

## A special prayer request to Barnabas Fund supporters

27 November 2020

Barnabas Fund is in urgent need of the prayers of our supporters. An article has appeared in *The Times* newspaper today about our UK-based charity and our International Director, Dr Patrick Sookhdeo. Unfortunately, for legal reasons, we cannot comment on the parts of the article that relate to an employment tribunal case (see statement) except to say (1) that we deplore the inflammatory language of *The Times* journalist, (2) that we are considering appealing against the tribunal's ruling, and (3) that we would like our supporters to view this article in the context of a string of challenges that Barnabas Fund has faced (see timeline below).

The Trustees are particularly distressed by the inflammatory nature of the article given that Barnabas Fund has recently been subject to a serious terrorist threat (something that is not even referred to in *The Times'* article). It is not appreciated that *The Times* is now adding fuel to the fire seemingly without any thought or consideration at all for Patrick, his family or indeed all those who work for the charity in what is an extremely difficult time.

With regard to the other matters in the article, we are legally permitted to say a little more. The Trustees of Barnabas Fund UK therefore take this opportunity to express their shock and dismay that a reputable publication such as *The Times* should seek to re-hash events that were well aired in the press years ago at the time they occurred. This is not "news". The Trustees note there are inaccuracies and are especially concerned about the mention of Patrick Sookhdeo's convictions that are now spent in law. They also strongly resent the claim in the article that Patrick's "key role" at Barnabas Fund was hidden from public view until exposed by the article; this is ridiculous, as even a cursory look at recent issues of our magazine and news emails would reveal. The Trustees stand shoulder to shoulder with Patrick, recognising that we live in a culture that never lets the past go and that since February 2015 he has been an easy target and today's article in *The Times* is just the latest in a long list of "cheap shots" at him since that date.

The Trustees would also like to put on record that the Charity Commission of England and Wales are fully aware of our governance arrangements and have no regulatory concerns. We have had a number of visits from the Charity Commission (most recently in October 2019) and they have praised the high standards of our financial management and our operations.

### **Timeline (for the sake of space, limited to the last eight years but there were also many earlier attacks)**

**December 2012 - July 2013** – an attempted ousting of some longstanding Trustees including Patrick by a group of newer Barnabas Fund trustees, some of whom made a number of unfounded accusations against him. In the end, the newer Trustees backed down and resigned.

**2014** – accusation by a member of Barnabas Fund staff against Patrick of sexual touching (February) and by two other members of Barnabas Fund staff of witness intimidation (June). The latter referred to a short talk that Patrick gave, ironically at the insistence of the Trustees, to a meeting of Barnabas Fund staff and Trustees, unaware that two of the future witnesses in the court case were in the crowded room, despite the fact they had been asked not to attend the meeting. Patrick strongly denied all the accusations and has always maintained his innocence. A detailed internal investigation, including appeals, headed by senior Christian leaders and highly commended by an external HR expert, did not uphold the accusations.

**February 2015** – court case relating to the 2014 accusations: verdicts guilty, though not all unanimous.

**April 2015 – October 2018** – Patrick appealed the above but, like 99% of people who appeal against convictions in the UK courts, he was not allowed to have a re-trial.

**August – November 2015** – a series of poorly researched, hostile articles appeared in *Christian Today*. There was a very strong inference that the former Trustees, who resigned in 2013, supplied the writer with highly selective information. Today's article in *The Times* is reminiscent of the misinterpretations, patent bias and factual errors of those articles.

**November 2015** – Patrick was arrested in dramatic fashion by armed police as he was boarding a plane at Heathrow Airport, following an “all ports” police warning. Although not told the reason at the point of his highly distressing and humiliating public arrest, he was later informed that he had been arrested because of an allegation of historic sexual touching dating back to 1977. He was held overnight by the police and, before they questioned him, was subjected to the kind of techniques used by army interrogators – sleep deprivation, cold and hunger. (He is diabetic.)

**July 2018** – court case relating to the 1977 historic accusation, in which the fact that the police had lost their paperwork was revealed: unanimous verdict not guilty.

**February 2019** – Patrick, having sued the Metropolitan police for their treatment of him in November 2015, was paid compensation by them.

**March 2020** – major cyber-attack on Barnabas Fund’s website which required a new one to be built over a period of weeks. (No data or information was stolen.)

**August 2020** – employment tribunal case referred to in the article.

**September 2020** – a spate of email threats against Barnabas Fund, including a very specific threat by a terrorist organisation against one of our national offices. (Police were informed.) Incidentally, this is not the first time physical threats have been made against Barnabas Fund and/or its staff. Patrick received a death threat in 2009 from Islamists following the publication of criticism about Patrick, a Muslim convert, by a group of evangelical Christians on an Islamist website.

**27 November 2020** – Article in *The Times* about 2020 tribunal and many other matters of past eight years.

### **So please pray:**

- for God’s protection over Barnabas Fund, its offices and staff around the world, in what we believe is ultimately a spiritual battle, that we may be able to continue providing practical aid for persecuted Christians. Thank Him for bringing us through so many earlier challenges and for the loving support expressed by so many people during those difficult times.
- for God’s protection, strength and peace for Patrick and Rosemary Sookhdeo, who have served the Lord together, bravely and sacrificially, for half a century. The attacks of the last eight years have taken a considerable toll on them, and Patrick has not sought to defend himself but has committed the situations to the Lord.
- for wisdom for our trustees and executive staff, as they respond to the current challenge. In particular, please pray for God’s leading as they consider the question of whether or not it is still possible in a modern workplace in the UK for a Christian organisation to follow Christian principles (for example, 1 Corinthians 6 and Matthew 18) in resolving disputes with employees.
- for those who are causing such damage to Barnabas Fund (Matthew 5:44)
- for justice, righteousness, truth and peace.
- for the Lord Jesus to be glorified.

### **This prayer request comes from:**

#### **Trustees of Barnabas Fund, UK**

The Most Hon. The Marquess of Reading, Chairman

Mr Andrew Carey, BA (Hons), Journalist

Rev. Albrecht Hauser, Canon of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg

Miss Caroline Kerslake, MA (Cantab.), MPhil (Cantab.), International Director of Projects for Barnabas Fund

Rev. Ian McNaughton, DipTh, ThM, Preacher and Author

Rev. Paul Mursalin, Senior Church & Ministry Leader, Guyana

Rev. Canon Dr Vinay Samuel, Founder and past Executive Director of Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

**International CEO of Barnabas Fund** - Mr Hendrik Storm, BSc (Hons), MSc (Acc. & Fin. Mngt), CMI (Fellow)

**Barnabas Fund UK CEO** - Dr David Dean, MB BS, BSc (Hons), CertHE (Th)