of Amnesty International, who spent 13 years with the United Nations in senior human rights posts, Daniel Perell, UN NGO Representative, Baha'I International community, Zama Coursen-Neff, Executive Director, Children's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch and Hamid Abduljaber, Rutgers University. The event opened with a special performance of "Freedom" and "One Day" by students of the Carrie E. Tompkins School, Croton-on-Hudson, New York. Spoken recitals of Articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were made by Annique Wong of Yale University and Michael Korzenney of St. John's University. Attended and reported by Dr. A. M. Riccitelli

## The Outcomes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (Cop21)

United Nations, Thursday, December 17, 2015

*"It seems impossible until it is done." Nelson Mandela*

Moderator Jeffrey Brez, Chief, NGO Relations & Advocacy Section, DPI, hosted a panel of presenters which included Janos Pasztor, Assistant Secretary General on Climate Change, who commented: "The Paris Agreement will take us where we need to go, but we must implement it. We need the full engagement of civil society to accomplish this goal." Nick Nuttall, Coordinator, Communications and Outreach, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) said: "The world is heading toward a low carbon future. NGOs over the last 20 years played a significant role. Now we must pressure governments to act." Francois Gave, Permanent Mission of France to the UN described how at the Paris Conference, "All delegations were treated equally, with complete transparency." Cassie Flynn, Climate Change and Sustainability Advisor, UNDP, described the "unprecedented global commitment in Paris." Iain Keith, AVAAZ Campaign Director, called the Paris Agreement "a victory for hope over cynicism on climate change." Bridget Burns, Advocacy Director, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDD) said the Agreement was the beginning of "the end of the fossil fuel era. This (climate change) movement is one of women and children and indigenous peoples." Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI.

## Town Hall Meeting: the 66<sup>th</sup> UN DPI/NGO Conference

United Nations, Thursday, December 17, 2015

Jeffrey Brez, Chief NGO Relations and Advocacy Section, DPI, moderated a discussion on the 66<sup>th</sup> UN DPI/NGO Conference on the topic of "Education," to be held in Seoul, Korea May 30-June 1, 2015. Bruce Knotts, Chair, NGO/DPI Executive Committee, Representative of the Unitarian Universalist Association, discussed the Conference Chair nomination and interview process and the Conference sub-committee Co-Chairs and volunteers. Jeffrey Brez discussed the conference process for DPI and feedback on the conference theme of "Education." Hawa Diallo, Public Information Officer, DPI, discussed the briefings wrap up for 2015 and the 2016 calendar of briefings. She concluded with a reminder to all to submit their annual review in a timely manner. Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI.

Ambassador Anthony DeLuca has been advisor to the Kyrgystan Mission to the United Nations for the last 20 years following that small central asian counties independence from the USSR.

Having pursued post-doctoral studies in diplomacy at Princeton, Georgetown, George Mason and Eastern Mennonite Universities, he volunteered his services to the Mission helping the transitional economic country move forward in democracy.

## SI Diplomat Invested

DeLuca is pictured here with the outgoing Ambassador Talik Kydyrov, having been invested with the chapam (ceremonial robe granted to dignitaries) a sign of friendship, appreciation and gratitude. The ceremony took place at the Kyrgyzstan Mission on December 30.



Chapan given to Dr. Anthony DeLuca by Kyrgyzstan ambassador.

### [Delivering on a Revitalized Global Partnership](#)

Title: **Delivering on a Revitalized Global Partnership**

Date: **September 27th 2015**

Meeting Length: **1:51:57**

**Co-Chairs:** H.E Mackey Sall, H.E. Ahmet Davutoglu, and Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, recognizes influential speakers from around the globe, concerning global warning.

Co-Chairs whose names are listed above, spoke out on the purpose of the meeting and yielded the floor to the speakers, for a total of three minutes each.

**Prince Albert II** from Monaco spoke for 3 minutes and: 03 seconds. He shared his views on climate change, and how eliminating over fishing, illicit fishing, and human trafficking can help in the fight against global warming.

Meeting reported by Joseph Cannizzo, UN SOCA Youth Rep.

## [Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts- Security Council, 7544th Meeting](#)

**Date: 27th October 2015**

**Length: 10 minutes 20 seconds**

The agenda for the meeting was called to order by the Council President, and the floor was opened for briefing and given to Ambassador Gerald, a representative from New Zealand.

**Speaker:** Ambassador Jerald Van Bolin. The briefing includes the resolution of 1267, of 1989 Al Qaeda and associated groups and entities.

**Speaker:** Madam Secretary General and Executive Director Ms.?? International Day of Women against Women and Girls. Works to eliminate violence before it happens.

**Speaker:** Ms. Maya Wiley, Council to the Mayor of New York City. In 2014, there were 282,000 reports of domestic violence, and thousands of incidents never getting reported. Women and Girls. Works to eliminate violence before it happens.

Meeting reported by Joseph Cannizzo, UN SOCA Youth Rep.

## [\(Part 1\) Commemoration of United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in New York](#)

**Date: 25th November 2015**

**Length: 58 minutes 59 seconds**

**Speaker: Richard Lui-** News anchor NBC, He for She champion for women, and a moderator for this day's event.

**Mr. Lui** is hosting this program for violence against women and girl. The objective is to make the public aware of the seriousness, and to prevent women and young girls from becoming victims.

**Speaker:** Mr. Bon Key Moon, UN Secretary General. Supports the fact that women and girls should live without violence.

**Speaker:** Julian Byrd, Permanent representative for Australia to the United Nations. Statistic shows that more than 60 women in Australia have lost their lives, and Australia recommits to the challenge of eliminating violence against women and girls.

**Speaker:** Mallika Dutt speaker of the organization “Break Through.” Partner with UN in the fight for Violence Against of Women.

Meeting reported by Joseph Cannizzo, UN SOCA Youth Rep.

## Briefing on the Humanitarian Consequences of El Nino and the Need for Urgent Action

**Date: 7th January 2016**

**Length: 1 hour 47 minutes 36 seconds**

The meeting began with an introduction from the USG OCHA, Steven O’ Brien the Surgeon General for Humanitarian Affairs. The meeting is concerning the humanitarian consequences of the EL Nino phenomenal. El Nino is having a devastating effect on many parts of the world, and the meeting is geared at resounding the alarm.

**Speaker:** Paul Edgerton, VMO, a special organization of the UN, to monitor climate and weather. The world leader of the regional organization, on the status and forecast of El Nino, which is the strongest since 1950.

**Speaker:** Phone conference: Ausnet Nubrawny, the resident coordinator of Fuji, speaking for the Asia region, and the Pacific region and Fuji. The speaker brings the council up to speed and the impact of El Nino and how field workers are dealing with the devastation of human suffering.

**Speaker:** Valarie Julian resident coordinator from Guatemala on video conference. Her representation posed an open question: “Why do countries like Guatemala in the Latin American & Caribbean region need humanitarian assistance?”

**Speaker:** Christi Uncoral resident coordinator of Lesotho, video link appearance. 38,000 people are ready to be secured in the South African region.

**Speaker:** Miss Kuna, resident and humanitarian coordinator leader in Ethiopia. The drought is the worst in the country, affecting 435,000 children and millions of adults.

**Speaker:** Mr. Neal, from Washington, DC on video. Addresses the significant impact EL Nino have on  
o **Title: Ismail Ould Cheikah Ahmed (UN Special Envoy) on Yemn- Security Council**

**Date: 22 December 2015**

**Length: 14 minutes 1 second**

**Speaker:** Ismail Ould Cheikah Ahmed stated that the meetings he attended did not produce an end to the fighting, but they did solidify political meetings and opened the door for future peace talks. their countries.

Meeting reported by Joseph Cannizzo, UN SOCA Youth Rep.

## Other Related News

### Historic gathering of global Christian leaders urges churches and governments to address growing concern for persecution of Christians

#### **Intensifying Christian persecution brings all streams of world Christianity together**

An historic consultation of church leaders, drawn from 56 nations, to focus on intensifying 'discrimination, persecution and violence' against Christian communities around the world has called on churches globally to pray, support and be in solidarity with those suffering persecution due to their faith.

In a two pronged response the leaders:

- offered "repentance" for times when churches had "persecuted each other and other religious communities in history"; and,
- urged churches "to urgently strengthen the solidarity of all Christians" in the face of discrimination, persecution and martyrdom in the 21st century.

In a greeting from the Vatican, Pope Francis said, "I think with great sadness of the escalating discrimination, and persecution against Christians in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and elsewhere throughout the world.

"In various parts of the world, the witness to Christ, even to the shedding of blood, has become a shared experience of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Protestants, Evangelicals and Pentecostals," he said.

The consultation also called on governments to "respect and protect the freedom of religion and belief of all people as a fundamental human right."

In a public message from the consultation participants called on:

- Christians to pray for those who are discriminated against and persecuted;
- Christian organisations at regional, national and local levels from all traditions to learn, pray and work together for the persecuted;
- Churches to engage in dialogue and co-operation with other faith communities, and be watchful and fearless in the face of discrimination and persecution.

The historic gathering was the first time in modern history that every stream of global Christianity had joined together to listen and learn from Christians who experience discrimination, persecution and violence.

The consultation was an initiative of the Global Christian Forum and supported by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican), the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the World Council of Churches. It was held in Tirana, Albania, 2-4 November.

Source: [http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/11/09/historic-gathering-of-global-christian-leaders-urges-churches-and-governments-to-address-growing-concern-for-persecution-of-christians/#h\[\]](http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/11/09/historic-gathering-of-global-christian-leaders-urges-churches-and-governments-to-address-growing-concern-for-persecution-of-christians/#h[])

## Concelebrated Mass of Oriental Orthodox Church



Oct 25, 2015 - St. Mark's Cathedral, Teaneck NJ

### [Oriental Orthodox Christians gather to honor H. H.](#)

Long Branch, NJ - Representatives of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches resumed their annual dialogue with their counterparts in the Roman Catholic Church on October 20 and 21, at the Stella Maris Retreat Center in Long Branch, NJ.

The primary focus of this year's meeting – a continuation of last year's dialogue on the Holy Mystery of Marriage – was the Roman Catholic practice of annulment and how this concept contrasts with the Oriental Orthodox approach to treating the end of marriage – which both communions acknowledge as an eternal bond – as a concession to human weakness. Next year, the discussion will continue with presentations on the respective pastoral approaches of the Syriac, Armenian, and Coptic churches to dealing with this painful issue.

The members of the dialogue also discussed a document produced by the Twelfth Annual International Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Consultation – convened this year in Rome – examining the ways in which full communion manifested itself in the Church prior to the schism of AD 451, and what implications those expressions of communion might have for our churches today should full communion ever be restored. The document – cautious, but optimistic – also recommend that the theologians of

the Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox families consider which divergences of practice and doctrine today might be considered legitimate expressions of a shared faith within different cultural contexts and which represent true and actual differences.

Other topics discussed included the ongoing genocide being carried out against the Christians of the Middle East and the work of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library of Collegeville, MN to preserve ancient Christian and Muslim manuscripts from Ethiopia, Timbuktu, Europe, and the Middle East.

The Oriental Orthodox delegates to the dialogue were:

H.G. Bishop David (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
H.E. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian (Armenian Apostolic Church)  
H.E. Mor Titus Yeldho (Malankara-Syriac Orthodox Church)  
H.E. Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak (Syriac Orthodox Church)  
Chorebishop Anthony DeLuca (Malankara-Syriac Orthodox Church)  
Fr. Diran Bohajian (Armenian Apostolic Church)  
Fr. Tateos Abdalian (Armenian Apostolic Church)  
Mr. Eric Vozzy (Armenian Apostolic Church)  
Fr. David Bebawy (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
Fr. Athanasius Farag (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
Fr. Moises Boghdady (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
Fr. Yacoub Ghaly (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
Fr. John Rizkalla (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
Prof. Nicholas Siniari (Coptic Orthodox Church)  
Fr. Joseph Chamoun (Syriac Orthodox Church)  
Fr. Joseph Varghese (Malankara-Syriac Orthodox Church)

Source: <http://www.scooch.org/2015/10/oriental-orthodox-roman-catholic-dialogue-convenes-on-the-jersey-shore/>

## Why does religion turn violent? (Part I)

### Why Does Religion Turn Violent? (Part I)

by James Jones

Part I of James Jones' paper (condensed and edited) appears below.

[Click here for the complete paper with references.](#)

For a complete list of Library of Social Science's essays and papers, [please click here.](#)

**James W. Jones**, PsyD, Ph.D., Th.D., is a Professor of Religion and an Adjunct Professor of Clinical Psychology, Rutgers

A factor that is virtually always cited by social psychologists and political scientists writing about religiously driven terrorism is the experience of shame and humiliation. For years, forensic psychology has emphasized the connections between shame, humiliation, and violence.

Forensic psychologists cite numerous studies correlating conditions of shame and humiliation with increases in violence and crime, especially for males. For example, [a psychiatrist working in prisons reports](#) on a study that suggests that every act of violence in the prison was preceded by some humiliating event in the life of the prisoner (Gilligan, 1996).

Statistics show that in the United States, at least, increases in crime follow exactly increases in the number of unemployed men. Feelings of humiliation on the part of Arab populations have been one of the most frequently cited “root causes” of the turn to fundamentalist Islam. One Palestinian trainer of the bombers has said, “Much of the work is already done by the suffering these people have been subject to. Only 10 percent comes from me. The suffering and living in exile away from their land has given the person 90 percent of what he needs to become a martyr”.

A Palestinian psychiatrist reports that “humiliation is an important factor motivating young suicide bombers”. By one estimate, over 90 percent of the recruits to militant Palestinian groups come from the villages and camps suffering the most from the Israeli presence, where the humiliation is greatest and the struggle is most intense. Hassan reports: “Over and over I heard them [militants] say, ‘The Israelis humiliate us. They occupy our land, and deny our history’”.

While often rooted in social and political circumstances, shame and humiliation are profoundly psychological, and often spiritual, conditions. By holding out an absolute and perfect ideal—whether it is a divine being or a perfect guru or master or sacred text—against which all mortals inevitably fall short and by insisting on the “infinite qualitative difference” (in the words of Soren Kierkegaard) between human beings and the ideal, religions can easily exacerbate and play upon any natural human tendency toward feelings of shame and humiliation.

I would suggest the more a religion exalts its ideal, or portrays the divine as an overpowering presence and emphasizes the gulf between finite human beings and that ideal so that we must feel like “worms, not human” (in the words of the Psalms), the more it contributes to and reinforces experiences of shame and humiliation.

One common belief, which many commentators mention, of fanatically violent religious movements is their apocalyptic vision of a cosmic struggle of the forces of the all-good against the forces of the all-evil. Virtually all religious terrorists agree that they are locked in an apocalyptic battle with demonic forces,

University. He is also a Senior Research Fellow, Center on Terrorism, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and a licensed clinical psychologist.

#### Book by James Jones



[Blood That Cries Out From the Earth: The Psychology of Religious Terrorism](#)

Oxford U. Press (2012)

usually, that is, with the forces of secularism. The late Rabbi Meir Kahane, whose Jewish Defense League was responsible for numerous attacks on Muslims in the United States and Israel, said bluntly, “Secular government is the enemy”.

Kahane’s arch enemy, the founder of Hamas, Sheik Ahmed n Yassin, told a reporter, “There’s a war going on” not just against Israeli occupation but against all secular governments including the Palestinian authority because there “is no such thing as a secular state in Islam” ([Juergensmeyer, 2000/2003](#)). Asahara, the founder of the Aum Shinrikyo cult is reported to have shouted again and again at his followers, “Don’t you realize that this is war” and to have insisted that his group existed “on a war footing”.

The Reverend Peter Hill, who shot and killed a physician in front of a family planning clinic in the United States, justified his actions to an interviewer as being part of a “great crusade conducted by the Christian subculture in America that considers itself at war with the larger society, and to some extent victimized by it”.

Juergensmeyer (2000) concludes his investigation of religiously sponsored terrorism around the globe, *Terror in the Mind of God*, with the comment that “what is strikingly similar about the cultures of which they [religious terrorists] are a part is their view of the contemporary world at war”. Klein, Fairbairn, and others have written about the obvious psychoanalytic antecedents to this splitting of the world into all-bad, all-good camps.

Violently apocalyptic movements not only split the world into irreconcilable opposites of good and evil, they also look forward to the climatic end of history, when evil will be violently eradicated. Apocalyptic religion is not only about dividing the world, it is also about purifying the world. In the apocalyptic mind-set, purification is almost always bloody.

Rather than envisioning a spiritual process through which the unholy is transformed into something holy, apocalyptic religions are full of fantasies and images of violence, warfare, and bloodshed in which the unholy is destroyed in the most gruesome fashion imaginable. Here purification becomes linked with violent death. We must explore the psychological dynamics involved in this linkage of purification and violent death.

The theme of purification is often linked to themes of death and rebirth, appears central in virtually every major religious tradition. Some, like [Durkheim \(1965\)](#), have argued that the split between the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane, is the defining characteristic of the religious consciousness. Certainly this seems especially true of fanatical religions at war with the impure and unrighteous world around them.

The traditional sectarian response has been to withdraw from the sinful world and create islands of purity separate from it (for example, the Amish people). Religious terrorists are not content to simply withdraw and protect their purity; they seek to actively transform and purify the surrounding world. Asahara is described as developing a “vision of an apocalyptic event or series of events that would destroy the world in the service of renewal”.

In many religions the theme of purification is linked with the theme of sacrifice. The Latin root “sacrificium” means to “make holy.” Sacrifice is a way of making something holy, of purifying it. Sacrifices are

offerings to the divine and to the community. But they are a special kind of offering in that what is given is destroyed. But something is not only destroyed, it (or something related to it, like the religious community) is also transformed. Something is offered; something is made holy.

The practice of sacrifice may go back to the very foundations of religion. The early Vedas in India center around various sacrificial rituals, and much of the Hebrew Torah is taken up with instructions for conducting sacrifices. Of course, Hinduism later gave rise to the Upanishads with their elaborate metaphysical discussions as well as to a wide range of yogic, meditational, and devotional practices. Furthermore, the Hebrew prophets and later writings came to ridicule the idea that God requires bloody sacrifices, insisting instead on a “broken and contrite heart” (Isaiah) and “justice, mercy, and humility” (Micah).

But the theme of sacrifice did not die out entirely. It was taken up by some strands of Christianity that continued to insist, with the author of the Letter to the Hebrews (apparently a conservative first-century Jewish convert to Christianity), that “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” One of the burdens of this paper will be to attempt to unpack the psychology behind this connection between purification or redemption and the shedding of blood, since that theme appears so central to so much religiously motivated violence.

### Has much changed since India’s 2008 massacre of Christians?



By [Elise Harris](#)

Rome, Italy, Dec 17, 2015 / 03:04 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- Though it has been almost a decade since a spat of violence left nearly 100 Christians dead in the Indian state of Odisha, it’s still foggy as to whether or not things have improved.

Themina Arora, a lawyer in India who has helped with rehabilitation efforts since the 2008 attacks, says that while there has been no large-scale outbreak of violence, targeted attacks against both Muslims and Christians are [still happening](#) on a regular basis.

“What we continue to see (is) physical violence, sexual assault, rapes, murders, desecration of churches and a lot of threats and intimidations,” she told CNA.

Arora said 121 incidents were recorded from January through November 2015 – but she is far from having received all the reports.

She expects the number to go up before the year is over, because “Christmastime unfortunately gets a little violent,” since people are out on the street and more visible.

Arora was in Rome last week participating in a Dec. 10-12 conference titled “Under Caesar's Sword: An International Conference on Christian Response to Persecution.”

She participated in a panel discussion Dec. 12, during which she referred to [the 2008 Odisha attacks](#) as “the worst in independent India.”

Following the August 2008 murder of Swami Lakshmanananda, leader of the right-wing Hindu nationalist organization Vishva Hindu Parishad, Hindu fundamentalists attacked the Christian minority in Kandhamal district of Odisha, whom they blamed for the murder.

In the months that followed, nearly 100 Christians were killed for refusing to convert to Hinduism and 56,000 people were displaced, taking refuge in forests where they were susceptible to starvation and deadly insect bites. Some 6,500 houses and 395 churches were destroyed, and about 10,000 people have still not returned due to fear of reprisals.

**The families and friends of those who died have recounted stories of the brutal deaths of their loved ones, many of which include torture, the demand to renounce their faith, dismemberment and worse.**

Arora recounted how in talking with the victims firsthand, she found out that some had converted to Christianity and were targeted for it. She also heard tales of people who lost everything; wallets stolen, homes destroyed, families attacked, yet when it came to their faith would say, “of course we’re Christian.”

She told CNA that the process of recovery “has been very slow,” and that as a lawyer she is still working to win compensation for those who lost their homes and property, as well as to make convictions in the cases of murder.

While there has been no widespread attack on the level seen in Odisha in 2008, [pockets of violence](#) remain a common phenomenon in India.

Concern has particularly arisen over a spike in the number of attacks against Christians and Muslims since the May 2014 election of Narendra Modi as prime minister.

After Modi took office the country saw a sharp rise in the number of attacks carried out against people and property, most of them perpetrated by the radical Hindu group Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, also referred to as the RSS, or the “the Sangh.”

The group, which has been described as “fundamentalist” and “violent,” sits on the right-wing and has no official, legal registration in India. However they maintain strong ties with India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

Modi has been criticized for his silence regarding the attacks, which have continued to take place against the Christian and Muslim minorities, as well as their property.

A part from a tweet or two, Modi has been silent largely silent, despite numerous calls for him to utter some sort of condemnation. As a full-time worker with the group, many are concerned that Modi is giving them a free pass.

Concern has also been voiced that police are dismissive of the cases that are brought to them, though Arora says this is true regardless of whether the case is one involving persecution or robbery or some other crime.

Police in India, she said, are “generally reluctant” to file complaints since they must be accompanied by an official investigation, which can be difficult to carry out and mean extra work and headaches.

Of the cases she has seen which have gone through, Arora said the forensic evidence that was gathered, such as the DNA testing of bones and the forensic evidence of the bones collected after bodies had been burned, “had not been properly done, so it came back with inconclusive results.”

Additionally, she said that the names and ages of witnesses had not been properly recorded, which meant that their testimonies couldn’t be disputed in court.

“So those were real struggles and I think to that extent the situation still stands” for many of the victims of Odisha, she said, explaining that Muslim victims could say something similar, and that in many of their cases, the evidence “was not robust enough to result in convictions.”

Since mob violence makes it more difficult to find the concrete evidence of the exact persons involved, Arora said she understands “the complexities” involved, but affirmed that even so, police ought to be “more diligent overall” in ensuring a rule of law.

Due to the long process and high costs that arise from the investigations and paying a lawyer, churches with limited resources are finding it difficult to advance their cases when incidents occur, Arora noted, explaining that this is also an area of concern she is trying to work with.

Part of the problem with hostilities against Christians and Muslims, she said, is that the law “isn’t being used properly,” and that when certain communities decide to waive their rights, “they begin to get watered down.”

She recounted a few cases of churches being shut down for either a few days or for several months due to a misinterpretation of the law. However, after intervening in the cases, she was able to help re-open the churches within a matter of days.

Arora said that she has seen several recent success stories which have been a source of encouragement, and suggested that in some cases the law could actually be on the side of those facing persecution, but it simply isn’t being properly used.

Source: [http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/has-much-changed-since-indias-2008-massacre-of-christians-99335/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=email](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/has-much-changed-since-indias-2008-massacre-of-christians-99335/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email)

## The beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians was 'just the beginning'



By [Elise Harris](#)

Rome, Italy, Dec 22, 2015 / 12:02 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- While the days of the Muslim Brotherhood are over, one expert says the February murder of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians by ISIS has opened the door to an even wider persecution – one that's gaining steam under new forms of Islamic authoritarianism.

Mariz Tadros, author and scholar on persecution in the Arab world, spoke at a conference last week in Rome, calling the gruesome beheadings “just the beginning.”

The murders, she said, have unleashed a new wave of both physical and economic persecutions against the country’s Christian minority.

“Following the beheading of the 21 Christians there were more assaults, physical assaults (and) murders of Ethiopians that didn’t appear as visibly in the press, but that basically showed a strategy of targeting Christians.”

Increased persecutions have also taken on an economic aspect, she said, explaining that Christians have begun to be exploited for economic interests.

At a time when everyone – Christians and non-Christians included – are suffering from a large “security vacuum,” the lack of a national condemnation for the beheadings and the absence of a zero-tolerance message for such acts “is very disconcerting,” Tadros told CNA.

Right now Islamist movements “are feeling very emboldened and are feeling that there is minimal accountability,” she said, so the silence only opens the door wider for extremist sentiments to take root.

Tadros, a fellow at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University in the U.K., was present in Rome last week for a Dec. 10-12 conference analyzing Christian persecution throughout the world titled “Under Caesar’s Sword: An International Conference on Christian Response to Persecution.”

She is also the author of two books: “The Muslim Brotherhood in Contemporary Egypt: Democracy Redefined or Confined?” and “Copts at the Crossroads: The Challenge of Building an Inclusive Democracy in Contemporary Egypt.”

In a Dec. 11 panel discussion Tadros presented research she had conducted on the state of persecuted Christian communities in Egypt, Libya, Israel, and Palestine.

Her presentation on Egypt and Libya focused primarily on the Muslim Brotherhood persecution unleashed by Mohammed Morsi in 2012, as well as the dangers of authoritarian governance.

A 2011 revolution, part of the Arab Spring, had overthrown Hosni Mubarak, a military officer who had been Egypt’s president since 1981. The following year Morsi, of the Islamist movement the Muslim Brotherhood, became the first democratically elected Egyptian president.

On July 3, 2013, Egypt’s military ousted Morsi, and in August began a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. Violence then spread across the country, with Islamists killing hundreds of people from August to October. Churches were vandalized, burned, and looted, as were the homes and businesses of Christians.

In January 2014 the interim government approved a new constitution, leading to the May 2014 election of Abdel Fattah El Sisi as the country’s new president. The elections were boycotted by the Muslim Brotherhood as well as other political groups.

Since his election Sisi has been praised for receiving representatives from both the Orthodox and Catholics, as well as Protestants.

However, despite the fact that the situation has “officially” improved under Sisi, who has said and done the right things, many Christians are still persecuted, especially in the rural areas where they are very much a minority.

Most Catholics in Egypt belong to the Coptic rite, and most Christians in Egypt are Coptic Orthodox. Christians compose about 10 percent of Egypt’s population.

On Feb. 15 of this year the Islamic State released a video purporting to show the grisly beheadings of 21 Coptic Christians from Egypt. The beheadings occurred just weeks after some 20 Coptic Christians had gone missing near the coastal city of Surt, also known as Sirte.

**Right now Islamist movements “are feeling very emboldened and are feeling that there is minimal accountability,” Tadros said, so the silence only opens the door wider for extremist sentiments to take root.**

Many Egyptians, including Copts, travel to Libya seeking employment opportunities. Tadros explained that up until 2010 there were 350,000 Christians living in Libya, the majority of whom were migrant laborers from countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana and other African countries.

Of those 350,000 Christians, 300,000 belonged to the Coptic Orthodox faith, she noted, explaining that they had been well integrated into Libyan society and were not discriminated against until the rise of Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and ISIS came to power, encouraging anti-Christian sentiments.

She cautioned against the dangers of a harsh authoritarian rule of any kind, but said that Islamic authoritarianism seems to be the worst form.

“All authoritarianism is bad,” Tadros affirmed, but stressed that the forms of Islamic authoritarianism that gripped Egypt in 2012 under Morsi’s rule and which have been seen by Hamas in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as in Iraq, Syria and Libya are “particularly disconcerting and worrisome.”

This, she said, is first of all because these groups base their Islamic governance on their own interpretation of Sharia law.

She clarified that this isn’t necessarily true for average Muslim believers, but “those who wish to organize politics and society along their lines of what they see as the right way to be ruled in alignment what they see as God’s laws.”

What this does, then, is that it “eats at the heart of the concept of equal citizenship that is not premised on gender, on class, on ethnicity, on religion” and creates a specific hierarchy in which Muslims are put at the top solely on the basis of being Muslims.

All other faiths, including Muslims who don’t share the radical, extremist ideals, become second-class citizens and are “denigrated, ostracized, demonized.”

With these type of authoritarian regimes, “anybody who expresses political dissent to the autocrat is wiped out” or subject to encroachment, she said, noting that this is especially true for women.

Throughout the Middle East and surrounding areas, “we have not seen a context...where people who rule in the name of Islamic Sharia have produced a system of government that increased women's choices” or enhanced their rights, she said.

“At the very best they only eroded at some of it,” she said, explaining that women are often targeted for modesty, and told to cover themselves. In controlling a woman’s body, the regimes believe they are able to control society.

However, she also noted that while women under Morsi’s rule had been more singled-out in this respect, it was also the women who showed stronger individual resistance.

Even when faced with public humiliation and violence, non-Muslim women refused to wear headscarves or view themselves as immodest for wearing pants instead of long, flowing clothing. They would also educate their children on their beliefs at home, opposing the radical Islamic ideologies taught in schools.

When it comes to current minority persecution, particularly in Iraq and Syria, Tadros said that adopting the term “genocide” on an international level could provoke greater action on the part of world leaders.

“There is a problem in that where the assaults began in ISIS controlled parts of Syria we found President Obama going silent, (but) when the assaults began on the Yazidis that’s when he started to talk,” she said.

While we show complete solidarity with the Yazidi community, who has so far seen the worst of ISIS’ wrath, “what we are doing here is not comparing who got the worst form of genocide,” but recognizing what is, according to definition, genocide for a fact.

Many UN officials and human rights organizations have recognized that what Christians are undergoing in Iraq and Syria does in fact amount so genocide, she said, so not to declare it as such would be saying two different things.

First of all, “we are saying that we don’t want to recognize Christians because we don’t want to seem as if we’re siding with Christians and therefore to seem that there’s a Christian empathy in Iraq and Syria on account of another religion.”

A second reason “is so we’re not accused of being Islamophobic,” Tadros said, adding that for her, this is “sheer hypocrisy.”

To officially adopt the term genocide, she said, “is important for recognition and then accountability afterwards, because if the acts are not recognized for what they are then how are we going to hold them accountable, either by illegal, moral or critical means thereafter?”

Source: [http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/the-beheading-of-21-egyptian-christians-was-just-the-beginning-36216/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=email](http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/the-beheading-of-21-egyptian-christians-was-just-the-beginning-36216/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email)

[Christmas Message from our beloved Patriarch](#)

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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST

BAB TOUMA, P.O.BOX 22260  
DAMASCUS - SYRIA



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BY THE GRACE OF GOD

**Ignatius Aphrem II**  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church



“ ܘܥܡܢܐ ܠܚܕܬܐ ܬܥܡܐ , ܕܗܘܐ ܕܐܢܠܘܗܐ . ܕܐܢܠܘܗܐ ܐܘ ܐܢܠܘܗܐ , ܕܗܘܐ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܗܘܐ ”  
“Today divinity sealed itself with humanity so that humanity is adorned within  
the seal of divinity” (Mor Aphrem )

No EI 88/15



December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Apostolic Benediction to our beloved brother in Christ His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I, Their Eminences our brother Metropolitans, and our dearly beloved spiritual children: the Very Reverend Corepiscopos, Venerable monks, Esteemed Priests, Reverend Deacons, Respected Nuns and all the faithful of our Jacobite Syrian Christian Church in India, the Malankara Archdiocese in North America, the Malankara Syrian Jacobite churches and congregations in the Arabian Gulf Region, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland, Singapore and EAE, Honnavar, the Simhasana and Knanaya Archdioceses.**

In a few days we are going to celebrate the feast of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. An event which, most profoundly, expresses the love of God and His kindness towards us. By being born of the Virgin Mary, Christ becomes Emmanuel, God with us. Instead of waiting for us turn to Him, He Himself comes down to visit us through His mercy. Even then He does not find us ready to receive Him. Joseph and Mary struggle tremendously to find a place where the Divine

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SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
OF ANTIOCH & ALL THE EAST  
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DAMASCUS - SYRIA



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ܕܡܫܩ - سورية



Baby could be born. How little has the world changed since the birth of Christ because people continue to close their hearts and keep the Lord out of their lives. On daily basis Jesus gives us the opportunity to make Him part of our lives. He encounters us through the hungry who is seeking food for survival, the sick and infirm who needs to be visited and cared for and homeless and the stranger who is looking for a shelter and a safer place to live. As war goes on in many regions of our world millions of refugees and displaced people challenge us to prove that the birth of Christ is correctly understood by us. The joy of Christmas, proclaimed by the holy angels in the fields of Bethlehem ought to fill the hearts of people, but very few of us are able to reflect that joy in our daily lives. Each one of us becomes more selfish day after day. We want everything for ourselves and we forget that we all are responsible for each-other, as well as, for the earth which we live on and the air which we breathe. God has created everything in order, but our misuse and exploitation has polluted the environment which causes innumerable disasters leading to countless casualties throughout the world.

Our dear spiritual children,

During our first Apostolic Visit to India, earlier this year, we expressed our strong desire to establish peace and harmony among our faithful people in Malankara. We went out of our way to spread the spirit of peace and reconciliation throughout our visit. We even formed an episcopal committee to pursue the matter locally. However, we have not received any positive response to our efforts from the other faction of our church in Malankara. We understand that time is needed to build trust and confidence between both sides, but the matter needs urgent attention from all in order to put an end to the suffering of many. We will continue to pray and work for a peaceful settlement where everyone can live peacefully and worship in freedom and with dignity.

Dearly beloved,

We constantly offer thanksgiving to God for the steadfast faith of our spiritual children in Malankara. We greatly appreciate the sacrifices of our beloved brother in Christ, His Beatitude Mor Baselios Thomas I<sup>st</sup>, the Catholicose of India, who for many years has been leading the church with great dedication and dynamic

(Page 2)



leadership. Together with our brothers the metropolitans of the church in India, His Beatitude has suffered many hardships in order to keep the true faith and loyalty to the Holy Throne of Antioch. The great majority of our people in Malankara are grateful to the spiritual leadership of the church. However, some may disagree with the hierarchy. They may express their disagreement in a civilized and kind way which should aim at helping to provide better ways to serve the spiritual needs of the faithful. But no one should resort to the social media with abusive language concerning church matters and clergy affairs. Social media can be a helpful tool to spread the word of God and spiritual values which help people live a better life. It should not be used to promote hatred and to cause people to lose their faith in the church.

Dearly beloved,

With St. Paul the Apostle, we invite you to: ***“Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?”(2 Corinthians 13:5)*** We need to ask ourselves how central the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in our lives is. Jesus should always be at the top of our priorities. He is the head of the Church while you are the body. He is the True Vine and you are the branches. God has appointed each one of us to bear fruits. Every branch that bears fruit, God prunes to make it bear more fruits. In Bethlehem, God became man to make each one of us divine and to bear the divine fruits. In Christ God has given us the gift not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer with and for Him and bear fruits. When we bear fruits we are witnessing to Jesus in truth. Here in the Middle East, especially in Syria and in Iraq we daily face martyrdom. We are not afraid to witness to Jesus Christ through our lives or through our deaths for we know that Emmanuel is God with us. We urge you to pray for our beloved Brothers in Christ Their Eminences Mor Gregorios Youhanna Ibrahim and Mor Paulose Yazigi, the abducted archbishops of Aleppo. We ask you to pray for our faithful in both Syria and Iraq.

We take this opportunity to wish you all a blessed and merry Christmas and a happy and blissful New Year. We extend our Apostolic Blessings to you all. May the grace of God be with you all. **ܐܡܝܢ ܘܨܘܠܬܘܢܐ ܕܡܫܩ**

*Forwarded with Christmas greetings*

(Page 3)  
*Archbishop Tchtus Feldha*

## Clinton: Islamic State ‘wiping out Christians’ is genocide

(Reuters) – U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton on Tuesday said that Islamic State violence against Christians, Iraqi Yazidis and other religious minorities in the Middle East was genocide.

“I think I was asked this a couple months ago, and I said that term carries with it legal import, it is a very important concept and label for behavior that deserves that name,” Clinton said at a town hall in Berlin, New Hampshire, when asked about the Islamic State’s killing of Christians, Yazidis, Kurdish Muslims and other religious minorities in the region.

“I am now sure we have enough evidence, what is happening is genocide deliberately aimed at destroying lives and wiping out the existence of Christians and other religious minorities,” Clinton said.

Islamic State has targeted and killed members of the Yazidi religion, one of the oldest in Iraq, along with Christians and other religious minorities in the region it controls in the Middle East.

The administration of President Barack Obama is weighing whether to designate Islamic State violence a genocide and which religious minorities would be covered by such a designation.

Source: [http://www.religionnews.com/2015/12/30/clinton-islamic-state-christians-genocide/?email=ignatiusu%40aol.com&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=The%20Slingshot%20Clinton%20Twitter%20and%20InterVarsity&utm\\_content=The%20Slingshot%20Clinton%20Twitter%20and%20InterVarsity+CID\\_9ca390c56c07634e1e04992903a7e75b&utm\\_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm\\_term=Clinton%20says%20ISIS%20attacks%20on%20Mideast%20Christians%20are%20genocide#h\[\]](http://www.religionnews.com/2015/12/30/clinton-islamic-state-christians-genocide/?email=ignatiusu%40aol.com&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Slingshot%20Clinton%20Twitter%20and%20InterVarsity&utm_content=The%20Slingshot%20Clinton%20Twitter%20and%20InterVarsity+CID_9ca390c56c07634e1e04992903a7e75b&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Clinton%20says%20ISIS%20attacks%20on%20Mideast%20Christians%20are%20genocide#h[])

## New Orthodox Geopolitics

by [Rev. Dr. Nicolas Kazarian](#)

The Orthodox Church is a complex geopolitical reality, and does not constitute a homogenous block. On the contrary, the rise of irredentism during the 19<sup>th</sup> century has created the basis for constant fragmentation throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A series of historical events have reduced the territory of Orthodox communities, leading local populations to leave for the West, redefining the map of Orthodoxy. The events in question include the Russian Revolution (1917), the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey (1923), the Ustashe massacres (1942-1944), the rise of Communism in the Balkans (1945), the beginning of the modern conflicts in the Middle East (1948), the invasion and division of Cyprus (1974), the Lebanese Civil War (1975), the Balkan conflicts (1991-2000), the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), the invasion of Iraq (2003), the independence of Kosovo (2008), the Russo-Georgian War (2008), the Arab Spring (2010) as well as the Syrian crisis (2011), and more recently the conflict in Ukraine (2013).

Surprisingly, the worldwide Orthodox population continues to increase. According to Antoine Arjakovsky, research director at the Collège des Bernardins in Paris, the number of Orthodox adherents has doubled in the last century from 124,923,000 to 274,447,000 in 2010. The convergence of these two phenomena – territorial fragmentation and population growth – is a starting point for a reinvestigation of Orthodox power in International Affairs, as well as a profound strategic change affecting the communion (federation) of the fourteen local Orthodox Churches.

21<sup>st</sup> century Orthodoxy has become an effective player in international relations and a true geopolitical force. In a post-Cold War world and a post-9/11 context, the Orthodox Churches have been able to

respond to the new global and geopolitical landscape by implementing strategies which are unique to each autocephalous (independent) Church. The specificities of the various contexts depend on the temporal, historical, migration, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of each of these communities. The Orthodox Churches deal with their own geopolitical agenda, in addition to being encompassed by state diplomacies. But the center of gravity of Orthodoxy is currently moving outside of its traditional borders, creating new geopolitical conditions and new tensions between the Churches.

Thus, the manifestation of Orthodox unity may be jeopardized by the contemporary geopolitical equation, which affects interchurch alliances and challenges the relationship between faith and politics. Orthodoxy has responded to geopolitics by developing new approaches, focusing on the dialogue between Orthodoxy and Identity, the effects of territorial changes in their strategies for maintaining authority over communities in the Diaspora, and their role in the context of conflicts. In other words, at a time of multi-polarity, or “nonpolarity”, in International Relations, following the end of the Cold War, is a new map of Orthodox geopolitics emerging?

The Orthodox Church is a geopolitical reality in itself. This fact influences the preparation of the Holy and Great Council, which is supposedly going to be held in June 2016. Will it be the last chance for the fourteen Orthodox Churches to guarantee their unity? The various political agendas, as well as the rise of Orthodox communities in the Diaspora act as a phenomenon regulating inter-Orthodox relationships. This phenomenon does not seem to be enough to slow down the centrifugal forces affecting them. The Ukrainian conflict and the crisis in Syria, for instance, are only two of the many challenges that the Orthodox Church has to face in the first decades of this 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium. Other key geopolitical issues include:

- The official recognition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate by the Turkish administration and the reopening of the Orthodox Theological Seminary of Halki;
- The issue of the Christians in the Middle East;
- The compatibility of the West and the Russian Orthodox Church;
- The transition period between Communism and European Union membership in Romania and Bulgaria;
- The European process of Serbia and the treatment of Orthodoxy in Kosovo;
- The place of the Orthodox Church in Greece at a time of economical and political crisis;
- The recognition of the new Primate of the Orthodox Church in the Czech land and Slovakia;
- The persistent division of Cyprus;
- The Rupture of communion between the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem regarding the canonical jurisdiction over Qatar.

Obviously, this list is not exhaustive, but it highlights the fragility of the Orthodox Church looking for its being as communion. These very specific geopolitical aspects and their changes of strategic nature create the conditions for ongoing bipolar tension close to what we encountered during the Cold War period. Through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Orthodox Church has demonstrated a real plasticity toward political contexts ranging from State religion to oppression under official atheism. The change of

geopolitical paradigms is a long and complex process, which continues to weigh on the mosaic of Orthodox spirituality catalyzing faith, identity, territory and politics.

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Source: <http://publicorthodoxy.org/2016/01/06/new-orthodox-geopolitics/>

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