

HOPE AND RELIEF FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH www.barnabasaid.org

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hope and relief for the persecuted church

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To guard the safety of Christians in hostile environments, names may have been changed or omitted. Thank you for your understanding.

Front cover: A young boy sits with his classmates at a Christian school supported by Barnabas Aid in Pakistan. Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version®.

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Prisoners of Hope

The past few months have seen growing unrest across the Middle East and North Africa. Starting with one man burning himself to death in Tunisia, it has led to the bringing down of governments in Tunisia and Egypt, unrest and demonstrations in Yemen, Algeria, Bahrain and Jordan, armed conflict in Libya, and more.

It is difficult to interpret precisely what is happening, and to understand these movements for change. Many in the West have hailed them as the uprising of young populations, long oppressed by totalitarian regimes, seeking liberty. From outside the Muslim world it is easy to see them as essentially secular forces.

But as one Christian leader from the Middle East has commented, the Muslim world sees such events very differently. He argues that the one issue not up for discussion in all the change and turmoil across the Muslim world is the role of religion in society. The issue of religious liberty is not being raised. Moreover, Islamist groups in the region are well organized and in a good position to seize the initiative and reshape their countries.

So although these uprisings have been termed the “Arab spring”, as we see later in this magazine (page 9) for many Christians it may turn out to be an autumn, a decline

towards winter. Christians, naturally, are filled with uncertainty and in some cases fear, because it is difficult to predict the future. In the Greek myth, Pandora could not resist the temptation to open the sealed box she had been told never to open. Out of it erupted every kind of evil, which spread across the earth. The only thing left in the box was hope.

In Zechariah 9:12 the prophet speaks of God’s people as “prisoners of hope”. The context is one of major conflict and war, producing great uncertainty for the people of God. In the midst of the uncertainty, the coming of the Messiah is predicted, riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). The people of God, much afflicted, now recognize that in Him they will find their fortress and their defense, their rock and their protector. And in His arms they will become prisoners of a divine hope.

We praise God for the certainty of this hope, both in divine providence now and in the hope that is to come, the hope that is Jesus.

Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo
International Director

What has God done through Barnabas Aid in 2010?

Thank the Lord that last year Barnabas Aid was able to support 342 projects to bring practical support and spiritual nourishment to thousands of Christians living in contexts of anti-Christian persecution. We sent grants ranging in size from USD\$30 to USD\$300,000 to 62 different countries. We also sought to tell the untold story of what God is doing among His people where they suffer for His Name. We are extremely grateful for the generous giving of our supporters, without whom none of this would have been possible. Most importantly, we are so thankful for the faithful prayers that sustain our persecuted brothers and sisters in their trials.

On this page, we give a selection of some of our current and recent achievements. (Certain countries cannot be named for security reasons. Thank you for your understanding.)

Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director

Currently, Barnabas Aid supports:

- 7,098 children in 26 schools/educational programs in eight countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Holy Land, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and one other country
- 237 missionaries and 180 pastors in 22 countries: Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Chad, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Ukraine and eight other countries, working with 27 partner organizations

In 2010, we:

- provided food to over 100,000 Christians
- provided 808,205 Christian books and 66,431 Bibles in 27 languages to twelve different countries: Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Holy Land, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Niger, Romania, Russia, South Africa and two other countries
- financed the construction or repair of 21 church buildings in twelve different countries: Bangladesh, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Niger, Romania, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and four other countries
- helped Christian leaders to have training in 22 countries: Algeria, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Georgia, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Russia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and one other country

We also supported:

- around 200 individual Christian victims of violence or injustice and their families and more than 5,000 Christians who have suffered community violence in Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar), China, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda, UK, Ukraine and four other countries; we also supported safe houses in five countries
- over 1,000 Christians with small-business and income generation projects in 12 countries: Algeria, Burundi, Egypt, Niger, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda and Uzbekistan
- Christian converts who are persecuted in the Arab world, former Soviet Union, Asia, Africa and Europe

In the last three years (2008-2010), we have:

- helped to build or support seven clinics and hospitals, and provided support for persecuted Christians who require medical attention, in ten countries: Lebanon, Macedonia, Niger, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and two other countries
- supported Christians in 18 countries where there have been natural disasters (earthquake, tsunami, drought, cyclone, floods and famine) and provided support for over 20,000 Christian families in these areas

Thank you for your generous support in enabling us to help Christians around the world who are enduring persecution and discrimination because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Lives are being changed and hope renewed for the future. Below and on the next pages you will find a selection of updates and news from the many projects we are supporting. Please pray as you read.

Bibles for brave Bangladeshi street preachers

Twenty young Bangladeshi Christians feel so compelled to share the Gospel that they are willing to risk their own safety by selling and handing out Christian literature on the streets and in buses and marketplaces in their cities. In the past eleven months they distributed more than 500,000 Bibles, New Testaments

and Christian leaflets. Barnabas helps these young Christians by funding their training and the purchase of the literature, most recently with a grant of USD\$12,756. Last year the workers were able to attend four seminars. Often when they are out on the streets they are harassed by local people and sometimes

arrested by the police, but despite these problems they persevere in their work.



Project reference 04-653

A Muslim man is offered Christian books and leaflets in Bangladesh



Flood relief around the world

The past months have seen an extraordinary number of floods in many parts of the world, many of them places where Christians are poor and needy or a vulnerable minority. Barnabas Aid stepped in immediately, sending flood relief to Christians in East Africa, West Africa and three countries of South Asia.

In November 2010, a grant of USD\$96,000 helped 521 needy Christian families in the north of **Benin**, West Africa for three months with food packages consisting of rice, maize, canned food, school supplies and medicines. A father of six said, "The gift goes beyond our understanding. It fills our mouths. We are very moved." Another grant of USD\$55,000 sent in February 2011, provided food for 70 Christian families for three months and temporary shelter to 114 families in the center of the country.

Barnabas continues to help Christian families in **Pakistan** rebuild their lives after the devastating floods in August 2010. From November 2010 to

February 2011 Barnabas sent a total of USD\$161,778 for helping 534 flood-affected Christian families through an ongoing feeding program and a total of USD\$46,425 for building houses and reconstructing damaged homes. One family, whose house was reconstructed, told a visiting Barnabas staff member that God had blessed them with more than they thought, and the flood had blessed them with a new friend in the shape of Barnabas Aid.

After heavy monsoon downpours overwhelmed eastern and central parts of **Sri Lanka** in January, Barnabas immediately sent a total grant of USD\$15,281 to the eastern part of the island, helping thousands of Christian families. Through one partner church organization over 700 Christian families received a food pack containing tea, soya, chick peas, lentils and powdered milk, which covered their food needs for two weeks. When another flood deluged Sri Lanka in February, Barnabas sent a grant of



A truck full of food is unloaded for Benini Christians suffering after the floods

USD\$54,998 for feeding 5,000 Christian families in the eastern districts of the country.

In February 2010 Barnabas sent a grant of USD\$16,446 to provide food and basic living equipment to Christian families in eastern **Uganda**, and USD\$8,451 for helping 65 Christian families in **Nepal**, all of whom were affected by flooding in their countries.

Project references



00-634 (Disaster Relief Fund)
38-844 (Benin floods)
41-919 (Pakistan floods feeding program)

Popular Christian radio station reaches millions in North Ossetia

A popular radio station in the Russian Republic of North Ossetia brings Christian radio programs 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, to more than 2 million people, many of whom are Muslim. Because of a 150-foot-high mast, funded by Barnabas in the past, people in neighboring Muslim countries can access the Christian programs. Radio is the main source of entertainment in this region, and many people are finding Christ through hearing the programs. In popularity ratings, they always take first or second place. A recent grant of USD\$40,931 is covering part of the salaries of eleven full-time workers and the other running costs for one year. And last year a separate grant of USD\$25,577 paid for new radio editing and reporting equipment.



Project reference 43-669

Bible training for spiritually hungry pastors in DRC

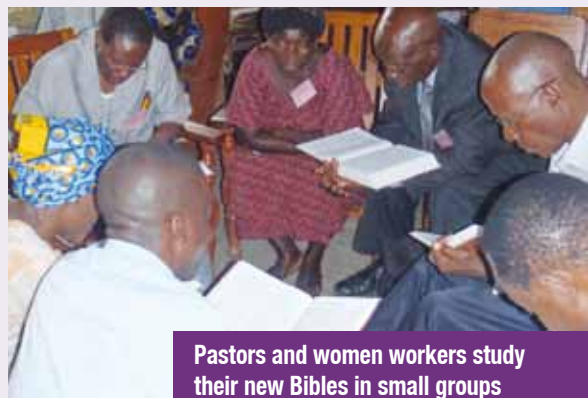
"The atmosphere throughout the week was vibrant and there was an air of expectation and excitement... These pastors are hungry for teaching." This is what one of the organizers reported about a leadership training event in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that took place in early February 2011, and which Barnabas funded with a grant of USD\$6,400.

One hundred senior pastors and 20 leading women workers from all over the DRC attended the training. They each received a copy of the African Bible Commentary in Swahili and extensive training on how to use it. Another 40 pastors were so eager to learn that they "attached" themselves unofficially to the training, sitting at the back, listening and taking notes. The need for such training is immense. Many of the qualified pastors in DRC have been killed in the violence that has

racked parts of the country for years. Others are ministering without even owning a Bible. One of the pastors said, "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. I am thrilled with this book... We are being truly edified."



Project reference 92-945



Pastors and women workers study their new Bibles in small groups

Sierra Leone: Self-sufficiency for pastors, equipping missionaries

“Please tell the donors that we appreciate this wonderful project, because it is going to build our self esteem and is going to make us self-sufficient with regards to food.” These are the words of a pastor in Sierra Leone who participated in a self-sufficiency training program that Barnabas Aid supported with a grant of USD\$29,027.

Forty pastors were first trained in crop cultivation and animal rearing, and then given tools and various types of seeds for growing crops in their back yards. Each pastor also received a flock of 40 goats or sheep. These new sources of food and income have enabled them to continue living in rural, Muslim-majority areas where most of the country’s population lives. Every pastor also received a bike and now can reach their congregation and Muslim neighbors far more easily. The project cost per pastor was USD\$726.

In another project in Sierra Leone pastors from areas with large Muslim populations receive training on how to evangelize Muslims effectively and follow up and disciple Muslim-background believers. A simple training manual is provided so that even the pastors who have not been able to go to secondary school can understand it.

The latest grant from Barnabas Aid to support this project was USD\$17,855 which provided training for 300 pastors.

Project references



46-851 (Self-sufficiency for rural pastors)

46-791 (Training in Muslim evangelism, convert care and discipleship)

Yurts for ministry in Kyrgyzstan

Sometimes a simple, practical gift can make an enormous difference to the ministry activities of Christians in places of pressure and hardship. This is especially true when the gift reflects the local culture.

A grant of USD\$9,169 has bought three traditional tents known as yurts, which are being used by churches in three locations across Kyrgyzstan, two of which are in remote, mountainous areas. Yurts form an important part of the country’s heritage, because in the past the Kyrgyz people all lived in yurts as nomadic shepherds. But nowadays most

people cannot afford to buy the tents, because they have become very expensive.

The churches are using the tents as meeting places for a variety of activities such as children’s and youth camps, outreaches and also special occasions such as funerals. During children’s camps, the yurts are an ideal place for the children to meet and listen to Bible stories, and the youth can experience something of their heritage by living in a yurt during summer while at the same time learning more about Christ.



Project reference 26-725



Inside a yurt, children listen to their teacher during a Christian children’s camp



The new yurt is used for a Christian youth camp

Niger: Combating malaria with mosquito nets

When a Barnabas staff member visited a small, isolated village in Muslim-majority Niger where almost all of the 1,500 villagers are Christian, he asked the villagers what their greatest needs were. The villagers responded that the provision of mosquito nets would effectively tackle the problem of malaria. Because of several floods in the region, interspersed by droughts, in the past years, malaria had become an increasing concern, especially for the young children. Barnabas provided the villagers with a gift of USD\$976 which provided for almost 300 chemically impregnated mosquito nets. The women were asked to congregate at a special meeting point for the distribution. Each family received one net for hanging up around the family’s sleeping area.



A young woman holds up the mosquito net she has just received



Project reference 00-671 (Medical Fund)

GRIEVING FOR CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENT MINISTER IN PAKISTAN

“As a Christian, I believe Jesus is my strength. He has given me a power and wisdom and motivation to serve suffering humanity. I follow the principles of my conscience, and I am ready to die and sacrifice my life for the principles I believe.” Shahbaz Bhatti, speaking a month before he was martyred.

On Wednesday March 2nd, Shahbaz Bhatti paid the ultimate price for following Christ. Pakistan’s Minister for Minority Affairs and only Christian government minister had an important role in speaking out for the voiceless, but tragically his voice was silenced when gunmen opened fire on his car



Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan’s only Christian government minister, was murdered for urging reform of the “blasphemy law”, which is often used to victimize the innocent

as he left his mother’s home to travel to work one morning.

Mr. Bhatti was a prominent campaigner for reform of Pakistan’s notorious “blasphemy law”, which he maintained was used to victimize the innocent. He had received death threats because of his campaigning and because of his support for Christian mother-of-five, Aasia Bibi, who was sentenced to death under the law in November 2010.

He knew his days might be numbered, but he said, “I want that my life, my character, my actions [to] speak for me and indicate that I am following Jesus Christ. Because of this desire, I will consider myself even to be more fortunate if – in this effort and struggle to help the needy, the poor, to help the persecuted and victimized Christians of Pakistan – Jesus Christ will accept the sacrifice of my life. I want to live for Christ and I want to die for Him.”

Mr. Bhatti’s funeral, held two days after his death, was attended by thousands of Christians mourning a courageous man who was inspired by the Bible and by the life of Jesus Christ. In the book *Christians in Pakistan or Where Hope is Tested* (Marcinaum Press, 2008) Mr. Bhatti said, “When I see that Jesus Christ sacrificed His everything and our

Lord sent His Son for our redemption and salvation, I ask myself how I can follow that path of the Calvary.”

The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for Mr. Bhatti’s assassination and promised a death sentence for other government ministers who support legislation that they claim is contrary to Islamic sharia law. In leaflets left at the scene of the murder, the Taliban said, “This is the warning from Islamic Warriors to the infidel world... Oh Warriors of Cross (Christians), we are at war with you until the religion of God leads the world, and infidels and disbelievers are destroyed!”

Speaking just before his death, Mr. Bhatti said, “If I change my stance today, who will speak out?” And it seems that all hope of reform to the blasphemy law has died with this bold man who sought equality for religious minorities in Pakistan. In the wake of Aasia Bibi’s case, only two other people spoke out against the law. Salman Taseer, a Muslim and the governor of Punjab, had criticized the “blasphemy law” and requested a presidential pardon for Aasia. He was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards on January 4th, 2011. Sherry Rehman, a Muslim and member of the governing PPP Party, dropped her proposals to reform the law because her party would not back her. She has now vanished from the public eye due to concerns for her safety. The government is explicitly ruling out any attempts to reform the blasphemy law.

UZBEKISTAN: PASTOR SHESTAKOV RELEASED BUT “NOT FREE”

On January 21st, 2011 Pastor David (Dmitri) Shestakov was released from prison in Uzbekistan after serving four years at a remote labor camp, many miles from his home and family. David was arrested during a Sunday service at his church, and in May 2007 he was found guilty of “incitement to religious hatred”. David had been active in outreach to Muslims in his community, prompting the authorities to target him and

regularly raid Christian gatherings. During his imprisonment, he endured harsh conditions and suffered severe health problems due to lack of food and extreme temperatures. He refused to renounce his faith, despite coming under pressure to do so.

Since his release, he has been placed under “administrative supervision”, which includes a curfew and a ban on visiting public places

including cafes and restaurants. In addition, he cannot leave his home city without prior police permission, and must report to the regional police at least three times a month. Local Christians fear this is being done to suppress David and his church and have expressed concern that the police will do all they can to bring another case against him and send him back to prison.

CHRISTIANS IN LAOS FACE STARVATION

Local authorities have destroyed crops and are preventing food from reaching a group of 18 Christian families in Laos, leaving them on the brink of starvation. The families had been driven from their village at gunpoint over a year earlier for refusing to give up their faith. They have been living in a temporary camp outside Katin village, Saravan province, and were threatened with death by village officials if they returned to their homes – even if they were moved back by the government.

Since their expulsion, the Christians have lacked adequate shelter, food and water, and now village officials are refusing to allow them to enter the village to farm their land, while an area that had been farmed around the camp has been destroyed. Families in the surrounding villages have also been instructed not to help or provide food to the Christians, who also lack access to sanitation facilities and medical treatment. The Christians believe that these tactics are an attempt to starve them into giving up their faith.

CHRISTIANS UNDER ATTACK IN EGYPT

Clashes on the streets of Cairo left at least 13 people dead and more than 140 injured when Muslims attacked a Christian demonstration. The violence broke out around Mokattam garbage village, where a number of homes were looted and torched by the mob. Thousands of Christians had taken to the streets on March 8th to protest against the burning of a church by several thousand Muslims three days earlier. Egypt's military rulers have apparently agreed to rebuild the church in the village of Soul, 18 miles from Cairo, but protestors say they want steps to be taken to improve the status and quality of life for Egypt's Christians.

The early months of 2011 have seen much unrest in North Africa and in some parts of the Middle East. Weeks of protests in Egypt and Tunisia led to the fall of their respective leaders, Hosni Mubarak and Zine Ben Ali, while supporters of Libya's leader Colonel Gaddafi have been locked in battle with anti-government rebels.

At the time of writing, the unrest in Egypt continues to rumble on as police and the military struggle to maintain order. Since the overthrow of President Mubarak, Christians have come under a series of attacks by Islamists and the authorities. On January 30th, two Christian families were massacred in their homes in Minya Province, Upper Egypt. Eleven people, including four children, were killed and four others seriously injured when two Islamist groups – aided by Muslim neighbors – accessed houses owned by Christians. On February 22nd, church leader Dawoud Botrous was found stabbed to death inside his home in Assuit. That same week, Egyptian armed forces stormed ancient Christian centers, firing live ammunition at the Christians, wounding some, and demolishing fences they had erected to protect themselves during the revolutionary protests.

CHRISTIAN MAN RELEASED FROM AFGHAN PRISON

After months of prayer and advocacy in public and behind the scenes by Barnabas Aid and others, Afghan convert to Christianity Said Musa was released from prison in mid-February 2011.

Said was arrested in May 2010 as part of a crackdown on Afghan converts and imprisoned under threat of execution for apostasy. He was tortured and abused during his detention but remained strong in his faith. Said had reportedly refused an offer of release on condition that he wrote a statement regretting his conversion to

Christianity. He said, "I laughed and replied, 'I can't deny my Savior's name.' Because my life is just service to Jesus Christ and my death is going to heaven [where] Jesus Christ is. I am a hundred percent ready to die."

At the time of writing, it is believed that Said is now safely out of Afghanistan, but there is still much concern for other Afghan converts to Christianity, including Shoaib Assadullah, who is in prison for his faith and facing possible execution for apostasy.



Afghan Christian Said Musa was released after ten months in prison. He was arrested for converting from Islam (Source: Release International)

REVOLUTION IN NORTH AFRICA: Arab spring... ...or Christian autumn?

The early months of 2011 were a tumultuous period for several nations in North Africa. In January a revolution in Tunisia brought down the long-standing autocracy of President Zine Ben Ali. A few weeks later the world watched in astonishment as a largely peaceful uprising toppled the dictatorship of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Immediately afterwards a violent rebellion broke out against the authoritarian rule of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in Libya; its outcome is uncertain at the time of writing. Smaller-scale unrest was witnessed in Algeria and Morocco, and in various countries of the Middle East.

The dominant reaction in the West to the spread of revolution was one of enthusiasm; some commentators even spoke of an “Arab spring” in North Africa and the Middle East. It was widely believed that the resulting political changes would be for the better, leading to the establishment of real freedom for the region’s peoples – including its Christian minorities – and of Western-style democracy. An important reason for this optimism was the apparently secular character of the revolts: they appeared to have little or no religious dimension, and certainly not to be Islamic revolutions on the Iranian model.

If this were so, the uprisings would indeed be good news for the Christians of these nations. For years they have suffered discrimination in many areas of life, restrictions on their freedoms by the authorities, and outright violence from the Muslim majorities. If the twilight of the old regimes really did herald the dawn of freedom, Christians could hope at last to take their place as equal members of society and to practice and share their faith in peace and safety.

Sadly, however, the widespread positive response to recent events is misplaced, even naive. North African and Middle Eastern concepts of freedom and democracy, shaped by centuries of Islamic domination, are simply not the same as Western ones. So, for example, when political leaders commit themselves to support “freedom of expression”, they do not intend to include religious freedom in this, and their Muslim audiences do not understand them to do so.

Nor can religion be separated from politics in any Muslim context, where the two are inseparably connected. For most of the people involved in them, the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings are not “secular” revolutions; they are profoundly religious events, waiting to be led by the strongest religious players.

The best organized and funded groups among the rebels in Tunisia and Egypt are the Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, who are aiming to play a leading role in the future government of their countries. There is already significant evidence of their growing influence in the post-revolutionary fervor:

- The return of Islamist leaders Rashid al-Ghannouchi and Yusuf al-Qaradawi to Tunisia and Egypt respectively, amid great public enthusiasm; the latter led a million people in prayer in Cairo’s Tahrir Square
- The appointment of an Islamist judge to head the committee drawing up Egypt’s new constitution
- The sudden and sharp upsurge in anti-Christian violence in Egypt, described elsewhere on this page, involving not only Islamist militants but also the Egyptian authorities

The outcome of recent events in North Africa and the Middle East is impossible to predict with confidence at this stage. But the essentially religious character of political events in Tunisia and Egypt, and the presence there of powerful Islamist groups, raises grave concerns for the future of Christian communities in those countries. If Islamism does seize control of the various revolutions, whether slowly or suddenly, it will impose a much stricter Islamic character on politics and society, threatening the very survival of Christianity across the entire region. ***We urge Christians to pray that the Arab spring does not become a Christian autumn.***

CHRISTIANS FLEE MUSLIM RAMPAGE IN ETHIOPIA

Thousands of Christians fled their homes in western Ethiopia following a spate of attacks by Muslim extremists, which appeared to be systematically organized.

The violence started in Asendabo, Jimma Zone, on March 2nd when Muslims accused a Christian of desecrating a copy of the Quran. In the following days, a mob rampaged through five districts in the predominantly Muslim area, looting property and torching at least 55 churches

and dozens of homes. Three Christians died, and dozens more were injured.

Security forces sent by the authorities were initially overwhelmed by the attackers. An estimated 2,000 Christian families (10,000 people) fled to Jimma city and sought shelter in local churches.



70-YEAR-OLD IRAQI CHRISTIAN MURDERED AT HOME

Youssif Isho (70) was stabbed to death in February by a group of armed men who stormed his home in Baghdad. The attack is said to bear the hallmark of a targeted killing by Islamists – nothing was stolen from the property, indicating that the offenders were not motivated by material gain.

The murder heightened fears of further attacks against Christians as thousands of Iraqis, inspired by protests across North Africa and the Middle East, staged anti-government protests across the country. On February 26th a “day of rage” saw violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces that left at least 11 people dead and many

government buildings ablaze. Protestors gathered in Mosul, Hawija and Basra, and as many as 5,000 people congregated in Baghdad’s Tahrir Square, to call for less corruption, more jobs and better public services. Iraqi Christians, who are already extremely vulnerable to attack, fear the unrest could exacerbate the dangers they face.

INDONESIAN CHURCHES ATTACKED

Two churches were set alight and a third was damaged when a group of militant Islamists went on the rampage in Temanggung, Central Java, Indonesia, on February 8th. The mob were protesting against the sentence of Antonius Richmond Bawengan (58), a Christian who had been found guilty of distributing books and leaflets that allegedly “spread hatred about Islam”. He had been given the maximum

sentence of five years in prison, but around 1,500 Muslims protested outside the courthouse, calling the sentence too lenient and demanding the death penalty. The crowd chanted “kill, kill” as they pelted the building with rocks.

The violence then spread to surrounding neighborhoods, where the mob cried “burn, burn” as they targeted the churches. One minister, who saw his church go up in flames, was beaten up by

the mob, and at least nine people were rushed to hospital with injuries. The protestors also threw rocks and other missiles at police, attacked a school building and torched a number of vehicles.

The church attacks took place as Indonesia started its “interfaith week”, when the country was supposed to be celebrating its religious diversity.



The Islamization of the UK

Many Muslims in Britain are trying to create an alternative society within the British nation. They want to live under Islamic sharia law instead of British law, and to isolate themselves as far as possible from non-Muslims in self-contained communities. But some Muslims, known as Islamists, want to go a big step further, by turning the whole of Britain into an Islamic society and forcing non-Muslims to submit to sharia.

This Islamist agenda is not a pipe-dream for some distant future. It is being pursued energetically right now, in many different areas. We will focus on just six of these.

Sharia

The legal system

Most Muslims in Britain believe that sharia defines what it means to be a faithful Muslim. So they think that it should control how they live every aspect of their lives. But while many are happy to live by sharia on a voluntary basis, others are calling for aspects of it to be incorporated into British law. Islamists go further still in wanting it to become the law of the land.

Because Muslims desire to follow sharia and because they mistrust secular courts, there has developed a parallel legal system for settling disputes among Muslims. Informal sharia councils operate in many Muslim communities, providing mediation mainly relating to divorce. And in September 2008 the British government acknowledged that it had for some time accepted the role of sharia tribunals in arbitration too.

In February 2008 the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested that the adoption of some aspects of sharia in Britain is unavoidable and necessary for social cohesion.¹ The Lord Chief Justice argued in July 2008 that sharia could be a basis of arbitration and mediation in certain fields as long as it did not contradict British law.²

The public sector

Various public bodies have taken steps to accommodate the requirements of sharia in order to satisfy Muslim demands. Recent examples include:

- Some police forces are allowing Muslim women to wear the *hijab* under the official police hat, in an effort to recruit more of them.
- Canterbury Prison in Kent spent USD\$27,300 on two footbaths (for use before Muslim prayer), a “squat” toilet and a shower area for its 92 Muslim inmates.
- The Department for Work and Pensions decided that polygamous families could claim extra welfare benefits for each additional spouse. They are also eligible for additional housing and council tax benefits. (Under sharia a man is allowed up to four wives. If a Muslim man has married more than one wife before entering the UK, his polygamy is recognized by the British government.)

- New uniforms have been issued to fire-fighters that include options of full-length skirts, long-sleeved shirts, *hijabs* and turbans.
- Counselors in the east London borough of Tower Hamlets were asked to observe Muslim fasting rules in meetings held during Ramadan.
- The Mid-Yorkshire NHS Trust ordered nurses in its hospitals to stop all medical work five times every day to move the beds of Muslim patients so they faced towards Mecca. The lengthy procedure also included providing fresh bathing water for the ritual washing before prayer.
- The Department of Health allows female Muslim staff to cover their arms on hospital wards, despite the increased risk of spreading infection, because some Muslims consider nudity of the female forearm to be immodest.

The *halal* industry

Halal food laws in Islam are part of the much wider system of the permitted (*halal*) and the forbidden (*haram*) found in sharia. All beings and things are divided into pure and impure categories. These include foods, goods and services, entertainments, finance and commerce, tourism and lifestyles.

Many Muslim scholars claim that the rules are not for Muslims only, but for all human beings. So Muslims are now working actively to integrate *halal* meat into the mainstream food market and extend it to non-Muslims. *Halal* meat is being sold at some of Britain’s supermarkets, sporting venues, bars, schools and hospitals, without the public’s knowledge. Its use is increasing so fast that already most of the imported lamb on the shelves is *halal*. And *halal* products are also to be found in other sectors.

In 2010 a leading European Muslim cleric, Dr. Mustafa Cerić from Bosnia, urged the international Muslim community to take control of the global economy through the *halal* movement.³

Islamic finance

In the last two decades Islamic finance and banking have expanded dramatically. Their growth has been driven by the claim of Islamist movements that Western financial products are inconsistent with

¹ “Archbishop’s Lecture - Civil and Religious Law in England: a religious perspective”, <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/1575> (viewed February 8th, 2008).

² Speech by Lord Phillips, Lord Chief Justice, “Equality Before The Law”, East London Muslim Center, July 3rd, 2008, http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/docs/speeches/lcj_equality_before_the_law_030708.pdf (viewed August 17th, 2009).

³ “Halal movement can lead Muslims to rule world economy” – Dr. Cerić”, *The Daily Mail* (Pakistan), December 11th, 2010.

sharia, mainly because they involve the charging of interest.⁴ Islamists have invented a wide range of alternative “sharia-compliant” products.

The growth of the global Islamic finance market has encouraged great efforts to attract Islamic finance to Britain. The legal and tax obstacles to the development of sharia-compliant products have been progressively removed, and senior politicians have declared their intention of supporting Islamic financial service providers. As a result of these efforts London has now become the largest center for Islamic finance outside the Muslim world.

In pursuit of a share in this lucrative market many mainstream banks have developed expertise in Islamic finance and now provide sharia-compliant services. In 2007, the Financial Service Authority authorized the launch of the Bank of London and the Middle East (BLME) as a sharia-compliant bank based in the City of London. An Islamic Bank of Britain has also been established.

The apostasy law

For most Muslims, apostasy from Islam is a terrible crime that ought to be punished with death as prescribed by sharia. British Muslims who convert to Christianity face rejection by their family and community, harassment, threats, violent attacks, kidnappings and even murder. A survey revealed that 36% of young British Muslims believe that those who leave Islam should be killed.⁵

Victims accuse the police and politicians of finding the issue so sensitive that they refuse to respond to appeals for help. The converts have to be supported and protected by secret networks.

Education

Schools

It is not surprising that Muslim parents want their children to grow up as Muslims. However, many of them are unwilling for the children even to be exposed to non-Muslim values and worldviews within the education system. This is fueling demands for specifically Muslim schools and for the Islamization of state schools.

Ofsted has delegated the inspection of many Muslim schools to an organization controlled by the Association of Muslim Schools. This arrangement allows Muslim heads to inspect each other's schools. Muslim schools tend to encourage the separation of Muslim children from mainstream society.

Most Muslim children, however, attend mainstream state schools. Some Muslim groups demand that specific arrangements be made to allow Muslim children to observe sharia. They also press for revisions of the curriculum, which they see as un-Islamic and steeped in Christian and secular values. Some Muslims also complain that their children are exposed to institutionalized racism and bullying in state schools, suffering academically, culturally and linguistically as a result. Numerous concessions have been made in response to Muslim demands.

In February 2007 the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) released a report entitled “Towards Greater Understanding: Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools”.⁶ It included a long list of wide-ranging recommendations for changes to previously accepted practice. The report was based on a very conservative and traditional

type of Islam, which it presented as normal for all Muslims.

Textbooks

In February 2007 the principal of the King Fahd Academy in Acton admitted that it used textbooks describing Jews as apes and Christians as pigs.⁷ Another textbook asks the pupils to “give examples of worthless religions ... such as Judaism, Christianity, idol worship and others”. The school is funded by the Saudi royal family and uses textbooks produced by the Saudi Ministry of Education.

A BBC *Panorama* program in 2010 revealed that this school is just one of a network of 40 Islamic private schools that are using hate-filled textbooks to teach children in Britain. This network runs part-time weekend schools that do not fall under the control of Ofsted or the Department for Education. They teach the national curriculum of Saudi Arabia.

One book asks children of six to list the “reprehensible” qualities of Jews. Another teaches 15-year-olds about sharia law and its punishments, with diagrams showing how to cut off the hands and feet of thieves.

Books used to teach Islam in state schools tend to present early Islamic history and doctrines in a very favorable light. Some aspects of classical Islam are widely regarded by non-Muslims as unacceptable and invalid today. But the authors of some textbooks either deny that Islam has ever taught them, or affirm them unashamedly. In most books the strictest and most traditional Muslim teachings are presented as normal, and these are often accompanied by Islamist statements.

The MCB has launched a special campaign to provide a pack of texts, teaching resources and Islamic objects for primary schools. They aim to ensure that every school child in Britain has access to high-quality Islamic resources within their schools and to reverse negative publicity and stereotypes. In an email to supporters they explain that this is a mission project designed to spread Islam.

Higher education

A growing number of senior staff positions in academic departments of Islamic and Middle Eastern studies are now being filled by lecturers from Muslim countries, while much of their funding comes from oil-rich Muslim countries. As a result the presentation of Islam in higher education and even the shape of university curricula are increasingly determined by Islamic influences. Islam is being progressively sanitized, the academic study of Islam politicized, and academic freedom restricted.

In recent years British universities have also become hotbeds of Islamist radicalism. Over the last decade around 30 Muslim graduates and undergraduates of British universities have been convicted of Islamist-inspired terrorism. Islamic student societies in colleges and universities tend to be dominated by Islamist activists. Four university Islamic Societies (ISOC) Presidents have been involved in major acts of terrorism.

Politics

Most British Muslims who engage in the political process do so to counter what they believe to be racism, Islamophobia and bias against Muslims. They aim to mobilize Muslims and empower them

⁴ Many Muslim scholars do not believe that charging interest is wrong, and think that the sharia prohibitions relate only to extortionate and exploitative interest. Also many Muslims use conventional financial products such as mortgages.

⁵ “Muslim apostates threatened over Christianity”, *The Daily Telegraph*, December 11th, 2007.

⁶ “Towards Greater Understanding: Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools”, London: The Muslim Council of Britain, 2007.

⁷ “We do use books that call Jews ‘apes’ admits head of Islamic school”, *Evening Standard*, February 7th, 2007.



politically, in order to force government to engage with Muslim issues and to support changes favorable to Muslims. However, some Islamist groups take part in politics to further their aim of transforming Britain into an Islamic state.

British Muslims first joined mainstream political parties in the 1960s. By 2010 there were eight Muslim Members of Parliament and one Muslim Cabinet Minister, Sayeeda Warsi, who is a member of the House of Lords; she is also the co-chair of the Conservative Party. The involvement of Muslims in the Stop the War Coalition forged a new partnership between Muslims and the hard left, which has partly replaced their traditional association with the Labour Party.

One area of politics in which Muslims have been particularly active in recent years is the campaign against so-called “religious hatred”. The Racial and Religious Hatred Act of 2006, which was strongly supported by Muslims among others, created an offense of stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds. Amendments in the House of Lords made the conditions for a conviction much more stringent, but many still fear that the Act threatens their freedom of speech. The possibility that people in Britain may be accused for even courteous and legitimate criticism of Islam appears to be growing.

There is also some discussion at present about the possibility of introducing “blasphemy laws” in Europe. The UK blasphemy law is very outdated and is unlikely to be used to prosecute anyone. But new blasphemy laws introduced mainly to protect Islam might – without the legislators intending it – turn into something more like the blasphemy law in Pakistan, which can be used to prevent criticism of Islam as well as misused to settle personal grudges (with Christians and other non-Muslims especially vulnerable to accusation).

Presentation of Islam

Islamists are also seeking to change the way that British people see the world (the Islamization of knowledge). Islamic bodies have been founded in the West to promote an Islamic way of thinking. Some of these are linked to Islamist movements, while presenting a moderate face to their Western audiences. Their academic standing encourages some Western academics to cooperate with them.

In recent years the British government has changed the ways in which it speaks about Muslims and Islam. The Foreign Office has advised ministers to stop using terms such as “War against terror”, “Islamic terrorism” and “Islamist terrorism”. It says that these terms suggest that the West is at war with Islam and link Islam unfairly with terrorism and radicalism. They also supposedly antagonize the British Muslim community, encourage Muslims to become more extreme and increase tensions with the wider Muslim world.

The result of this change is that Islam is increasingly presented by senior public figures as a tolerant and peaceful religion, while all the negative features of its history are quietly ignored. No criticism of Islam is allowed. In a recent speech, Baroness Warsi, herself a Muslim, attacked what she regarded as intolerance and “Islamophobia” and criticized the labeling of Muslims as moderate or extreme. She pledged to use her position to wage an “ongoing battle against bigotry”.⁸

The reluctance to criticize Islam has spread well beyond ministers and politicians into society at large. It also extends beyond the use of

words. Unreasonable demands by Muslims for special treatment in various areas of life are increasingly conceded, because to refuse them is seen as critical or even Islamophobic.

Mosques

Some observers estimate that by 2007 there were over 1,700 mosques in the UK. The largest and most ornate mosques are often funded and supported by Islamic states. The increasing number of mosques, and their magnificence, speak of the presence and permanence of Islam in the West and reflect the growing confidence of the Muslim community.

In Muslim thinking, mosques function as bridgeheads in the struggle to overcome unbelief in territory that is not under Islamic rule and bring it under the authority of Islam.

So Muslims build mosques to widen their geographical sphere of influence and rule. The call to prayer through loudspeakers involves a public statement of Islamic faith, inviting non-Muslims to pray in the mosque and thereby in effect convert to Islam. Some mosques are funded by foreign states and donors, including rich oil states such as Saudi Arabia and international Islamic organizations.



The Jamia mosque in Totterdown, Bristol

Despite the Islamizing agenda of the mosque-building program, some local councils have promoted it by providing free or subsidized plots of land to local Muslims. Recently, however, plans to build several “mega-mosques” in the UK have caused much controversy and raised inter-communal tensions. Muslims claim that these structures will be needed to accommodate their growing numbers, but the ambitious designs of many mosques may reflect a desire to have a very visible presence, assert the superiority of Islam, and dwarf Christian cathedrals and churches.

Radicalism

Some British mosques are being used for political agitation, radicalism, the preaching of hatred, violence and terrorism. Imams and visiting preachers have disseminated a radical Islamist message of hatred for non-Muslim society, glorification of jihad and rejection of democracy. Some condemn integration into British society, and others praise the Taliban for killing British soldiers in Afghanistan. Others proclaim the superiority and dominance of Islam and call for strict control of British Muslims to ensure that they live according to sharia. There have also been calls for sharia to be made the law of the land.

DVDs by radical preachers are widely disseminated in these mosques. One speaker on a DVD argued that if a girl refuses to wear the *hijab*, she should be hit. Another preacher stated that girls can be married off before they reach puberty. Others designated Jews and Christians as enemies of Muslims, said that Muslims should aspire to live in an Islamic state, and claimed that women are created with deficient intellect.

⁸ “Tory chief Baroness Warsi attacks ‘bigotry’ against Muslims”, *The Daily Telegraph*, January 19th, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/8270294/Tory-chief-Baroness-Warsi-attacks-bigotry-against-Muslims.html> (viewed February 2nd, 2011).

Mission

Islam is a missionary religion. But Muslim mission (*dawa*) is not a matter of just gaining individual converts to Islam. For many Muslims it also includes the establishing of Islamic enclaves that will reveal the power and benefits of Islam to others, while for Islamists it involves the eventual and complete Islamization of non-Muslim societies.

So the main Islamist movements are dedicated to mission as the means of establishing Islam as the dominant religion in non-Muslim states, including Britain. And because Islam does not separate religion from politics, this process includes the imposition of Muslim practices on non-Muslims, using the full force of the state.

Muslims present Islam as the final fulfilment of the single truth that the god of Islam has revealed through all his prophets to every people since creation. They believe that non-Muslims have strayed from these beliefs and must be invited to return to them. Islam is also presented as a safeguard for morality and family life in a culture that threatens them.

British converts to Islam

Muslims claim that unprecedented numbers of British people are now converting to Islam. A recent report by a multi-faith group estimates the number of converts to have risen from around 60,000 in 2001 to up to 100,000 today.⁹

Some converts choose Islam because they are disillusioned with the breakdown of community and spirituality in Western society, or the widespread acceptance of immoral lifestyles. Others feel their lives were “lost” and “lacking in purpose” before conversion. Some women fall in love with Muslim men and want to marry them. Other converts are male prisoners who embrace Islam as a way of retaliating against the society that locked them up. A significant number of converts are white women, and the average age of conversion is 27. Security officials fear that new converts may be especially vulnerable to recruitment by radical Islamists.

Methods

- Books, pamphlets and internet websites give guidance on how to become a Muslim. The materials are attractively produced and promoted.
- Islamic student societies are active in mission, organizing special lectures, debates and other outreach events. Local Muslim societies often offer training in mission.
- Islamic Awareness seminars are offered by prestigious Islamic institutions to public service personnel who have regular contact with Muslims.

- Muslims in the Sufi tradition use music to arouse the interest of Western music lovers and spiritual seekers.
- Various international Islamic organizations have been established to facilitate the Islamization of the West.
- An annual Islam Awareness Week presents Islam as part of British culture, promotes Islamic values and highlights Muslim contributions to society.

Interfaith dialogue

Islamists often engage in interfaith dialogue with Christians with the aim of promoting Islam. They aim to discourage Christian mission to Muslims and encourage Christians to endorse Islam as a legitimate and “Abrahamic” faith.

Muslims see mission as a one-way street: only Islam, as the god-given, final and true revelation, has the right to propagate itself. Muslims reject all Christian mission work and seek to suppress it and present it as aggressive, deceitful and evil.

Conclusions

Most Christians would agree that Muslims in Britain should have the same freedom to practice their faith as Christians have to follow theirs. In addition, many of the changes described above relate to freedoms that a religious minority can properly enjoy in a free society. Christians raise – and should raise – no objection of principle to these.

But the changes cannot be separated from their wider context, and in particular from the forces that are driving them. For Islamists, who are a large and influential group within mainstream British Islam (not a tiny minority of “extremists”), the goal is to impose the requirements of Islamic sharia, not just on their own people, but on British society as a whole.

Britain is gradually being transformed into a society in which Islam is not just an equal alongside many other faith communities, but a dominant and privileged player, with disproportionate influence and control over the structures of society. This is not happening by chance, but is apparently the result of a careful and deliberate strategy by certain Muslim leaders.

Muslims around the world are regaining their confidence and promoting a resurgence of Islam. In this process the Islamic world is also growing more assertive and intolerant towards the West (and to non-Muslim minorities in Muslim countries). These developments strongly impact Muslim communities in the West, including Britain, and are encouraging them to press for the Islamization of their host societies.

⁹ Faith Matters, *A Minority within a Minority: A Report on Converts to Islam in the United Kingdom*, <http://faith-matters.org/images/stories/fm-reports/a-minority-within-a-minority-a-report-on-converts-to-islam-in-the-uk.pdf> (viewed March 11th, 2011).

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In this edition, we introduce a new Barnabas Aid DVD and highlight the Operation Nehemiah booklet called *The Way Ahead*. A copy of this booklet is enclosed with this magazine.

The Way Ahead: Returning Britain and the US to their Christian path Patrick Sookhdeo



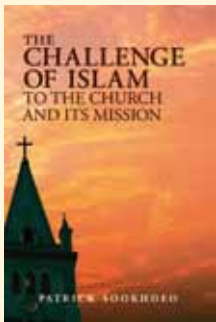
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As Christians suffer increased discrimination and marginalization in Western society, Barnabas Aid has launched a new program of action, Operation Nehemiah, to address these concerns and to promote the spiritual transformation of the West. This booklet describes the great challenges that we face and offers recommendations for the way ahead. It also includes information about the campaign.

Isaac Publishing, paperback, 2011, 50 pages, USD\$1.00

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The growing impact of Islam on Western society raises questions and brings many challenges, either directly or indirectly, for the Church and its mission.

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Isaac Publishing, paperback, 2008, 200 pages Offer price USD\$16.00 + USD\$4.00 postage (Retail price USD\$20.00)

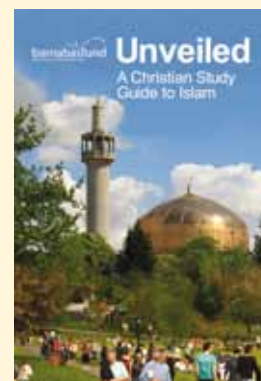
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We have brought together in one DVD a collection of nine videos produced by Barnabas Aid over the last few years. Four of these videos tell stories of persecution, while the remainder provide information on how Barnabas Aid is bringing hope and relief to the suffering Church. The videos range in length from 3.27 minutes to 8 minutes. They are ideal for showing to your church or home group to raise awareness of our work.

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THE CHURCH IN INDIA: FACING THE FIRES OF HINDU EXTREMISM



The number of churches in one area of Bangalore has increased massively in recent decades

Living for Christ in India is rarely easy. Although the country is home to millions of Christians, they represent only a small proportion of its enormous population. Despite the constitution guaranteeing their religious liberty, they suffer discrimination in many areas of life. And India's commitment to communal harmony is frequently breached by acts of violence against individual Christians and churches.

The population of India numbers more than **1.2 billion**, and estimates suggest that it will be close to **1.5 billion by 2030**. Already one in six of the global population is Indian, and in 20 years' time it is likely to be the most populous nation on earth, overtaking China.

But in recent years the Church in India has had to face a fresh threat, from an aggressive and strident form of Hindu nationalism known as Hindutva. Although the movement itself is not new, and represents an extreme form of Hinduism not endorsed by the majority of Hindus, since the 1980s it has grown rapidly in confidence and influence, and has even taken control of large parts of the country's political apparatus. Its vigorous pursuit of an exclusive and often violent agenda has already worsened the plight of India's Christian minority and damaged their prospects for the future.

A VULNERABLE MINORITY

Estimates of the number of Christians in India vary considerably. The most recent census (2001) gave a figure of 2.3% of the total population, which is widely believed to be much too low. Christian researchers have suggested higher numbers, even up to 9%, but a more conservative estimate places the proportion at around 4%, and the total figure at some 50 million. However, there may be many who do not declare their faith because of possible reprisals. (Results from the 2011 census should be available by 2013.)

The Christian minority has little worldly strength. The great majority (around 74%) of Indians are Hindus, who number nearly a billion. Alongside them lives the world's second largest Muslim population of some 170

million (about 14%), and there are also substantial Sikh and Buddhist communities. About 60% of the Christians are Dalits, who occupy the lowest level of Indian society.

The various religious groups are not distributed evenly. Christians are found across the country, mainly as a small minority, but there are higher concentrations in some southern states, and in three small north-eastern states they are a large majority (90 percent in Mizoram and in Nagaland in 2001). Yet even where they are present in some numbers, they may be subject to pressure and restrictions: in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, also in the north-east, evangelism is forbidden despite its Christian population of some 20%.

The Church in India has seen remarkable growth in the last few decades. Numerous

HISTORY OF INDIAN CHRISTIANITY

Christianity has a long and rich history in India. Some Christians in the south believe that their church is descended from a community founded by the apostle Thomas in the 1st century. There were certainly Christians in India by 200 AD, and in later centuries successive waves of Assyrian, Catholic and Protestant missionaries founded many churches.

At first Christian mission focused on the elites in Indian society, but many rural and low-caste people proved very open to the Gospel. Various "mass conversion" movements occurred among them, and evangelism continues to make a huge impact on the Dalits and others who are excluded from the mainstream of Indian life.

Christianity has contributed significantly to modern Indian society. Christian teachings on faith, peace and goodwill have influenced many intellectuals, including Gandhi, and Christian institutions such as hospitals and schools are renowned for their high quality. In the south, where most Christians live, Christianity is well integrated within culture and society.



Thousands of Christians were displaced when Hindu extremists attacked their villages in Kandhamal, Orissa, in December 2007 and August 2008

churches and mission agencies have sent out missionaries and church planters, who have founded thousands of new congregations. One area of Bangalore had fewer than 25 churches in 1970; now it is estimated that there are more than 600 with their own building and another 400 house churches. But this evangelistic success has provoked much opposition from Hindus and others in many places, and Bangalore is the capital of Karnataka, one of the most anti-Christian states in the whole of India (see below).

Against this significant Christian minority, thriving but vulnerable, is now arrayed the growing and threatening power of the Hindutva movement.

HINDUTVA

Hindutva (“Hinduness”) teaching grew out of the Indian independence movement against the British in the 1920s. One of its leaders, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, set himself in opposition to Gandhi’s views on non-violence by arguing that the Hindu Scriptures teach a “warrior morality”.

Hindutva doctrine was developed further by the Hindu nationalist Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who emphasized the Hindu identity of the land and nation of India. It soon evolved into a militant, terrorist ideology characterized by hostility towards non-Hindu minorities (including Christians); some of its leaders even held up the Nazi pogroms against the Jews as a model to be followed in India against non-Hindus. More recently it has encouraged an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy.

Supporters of Hindutva are striving to make India a single, culturally and religiously “pure” nation. To this end they make a sharp

distinction between what they regard as “Indian” and “non-Indian” religions. The former are Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism, which were all born within the Indian sub-continent. The latter include Christianity and Islam, which entered the country from outside. Christianity attracts extra hostility because it is wrongly viewed as a colonial imposition. In fact it has a long history in India (see text box, p.12), has been thoroughly contextualized in Indian culture, and has a good claim to be regarded as authentically “Indian”.

Hindutva was born out of India’s history of foreign domination, first by Muslims and then under British colonial rule. Many Hindus felt deeply humiliated because Christians and others supposedly saw their culture as inferior. Hindus were also offended by what they perceived as the desecration of sacred Hindu symbols by outsiders. More recently the growing influence of non-Hindu cultures has increased Hindus’ sense of insecurity, and the movement of rural populations into the city threatens to cut them off further from their traditional roots.

The strident reassertion of the nation’s Hindu identity is a reaction against these developments. Hindu nationalists aim to return India to its golden age, when Hindu culture was supposedly not influenced by “alien” cultures such as Christianity. In pursuit of this goal they seek to emulate other aggressive religious movements.

In 1925 the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) paramilitary organization was founded to mobilize support for Hindutva teaching. Since then it has become not only the guardian of that doctrine, but also the source or inspiration of various other Hindutva movements. (See text box, right.) Its political wing, the Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP), has become one of the main parties in India, and now holds or shares power in ten states. Hindutva organizations have also developed close links with wealthy Indian communities overseas.

Hindutva tactics are focused in three key areas. First, supporters seek to infiltrate the armed services, police and legal system, to entrench and enhance Hindu privileges and promote discrimination against minorities such as Christians. Secondly, they seek to influence the legal process to pass anti-conversion laws that limit the freedom of other religious groups to witness. And thirdly, they either encourage or participate in violence against non-Hindus so as to make such aggression normal and acceptable.

INTENSIFYING PERSECUTION

The influence of the Hindutva movement has served to increase the pressure on India’s Christians. Social and legal discrimination, restrictions on and abuse of religious liberty, and individual and communal violence, have intensified against them as a result.

DISCRIMINATION

Christians in India suffer discrimination in many walks of life. In part this is a result of the Hindu caste system, which dictates people’s occupations and often their economic circumstances. When Dalits (whose status is so low that they are judged to be

HINDUTVA MOVEMENTS

RSS – The original Hindutva organization and the source of its ideology

BJP – The political wing of the RSS, holding power in many Indian states

VHP – The religious and activist wing of the RSS, which also includes a lobbying organization

IDRF – The service wing of the RSS, which has multiple satellite groups

ABVP – The youth wing of the RSS

Shiv Sena – The extremist political wing of the BJP

Bajrang Dal – The paramilitary wing of the VHP

Abhinav Bharat, Sriram Sene, Hindu Dharam Sena – Independent, sometimes violent Hindutva movements

Country Profile

outside the caste system altogether) become Christians, Hindu extremists continue to regard them as Hindus and “untouchables” and to treat them accordingly.

But anti-Christian discrimination extends more widely. For example, corruption is rife in the legal system and the law enforcement agencies. Christian candidates for the police force may pass the entrance examinations but then be denied entrance because they refuse to pay the substantial bribe that is expected. It is difficult for Christians to obtain

justice in the courts for the same reason. Many offenses committed against them are inadequately investigated, and all too often no-one is prosecuted or convicted. It is very difficult for Christian Dalits to obtain land under government schemes, as the authorities do not recognize them as Dalits. Christians generally are under-represented in political decision-making.

Where Hindutva supporters take control of the political and legal machinery, or begin to exert the dominant influence in a locality,

anti-Christian discrimination in the area is likely to become worse. The low social status of most Christians and their unwillingness to play the system dishonestly makes them easy targets for a movement that is hostile to religious minorities.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

India's constitution guarantees full religious liberty for Hindus and non-Hindus alike, including the freedom to witness to their faith. But the success of Christian

ORISSA – “COME BACK AS HINDU OR DON'T COME BACK AT ALL”

Christmas Eve, Kandhamal District, Orissa State, 2007. Christians were preparing to celebrate Christ's birth when phone lines to Christian homes were disconnected and guns were fired into the air by Hindu extremists. The Christian families spent the night together, awake, instead of sleeping in their homes. As Christmas Day dawned, the families had gathered to worship when their celebrations were attacked by Hindu extremists armed with guns, knives, home-made bombs and other weapons, and shouting slogans including: “Only Hindus to stay here – no Christians to stay here”, “Christians must become Hindu or die” and “Kill Christians”. The families could do nothing but run for their lives as the extremists burned churches and homes. Many of those who could not flee fell victim to the attackers.

But worse was to come eight months later when Orissa's Christian community experienced one of the most brutal and drawn-out periods of Hindu extremist violence. It began when Hindu activists blamed Christians for the assassination on 23 August of Hindu leader Laxmanananda Saraswati, who strongly opposed the conversion of Hindus to Christianity. Saraswati's nationalist movement (the VHP) and its allies called a protest that rapidly escalated into violence. Maoist rebels admitted responsibility for the assassination one week after the start of the anti-Christian attacks, but this did not help the Christians.

Attacks started on August 24th, 2008 and continued almost unabated for two months.

Thousands of homes were burned to the ground and hundreds of churches and church buildings were destroyed. At least 400 villages were “cleansed” of all Christians. Church leaders were beaten up and women raped; 18,000 people were injured; over 56,000 Christians were left homeless, and around 30,000 hid in the jungle for safety, without food or protection from the monsoon rains. There were also numerous reports of forced conversions: Christians who wanted to return to their homes were told by the Hindu extremists, “Come back as Hindu or don't come back at all.” In some cases the Hindu extremists poured petrol over the Christians and then asked them to convert; if they refused they were burnt. Jaspina, a 32-year-old Christian woman, was warned by her neighbors, “If you go on being Christians, we will burn your houses and your children in front of you, so make up your minds quickly.” She was forced to attend a conversion ceremony together with her husband and three children.

At least 90 people died in the attacks in 2007 and 2008. Many were direct victims, either cut to pieces or burned alive. Others succumbed to their injuries or died of illness after fleeing their homes.

But more than two years later, Christians in Orissa State are still suffering at the hands of

suspected Hindu extremists. In the latest outbreak of anti-Christian violence, in December 2010, they were physically attacked, their homes destroyed and church meetings raided. On December 8th about 35 attackers stormed the house of a church pastor in Katanpali village and beat him up. On December 25th around 200 extremists burst into a Christmas Day celebration at a church in Koyi Konda village. They beat worshippers, causing serious injuries, and destroyed the homes and crops of ten Christian families. Many of those left homeless and in need of immediate aid fled across the state border to Andhra Pradesh.



Namrata was badly burned by a bomb during the anti-Christian violence in Orissa, but thanks to surgery she is no longer physically scarred. Namrata says, “We forgive the Hindu radicals who attacked us, burned our homes... They were out of their minds, they do not know the love of Jesus. I want to dedicate my life to spreading the Gospel.”

BRUTAL MURDER IN BIHAR

Ravi Murmu, a Christian missionary from Jamalpur, Bihar State, was among a group of missionaries who were showing the Jesus film in nearby Laxmanpur on May 2nd, 2010. When he did not return home that night, a search was organized; his body was found with his right hand severed and deep cuts on his neck and other parts of his body. His personal belongings, including his watch, mobile phone and motorbike, were found with the body.

When asked how the family was coping with the murder, Ravi's brother (also a missionary) replied, "The peace of God still reigns in this house and in this family."



Christian missionary Ravi Murmu left behind a wife and a young daughter when he was murdered in May 2010

evangelistic endeavors, and the mass conversion of some Dalit groups away from Hinduism, have made conversion a very sensitive issue for many Hindus, and this concern has been ruthlessly exploited by Hindutva supporters to advance their agenda.

India has a federal system of government in which state authorities wield considerable power and are able sometimes to defy the constitution or the will of the national government. In seven states the BJP has taken advantage of this autonomy to secure the introduction of anti-conversion laws that restrict the freedom of Christians and other non-Hindus to share their faith (although the laws are enforced in only five of these states). These impose penalties for converting someone by "force", "fraud" or "allurement", but in some places they are interpreted or applied more rigorously to prevent legitimate Christian evangelism.

When a new anti-conversion law is put in place, there is usually a rise in anti-Christian violence in the state. Although the laws are not always enforced, their mere enactment is seen as permission for radicals to attack missionaries and other Christian workers.

VIOLENCE

Assaults on Christian individuals and churches by Hindutva supporters are frequent and widespread. For example, in late 2010 there were four attacks in Karnataka State in a single day, adding to more than 200 anti-Christian incidents in the state since the BJP came to power there in 2008. Christians

were beaten, maimed or murdered in various other states. Hindu extremists were also responsible for the brutal killing of the Australian mission worker Graham Staines and his two young sons, who were burned alive in their station wagon in Orissa State in 1999.

But in recent years there have also been some alarming outbreaks of mob violence against entire Christian communities. Large-scale attacks by Hindu nationalists in Orissa State in 2007 and 2008 left many dead and thousands homeless (see text box opposite). And a less publicized eruption of hostility in Karnataka demonstrated the vulnerability of local Christians and the difficulties they face in getting justice or redress for such offenses.

In September 2008 there was a series of 37 anti-Christian attacks in two or three days across Karnataka, which were clearly organized and preplanned. Christian leaders, lacking confidence in the BJP administration of the state, asked for the commission of inquiry into the incidents to be appointed by the central government. But the state's chief minister refused and set up a local inquiry instead. After this produced an interim report that was critical of the state machinery, the chief minister publicly declared himself "very disappointed" with it. When the final report appeared, it exonerated the state government and blamed misguided Hindutva supporters who could not be identified. The Christians set up their own commission of enquiry, headed by a retired High Court judge and running in parallel with the official

investigation. It found that all the incidents had been instigated and carried through by the authorities.

Indian Christians do not suffer violence only at the hands of Hindus. The state of Kashmir has a Muslim majority, and here there has been a spate of attacks against converts from Islam. Christians are also sometimes blamed for attacks by the Naxalites, a militant Maoist group. The attack on a Hindu leader that triggered the anti-Christian violence in Orissa in 2008 was in fact carried out by Maoists.

PRAY FOR INDIA'S CHRISTIANS

The Church in India is bold in its witness to Christ in face of the rising tide of Hindu nationalism and extremism, but finds itself increasingly endangered by discrimination, restriction and violence. Please pray for the Lord to uphold His people in these challenging times, and also that the Indian government will find ways to counter the power and influence of the Hindutva movement. Pray too for the continuing spread of the Gospel in India.

**PLEASE TURN OVER
FOR DETAILS OF HOW
BARNABAS AID IS
HELPING TO SUPPORT
CHRISTIANS IN INDIA**

BARNABAS AID HELPING CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

AID FOR VICTIMS IN ORISSA

Barnabas Aid has been helping Christians who have been targeted by the anti-Christian violence in Orissa since the original outbreaks in 2007-2008 (see page 14). Below are some details of these projects.

RELIEVING NEEDS AND RENEWING LIVES

After news came that Christians had been attacked in their houses by Hindu extremists at Christmas 2007 and had fled into the jungle, Barnabas Aid sent food, clothes and medical assistance to meet their immediate needs. But they also required help in the medium and long term.

Many Christians lost their livelihoods. So help from Barnabas Aid enabled 100 Christians to start new businesses to support themselves and their families. They bought tools and stock to start up laundries and tea or fish shops, or to work as barbers, tailors and greengrocers. We also provided funds for 27 young Christians from families who had suffered in the violence to study as nurses and medical technicians. This coming year many will be finishing their courses and will start working in their vocations.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

But after so many homes were destroyed in the violence, the greatest need of the Christians in Orissa was for a roof over their heads. Soon after the second major outbreak in August 2008, Barnabas sent funding for 150 temporary houses made out of bamboo and polythene to provide emergency shelter.

Christians who returned to their villages often found the roofs of their homes burned out and just the walls standing. So Barnabas Aid helped a reroofing project where a total of 279 houses were reconstructed and re-roofed, making it possible for Christian families to restart their lives again in their own homes.

But there are thousands of Christian families who are still without proper homes, some of them even living in the jungle.

Permanent houses cost just USD\$1600 each, made out of brick and concrete and consisting of one room and a veranda for cooking.

Project reference 21-723

TSUNAMI ORPHANS NOT FORGOTTEN

Even though the world moves on quickly after a new disaster grabs its attention, Barnabas stays to help vulnerable Christians whose lives have been devastated by a natural catastrophe to rebuild their lives. Nineteen Christian children orphaned by the December 26th, 2004 tsunami are still being supported by Barnabas in a Christian orphanage close to the eastern coast of India. Food, clothes and medical costs are paid for, as well as the salaries of six Christian staff members. Barnabas also funded the building of a dormitory in 2005, where the children now live: a white house with Bible verses printed on the outside walls in bright red, blue and green colors.



Tsunami orphaned girls play karom on the veranda of their Christian orphanage

**Project reference
00-540**

HOPE FOR INDIA'S DALIT CHILDREN



Dalit children in India are receiving education in a Christian environment

Education brings hope to children's lives. This is especially true for children from the lowest rung of Indian society, who are called Dalits. They are usually given very few opportunities in daily life. Barnabas Aid is helping 330 Christian Dalit children to get an education in a Christian environment in three different locations in India.

When 17-year-old Mili started one of the educational programs in a rural area close to Calcutta two years ago she was an average student. Her Dalit parents did all they could to help her with her schooling, but were struggling even to buy the school books. Through the

program, she received a uniform, textbooks, notebooks and pens. The extra tuition and the food helped Mili to make remarkable progress, and she now has hopes of being admitted to a law college nearby.

At a Christian school in southern India 150 Dalit children are receiving a Christian education with the support of Barnabas. The program coordinator so desires to help the children rise out of poverty through education that he even found the time to pay monthly visits to the parents' homes to discuss the children's progress. Soon he could see improvements in their results, which is making all his work worthwhile.

One focus of the teachers in the third educational program Barnabas supports is teaching the children their importance as children of God. Because Dalits are despised and oppressed by the rest of Indian society, many of the children are not used to viewing themselves positively and have no hope that their circumstances can change. Once a year the children also go on a four day camp where they are encouraged further in their studies.

Project reference 21-510

ACTS

–Assisting Christianity Teaching in Schools

Christianity is being rapidly squeezed out of many Western schools by an agenda that is hostile to Christian teachings and values. Some recent examples from the UK include:

- In February 2011, a London Religious Education (RE) teacher was beaten up by a Muslim gang for “teaching other religions to our sisters”.
- In December 2010 secondary schools won the right to opt out of the legal requirement to provide a daily act of worship that is “broadly Christian” in character.
- In November 2010, Education Secretary Michael Gove warned that state schools in Birmingham have been targeted by Islamic extremists trying to infiltrate the education system.
- In January 2010 ministers recommended that children as young as five learn about minority faiths, including humanism, the Baha’i Faith, Zoroastrianism and Jainism, along with Buddhism, Islam, Judaism,

Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity.

- In 2009 a five-year-old girl was left in tears after being reprimanded for talking about Jesus to friends in class.
- In 2008 two schoolboys were given detention for refusing to pray to the god of Islam in an RE lesson.

Last year Ofsted, the inspectorate for schools in England, found that the quality of RE lessons at many primary schools was “not good enough”. They drew attention to the marginalization of the Christian faith and particularly the silencing of Christian pupils, stating:

“Insufficient attention was paid to diversity within the Christian tradition and to pupils who were actively engaged in Christian practice.”

Often their experience was ignored and they had limited opportunity to share their understanding. This sometimes contrasted

sharply with the more careful attention paid to the experiences of pupils from other religious traditions.

Many people, including teachers, have highlighted the need for better materials for teaching Christianity in schools. Many churches and individual Christians are already working with schools in their local community. To help fulfil this need and support Christians who are actively involved, a school pack about Christianity (**ACTS – Assisting Christianity Teaching in Schools**) will be available in the summer for supporters to sponsor and donate as a gift to their local schools.

ACTS is one step towards reaching out to schools and equipping them with material that will make a difference. It is intended to motivate the churches to support schools in their communities in the teaching of Christianity as part of the RE syllabus. It also provides an opportunity for churches and individual Christians to invest in material that will assist schools in their presentation of Christianity and introduce reference and reading books into the school library.

The pack will consist of four key areas: Basics of Christianity; Character Development; Bible Reference; Life and Teachings of Jesus.

For further details, go to Operation Nehemiah’s section of our website, www.barnabasaid.org/operation_nehemiah. More information will also be included in the next *Barnabas Aid* magazine.

Mission Statement: Operation Nehemiah is committed to maintaining Christian values of freedom of conscience, speech and religion for the next generation in church and society.

Creative children challenge congregation

Enterprising youngsters have doubled their money for Christian children in Bethlehem with a little help from the adults at their church.

When the children at St. Matthew's Church, Walsall, UK, heard about St. Aphrem's Christian School, Bethlehem, they decided to support it through their Christmas appeal. With great enthusiasm they baked and sold cakes, hosted a coffee morning and organized a table-top sale, raising \$USD260.

The children then challenged St. Matthew's congregation to match their gift; within three weeks, the adults had contributed \$USD289. Not to be outdone, the children raised an additional \$USD77 giving a grand total of **USD\$626** for St. Aphrem's.

Mrs. Sara Hartshorne, who helped the children to organize the appeal, said, "We wanted the children of St. Matthew's to feel involved in the appeal, and feel that they were helping children in Bethlehem, where Jesus was born." The Rev. Colin Gibson, Rector of St. Matthew's, added, "I think the children's caring attitude towards children in another part of the world is outstanding. Everyone at St. Matthew's should be very proud of our Children's Church and the fantastic job they have done!"

Barnabas Aid and St. Aphrem's are very grateful for the money raised by St. Matthew's and their imaginative Children's Church. If you have raised money for Barnabas Aid and would like to tell us about it, please write to us or send an email (address details on the back cover).

Back row, from left to right: Scarlet Salt, aged six, Grace Salt, nine, Holly Mills, six, and Sophia Evans, 13 (front), helped to raise USD\$626 for St. Aphrem's Christian School, Bethlehem

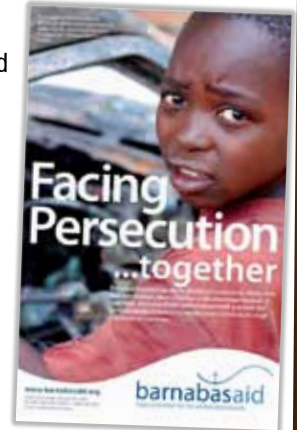


New poster for Barnabas Aid

A copy of Barnabas Aid's newly-designed poster is now available.

If your church would like copies of our new poster, please contact your nearest Barnabas Aid office (addresses on back cover).

A range of alternative posters can also be downloaded from our website (www.barnabasaid.org/posters).



Would you like to host Patrick Sookhdeo in your church?

The Rev. Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo (International Director of Barnabas Aid) will be in the Maryland/Virginia/Washington D.C. area from Sunday September 25th to Friday September 30th, 2011 and will be available to speak in your church. Please contact Barnabas Aid office in McLean, VA. at 703-288-1681 for further details.

Maryland church to host Patrick Sookhdeo

The Rev. Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo (Barnabas Aid International Director) will be speaking on:

Sunday, May 22, 2011,
9:00 Sunday School
10:15 Worship Service

**Bishop Cummins Reformer Episcopal Church
2001 Frederick Road
Catonsville, MD 21228**

Brick by brick:

help us rebuild homes for Christian families in Orissa

Homeless ever since the anti-Christian riots of 2007-08, thousands of Christians in Orissa, India desperately need your help. Their houses were damaged or completely destroyed when extremist Hindus set them on fire.

They need the means to start again. Barnabas Aid is raising money for constructing houses in safe areas. Building one simple brick house costs around USD\$625.

Will you or your church help provide a new home to a Christian family in Orissa?

For more information, see page 16. Please use the form on the inside back cover for making a donation.



Project reference 21-723

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Company registered in England number 4029536

For a list of all trustees, please contact Barnabas Fund UK at the Coventry address above.

Germany

German supporters may send gifts for Barnabas Fund via Hilfe für Brüder who will provide you with a tax-deductible receipt. Please mention that the donation is for "SPC 20 Barnabas Fund". If you would like your donation to go to a specific project of Barnabas Fund, please inform the Barnabas Fund office in Pewsey, UK.

Account holder: Hilfe für Brüder e.V.

Account number: 415 600 Bank: Evang. Kreditgenossenschaft Stuttgart

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