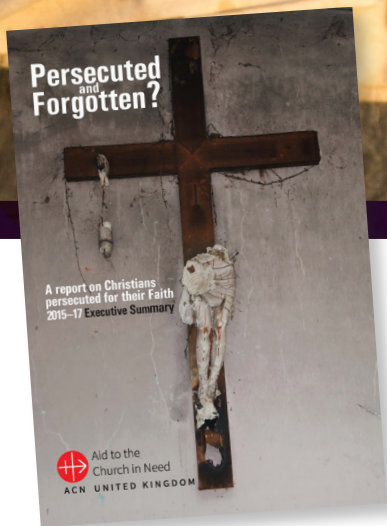


The face of suffering Christians today

Persecuted Christians need us to tell their story



credit: Magdalena Wolnik



Eritrean refugees seeking sanctuary in Ethiopia (see story on back page).

NOT a day goes by without Christians suffering persecution for their faith – many of them are left with no choice but to flee for their lives.

While people of all faiths and none suffer hatred, Christians are the victims of at least 75 percent of all religiously-motivated violence and oppression.

The extent of this persecution is largely ignored by our media.

And this is why your charity – Aid to the Church in Need – is committed to finding out the truth about persecuted Christians today.

The fruit of this labour is ACN's fresh research project – *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith* – out now.

Drawing on fact-finding trips, first-hand testimonies and figures from little-known corners of the world, the 2017 report reveals the faces of persecution.

Inside please find some of the highlights of the report and how

you can help through prayer, information and action.

The full report is available at www.acnuk.org/persecuted

Be inspired by the stories you read about Christians who remain true to their faith in spite of acts of hatred.

Persecuted Christians need us to tell their story.

Father Werenfried van Straaten, the founder of Aid to the Church in Need, once said: **“Our persecuted brothers and sisters are the elite of the Church. To show solidarity with them is a matter of honour.”** ✚

“Our persecuted brothers and sisters are the elite of the Church. To show solidarity with them is a matter of honour.” ✚

Helping the suffering Church today

www.acnuk.org



Aid to the Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

Keeping faith with persecuted Christians

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Keeping the flame of hope burning: A little girl lights a candle at a Christian displacement camp in Erbil, northern Iraq

In countries all around the world, Christians live in fear of their lives because of the faith we all hold dear.

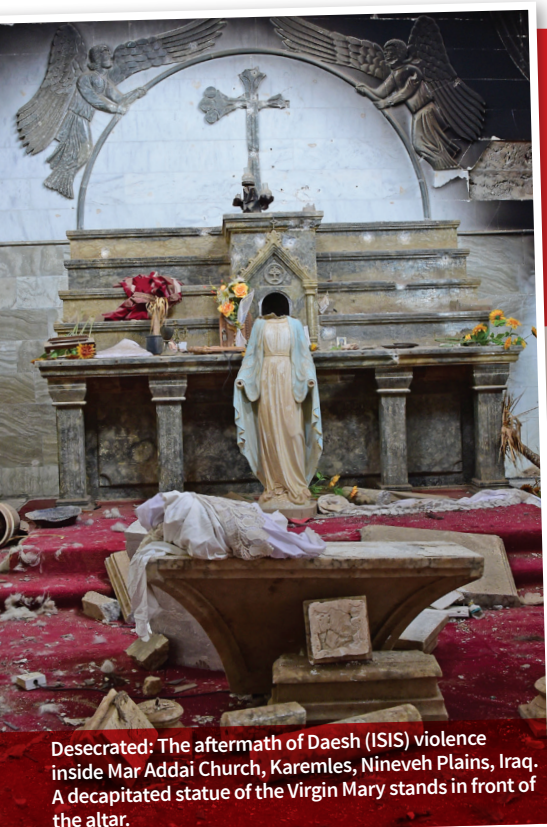
The situation of persecuted Christians today is covered in Aid to the Church in Need's fresh research *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2015-17*

The report includes:

- **Case studies** with first-hand testimony of Christians suffering persecution
- **Incident reports** and analysis on 13 countries of most concern such as China, Iraq, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Sudan and Syria
- **Video** about the report
- **At-a-glance summary** of the report's main findings
- **Table and map** showing where and how Christians suffer

They need us to tell their story.

- **Be informed** – for the full report (which is only available online), visit www.acnuk.org/persecuted
- **Pray** – Download or request our Persecuted but never Forgotten? booklet, full of ideas about how you can help and pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- **Get involved.** Help ACN spread the news about Christians suffering persecution – encourage friends and family to join ACN in acts of practical and spiritual solidarity. Together, we can make a difference. 🙏



Desecrated: The aftermath of Daesh (ISIS) violence inside Mar Addai Church, Karemles, Nineveh Plains, Iraq. A decapitated statue of the Virgin Mary stands in front of the altar.

Persecuted Christians today – what you need to know

The suffering of Christians in 2017 is unprecedented. ACN's *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report includes the following important findings...

- 1** In China, more than 2,000 churches and crosses were demolished within just 12 months up to and including April 2016.
- 2** In Egypt, it is illegal to convert from Islam to Christianity.
- 3** In Eritrea, within one month – May 2017 – 122 Christians were arrested during a government crackdown. 33 women were jailed in a prison notorious for torture.
- 4** In India, 365 anti-Christian incidents were recorded during 2016 – 10 people were killed, 145 were beaten and physically assaulted and 34 women – including nuns – were raped.
- 5** In Iran, saying Mass in the main language of Farsi is not allowed. Priests are required to ask a Muslim attending a service to leave or else face possible arrest for alleged proselytism – seeking converts.
- 6** In Iraq's Nineveh Plains, 12,970 homes were damaged or destroyed in Christian majority towns and villages during a 2½-year occupation by Daesh (ISIS). 120,000 people were displaced.



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Please offer hope by making a kind donation

Pakistan: Christian man left to die in hospital

DOCTORS at a hospital in Pakistan were accused of refusing to treat a dying Christian man who was injured while trying to unblock an underground sewer.

The Aid to the Church in Need 2017 *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report tells the story of Irfan Masih, who was rushed to Umerkot Civil Hospital, in the Sindh province. It was claimed that three medics repeatedly ignored pleas to help him.

The doctors – who included the hospital’s chief medic – refused to treat the sewage worker, describing him as filthy.

The Urdu word for ‘filthy’ used by the doctor was ‘chuhra’, which is also a

derogatory term for Christians.

Irfan’s family say he was ignored because of his religion, a common complaint among Christians in Pakistan where there is systematic harassment of the faithful.

Many Christians have to go into hiding because of false accusations of blasphemy. Rape of Christian women is widely reported.

• **Aid to the Church in Need provides emergency help – food, clothing, medicine and shelter for Christians – including victims of blasphemy and others forced into hiding. The charity also helps fund legal assistance for Christians in search of justice in the law courts. Please help.** ☩



Hospital doctors in Pakistan allegedly refused to treat sewage worker Irfan Masih, a Christian man (pictured right on a stretcher).

- 7 In northern Nigeria’s Maiduguri diocese, Islamist Boko Haram mass killing and other violence caused 1.8 million to be displaced and left 5,000 widows and 15,000 orphans.
- 8 In North Korea, where there are reports of public executions of Christians, the faithful may number up to 500,000. They meet in groups of two or three and silently mouth prayers.
- 9 In Pakistan, increasing acts of violence and hostility led Father James Channon, responsible for inter-faith cooperation, to say “Christians are experiencing their worst time in the country’s history”.
- 10 In Saudi Arabia, there are no churches as they are forbidden. Public Christian worship is banned, as is the import of Bibles. Converting to Christianity is punishable by death.
- 11 In Sudan, in the 12 months up to February 2017 the government gave

notice of its intent to destroy at least 25 churches.

- 12 In Syria, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Aphrem II pleaded for help for Christians exiting en masse, admitting to fears that one of the oldest Church communities was “on the way out”.
- 13 In Turkey, at least 100 church properties have been seized over the past five years.

For more information about each country visit www.acnuk.org/persecuted Please tell your friends and family about persecuted Christians. Ask your parish priest about ways to inform your parish. Contact ACN for ideas. ☩

China: Bishop arrested four times in 10 months



In detention: Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou, eastern China

CATHOLICS from across China have been praying for their new bishop who – at the time of writing – has been prevented from taking up his new role after being repeatedly arrested.

Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, 54, was appointed co-adjutor Bishop of Wenzhou, with automatic right of succession, but when his predecessor died in September 2016, the authorities took him “on a trip” before releasing him a month later.

The bishop, whose story is told in full in the 2017 *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report, was subsequently arrested, released and re-arrested three more times.

An ‘Underground’ bishop, appointed by the Pope but not recognised by the Chinese authorities, Bishop Zhumin is one of a number of bishops in the country under constant harassment.

The Vatican has expressed its “grave concern” about the treatment of Bishop Zhumin.

• **Please pray for all bishops, priests and other Church leaders prevented from carrying out their ministry.** ☩

Iraq: Children's toys booby-trapped

DISPLACED Iraqi Christians were overjoyed in late 2016 when news came through that Daesh (ISIS) had finally been driven out of the ancient Nineveh Plains.



But joy quickly turned to sadness when they discovered the devastation the Islamists had left behind. This included scattering the region with land mines and “putting bombs in children’s toys”, as reported in ACN’s *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report.

Following extensive mine clearance, ACN is repairing many of the 12,970 homes damaged and destroyed across nine mainly Christian towns and villages across the Nineveh Plains.

Young priests such as Father Martin Banni and Father Salar Boudagh are committed to helping Christians return home.

Father Salar said: “We have begun the rebuilding work but there is still so much to do.”

Please help ACN rebuild homes for families wanting to return to their ancient Christian homelands in the Nineveh Plains of northern Iraq. ✝



Christian families are – thanks to you – beginning to return to their homelands

Eritrea: Incarcerated but never forgotten

FOR 33 Christian women, the cost of a complete denial of religious freedom in Eritrea has been incarceration in one of the country’s most notorious prisons.

The 2017 *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report describes how the women were caught praying by the regime and were among 122 people arrested in May 2017 during a regime crackdown on so-called illegitimate Christian practice.

Reporting back from a rare fact-finding visit to Eritrea, a source known to ACN said: “Prisoners cry out to be dead and go crazy because of the torture they receive. “The oppression of the regime against [non-registered] Christians is merciless.” Such violence and deepening poverty has sparked an exodus which has drastically depopulated Eritrea.

Aid to the Church in Need is helping thousands of people who have escaped persecution and who urgently need food,



Christian women in Eritrea face the very real threat of incarceration and torture

water, medicine, shelter and education for their children.

ACN is helping Christian refugees in Hitsat refugee camp in neighbouring Ethiopia, where a surge in refugee numbers meant the camp’s population reached 1,000 within eight months.

The charity is prioritising trauma counselling and pastoral support – especially for women and children.

• **Please can you help ACN with emergency help for refugee and displaced Christians who have fled persecution. ✝**



Aid to the Church in Need

ACN www.acnuk.org

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Reports by John Pontifex.
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