

barnabasaid

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Social Justice and Righteousness

The days before and after Christmas saw brutal acts of violence unleashed against Christians in various parts of the world. In Nigeria, in Egypt and in Iraq large numbers of our brothers and sisters were killed or injured – the victims of ugly and destructive forms of injustice and unrighteousness.

Part of the calling of Barnabas Fund is to expose the roots of such evils, in the many religions and philosophies that deny justice and righteousness to Christian minorities (and others). But in taking our stand for these values we need to understand them rightly, especially because they are so often misunderstood in the West. The idea of “social justice”, for example, is used to demand all kinds of “rights”, some of them deeply un-Christian.

In the Old Testament there is no doubt that the LORD loves justice (Psalm 27:28); in fact He is a God of justice (Isaiah 30:18). He hates incorrect scales, the mistreatment of the defenceless, stealing, lying, and the perversion of justice against the poor and needy. Indeed, the Lord glories in His justice: He “sits enthroned forever; He has established His throne for justice” (Psalm 9:7).

A strong warning against injustice is given in Deuteronomy 27:19: “Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow.” King David is commended for administering justice and equity to all his people (2 Samuel 8.15).

But in modern calls for justice its strong link with righteousness is often forgotten. There are over 50 verses in the Old Testament where both these words are used. Examples include: “He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday” (Psalm 37:6); “And I will make justice like the line, and righteousness the plumb line...” (Isaiah 28:17).

Hebrew poetry rhymes, not in sounds but in thoughts and ideas. Justice and righteousness go together. One cannot exist without the other. The true test of something’s being just is whether it results in righteousness. Christians in the West must apply this test to the many moral issues we face, such as gay marriage, abortion on demand and euthanasia. Gay marriage may sound like a justice issue, but does it result in righteousness? An issue may be presented to us as a matter of justice, but is it right in God’s eyes?

And as we also seek to serve the persecuted Church, we must strive with them for both justice and righteousness. Dr Martin Luther King once said, “You know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled down by the iron feet of oppression... And we are determined to work and fight until justice runs down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream [quoting Amos 5:24].” As we approach Easter, and rejoice in the display of God’s justice and righteousness in the dying and rising of Jesus, let us resolve to do the same.

Ian Wright
Director, Barnabas Fund Australia

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

Front cover: Barnabas Fund has helped these women in Central Asia, all converts from Islam, to become self-sufficient through a sewing business

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Thanks to your generous support, we are able to help suffering Christians around the world who are enduring persecution and discrimination simply because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your gifts are transforming lives and bringing renewed hope for the future. Below and on the next pages are just a selection of updates and news from the many projects we are supporting. Please pray as you read.

Food Parcels for Iraqi Christians

Barnabas is continuing to help feed needy Iraqi Christians, both in their homeland and those who have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees. Recent grants totalling AU\$182,870 enabled local churches to provide food aid for Iraqi Christians in Iraq and Syria.

Ever since the Gulf War in 1990-91, Christians in Iraq have been facing hostility and growing violence. After the invasion of 2003 and the lawlessness that followed the fall of Saddam Hussein, the level of anti-Christian violence

greatly increased. Some Muslim extremists are determined to “cleanse” Iraq of Christians, many of whom have been threatened, kidnapped or murdered. This is why Christians have left their homes, and now need food aid.

On 30 November 2010 Fadi, just 26 years old, was working in a small supermarket in Mosul when four terrorists demanded that he produce his identity card. Then they put a gun to his head and shot him with two bullets. The killers admitted later, “We were paid a sum of

\$200 by one of the group leaders and we killed Fadi simply because he was Christian.” Fadi’s parents, brother and sister realised their own lives were not safe either and fled the country to Syria. They are now one of the many Iraqi Christian families in Syria that Barnabas is supporting with monthly food parcels.



Project references
[Feeding Iraqi Christians in Iraq 20-246](#)
[Feeding Iraqi Christian refugees 20-383](#)



Before the food parcels are handed out, Iraqi Christians gather together for worship and prayer

Water Wells

Clean drinking water is essential for life. Barnabas often helps needy or persecuted Christians by providing sources of safe water or improving existing ones.

Burma

A small Christian orphanage where 25 orphans are being raised had very poor quality drinking water. Too much limestone and other minerals in the water were making it unhealthy. But because the orphanage did not have access to any other water source, they were forced to drink it anyway. In November 2010 Barnabas sent a grant of AU\$1,460 to fund the building of a 100-150 metres well and a pump to bring the water up to an elevated water tank. Now the children have clean drinking water. Our local partner wrote to us, "Words cannot express how grateful we are. The Lord has put us to work together according to His purpose as in Romans 8:28: 'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.'"

Niger

In a small, isolated Christian village in Muslim-majority Niger, almost all of the 1,500 villagers are Christian. Most of them are farmers, and very poor because of frequent droughts. There is only one well for drinking water, which is 82 metres deep. The villagers draw out the water with big buckets on long ropes pulled by animals, and sand and dust would keep getting into the water because the well was unprotected. Barnabas sent a grant of AU\$1,440 for the villagers to put cement on the ground around the well to keep it clean from sand and mud, and to build a protective wall around the entire area. They also purchased a metal covering to keep dust out of the well.

Bangladesh

Every year Bangladesh has to deal with a cycle of drought and floods. During the drought season access to wells is essential



Christian orphans in Burma now have access to clean drinking water from this tank

for survival. Muslim neighbours often block Christians from drawing water from the communal wells, which puts Christians in desperate situations. Barnabas assists Christians in Bangladesh by providing tube wells, where a long tube is used to reach water deep underground. A recent grant of AU\$1,810 is funding 20 tube wells. Most of the wells are built on the properties of Christians or at churches.

Project references



**Water Project Fund 00-635
Christian orphans in Burma 75-821**

Turkmenistan: Help for Arrested Pastor

On 27 August 2010, Pastor N was arrested near his home. He was falsely accused of drugs charges and financial irregularities as well as of inciting religious hatred. The pastor was very active, leading two churches and several house churches, and government officials repeatedly tried to hinder his work, first by denying registration to one of the churches he led and then fining him for his religious activity. Other pastors in Turkmenistan believe he has been targeted as a warning to them all.

After eight weeks in prison, the trial took place on 21 September 2010. Pastor N was sentenced to four years in prison and fined a sum of AU\$700. He suffers from diabetes and did not receive any medication for months while in prison, where he was also beaten. Barnabas sent a grant of AU\$2,000 for buying food, medication and warm clothes for the pastor, and for paying the fine, legal documentation and costs for an appeal.



**Project reference 00-345
(Victims of Violence)**

Conference on Reaching Muslims for Christ in Indonesia

Bringing the Gospel to all Muslim peoples throughout all of Indonesia: this was the purpose of a four-day conference in September last year. In total 532 mission leaders, pastors and field workers from 39 different cities, who all work to reach unreached peoples in Indonesia, came together. Barnabas sent a grant of AU\$16,050 as a contribution towards the costs of the conference.

As there are more than 750 distinct people-groups in Indonesia, a lot of work needs to be

done. During the conference the leaders identified church planting and mobilising local Indonesian churches for mission as effective ways to reach Muslims. They also focused on groups of people that have not yet been reached at all. Because of the conference many church leaders and field workers from different agencies and churches have now started working together.



Project reference 22-908



Indonesian Christians in traditional costume sang praise and worship songs at the beginning of a conference on reaching Muslim groups for Christ

Burundi: Stepping in to Help Two Student Converts



Beaming smiles from the two converts. Barnabas enabled them to complete their studies

Two orphaned young women in Burundi, who had been raised as Muslims, became Christians. But when their Muslim guardian found out, he mistreated them and eventually threw them out of his house. A Christian family helped them by providing a free one-bedroom house for them to live in.

The women were about to enter the final year of their studies but had no funds to pay for it. Barnabas provided them with a grant of AU\$2,535 through a local church to pay their fees. They could also buy furniture for their house, and food, clothing and other daily needs.

In December 2010 they graduated. Our partner at the local church wrote: "They had tears flowing on their cheeks because of their endless thanks to Barnabas Fund for giving them such a great support which finally made them secure certificates. This will help them get a job and that will continue to pay for their daily needs."



Project reference: 00-113
(Convert Fund)

Pakistan: School in Christian Tent Community

Christians are seriously marginalised in Pakistan. So when more than 200 Christian families were unexpectedly left homeless, they were first forced to live in tents along the central reservation of a busy highway with traffic passing on both sides. Barnabas Fund sent practical aid to them. Later they were then moved to an open field outside the city. Almost two years on, they are still living there, without any sanitation and with very limited access to clean water.



200 Christian families have been living in tents in squalid conditions for more than two years

watchman with a grant of AU\$2,000 for an entire year.

The families were too poor to pay school fees. So in September 2010 local Christians set up a primary school in two tents. Now 110 Christian children, aged 4 to 11, are learning to read, write and do arithmetic at the school. Barnabas is paying for the salaries of the three teachers and a

One of the leaders of the tent community told us, "This school is a symbol of hope and light for our future generations."



Project reference: 41-842
(Pakistan – Christian Victims of
Violence and Injustice)

Now the children are receiving a Christian education in two tents inside the community



SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Throughout the world Christians need to generate an income for themselves and their families. But in countries where Christians experience discrimination, their job opportunities can be seriously restricted. Employers often will not take on Christian staff, and if they do they may well pay them a lower wage. Where discrimination also means that Christians are lacking educational qualifications, this makes the situation even worse. In some countries, Christians mainly have to take the most menial and low-paid work, and some Christians may struggle to get work at all. Even well-educated Christians may find that certain careers are closed to them, or that they cannot advance to more senior positions. This treatment attaches a social stigma to many Christian communities and makes it difficult for them to support themselves and their families.

pastors at anything more than a basic level. In Indonesia pastors have planted churches in remote, rural areas of Java, where the majority of people are Muslim. The villages and hamlets in which they work are generally very poor, and unemployment is high. The new believers can contribute only modest amounts to their church. For example, one pastor and his wife and son receive a weekly offering of only AU\$0.80 from the congregation. Church growth is slow owing to resistance from the Muslims.

Physical attacks on Christians and their property are all too common in many countries. Homes, churches and businesses may be destroyed by angry mobs, driving whole Christian communities from their homes. When this happens, the **victims of violence** are left with nothing, and many are forced to flee, leaving behind their homes, friends and employment. The looting and

Christians are treated as inferior and unfit for certain privileges and responsibilities, not least in the job market. In Egypt, many Christians are forced to do the most menial of jobs and live in squalid and unhealthy conditions, such as the “garbage villages” surrounding Cairo.

In times of **disaster**, people can lose everything in the blink of an eye. Homes, businesses, livestock can all be washed away in floods or destroyed in an earthquake. In these situations, Christians who already earn very little may find themselves completely bereft of their sources of income. In September 2009 a number of Christian brickmakers in West Sumatra, Indonesia, lost their livelihood when the ovens in which they baked the bricks were destroyed by an earthquake. Ironically, this came at just the time when bricks would be in great demand as damaged buildings had to be

“I learned how to trust in the Lord to provide for all my needs,” says Howa, a Christian widow in North Sudan who studied tailoring at a course funded by Barnabas and can now earn an income to support her children.

Income-generation problems are particularly severe for certain groups of Christians and can arise from a number of different sources.

Struggling groups

Converts may find it particularly difficult to get work of any kind. For those who turn to Christ from other religions, especially from Islam, their decision usually arouses strong opposition. They can experience hostility and ill-treatment from family, friends, employers and colleagues and may even be sacked, leaving them virtually no hope of finding another job.

Pastors and church leaders can also find themselves struggling to make ends meet. In situations of poverty and persecution churches may be unable to support their

burning of Christian homes and businesses in Egypt in 2009 and 2010 left Christians without their livelihoods and without a means to support their families. Christians who have fled anti-Christian violence in Iraq to the relative security of the north cannot find work in their new locations; while those who have fled to neighbouring countries are often forbidden from getting paid employment.

Difficult circumstances

A society that is hostile to Christianity will see Christians as harmful and will try to limit their participation in **community** life.



When these brick ovens were destroyed in the 2009 earthquake, 25 Christian families were left without their source of income but Barnabas has now enabled them to build new ovens

reconstructed. Without their ovens, the Christians could only work as labourers, earning around AU\$3.20 a day.

In some countries, Christians can experience **state-sponsored persecution** at the hands of the government, police and courts. Some nations have laws that specifically discriminate against Christians, but even where there are no such laws, police may find pretexts to punish Christians anyway. Christians who are employed may find themselves living under constant scrutiny and in fear of arrest and detention – hardly a context in which to hold down a steady job and earn a regular income.

Barnabas encouraging self-sufficiency

Enabling Christians to support themselves in contexts where they face discrimination or hostility is an important part of our ministry at Barnabas Fund. When Christian families can cover their rent, food and other basic necessities, not only is their suffering alleviated but they also gain greater self-respect and dignity and are able to support the ministry of their churches by tithing. In some countries, such as Pakistan, parents cannot send their children to school unless they can afford the fees and other costs. If children grow up illiterate and uneducated, they will find it even more difficult to get work.



Barnabas supports a bakery in North Korea that provides jobs for local Christians and bread for the hungry

In the past year, Barnabas has supported over 140 small-business and income-generation projects in ten different countries. We fund training courses, provide materials and give one-off start-up costs to help Christians set up their own businesses and earn a living. Projects have included funding a training course and supplying hives and other equipment for a group of converts in Uganda to set up a bee-keeping business, and teaching tailoring and providing sewing machines to 100 women in North Sudan. Some of the women are pastors' wives, and



A Christian woman learning sewing in North Sudan. The money she can earn following the training will help her to support her family

the increase in the family income allows their husbands to give more time to their ministry. We also support a bakery project in North Korea that provides employment for impoverished Christians and free bread for the poor, and in Indonesia a grant from Barnabas enabled 25 Christian families to build new ovens, damaged in the 2009 earthquakes, and

to resume their brick-making trade.

Hundreds of Christians have had the opportunity to become more self-sufficient through income-generation projects sponsored by Barnabas Fund. The following pages tell the stories of some individual Christians and their communities whom we have helped.

WORKING FOR GOD'S PROVISION

The Bible is full of promises from God to provide for His people's basic needs. For example, in Deuteronomy Moses says that there need be no poor in Israel, because the Lord will richly bless them in the land He is giving them (Deuteronomy 15:4). Isaiah's prophecy of the messianic age includes God's provision for the poor and the grieving and is picked up by the Lord Jesus in His mission statement in Nazareth (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19). And the apostle Paul assures the Philippian Christians that God will supply all their needs according to His riches in Christ (Philippians 4:19).

But at the same time God's people are also instructed to work. From the opening chapters of the Old Testament, where a man is put in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15), to the

instructions to Christians in the New Testament letters to work with their own hands and earn their own living (2 Thessalonians 3:12; Ephesians 4:28), labour is commended and commanded as the normal way of accessing God's generous provision. Paul even encourages his readers to be dependent on no-one (1 Thessalonians 4:12), which suggests that self-sufficiency through work is the ideal for God's people.

Of course, not all Christians are able to work, and it is the responsibility of their Christian brothers and sisters to support them (1 John 3:16-17). But how good it is when that support not only supplies their immediate needs, but also enables them to fulfil God's call to support themselves with their own hands!

REFERENCE NUMBERS

00-356 Small Business Start-Up Fund
86-642 Christian bakeries in North Korea

56-856 Bee keepers in Uganda
22-828 Indonesia, support for church planters

Helping Christians support themselves

Good news stories from around the world



Christians at work with their new machines in the sewing business

Thriving sewing business

“The women have constant work and earn money for their families. It is very important for us. We thank Barnabas Fund very much for the assistance. Praise the Lord for it.”

A Christian couple in Central Asia already owned three old sewing machines, and they had set up a small sewing business in their house. But their production was low because the machines were old. With a grant from Barnabas, they were able to buy two new sewing machines and employ six Christian women to do the sewing. The women have all converted from Islam and because of that were having great difficulty finding a job. Brightly coloured rugs, spread on the floor and used as seating, were their speciality. They also made women’s clothing and souvenirs. At this point they started to produce about 120 items per month.

The husband took several short courses to improve his understanding of how to run a business. He updated the accounting system and spent more time keeping the business side of the work in good order. As a result the business started to generate more profit and they were able to buy more fabric and three more sewing machines. Now they have eight machines, and eight Christian women are working with them, producing about 250 items every month.

Getting together for work is also an opportunity for the women to pray together and have fellowship with one another. They feel strengthened in their faith, because they can talk about their problems and encourage one another. It is especially helpful for two of the women, because their families do not permit them to attend church services.

Minibus company in Central Asia

Because their Muslim neighbours discriminate against them for converting to Christianity from Islam, it is extremely difficult for members of a house church in Central Asia to gain employment in the region. If they want to go on living there, the only way is to start their own business.

Barnabas sent the church a grant for buying a van that seats 17 people and driving lessons (for passenger transport vehicles) for one of the men. The initial plan for this small business was to set up a long-distance bus company between two cities. But after a month of making the long-distance trips, they realised that the bad conditions of the roads were damaging the van and that the trips were too exhausting for the drivers.

So they changed their tactics and altered their route to a short one within the city where they live. Now they are making eight trips daily from the railway station to the central bus station and back again, taking up to 17 passengers per trip. After several months they were already making a profit and could pay for the salaries of three people as well as tithe a portion of their income back to their church and pay for church ministry.

Our local partner told us, “Thanks to your support three people from our church have stable jobs, getting a salary that provides for their family. We see that they have closer relationships with their families. It is also very good for our church and for the development of the Kingdom of God on earth. Thank you also for your prayers.”



One of the trainers joyfully holds up his new bicycle, bought with funding from Barnabas

A hoe and a plot of land

A large number of churches throughout Zimbabwe are working together to teach impoverished Christians to become self-sufficient again through farming. Many have fallen into poverty after years of hyperinflation in Zimbabwe. The new farming method is much less labour-intensive than the traditional methods that were used previously, and requires only simple farming equipment such as a hoe. At the same time it yields a much greater crop. It is ideal for vulnerable people such as elderly widows or families headed by children after their parents died. They can sow a crop, live from the produce and make a small profit. Last year Barnabas also provided seed for 1,000 farmers.

First a group of potential trainers learnt the new methods. Besides learning farming

techniques, they were encouraged to transform their communities through adopting a Christ-centred lifestyle. Then they went out to train Christians from their local churches, mostly in rural areas. Some of the trainers had to walk long distances of 15 to 30 miles to reach the people they were training. One was even walking more than 40 miles! Barnabas provided all 56 trainers with bicycles. The trainers are delighted and say that Barnabas has given them "feet" to do their work.

Several new farmers testified that they feel they have been given back their dignity now they can provide for themselves again. They also feel strengthened and renewed in their faith. A local contact reported that the project has also had the wonderful effect of unifying the churches that are working together.

Becoming tailors in Pakistan

More than six years ago a sewing training centre was opened in an extremely poor area of Rawalpindi, where many Christians are living. Christians suffer a lot of discrimination in Pakistan, which locks them into a downward spiral of poverty. Most of the Christian families in the neighbourhood have no education whatsoever and cannot read or write themselves or afford to send their children to school. Barnabas has been sponsoring the centre for the past five years.

At the centre young women learn dress-making and other sewing skills in order to become independent tailors and make a living. They learn how to make clothes, curtains, bedding and other cloth

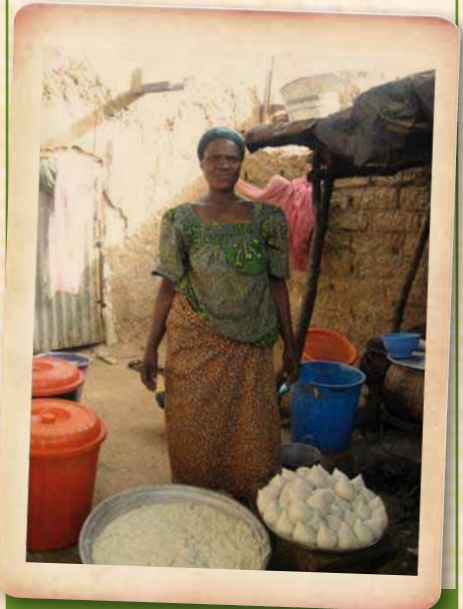
household items. The women are expected to work hard: the courses take one or two years, and they are required to be at the centre every day for five hours, five days per week. But in 2010 eighteen young women completed the one-year course.

Rebecca and her husband and young son were living in poverty before she started the course. Her husband washes cars for a living, which provides them with an income of a mere AU\$2.40 per day. They were struggling to pay the rent. Rebecca followed a one-year training course at the centre, and has now started her own business. She and her husband can pay the rent and take care of their son.

Micro-loans for enterprising women

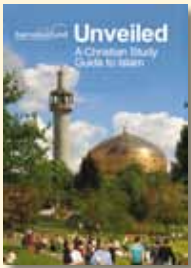
In a church in Niger, many of the women were struggling to feed their children and pay the rent. Barnabas Fund provided funds to the church so that it could provide micro-loans to 30 women. Some of the women already had small businesses but lacked resources to make their trades successful. Each one received AU\$128 from the church to use as capital for buying stock. Over time, the women have started to repay the loans monthly with a little interest. In turn this allows the church to provide further loans for more women.

The women have a wide variety of economic activities. Some are working as hairdressers; others are selling women's accessories or food such as soup with fried dough balls, salted peanuts and *acassa*, which is an African paste made with corn. The women are very grateful. Thanks to the loan many are now able to support their families.



"I sell *acassa*, a paste made from corn. Thanks to the credit, I have continually had business and have not had one break. Thank God, I can now bear the expenses of my family. I live with my children, because their dad had to return to the village after health problems."

Coming soon: *Unveiled*



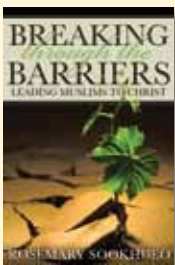
Unveiled is a simple, illustrated study guide prepared by Barnabas Fund to help Christians understand the teachings of Islam and the worldview of Muslim people. It explores some of the differences between Islam and Christianity and explains how Islam has spread across the world, both in the distant past and more recently. The last chapter looks at how to share the Gospel with Muslims.

The guide is divided into 13 chapters. Each includes some explanatory text, a Bible passage to provide a Christian perspective on the issues raised, and questions with space for answers.

Unveiled is a very basic introduction in easy English, intended to be accessible to all. It can be used by an individual for personal study, or for group study at your church.

This study guide is coming soon; further details will follow in due course.

Breaking Through the Barriers: Leading Muslims to Christ Rosemary Sookhdeo

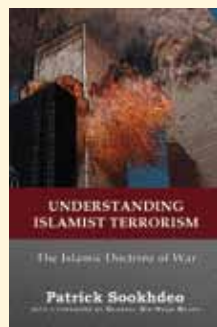


In her new book Rosemary Sookhdeo lifts the veil on Muslim culture, practices and faith, and identifies the points of contact that will help Muslims respond to the Christian Gospel. This accessible

guide takes us through the challenges of evangelism among Muslims and aims to help those Christians who want to reach out to their Muslim neighbours.

Isaac Publishing, paperback, 160pp. Special introductory offer \$10 plus \$8 postage

Understanding Islamist Terrorism: The Islamic Doctrine of War Patrick Sookhdeo



“As we see radical Islamic groups reclaiming their classic doctrines as their logic for turning to terrorism, the importance for the West actively working to treat Islam with understanding and respect ... becomes ever more urgent...” The late Maj Gen (Retd) the Rev'd Ian Durie CBE

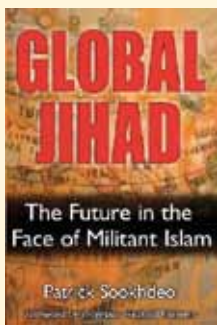
Dr Patrick Sookhdeo examines the roots and development of the classical Islamic doctrine of jihad, which is used by modern Islamists to justify their violent actions. He enlightens the reader as to the values, beliefs and logic that drive individuals such as Osama bin Laden to commit acts of terror and the motives of suicide bombers. The book also outlines some possible responses to terrorism.

Isaac Publishing, paperback, 280pp, \$15 plus \$8 postage



MARCH/APRIL SPECIAL!

Global Jihad: The Future in the Face of Militant Islam Patrick Sookhdeo



“The past experience of Patrick Sookhdeo as a Muslim in the Islamic culture has given him extra ability to understand the root causes of the problem. As a former jihadist I testify that the deep analysis of the problem of radical Islam that Dr Sookhdeo has provided is valid and accurate.” Dr Tawfik Hamid, Muslim reformer

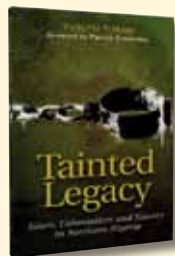
The worldwide growth of Islamist terrorism is a phenomenon of our age. But this is not the first time that violence done in the name of Islam has surged across the world. In *Global Jihad*, Patrick Sookhdeo provides an in-depth analysis of the past and present teachings of Islam that provide the driving force for Islamist terrorism. He also examines those aspects of the Islamic faith that motivate men and women of violence and provides a number of practical responses that non-Muslims can adopt.

Isaac Publishing, hardback, 669pp, \$20 plus \$12 postage

These two books are essential reading for all who wish to understand jihad and the nature of Islamic violence today.

Tainted Legacy: Islam, Colonialism and Slavery in Northern Nigeria

Yusufu Turaki



This important book traces the effects of Islam on society in Northern Nigeria, where thousands of Christians have died at the hands of Muslims in recent years. Professor Turaki describes the Muslim practices of

colonialism and slavery in West Africa, and shows how they have bestowed a tainted legacy of discrimination and cruelty to the Christians of Northern Nigeria.

Isaac Publishing, paperback, 210pp, \$20 plus \$8 postage

To order either of these books, please visit www.barnabasfund.org/shop. Alternatively please contact Barnabas Fund's Australia Office (address details on back cover).

Mosques in Islam

Mosques are the outward and visible symbol of Islam. The mosque is the most important institution in Islam, serving as a house of worship and as the centre of authority and of communal life for Muslims throughout Islamic history. It has also been the central point for the dissemination of Islam and its sharia. Muslims attend mosques for the prescribed daily prayers and to hear the Friday sermon.

The word “mosque” (*masjid* in Arabic) is derived from a root meaning “to prostrate”, one of the postures of worship. Another commonly used word for mosque is *jami*, derived from a root word meaning “to gather” or “gathering”.

There are two kinds of mosques: small mosques serving a specific local population for the five daily prayers, and large congregational mosques where the Friday congregational sermons are delivered and where a large part of the population can gather. Historically the congregational mosque (*Masjid Jami*), was at the centre of every Muslim city, its heart and pulse. It fulfilled the same purpose as the Roman Forum or European marketplace, serving as the gathering point for the population.

The mosque is much more than a place of worship. Muslims claim that they follow Muhammad’s example in making the mosque a centre for information, education and dispute settlement as well as for political activities. At the time of Muhammad, they argue, the mosque was a place of prayer, reflection and retreat, communal activity, welfare and education and a social and administrative centre. In many places the mosque was the focal point of a complex of buildings that served as religious schools (*madrassas*), hospitals and shelters for travellers.

The second obligatory pillar of Islam, prayer (*salat*), is of unique importance in a Muslim’s life. It is the act of worship in which one regularly remembers the god of Islam and is supposedly kept in constant communication with him. The prostrations during prayer symbolise the very essence of Islam, submission to the will of the Muslim god. Muhammad, in various *hadith*, emphasised the great importance of performing the prescribed prayers at their allotted time. Muslim men are required to pray as many prayers as possible in the congregation within the mosque and must attend at least once a week for the *Jum’*a or Friday prayer. Women were traditionally encouraged to pray in their homes with their children. Muslims like to live close to a mosque as they believe that they will obtain greater blessings if they do so.

The earliest mosques were based on the model of Muhammad’s house in Medina, which was used for prayer during his lifetime. They consisted of a square courtyard built of sun-dried bricks with a small number of rooms on the east wall and colonnades of palm trunks supporting palm branches on the south and north sides. The south wall became the *qibla*, the direction of prayer to the *ka’ba* in Mecca. The minaret most likely developed from church bell towers, and it was used for the same purpose, calling the faithful to prayer. The dome of later mosques was borrowed from the design of contemporary churches.

Muhammad and mosques

On the one hand, Muhammad saw the whole world as a suitable place of worship:

Allah the Exalted has conferred a special blessing upon this ummah – that is, the whole earth has been declared a mosque for it. Therefore, when the time for prayer comes, a Muslim may pray wherever he may be... Then, he said: “Wherever you may be, at the time of salah, you may pray for it [the earth] is all a mosque.” This is related by the group.¹

At the same time, paradoxically, Muhammad saw the pagan shrine in Mecca around the *ka’ba* as the principal place of worship (*al masjid al-haram*) to Allah from ancient pre-Islamic times:

Narrated Abu Dharr: I said, “O Allah’s Apostle! Which mosque was first built on the surface of the earth?” He said, “Al-Masjid-ul-Haram (in Mecca)”... He added, “Wherever (you may be, and) the prayer time becomes due, perform the prayer there, for the best thing is to do so (i.e. to offer the prayers in time).”²

When in Mecca, Muhammad prayed in the *masjid al-haram* by the *ka’ba* whenever possible. However, Mecca and its shrine were controlled by pagans, and Muhammad and his few followers often had to perform the prayers in secret in narrow alleys. Sometimes the first Muslims prayed secretly in private houses.

The migration (*hijra*) of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622 signalled Islam’s change from a persecuted religion to the ruling religion. In Medina Muhammad erected a simple mosque beside his

¹ Fiqh-us-Sunnah, 2.67.

² Sahih Bukhari, 4.585.

house. This mosque assumed roles far beyond that of a centre for prayer and worship. It became both the religious and the political centre for the early Muslim community. In it prayers were held, negotiations conducted, pledges of loyalty received, military actions planned, prisoners of war held, the wounded treated, disputes settled, and gifts received and distributed among Muhammad's companions. Some people even lived in the mosque permanently in tents and huts. The first mosque became the political, social and religious centre of the new community.

Mosques in the Qur'an and *hadith*

The word *masjid* in the Qur'an at first implied any pre-Islamic house of worship (especially Jewish and Christian), any temple where a god was invoked:

And who is more unjust than he who forbids that in places for the worship [*masjid*] of God, God's Name should be celebrated? (Q 2:114)

But usually in the Qur'an, references to a mosque are to the Meccan shrine of the *ka'ba* (the Sacred Mosque), although for most of Muhammad's life it was a pagan shrine:

And slay them wherever ye catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. (Q 2:191)

On Muhammad's conquest of Mecca he purified it from idols and turned it into the central and holiest mosque-shrine of his new religion, Islam, claiming that it was built by Abraham and Ishmael. The pagans were now forbidden entrance to it:

O ye who believe! truly the pagans are unclean; so let them not after this year of theirs approach the Sacred Mosque. And if ye fear poverty soon will Allah enrich you if He wills out of his bounty for Allah is All-Knowing All-Wise. (Q 9:28)

Praying towards the shrine in Mecca was also ordered in the Qur'an, a change from Muhammad's original command that his followers should pray towards Jerusalem:

So from whencesoever thou startest forth turn thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque; among wheresoever ye are turn your face thither that there be no ground of dispute against you among the people except those of them that are bent on wickedness; so fear them not but fear Me; and that I may complete My favors on you and ye may (consent to) be guided. (Q 2:150)

The *hadith* deal at length with the minute details of ritual in the mosque, the way Muhammad prayed and what he said about being in a mosque. Thus spitting is frowned on:

Narrated Anas bin Malik: The Prophet said, "Spitting in the mosque is a sin and its expiation is to bury it." (Bukhari 1.407)

So is coming to the mosque after eating garlic:

Yahya related to me from Malik from Ibn Shihab from Said ibn al-Musayyab that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Anyone who eats this plant should not come near our mosques. The smell of the garlic will offend us." (Al-Muwatta, Book 1, Number 1.8.300)

Great mosques express Islam's victory and superiority

As a religion Islam sets great store by a public demonstration of its power and strength. As a result of the principle that "Islam must be above and not below" (or "Islam must rule and not be ruled"), it became accepted that mosques must be higher, larger and grander than adjacent churches. This is especially important in non-Muslim majority lands, where the superiority of Islam over the surrounding culture of unbelief must be demonstrated by the grandeur of its mosques.

In Muslim countries minarets are always taller than church towers or steeples in order to provide a concrete demonstration of Islam's superiority.

The placement of mosques throughout Islamic history has been an expression of conquest and superiority over non-Muslims. The earliest surviving mosque is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, finished in 691 on the traditional site of the Jewish Temple. It was intended to emphasise the victory of Islam and to compete with the nearby Christian churches. The power of Islam was also expressed in the vast congregational mosque (the Great Mosque) of Caliph al-Walid I in Damascus (706-715), which incorporated parts of the Christian cathedral of St John.

Conversion of churches into mosques

During the early conquests, victorious Muslims often transformed synagogues, churches and Zoroastrian fire temples into mosques. Towns that made treaties with the Muslims were allowed to retain most of their churches. Those that fought the Muslims had some churches destroyed and others converted to mosques. Many early mosques were originally churches.

In Damascus Christians had to turn 15 churches over to the Muslims to become mosques. The Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik is said to have transformed ten churches in Damascus into mosques. The Great Mosque of Caliph al-Walid I was originally the Church of St John. Over the centuries, many churches in Egypt were also converted into mosques. Many churches of the Byzantine era on Cyprus became mosques. The Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (813-833) turned many churches into mosques. The Ottomans converted nearly all the churches, monasteries, and chapels in Constantinople into mosques, including the famous Hagia Sophia, after capturing the city in 1453.

Mosques are eternally sacred

For Muslims, every mosque is considered permanent for all eternity and must always be used as a mosque. It should not be allowed to fall into disrepair or be used for any other purpose. A mosque is a place where Islam rules and is to be actively defended. Mosques, once built, become sacred spaces that may never be given up or demolished. The radical Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir commented on the demolition of a mosque in Khartoum by the Sudanese government:

The 'Ulamaa' of the Ummah have agreed that when a part is designated for prayer by speech then it becomes excluded from private ownership and it becomes public property for all Muslims... The Sharee'ah prohibits the destruction, sale or obstruction of a mosque even if the locality was ruined.³

³ "They destroy the Houses of Allah", The Media Office of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Sudan, 12 May 2005, <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/english/sudan/2005/may1205.htm> (viewed 28 November 2005).



Non-Muslims are not allowed to enter this mosque in Singapore

Can Christians visit mosques?

The schools of sharia differ on this question. According to sharia, all beings and things are divided into pure and impure categories. People can be clean in themselves yet become unclean as a consequence of a failure to observe the laws of purification. Thus for Sunnis, Christians and Jews are clean in themselves but unclean because they handle unclean substances and do not purify themselves. For the Shi'a, Christians and Jews are unclean in themselves. The Shi'a and those Sunnis who follow the Maliki school of Sunni sharia do not allow non-Muslims to enter their mosques. Sunnis who follow the Shafi'i, Hanafi and Hanbali schools allow non-Muslims entry into their mosques. For all schools of law, the Great Mosque in Mecca and Muhammad's Mosque in Medina are exclusively for Muslims, and non-Muslims may not enter them.

Mosques and politics

Some people compare mosques to Christian church buildings, but this is misleading. Although in medieval times the church building had a significant social and economic role, mosques perform many political functions not usually associated with churches.

In Islam the secular and the sacred, the religious and the political are welded together. From the earliest times the mosque has been the place of assembly, a religious and political centre for the community. Congregational mosques provided a platform for political pronouncements at midday prayers on Fridays. Sovereign edicts and tax decrees were proclaimed from the pulpit of the mosques. Caliphs and sultans preached in the mosque.

The caliph led the prayers and delivered the Friday sermon (*khutba*) in the main mosque. The pulpit (*minbar*) was his seat of sovereign authority. In the provinces, governors had the same authority (delegated by the caliph) in their local main mosques.

According to al-Qaradawi (a popular Islamic cleric and scholar, and a spiritual leader of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood), Muhammad built the mosque in Medina as a spiritual centre for worship as well as a university for study, the headquarters of the Muslim outreach and mission and the seat of the government:

The example of the Prophet (peace be on him) in relation to business and trade is sufficient in itself. On the other hand he was eager to nurture the spiritual aspect; thus, he built the mosque in Madinah on the foundation of piety and seeking the pleasure of Allah, as a gathering place for worship, as a university for teaching and learning, as the headquarters for the call toward Islam, and as the seat of the government.⁴

Jihad was often proclaimed in the mosque. Weapons were and still are stored in some mosques in various contexts. Mosques in some parts of the world have been used in recent times as the bases for insurgency.

Only at very specific periods and places, for example under Western colonial rule, was the political aspect of the mosque's function temporarily very much reduced.

Mosques and cursing

Sometimes cursing prayers against Christians and Jews are used at Friday prayers in the mosque. The practice of cursing Christians, Jews and infidels in general is based on verses in the Qur'an:

And the Jews say: Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths, resembling the saying of those who disbelieved aforetime. Allah's Curse be upon them, how they are deluded away from the truth! (Q 9:30)

It is also based on examples in the *hadith* such as:

On his death-bed Allah's Apostle put a sheet over his face and when he felt hot, he would remove it from his face. When in that state (of putting and removing the sheet) he said, "May Allah's Curse be on the Jews and the Christians for they build places of worship at the graves of their prophets." (Bukhari 4.660)

Some Muslims are uncomfortable with the idea of cursing non-Muslims indiscriminately. A *fatwa* issued by "a group of *muftis*" on 30 October 2003 addressed this concern and said that it was permissible only to curse non-Muslims who were at war with Muslims or seeking to harm them. A *fatwa* from a scholar at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, the leading centre of Sunni Islam, said that cursing non-Muslims at war with Muslims was part of *jihad* and of resisting oppression or injustice.⁵

An article in the 10 March 2008 edition of the Saudi pro-government daily newspaper *Al-Jazirah* nonetheless described how "in almost every sermon, without exception imams recite supplications against Jews and Christians, and ask Allah that we defeat them, capture their women, and confiscate their possessions as booty."⁶

Some examples of cursing prayers are as follows:

O Allah, destroy the *kuffar* (infidels i.e. non-Muslims) who are trying to prevent people from following Your path, who deny Your Messengers and who do not believe in Your promise (the Day of Judgment). Make them disunited, fill their hearts with terror and send Your wrath and punishment against them, O God of Truth.⁷

O God, destroy the Jews and their supporters and the Christians and their supporters and followers. O God, destroy the ground under their feet, instil fear in their hearts, and freeze the blood in their veins. [From the Grand Mosque in Sanaa, Yemen]⁸

⁴ Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam*, p. 64.

⁵ www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503545224 (viewed 17 January 2006).

⁶ Fahd al-Hushani, "[on the Imam] Supplication Against Jews, Christians", *Al-Jazirah*, 10 March 2008; translated by MideastWire.

⁷ "Night Prayer During Ramadhan (Al-Qiyaam or Taraweeh)", issued by Khalid Bin al-Walid Mosque, Toronto, Canada, <http://www.khalidmosque.com/en/modules.php?op=modload&name=Sections&file=index&req=viewarticle&artid=130&page=1> (viewed 17 January 2006).

⁸ Islam Online – Fatwa, Date of Reply, 30 October 2003, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503545224 (viewed 17 January 2006).

Cursing prayers are often used in night prayer during Ramadan. Curses are also often included in the *qunoot* prayers offered after regular morning prayers in mosques whenever Muslims seem to be experiencing trouble, for example natural disaster, plague or war. One pattern for such a prayer is:

O Allah, let Your curse be on those unbelievers who prevent people from treading Your path, who reject Your prophets and fight Your chosen ones. O Allah, make difficult their plans, shake their feet and give them such punishment which is not turned away from a sinning people.⁹

Mosques in modern society and in the West

In modern society, the mosque serves as the single most important visible symbol of Muslim identity and values, a vital centre of political and social activities. Today more mosques are being built than worship buildings of any other religion. More than ever before the mosque is the hub and symbol of intense political and intellectual activity.

The resurgence of Islam since the 1970s has increased the importance of the mosque. Friday prayers in large mosques attended by presidents and kings are shown on television. Friday sermons are widely distributed by modern means of communication.

In some Muslim states, the mosque has become a focus of opposition to the government. The ideas generated in the mosque quickly permeate markets, slums and villages. Friday sermons are often very politically radical. In many Muslim states the mosques are tightly controlled by the state security services to ensure the regime's survival. Often even the Friday sermons must be presented to the security services or the Ministry of Religious Affairs for censorship before they can be preached.

Mosques in the West now fulfil a newer and larger role, reproducing the comprehensive and varied Islamic infrastructure present in Muslim states. They have become the main centres and identity markers of their communities, seeking to legitimise the community's presence in the non-Muslim majority culture. The mosque has become a comprehensive centre where many religious and cultural activities take place. Contemporary large mosques have developed a variety of amenities to serve the Muslim community and are often termed "Islamic Centres". They provide additional facilities, including education (libraries and Islamic schools), health clinics and gymnasiums.

Muslim communities in the West have slowly and steadily established an Islamic presence by building an Islamic infrastructure centred on the mosques, which are central to Muslim identity in

its strange new surroundings. Many mosques in the west cater for specific ethnic, linguistic and confessional groups rather than for the wider Muslim community. They offer religious, educational and social amenities as well as a refuge from a seemingly hostile environment. Most mosques in the West are aligned to Islamic umbrella organisations.

Mosques as tools of Islamisation

The building of new mosques in traditional European cities not only changes the landscape but also symbolises the lasting presence of Islam in its new sphere. Organised Islam tends to use the building of mosques to widen its geographical rule and sphere of influence. In Islamic thinking, mosques function as territorial bridgeheads in the struggle to overcome unbelief in *Dar al-Harb* (territory not under Islamic rule) and establish *Dar al-Islam* (territory under Islamic rule). Some mosques are misused (even in the view of some moderate Muslims) for political agitation, radicalism, preaching of hatred, violence and terrorism.

The call to prayer via loudspeaker involves a public statement of Islamic faith and its content, inviting non-Muslims to pray in the mosque and thereby in effect convert to Islam. It also raises the question of noise pollution and may well infringe noise prevention laws.

Some observers estimate that by 2007 there were over 1,700 mosques in the UK, over 1,600 in France, over 1,200 in the US and over 1,000 in Germany. The largest and most ornate mosques are often funded and supported by Islamic states. The increasing numbers of mosques, and their magnificence, speak of the presence and permanence of Islam in the West and reflect the growing confidence of Muslim minority communities.

Recently 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 in the West. However, the need for Muslim places of worship could be met by smaller, less eye-catching buildings. The ambitious designs of many mosques may come from a desire to have a very visible presence, claim superiority for Islam, and dwarf Christian cathedrals and churches.

A secret Muslim Brotherhood document, recently presented in a law case in the US, proposes that the building of mosques and Islamic cultural centres be accelerated as part of a long-term strategy to Islamise the West and destroy its Christian and secular culture.¹⁰ In this context the rapid increase in the number and size of mosques in the West must be a cause of grave concern, which requires urgent attention by churches, communities and government.

In a future edition of Barnabas Aid we will consider a Christian response to the issues raised in this article.

⁹ "Qunoot - E - Naazilah", http://www.communities.ninemsn.com.au/AMHCY/howtopray.msnw?action=get_message&mview=0&ID_Message=592&LastModified=4675414837075584617 (viewed 17 January 2006); Jamiyatul Ulama (Kwa Zulu Natal) Council of Muslim Theologians, issued by Al Jamiat Publications, Durban, South Africa, <http://www.jamiyat.org.za/qunoot.html> (viewed 17 January 2006).

¹⁰ See Government Exhibit 003-0089, 3:04-CR-240-G, U.S. v. HLF, et al, T13-T18 1, "Ikhwan in America: Zeid", <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/HLF/IkhwanAmerica.pdf> (viewed 12 September 2007).

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Anti-Christian discrimination in Europe and the US

A report from an Austrian-based organisation has strongly confirmed the warnings of Operation Nehemiah about anti-Christian discrimination in the West.

The *Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians* has catalogued wide-ranging examples of discrimination in Europe and the US over the last five years. It highlights such instances as hate crimes against Christians and church buildings, the limiting of freedom of conscience, expression and religion, and interference with employment, education and parental rights. It also notes how Christianity has been marginalised by defamation and insult, negative stereotyping and the suppression or removal of religious symbols.

The report does not claim to be exhaustive but gives “impressions of the phenomenon, revealing to the reader its diverse aspects and far-reaching scope”.

Among the numerous examples cited are:

- A mother was jailed in Germany in February 2010 for refusing to send her nine-year-old son to school for sex education lessons.
- A Spanish Christian TV network was fined 100,000 Euros by the government in July 2010 for running a series of adverts promoting the family and opposing alternative lifestyles.
- In February 2009 a Christian foster carer in the UK was struck off because she allowed a Muslim teenager in her care to convert to Christianity.

The report concludes, “Christianity ... faces acts of intolerance, partly inflicted by small radical groups. Discriminatory laws are

created when intolerance is paired with legislative power. It is the duty of the political community to be aware of and tackle the phenomenon of intolerance and discrimination against Christians.”

It goes on to offer a number of recommendations for governments and institutions. These include ensuring freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression and the right to conscientious objection. The Observatory also calls for governments to refrain from interference and to modify legislation that discriminates against Christians.

GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM

Operation Nehemiah is providing a number of training opportunities under the title “Greater Understanding of Islam”. **Major training days** will be held on 4 April in **Melbourne VIC**, 7 April in **Tamworth NSW** and 9 April in **Brisbane QLD**. Patrick will also be speaking with Church leaders on 6 April in **Adelaide SA**. These will be led by Dr Patrick Sookhdeo and Mrs Rosemary Sookhdeo. Topics to be addressed include *What is Happening in the Muslim World?*, *The Islamisation of Society*, *The Nature of Sharia* and *Why Women Convert to Islam*.

Please see insert for more details.

For more information please email: bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org or telephone 1300 365 799.



MUSLIMS URGED TO PROMOTE HALAL AMONG NON-MUSLIMS

A recent statement from a leading European Muslim cleric has underlined the importance of Operation Nehemiah's campaign against the extension of *halal* goods and services to the non-Muslim population. Dr Mustafa Ceric, Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sanjak, Croatia and Slovenia, has urged the international Muslim community to promote *halal* more strongly in the non-Muslim market.

Dr Ceric was speaking at a reception hosted by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) as part of the first ever Global Halal Congress in Karachi, Pakistan, earlier this month. He said that the *halal* movement can enable Muslims to dominate the global economy because its food and other services are the basic needs of every human being. He also claimed that *halal* means “pure and hygienic”, and that the non-Muslim world has no hesitation in accepting it.

Dr Ceric's words reinforce the message of a video produced by the World Halal Forum, which seeks to advance *halal* as a global brand. It is becoming apparent that *halal* is being used as an instrument of Islamic mission (*dawa*), bringing the largely oblivious non-Muslim world increasingly under the authority of sharia law.

Operation Nehemiah is greatly concerned about this insidious campaign and urges Christians to both sign and circulate our petition against the imposition of *halal* on the general public. Please visit www.barnabasfund.org/halal-petition.

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.

“Blessed are you when people persecute you...” (Matthew 5:10-12)

Christians in South Sudan have suffered dreadfully in the last 30 years. The long civil war and its aftermath have seen millions killed or displaced and most others suffering acute poverty. Yet remarkably, in the midst of acute deprivation and distress brought on them by others, the churches are renowned for the joy and persistence of their singing.

The Chin people of Burma (Myanmar), who are 90% Christian, are one of the poorest people groups in the country. The military regime also regards them as an enemy and persecutes them ruthlessly. Yet they are known among other Christians in Burma for their loud and lively worship, and they love to make and distribute Gospel music in praise of God.

How is this possible? How can Christians who endure such appalling suffering at the hands of others respond to it in this way?

PERSECUTION AND BLESSING

In this passage from Matthew's Gospel (5:10-12), the Lord Jesus gives us His perspective on our sufferings for Him. He declares here that people who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness are blessed.

Those who are faithful to Christ may experience accusation, ill-treatment and slander from other people on His account, but if they do, they can reckon themselves happy.

This statement does not deny that persecution is painful and grievous. It means that suffering for Christ leads to blessing for the people who endure it. Those who are persecuted for righteousness inherit the Kingdom of heaven that He has come to bring. That heavenly reward is a great one. Their trials, like those of the prophets before them, are a sign of their faithfulness to God, and thus of His favour towards them.

This favour is for both the present and the future. In Christ the Kingdom of heaven has already come among us, and those who endure persecution for His sake receive a measure of its blessings now through the gift of His Spirit. But there is greater blessing still to come when Christ returns to bring the Kingdom in its fullness.

REJOICE AND BE GLAD

Because persecution brings blessing for faithful Christians, their right response to it is

to rejoice and be glad. The experience of God's favour in the present, and the expectation of it in the future, give suffering Christians good reason to celebrate. This is not a matter of trying to pretend that ill-treatment by others is not both agonising and traumatic. It is a recognition that the afflictions God's people undergo are far outweighed by the reward that they receive from Him – the gift of His Kingdom.

Some of the Sudanese Christians who sing so cheerfully in the face of their suffering were once asked why. They replied, “Because God has given us another day, and because we are going to heaven.” The assurance of God's blessing in Christ, for the present and the future, enables them to rejoice and be glad when people persecute them so severely.

The trials that most of us face for the Lord's sake are very minor compared to those of our brothers and sisters in Sudan, Burma, and many other parts of the world. But as the rising tide of secularism threatens to engulf Western society, and Christians in the West suffer increasing discrimination, marginalising and ridicule, we too need our Lord's perspective on the persecution of His people. **And we too must rejoice and be glad, in celebration of our heavenly reward.**

Sudanese Christians in worship. Barnabas Fund has provided hymn books for Christians in Sudan and musical instruments for Chin Christians in Burma





The Plight of Christians in the Muslim World

A Pakistani Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, was sentenced to death on 8 November 2010 for allegedly defiling the name of Muhammad. Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab, who criticised the “blasphemy law” under which Aasia was accused and requested a presidential pardon for her, was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards on 4 January 2011.

More than 500 religious scholars of the Bareilvi movement, the largest Muslim movement in Pakistan, urged Muslims to boycott the governor’s funeral and saluted the assassin. They added that others should learn lessons from the governor’s death. “Those who support blasphemy of the Prophet are themselves indulging in blasphemy.”

The statements of these scholars are considered binding on some 100 million Bareilvis in Pakistan. While Bareilvis are seen as moderates in the West, they are fanatical in their adherence to sharia (which they believe should be the law of Pakistan) and in their defence of the honour of Muhammad. If these are the moderate Muslims of Pakistan, what hope is there for the Christian community there?

Violent attacks

Before and during Christmas 2010 and New Year 2011, there were various attacks against Christians across the Muslim world, giving the impression that a coordinated campaign was being conducted against Christian churches.

Manipulating false rumours that Christians in Egypt had abducted two Christian women who had allegedly converted to Islam, Al-Qaeda and related organisations issued a number of statements claiming that all Christians were now “legitimate targets”. On 31 October 2010 a group of Islamic gunmen burst into a Baghdad church during a service. More than 50 people were killed and many others injured.

On 30 December at least six bombs aimed at Christian homes in Baghdad exploded, killing two Christians and wounding at least 14 other people. Later a Christian woman who survived the attack on the Baghdad church in October was shot dead in her bed.

On New Year’s Day 2011 a suicide bomber detonated explosives outside a church in Alexandria as some 1,000 worshippers were leaving the service, killing 21 people and wounding many more. This is the latest in a long series of unprovoked attacks by Muslims on Christians across Egypt.

Following threats to disrupt Christmas celebrations in Nigeria, a series of bomb attacks took place on Christmas Eve, with seven explosions in Jos killing 32 people and injuring 74. On the same day a 30-strong mob of Muslim militants attacked a church in the city of Maiduguri, killing five people, while another church in the city was attacked by three armed men, who murdered a security guard. These incidents were the culmination of a year that saw an unusual number of serious anti-Christian riots in Nigeria, especially in and around Jos (Plateau State).

A convert from Islam in Afghanistan, Shoaib Assadullah, appeared in court on 28 December and was told that he would be executed if he did not return to Islam by 3 January 2011. The case was then delayed while the attorney general looked into it. Shoaib has refused to deny Christ in exchange for his freedom, and his supporters fear that he is being given mind-altering drugs.

Another Afghan Christian, Said Musa, is still languishing in prison after being arrested in May 2010 as part of a crackdown against converts. After a local TV station broadcast images of Afghan Christians being baptised, Afghan media and politicians alike called for the death of converts from Islam, in line with sharia law. Said has been tortured in prison. His lawyer was blocked from representing him, and another lawyer refused to do so when Said refused to return to Islam.

A call for action

For ten years radical Islamism has been increasing its influence. This process has been based on a long tradition of Muslim anti-Christian sentiment and practice, as well as government-sponsored discrimination and repression.

Islam is being restructured in a violently anti-Christian form. Unless something is done to stop the process, accelerating persecution seems both inevitable and unstoppable. We will witness the eradication of the Christian presence in most Muslim lands, with some Christians being killed, others pressured to convert to Islam, and many fleeing to safe havens in the West or elsewhere.

In many Muslim countries Christians are now living in fear of further attacks with no-one to protect them. Barnabas applauds intervention by Western governments, Church leaders, the media and the international community on behalf of the persecuted Christians in the Muslim world. Despite the rejection of this by Muslim governments as interference in their affairs, we urge them to continue. We also call on governments in Muslim states to reverse the Islamisation of their countries, guarantee real religious freedom and protect Christians (including converts from Islam) from discrimination, persecution and violence.

PAKISTANI GOVERNOR WHO DEFENDED CHRISTIAN SHOT DEAD

A Pakistani provincial governor who campaigned for the release of a Christian woman sentenced to death for “blasphemy” was murdered amid widespread Muslim protests against proposals to change the controversial law.

Salman Taseer, governor of Pakistan’s Punjab province and a senior member of the ruling party, was gunned down by one of his own bodyguards in the capital, Islamabad, on 4 January. The Elite Force guard, Malik Mumtaz Hussain Qadri, said that he planned the murder after Governor Taseer, a Muslim, spoke out against the country’s blasphemy law and defended Asia Bibi (45), a Christian mother of five sentenced to death under it.



Pakistani governor Salman Taseer paid with his life for his opposition to the country’s blasphemy laws. (Source: Salman Tasser on Flickr)

He yelled, “Allahu Akbar” (“god is great”), the traditional Islamic war cry, as he fired around 30 bullets from a sub-machine gun at the 66-year-old governor at close range. Qadri told reporters, “Salman Taseer is a blasphemer and this is the punishment for a blasphemer.” He was arrested at the scene and subsequently charged with murder, terrorism and violence.

Governor Taseer had called for reform of the blasphemy law, which is often used against Christians and other non-Muslims. He was a prominent supporter of Asia Bibi, visiting her in prison, where she has been held since she was accused of making derogatory remarks about Muhammad in June 2009.

Proposals to change the law, which carries a mandatory death sentence for “defiling the name of Muhammad”, in light of Asia Bibi’s case have provoked an outcry from certain Muslim groups. Governor Taseer’s murder followed nationwide protests on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve in defence of the blasphemy law. And a few days after the shooting, up to 50,000 Muslims rallied in Karachi against any softening of the law. The law is frequently misused to settle personal grudges, and non-Muslims are particularly vulnerable to accusations by Muslims.

FOUR ATTACKS AGAINST INDIAN CHRISTIANS IN ONE DAY

Christians in the Indian state of Karnataka were said to be living in a “climate of fear, persecution and harassment” by a senior leader after four attacks by Hindu extremists in one day.

Sajan George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, spoke out following the incidents at different churches during services on Sunday 5 December.

Extremists surrounded and attacked two churches in Bangalore, terrorising the Christians inside. In two other incidents, four Christians were beaten up and dragged from their church buildings in the district of Shimoga before being arrested on false charges of trying to convert Hindus.

Sajan George said, “The four attacks on the same day in Karnataka is reflective of the insecurity of the vulnerable minority Christian community and, more importantly, this is an indication of the climate of fear, persecution and harassment and terror in which Christians must practice their faith in this Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-governed state.”

Since the Hindu nationalist BJP came to power in Karnataka State in May 2008 there have been more than 200 anti-Christian incidents. Last August a BJP member of the Karnataka State Legislature vowed to “weed out” the seeds of Christianity.

LAOTIAN CHRISTIANS ARRESTED AT GUNPOINT

A group of Laotian Christians, including two young children, were arrested at gunpoint while they were eating a meal at a pastor’s home.

The raid by 20 police officers at the house in Nakoon village, Hinboun district, took place on 4 January at 7pm. Eleven Christians were arrested and charged with holding a “secret meeting” – an act punishable as a political offence in communist Laos.

Among those detained were two house church leaders, Pastor Wanna and Thao Chanlai, who have previously been imprisoned for their

Christian activities, and two children aged four and eight. Some of those detained were released, but the leaders were held in custody.

Pastor Wanna had started holding worship meetings in his home in 2008 and by 2009, 105 villagers had converted to Christianity from animism and Buddhism. At the same time Thao Chanlai, who leads the church in nearby Tonglar, was sharing his faith and 15 families from the village became Christians.

The two leaders were arrested and detained in Hinboun district prison from May to October

2010. They were both charged with leading other people to embrace the Christian faith. During their imprisonment, the villagers they had led to Christ were put through a “re-education programme” by the authorities and forced to formally recant their Christian faith.

Upon his release from prison Pastor Wanna was ordered not to hold worship meetings in his home or influence others in the Christian faith but he resumed the gatherings. Some of the families who recanted their faith have returned to Christianity.

IRANIAN CHRISTIANS ARRESTED IN HOME RAIDS

More than 70 Christians have been arrested in a crackdown on Iran's house church movement by the authorities.

Armed special security officers forced their way into various homes in Tehran and the western city of Mashhad in the early hours of 26 December while the occupiers were asleep. Dozens of Christians, many of whom are converts from Islam, were verbally and physically abused before being detained for interrogation. Among them were house church pastors and leaders, married couples, two of whom were separated from young

children, and a number of young single women.

It is understood that another 16 would have been arrested but were not at home when the security forces broke in. Their relatives were harassed and ordered to tell the Christians to turn themselves in to the authorities.

Some of the detained were released after signing statements that they would no longer participate in Christian activities. One of those held in detention said they were being subjected to sleep deprivation.

The Governor General of Tehran Province, Morteza Tamadon, confirmed on 4 January that a number of Christians had been arrested. He spoke of their "corrupting" influence and warned of further arrests.

The leaders and members of Iran's house churches, who are mainly converts from Islam, have been in heightened danger since Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, made a speech last October warning against the network of house churches that "threaten Islamic faith and deceive young Muslims".

EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS KILLED IN CHURCH BOMB BLAST

At least 21 Christians were killed and scores more injured when a suicide bomber detonated explosives outside a church in Alexandria, Egypt, as worshippers were leaving a service on New Year's Day, 1 January 2011.

A Barnabas Fund partner in Egypt, who was at the scene soon after the bombing, reported that Muslims coming out of a nearby mosque were saying the traditional Islamic war cry "Allahu Akbar" ("god is great") as they watched Christian mothers frantically searching for their children. She said there were bodies and blood everywhere.

Bishop Angaelos, a senior Egyptian church leader in the UK, commented, "Men, women, children and the elderly gathered together in prayer for a happy and peaceful new year. Instead, they became the innocent victims of a most horrific, callous and cowardly act of terror and violence."

The attack came two weeks after an Al-Qaeda group, the Islamic State of Iraq, posted a statement on its website calling for militants to bomb Egyptian churches during Christmas celebrations. That same group had, while holding worshippers hostage at a Baghdad church in October 2010, demanded the release of Muslim women they falsely claimed the Egyptian Church was holding captive. When a 48-hour deadline for this expired, they threatened further violence, declaring that Christians everywhere were "legitimate targets".

There were fears of further attacks against Egyptian Christians during the Eastern Christmas celebrations on January 6 and 7, but this festival passed without major incident. Rather, in a show of solidarity, many prominent Muslims called for Egyptian Muslims to attend Christmas Eve services to act as "human shields" against possible attacks by Islamist militants.



A Christian woman mourns at the church in Alexandria following the deadly blast (Source: AINA <http://www.aina.org>)

AFGHAN CONVERT THREATENED WITH DEATH PENALTY

An Afghan convert to Christianity has been threatened with the death penalty for apostasy unless he returns to Islam.

Shoab Assadullah (25) was arrested in October 2010 for giving a New Testament in the national Dari language to another Afghan, who later reported him to the authorities in Mazar-e-Sharif. At a court hearing on 28 December, Shoab was told that he would be executed for apostasy from Islam if he did not renounce Christianity by 3 January. His case was then postponed while the attorney general looked into it. Shoab has refused to deny Christ in exchange for his freedom and his supporters fear he is being given mind-altering drugs.

Shoab told supporters by phone from prison that he had given his life completely into the hands of Jesus, adding, "Without my faith I would not be able to live."

At the time of writing, another Afghan convert, Said Musa, was also being held in prison because of his Christian faith. The father of six was arrested in May 2010 as part of a crackdown against Afghan converts to Christianity. He has been tortured and abused in prison, and his case has been repeatedly delayed. His lawyer was blocked from representing him, and another lawyer declined to do so when Said refused to return to Islam.

Observers say that Said is likely to be charged with apostasy from Islam, a crime that is punished by death under Islamic law, which is endorsed by the Afghan constitution. Some leading political figures in Afghanistan called last year for the execution of converts following a television broadcast of a baptismal service, which led to a frenzied anti-Christian response. Said was one of around 25 believers subsequently arrested.

IRAQI CHRISTIANS FLEE AMID UNRELENTING VIOLENCE

Iraqi Christians are being targeted in their homes and workplaces, forcing hundreds of families to flee their homeland amid fears of genocide.

The unrelenting attacks follow the hostage siege at a Baghdad church last October that left more than 50 people dead. After claiming responsibility for the incident, an Al-Qaeda group, the Islamic State of Iraq, threatened further violence. Since then, several Christians have been murdered and Christian neighbourhoods targeted with bombs.

Among those killed were Hikmat and Samira Sammak, an elderly Christian

couple, who were shot dead along with their daughter in their Baghdad home on 5 December. Tragically, they had just returned briefly to the property to finalise its sale, having left the capital for the north.

Two weeks prior to this incident, Christian brothers Saad and Raad Hannah were gunned down in their car workshop in Mosul. And in the early hours of 3 January, Rafah Butros Toma, a 44-year-old Christian woman who had survived the Baghdad church siege, was murdered in her bed. At least two people were killed and 14 others wounded in

coordinated bombings targeting Christian homes in the capital on 30 December.

Hundreds of Christian families have left everything behind, with many heading to the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan, where they face severe financial hardship.

Those who remain are living in constant fear. A report received by Barnabas Fund from a senior church leader described their plight: "It is as if they are in prison: without work, without study, without church meetings. Fear rules over all situations and in all places."

CHRISTIANS SLAUGHTERED IN NIGERIAN VILLAGES

Christian families were slaughtered when men armed with rifles and machetes attacked their village in the latest outbreak of anti-Christian violence in Nigeria's "Middle Belt".

The brutal assault on Kuru Station, which is around 19 miles from the city of Jos, Plateau State, took place in the early hours of 11 January. Three homes were attacked with 13 people, including women and children, killed and at least three others injured.

The occupants were woken with gunshots and forced out of their homes, before being attacked with machetes. The houses were then set ablaze. Villagers said that soldiers appeared to be involved in the raid.

Another predominantly Christian village, Fagawon, which is around 50 miles from Jos, was attacked shortly afterwards. Two people were killed and three houses and three motorcycles torched.

The attacks follow a series of violent incidents on Christmas Eve. Seven blasts in Jos killed 32 people and injured 74 more, following threats to disrupt festive celebrations in the area.

And six people were killed in attacks by suspected Islamists on two churches in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri, Borno State. In one incident, a 30-strong mob of Muslim militants armed with guns, knives and petrol bombs killed five people, including the pastor and two choir members who were rehearsing for a late-night carol service. Another church in the city was attacked by three armed men,

who murdered a security guard.

There have been long-running sectarian tensions in Nigeria's Middle Belt, where the strongly Muslim North meets the predominantly Christian south and Christians are present in approximately equal numbers. Plateau State was the scene of several horrific massacres of Christians last January and March.



Christians mourn their loved ones following anti-Christian violence in Nigeria in 2010

"Sharing the Gospel While Sharing a Cell"



Azamat and Sattor, Christians from Uzbekistan, were imprisoned for 15 days and 10 days respectively for unregistered religious activity in April 2010. Church members were put under strong police pressure to write statements against Azamat. Below, he tells the story of his arrest and how he shared his faith with others during his short time in prison:

It is hard for me to write and describe how it all happened. But I will try.

I was arrested while I was in my town. A car was following my car. When I stopped three people got out of the car and told me they were from the terrorism department. They took me to the police department, where they told me that there were a few complaints against me, that I convert Muslims to Christianity.

I stayed at the police department until the evening, when I was brought to the court. A man about 20 years old was the judge. He asked me questions but didn't need any answers to them. Then he just read the verdict - 15 days of imprisonment for me and 10 days for brother Sattor.

We were taken to the detention room, and it was only there that I was allowed to make a phone call to my wife to tell her that I was to be imprisoned. It was a very funny thing for me - in the morning I left home and everything was OK, but then everything happened so quickly - arrest, court hearing and the verdict. She was so shocked. I was in the cell where I spent my first five days of imprisonment eleven years ago on the same charges.

My first night I was alone in the cell, and it gave me chance to talk to my living God. I asked that the time I spent in prison would be of maximum use. So I was able to meet three men who shared the cell with me.

The first man I met was Oleg. He was an alcoholic, and he was in prison for 18 years. They wanted him to get information about me and from me, but later he told me that he didn't want to harm me, and we became friends. Oleg

became very interested in how to communicate with God, and he asked about the Bible. I did my best to tell him about Jesus and what He did for our salvation.

I also spent four days with Rashid. He was Uzbek, and he had also spent many years in prison. He talked most of the time. I don't know his opinion about God because his heart was closed.

The third man was a policeman who was guarding me. He told me that he didn't understand how an Uzbek could accept Christianity. We talked till late at night. I shared the Gospel with him, and he was very friendly towards me. I wasn't allowed to have food from outside; I could only have soup once a day, but the policeman brought meat and juice for me.

So during my imprisonment, three people heard the Gospel, even though I was isolated and considered a "very dangerous person". Hopefully at least one of them accepted Jesus.

At one point, I was called to speak to a senior official, who continually repeated that I would be jailed for a long time. I had a very serious talk with God, and He comforted me. It is not easy to express in words the comfort I felt. I asked if I would be released. And like Gideon I asked for a sign (Judges 6); I asked to hear the sound of running water, even though there was no tap in the room. Right after that there was an answer like water running from a tap. I was shocked and happy at the same time. Peace came to my heart. And when they told me again that I would be imprisoned for 15 more days or even a minimum of five years, I was able to joke, "Why do you act on a small scale? Give me life imprisonment or the death penalty!"

Helping Persecuted Christians to Celebrate Hope

The weeks leading up to Easter are a good time to focus on the needs of the suffering Church, through prayer and practical gifts.

Included with this magazine is a copy of our 2011 Lent Prayer Booklet, to assist you in your **prayers** for Christians around the world during Lent and Easter. Further copies are free and available to order from your nearest Barnabas office (addresses on back cover) or from our website (www.barnabasfund.org/resources).



Why not ask your church to take up an Easter offering to help our brothers and sisters to rejoice in the hope of resurrection in their times of trial and persecution?

Please help Barnabas Fund to support our suffering family at Lent and Easter.

Use PayPal to Donate

Barnabas Fund Australia is now using PayPal, a quick and secure method of online payment. PayPal stores your card and bank details, enabling you to pay online without entering sensitive financial information each time. Your payment details are never shared on the internet as PayPal takes the payment directly from your card or bank.

If you would like to use PayPal to donate to Barnabas Fund, simply visit our website www.barnabasfund.org, click on "Give Now" at the top of the homepage and then click on the PayPal tab.

Children Helping Children

The Sunday school children at **Hope Christian Centre, Hobart, Tasmania**, spent the third term last year focusing on Christian school children in Pakistan. They learnt about the challenges the children face, prayed for them and raised money to help them. One of the teachers, Mrs Alison Ferguson, said, "It was wonderful to hear our

children pray for the dear Pakistani children." They were also very pleased to send a cheque for \$550. Most of the money was raised by the children bringing along coins each Sunday. Sometimes older church members brought jars of silver coins they had collected, which caused much excitement among the children.



Hope Christian Centre raised \$550 for Christian children in Pakistan

New "Hope and Aid" DVD

Barnabas Fund has produced an introductory DVD outlining why Barnabas Fund exists and the work it undertakes. This valuable resource can be used in presentations to home groups and churches (approx. length 4 mins).



To order your free copy of the DVD, please visit our website or contact your nearest office (addresses on back cover).

The Barnabas Fund Distinctive

What helps make Barnabas Fund distinctive from other Christian organisations that deal with persecution?

WE WORK BY:

- directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them (“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, **especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**” Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- aiming the majority of our aid at Christians living in Muslim environments
- channelling money from Christians through Christians to Christians
- channelling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organisations)
- using the money to fund projects that have been developed by local Christians in their own communities, countries or regions
- considering any request, however small

- acting as equal partners with the persecuted Church, whose leaders often help shape our overall direction
- acting on behalf of the persecuted Church, to be their voice – making their needs known to Christians around the world and the injustice of their persecution known to governments and international bodies

WE SEEK TO:

- meet both practical and spiritual needs
- encourage, strengthen and enable the existing local Church and Christian communities – so they can maintain their presence and witness rather than setting up our own structures or sending out missionaries
- tackle persecution at its root by making known the aspects of the Islamic faith and other ideologies that result in injustice and oppression of non-believers

- inform and enable Christians in the West to respond to the growing challenge of Islam to Church, society and mission in their own countries
- facilitate global intercession for the persecuted Church by providing comprehensive prayer materials

WE BELIEVE:

- we are called to address both religious and secular ideologies that deny full religious liberty to Christian minorities – while continuing to show God’s love to all people
- in the clear Biblical teaching that Christians should treat all people of all faiths with love and compassion, even those who seek to persecute them
- in the power of prayer to change people’s lives and situations, either through grace to endure or through deliverance from suffering

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

BARNABAS FUND TOUR 3-10 APRIL 2011

Dr Patrick & Mrs Rosemary Sookhdeo will be speaking in Melbourne VIC, Adelaide SA, Tamworth NSW & Brisbane QLD

Please see insert for further details of venues

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