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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2013

Children of Courage

Raising tomorrow's Church



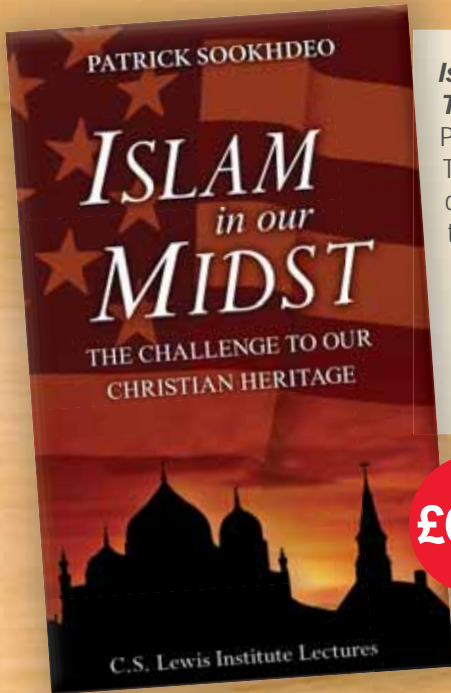
IN THIS ISSUE

Suffering Church Action Week

27 October – 3 November 2013

14 pages of information and resources inside





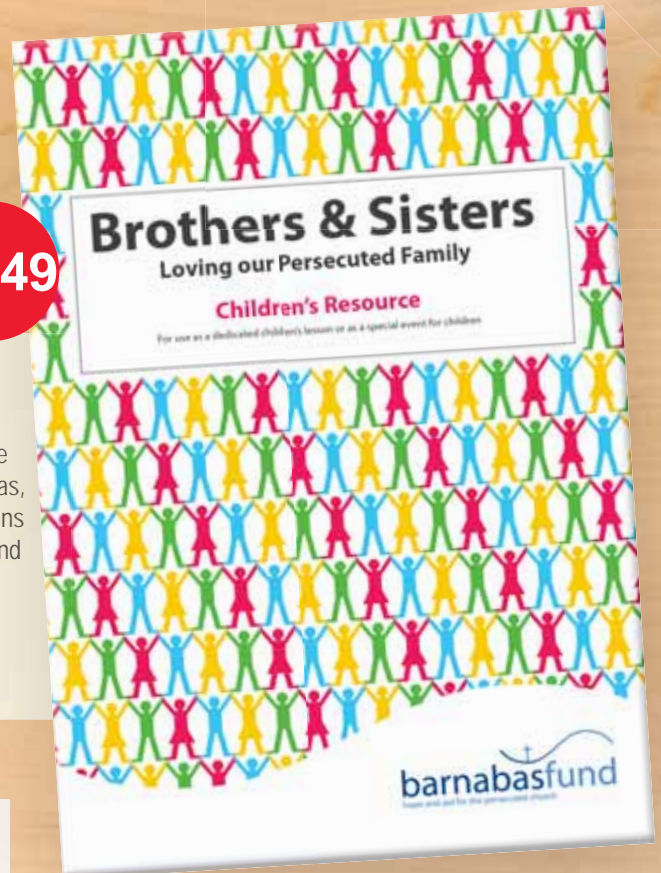
Islam in our Midst
The Challenge to Our Christian Heritage

Patrick Sookhdeo

The challenge of Islam to America's Christian identity and the stark differences between Muslim and Western worldviews are exposed in this penetrating study by Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, a renowned expert on Islam. As Muslims become increasingly assertive and Islamism grows, the call is for Christian and secular leaders to respond.

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£4.49

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Barnabas Fund

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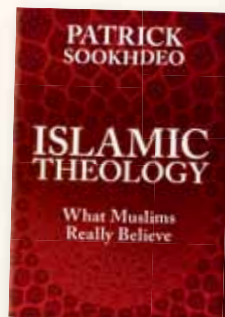
Islamic Theology
What Muslims Really Believe

Patrick Sookhdeo

In this book, Dr Patrick Sookhdeo has provided a comprehensive introduction to Islamic theology. This one-stop guide to what Muslims believe will be invaluable to students, researchers and academics in this fascinating field. But it will also be useful to Christians seeking a working knowledge of Islam to enable them to share Christ effectively with their Muslim neighbours.

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Front cover: A Christian child from India

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“As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him”

(Psalm 18:30)

David is overwhelmed. He sees himself as a drowning man engulfed by the waves. He faces death at Saul’s hands. He is pursued by his enemies. He has lost friends and family. He is alienated from everyone. He is alone.

This picture of being overwhelmed is one that was described to me recently on a visit to Beirut, where I chaired a meeting of Barnabas Fund’s Syrian Church Leaders Advisory Council. The leaders spoke of the conditions facing Christians in Syria, of being overwhelmed, drowned, reaching the very depths. Yet, two and a half years ago Christians in the Middle East, together with secular Muslims and others, had had great hope. The Arab Spring, as it was called, promised much. However, the Islamists (followers of political Islam) very soon took control: in Egypt and Tunisia by the ballot box, but elsewhere through a process of subversion and violence.

In Egypt the Christians found themselves gradually sinking, and many felt overwhelmed to the point of despair. As one Christian leader wrote, it was a revolution hijacked. In Syria, a bitter conflict soon developed, which has now left more than 100,000 dead, with total casualties estimated at 350,000. More than 1.6 million Syrians are refugees in other countries, and more than 4.2 million are displaced within the country. Aleppo, a great and ancient city, is being systematically destroyed, its Christians beleaguered and defenceless. For Syrian Christians at this time there is nothing but despair.

Yet, change can come. On 3 July Egypt’s President Morsi was overthrown; the Islamists lost control in Egypt, and now they are fragmenting and increasingly resorting to violence. The force that was shaping not just Egypt and the Middle East but the world – radical, political Islam – is now facing internal conflict and rejection by many who do not want to live under a religious state that controls every aspect of their lives. And so great changes have been made in Egypt, changes that are themselves producing grave instability. Sadly, not so in Syria.

As David sinks to the bottom of the sea, he cries out to God. The same God who had revealed Himself at Sinai in earthquake, thunder, lightning and smoke (Exodus 19:16-18) and who had swept back the waters to expose the seabed so that His people could be saved from their enemies (Exodus 14:21) now saves David from the waters (v. 16).

God’s way is perfect (v. 30), as David came to understand: perfect in His understanding, perfect in His timings and intervention, perfect in all His doings. The Arab Spring turned into an Islamist summer with the prospect of a Christian autumn, leading potentially to a Christian winter. But God is perfect. He holds His people in His hands. He will watch over and protect them. He will fulfil His purposes for them.



It is not force of circumstance that ultimately determines events. It is not the machinations of humans. It is not the rulers of the world. It is not the devices of their enemies. It is not the destructive powers of Satan. But it is God, whose way is perfect, and who will fulfil His purposes for His people.

In this edition of *Barnabas Aid*, we are including resources for Suffering Church Action Week, which will focus on the next generation, the young. As God took up David as a young boy and trained his hands for battle (v. 34) so we are prioritising today’s Christian children and youth, who will later be entering a battle that will be both grave and severe, whose hands need to be trained for this, their minds equipped and their trust in Him firmly established. For this conflict is essentially a spiritual conflict, which must be fought with spiritual weapons of faith, of prayer, of righteousness.

God’s people often have to undergo terrifying experiences, which fill them with despair at the time, from which there seems to be no escape. Yet when the Lord has brought them out, preventing the waters from overwhelming them or the fire from burning them, they can reflect on God’s flawless and marvellous doings, His perfect way, His perfect Word and His perfect power (v. 30).

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo
International Director

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how barnabas

£3,214 for a year's leadership training for ten students in Burundi (US\$4,919; €3,721)

£143,868 for flood relief in Chad (US\$220,174; €166,580)

£30,680 for food and other basic needs in DRC (US\$46,949; €35,521)

Equipping leaders to strengthen the Church



Some of the leaders Barnabas has supported during their training

Pressure is increasing on Christians in East Africa. Radical Islamist groups are carrying out attacks with growing frequency and ferocity. Islamic mission (*dawa*) is being vigorously promoted, strengthening Muslim communities and working for the conversion of Christians. In this threatening context, leaders who are properly trained for their ministry are vital to the health of the Church throughout the region.

A residential Bible school in Burundi, supported by Barnabas, is training leaders for pastoral work in newly planted churches. A recent grant paid for food, medical expenses, pocket money and transport to and from the school for ten students, as well as staff salaries.

The students have done well in class and have acquired many skills to enable them to minister with confidence. They have now completed their three-year course and have been formally commissioned for ministry.

Project reference
67-976



Surviving the flood waters



A Christian family outside their rebuilt home

"The Lord put in the heart of brothers and sisters we have never seen such a love to help us. May God bless those who contributed." With these words a church leader expressed his gratitude for relief funded by Barnabas for Christian flood victims in Chad.

In the latest phase of their project, our partners delivered corn, mosquito nets and hygiene materials to 925 Christian families displaced by the heavy rains that devastated large parts of southern Chad in 2012. They have also helped to re-roof and rebuild damaged houses and church buildings.

Christians in Chad suffer marginalisation and discrimination. Although the majority of those affected by the floods were non-Muslims, government help was targeted at Muslim flood victims, leaving the Christians in need.

Project reference
00-568 (West Africa Relief Fund)



Basic needs for displaced Christians



Distribution of emergency relief for displaced Christians

"Providing food and meeting the basic needs of people brought joy into their heart and a big smile on their faces." A Barnabas partner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reports on the difference that a grant from Barnabas made to starving and desperate Christians.

DRC has been racked by a long-running civil war, and in late 2012 thousands of Christians were displaced from their homes in the east of the country by a new rebel group called M23. Many fled to the city of Goma after their villages were plundered.

Our partner in Goma provided 652 families with two months' supply of food and hygiene articles and arranged for 200 families to receive medical treatment.

Project reference
92-765



is helping

Thank you for your generous support for our work. Below and on the following pages you can read about the huge difference that it makes to the lives of many Christians who have suffered for the Lord in ways most of us can hardly imagine. And these are just a few of the projects that your prayers and gifts make possible. Please pray as you read these stories.

£3,321 to support 13 Christian students in higher education for a year (US\$5,082; €3,845)

£3,122 to support two evangelists for one year (US\$4,777; €3,614)

£38,381 to support a trauma and counselling centre in India (US\$58,734; €44,438)

Recovering from a terrible ordeal



Pastor Digal and his wife

"My wife and I were unable to understand and deal with the trauma of our children. But now I can see a remarkable difference. My children have started talking to me again."

Pastor Digal, his wife and three children were caught up in the brutal anti-Christian violence by Hindu extremists that scarred the Christian community in Orissa State, India, in 2007-8. Traumatized by the horrifying attacks they had witnessed, the children almost stopped talking altogether. But thanks to the ministry of a Christian-run trauma and learning centre supported by Barnabas, they are at last beginning to recover from their ordeal.

The centre is supporting around 300 Christian children with trauma counselling. It has also encouraged the re-opening of Sunday schools that were closed after the riots.

Project reference
21-967



Nurturing new Christians under pressure



One of the home groups led by Bakir and Aigul

Two evangelists supported by Barnabas are proclaiming Christ in southern Kyrgyzstan, where Christian converts face great pressure from the Muslim community.

Husband-and-wife team Bakir and Aigul, based in Uzgen, lead worship on Sundays and groups during the week. Each Wednesday they hold discipleship classes for new converts, and they also visit local villages to share the Gospel.

When one Muslim couple became Christians, local mullahs went to their place of work and maligned them. Two Muslims also accused the wife of forcing Christian literature on them. Bakir and Aigul meet with the couple to pray for them and strengthen them in their new faith.

Our most recent grant paid half the couple's personal support and ministry expenses for six months.

Project reference
26-1025



Higher education to strengthen the Church



One of the Christian students supported by Barnabas

Most Christian families in Pakistan are too poor to pay for their children's education, especially to tertiary level. But scholarships from Barnabas have supported 13 Christian students through a year of university education in 2012-13.

The students are studying a wide range of subjects, including medicine, dentistry, mathematics and public policy, and at various levels. Some of them have excelled in their studies. The qualifications they hope to achieve can open the way to professional careers that will strengthen their families and the whole Christian community.

The grant from Barnabas contributed to the students' tuition fees and to other miscellaneous expenses. Our project partners also arrange Christian camps and conferences to encourage the faith of the students, who often face hostility from non-Christian students and lecturers.

Project reference
41-694



bringing hope,

BUILDING FOR MISSION – AND FOR REFUGE

Sri Lanka: New buildings help congregations to flourish

“This church is a great blessing to our village. There are many newcomers now to our church. We would like to thank everyone who supported us to build this church. Above all I would like to thank God.”

Barnabas is strengthening the Church in Sri Lanka by providing new places of worship for congregations whose buildings were destroyed in the country’s 26-year civil war.

When Christians in the Northern Province returned to their homes after the war ended in 2009, they had lost their livelihoods and could not afford to rebuild their many ruined church buildings. Worship services were held in the open air or in temporary shelters made of weak materials such as coconut branches or plastic sheeting, which offered little protection against the elements.

Barnabas has provided funds for the construction of 17 new church buildings, and 20 more

are planned in the next stage, at a cost of approximately £5,000 per building. At least 100 are needed. Our latest grant paid for ten buildings in three areas. Construction proceeds in four stages: laying the foundations, building the outer structure, adding the roof and fittings, and painting the building.

The new buildings have transformed the lives of congregations that had previously worshipped under the blazing sun or in little tents, enabling them to thrive again. One woman said, “Many families are coming to know Jesus and worship him... Children are learning good habits and receiving educational assistance through the work of the church. All glory to God!”



A temporary building for worship



One of the new church buildings funded by Barnabas

£50,434 for constructing ten new church buildings in Sri Lanka
(US\$77,192; €58,403)



Project reference:
85-927

Syria: Shelter in the storm of civil war

As the agony of Syria’s Christians continues, Barnabas is helping to construct a refuge shelter for displaced and needy believers.

The violence of the country’s civil war is forcing more families to flee their homes, and the Christian community is also subject to targeted attacks. One expert said recently, “The Christians ... are not simply caught in the middle, as collateral damage. They ... are

the targets of an ethno-religious cleansing by Islamist militants and courts.”

Many of the displaced choose to flee to Wadi al-Nasara (“Valley of Christians”), which is a mainly Christian area. But it is already badly overcrowded, and many families are struggling to find accommodation to rent or afford the high payments. And the flow of new arrivals is not expected to stop any time soon.

£40,563 towards building a refuge shelter in Syria
(US\$60,000; €45,396)



Project reference 00-1032 (Middle East Fund to help Christians in Syria)

In one village, a half-finished church hall, which was begun before the current conflict, is being finished to provide accommodation for 50 displaced Christians. It has various rooms that can be used as living quarters, as well as bathrooms and a large kitchen. A grant from Barnabas is paying for building work.

Recent grants from Barnabas have also paid for the construction or rebuilding of church buildings in Pakistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan and for the purchase of a building in Georgia.

transforming lives

Children on the front line in Burma



Chaa Paw, a teacher who escaped the violence with more than 100 of her pupils

Barnabas is bringing relief to Christian children in Burma (Myanmar) living in the midst of a brutal military campaign against their people.

The Kachin are a mainly (98%) Christian ethnic group who are being subjected to ruthless religious and ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Burmese army. They have suffered indiscriminate bombing, gas attacks and cruel abuse. Tens of thousands have been displaced from their homes and villages and now live in miserable conditions in camps. Even here they are not safe from attack. At least 66 church buildings have been burned down and around 200 villages destroyed. A provisional peace agreement was signed on 30 May, but at least two Kachin civilians have been killed by the army since then.

Kachin children are especially vulnerable in this unstable and threatening context. Many of them have lost one or both parents in the violence or have had to escape into the jungle without any food or extra clothes. Chaa Paw, a teacher now in one of the camps, related to our project partners the story of her flight from her home village as gunshots and artillery approached. She took five of her pupils initially, but by the time she reached comparative safety further from the war zone she had more than 100 with her.

Border Post 6 is a displaced people's camp in a remote area, and the Burmese military is active nearby. It is also home to around 2,000 Kachin children. A recent grant from Barnabas paid for the reconstruction of the damaged school building in the camp. It also funded a month's

supply of food for 224 families there and 100 blankets, one per household.

Our funds have supplied 2,000 raincoats and 1,000 pairs of shoes for displaced Kachin children in other camps and a month's food for 9,000 of them. A large new dormitory has been provided, and also tables, cups and beds for children. Our partners plan to use the balance of the grant for the provision of school materials for 2,000 children. An earlier grant provided Bibles in two Kachin dialects for people living in the camps.

The Kachin maintain their hope and joy in the Lord in the midst of their sufferings. Chaa Paw says, "We are thankful to God that we are still alive and living in this refugee camp. We have many things to be grateful for. God is good to us."

£25,227 for emergency relief for Kachin Christians in Burma
(US\$38,607; €29,212)



Project reference:
75-763



Kachin children in a displaced people's camp

Children of Courage

Raising tomorrow's Church



What we're doing for Suffering Church Action Week:



childrenofcourage.org



**Suffering Church
Action Week**


barnabasfund
hope and aid for the persecuted church



Children of Courage

Suffering Church Action Week 2013

Christian children face hostility and discrimination in many places where Christians are a persecuted minority. They are easy targets for violence and injustice. Even in the West they are under pressure, as their faith is publicly undermined and marginalised. As the next generation of the Church, they urgently need our prayers and support.



Raising tomorrow's Church

Barnabas Fund is urging our supporters to remember Christian children living in contexts of harassment and persecution, as the main focus of a special week dedicated to the suffering Church. Suffering Church Action Week will run from 27 October to 3 November, and we are providing free resources to enable churches and individuals to pray and take action on behalf of tomorrow's Church.* The week will include a worldwide Day of Prayer on Friday 1 November.

The following pages provide various perspectives on the persecution of Christian children and how you can join with us in helping them. A free Suffering Church Action Week Inspiration Pack is also available to order, including materials for a church service and children's ministry, a prayer guide for the Day of Prayer and further information about how to support *Children of Courage*. Please turn to pages 14-15 for more details.

*If preferred, the resources can be used at another time of year more suitable to your church's calendar.

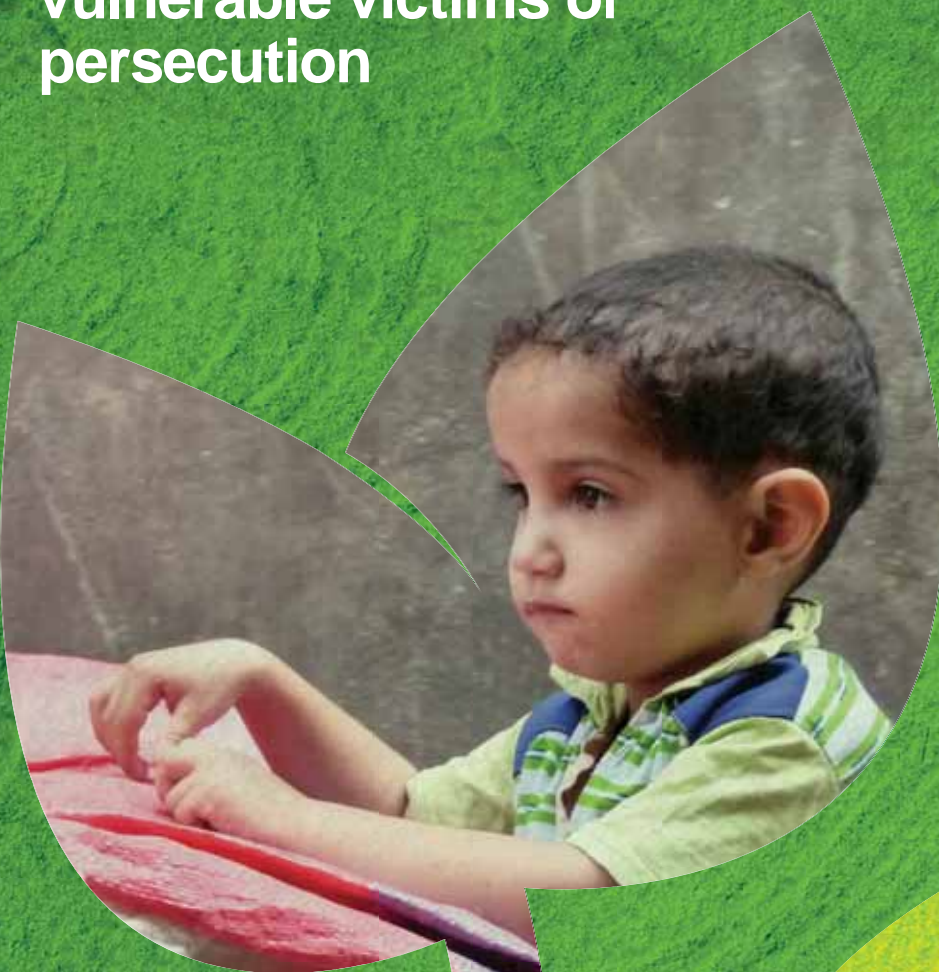


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Let the little children come

Supporting the most vulnerable victims of persecution



The Bible speaks of children as gifts to be highly valued and cherished. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14). But in places where Christians are persecuted, many parents cannot give their children the life they would want for them. In fact, children are amongst those who suffer most acutely from persecution.

Christian children may grow up in desperate poverty and need because of discrimination. And because they are unable to defend themselves or escape, they are also easy targets for violence: persecuted Christian children may be attacked, sexually assaulted or even murdered. Some face discrimination in the classroom or are unable to go to school at all, which can have devastating consequences for their future. They may come under intense pressure at school to convert to the majority religion, or may be failed in their exams just because they are Christians. Christian girls are also at risk in some countries of being abducted by Muslims and forced to convert to Islam and to marry their captors.

Christian children are the future of the Church, the next generation of God's people. It is vital that we care for them and support them both practically and spiritually so that their faith may not fail under pressure and persecution. This article describes the issues faced by persecuted Christian children, explains how Barnabas Fund is helping to relieve their suffering, and details how you can get involved.

Deprived of a childhood

In Pakistan, many Christian families are trapped in grinding poverty. Discrimination bars the majority of believers from all but the most poorly paid jobs, and parents often have to choose between feeding their sons and daughters and sending them to school. Many Christians are also crippled by debt owed to their employers, which was often incurred generations previously. These brothers and sisters are effectively indentured labourers, because their employers ensure that their debt is never paid off by keeping their wages very low. Also, there is often no paperwork to prove the true amount of the debt, and even if there is, few Pakistani Christians would be able to read it. These pressures mean that many parents have no choice but to send their children to work to help feed the family.

Christian children in Egypt are also born into discrimination. Most of the country's wealthier Christians have left the country in the last few decades, and those who remain largely live in

extreme poverty, which causes their children to grow up in desperate conditions and without proper nourishment.



Barnabas Fund is helping needy Christian families in numerous countries with food parcels, so that parents no longer have to worry about where their next meal is coming from. Their children can now eat well every day, and the money that would have been spent on food can instead be used to improve the family's quality of life in other ways, for example, by paying school fees.

Victims of violence

"I cannot fathom why they targeted the little ones." With these words, the mother of a nine-year-old boy who died in an attack on a Sunday school class in Kenya expressed her grief at the senseless crime that killed her son. John Ian Maina was killed in September 2012 when a grenade was thrown at the room where he and his friends were waiting for their class to begin. Several other children were injured in the attack, which was thought to have been carried out by sympathisers of the Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab.

Tragically, such incidents are seen in many persecuted Christian communities. For example, children were beaten when a gang of thugs attacked and destroyed a Christian orphanage in Vietnam. The attackers were thought to have been sent by the authorities, who are hostile to Christians. Christian young people may also suffer when whole communities are attacked.



Barnabas helps Christian children and their families who have been the victims of violence by providing for their practical needs if they have had to flee, helping with medical expenses and funding trauma counselling. For example, Barnabas-funded trauma counselling in Orissa, India, is helping to heal the mental wounds inflicted on Christian children in multiple outbreaks of violence by Hindu extremists.

Persecuted at school

In some places, children may be denied places at government schools because of their faith. Adrash Nayak, a Christian boy whose family was displaced by the violence in Orissa in 2008, has been repeatedly denied a school place because he is a believer. And at times of crisis, children of

Christian families may miss out on education even when school places are available to them. For example, Christian children are suffering greatly in the violent civil conflict in Syria, in which believers are being particularly targeted by rebel forces. Some Christian mothers keep their children at home because it is too dangerous for them to make the daily journey to school. And for those who have fled to nearby Lebanon, leaving homes and jobs behind, paying for school fees may be unthinkable once their savings have run out.

Even when Christian children are able to go to school, they may be in a tiny minority in the classroom, and this puts them at great risk. They may experience intense pressure to convert to the majority religion. For example, children from predominantly Christian ethnic minorities in Burma (Myanmar) are deliberately recruited to Border Areas National Races Youth Development Training Schools, where they are prevented from practising their faith and coerced into converting to Buddhism.



Barnabas Fund is funding school places for children from the Chin minority at regular government schools, so that they will not have to endure such pressure to convert.

Christian children in Muslim-majority contexts may be offered free education in Islamic schools, where they are exposed to a heavily Islamic environment. This is particularly a problem for tribal Christians in Sarawak, the only Christian-majority state in Malaysia, where Islamic schools have been set up for children aged 3 to 6 that are not only free but that even pay their students to attend. Christian parents are seeing their children come home from these schools and perform Islamic prayers or ask to be bought Muslim *hijabs*.

Christian students are also at risk of violence in the classroom from fellow students and even teachers. Ayman Nabil Labib, a Christian schoolboy in Egypt, was beaten to death by Muslim classmates in October 2011 when he refused to conceal his cross. His teacher was also involved in the attack.

Schoolchildren may also be penalised for their faith in other ways. In September 2011 Faryal Bhatti, a year-eight (12-13 year-old) Pakistani Christian girl, was expelled from school, and her family evicted from their home, after she innocently misspelled a word relating to Muhammad in an exam. Christians may also be discriminated against in the awarding of marks in



Some Christian children in Pakistan have to work as brick-makers to help support their families

exams, an injustice that can have a devastating effect on their future prospects. A Christian student from Pakistan missed out on a place at a government-run medical school in 2012, despite achieving top grades, because he was denied the extra 20 marks given to Muslim students who had memorised the Quran. Haroon Arif's three certificates in Bible education were not counted towards his exam results. Barnabas Fund was able to support him financially following this setback in his career.



Barnabas Fund's School-Place Sponsorship programme transforms the lives of needy Christian children by enabling them to attend school in safe, loving Christian settings. The programme currently supports 7,423 Christian children in ten countries.



Students at a Barnabas-funded Christian school in Sudan pray before lessons begin

Under intense pressure

Targeting the next generation is a tactic often used by those who seek to harm Christian communities, because it puts the future of the Church at risk. For example, according to reports in September 2012, children from impoverished Christian families in Bangladesh were being removed from their parents, who believed they were sending their children to affordable boarding schools, under false pretences and sold to Islamic schools, where they suffered physical abuse if they refused to participate in prayers or lessons.

And being underage and vulnerable does not protect children in Pakistan and Egypt from false accusations of blasphemy. Rimsha Masih, a 14-year-old Christian girl who doctors have said has a lower mental age, was accused of burning pages of a booklet used to learn the basics of the Quran, a crime carrying a sentence of life imprisonment. Rimsha was beaten and arrested in August 2012 and was facing trial when it emerged that she had been framed by the imam of the local mosque, who wanted to "get rid of Christians" from the area.

Another Christian teenager in Pakistan, Ryan Stanten (16), is still facing trial for alleged blasphemy after he was accused of sending a text message containing material deemed offensive to Muhammad. And in Egypt in 2012, two Christian boys aged nine and ten were found guilty of blasphemy. They were accused by a local imam, who said they had torn up pages of the Quran and urinated on them. The boys, who are illiterate and therefore could not have known the content of the papers they found amongst rubbish on the street, were not penalised by the court. However, having been convicted of blasphemy, they are now at risk of suffering societal discrimination or attack.

Not only do Christian children come under pressure from the majority religion in some countries; in others they are legally restricted from taking part in Christian activities. In Tajikistan, the law prohibits children under the age of 18 from taking part in public worship. The Uzbek authorities also attempt to discourage parents from bringing their children to church, and some children are questioned by school officials about their faith and church attendance. Religious groups in Uzbekistan have also been warned of severe consequences if they conduct summer camps for children. And in Kazakhstan, the law requires churches to take steps to prevent anyone under the age of 18 from attending church if their parent or guardian objects, and bans Christian activities at children's holiday camps.



We must respond to these pressures by helping Christian children to grow up strong in their faith. Barnabas Fund provides Urdu children's Bibles in Pakistan, Christian children's magazines in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria and the Middle East, and Christian children's clubs in Egypt. These enable children to put on the full armour of God (Ephesians 6:11) so that they can withstand pressure from the authorities or from the majority religion.

Assaulted and forced into marriage

In Pakistan and Egypt, Christian girls face a particularly harrowing prospect. It is disturbingly common for Muslim men to kidnap and sexually assault young Christian girls and then force them

to convert to Islam and to marry against their will. It is estimated that around 700 cases of this abuse occur every year in Pakistan. In Egypt, over 500 cases of the abduction of Christian girls have been documented since the revolution of January 2011.

Amber, a twelve-year-old Pakistani Christian girl, endured an eight-month ordeal in which she was kidnapped, raped and tricked into marrying her captor. Her tormentors tried, unsuccessfully, to force her to convert to Islam.

Even when Amber escaped in September 2011, the authorities refused to file a case against her abusers, and she and her family were consequently forced to go into hiding. The abuse meted out to Amber is considered by some Muslims in Pakistan to be a legitimate method of spreading Islam.



Barnabas Fund supports refugees for Christian women and girls who are at risk of forced marriage and forced conversion. We also help the victims of such abuse in Pakistan by supporting Christian lawyers who fight for justice for them. Christian girls are also at risk in non-Islamic contexts. Barnabas supports the Cana Girls' Refuge Home in Kenya, which provides a safe home and a Christian education for Christian girls who are at risk of abuse associated with traditional African religions and of being married against their will to much older non-Christian men.

This children's ministry in Egypt is a great support for Christian children



How
you can
help

Alone and vulnerable

Persecuted Christian children are perhaps most vulnerable when they lose their parents, or become separated from them, and have to fend for themselves. Nima (17) and Helma (12), an Iranian Christian brother and sister, found themselves in these terrifying circumstances when their parents were arrested and imprisoned for their Christian activities in February 2012.

Because the children were rejected by their maternal relations when their family converted to Christianity, and their father's family does not live nearby, Nima had to care for his younger sister. He worked in a shoe shop to support them both but had to send half of his wages to cover his parents' prison expenses. Nima suffered an epileptic fit during his parents' trial, and the judge offered to release his mother so she could care for him, on the condition that she renounce her faith. She refused to give in, but the judge freed her anyway when a bail payment of around US\$200,000 was made. She and Nima, who was initially also arrested, were later given two-year suspended jail sentences. Nima's father remains in prison.

Thousands of orphans in Burma, whose parents were killed in a devastating cyclone in 2008, are now forced to engage in a deadly game of hide and seek with the Burmese army

Thousands of orphans in Burma, whose parents were killed in a devastating cyclone in 2008, are now forced to engage in a deadly game of hide and seek with the Burmese army. Because the children are from the predominantly Christian Karen tribe, the army attacks their villages and forces the inhabitants to flee into the jungle.

As well as being separated from their parents as a consequence of persecution or natural disaster, children of Christian families may be deliberately taken from them. The authorities, or armed Islamist groups, sometimes use children as leverage in campaigns against their parents.

In 2011, a child was taken hostage by security forces in Iran in order to put pressure on the Christian adoptive parents. The couple had adopted the child after years of waiting, and the authorities demanded they

make a statement against believers in prison if they wanted to see their child again. In November of the same year, two children in Nigeria were kidnapped and killed by Islamist group Boko Haram in order to punish their father, a Christian convert from Islam, for being "disloyal to Islam". And in Pakistan, Christian girls may be kidnapped and raped by Muslims in order to punish other members of their family.



When children are forced to fend for themselves, we must do everything we can do meet their needs. For example, Barnabas funds Christian-run orphanages in Burma, where Karen orphans, many of whom have witnessed horrific brutality, can live in safety and receive a Christian education. Barnabas Fund is also providing for the basic needs and education of four orphaned siblings in Ethiopia whose parents were killed when Muslims attacked a Christian gathering. The children were left so impoverished that without help from Barnabas they could not even afford to bury their parents.



Funds from Barnabas help to care for Christian orphans from the Karen minority in Burma (Myanmar)



Please pray

Cry out to the Lord for persecuted Christian children around the world. Ask that all their material, educational and spiritual needs will be met, and that they will know the Lord's peace and joy despite the many challenges they face. Ask the Lord to strengthen them in their faith so that they will grow up to be strong men and women of God.



Reach out

You have read throughout this article about how Barnabas Fund steps in to help Christian children on the frontline of persecution. None of this work would be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Could you consider giving a gift to our Children's Fund (00-665) to help us bring hope to needy and vulnerable Christian children? Please use the form on page 27 to do so. You could also sponsor a Christian child. Please see the leaflet included with this magazine to find out more about child sponsorship.



Get involved

More information on how to get involved in our Suffering Church Action Week on behalf of persecuted Christian children can be found on page 16.

Suffering Church Action Week | Resources

Want to get involved with Suffering Church Action Week but unsure where to begin? Order our free *Children of Courage* Inspiration Pack to get you started.

The pack contains everything you will need to set up the different events suggested on page 16, including a Suffering Church Sunday service and Day of Prayer events.

Inspiration Pack includes:

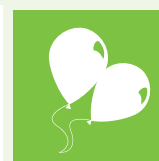
(one of each item unless otherwise stated)



An A3 version of the poster (see p. 8) that you could use to advertise your Suffering Church Action Week events



An additional copy of this issue of *Barnabas Aid* magazine, including a *Being Brave for Jesus* children's magazine*



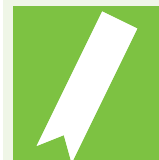
Two *Children of Courage* balloons



A *Children of Courage* DVD, which includes a PowerPoint presentation and video for use in a Suffering Church Sunday church service



A response envelope for gift aid donations



A prayer bookmark to help you pray for the suffering Church



A Day of Prayer resource, including a *Praying for the Persecuted Church 2013* booklet and a *Children of Courage* prayer guide*



A money box that could be used when taking up a collection



A sponsorship form for you to use when raising funds for persecuted children*



A children's resource, including a lesson plan for a children's event or Sunday school, and a Friends and Heroes DVD



A sheet of 35 *Children of Courage* stickers

***These items can also be downloaded from our website at www.childrenofcourage.org or printed out from the DVD.**

The following items are also available to order:

Children of Courage balloons - £1.50 for a pack of ten
Lapel pin badge - £1 each
Barnabas Fundraising T-shirts - £9 each (including postage)
in adult sizes S, M, L, XL, XXL

All additional items can be ordered using the form (right) or the form included in the Inspiration Pack. You can also order by visiting www.childrenofcourage.org or contacting your nearest Barnabas Fund office.



Items shown in graphic form only; actual items may differ

+ Need more?

Additional quantities of the following items can be ordered for free:

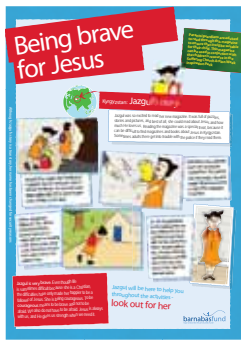
A3 poster, Day of Prayer resource, money box, response envelope, sticker sheet

For example, you may wish to place a gift aid response envelope on each seat at your Suffering Church Sunday service, so that Barnabas Fund can claim back an extra 25p from the government for every £1 given (only for tax-payers in the UK). You can order as many of these envelopes as you need for free. Alternatively, you could order several of the money boxes to be placed around a room, with sticker sheets to go with them.

Lyrics to "God, who o'er the trials of ages"



**Being Brave for Jesus
children's magazine**



Included with this magazine is a copy of *Being Brave for Jesus*, a fun-packed magazine just for children. Children of Christian families in the West need to stand up for their faith as it is increasingly undermined in public. To encourage the children in your family

and church to be brave for Jesus, we have produced a resource to inspire them. The magazine includes a stirring story of a persecuted child who is standing firm in her faith, a retelling of the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (from Daniel 3), engaging puzzles and craft activities.

Being brave for Jesus is primarily aimed at ages 7-10, but can be enjoyed by children who are older or younger. All the material is very child-friendly, but we suggest that you look through it yourself initially to ensure that it is suitable for your own child.

The magazine could be used in conjunction with the children's resource in the Inspiration Pack, as the two items work well in tandem.

God, who o'er the trials of ages,
Shows His grace and steadfast love;
Circles us with His protection
Through His power from heaven above:
Hear us as we bring our praises
For the blessings You have wrought
In the name of our Lord Jesus
We give thanks for all You've taught.

Father, who from first creation
Gave the seed and sowed the earth;
Grants to us the task of watering
All new enterprise and birth:
Hear us as we raise our voices.
Join the international song,
For the kingdom growth You've given
In the face of man's deep wrong.

Jesus, who as suffering Saviour,
Bled for us upon a tree;
Ris'n to walk with us in weakness,
Re-adjusting history.
We pray now for Christians suffering
Persecution, loss and pain.
May our ventures to support them
Through Your love, be not in vain.

Holy Spirit, our protection,
Mighty God whose love forgives;
Hear us for the suffering children
Where attack and terror lives.
Those who face brute isolation
Those with parents from them torn
Give to them to struggle bravely
To withstand the hurt and scorn.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
God, who o'er the tests of time
Has remained our strong Redeemer
Led, inspired, as mounts we climb,
Help us press towards our calling,
To the goal when sufferings cease.
Christ returns and raised to glory
At Your throne we know Your peace.

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May be sung to the tunes:

- **Abbott's Leigh** by Cyril V Taylor, Hope Publishing Co. USA
- **Austria** by Franz Joseph Haydn
- **Ebenezer** by T. J. Williams
- **Hyfrydol** by R. H Prichard
- **What a friend** by C. C. Converse
- or any tune with the metre 8.7.8.7.D



**Suggested songs for your
Suffering Church Sunday service**

"Faithful one, so unchanging" (Brian Doerkson, *Songs of Fellowship* 89, *Mission Praise* 825)

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!"
(George Duffield, *Songs of Fellowship* 513)

"You never let go"
(Matt Redman, *Songs of Fellowship* 1753)

"Be bold, be strong"
(Morris Chapman, *Mission Praise* 542, *Songs of Fellowship* 37)

"O Church, arise, and put your armour on"
(Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, *Songs of Fellowship* 1981)

"A safe stronghold our God is still"
(Martin Luther, *Songs of Fellowship* 25, *Mission Praise* 2)



Suffering Church Action Week Offering

Christian children need both material and spiritual support so that they can be courageous in the face of persecution. Barnabas Fund's children's projects not only provide for the practical needs of persecuted Christian children but also encourage them so that they may grow up firm in their faith. Please see the bold sections on pages 10-13 for further information on how Barnabas is helping them.

Please consider giving your Suffering Church Sunday offering to our Children's Fund (00-665) to help Barnabas Fund to continue supporting children of courage. Alternatively, you could give your offering to our General Fund, and it will be used to help persecuted Christians wherever the need is greatest. Children often benefit greatly wherever a Christian community receives our help, even if it is not aimed at them specifically.

Please send me a **Children of Courage Inspiration Pack**

Additionally, please also send me the following resource(s) (*state quantity of each*):

.....
.....
.....
.....

(For pin badges, balloons and T-shirts, please enclose a cheque for the full amount payable to "Barnabas Books". If you wish to pay by another method, please contact your nearest national Barnabas office to order.)

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....

Email address

Phone

Name of church/group

.....

.....

Please add my Suffering Church Action Week event to the online map

Location

.....

Type of event: (i.e. church service,

prayer meeting, other)

.....

Time:

Open to public: Yes No

Action Plan

Suffering Church Action Week 2013* offers many excellent opportunities to highlight the plight of persecuted Christian children and to focus on the next generation of courageous Christians.

Below you will find some ideas for events and activities that can be organised during the week. Please share your events by posting them on our online map at www.childrenofcourage.org.

A free **Suffering Church Action Week Inspiration Pack** is also available to order (see pages 14-15). Where particular resources are especially suitable for any of the suggested events, these are highlighted.

Suffering Church Sunday Service

Dedicate a special service on 27 October or 3 November (or any other Sunday that fits in with the church calendar) to remember those who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ, and especially their children. Available resources for this service include a **sermon outline** on children in the New Testament (see pages 18-19), **gift envelopes** for each seat, a printable **poster**, a **DVD**, a **collection box**, **balloons**, **stickers** and **pin badges**.



Children's Events

Focus your weekly children's ministry on the suffering Church, or use the suggested programme for a special event such as an alternative to Halloween. A special free **children's resource** is available that can be adapted to all age groups, with stories, activities and a DVD to teach children about the suffering and persecution that Christian children in other parts of the world endure. The lessons also encourage the children to be courageous and to stand firm for Christ. Included with this magazine is an **insert** especially for children with fun activities and stories. This can be photocopied for use in children's events.



Prayer

Organise a prayer meeting to lift up to the Lord the numerous Christians who are persecuted for their faith. On Friday 1 November Barnabas is organising an international Day of Prayer for persecuted Christians (see pages 20-21). We are encouraging our supporters and partners all over the world to set aside time to pray for their suffering brothers and sisters during the day, especially remembering Christian children: tomorrow's Church. A free **prayer resource** (comprising two prayer booklets) is available to guide your intercessions. Can you help Christian children by organising a special prayer event for that day (or another day)?



Bible Studies

Devote your Bible study or home group meeting to the Suffering Church Action Week theme. A suitable **Bible study** about children in the New Testament is available in this magazine (see page 17). Identify some concrete action that you can take, individually or as a group, to support persecuted Christian children in their distress. Take time to pray for them, that they will stand for Christ in the difficult circumstances that they face.



Fundraising

Our supporters frequently amaze us by the bold and imaginative ways they find to raise money to meet the needs of the suffering Church. Could you organise a fundraising event for Suffering Church Action Week on behalf of persecuted Christian children? **Sponsorship forms**, **Children of Courage balloons**, **Barnabas Fund T-shirts** and supporter **stickers** are available for your use.



Coffee Mornings

Hold a coffee morning at your church or in a private home, and put **magazines**, **gift envelopes** or a **money box**, and supporter **stickers** on the tables. Share the Suffering Church Action Week theme: *Children of Courage – Raising Tomorrow's Church*; you can find out more about this from the article on pages 10-13 of this magazine. Invite prayer for Christian children in contexts of pressure and persecution.



Share your event at childrenofcourage.org

“The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”

This study looks at some of the same passages discussed in the sermon outline (pp. 18-19). It can be used before or after hearing the sermon. If it is used without the sermon, it may be helpful for the group leader to read through the outline beforehand. The section at the end entitled “Digging deeper” is intended for those who would like to explore the theme in more depth.

Introduction

1. How much do you know about the persecution of Christian children? (The group leader may like to share some examples from the article on pages 10-13 of this magazine.) How do you react to the ill-treatment of children who bear Christ's Name?
2. Before turning to the Bible, share your initial thoughts about how God regards children and how He might call us to respond to their needs.

The inclusion of children

Read *Matthew 14:13-21* and *21:14-16*.

3. Consider the place of children in these stories and the words of Jesus in 21:16. What do these tell us about how children can experience God's kingdom?
4. What steps can we take to share our privileges as God's people with the Christian children whom we know? Are there any ways we can share them with persecuted children?

The suffering of children

Read *Matthew 2:13-18* and *Luke 23:27-31* (also *21:23*).

5. What kinds of suffering are ascribed to children in these passages? How are these events interpreted by Jesus and the Gospel writers?

6. In Matthew's story, how does the infant Jesus suffer? Can you see any parallels between His experience and the persecution of Christian children today?

7. In what ways today can Christian children be caught up in the sufferings of God's people? Why may they be targeted as well as their parents and churches?

The value of children

Read *Matthew 18:1-5* and *19:13-15*.

8. In what way does Jesus regard children as a model for Christian discipleship? What does this say about the value He assigns to them?
9. How does Jesus call us to relate to children? How does our response to them bear upon our response to Him?

The raising of children

Read *Colossians 3:21*, *Ephesians 6:4* and *1 Timothy 3:4, 12*.

10. How do these verses instruct Christian parents to bring up their children? What do you think is the goal of such an upbringing?
11. How can we support Christian parents in

raising children “in the training and instruction of the Lord”? What special obstacles to doing this might parents face in contexts of anti-Christian persecution?

Conclusion

12. Try to sum up what you have learned from this study. How will your understanding of and approach to Christian children change as a result?

13. Identify one concrete action that you can take, individually or as a group, to support persecuted Christian children in their distress.

Digging deeper

14. Acts 2:39 indicates that God's salvation in Christ is meant for future generations. In what ways can we most effectively share our Christian faith and lifestyle with children today?

15. How do you respond to the idea of children being caught up in the sufferings of God's people? What hope do you think we can offer them in these circumstances?

16. How can we put into practice Jesus' encouragement to take the lowly position of a child (*Matthew 18:4*)?

“Whoever welcomes one such child...”

Supporting Christian children

The following sermon outline can be used at a Suffering Church Action Week service or meeting. It can be read out as it stands, though you may want to add some illustrations of your own or take some from the Spotlight article on pages 10-13. Alternatively it can be used as a framework for your own ideas and applications.

Amila was the only Christian in his class at school in Sri Lanka. All the other children were Buddhists. When a monk visited the school to teach the class about Buddhism, he made Amila sit at the front and told him to recite the names of the Buddha's parents. When Amila replied that he was a Christian, the monk beat him severely, leaving him bleeding from the ear. He received no medical care and was warned not to report the assault.

Christian children stand on the front line of persecution. Wherever the Church suffers discrimination, harassment or violence because of its faith, the children of believers may well be among the worst affected. Whether in grinding poverty or harsh treatment at school, in unjust deprivations or brutal assaults, in pressure to convert or kidnap and forced marriage, they know better than most what it means to suffer for bearing Christ's Name.

This year Barnabas Fund is using its Suffering Church Action Week to focus prayer and attention on the needs of persecuted Christian children. This initiative is based on the New Testament's (NT's) strong affirmation of children and its call to Christians to welcome and care for them. This teaching impels us to do what we can to help children who are enduring hardship because of their parents' faith. It also inspires and guides the many projects that Barnabas supports to bring them aid and hope in their distress.

There is no one passage that sums up the Biblical teaching on children, so we will look instead at various short sections of the NT that bear upon this theme.

The inclusion of children

In the Gospels we find children sharing in the blessings of the good news of God's coming kingdom. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14:13-21) and the four thousand (Matthew 15:32-39) represents the fulfilment of God's promise to provide for human need and well-being through the mission of His anointed king. Thus it is also a foretaste of the messianic banquet in the age to come, when this promise will be perfectly realised. On each occasion Matthew explicitly mentions children among those who shared in the meal (Matthew 14:21; 15:38).

Later in Matthew's Gospel God is said to ordain praise from children. As Jesus heals blind and lame people in the temple, children there cry out to acclaim Him as the Son of David. He responds to the indignation of the chief priests and scribes by quoting Psalm 8: "From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise" (Matthew 21:14-16).

Then as Peter proclaims the Gospel to the crowd in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, he declares, "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39). "Children" here may refer to generations to come rather than to young people, but even then it indicates that God's salvation in Christ is meant for future generations as well as one's own.

These passages suggest that children who are too young to confess Jesus as Lord for themselves can still share in some of the privileges enjoyed by His people, and that they are called to receive God's salvation when they are of age. So when Christian children are deprived of their basic needs and welfare, or when they are denied the opportunity to worship, or when their access to Christian teaching is restricted, we have a responsibility to take whatever steps we can to provide these things for them.

The suffering of children

Many Christian children in Burma have witnessed horrific brutality from the Burmese army. Their villages have been ravaged, their parents killed, and they themselves conscripted as child soldiers or forced to flee into the jungle. Because their parents and communities believe in the Lord Jesus, the children are caught up in their sufferings.

The NT does not speak explicitly of Christian children being persecuted for their parents' faith. But it does endorse an Old Testament tradition in which children are seen as being caught up in the sufferings of the people of God.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is followed soon afterwards by the slaying of the young children in the city by Herod (Matthew 2:16-18). Matthew presents this horrific murder as the fulfilment of Jeremiah 31:15: "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are

no more." This verse depicts the anguish and death of God's people Israel under the cruel oppression of their enemies; the infants of Bethlehem share in this grievous suffering.

The infant Jesus also has to be taken to Egypt in order to preserve His life (Matthew 2:13-15) and so He experiences the trauma of forced migration and exile in a foreign land at an early age. Yet through His rescue the purpose of God is fulfilled, as He grows up to become the Saviour of His people (Matthew 1:21).

In Luke's Gospel, when Jesus is on His way to be crucified, He is followed by women who weep and mourn for Him. He tells them to weep not for Him but for their children, in light of the terrible distress that is coming upon Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-31). Luke sees these words as having been fulfilled in the sack of the city in AD70, which causes grave distress to (among others) nursing mothers (Luke 21:23). Again we see the next generation, including children, involved in the pain and repression of Israel.

So it should cause us no surprise when Christian children are also caught up in the sufferings of Christ's people, when they are forced from their homes by military action or driven abroad (as Jesus was) by violent persecution, or even when they are brutally and unjustly killed. They bear Christ's Name by extension through their parents and Christian communities, and so they are targets along with their elders for the hatred (Matthew 24:9) that this Name attracts.

But since we can anticipate the suffering of Christian children, we should also stand ready to relieve it, whenever and however we can. And just as the preservation of the infant Jesus enabled Him to accomplish God's saving purpose in adult life, so today's Christian children should be kept safe so that they can later play their own part in fulfilling His plan.

The value of children

In Matthew's Gospel, faced with a question from His disciples of who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus stands a little child in the midst of them and says, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:1-5).

In 1st-century Jewish culture, children tended to be undervalued. But in these verses Jesus makes the acceptance of a lowly status, like that of a child, as the condition of entry and measure of greatness for the kingdom of heaven. He also says that in receiving a lowly child on His account, we also receive Him. By making children His model for discipleship, Jesus strongly affirms their worth.

This message is reinforced by another passage, in which children are brought to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them (Matthew 19:13-15). The disciples, seemingly regarding them as too insignificant for His notice,

rebuke those who bring them. But Jesus responds, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these," and He lays His hands on them. Again He uses children, in their lowliness, as the example of those who receive the kingdom; He welcomes them as such with a blessing and encourages His disciples to do the same.

Children may be insignificant by worldly standards, but among God's people they should never be despised. The value placed upon them by Jesus should make us acutely sensitive to their sufferings and drive us to their aid when they endure persecution for His Name. He accepts the welcome and blessing we bring them as something given to Him.

The raising of children

Colossians 3:21 tells fathers in the church not to embitter their children, or the children will become discouraged. A different version of this instruction appears in Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Relationships between parents and children that are guided by the Spirit's wisdom (see Ephesians 5:15-18) involve the parents caring for the children, not alienating or frustrating them, but teaching them how to know and serve Christ, so that they may later become His disciples.

Similar ideas are found in the qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy and Titus. An overseer must manage his family well and see that his children obey him (1 Timothy 3:4), and deacons likewise must manage their children and households well (1 Timothy 3:12). The children of elders must believe and not be "open to the charge of being wild and disobedient" (Titus 1:6). These verses underline the importance of Christian parents raising their children in their own faith and lifestyle, so that the children can embrace these for themselves when they become adults.

Where pressure and persecution threaten the well-being and security of Christian communities, parents may struggle – despite their best endeavours – to fulfil these responsibilities to their children. In such circumstances they need the support of their wider Christian family, in the local church and beyond, to provide the instruction and encouragement that the children need to prepare them for Christian discipleship.

Conclusion

Children are the youngest victims of anti-Christian persecution and are among the most vulnerable. These various Biblical perspectives on the value and proper treatment of children warn us strongly against indifference to the sufferings that they endure because of Christ's Name. They urgently need our prayers and our practical help, both to relieve their sufferings and to share God's blessing with them as far as we are able, and thus to encourage them to become disciples of Christ in adult life. And by supporting them in their distress we also serve our Lord, who says that whoever welcomes a lowly child in His name welcomes Him. ➡

Barnabas Day of Prayer

for the Persecuted Church

Friday 1 November 2013

This special day provides a great opportunity for Christians worldwide to unite in prayer, lifting up to the Lord the needs of our suffering brothers and sisters and their children. Let us ask Him to strengthen Christian children everywhere in their faith and give them courage to follow Jesus, so that Christian witness and ministry may be secured for the next generation.



childrenofcourage.org

Barnabas Fund encourages you to dedicate time on Friday 1 November to praying for those who suffer because of their faith in Christ, especially for persecuted Christian children and the next generation of courageous Christians. Please do join us, and encourage your friends at church to get involved too.

An inspiring response

The 2012 Day of Prayer caught the imagination of Barnabas partners and supporters throughout the world. Events were held in at least 36 countries, and thousands of people joined in the day.

When we invited our partners to share prayer needs for themselves and the persecuted Christians whom they help, we were soon deluged with requests. After the event we received many encouraging reports from partners who rallied local Christians to pray for their persecuted Christian family elsewhere. A group

of Afghan Christians, in exile in India because of their faith, held a prayer meeting. They told us:

All brothers were happy and thankful to Barnabas Fund for organising this prayer meeting, which gave us a reason and opportunity to come together and pray especially for the persecuted Church. We know very well the importance and necessity of prayer.

In Uganda, prayers were said over the radio in a live broadcast led by two church leaders. One of them said:

I read some prayer items in the guide ... and invited the listeners to call and pray. Our telephone lines in the studio were jammed.

The Day of Prayer also had a significant online following, as prayer points were posted on our Twitter and Google Plus pages throughout the day. The prayer guide prepared especially for the event was accessed by over 3,700 people from our website.



We pray that the 2013 Day of Prayer will be equally well supported and will encourage many people to make prayer for the persecuted Church a regular practice.



How can I get involved?

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

It is easy to get involved in the Day of Prayer.

Join a prayer event in your area. The special section of our website devoted to Suffering Church Action Week contains a map that marks the location of events that have been registered with us. You can also use the map as an inspiration for your prayers, interceding for our brothers and sisters as they meet to pray in many and varied locations around the world.

Plan your own prayer event if one has not been organised near you. Some suggestions are provided below for how you might organise this, but please feel free to use your own ideas as well or instead: anything that will encourage people in your church or area to come before the Lord in prayer for our persecuted Christian family.

Commit to praying as an individual or small group on 1 November. We have provided two free prayer booklets to guide you in your praying:

Praying for the Persecuted Church

2013. Each page of this booklet focuses on a particular country, a specific kind of persecution or a special theme, with background information and a prayer point. It contains detailed information on the most important contexts in which Christians face discrimination, harassment and violence for their faith.



Children of Courage Prayer Guide. This booklet is based around the theme for Suffering Church Action Week: *Children of Courage: Raising Tomorrow's Church*. It includes specific prayer requests about persecuted Christian children from our partners on the ground in various countries.

Both these booklets are included in the Suffering Church Action Week pack (see pages 14-15 for more details of this), but more copies are available on request.



What could your Day of Prayer look like?

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Ephesians 6:18).

If your church is planning to join in the Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, here are some ideas for how you can do so:

Set up a special room or space for prayer, making it comfortable and welcoming for those who will use it. You could set up prayer stations at different points in the room, perhaps including background information or prayer requests from one of the prayer booklets (see above). Or you could make available a range of resources for Suffering Church Action Week, such as copies of this magazine or the children's appeal leaflet, to stimulate prayer for persecuted Christian children.

To create a rolling sequence of prayer throughout the day, divide the morning, afternoon and evening into half-hour time slots for which people can sign up in advance. Assign a particular country or theme to each slot and invite people to pray for it using the prayer booklets. Larger churches may be able to assign a prayer leader for each of several

longer sessions. Or you could go a step further and organise a half-night or whole night of prayer arranged around key themes.

You could provide large sheets of paper on walls or tables and coloured pens, so that prayers can be written down or illustrated. Or you could have a prayer table with items that evoke the plight of the persecuted Church and of Christian children in particular, such as pictures, children's toys or exercise books. Encourage people to find imaginative ways of expressing their prayers.

Remember that you do not need to set aside a whole day if that is not feasible for your church. Whatever time you can give to prayer will make a difference. Organise a special prayer meeting, or perhaps an informal drop-in, at your church or in somebody's home, where people can come and go as they have opportunity. Or encourage individual prayer for persecuted Christian children by including specific prayer requests in your church notice sheet.

Ask everyone in your church to stop what they are doing at midday on 1 November and spend five minutes in prayer for all those who suffer because of their faith in Christ. Suggest that they keep our prayer for the persecuted Church (see right) to hand and pray through it slowly at that time.



A prayer for the persecuted Church

Our Father in heaven, we worship you for all your goodness to us in Christ. We praise you especially for protecting and supporting us in our times of trial and distress, and for providing so graciously for all our needs.

We pray for all those who are suffering discrimination, harassment and violence because of their faith in Christ. We pray that you will strengthen them to stand firm under pressure and enable them to love and forgive their persecutors. We ask too that you will soon grant them relief from their distress.

We pray in particular for Christian children who suffer for the Name of Christ. We give you thanks that so many of them are an example to us of strength and courage in the face of persecution. We pray that they may grow up to be men and women of God and to strengthen the Church in the next generation. We ask too that Christian children in the West may be courageous in standing for Christ despite opposition.

Thank you for blessing the work of Barnabas Fund and other Christian organisations that seek to bring hope and practical aid to persecuted Christians and their children. We pray that you will continue to bless your suffering people through their ministry.

We ask all these things in the powerful Name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen

CHRISTIAN TEENAGER DIES IN POLICE CUSTODY

PAKISTAN – An investigation has been launched into the death of an 18-year-old Christian man in police custody in Sharaqpur Sharif. Adnan Masih died on 10 June after allegedly enduring six days of severe torture. He was arrested in connection with the disappearance of a young Muslim woman, who had apparently had an affair and left her husband.

Adnan insisted that he had not had contact with the woman, and no calls between the two appeared on their telephone records. Police discovered that calls *had* been made between the woman and three local Muslim men. But when the three were brought in for questioning, they were released after apparently paying a bribe.

The officers then allegedly tortured Adnan in an attempt to force him to confess to involvement in the woman's disappearance. He was beaten and cut, his fingernails and toenails were pulled out, and his legs were broken. After six days of such treatment, his neck was broken

and he died. In an attempt to make it appear that Adnan had taken his own life, officers hanged his body in a bathroom.

Over 4,000 local Christians protested following Adnan's death,

After six days of torture, Adnan's neck was broken and he died. In an attempt to make it appear that Adnan had taken his own life, officers hanged his body in a bathroom

demanding that justice be done. CLAAS, a Barnabas-funded Christian legal organisation, managed to persuade senior policemen to launch a criminal investigation against three officers.



Adnan Masih died in police custody on 10 June

PEACE DEAL OFFERS RAY OF HOPE FOR CHRISTIANS

BURMA (MYANMAR)

– A tentative peace deal, agreed between the Burmese government and the predominantly Christian Kachin ethnic group, has brought hope to a people who have endured two years of grave abuses by the army. The two sides agreed on 30 May to stop fighting and to hold further talks about the repositioning of troops and the future of the Kachin people.

Kachin state has been the site of many human rights abuses by soldiers since the Burmese army broke the previous 17-year ceasefire in June 2011. Christian communities have seen children killed, women



Barnabas Fund is helping with the practical needs of Kachin refugees

raped and people tortured. During the conflict, which has displaced nearly 100,000 people, around 200 villages

be addressed before peace can be achieved. Fighting has continued since the peace agreement was

Christian sources in Kachin expressed cautious optimism, saying that the peace agreement was an "important step"

and at least 66 church buildings have been destroyed by the army.

Christian sources in Kachin expressed cautious optimism, saying that the peace agreement was an "important step", but stressed that the concerns of ethnic minorities must

made, with clashes breaking out at least 20 times since the deal was signed. Two men were killed by the army in Kachin state in separate incidents on 14 June; one was tortured and beaten before he was shot dead.

PASTOR ARRESTED AND CHURCH CLOSED BY THE AUTHORITIES

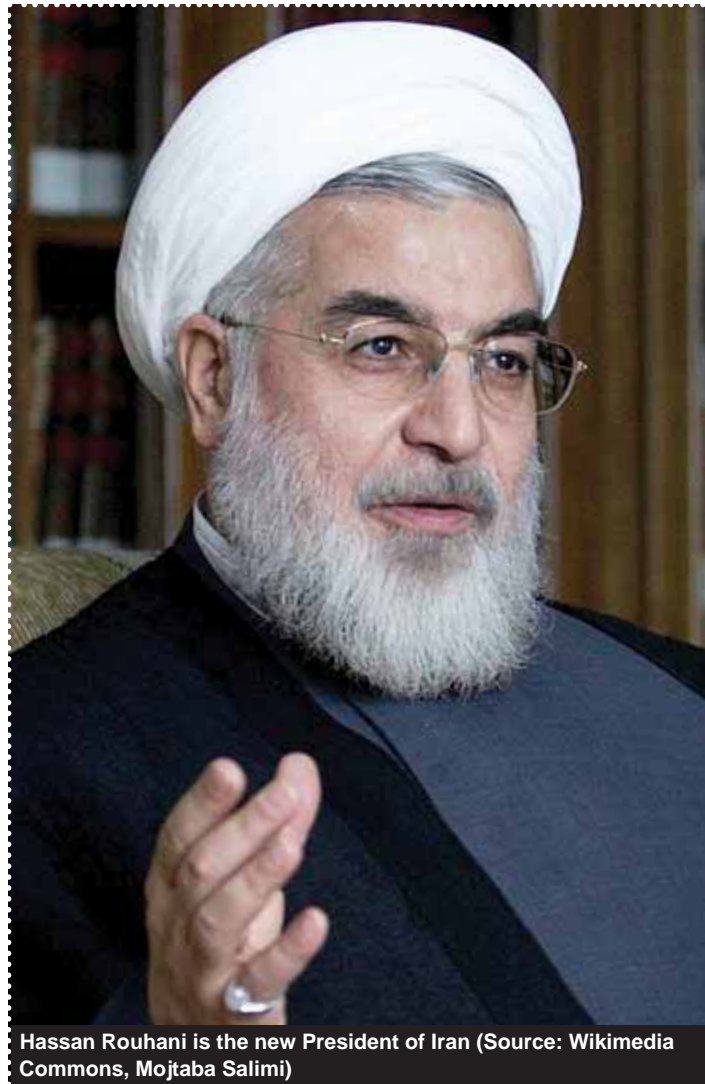
IRAN – The Central Assemblies of God Church in Tehran, which has been subject to mounting pressure from the authorities, was closed on 23 May. The closure came after the church's pastor, the Rev. Robert Aserian, was arrested during a raid on a prayer meeting.

During the raid, the church building was searched and books, documents and equipment seized. The pastor was taken to an unknown location. Prior to raiding the church, the security forces invaded his home and confiscated items including his computer and books. Two days later, security agents returned to the church and ordered the caretaker to put up a sign stating that the church was closed.

The church has been under extreme pressure from the authorities over its refusal to stop holding services in Farsi, the Iranian national language. These services were accessible to Muslims and converts from Islam, unlike services in other languages. One local source said that church leaders and their families have been threatened with imprisonment, kidnapping and even execution. The church has been under close surveillance for many years, and a number of its congregation have been killed.

The church elders were expecting action to be taken against them by the authorities after they requested information about Pastor Farhad Sobokrouh, the leader of an Assemblies of God church in Ahwaz, and his wife Shahnaz Jeizan. The couple were sent to prison for a year in October 2012, and this sentence was upheld in May 2013. The elders were told that the couple might be released if the Central Assemblies of God Church closed voluntarily, but they refused to give in.

The election in June of "moderate" candidate Hassan Rouhani as President reveals a desire among the Iranian people for relief from



Hassan Rouhani is the new President of Iran (Source: Wikimedia Commons, Mojtaba Salimi)

the oppressive imposition of hard-line Islam. But the prospects for increased freedoms for Christians

Even if the new president does aim to change how these beliefs are put into practice, he has limited powers

The election in June of "moderate" candidate Hassan Rouhani as President reveals a desire among the Iranian people for relief from the oppressive imposition of hard-line Islam

may be limited. Mr Rouhani has been a political insider for many years, so it is unlikely that the fundamental beliefs of the regime will change.

compared to those of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose aim appears to be to eradicate the Christian faith from Iran.

ANTI-CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE ON THE INCREASE

EAST AFRICA – Violent attacks on Christians and their property are becoming increasingly common in Kenya and Tanzania. At least 15 people were injured in a bomb attack on a church compound in Kenya. The attack, which targeted an open-air evangelistic event, took place in Mrima village near Likoni on 9 June. A bomb was thrown into the compound and landed next to Pastor Collins Maseno, whose legs were broken by the blast. A ten-year-old boy was also amongst the wounded.

It is thought that the attack was carried by sympathisers of al-Shabaab, the Islamist group that until recently controlled large parts of neighbouring Somalia. The group has been behind a number of attacks in Kenya since Kenyan troops began fighting its militants in Somalia in 2011, and Christians and churches have been particularly targeted.

Christians are currently greatly at risk

Anti-Christian violence is also on the increase in Tanzania, where the homes of two pastors were targeted during the night. Pastor Robert Ngai suffered serious cuts to his hands and arms as he defended himself against machete-wielding radical Muslims who broke into his home in Geita on 2 June. Pastor Daudi Nzumbi's home was also broken into two nights earlier, but the assailants were frightened away by his dogs.

Christians are currently greatly at risk in Tanzania, where fatal attacks on churches and church leaders are becoming more common. Pastors in particular are greatly at risk of attack by Islamists.

CONGREGATION ATTACKED BY MOB

SRI LANKA – A number of Christians were injured when a mob armed with clubs, knives and swords raided a church service in Sugankerni, Batticaloa district. The assailants stormed the building on 16 June, ordering that the service be stopped and the church closed down. The pastor and a number of the congregation were injured in the attack, some so badly that they needed hospital treatment. The church building was seriously damaged.

This attack is thought to have been carried out by Hindu extremists. Batticaloa is in the predominantly

Hindu eastern part of the country, where, besides the risk of violence by extremists, Christians face other pressures; for example they are denied the right to bury their dead.

In Sri Lanka as a whole, Christians more typically come under pressure from radical Buddhists. In the political sphere, this pressure has recently intensified. The powerful ethnic Sinhalese and Buddhist nationalist lobby has been campaigning against the conversion of Buddhists by Christians and other minority groups.

Several anti-Christian attacks by Buddhist extremists have also taken

place recently. A church building in Kaluthara district was broken into and vandalised on the night of 5 June, and the vandals tried unsuccessfully to start a fire inside the building. In the same district, posters have appeared that incite locals to “chase the Christian pastor from the village.” The pastor in question has been questioned by police, who warned him that there is a threat against him. At least one pastor has also been threatened in Kegalle district, where a meeting of Buddhist and Hindu villagers was held on 15 June to discuss restricting church activities.

On 16 June, Buddhist monks harassed a pastor who happened to be passing by as they were holding a meeting about their opposition to the *halal* slaughter of cattle by Muslims, to which some Buddhists object. The monks chased the pastor to the police station, where they made false allegations against him. The next day, the church leader’s house was surrounded by a mob of 30 Buddhist extremists, who shouted threats and demanded that he stop holding services. The pastor has continued to receive threats on an almost daily basis.

MORSI’S REMOVAL BRINGS HOPE BUT CHRISTIANS SUFFER REPRISALS

EGYPT – The removal of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi from power in Egypt has raised hopes that the condition of Christians in the country could improve. Christians were amongst the millions of protestors who took to the streets on 30 June on the dictatorial leader’s first anniversary in office.

Morsi’s Islamist agenda led to much suffering in the Christian community. Incidents of anti-Christian violence increased, and the government failed to offer protection to Christians or to bring those responsible to justice. A growing number of believers were also jailed after “blasphemy” cases were brought against them. But this picture could change if Egypt’s security forces, which suspended the contentious constitution introduced by Morsi and put him under house arrest on 3 July, can rally support for a truly democratic society.

The tumultuous events also led to outbreaks of violence, in which Christians were particularly targeted

by those who support Morsi and his group, the Muslim Brotherhood. Anti-Christian violence broke out on the day of Morsi’s removal in the village of Delgia, Minya province, where two churches and other Christian property came under attack from Islamists. One church building was looted and came under fire, and property belonging to the other church, including the pastor’s home, was burned down. Christian homes and businesses were also targeted.

Then, on 5 July, armed Muslims attacked the village of Nag Hassan in Luxor province. The assailants began burning homes and shops belonging to Christians following the death of a Muslim man, who had allegedly been in a fight with a group of Christians. Four Christians were killed, and three others were left in a critical condition. Mina About Sharween, a church minister, was also shot dead in a separate incident on 6 July as he left his church in el-Arish, North Sinai.

REBELS MASSACRE CHRISTIAN VILLAGE

SYRIA – Almost 40 people were killed when opposition fighters brutally attacked the Christian village of Dweir, on the outskirts of Homs, on 27 May. A Barnabas Fund partner said that two victims were severely tortured by the rebels before they were killed; their bones were broken and they were set on fire before being shot in the head.

The Syrian army entered the area and began fighting the rebels after the massacre. Those residents who managed to escape the slaughter fled

Christians fled their homes in June 2012 after hearing the words “Christians must leave al-Qusair within six days” from the town’s minarets. They have now returned to scenes of total destruction; many have lost everything. A church building in the centre of the town was defaced with anti-Christian graffiti.

On the day after the Dweir massacre, independent United Nations investigators warned that the opposition in Syria is becoming increasingly radicalised, saying that only a minority



Barnabas Fund is providing aid to displaced Christians in Syria

to a nearby district, where Barnabas Fund was able to provide them with aid.

Meanwhile, many Christians have been able to return to their homes in al-Qusair after government forces recaptured the town. Thousands of

are fighting for democracy and want a state for all Syrians. Some groups have an openly Islamist agenda. The leader of the al-Nusra Front, which is a prominent opposition faction, declared allegiance to the leader of al-Qaeda in April.

BARNABAS CONCERNS OVER HALAL PRODUCTS HEARD BY MPs

AUSTRALIA AND UK:

Barnabas Fund has recently had the opportunity to register our disquiet about the labelling of *halal* products and the limiting of consumer choice with legislators in two Western countries.

Barnabas Fund Australia was invited by the House of Representatives Petitions Committee to a round-table hearing in April 2013 to discuss our

explained that we want to make sure consumers are properly informed about what they are buying and are given a choice to buy non-*halal* products if they prefer. He pointed out that agencies that certify products as *halal* charge a fee that is eventually passed on to consumers. The fees collected are used to promote Islam.

In discussion with MPs on the

been made public and a copy sent to the relevant government minister.

Then in June 2013 a representative of Barnabas Fund UK was given an opportunity to meet with some MPs in the UK Parliament. (Other interested groups were also represented, including the Sikh community and the British Veterinary Association.) He too was able to share our concerns about

October or November this year.

The discussion focused in particular on animal welfare issues and especially the practice of slaughtering animals without stunning them first. However, Barnabas does not want *halal* meat to be labelled *only* if it comes from non-stunned animals, as consumers might then still buy *halal* meat from stunned animals without knowing it.

Halal products

Halal goods and services are those that Islamic sharia allows Muslims to consume. The *halal* rules are applied to food and other products to establish whether they are consistent with sharia. For meat to be designated *halal*, the animal's blood must be completely drained and a Muslim blessing pronounced by a Muslim slaughterer. Most slaughterers do not stun the animal first.



Barnabas has met with MPs in the UK Parliament to discuss *halal* labelling (Source: Flickr, Reemul)

petition on *halal* food labelling, which had been presented to the House in August 2011. Such hearings are offered only to selected petitioners, and are designed to air the subject-matter of their petitions more fully in public.

The petition asked that the House "ensure that *halal* food does not become the norm in Australia and to this end require the food industry to label all *halal* products clearly and give their customers a choice".

At the hearing, Colin Johnston, Managing Director of Barnabas Fund Australia, expressed our concern that many *halal* products on sale to consumers are not labelled as such. He

committee, Mr Johnston said that slaughtering an animal without stunning it first is cruel. He also argued that a small minority – Muslims make up only

about 0.9% of the Australian population – should not be able to impose their practices on everyone else.

The hearing was an indication that Australian MPs have taken serious notice of the issues raised in our petition. The transcript of the proceedings has

halal products, and to call for proper labelling and the provision of consumer choice, with reference to our 2011 petition.

Two of the MPs present are on the working committee that addresses the issue of animal slaughter; they undertook to take the matter further and to present a bill to Parliament calling for proper labelling. They indicated that this was likely to be debated around

So our representative proposed that the wording of the bill should specify that the meat be labelled "*halal* by stunning" or "*halal* by non-stunning" as appropriate.

Barnabas is following up the discussion with the MPs who were present. We are also in contact with the Sikh group to seek further joint opportunities to present our case on this important issue.

We are grateful for these invitations to address and talk with MPs in Australia and the UK and welcome them as a sign that the issues of *halal* labelling and consumer choice are gaining a higher profile in the West.

Help the persecuted Church for the price of a magazine

Just £3 could make a real difference to persecuted Christians. It could enable an impoverished Dalit Christian child in India to go to school for one month. It could pay for two persecuted pastors in Laos to travel in safety to a church leaders' conference in Thailand. Or £3 could provide two copies of an inspiring Christian children's magazine in Kyrgyzstan.

Could you spare the price of a magazine to support our needy Christian brothers and sisters? Do you have a mobile phone? If your answer to both of these questions is "yes", please consider giving to Barnabas Fund by text message. It couldn't be easier: just text "Barnabas" to 70007*, and we will receive a donation of £3.

If you have a pay-as-you-go mobile phone, your £3 donation will be subtracted from your available credit. If you pay monthly, the cost will be added to your next bill. The costs to Barnabas Fund of receiving your donation in this way are minimal. Your gift will remain anonymous unless you Gift Aid it by following the link included in your confirmation message.

*Messages charged at standard network rate. For full terms and conditions, please visit www.barnabasfund.org/terms.

Made with love

These colourful and cosy hats, kindly knitted by a group of supporters in the United States, will help displaced Syrian Christian to stay warm when the cold weather sets in.



Anniversary events in full swing

Barnabas Fund is celebrating God's faithfulness throughout our 20 years of serving the persecuted Church. We would like to thank all those who attended our celebration in Bristol on 13 July. At least 250 of our dedicated supporters came along to the event, which was a fantastic opportunity to rejoice in God's faithfulness and look at the issues facing the persecuted Church today.

Do come along and help us celebrate at our anniversary event in Eastbourne, UK, on Saturday 28 September 2013. For further details, please contact the Barnabas Fund International Headquarters (address on back cover). Please register your attendance in advance at www.barnabasfund.org/event.



A fantastic turn-out at our anniversary event in Bristol

Barnabas Fund at CRE Midlands

Barnabas Fund will be at the Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) in Birmingham, UK, on 3 and 4 October 2013. The event will be held at the National Exhibition Centre, B40 1NT. Come along and visit us at stand A14; we will be happy to welcome you, and the CRE organisers have kindly provided us with free tickets for Barnabas Fund supporters. An email will be sent out to supporters in the local area prior to the event with further details; alternatively please contact the Barnabas Fund International Headquarters (address on back cover) for more information.

Fundraising reaches new heights

Carolyne Williams set herself a real challenge when she organised a sponsored event for Barnabas Fund. Despite being terrified of heights, Carolyne took part in a sponsored zipwire to raise money for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Syria. And overcoming her fear was certainly worth it: Carolyne raised a fantastic £407.20 with the help of her family, friends and church community.

Carolyne's sponsored zipwire took place during a church weekend away, and she was cheered on by her church family from St John's Community Church in Burntwood, Staffordshire, UK. She writes, "I give all praise to our Lord and Saviour that we are all able to support our brothers and sisters in Syria and I pray that God will bless all who work to help them and in other countries."

Our thanks go out to Carolyne for her inspired idea and bravery in tackling this challenge. The funds she raised will be much appreciated by our brothers and sisters in Syria, who are in such desperate need.



Carolyne celebrates completing her zipwire challenge



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OUR GOD IS FAITHFUL


barnabasfund
hope and aid for the persecuted church

20 years giving aid to
Christians in need

Children of Courage

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Germany

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

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