

Holy Wisdom

Peace: Showing that Others Matter!

VOLUME XXV

WINTER 2015

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

Winter/Spring 2015 Briefing Calendar



Working Together: Making a Difference.
Department of Public Information Non-Governmental Organizations

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Winter/Spring Briefings and Events Calendar January - June 2015

22 January

Inspiring Voices: Transforming the World, Lives and Communities

29 January

The Holocaust, Homosexuals and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Today
Organized in observance of International Day for Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust (27 January)

5 February

Focus on Faith Series

Organized in observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week

12 February

NGO-led Briefing

19 February

One-on-One Series

26 February

Final Push on the MDGs

Organized in partnership with UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

5 March

Civil Society and Climate Finance

12 March

NGO-led Briefing in observance of the CSW
(Review of Beijing +20)

19 March

Briefing in observance of International Day of Happiness

26 March

Women and Slavery

Briefing in observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

2 April

NGO-led Briefing

16 April

NGO-led Briefing

30 April

Briefing in observance of World Press Freedom Day (3 May)

14 May

Communications Workshop

Organized in partnership with the NGO/DPI Executive Comm. Communications Sub-Committee

21 May and 22 May

Orientation Programme - DPI Associated NGOs

28 May

NGO-led Briefing

12 June

NGO-led Briefing

26 June

End of Season Briefing

DPI/NGO Relations, Room U-204/5, UNITAR Building
Tel: +1-212-963-7234 • E-mail: undpingo@un.org
Website: outreach.un.org/ngorelations

Please note that the calendar is subject to change

**Webcast may be available, please check UN Web TV: <http://webtv.un.org>

Last Updated 8 January 2015

The 2015 Post, UN-NGLS Newsletter Issue #11

1. [Civil society engagement in the post-2015 development agenda negotiations](#)
2. [Financing for Development Conference: Next Steps in 2015](#)
3. [Call for responses to the UN Secretary-General's Post-2015 Synthesis Report](#)
4. [Overview: Beijing+20 Regional Review Conferences and Civil Society Forums](#)
5. [Launch of the International Decade for People of African Descent](#)
6. [Resolutions Africa: overcoming challenges of financing African cities](#)
7. [Third UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva](#)
8. [Second World Human Rights Forum held in Marrakesh](#)
9. [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November](#)
10. [ILO Solution Forum: South-South Cooperation - Decent Work Solutions](#)
11. [Update on World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction](#)

Source: <http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=f7beebcb-b794-4439-9655-c277f94858b3&c=ad85cbe0-ac43-11e3-8b87-d4ae528440e0&ch=ae0b2880-ac43-11e3-8bc2-d4ae528440e0>

Inspiring Voices: Transforming The World, Lives And Communities

The DPI/NGO Inaugural briefing for this year was held on January 22, 2015. Jeffrey Brez, Chief, NGO Relations offered welcoming remarks, reminding an overflow crowd that 2015 is the year of the UN's 70th Anniversary. He quoted Secretary General Ban Ki-moon: "2015 is a once in a generation opportunity, a strong UN equals a better world." Brez asked the NGOs present: "What are we doing to let the world know about the work of the UN?" Lyricist and poet Imani Woomera and her son Zion Miyonga presented a spoken word performance which quoted the Dalai Lama: "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito!" and Albert Einstein: "Ignorance is a luxury our world cannot afford." Roszel A. Morris, a native of Barbados who works at the UN Department of Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, described her harrowing escape on 9/11 from her office on the 88th floor of the World Trade Center. It took over one hour to descend those 88 flights of stairs and it forever changed her life and inspired her to work at the UN. Karim Abouelnaga, the 22 year old son of Egyptian immigrants to the US, who lost his father when he was 14 and was recently named to Forbes' 30 under 30 in Education is the Founder and CEO of Practice Makes Perfect. He believes in "the poor helping the poor" and that the "action starts at the bottom." Practice Makes Perfect has worked with over 500 students in New York City and DC, matching struggling elementary and middle school students with high achieving middle and high school students supervised by college interns and expert teachers. Karim experienced the struggle to succeed in under-resourced urban public schools and benefitted from the non-profits that provided him with great mentors. The briefing concluded with remarks from all the panelists and a closing spoken word performance by Imani Woomera.

Reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli – SOCA UN Representative

Deacon Joel Jacob, M.D.



New Alternate UN Representative for SOCA. Deacon Joel is from the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.

[The Holocaust, Homosexuals And Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual And Transgender Rights Today](#)

THE HOLOCAUST, HOMOSEXUALS AND LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER RIGHTS TODAY was the title of the DPI/NGO briefing held on January 29, 2015 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Jeffrey Brez, NGO Relations Chief made welcoming remarks and introduced Professor Erik Jensen of Miami University of Ohio. Mr. Jensen described gay Germany in the 1920's as a welcoming place for homosexuals. He noted that of the 22 gay publications in the world at the time, 20 were published in Germany. Of the two remaining, one was published in Paris, the other in Chicago. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they relentlessly persecuted homosexuals and banned all the gay publications. Hard labor and castration were used as therapy for gay men who were considered detrimental to the German birth rate. Rafael De Bustamente, who serves as Counsellor, Human Rights and Social Affairs with the European Union Delegation to the United Nations in New York, commented: "There is no room for

discrimination or violence against anyone.” He also added that “Not everyone is favorable to this agenda at the United Nations. It is very difficult.” Attorney Rick Landman, son of two German Jewish Holocaust Survivors, came out at age 13, with the full support and blessing of his beloved parents. He spoke with gratitude of their love and inspiration in his choice of career and pursuit of justice for all victims of the holocaust. He talked about the Holocaust Memorial Park in Sheepshead Bay. He discussed his initiative in creating a dedication to all the victims of the Nazi era, including homosexuals, Roma people, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the disabled and the homeless and how this was opposed by the Orthodox Jewish community. Marianne Mollmann is a veteran human rights advocate who lectures on advocacy around the world, teaching the “cost of exclusion and the benefit of inclusion.” Charles Radcliffe, Chief of Global Issues at UNHCR talked about the enormous discrimination and criminalization against LGBT people in the world, saying this could only happen in those societies which believe that “some humans are worth more than others.” While much has been accomplished so much more remains to be done.

Reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative at UN/DPI

[A Future For All: The United Nations Through Women And Faith](#)

A FUTURE FOR ALL: THE UNITED NATIONS THROUGH WOMEN AND FAITH, was the title of the DPI/NGO briefing held on Thursday morning, February 5, 2015. Dr. Azza Karam of the UN Population Fund was moderator. A political scientist and economist by training, Dr. Karam said that “10 years ago this type of event would be very problematic to hold at the UN.” She praised UN/DPI as “champions of the Focus on Faith series for the entire UN system.” She added that “The world bank has now put religion on its international development agenda.” Dr. Karam began by asking each of those present “What does it mean to be a woman of faith?, “ followed by the question, “What does your faith mean to you?” Kamila Jacob, of the Unitarian Universalist UN office grew up in her faith, knowing that it meant she would “Take risks to make the world a better place.” She added that “anything you do is taking a risk, but a woman of faith KNOWS the support is there and is empowered to take action.” Rabbi Marla Feldman, Director of Women of Reform Judaism an NGO at the UN, said she “acts out of my sense of partnership with God,” knowing that we are “stewards to care for the world and all living beings.” She reminded those present that “we are all children of God and even an evil general has a mother who loves him.” Julia Berger, principal researcher at the Baha’I office at the UN in New York was born in Poland and raised in the Catholic faith there. As an adult, she selected the Baha’I faith for its inclusiveness, “It gives me a vision of the world, challenges me to keep growing spiritually and to be of use in the world, because every single person has a contribution to make.” Reverend Theodora Brooks, an Episcopal priest and pastor of St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church in the Bronx described “a trust in something bigger than me.” She reminded the audience that “women played an important role in the gospels. Women have the heart of compassion. We can care and dare to make a difference.” Shafferan Sonneveld, Advocacy Director of Muslims for Progressive Values, a UN NGO, spoke of her group’s “belief in social justice, and that everything happens for a reason.” She added that women “work to help the marginalized in society.” She cited the example of “Malala’s peace work which is grounded in faith and which advocates against the injustices carried out in the name of Islam.” Dr. Karam added that “living with awareness of divinity is what makes women of faith different.”

Reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI

[The 2015 Post, UN-NGLS Newsletter Issue #12](#)

1. [Civil society engagement in the 17-20 February post-2015 agenda negotiations](#)

2. [Apply for the Stakeholder Steering Committee and speaking roles during the 23-27 March negotiating session for the post-2015 development agenda](#)
3. [Summaries, statements and videos from the 19-21 January negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda](#)
4. [Summary of the 16 January Stakeholder Preparatory Forum for the Post-2015 Development Agenda Negotiations](#)
5. [Summary of the United Nations President of the General Assembly's Interactive Dialogue with Civil Society, 16 January](#)
6. [On the road to COP 21 in Paris: UN Climate talks in Geneva](#)
7. [President of the General Assembly hosts high-level thematic debate on "Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda"](#)
8. [UNCTAD side event: "Making the Sustainable Development Goals Work - Harnessing Trade, Investment and Technology for Sustainable Development"](#)
9. [Invitation to the 2nd Sustainable Energy for All Forum at UNHQ, 17-21 May](#)
10. [Negotiations on financing for development begin](#)

Source: <http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=0a73f7c3-c2e1-4cd2-b1e8-ff55ed676ef8&c=ad85cbe0-ac43-11e3-8b87-d4ae528440e0&ch=ae0b2880-ac43-11e3-8bc2-d4ae528440e0>

One Billion Dollars Headed to Countries in Crisis

25 February 2015

The World Health Organization (WHO), in tandem with other agencies has allocated \$1 billion to four countries in severe need of aid: the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan, and Syria. Various conflicts in these nations have left over 25 million individuals in medical emergency. Until this point, medical supplies and personnel have been insufficient in these regions, leaving a plethora of individuals in dire straits. The extra medical funding is a key step in the WHO's efforts to aid those currently in need, as most of its existing budget has been distributed to relief of the Ebola outbreak.

In total, more than 25 million people will be assisted by the funds set forth by the new allocation. Due to hostilities in Iraq and the Central African Republic, one-quarter of hospitals have been either severely damaged or completely shut down. Between the two countries, about \$270 million has been allocated for assisting the 5.5 million requiring medical attention. In South Sudan, over three million individuals must be treated, and \$90 million is being set aside to address the problem. In Syria, the location of today's largest humanitarian crisis, \$687 million is required to take care of the 16.4 people seeking medical help from the current conflict.

In addition to other United Nations agencies, the WHO is attempting to end the world's conflicts. The WHO is performing necessary responses to these crises by assisting victims. It is up to other UN agencies and the international community to put an end to these crises.

- Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

Message from Cristina Gallach, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information



Dear friends

2015 will be a critical year for the global community and the United Nations. It is the year we face several decisions – on disaster risk reduction, financing for development, sustainable development and climate – that will shape our collective futures for generations to come.

Earlier this year the Department of Public Information launched “2015: Time for Global Action”, the UN system-wide campaign that aims to build public support for the sustainable development agenda and show how the issues behind some of this year’s most important events are interconnected.

As part of the campaign, a new website – www.un.org/action2015 – is now live and will shortly be available in all six official UN languages. This website will serve as a source of news, as a portal to UN system websites, and as the anchor for a robust social media campaign. It will also link to the extensive civil society mobilization under way through the concurrent Action 2015 campaign.

The website has been designed with the general public in mind and to complement the existing and very informative UN websites that focus on the substance of the processes. We hope to continue to build the new website, with your help, adding more news, features, graphics, videos and photos that will help people understand the issues and find ways to join in and take action.

We look forward to working with you to implement the wider “2015: Time for Global Action” campaign and to helping achieve the kinds of outcomes this year that will lead to better lives for everyone.

Thank you.

Cristina Gallach
Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information

Lecture Series on Women, Peace and Security entitled “Breaking the Silence: Monologues on Gender, Voice and Violence”-February 20th, 2015

This lecture featured a diverse cast of actors which performed monologues depicting graphic accounts of rape and abuse. Most of these recounts were from horrible atrocities experienced by women however, one was from the perspective of a man victimized by rape. Each monologue presented a vivid story which allowed the listeners to intimately connect with the pain and struggle of each of the cast members. The overall message was that women have been silenced not only physically but mentally and emotionally as a result of the crimes that have effected them. By giving victims the ability to have a voice, it allows them to easier let go of the past and begin to heal.

Joseph Cannizzo SOCA Rep attended on site

DPI/NGO Briefing "Partnerships for Success: NGOs, Youth and the UN"

2/25/2015 11:00AM EST

Dr. Bill Hunter the Lehigh University NGO Rep to the United Nations welcomed Youth Representatives and other distinguished guests. Four panelists gave presentations which highlighted their experience and individual success as Youth Representatives at the United Nations. These panelists were Amanda Nesheiwat, Viktoriia Brezheniuk, Gabriela Taveras, and Joy Ukaigwe. Each panelist provided examples of the positive impact and experience they have had as Youth Representatives. They mentioned ways for interested individuals to become involved in volunteer efforts as well as ways to pursue becoming a Youth representative. The Youth NGO Subcommittee provides orientation for new reps. This is a great way for new representatives to learn how to become oriented and involved. The panelists demonstrated ways they were able to serve as civil servants, volunteers and as communicators within the United Nations global community. With only about 400 Youth NGO Representatives from around the world, Youth Representatives provide a grassroots effort to creating change and improving society on a local and global level. They serve not only the directives of the NGOs they represent but also UN subcommittees as well as other missions which they individually deem worthy.

Joseph Cannizzo

SOCA Youth Representative

Special Exhibits at the United Nations, March 2015

Women and Slavery: Telling Their Stories

General Assembly Lobby, United Nations Headquarters from March 12-April 9, 2015

Organized by the UN Department of Public Information and their partner, the Nantes Memorial for the Abolition of Slavery in France, “Women and Slavery,” pays tribute to the many enslaved women who endured unbearable hardships, including sexual exploitation, as well as those who fought for freedom from slavery and advocated for its abolition. The theme also celebrates the strength of enslaved women, many of whom succeeded in transmitting their African culture to their descendants despite the many abuses they had to endure. It is estimated that one third of the approximately 15 million people who were deported from Africa through the Transatlantic Slave Trade were women. Enslaved women carried a triple burden. In addition to enduring the harsh conditions of forced labor as a slave, they experienced

extreme forms of discrimination and exploitation as a result of the color of their skin. Among the many courageous women cited were: Queen Anne Zingha (1582-1664) of Angola who fought slavery against the Portuguese; Anne Knight, a British feminist (1781-1862) who connected sugar consumption to slavery; and Sojourner Truth (1787-1883) who linked the oppression of women to slavery and equated women's rights to civil rights. Viewed and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative at UN/DPI

Water for Life Voices

General Assembly Lobby, United Nations Headquarters from March 9 – April 14, 2015

“Water holds the key to sustainable development, we must work together to protect and carefully manage this fragile finite resource.” UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

Sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Tajikistan, Spain and Korea, the exhibit features the voices of those whose lives have improved through education and the careful management of water resources. Celebrating the UN Water For Life Decade of 2005-2015, some of the improvements include: since 1990, 2.3 billion people have better drinking water; from 1990-2012, 2 billion more people have better access to latrines, flush toilets, and improved sanitation facilities. The goal of the decade has been to manage water which is scarce and control pollution and water degradation as well as foster water cooperation. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nagaliema village chief Munsie Tampo said: “We had been really struggling with water...We now see how unsafe water and lack of toilets was affecting our community health.” In Bolivia, villagers use sunlight to kill bugs so the water is safe. In Moldova, a teacher said: “Since we have a new toilet, school attendance has noticeably improved.” Yet much still remains to be done: 748 million people still do not have access to improved sources of drinking water and 2.5 billion lack access to improved sanitation. Said a citizen of Bangladesh: “Water is life. No one can live without safe water.” Viewed and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative at UN/DPI

A Waiting Room - Mothers and Children First

Vienna Café Area, 1st floor, Conference Building, , United Nations Headquarters March 9-20, 2015

On the occasion of the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (New York, March 9-20, 2015), the Italian NGO Doctors with Africa CUAMM presents “A Waiting Room – Mothers and Children First.” Sponsored by the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Italy and the United Republic of Tanzania, this exhibit features the work of Polish photographer Kasia Ciechanowska, an architect and urban designer by training. The photos cover a day in the life of Eliza in a families camp near Tosamaganga Hospital where she is waiting for her daughter who gave birth prematurely at 7 months. Spending a day with Eliza means exploring the daily life of patients and their families, sharing their feelings and the wait. This one-day photographic journey shows the connection between medical care and family care, as part of the same path toward health and focuses on the role of women in achieving health. In Africa, more than 280,000 women still die during childbirth each year. Since 1950, Doctors with Africa (Medici Con L’Africa) is the largest Italian organization involved in the promotion and

protection of health in Africa. Viewed and reported by Dr. A. M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative at UN/DPI.

Stitching to Survive: Handwork of Armenian Women

Vienna Café Area 1st floor, Conference Building, United Nations Headquarters, March 2-13, 2015

This exhibition shares the story of a people who exactly 100 years ago experienced mass exterminations and deportations, a crime which at that time had no name. Raphael Lemkin called this extermination “a crime against humanity and civilization” and gave it a name: genocide. On March 5, 2015 the Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations in collaboration with the Armenian Relief Society hosted a reception at UN headquarters in New York to launch the official opening of the exhibit “Stitching to Survive: Handwork of Armenian Women.” In attendance at the opening were representatives from UN member states, the clergy of the Armenian Church, civil society organizations, media and members of the Armenian-American community. This unique exhibition features needlework from the late 19th century to the present day. Many of the older pieces were created by girls in the Near East Relief Orphanages 100 years ago. The exhibit highlights the important role of women during the diaspora and within the framework of the 59th UN Commission on the Status of Women. On view in one case were lace doilies and collars created by members of the Armenian Relief Society in Syria. Also seen were wedding costumes for men and women from the late 1800’s, dolls, gloves, an embroidered gold belt, slippers and purses. The exhibit bears witness to the resilience and achievements of Armenian women who were forced out of their homeland and scattered across the globe. Viewed and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative at UN/DPI.

DPI/NGO Announcements for the week of 16 March, 2015

PDF: http://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/files/2015/03/DPINGO-Announcements-16-March_2015.pdf

Older Women Count: Bringing Visibility to Violence against Older Women 20 years after Beijing

Older Women Count: Bringing Visibility to Violence against Older Women 20 years after Beijing was a side event panel during the Commission on the Status of Women on Tuesday March 17, 2015. The side event was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living, the Permanent Mission of the Argentine Republic to the United Nations and Help Age International. *Kate Bunting*, CEO HelpAge USA, introduced the panelists. *H. E. Ms. Maria Cristina Perceval* Permanent Representative of Argentina to the UN talked about the aging world: there will be 1.375 billion people over the age of 60 by 2030. This means that elderly people will constitute 16% of the global population. Older women make up the majority of those living over 60 and are most vulnerable to violence, especially if they are disabled. Older women are almost invisible, and because they continue to be unequal, the violations against them are unequal. Most acts of violence against elders are committed by family members and caregivers. Financial advisors and others in positions of trust often betray that trust as well. *Ms. Susan Markham*, Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, USAID said that by 2025 older people over 60 will outnumber children. Women are unpaid caregivers throughout their lives and as a result, are more likely to be poor in old age.. They are living longer and need to prepare for longer lives. We need ways to prevent and respond to gender

based violence and promote older women as key agents of social change. *Kathy Greenlee*, Assistant Secretary for Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services spoke of six victims of elder abuse and the many forms the abuse took. One woman, a veteran, had caregivers who isolated her from her family and community and took her money and property. Since half the population faces discrimination due to gender, older women must be seen as a category. Older women are us. *Bethany Brown*, Policy Director, HelpAge International asked the panel about mainstreaming, the ways in which older women's rights can be brought into mainstream discussions of women's rights, especially regarding the question of violence against older women. Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA representative at UN/DPI.

United Nations Chiefs of Defense Conference

27 March 2015

Today marks the first ever Chiefs of Defense Conference at the UN. Senior military officials from 100 different countries met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to discuss the future in peacekeeping efforts. At a time where more UN peacekeeping troops have been deployed and killed than ever before, this conference is vital to the next generation in international conflict resolution.

The consultation of world military leaders will help United Nations peacekeeping troops better carry out their duties and to see to the end of violent disputes. The main role of the UN troops is to protect civilians from violence, but other responsibilities include: extending state authority, restoring and strengthening the rule of law, ensuring gender and cultural equality, and to protect human rights. With over 130,000 deployed worldwide, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated "This is our largest deployment in history. It must be matched by a stronger international partnership for peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is a shared global responsibility that advances the world's common interests."

Hopefully, we will see the benefits of the first Chiefs of Defense Conference. With militaries worldwide cooperating with UN peacekeeping troops, a vital step has been taken in ending violent conflicts throughout our planet.

-Zachary Yesko, United Nations Youth Representative

DPI/NGO Summary Report

Session: Transitioning from the MDGs

When: February 12, 2015

Venue: Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium

The primary objective of meeting was to outline the transition of the United Nations from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to newer heights. Presenters spoke eloquently about what should be considered causes to focus on through the transition. Great progress has been made toward global access to water but argued that much more work is needed - not just quantity but also quality. Presenters also spoke of advances in primary education for children but that it also falls short of higher standards. The weakest of humanity should know we are working to improve their lives through the UN's Development Agenda. Lastly, presenters emphasized the need to create significant awareness about the new agenda along with benchmarks for success and accountability.

Deacon Joel Jacob, M.D.
Alternate Representative

Session: Partnerships for Success: NGOs, Youth and the UN

When: February 26, 2015

Venue: Conference Room 2, Conference Building

Dr. Bill Hunter welcomed the gathering and initiated the panel discussion by proudly stating that there are over 400 youth representatives that represent NGOs worldwide. Subsequent panelists highlighted that it was up to the youth to create a better tomorrow for the world and that there was no excuse ignorance or inaction. Panelists emphasized the importance of networking. Ms. Gabriela Taveras underscored the importance of social media and the impact it has worldwide. Panelists reaffirmed that the cause for change is unstoppable and that the role of the youth movement and partner organizations was vital to achieving tangible achievements, particularly as it relates children in need.

Deacon Joel Jacob, M.D.
Alternate Representative

His Holiness, Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church - First Apostolic Visit to India

His Holiness, Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Supreme Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church arrived in Kerala on February 7th for an 11-day Apostolic visit to India. This was the first Apostolic visit to Malankara since the enthronement of His Holiness in May 2014. Accompanying HH was a high-level delegation that included Syriac Orthodox Bishops, priests, and deacons from around the world.

From the moment HH stepped foot in Kochi to the very last moment before leaving India, hundreds of thousands of faithful of from all across India, thronged to receive blessings from the Holy Father. As the Honored State Guest of Kerala, HH spent the majority of his stay visiting the faithful and churches across Kerala. Events included consecration of various churches, the Feast of St Ignatius Elias III in Manjanikara, keynoting at the Maramon Convention, and official meetings with state and local representatives.

On February 16th, HH arrived in Chennai , Tamil Nadu, for the concecration of a church. On February 17th, HH arrived in Delhi to meet the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Congress Party President, Sonia Gandhi. HH returned to the Patriarchate on February 19 promising to return to Malankara as soon as possible.





Deacon Joel Jacob, M.D.
Alternate 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 Debate on the Middle East, January 15, 2015](#)

USUN PRESS RELEASE
AS DELIVERED

January 15, 2015

Thank you. Foreign Minister Muñoz, bienvenido. We are grateful to have you here to chair a meeting on such critically important issues, and we are appreciative of Chile's leadership every day. Assistant-Secretary-General Toyberg-Frandzen, we thank you for your informative briefing.

Today, I will speak on three topics: Syria, Lebanon, and Middle East peace.

On Syria, we welcome the efforts of UN Special Envoy de Mistura to establish a freeze in the city of Aleppo. Any freeze must be consistent with humanitarian principles and include measures to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It also should reduce violence, not provide cover for any side to advance military aims, such as redeploying forces. And we welcome serious efforts to advance a political dialogue consistent with Geneva II, including those led by Special Envoy de Mistura. There is no military solution to this devastating conflict, only a political solution.

In meeting after meeting before this Council, we have presented mounting evidence of the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by the Assad regime. This session is no exception. Since we last met to discuss Syria, the OPCW released its third report, with further evidence indicating the regime has repeatedly used chlorine as a weapon against civilians, directly violating international norms and Syria's international legal obligations. Investigators concluded "with a high degree of confidence" that chlorine gas was used against three opposition-controlled villages in Syria last year. In one affected village, 32 of the 37 people interviewed by OPCW investigators "saw or heard the sound of a helicopter over the village at the time of the attack with barrel bombs containing toxic chemicals." Of the forces fighting in Syria, only the Assad regime uses helicopters. Only the Assad regime drops barrel bombs.

The Council must stop the Assad regime's use of chemical weapons and ensure it has fully declared and verifiably eliminated its chemical weapons program, as required by Security Council Resolution 2118 and by the Chemical Weapons Convention. We vigorously condemn the use of chemical weapons by any party, anywhere.

The use of chemical weapons is far from the regime's only deplorable act. As Under-Secretary-General Amos informed the Council a month ago today, the use of barrel bombs against civilians has been particularly acute in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib, Rural Damascus, Deir Ez-Zor, Ar-Raqqa and Da'ra. And the regime continues to systematically use torture as a means of inflicting suffering and extracting information. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, at least 2,100 people died in Syrian prisons last year, and the bodies of many showed signs of torture. Because the Observatory only counts cases in which families have received a corpse or a death certificate, they believe the actual number to be much higher. This is consistent with the abhorrent practices of the Assad regime brought to light by the Syrian defector "Caesar."

Assad, those around him, and any individuals overseeing or complicit in the commission of serious crimes in Syria must know that they will be ultimately held accountable. That is why the United States is actively supporting the collection and preservation of evidence to support future justice processes in a variety of jurisdictions for war crimes and other human rights violations, including those involving sexual and gender-based violence. Those overseeing or complicit in these crimes must be aware that the international community is building case files on its abuses, and the files are growing.

In the meantime, the immense suffering and insecurity caused by the regime's brutality, and by the extremist groups like ISIL and Al-Nusra, continue to deepen the most severe humanitarian catastrophe in a generation. Approximately 12.2 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, some 5.5 million of them children – 5.5 million children. Around 7.6 million people have been displaced within Syria, and more than 3 million Syrians have become refugees.

On January 2nd, the Italian Coast Guard intercepted a crewless ship floating 40 miles off the country's coast. Approximately 400 people, including many women and children, were on board, huddled together for warmth in containers originally built to transport livestock. Most of them were Syrians fleeing the civil war and had been abandoned on the ship by their smugglers and left for dead. People abandoned – freezing and starving – in containers built for animals; that is what Assad's brutality has done to Syrians. And this is not an isolated incident; days earlier, Italy's Coast Guard intercepted another crewless ship as it steamed toward a collision with the coast, with nearly 800 Syrians packed on board.

In the face of this unprecedented need and desperation, all countries can and must do more, including by supporting the countries that are already hosting the majority of Syrian refugees, and making robust contributions to the UN's enormous \$8.4 billion humanitarian appeal.

No country has taken in more Syrian refugees than Lebanon, which is host to more than 1.1 million Syrians, and is facing growing challenges in meeting their basic needs, especially with the onset of winter. We encourage Lebanon and all receiving countries to coordinate closely with UNHCR in the development of criteria to ensure that those fleeing violence and persecution are able to enter these countries, just as we encourage governments across the region and around the world to provide refuge for asylum seekers in accordance with international humanitarian principles. Lebanon deserves the election of a president and a fully empowered government to help deal with the considerable challenges the country faces. Electing a president is of course a Lebanese decision, but it is one that must be taken now for the sake of the Lebanese people.

The suffering inside Syria is not limited to Syrians. Some 18,000 civilians are trapped in Yarmouk, the vast majority of them Palestinian refugees. UNRWA estimates that 400 food parcels are needed daily to meet the population's minimum needs, yet over the last month, only 36 parcels total have been distributed. That is 36 parcels distributed during a time when a minimum of 12,000 parcels were needed.

Assad's brutality has helped fuel the rise of violent extremist groups like ISIL and Al-Nusra, which are spreading terror and instability across the region. The United States and partner nations are committed to continuing to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL through operations in Syria, as well as in Iraq, at the request of the Iraqi government. And together with our partners, we are committed to rooting out ISIL's safe havens in the region. We commend Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi for his outreach in the region and to all of Iraq's communities – an effort that has consolidated his broad-based support – and we urge his government to continue along the path toward genuine inclusion of all groups in the political, economic, and security future of the country.

The spread of ISIL, Al-Nusra, and other extremist groups also threatens the security of Iraq and Syria's neighbors, most directly Lebanon. Hizballah's involvement in the conflict in Syria violates Lebanon's policy of disassociation and has made Lebanon a target for violent extremists' attacks. On January 10th, extremists staged a double suicide bombing at a café in the Jabal Mohsen neighborhood of Tripoli, Lebanon, in which nine people were killed and dozens more injured. Yet if the attackers aim was to divide Lebanon, they failed. A full range of Sunni, Shi'a, and Christian Lebanese leaders firmly condemned the attack, as did a broad swathe of Lebanese society, who rallied behind the Lebanese Armed Forces in pursuing those responsible. The Lebanese people also vigorously condemned the attack; in the days following it, the Twitter hashtag #JeSuisJabalMohsen was a top trending tweet in Lebanon.

Lastly, let me turn to the Middle East. For decades, the United States has helped – has worked to try to help achieve a comprehensive end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Immense though the challenges may be, we firmly believe that they can and must be overcome because the status quo is unsustainable. We remain committed to achieving the peace that both Palestinians and Israelis deserve: two states for two peoples, with a sovereign, viable and independent Palestine living side by side, in peace and security, with a Jewish and democratic Israel.

As you know, on December 30th, the United States voted against a Security Council draft resolution. We made our position clear: the resolution, which was hastily put to a vote, would have taken us further from, and not closer to, an atmosphere that makes it possible to achieve two states for two peoples. Since that vote, the United States, represented in particular by Secretary Kerry, has reached out to both parties in an effort to try to reduce tensions and find a path forward. The Quartet Envoys will meet at the end of this month to discuss the way ahead.

We continue to oppose unilateral actions by both sides that we view as detrimental to the cause of peace. Palestinian efforts to join the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to accede to a number of international treaties are counter-productive and will not advance the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a sovereign and independent state. We urge both parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid steps that threaten to push Israeli-Palestinian relations into a cycle of further escalation.

As we continue to work towards Israeli-Palestinian peace, we share the UN's deep concern regarding the situation in Gaza. All sides must work together to accelerate efforts and increase support for rebuilding through the Gaza reconstruction mechanism. The humanitarian needs are considerable, particularly in the harsh winter months. In December, the United States announced an initial \$100 million contribution for UNRWA's 2015 needs, including in Gaza. We encourage other states to make pledges, and to promptly deliver the funds that they have already promised to fully meet those urgent needs.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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[Syria: UN envoy makes renewed push for peace, says country set back 40 years by war](#)



Syrian children stand in the entryway of their tent shelter in the Bab Al Salame camp for internally displaced persons in Aleppo Governorate. Photo: UNICEF/Giovanni Diffidenti

Ahead of next week's expected resumption of talks with the Syrian Government, United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura briefed journalists in Geneva on 15 January about his hopes for "freezing" the fighting in Aleppo, the country's second largest city.



UN Photo

Addressing reporters at the Palais des Nations, Mr. de Mistura called Aleppo a "symbolic microcosm of all of Syria" with a high number of displaced people. He also noted that as the government and the opposition fight, ISIS is "only 20 miles away" from Aleppo. "Our hope is that Aleppo could be a signal of goodwill, a confidence-building measure which could and can facilitate the re-starting of a political process with a clear political horizon, bearing in mind the Geneva communique," he noted.



Destruction in the ancient city of Aleppo, Syria. Photo: UNESCO

“We are engaged in intense discussions with the government because they are the first players in the city of Aleppo, and the opposition forces regarding the freeze,” said Mr. de Mistura. His deputy, Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy will lead a delegation early next week. “We have been invited to come to Damascus, and we will then see how we follow-up on our side on that,” added the Special Envoy.



A damaged building in Aleppo City, Syria. Photo: OCHA/Gemma Connell (file)

Mr. de Mistura stressed that the Syrian conflict cannot go onto the back burner, and that some type of political solution should take place this year. “What we need to make sure is that this does not become like 2014, when we heard similar appeals from all of us, including the UN, and then nothing really happened,” the Envoy said. He added that “Aleppo cannot be abandoned because it is becoming the symbol of all what we said about 2015 in a way.”



Syrian refugees remove snow from their shelters at an informal tented settlement in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, during a blizzard. Photo: UNHCR/A. McConnell

“Syria has gone now 40 years backwards from where it was,” Mr. de Mistura said during the press conference. The conflict in Syria has left 12 million people in need; displaced 7.6 million; turned 3.3 million into refugees, and resulted in more than a million casualties, according to figures provided on 15 January.



Snow weighs down tents at Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Credit: UNHCR / H. Etyemezian

More than 4,000 schools in Syria are non-utilizable, according to the latest UN figures, and as a result, some 3 million school-aged children are not in classrooms. Polio, typhoid and measles have returned to the country.



Ahmad, 6 years old, tells Mr. de Mistura how he fled from Aleppo, Syria, in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 9 December 2014. Courtesy @JulietteTouma.

Since the start of the conflict, some 290 cultural heritage sites have been destroyed or damaged.



Three UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Syria are being used for military purpose and this raises the risk of imminent and irreversible destruction. Photo: UNESCO, UNESCO/Ron Van Oers

Source: <http://un-dpa.tumblr.com/post/108278779084/syria-un-envoy-makes-renewed-push-for-peace-says>

Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Briefing on Ukraine, January 21, 2015

Mr. President, thank you for convening today's session on the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Under Secretary-General Feltman, we are grateful for your unflagging attention to this alarming situation, and for the alarm that you sounded here today in very explicit terms.

While this is the Council's first session on Ukraine in 2015, it is our 28th meeting on the crisis in the last 11 months, far more than on any other situation during the same period. We keep meeting on Ukraine because, despite countless commitments made to the international community to de-escalate – here in the Council, at Geneva, Minsk, Berlin, Normandy, and elsewhere – Russia continues to choose the path of escalation and obfuscation.

In addition to occupying Crimea, Russia continues to train, equip, and fight alongside separatists in eastern Ukraine. Indeed, Russia has so consistently broken its commitments and violated its obligations not to lop off part of another country, that some here may begin to accept Russia's behavior as an unfortunate but inevitable reality – a new normal that would be dangerous for Ukraine and dangerous for international peace and security, because complacency would reward aggression and threaten the basic rules on which our collective security rests.

...

What is frozen in these conflicts? Instability is frozen. Violations of sovereignty are frozen. Militarization is frozen. In sum, all the problems that the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, were created to address, are frozen. If Russia succeeds in achieving its aims, if we allow this behavior to become the new normal, this will not be the last time Russia uses this well-worn playbook.

Buddhist Leader Calls for Increased Efforts to Rid World of Poverty and Ban Nuclear Weapons in 70th Year since WWII

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda Issues 2015 Peace Proposal.

TOKYO, Jan. 26: Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist association, has issued his 2015 peace proposal, "A Shared Pledge for a More Humane Future: To Eliminate Misery from the Earth."



In the proposal, Ikeda welcomes the ambitious scale of the United Nations' proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for putting an end to poverty "in all its forms everywhere." In the 70th year since the UN was created, he calls for a return to its founding spirit, as well as for increased collaboration between the UN and civil society.

In order to lay the foundations for elimination of the human suffering caused by poverty and conflict, he stresses a need for the rehumanization of politics and economics based on a solidarity of ordinary citizens, for empowerment that enables people to overcome suffering and for a broadening of the sphere of our friendships and concern for others as a basis for building peace.

Ikeda makes specific proposals for protection of the rights of displaced persons and others living outside of their country of origin for economic reasons. He suggests including in the SDGs the protection of the dignity and human rights of all such people, and calls for regional cooperation toward the

empowerment of displaced persons, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region and the Middle East, building on pioneering initiatives in West Africa.

Regarding the abolition of nuclear weapons, a consistent theme of Ikeda's proposals, he applauds the fact that in October 2014, a total of 155 countries and territories signed the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons. Over 80% of UN member states have now clearly stated that nuclear weapons should be never used under any circumstances.

Ikeda asserts that while the gulf between the nuclear-weapon states and those calling for nuclear abolition appears great, there is common ground in the desire to avoid the horrific outcome of any use of nuclear weapons. He urges heads of government to attend the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference and calls on them to voice there the pledges of their governments to eliminate the danger posed by nuclear weapons.

Planning is underway for a World Youth Summit for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons to be held in Hiroshima in September as a joint initiative of SGI and other NGOs. Ikeda hopes a youth declaration pledging to end the nuclear age will be adopted, building momentum in support of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

In his proposal, Ikeda also calls for increased regional cooperation and youth exchange, specifically urging China, South Korea and Japan to come together to create a regional model for such collaboration.

He stresses the importance of reviving trilateral China-Korea-Japan summits and hopes that leaders of the three countries can mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II with a pledge never to go to war again and regional cooperation in support of the SDGs.

At the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai, Japan, in March, Ikeda mentions that SGI will organize a workshop in which representatives of the three countries will discuss possible regional cooperation in disaster prevention, relief activities and post-disaster recovery.

He also hopes to see the establishment of a China-Korea-Japan youth partnership through which young people can cooperate in efforts to realize the SDGs and other trilateral initiatives.

Buddhist philosopher, author and peacebuilder Daisaku Ikeda (1928 –), president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) lay Buddhist organization, has issued a peace proposal offering ways forward in tackling global challenges every year since 1983.

Source: [http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/01/26/buddhist-leader-calls-increased-efforts-rid-world-poverty-ban-nuclear-weapons-70th-year-since-wwii/#h\[\]](http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/01/26/buddhist-leader-calls-increased-efforts-rid-world-poverty-ban-nuclear-weapons-70th-year-since-wwii/#h[])



GAR 2015: PROGRAMME OF OFFICIAL LAUNCH

*Wednesday, 4 March 2015, Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium,
Headquarters, New York*

Moderator: Ms Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNISDR

11:00 am -11:30 am

Welcome remarks by **H.E. Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra**, Permanent Representative of the United Nations, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Disaster Risk Reduction

Remarks by **H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Overview of the key findings of the 2015 Global Assessment Report *Sustainable: The Future of Disaster Risk Management* by **Mr. A. Khan**, Author and Head of the Risk Knowledge, UNISDR

Remarks by **H.E. Mr. Ahmed Sareer**, Permanent Representative of the United Nations (TBC)

11:30 – 12:30 am

Remarks by **H.E. Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting**, Head of Delegation of Austria to the United Nations

Remarks by **Mr. Stan Nkwain**, Deputy Director, Bureau Policy and Programme, United Nations Development Programme

Remarks by **Mr. Albert Binger**, Energy Science Advisor at the Centre for Global Change, International Centre for Climate Change Centre

Interactive discussion and Q&A

Will there be justice for Syria?

A UN commission of inquiry has [called for](#) the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute perpetrators of grave crimes in the



Syrian conflict, which has left over 220,000 dead in four years.

At a briefing in Geneva this week, the high-level panel added that it was ready to [share](#) the names of suspects with national authorities willing to prosecute.

It also [urged](#) the referral of the situation to the ICC prosecutor for investigation, despite the vetoes of Russia and China that blocked an attempt to do so last year.

UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini [said](#) that war criminals will eventually face justice.

Amnesty International (AI) released evidence indicating that the Syrian government [committed war crimes](#) and called for the situation to be referred to the ICC. **AI** also reported an [alleged chlorine gas attack](#) in northern Syria. **No Peace Without Justice** called on the UN Human Rights Council to [support](#) the fight against impunity in Syria.

[Intervention of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza at the Security Council Open Debate 27 March 2015](#)

(See attached file: Intervention at Security Council Open Debate 27 March 2015.pdf)

To whom it may concern

Please, find attached the intervention of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on “The victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East”, New York, 27 March 2015.

Kind regards,

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Intervention of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza,
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN

United Nations Security Council Open Debate on
“The victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious grounds in the Middle East”
New York, 27 March 2015

Mr. President,

At the very outset, the Holy See wishes to express its sincere gratitude to your Presidency for having convened today’s Open Debate on “the victims of attacks and abuses on ethnic or religious ground in the Middle East”. This debate is not only timely but it is most urgent, especially when we call to mind those who have already lost their lives, for whom this Open Debate has come too late. Their fate urges us to do all that we can to prevent further victims of attacks and abuses for ethnic and/or religious grounds. Christians and other religious minorities of the Middle East seek to be heard by this Council and other International fora, not in some abstract form, but in a manner that is truly conscious of their pain and suffering and their existential fear for their survival in the Middle East and beyond.

We must acknowledge that the problem exists and that the hour is grave. Ethnic and religious communities --- including Turkmen, Shabaks, Yazidi, Sabaeans, Kaka’e, Faili Kurds, Shi’ite Arabs and even Sunni Arabs and Kurds --- face extreme pressures, abuses of human rights, torture, killing and all forms of persecution purely for the faith they profess or for the ethnic group to which they belong.

The Christians in the Middle East have been specifically targeted, killed or forced to flee from their homes and countries. We have helplessly watched Assyrian Christians kidnapped in Iraq by the so-called “Islamic State” group, Egyptian Coptic Christians beheaded by ISIL-affiliated organizations in Libya, and the near elimination of Christians in Mosul. Only 25 years ago, there were nearly two million Christians living in Iraq; while the most recent estimates are less than a quarter of this figure. Faced with the unbearable situation of living in a conflict zone controlled by terrorist and extremist organizations who constantly threaten them with death, and with a deep sense of feeling abandoned to their fate, by the legitimate authorities and the International Community, entire communities of Christians, especially from Northern Iraq, have been brutally forced to flee their homes and they have sought refuge in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in the neighbouring countries of the region.

The Holy See expresses profound gratitude to countries and leaders in the region who openly defend the Christians as an integral part of the religious, historical and cultural fabric of the region. For 2,000 years, Christians have called the Middle East home; indeed, as we all know, the Middle East is the cradle of Christianity.

Thus, it pains us so deeply that these ancient Christian communities in the region --- many of whom still speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ --- are among those threatened with extinction. Their uninterrupted existence in the region is testimony of many centuries of coexistence, side by side, with Muslims and other religious and ethnic communities. These communities are an integral part of the cultural religious identity of the Middle East, thus their disappearance from the Middle East would not only be a religious tragedy but a loss of a rich cultural-religious patrimony that contributes so much to the societies to which they belong, and which the whole world has much interest to preserve. The Holy See, therefore, calls on all the leaders and people of goodwill in the region and throughout the world to act before it's too late.

In 2005, at the United Nations World Summit, the entire International Community agreed that every State has the primary responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing and their incitement. Moreover, the International Community recognizes its responsibility to assist States in fulfilling their primary responsibility. However, when a State is unable or unwilling to uphold this primary responsibility, the International Community must be prepared to take action to protect populations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.¹

As Pope Benedict XVI underlined in his Address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, this responsibility to protect is not a novel creation in international law, but rather is rooted in the ancient *ius gentium* as the foundation of every action taken by those in government with regard to the governed.² Building on this ancient tradition and its reiterations in the international humanitarian law and in today's United Nations fora, Pope Francis has repeatedly called upon the International Community "*to do all that it can to stop and to prevent further systematic violence against ethnic and religious minorities.*"³

The Holy See avails of this opportunity to convey its deep appreciation to countries in the region and to all those who work tirelessly, even risking their lives, to provide assistance to some two and a half million internally displaced persons in Iraq,⁴ to 12 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, of which four million are living as refugees and seven and a half million are internally displaced.⁵ Let us help these neighbourly countries as they care for and welcome the refugees.

Mr. President,

Delay in action will only mean more people will die, be displaced or persecuted. Pope Francis exhorts us all to join our efforts to support a Middle East that will continue to be a welcoming home for all its ethnic and religious groups.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ A/RES/60/1, para. 138-140.

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080418_un-visit.html

³ Cf. Letter of Pope Francis to the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization concerning the situation in Northern Iraq, 9 August 2014,

⁴ Iraq Crisis Situation Report No. 33 (21 – 27 February 2015)

⁵ <http://www.unocha.org/syria> Data source: OCHA (as of Feb 2015)

Weekend Reads: Politically Speaking's features of the week

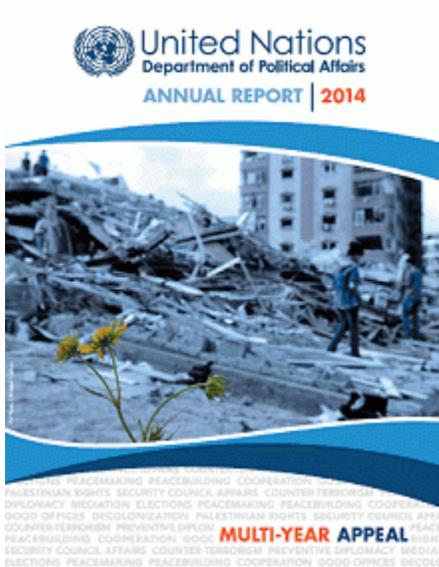
Politically Speaking is the official magazine of the Department of Political Affairs

Check out these stories and more at <http://un-dpa.tumblr.com/>

Stories this week:



[Middle East, terrorism and sexual violence top Security Council's agenda in April](#)



[DPA reports on its work in 2014 and looks ahead](#)

Session: Transitioning from the MDGs

When: February 12, 2015

Venue: Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium

Religious News from Around the World

Syria: Chemical Weapons and OPCW Fact-Finding Report

Tomorrow morning (6 January), UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane will brief Security Council members on the fifteenth monthly report (S/2014/948) on the implementation of resolution 2118, which required the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. Tomorrow will be Kane's first briefing in the Secretary-General's good offices role regarding implementation of resolution 2118, a role previously filled by Sigrid Kaag who is now the Special Coordinator for Lebanon.

Kane is expected to brief on the remaining tasks in the implementation of resolution 2118, such as the verification of the ongoing destruction of chemicals outside Syria, plans to complete the destruction of chemical weapons production facilities in Syria by the summer of 2015, and clarification of Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile.

However, Council members expect the major focus of tomorrow's consultations will be the 18 December 2014 report by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on Syria's use of chlorine bombs. This report concludes with "a high degree of confidence that chlorine has been used as a weapon". It also exhaustively details the OPCW fact-finding mission's work and supports the conclusions of the September 2014 OPCW report that there was evidence that chlorine had been consistently and repeatedly used in barrel bombs dropped from helicopters. While the fact-finding mission does not attribute blame, only the government has aerial capacity and only rebel-held areas were targeted.

Source: <http://www.whatsinblue.org/2015/01/syria-chemical-weapons-opcw-fact-finding-report.php#>

Persecution of Christians Reaches Historic Levels, Conditions Suggest Worst Is Yet to Come According to the 2015 Open Doors World Watch List, the Middle East Remains Most Violence While Africa Sees Largest Increase in Persecution of Christians

SANTA ANA, Calif., Jan. 7, 2015 – While the year 2014 will go down in history for having the highest level of global persecution of Christians in the modern era, current conditions suggest the worst is yet to come.

Today, Open Doors released its annual World Watch List, which ranks the top 50 countries where it is most dangerous and difficult to be a Christian. This year, the threshold was higher for a country to make the list, indicating that worldwide levels of persecution have increased. Topping the 2015 list for the 13th consecutive year is North Korea. Africa saw the most rapid growth of persecution, while the Middle East saw targeted attacks, resulting in a mass exodus of Christians.

"Even Christian-majority states are experiencing unprecedented levels of exclusion, discrimination and violence," said David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA. *"The 2015 World Watch List reveals that a staggering number of Christians are becoming victims of intolerance and violence because of their faith. They are being forced to be more secretive about their faith."*

TOP-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF OPEN DOORS' 2015 WORLD WATCH LIST

- North Korea remains the most dangerous and difficult place to be a Christian for the 13th consecutive year. An estimated 70,000 Christians remain in prison for their faith.

- For the third year in a row, the majority of African nations on the World Watch List have increased in rank due to Islamic extremism. Kenya made the largest jump, moving up from No. 43 to No. 19.
- The Middle East remains one of the most violent areas of the world for Christians. Violence against Christians by the Islamic State and other Islamic terrorist groups increased in countries like Iraq and Syria, causing thousands of Christians to flee these areas.

Christian persecution is defined as any hostility experienced as a result of one's identification with Christ. Recent examples include imprisonment, torture, beheadings, rape, and loss of home and assets. Islamic extremism is the main source of persecution in 40 of the 50 countries on the 2015 World Watch List.

"The goal of the World Watch List is to keep Christian persecution on the radar of those enjoying the privileges of freedom," said Curry. "The perpetrators of persecution need to know that the world is watching and stands in opposition to persecution. And for the persecuted, we want them to know that they are not forgotten."

Source: [http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/01/07/persecution-christians-reaches-historic-levels-conditions-suggest-worst-yet-come/#h\[TgoAft,3\]](http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/01/07/persecution-christians-reaches-historic-levels-conditions-suggest-worst-yet-come/#h[TgoAft,3])

Iraqi Christians say there's no going home after rise of Islamic State

By [Kevin J. Jones](#)

Amman, Jordan, Jan 7, 2015 / 04:02 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- Christians lived in Iraq for nearly two thousand years, but the violent rise of the Islamic State has convinced many Christian refugees they must forever leave their homeland.

"No, we will never go back," Taif Hanna, an engineer from Mosul, told reporters in Amman Oct. 28.

"ISIS tried to kill us," he said. The militant group offered three choices: conversion to Islam, payment of an extortionate tax, or death.

"So we all fled Iraq," Taif said.

The Islamic State, called Daesh by its Arabic-speaking opponents, surged across Iraq in 2014. In June it captured Mosul, a historic center of Iraqi Christianity on the Tigris River, near where the ancient city of Nineveh once stood.

Taif Hanna is one of about 47 Iraqi Christians who have taken shelter at a converted building on the grounds of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Naour, a district on the west side of Amman.

The shelter is lined with partitions eight feet tall to create small rooms. Near the entrance, a whiteboard bears an inscription, written in Arabic: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Next to the whiteboard are posters of two photos. One photo shows a statue of the Virgin Mary's face. The cheeks beneath her eyes are stained, as if she has been crying blood.

It is captioned, “Your tears in every place are a purification, a bible of love, compassion and light.”

The other picture shows a large cross in silhouette. Behind the cross is a bright sunrise – or a sunset.

Taif’s 52-year-old father, Maan George Hanna, also does not think he will return home.

“I will leave all my history there. Because of the terrorism,” he lamented. “We have no trust in the government or anything. Never, forever.”

Hanna said his grandfather was “the servant of the oldest church in Mosul.”

The church was started in 360, he said. “More than 1,600 years ago.”

“We left all of that. We left all our history. We don’t want to go back. We are wanting peace.”

Hanna, his wife and children are all engineers from Mosul, where his father taught English. As a student, Hanna studied in Romania, Italy, and Spain. A polyglot, he speaks all three countries’ languages, in addition to English and Arabic.

Hanna and his family fled Mosul early on June 10, when they learned that “terrorists” were crossing the Tigris only 10 to 15 minutes away from their home.

“We left with these clothes,” Hanna said, pulling at his own shirt. “We left our home, we left our car, we left all the memories of the children. My own home.”

They escaped to Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, and joined 30 other displaced persons in a small apartment. They didn’t have enough money for tickets out of the country.

Catholic groups such as Caritas Jordan helped fund Hanna and some of his family to travel to Jordan in mid-September.

However, his father, his mother, his brother and his family could not come because they didn’t have their passports.

“My father and mother are old, more than 75 years. They haven’t had to think about travel or leaving their house.”

As of late October, Hanna’s family in Iraq was seeking help from the French embassy.

“We don’t know the future. We are hoping now for the future of our children, only. Not for us.”

Hanna said his family had previously been forced to leave their homes several times in 2008 and 2009 due to fears of violence. Iraqi Christians had suffered problems for decades.

The beginning of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980 marked a turning point for the worse, he said.

“We were as prisoners in our own country,” he said of Iraqis. “Especially the Christians.”

He recounted that when one of his sons was in school, his Muslim classmates would cite his father’s middle name George – a Christian name – and laugh derisively that it was not a Muslim name.

“Will we go back? No,” Hanna said.

There were 1.6 to 1.8 million Christians in Iraq before the 2005 execution of Saddam Hussein. Now there are only an estimated 400,000 to 450,000.

Another of the Iraqi Christians in Jordan is Maitham Najib, a 36-year-old mechanic from Bakhdida, a largely Christian city 20 miles from Mosul which Islamic State seized on Aug. 7.

Najib was staying at a shelter at St. Ephriam Syriac Orthodox Church in the Amman area.

“Until now, we didn’t suffer as Jesus Christ,” he said. “This is nothing compared to what he did for us, to suffer for us.”

Najib, his wife, and his three children now live in cramped conditions at with dozens of other refugees at the church shelter, converted with the help of Catholic Relief Services. The shelter’s television played the U.S. show NCIS, subtitled in Arabic, as Najib’s children played the card game Uno at a table outside.

Najib’s father, his mother, and two sisters are still in Baghdad. But returning to Iraq is not an option for him.

“We don’t want to.”

Even before the rise of Islamic State, he was a victim of the violence which followed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Najib was living in Baghdad in 2005, when he was kidnapped and held for eight days by unknown attackers.

They released him, but robbed him and stabbed him at least ten times. He still has the scars.

Najib is pessimistic

“We are thankful for the Jordanian government and for Caritas, what they are doing for us ... but the situation is not good. They can’t give you everything.”

“It’s done for us, at this age,” he said. “We want to guarantee our children’s future: education,

everything, for them. Especially for them.”

The pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, a Latin Rite church in Amman, reflected on the refugees’ situation.

“They are suffering because they are Christians,” said Father Rifat Bader, who is also the general director of the Catholic Center for Studies and Media.

“Faith is the main treasure that we have. When you see that these people, these families, found a way to escape without money, without gold, without their passport even, this means that the faith is more important than money, than gold, than everything.”

“Really they are teachers,” the priest said of the refugees.

“They are normal people, very kind people, people full of pride because they kept their faith. They could become (Muslims), in one moment, but they refused.” This was not “because they hate all Muslims or Islam,” he explained, but rather “they want to keep their faith because it is part of their identity.”

“They wanted to stay firm in their faith. It is very important, and it is a great lesson for all of us.”

In Jordan, Fr. Bader said, the refugees “feel the freedom, they feel a part of the Church, when they read the gospel or the readings in the Mass.”

“Their accent is full of sadness, but also full of hope.”

He particularly remembered a Christian girl from Mosul who said the Mass reading after her arrival.

“Who separates us from the love of Christ?” was the reading, from Romans 8.

“Not the death, nor persecution, nor Daesh is separating us,” Fr. Bader added.

He suggested that what the refugees did in keeping their faith is “a heroic part of the history of the Church.”

“People will be proud that these Christians left their country, but they kept their faith. This is greatness for the future.”

The priest acknowledged that the Christian refugees do not want to return to Iraq.

“To us, it is very sad to hear this,” he said.

While Palestinian refugees still dream of returning home 60 years after being displaced by Israel, he said, “the Iraqi man and woman feels sadness because something died in his heart. He doesn’t want to go home. He loves his homeland, his country, but what happened really injured him in the most deep

inside his heart.”

He suggested this is because many refugees were forced out not by military occupation, but by their fellow citizens.

Fr. Bader said that King Abdullah II of Jordan and some other Arab leaders are speaking out against the persecution of Christians, and both Christian and Muslim Jordanians have worked to help Christian refugees fleeing Islamic State, though the priest said more opposition to the violence is needed.

The refugees’ sufferings have been a major contrast for Jordanian Christians, who have lived in peace.

“Sometimes we feel that our faith is without real political problems. It’s good. We have all that we need. Thank God for this, thanks for the leadership,” the priest said.

“But we have to learn from these people, that you have to be ready for any new ways of the Cross.”

Source: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/iraqi-christians-say-theres-no-going-home-after-rise-of-islamic-state-52687/>

Francis says religious dialogue can't come at cost of faith

By Joshua J. McElwee

Embarking on a key mission of his visit to this island nation -- shoring up efforts at interreligious dialogue to heal wounds from a 26-year civil war -- Pope Francis on Tuesday said such work should not blur the lines between different religious convictions.



Source: <http://ncronline.org/node/93976>

Resources for the Genocide Centennial

With the 100th year of remembrance of the Armenian Genocide advancing rapidly, the Eastern Diocese has created a special section on its website for downloadable resources. Parishes, community groups, and anyone else can obtain materials to help them inform local press and reach out to their surrounding communities. This week, a downloadable map of "Historic Armenia Through the Ages" was added to the offerings—these can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

In the meantime, the Armenian-American community is building towards a national observance in Washington, DC, in May 2015. Special events are scheduled for May 7 to 9—including an ecumenical prayer service at the National Cathedral, a Pontifical Divine Liturgy, a memorial concert, and an awards banquet honoring those who helped the survivors. His Holiness Karekin II, the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and His Holiness Aram I, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, both will journey to the United States to lead the Washington commemoration. They will be joined by Armenians from across the U.S., under the auspices of the Eastern and Western Dioceses, and the

Eastern and Western Prelacies. [Click here](#) to learn more about the May events in the nation's capital.

The Eastern Diocese's Annual Diocesan Assembly and Clergy Conference will convene in Washington that same week; details on the 2015 Assembly will be forthcoming.

People in the New York metro region should also reserve the dates of April 24, 25, and 26 for commemoration events in New York City. These will include liturgical celebrations and the annual Times Square program sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Diocesan Primate, has appointed George and Lorraine Marootian as Diocesan liaisons to the Genocide commemorative committees. They will be working with established committees at the national, regional, and local levels, and have begun reaching out to our parish communities. Contact them via e-mail at georgem@armeniandiocese.org.

Russian Patriarch Calls For Abortion Curbs, Touts Conservative Values

By Tom Balmforth

Last updated (GMT/UTC): 22.01.2015 15:35

MOSCOW -- The head of the Russian Orthodox Church used a historic speech to parliament to call for restrictions on abortions and press the country to embrace conservative values to counter what he described as the erosion of morals in a "post-Christian" world.

In what was touted as modern Russia's first address to parliament by an Orthodox Church leader, Patriarch Kirill said on January 22 that the "horrifyingly high" abortion rate is "one of Russia's main misfortunes."

He called on the State Duma lawmakers to end the practice of free, state-provided abortions and said cutting the number of abortions in half would result in "sustainable and powerful demographic growth."

The call, which was met with applause from the floor of the lower house of parliament, came amid a grandstanding speech in defense of "traditional" values that reflected the rising sway of the Russian Orthodox Church as President Vladimir Putin takes the country on a conservative, authoritarian turn.

The speech was broadcast live on Russian state television in its entirety.

Putin, a longtime Soviet KGB officer who has touted the Russian Orthodox Church as a moral bulwark, has called reversing the country's post-Soviet population decline a major priority.

Both Putin and Kirill have been faced criticism from liberal Russians over the close ties between church and government in what the constitution says is a secular state.



"The cost of legal child-killing operations should be the same as underground ones," Kirill said. "But it should not be at the expense of taxpayers."

Officials estimate there were 900,000 abortions in Russia in 2013, a level much higher than many countries.

The high rate is often described as a legacy of the Soviet era, when abortions were widespread due in part to a lack of contraceptives, sex education, and family planning.

Pro-choice activists say drastic attempts to curb abortions would drive women to use dangerous underground abortion clinics, an argument Kirill called "nonsense."

"The cost of legal child-killing operations should be the same as underground ones. But it should not be at the expense of taxpayers," he said.

Kirill also condemned the practice of surrogate motherhood, which he said turned women and children into commodities.

"We are distorting the very notion of the mother, of the privacy of familial relations, their very sanctity," he said.

Kirill also delivered thinly veiled criticism of the West, which Putin and other Russian officials have suggested is sacrificing its morals by pursuing liberal policies and secularism.

"The world we live in is often called 'post-Christian' and sometimes 'postreligious.' This term conceals a terrible diagnosis of the spiritual and moral condition of societies in many countries," he said.

"The idea of absolutely prioritizing the value of free choice and of rejecting the priority of moral norms has become a slow-acting bomb for Western civilization," he said.

He said Russia should cherry-pick the best aspects of its history to lay the foundations for its future, lauding the Soviet Union for establishing a "solidarity" between its people that paved the way to "feats" such as the construction of the Baikal-Amur Railway.

"As soon as we start talking about the Soviet period, some idealize, others demonize. But was there something else that this time brought about and that today we can boldly adopt and include in our personal life philosophy? There was solidarity."

He went on to call for the political parties in the audience to display that same solidarity or unity, warning that political competition between parties over Russian values could make Russia weak and vulnerable to exploitation by its "enemies."

"There won't be a Russia," he warned.

Kirill called for lawmakers to increase religious teaching in schools and to boost support for Cossacks who have undergone a revival in recent years, particularly in southern regions like Krasnodar Krai where they have been used to police the streets and monitor migrants.

"The fundamental lifestyle of the Cossack is primarily founded on Orthodox faith and love of the fatherland. This is why for centuries they have served as fierce defenders of Russian statehood and today we know that they play a very important role," Kirill said.

Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-religion-patriarch-abortion/26807767.html>

Russian Orthodox Patriarch Says IS 'Discredits Islam'



The powerful head of the Russian Orthodox Church has denounced the Islamic State (IS) group, saying that it "discredits the image of Islam in the eyes of the entire world."

Patriarch Kirill made his comments on February 19 at a reception in Moscow for the patriarch of Antioch, John Yazigi X.

Patriarch Kirill is a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose rule Kirill once famously likened to "[a miracle of God](#)." Patriarch John, who was born in Latakia in Syria, is an open supporter of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

"It is not possible to imagine a more terrible 'service' to Islam that what they [IS militants] are providing. The images that the whole world sees on television -- they destroy any positive image of Islam," Kirill said, according to the TASS news agency.

The Russian Orthodox patriarch added that the militants were also "consciously or unconsciously creating chaos in the Middle East."

According to Kirill, it is necessary to "explore the genesis of this phenomenon and to understand to what extent it is an anti-Islamic and anti-Arab action."

Kirill's comments had, of course, a political dimension. The patriarch's comments could be seen as hinting at an argument that Moscow has been emphasizing since the emergence of militant Islamist factions in the Syrian crisis and in particular since the rise of the IS group -- that the armed groups in Syria, including IS gunmen, are not only anti-Arab and anti-Islamic but deliberately so, because they are a creation of the West.

The patriarch said that Russian citizens who study these issues should obtain education in Arab countries, and noted that students from the Kazan Theological Seminary could study at state universities in Syria.

Kirill is known for his highly conservative views, including his [denunciation of feminism as propaganda](#) that encourages women to adopt roles beyond child-rearing and housekeeping.

-- Joanna Paraszczuk

Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russian-patriarch-islamic-state-discredits-islam/26858513.html>

Local Ecclesiastical News

Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a General Assembly Meeting on Anti-Semitism, January 22, 2015

In Judaism, the Sabbath is a holy day of rest and spiritual reflection, when Jews remember the miracle of Genesis and the exodus that followed their ancestors' liberation from slavery. For many Jews, the ritual centers on Shabbat dinner, which begins at sundown on Friday night. Families come together to light the candles and sing the blessings over wine and challah.

January 9, 2015, the day a terrorist attacked a kosher supermarket in Paris, was a Friday. Yoav Hattab, a 21-year-old student from Tunisia, stopped at the market to pick up a bottle of wine to bring to the hosts of his Shabbat dinner. Philippe Braham, age 45, went there after dropping off two of his kids at school; his wife, Valerie, had asked him to pick up some food for Shabbat. Yohan Cohen, age 22, worked at the market, and was saving up for his wedding to his fiancée, Sharon. Yoav, Philippe, and Yohan were all in the market when the terrorist walked in. Francois-Michael Saada, a 64-year-old retiree, arrived after the attack started. He reportedly asked to be let in so he could buy loaves of challah.

Yoav, Philippe, Yohan, and Francois-Michael were all killed in the attack. All four were casualties of violent anti-Semitism – targets because they were Jews. All were killed playing some role in preparation for the celebration of Shabbat – a core practice of their faith.

As you all know, Jews were not the only targets in the Paris attacks; the violent extremists who launched coordinated attacks that week also went after satirical journalists and police. Nor were they the only victims. The families of those killed are victims as well. Thousands of children attending France's 717 Jewish schools – little kids who now have to walk to class through phalanxes of heavily armed soldiers – are also victims. So too are Jewish worshippers who congregate in synagogues that increasingly feel like fortresses, with blast walls and foot patrols outside. Any Jew in France, in Europe, or anywhere in the world, who fears putting on a kippah before walking out in public, or thinks twice about shopping in a kosher market, or putting a mezuzah outside their door, or living in a Jewish neighborhood, for fear of being attacked – he or she is also a victim.

Cleric arrested for 'Pro-Taliban' Friday sermon

UMAIR RANA — UPDATED JAN 22, 2015 07:30PM



LAHORE: A cleric was arrested by security agencies from Lahore on Wednesday.

The cleric, Qari Ahrar, a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) employee, was arrested on charges of supporting the Taliban during his Friday sermon last week. Ahrar had reportedly led a public 'dua' for the Taliban to emerge victorious.

Ahrar was a cleric in the CAA staff colony mosque in Lahore and was associated with the civil aviation for 20 years, CAA sources told Dawn.

Since the attack on Peshawar's Army Public School on December 16, 2014, military and political leadership have formed a National Action Plan to counter terrorism.

Establishment of military courts in the country and lifting of a long-held moratorium on the death penalty have been a few of the major developments in this regard, along with the formation of multiple committees to deal with the many dimensions of the security threat.

Among those was also a committee to monitor hate speech, headed by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan.

The committee's prime responsibility was to make recommendations on how to counter hate speech and extremist material.

At the societal level, several hard, ugly realities that have gone largely ignored by the majority are being confronted, even if reluctantly.

Foremost is the one that is also perhaps the most ironic: that religion and the pulpit have been hijacked by groups and individuals intent on spreading mischief and sowing divisions; society itself has been infected by deep-rooted extremism that is exacerbating already dangerous divisions.

This may not necessarily lead individual citizens to resort to physical violence, but it certainly constitutes the bed from which the seeds of intolerance and bigotry take nourishment; the fact that extremist views are rife in society explains why it has taken Pakistanis so long to recognise the problem, despite suffering years of witnessing innocents being slaughtered.

Like all societal malaises, the path to redemption is fraught with challenges, but some measures are readily apparent. These should apply immediately to the misuse of mosques in general, and in particular to the Friday sermons in which views that are divisionary and that often amount to outright hate-speech or incitement to violence are disseminated.

These must be curtailed. One solution can lie in crowd-sourcing: citizens can be encouraged to report violations, with the state then stepping in to investigate and apply the law.

All mosques and their khateebis should be registered with the government, and the merits of requiring religious figures to apply for a licence to deliver the Friday sermon, which goes out over loudspeakers, can be considered.

It is already the case that the Friday congregations can only take place in some, and not all, places of worship; the oversight net can be tightened by the law requiring that all sermons be recorded and the records kept in order and be readily available.

To stem the tide of extremism in society, extraordinary measures are needed. Perhaps even more than the state, it is the people themselves that need to step up to the challenge.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1158715>

India Prepares for the First Apostolic Visit of HH Ignatius Aphrem II Patriarch



HH Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Antioch and All the East and Head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, is scheduled to arrive in India for an 11-day visit on February 7. During his visit His Holiness is scheduled to meet Pranab Mukherjee, President of India, Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, and Sonia Gandhi, President of All India Congress Committee in New Delhi. HH will be in Kerala as a State Guest, and will be received at the Kochi International Airport by the Head of the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church Catholicos HB Baselios Thomas I, ministers representing the State Government, as well as by the Bishops, Clergy and Laity of Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church.

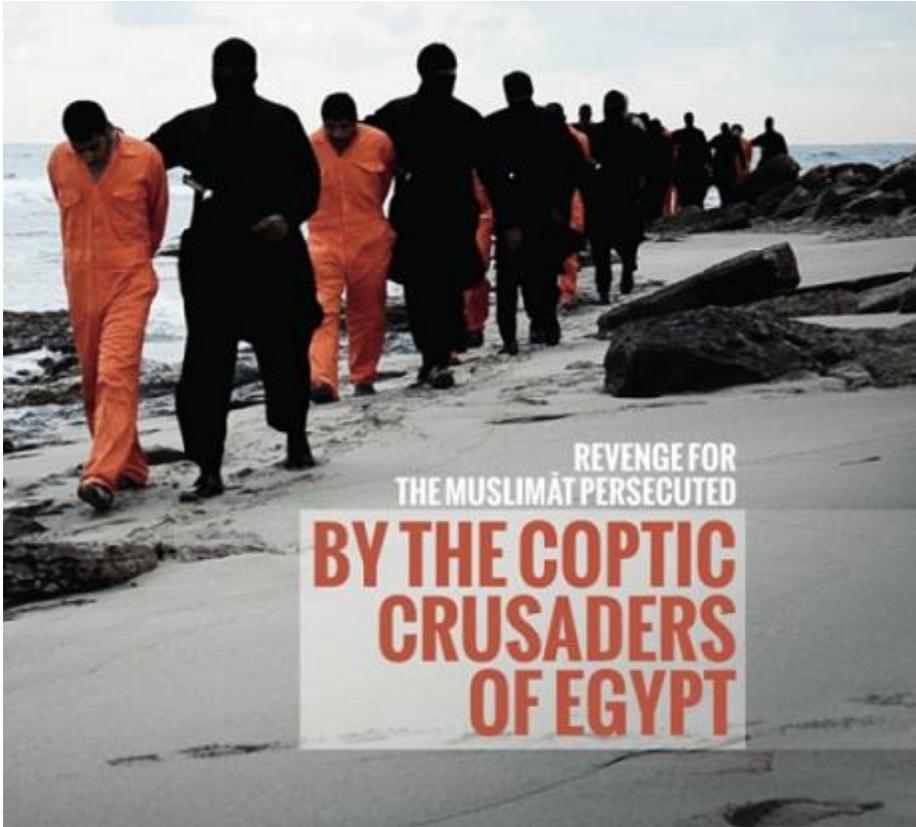
HH will address the synod of the bishops of the church at St. George Cathedral, Karingachira on February 7. HH will be staying in Kumarakom resort on Feb 7. HH will conduct the Holy Qurbano at the St. Mary's Cathedral, Manarcadu - the Global Marian Center - on Feb 8. A Giant Public Reception, inaugurated by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, will be held at the Nehru Stadium, Kottayam at 5 PM on the same day that is expected draw over 1.5 lakh people. Later the State Government will host a dinner in honor of the Patriarch. HH will also perform the Consecration (Mooron Koodasha) of Syrian Orthodox Centre, Kanjikuzhy, Kottayam. HH is also scheduled to address the Maramon Convention on February 13. HH will attend the Manjinikkara Perunnal, conducting the Holy Qurbano on February 14. On February 15, HH



Some social media in the west speculated that this has something to do with Denmark, [for example](#):

“Speculation as to ‘nation of the cross’ spans from Denmark (flag with cross) to ‘community of Christendom’. This announcement came after the Denmark attacks yesterday, so is not a reference to yesterday’s attacks.” ([Weasel Zippers](#))

Westerners centric folks care more about Charlie Hebdo’s death, a liberal who mocked Christ portraying the Virgin Mary giving birth to a pig when all [throughout the Middle East](#), the speculation is quite different and more accurate, the beach and the waves shaped red, a reference to the blood was a clear message to the Copts in Egypt, a people who are rarely cared for and to Egypt it is about the slaughter of the 21 Christian Copts who were dragged to a Mediterranean beach front in Libya dressed in orange jump suits while the shadow of death, the Muslim dressed in evil looking back (the color of their flag) drags them to martyrdom. The picture shows from ISIS magazine *Dabiq*, a group of Copts bowing on a beach, which can be linked to the image of the new promotional video issued by ISIS.





Now it all adds up. Exactly as we stated in three articles before ISIS released this horrifying video.

The phrase “Cross nation” referred to in the message, raised our doubts about the fate of 21 Coptic Egyptian kidnapped by a group “Soldiers Of The Caliph” loyal to ISIS in Libya, and who had been abducted from the city Sirte, Libya. We (Rescue Christians) have been monitoring the situation in Sirte and the Coptic community is stranded there and the Copts who want to leave find it impossible since seven were killed previously trying to escape. The only route is through Tunisia and the poor Copts who are stuck there cannot afford it. We are trying our best to find a way and to also send financial aid to their families.



One of the mothers in Minya Egypt weeps for her son captured by ISIS.

And while the families who were anticipating the fate of their 21 sons in suffering to now realize the full story, I am reminded of Christ's descending on earth which the Muslim executioner in the video referred to from his demonic teaching. Let me remind ISIS, we fear not you scimitar, you can take our lives, but you will never have our souls. The two places in Scripture I find Jesus landing to rescue folks is in Zechariah 14 and Isaiah 19. We all know that Zechariah 14 is about rescuing the Jews and converting them to Him, but Isaiah 19 should shock some folks and get us to ask, who and why is Christ coming for in Egypt:

*"And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of Hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD **because of the oppressors**, and **He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One**, and **He will deliver them.**" (Isaiah 19:20)*

Here we have the "Mighty One" is the Messiah who fights on the day of the Lord to fight "the oppressors" of His brethren. Here, see for yourself your brothers and sisters in Egypt suffering from the oppressors and calling for Jesus to come down and save them:

And where do we find faith like this? Be encouraged and rejoice O daughter of Egypt. Where do we see multitudes of Christians taking to the streets when there are 90% Muslims and in the face of such a massive threat the Copt stands for Christ, yet here in the West, we fear a handful of bickering Muslims.

Prior to the release of this execution, the call on Christ to appear and rescue the 21 Copts has become a typical occurrence in Egypt since Egypt is mentioned in Scripture that upon His return (Isaiah 19) *"they will call on the Lord to send them a Savior and a Mighty One"*. And so in this following demonstration calling for Christ to descent and rescue the 21 brethren, they cried out: "Have mercy, save us O Lord for You are our salvation ...*Kurielaison* (Lord have mercy) ... O Lord of hosts ..." as they did the sign of the crucifix (see 1:40) declaring their faith publicly as to [take the mark of God \(Revelation 9:4\)](#) in the midst of a Muslim majority population yelling out "we are not kafir (heathen)".

And this is exactly what these Copts are doing, calling on Jesus to descend and save them. Christ was called "Mighty One", Isaiah 19:20 leaves no question as to who Christ comes to rescue: "He will send them a **Savior** and a **Mighty One**, and He will deliver them."

The Egyptian Coptics are increasingly being oppressed by the Muslim majority. But if God sees their cause as being so important to personally send His Son, the Savior and Mighty God to rescue them, then we need to ask: what are the Coptic Christians of Egypt doing right and what are they doing differently from the western church?

He comes to rescue the Christians, the remnant in Egypt, the 10% Christians. There is no doubt that the "Savior" and "Mighty One" is Christ. In the Psalms, Messiah is portrayed as a soldier and a fighter with the same reference, "Mighty One":

"Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty" (Psalm 45:3).

In Zephaniah 3 this "Mighty One" is physically present in Israel's midst:

"The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save" (Zephaniah 3:17)

He comes for Israel to convert the Jewish people to Him. And if in doubt that Christ lands in Egypt, explain this:

*“See, Jehovah rides on a **swift cloud** and is **coming to Egypt**. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them” (Isaiah 19:1).*

Who comes on the clouds? We also meet Him in the clouds. We even sing “Behold He comes riding on the clouds”, yet we eliminate Egypt from the song. Indeed, we are lacking. We eliminate essential clues from our songs we sing. Why?

This is Messiah personally coming to defeat Egypt. Obviously Egypt is a 90% Muslim nation with 10% Christians who will be caught up in the clouds and then landing to fight tyranny and Antichrist.

But here is the dilemma, the Egyptian Christians are Copts who believe that the bread and wine in the Eucharist are miraculously, and mysteriously, changed in to the Body and Blood of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. They also believe in the intercessions of the Virgin Mary or of the angels or of the saints.

Yet Christ is personally coming to rescue them and snatch them up in the clouds from the persecution by the Antichrist, the tyrant.

Ever think about it?

If Christ loves these, who are we to judge what He considers His brethren? Is it perhaps that even their theology is more sound than ours?

They even have a Pope. The previous Pope Shenouda III (ال ثالث شنودة الإ سدك ندرية ب ابا) before his death on 17 March 2012, he wrote a thesis on [responding to the western Protestant style Christianity and its in English](#).

He called for unity:

“We are in an age in which Ecumenical work and attempts towards the recovery of the Christian Unity have flourished. The meetings between the Churches, in councils, conferences and symposiums have increased, and the fields of co-operation and co-working have multiplied. However, unity is in a much higher level than cooperation. The Christian Unity should be built on the foundation of the “One Faith”. Thus began the theological discussions between the Churches. This book in your hands is a step in this theological discussion between our brethren the Protestants and us.”

Go ahead, [read his work](#), its an eye opener.

My friends are concerned, why am I focused on the ancient East and Church Fathers in my theology lately? Some think I have gone mad because I do not sound like your typical tele evangelist prophecy teacher.

And why shouldn't I focus on the east? The Coptic Christians are extremely devout to Christ. The coptic church is probably the most devoute and active church in the world. Their youth were raised in the church and are very close to their church community and are just as pious as their parents.

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt was founded in the first century by St. Mark, one of the disciples of Jesus. St. Mark is regarded as the first patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. He planted the Church in

Alexandria, where he wrote his gospel—the Gospel of Mark, in the Greek language. After winning many converts to Christianity in several journeys, he was brutally martyred by pagans in the streets of Alexandria in 68 AD.

The Christian Church of Egypt (the Coptic Orthodox Church) produced world-wide distinguished Christian leaders and theologians who defended the Orthodox faith tirelessly.

I had asked a fellow Christian on my blog to tell me about St. Athanasius the Apostolic, the twentieth patriarch of Egypt (328-373) who fought the Arian heresy. She knew nothing and the name wasn't interesting enough for her.

He is known for his staunch defense of the orthodox faith, St. Athanasius suffered exile from his See five times.

There was also St. Cyril the Great, the twenty-fourth patriarch of the Coptic Church (412-444), refuted the Nestorian heresy. His theology is regarded by Christendom as the key to orthodoxy. At the time of his death, the Coptic Church occupied the position of undisputed leadership in the entire Christian world, and Christianity covered most of the land of Egypt.

Christ loves the Copts, and so will I. Not only will I love them, but I will also learn from the remnants of St. Mark, the apostle. We always talk Bible, yet we forget who wrote it and where they lived and what they said and how they interpreted it. If I want to know what Mark meant by certain verses, I will sure check with the Copts before I check with Rick Warren!

Yesterday, we have decided to send help to the heart of Egypt. We will find these families and we will send them help and support. The west needs to think on more serious issues on Christian persecution which will increase as we see these events unfold. For example, we operate a very effective mission in rescuing fellow Christians who literally live under slavery. We are a unique organization ([Rescue Christians](#)) who rescue Christians, predominantly in Pakistan that live under the Muslim yoke baking bricks in kilns under the heating sun. Christians too are burned in furnaces in Pakistan with no one to mourn them. To see an example out of the thousands we rescue, [click here](#), and listen to the amazing testimonies first hand on how you can help and make a difference, now in this life and for eternity.

[“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal”. CONSIDER DONATING TO RESCUE CHRISTIANS](#)

[Iraq's Christians persecuted by ISIS](#)

More than 125,000 of Iraq's Christians have been forced to flee the homeland they have lived in for nearly 2,000 years because of ISIS violence and threats

The following script is from "Iraq's Christians" which aired on March 22, 2015. Lara Logan is the correspondent. Max McClellan, Jeff Newton and Richard Butler, producers.

There are few places on earth where Christianity is as old as it is in Iraq. Christians there trace their history to the first century apostles. But today, their existence has been threatened by the terrorist group that calls itself Islamic State. More than 125,000 Christians -- men, women and children -- have been forced from their homes over the last 10 months.

The Islamic State -- or ISIS -- stormed into Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, last summer and took control. From there, it pushed into the neighboring villages and towns across this region, known as the Nineveh Plains, a vast area that's been home to Christians since the first century after Christ. Much of what took almost 2,000 years to build has been lost in a matter of months.



Monastery of St. Matthew

CBS NEWS

On the side of a mountain, overlooking the Nineveh Plains of ancient Mesopotamia, is the Monastery of St. Matthew. It's one of the oldest on earth.

The voices of its monks have echoed here since the fourth century, uttering prayers that have not changed.

Lara Logan: You do the service in Aramaic?

Father Joseph Ibrahim: Yes.

Lara Logan: Which was the language of Jesus.

Father Joseph Ibrahim: Yes.

Lara Logan: Are you among the last people on earth to speak this language?

Father Joseph Ibrahim: We think so because we kept this language through the language of prayers.

Prayers through centuries of persecution. Father Joseph Ibrahim is one of only seven monks left here. He told us the monastery was founded in 363, and has survived the Persian and Ottoman empires, Mongol invaders and Kurdish conquests. Today, it's threatened by the Islamic State, whose fighters advanced towards St. Matthew's gates shortly after taking Mosul last summer. Kurdish soldiers pushed them back to this village where their flag still flies only four miles from the monastery.

Lara Logan: What are you most afraid of?

Father Joseph Ibrahim: Unknown future.

Lara Logan: The unknown future?

Father Joseph Ibrahim: Yes.

Lara Logan: What do you think is going to happen?

Father Joseph Ibrahim: We don't know exactly but we are expecting the worse.

"They take everything from us, but they cannot take the God from our hearts, they cannot."

The road from St. Matthew's brings you to the front line, just six miles from the outskirts of Mosul. Every town and village between here and the occupied city is in the hands of the Islamic State. And now, we're told, for the first time in nearly 2,000 years, there are no Christians left inside Mosul.

Archbishop Nicodemus Sharaf: They take everything from us, but they cannot take the God from our hearts, they cannot.

Nicodemus Sharaf is the Archbishop of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Mosul, one of about 10,000 Christians who fled the city. We found him living as a refugee in the Kurdish capital, Erbil. He said ISIS fighters were already inside Mosul when he escaped.

Archbishop Nicodemus Sharaf: I didn't have any time to take anything. I was told I had five minutes to go. Just I took five books that are very old.

Among them, this Aramaic manuscript. He told us it was written 500 years ago and said he left behind hundreds more older than this one - Christian relics that may never be recovered.

Archbishop Nicodemus Sharaf: I think they burn all the books. And we have books from the first century of the Christianity.

Lara Logan: You had from the first century..

Archbishop Nicodemus Sharaf: Yes, of the Christianity. When I remember this, I cannot ...(crying) from the beginning the Christianity, this is the first time we cannot pray in our churches.

As it seeks to erase Christianity from the landscape, the Islamic state allows no Christian symbols. It just released these photographs which show the desecration of the church at what is believed to be the monastery of Mar Gorgis, just north of Mosul.

And nothing is sacred. ISIS blew up this mosque just over a month after taking here -- it's a site holy to both Christians and Muslims because the Old Testament prophet Jonah was said to be buried inside.

Just like the Nazis marked the property of Jews, Christian homes in Mosul have been marked with this red symbol. It's the Arabic letter N - for Nasara - an early Islamic term for Christians. When ISIS puts it on your home, you either convert to Islam, pay an extortion tax or face the sword.

Issah Al Qurain is one of tens of thousands who had to make that choice. He was at home with his family in the Christian village where he'd lived all his life, when ISIS fighters came looking for him. He told us the fighters first took all his money - then his wife and children.

Lara Logan: They were telling you convert, convert, convert?

Issah Al Qurain (translated): Yes, convert. In the beginning, I refused. I told them I was Christian and I had my religion and they had their religion. But they told me, if you don't convert, we will kill you and take your wife and children.

He agreed and was taken to Mosul to convert where he was reunited with his family. Soon, ISIS fighters were asking about his young daughter, and he told us that frightened him more than anything.

Issah Al Qurain (translated): They said to me that in Islam, the Sharia says, girls that are 10 years old should get married. As soon as they left, my wife and I shut the door. We looked at each other and she started to cry and pray. We were so scared they were going to take our daughter from us.

They escaped in the back of a taxi. Issah says they talked their way through three ISIS checkpoints and traveled for over four hours on back roads to Erbil where, like Archbishop Sharaf, they now live as refugees.

Some 30,000 Christians were living in Erbil before this crisis, most of them Chaldean Catholics, who follow their own ancient traditions but recognize the authority of the pope. Bashar Warda is the archbishop of this diocese. He says his congregation has swelled by more than 60,000 refugees...as Kurdistan, the semi-autonomous region in the north of Iraq, has become a safe haven for Christians fleeing the Islamic state.



Archbishop Bashar Warda and Lara Logan

CBS NEWS

Lara Logan: This is one of the oldest Christian communities in the world? Thousands of years old.

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Two thousand, almost.

Lara Logan: And when you look at it today, where is that Christian community here?

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Disappearing. It's dying.

Archbishop Warda said Christians in Iraq ironically felt safer under Saddam Hussein. Democracy brought a new wave of persecution and prompted a mass exodus of Christians. When the U.S. withdrew completely in 2011, Archbishop Warda says the situation became even worse because Iraq's new leaders were incapable of governing without help.

Archbishop Bashar Warda: I think American support was needed, needed forcefully. You cannot leave the country like this and tell them, "Well, we've liberated you. We cannot do the job for you and we are walking away. This is your country, rule it."

Lara Logan: So, in your view walking away in 2011 was just as damaging to Iraq as 2003 when the U.S. invaded?

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Yes. It's not blaming, but that's the reality. This is not what you came for in 2003. The 4,000 sacrifices of the American soldiers was not meant to come to this day.

Christianity in Iraq was born in the towns and villages of the Nineveh Plains, like this one, called Tel Isqof, which lies less than 20 miles north of Mosul.

Christians have lived here and walked these streets for over a thousand years. But today, there's no one - they're all gone. Driven out by fear. And one of the most striking things you notice is the silence.

Every road was deserted. Houses and possessions abandoned. Others destroyed. Tel Isqof had always been a refuge for Iraq's Christians, until last August when ISIS moved in and 7,000 Christians fled. Three weeks later, Kurdish soldiers pushed the terrorists out.

But Father Rony Hana says ISIS instilled such fear here that his people won't come back. He worries, too, but returns for a few hours every morning to check on his church, which he said ISIS fighters used as their base. He told us one of them called him on his cell phone to ask how to operate the church generator.

Lara Logan: They really did, they asked you that? And you told them?

"I guided them to where it was located around the corner from here," he told us, "and explained how to turn it on. The last thing I said was to please take care of the church and they just hung up."

The cleansing of Iraq's Christians from this land is something Archbishop Sharaf believes ought to be generating a much louder cry of outrage from his Muslim friends and neighbors.

Archbishop Nicodemus Sharaf: Speak up. Of course, there is good people of the Islam people. There is not all Muslim people they are bad. I believe. But there is the good people? Where is their voice? Nothing. Few. Few.

Lara Logan: With everything that has happened here to the Christians, what has been lost?

Archbishop Nicodemus Sharaf: They lost our dignity here. I'm sorry to say that. We don't have dignity in our country, in our land.

Most everyone we met welcomed U.S.-led airstrikes here, but they also said it is not nearly enough. Taking back Mosul - a city of about 1.5 million people -- is widely understood to be a difficult prospect. Archbishop Warda believes the Iraqi army can't do it alone and as long as the city remains in the hands of ISIS - who he refers to as Da'esh, its Arabic name -- no Christians will be going home.

Archbishop Bashar Warda: For me, Da'esh is a cancer. It's a disease. So sometimes you take some hard measures, unfortunate measures to deal and to treat this cancer.

Lara Logan: So you want to see a major military offensive to retake Mosul?

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Yea, to get Iraq to its normal situation.

Lara Logan: And by getting Iraq to its normal situation, you mean restoring the border between Iraq and Syria?

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Yes.

Lara Logan: Getting rid of Da'esh, the Islamic State?

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Exactly.

Lara Logan: Defeating them militarily?

Archbishop Bashar Warda: Please God.

The Christian community hastily set up militias to guard their deserted villages and homes along the frontline, and they're getting a little help. We were surprised to come across American Brett Felton, a Christian veteran of the Iraq war, who traveled -- on his own -- from Detroit to train Christian volunteers. And this man, Khamis, who said he came from Australia, driven to defend the land where he was born.

Lara Logan: What do you think the Islamic State intends to do with the Christians here?

Khamis: To wipe them out. To be nothing. No place left that bears the name of Christian or Christianity.

Christians in the frontier town of al Qosh live in the shadow of the Islamic State. Under constant threat, the militiamen keep watch as they celebrate their faith ... and carry out traditions that are as old as Christianity on the Nineveh Plains.

Source: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraq-christians-persecuted-by-isis-60-minutes/>

Other Related News

[Reflections on the Paris Attacks - Council on Foreign Relations \(CFR\)](#) [An Attack on Press Freedom and Islam](#)

The killing of journalists at Charlie Hebdo in Paris on Wednesday was also an assault on Islam and the very freedoms that allow thirty million Muslims to prosper in the West, writes CFR's **Ed Husain**. [Read more »](#)

[A Consequential Terror Attack in Paris](#)

The recent attacks in Paris have revived the debate on balancing government policies to prevent these sorts of attacks, while preserving the individual freedoms and privacy. Read CFR senior fellow **Max Boot's** [op-ed.](#) »

[When Their Hell Becomes Ours](#)

CFR's **Gayle Tzemach Lemmon** writes that although the United States and Europe largely ignore terrorist attacks that happen overseas, they are “not immune to the threat.” [Read more](#) »

[Pegida Marches On: How the Charlie Hebdo Attack Reinvigorated the Movement](#)

Before the bloodshed in Paris, Pegida and its variants across the country, which oppose the "Islamization of Christian Europe" and Germany's "foreign infiltration," were faltering. No longer, says **Paul Hockenos** in this *Foreign Affairs* Snapshot. [Read the full article](#) »

[Will Journalism Suffer After the Paris Attack?](#)

The terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo could have a chilling effect on the coverage of Islam in certain countries, says expert **Karin Karlekar** in this CFR.org interview. [Read more](#) »

[ISIS and AQAP: Organizational Structure and Origin - Council on Foreign Relations \(CFR\) Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#)

The union of the Saudi and Yemeni branches of al-Qaeda is emerging as the organization's most dangerous affiliate. This CFR Backgrounder examines al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and U.S. counterterrorism operations. [Explore this CFR Backgrounder](#) »

[Islamic State in Iraq and Syria](#)

Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has capitalized on Iraq's Sunni minority's alienation from the state, driven by sectarian politics and heavy-handed approaches to security, to establish zones of authority while expanding its reach into neighboring Syria. [Explore this CFR Backgrounder](#) »

[Efforts to Address Religious Extremism - Council on Foreign Relations \(CFR\) CFR's Farah Pandith on Muslim Identity, Youth, and Extremism](#)

Farah Pandith, CFR adjunct senior fellow and the first-ever State Department special representative to Muslim communities, put the January 7, 2015 massacre at Charlie Hebdo into context, explaining the appeal of violent Islamic extremism and offering a long-term strategy to combat extremist ideology. [Read the transcript](#) »

[Extremism, Censorship, and the Internet](#)

Experts **Yasmin Green**, **Peter R. Neumann**, and **Shaarik H. Zafar** discuss strategies to curb online radicalization while not infringing upon freedom of speech, as part of the Eighth Annual Religion and Foreign Policy Summer Workshop. [Listen to the event audio »](#)

[Religion and Foreign Policy Conference Call Audio: Countering Violent Extremism](#)

CFR's **Ed Husain** leads a conversation on why it is crucial to create a global fund to counter violent extremism, as part of CFR's Religion and Foreign Policy Conference Call series. [Read the CFR report »](#)

[Media Call on President Obama's Trip to India](#)

MCMAHON: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the CFR on-the-record media briefing ahead of President Obama's trip to India. I'm Robert McMahon, editor of CFR.org, and I'll be presiding over this call.

President Obama this weekend will become the first sitting U.S. president to visit India twice. And the trip is rich in symbolic importance, as President Obama joins Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as guest for India's Republic Day. Now, Modi himself was in the U.S. last fall, and much has been made of the personal connection the two leaders appear to have.

So here to guide us on this important trip is Alyssa Ayres. She's CFR's senior fellow for India, Pakistan and South Asia. And I will speak with Alyssa for about 15 to 20 minutes before opening up the call to you.

Alyssa, to kick things off, you wrote on CFR's "Asia Unbound" blog earlier this week about the importance of India's Republic Day. Can you go a little bit further to that and talk about why this invitation to President Obama matters?

Source: http://www.cfr.org/india/media-call-president-obamas-trip-india/p36023?cid=nlc-public-the_world_this_week-highlights_from_cfr-link22-20150123&sp_mid=47877272&sp_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1

[The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate: Twentieth Anniversary Edition](#)

August 12, 2013

This volume brings together a broad range of *Foreign Affairs* content to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Samuel Huntington's classic article "The Clash of Civilizations?"

Huntington's essay argued that culture, rather than ideology or geopolitics, would be the driving source of international conflict in the post-Cold War era. It struck a nerve because it raised important and uncomfortable subjects in direct and powerful ways. Two decades on, the jury is still hung, with critics and defenders passionately arguing the piece's merits and demerits, agreeing only on its enduring significance both as a marker of its times and a theoretical perspective that demands serious engagement.

We believe that readers should make up their own minds about how well his argument does and doesn't hold up. So we've pulled together the original article; a broad range of responses from prominent commentators; Huntington's response to his critics; a recent retrospective analysis by Richard Betts; eulogies of Huntington from Stephen Peter Rosen, Eliot Cohen, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and

Henry Rosovsky; and a video of a celebration of Huntington's career featuring reminiscences from some of his students, including Cohen, Francis Fukuyama, and Fareed Zakaria. An introduction by *Foreign Affairs* Editor Gideon Rose sets the stage for the debates that follow.

Bookstores that wish to order bulk copies may do so through Ingram.

Visit <https://ipage.ingrambook.com>, call (800) 234-6737, or email orders@ingrambook.com. Be sure to include the ISBN number for the hard copy version: 978-0876095546

Source: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/books/fabooks/the-clash-of-civilizations?sp_mid=47915636&sp_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1

CFR Teaching Notes



This issue of the Academic Bulletin focuses on [CFR's Teaching Notes](#). Built around popular CFR materials and written by CFR fellows and other experts, Teaching Notes feature discussion questions, classroom activities, essay prompts, and supplemental readings designed to assist professors and teachers in developing course syllabi. Use of these notes is free of charge.

[The Taliban](#)

CFR's latest InfoGuide on the Taliban includes an overview video with insights from policy experts, a timeline tracing the Taliban's evolution, and an interactive map of Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The companion Teaching Notes feature discussion topics, essay questions, activities and assignments, and supplementary resources designed to help educators use the InfoGuide in the classroom. [Explore the Teaching Notes »](#)

[The Sunni-Shia Divide](#)

Through a series of multimedia tools, students can explore at their own pace the history of the Sunni-Shia schism and the modern strains fueling a resurgence of conflicts in Muslim countries. The Teaching Notes provide discussion questions, essay prompts, and suggestions for classroom activities to help professors incorporate the InfoGuide into their course syllabi. [Review the Teaching Notes »](#)

[What To Do About Russia and Ukraine](#)

This video is part of CFR's "What To Do About" meetings series, which highlights specific issues and features experts who put forward competing analyses and policy prescriptions in a mock high-level U.S. government meeting. In this edition, three experts join CFR President Richard N. Haass to discuss the crisis in Ukraine and its implications for U.S. foreign policy. The accompanying Teaching Notes help professors bring the issue to life with supplemental readings and discussion questions on the background, stakes, and policy options involved in this crisis. [Explore the Teaching Notes »](#)

[Foreign Policy Begins at Home](#)

In his book [Foreign Policy Begins At Home](#), CFR President **Richard N. Haass** puts forward a new foreign policy doctrine of Restoration, in which the United States limits its engagement in wars of choice and humanitarian interventions abroad and focuses on restoring the foundations of its power at home. In his Teaching Notes, Dr. Haass provides suggestions for policy memorandum and class debate projects, essay questions, and supplemental reading materials for educators. [Review the Teaching Notes »](#)

[Why Growth Matters](#)

In the book [Why Growth Matters](#), Columbia University's **Jagdish N. Bhagwati** and **Arvind Panagriya** examine how market-driven economic growth and liberal state policies can alleviate poverty in India. Professor Bhagwati's Teaching Notes feature discussion questions and essay prompts relevant for courses on development economics, Indian development, and political economy. [Explore the Teaching Notes »](#)

Source:

<http://links.cfr.mkt5175.com/servlet/MailView?ms=NDgxNTQzNDkS1&r=NTIzMzIzOTkwNTcS1&j=NjQwNTA1Mdc0S0&mt=1&rt=0>

[Religion and Foreign Policy Bulletin March 2015: The United States, Israel, Iran, and the Bomb](#)

The United States, Israel, Iran, and the Bomb



This issue of the Religion and Foreign Policy Bulletin examines the Iranian nuclear program negotiations and their effect on U.S.-Israel diplomatic relations. Included are links to CFR Backgrounders to provide context, interactive media, and expert testimony on policies for addressing this diplomatic and security challenge.

CFR Resources and Analysis

[Netanyahu Brings Theatre But Few Answers](#)

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to Congress offered a tough critique of the Obama administration's Iran diplomacy, but provided little in the way of alternatives, writes CFR President **Richard N. Haass**. [Read more »](#)

[Crisis Guide: Iran](#)

Explore the country's complex regime structure and controversial nuclear program, and watch experts debate a range of policy options. [Explore this Crisis Guide »](#)

[The Strategic Genius of Iran's Supreme Leader](#)

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is a first-rate strategic thinker who is patiently negotiating his way to a nuclear bomb. However, as a national leader, he has ruthlessly repressed Iran's once-vibrant civil society while impoverishing its economy, writes CFR's **Ray Takeyh**. [Read more »](#)

[Even an Imperfect Iran Nuclear Deal Is Worth Pursuing](#)

The nuclear negotiations with Iran should continue, writes CFR President **Richard N. Haass**. Though any reachable deal will inevitably be imperfect, it should be judged against the potential alternatives of war or multiple nuclear-armed states in the Middle East. [Read the op-ed »](#)

[The Breakup: The Slow Demise of U.S. Bipartisan Support for Israel](#)

The Democratic and Republican divide over Israel may be at its worst today, but bipartisan support for Israel began to erode decades ago, writes **John B. Judis** in this *Foreign Affairs* Snapshot. [Read more »](#)

[Undivided Tehran](#)

To avoid another failed round of nuclear negotiations with Tehran, Washington must understand why Iran is at the negotiating table, argues **Reza Marashi** in this *Foreign Affairs* Snapshot. [Read more »](#)

[Netanyahu's Strategy in Washington](#)

Though commentators are debating whether Netanyahu is damaging Israel's security by alienating Obama, it seems unlikely that the White House will cut back on military aid or stop vetoing anti-Israel legislation at the UN, writes **Lisa Goldman** in this *Foreign Affairs* Snapshot. [Read more »](#)

Source:

<http://links.cfr.mkt5175.com/servlet/MailView?ms=NDgxODc0MzQS1&r=NTIzMzIzOTkwNTcS1&j=NjQxMTIxNTY1S0&mt=1&rt=0>

Anne Marie Riccitelli: Hanging out with a young Frank Sinatra



The photo hung on the knotty pine wall in our basement kitchen. It was the first thing you saw as you went down the stairs. As I child, I never believed the man in the photo was Frank Sinatra. This young man looked nothing like the “Chairman of the Board” who ran with the “Rat Pack” and helped elect presidents. He had a far-off look, as if he had seen better days -- and of course he had, and would again. But in February 1947, he had a beer with my parents (and me).

All three of them were born in 1915. This year marks the centennial of their births. To celebrate this anniversary, Frank’s children helped to organize “Sinatra: An American Icon” now on display through Sept. 4 at the New York Library for the Performing Arts. The retrospective recalls his “illustrious life and six-decade career.”

There are many photos in the exhibit, but none quite like the one taken with my parents in Miami Beach in 1947. For a brief moment, decades ago, my parents’ lives -- and mine, too -- intersected with “The Voice,” Frank Sinatra.

My father’s own illustrious 50-year career began and ended in the Providence neighborhood of Silver Lake. He was a gardener with an intuitive gift for landscape design, as well as for growing grass and plants, building stone walls and pushing “a mean lawnmower.”

His seasonal work left time in the winter of 1947 to travel to Miami Beach with Mom and me. Sinatra was there at the same time, during one of the lows in his career. Dad loved his music and offered to buy him dinner. Frank joined my parents for a beer instead.

Dad never talked much about the photo. It was just there, silent testimony to their meeting. Sinatra performed in Providence over the years, but Mom and Dad never saw him live. They had his records. One Sinatra performance 50 years ago was especially exciting for my father: the Newport Jazz Festival, on July 4, 1965. Sinatra was set to perform with Count Basie. What a thrill! Dad purchased two tickets to the must-see event -- for two teenagers, my sister and me.

"You'll be way in the back, the next-to-last row. It was the best I could do," he told us. "So you'll have to bring binoculars to see, but you'll still be able to listen to the music." We were excited to see this man who meant so much to Dad and his generation. He was the closing act on the closing night of the Newport Jazz Festival for a standing-room-only crowd. And what a show it was!

Sinatra made a dramatic helicopter entrance, surrounded by tight security. He performed for over an hour with the Count Basie Orchestra. They played a knock-'em-dead set of upbeat tunes: legendary musicians making music history in my home state. The screams and applause were deafening. Then Sinatra left, just as swiftly as he had arrived, by helicopter.

We gave my father every detail of the performance. He was as excited hearing our enthusiasm for the music and performance as we were to witness it. I am sure he knew that would happen.

Now, when I look at the 1947 photo of the three of them, I wonder what they talked about. Mom was holding me and probably listened to Dad and Frank. Dad was so proud of Sinatra's accomplishments and how they reflected on all Italian-Americans.

Frank never forgot where he came from. I imagine that in my father he saw a working man who shared his heritage. Even though he might have been a bit down on his luck when they had that beer, both men shared the same resilience and self-reliance. They kept trying. They didn't give up.

My father gave that gift to his children, and Frank Sinatra inspired his generation and young musicians yet to come. A century went by so quickly!

Anne Marie Riccitelli is the former executive director of media relations for the ABC Television Network. For the past decade, she has served at the United Nations as a non-governmental organization representative for the Syrian Orthodox Church in America. She grew up in the Silver Lake section of Providence.

Source: <http://www.providencejournal.com/article/20150324/OPINION/150329672/2011>

National Christian Leaders Accept Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Roma Downey & Mark Burnett's Urgent Call for Solidarity & Prayer for Persecuted Christians

LOS ANGELES – In an [opinion piece published today](#) – Good Friday – on CNN.com, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of the [Archdiocese of New York](#), and Roma Downey and Mark Burnett, executive producers of "[A.D. – The Bible Continues](#)," noted an alarming rise in Christian persecution around the globe, calling for urgent prayer and advocacy on behalf of those threatened by extremists.

"This Holy Week we are calling upon Christians to also reflect upon the crucifixion, beheading, stoning, enforced slavery, sexual abuse, human trafficking, harassment, bombing and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Christians – and others – whose faith alone has made them a target of religious

extremists,” [wrote](#) Dolan, Burnett and Downey. “These communities need our love and support like never before, and they also need security and protection from the world like never before.”

Already, more than 80 of America’s most well-known faith leaders, representing many millions, have responded, pledging their own support and the support of their communities, including:

- Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C.;
- Charles J. Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia;
- Leith Anderson, President of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE);
- Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington;
- Samuel Rodriguez, President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC)/Conela;
- Jim Daly, President of Focus on the Family;
- Rich Stearns, President of World Vision;
- Father Jonathan Morris, New York Times Bestselling Author;
- Russell Moore, President of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission;
- Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Orthodox Church;
- Most Rev. Denis J. Madden, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore;
- Andy Stanley, Founder and Pastor of North Point Community Church;
- Nina Shea, Director, Center for Religious Freedom Hudson Institute;
- Pastor Louie Giglio, Passion City Church, Founder, the Passion Movement;
- Jo-Anne Lyon, General Superintendent of The Wesleyan Church;
- Joshua DuBois, Founder and CEO, Values Partnerships;
- Mark Batterson, Senior Pastor of National Community Church;
- Geoff Tunnicliffe, Former Secretary General, World Evangelical Alliance;
- Jerry Falwell Jr., President of Liberty University;
- John Garvey, President, The Catholic University of America;
- Ambassador Mary Ann Glendon, Harvard Law School;
- Very Rev. Archimandrite Nathanael Symeonides, Director, Department of Inter-Orthodox, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America;
- Dr. Gabriel Salguero, President of the National Latino Evangelical Association;
- Ravi Zacharias, President of Ravi Zacharias Ministries;

- Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor of Northland – A Church Distributed;
- Dave Stone, Senior Pastor of Southeast Christian Church;
- Kevin Palau, President of the Luis Palau Association;
- Vernon Brewer, Founder and President of World Help;
- Peter Greer, President and CEO of Hope International;
- Chris Seiple, President, The Institute for Global Engagement, Co-Founder, The Cradle Fund;
- Barry H. Corey, President of Biola University;
- Kenneth C. Ulmer, Senior Pastor of Faith Central Bible Church;
- Larry Ross, President, A. Larry Ross Communications;
- Johnnie Moore, Author of “Defying ISIS,” Co-Founder, The Cradle Fund;
- Robert A. Destro, Professor of Law, The Catholic University of America;
- Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Armenian Orthodox Church;
- Lino Rulli, The Catholic Guy, SiriusXM Satellite Radio;
- Eric Metaxas, New York Times Bestselling Author of “Bonhoeffer;”
- Michael Wear, Consultant and Former Obama White House and Campaign Staff;
- Gregory Thornbury, President of The King’s College;
- Jack Graham, Senior Pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church;
- James MacDonald, Senior Pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel;
- Pastors Tommy and Luke Barnett of the Phoenix First Assembly of God;
- Ray Johnston, Senior Pastor of Bayside Church;
- Wilfredo “Choco” de Jesus, Senior Pastor of New Life Covenant Church and one of Time’s 100 Most Influential People;
- Thomas F. Farr, Director Religious Freedom Project, Georgetown University;
- The Very Reverend James A. Kowalski, Dean of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine;
- Clarence E Martin II, Esq., Vatican Liaison for the Iraqi Kurdistan Project;
- Richard P. Gallena, Esq., Washington, D.C.;
- Carole A. O’Leary, Senior Adviser and Co-Director, The Iraqi Kurdistan Religious Freedom Project;
- Patricia Andrasik, The Catholic University of America School of Architecture and Planning;

- Toufic Baaklini, President of In Defense Of Christians (IDC);
- Stephen Schneck, Director, Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of America;
- Very Rev. Dr. Mark M. Morozowich, Interim Provost, The Catholic University of America;
- Andrew V. Abela, Dean, School of Business and Economics, The Catholic University of America;
- Robin Darling Young, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America;
- Father Benedict Kiely, Founder, www.Nasarean.org;
- Will C. Rainford, MSW, Ph.D., Dean, National Catholic School of Social Service, The Catholic University of America;
- James M. Quirk, Adjunct Professorial Lecturer, Department of Government, The Catholic University of America;
- James Robison, Founder of Life Today International;
- Dean Curry, Lead Pastor of Life Center in Tacoma, Washington;
- John Hagee, Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Church;
- Brian Tome, Senior Pastor of Crossroads Church;
- Jentezen Franklin, Senior Pastor of Free Chapel;
- Jerry Prevo, Senior Pastor of the Anchorage Baptist Temple;
- Ralph Reed, Founder of the Faith and Freedom Coalition;
- Mat Staver, Founder of Liberty Counsel;
- Jonathan Falwell, Senior Pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church;
- Tim Head, Executive Director of the Faith and Freedom Coalition;
- Michael Youssef, Vicar of the Church of the Apostles;
- Pastor Ken Foreman, Senior Pastor of the Cathedral of Faith;
- Bob Roberts, Jr., Senior Pastor Northwood Church, Keller, Texas;
- and many others.

This is the latest in a series of initiatives calling for greater attention to this crisis including [a letter issued by Dr. Ronnie Floyd](#), President of the [Southern Baptist Convention](#), and his 17 predecessors over three and one-half decades, and a campaign on behalf of the “[21 Martyrs](#)” of the Coptic Church initiated by the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC)/Conela.

Of that effort, Rodriguez noted, “When light stands next to darkness, light always wins. As individuals of faith suffer persecution, we stand convicted and convinced that terror and intolerance cannot, and will not, extinguish the light of grace, truth and love.”

Source: [http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/04/03/national-christian-leaders-accept-cardinal-timothy-dolan-roma-downey-mark-burnetts-urgent-call-solidarity-prayer-persecuted-christians/#h\[\]](http://pressreleases.religionnews.com/2015/04/03/national-christian-leaders-accept-cardinal-timothy-dolan-roma-downey-mark-burnetts-urgent-call-solidarity-prayer-persecuted-christians/#h[])

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