

Persecuted Christians need us

Faces of suffering and hope – ACN *Persecuted and Forgotten?*

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Father Douglas Bazi

'WHEN I was kidnapped, they told me I was the first not to beg for my life.'

Father Douglas Bazi describes the moment he came face to face with the Al Qaeda militants who seized him from his church in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

Over the next nine days, they took a hammer to him, smashing his teeth and striking his back. He was denied water for three days.

So many people have suffered persecution. What ACN is doing is to ensure that they do not become beggars but are able to find sanctuary and a new life.

Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil

But he refused to give up his faith and was eventually set free.

Fr. Douglas's story, is one of so many we encounter at Aid to the Church in Need.

And that is why we have included their witness accounts in our latest *Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their Faith*.

Inside, please find more details about the report and individual accounts of suffering and hope given by those on the frontline of persecution.

It is these people – clergy and lay, young and old – whose vital pastoral needs are being met by ACN.

For those seeking sanctuary away from persecution, **ACN is providing food, shelter and medicine.**

For those ministering in such situations, the charity is providing Mass stipends.

For those who are sick and frightened, ACN is providing medicine and counselling.

- ⊕ With your support,
- ⊕ With your compassion and
- ⊕ with your prayers

we can help them not only survive persecution but also give witness to the light of Christ in the midst of darkness and despair.

As ACN's late founder, Fr. Werenfried van Straaten, said, we must *'dry the tears of our abandoned brothers and sisters on the crosses of this century.'* ●

View the full report at www.acnireland.org

Helping the suffering Church **today**

 **Aid to the Church in Need**

Shining a light on the facts of oppression



Boy with candles

DAY by day, reports received by Aid to the Church in Need show how the persecution of Christians is becoming ever more serious – affecting the lives of thousands upon thousands of faithful.

So many of them suffer verbal abuse, violence, sexual harassment and worse simply because of the faith they profess.

They need us to tell their story and that is why ACN has produced **Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians oppressed for their.**

Drawing on first-hand research and with input from Christian leaders facing persecution, the report deals with 22 countries of particular concern including Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, North Korea, Nigeria and China.

Persecuted and Forgotten? compares the situation today with that of two years ago and gives first-hand witness accounts of oppression.

Released by ACN globally, the report is issued for government, politicians, the media and other influential figures in an effort to raise awareness of the problems and encourage government action in support of suffering Christians.

If we are better informed about the suffering of our brothers and sisters in faith, we will be able to take the steps necessary to support them. **Will you help us?**

ACN Persecuted and Forgotten?

- **Be informed:** visit www.acnireland.org and view the full report
- **Contact:** Aid to the Church in Need **01 837 7516** or info@acnireland.org to receive a print copy of the report's principal findings and case studies of people who have suffered persecution.
- **Get involved:** Help ACN spread the news about Christians suffering persecution.

Please remember in your prayers all those who are suffering and are being persecuted for their faith.





Poster praying for the return of Archbishop Yazigi and Archbishop Ibrahim

Missing priests and bishops **kidnapped in Syria**

- **Armenian Catholic Fr Michel Kayal** (kidnapped 9 February 2013)
- **Greek Orthodox Fr Maher Mahfouz** (9 February 2013)
- **Syrian Orthodox Archbishop Gregorius Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo** (22 April 2013)
- **Greek Orthodox Bishop Boulos Yazigi of Aleppo** (22 April 2013)
- **Jesuit Priest Fr Paolo Dall'Oglio** (29 July 2013)
- **Fr Jacques Mourad** (21 May 2015)

Please keep them in your prayers. ACN provides Mass stipends to priests ministering amid persecution and poverty. Your Mass offering – for you or a loved one – will support priests who bring the light of Christ in a world darkened by suffering. ●



Fr Jacques Mourad

On the frontline of persecution – Fr Douglas's story

It took Fr Douglas Bazi a whole year to recover from nine days of torture at the hands of terrorist organisation Al Qaeda.

Seizing him from his church in Baghdad, the extremists hit his back, smashed his teeth and injured his face and knees.

For three days he was denied water while the militants jeered at him.

During his torture in November 2006, Fr Douglas refused to deny his faith: *'I told my kidnappers I believed in an afterlife. They could see I was not afraid.'*

Eventually, he was released into the night blind-folded.

'For what seemed like eternity,' he recalled, *'I stayed where I was, thinking they were going to kill me.'*

Eventually he staggered off and was able to call for help.

Fr Douglas is a veteran of life on the frontline of persecution.

Once, five mortars were fired at his church during Mass. On another occasion, he was shot at. He has a bullet buried deep in his leg.

Fr Douglas is now giving his life to help others who have suffered.

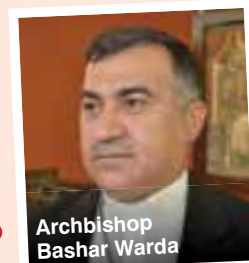
When Christians fleeing Daesh (ISIS) poured into Kurdish northern Iraq in August 2014, Fr Douglas helped set up a displacement camp in Erbil's Ankawa district.

He said: *'Tens of thousands of people arrived here [in Erbil] with nothing. At first, this completely overwhelmed me. The people were totally lost.'*

Fr Douglas has coordinated ACN aid – food, shelter, schooling and trauma relief.

In August 2015, ACN announced more aid and pastoral support for over 100,000 Christians in Erbil and elsewhere in Kurdish northern Iraq.

Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil said: ***'When vast numbers of Christians fleeing ISIS knocked on our door for help, we were – thanks to ACN – able to help.'*** ●



Archbishop Bashar Warda



Fr Douglas (right) with ACN staff

On death row in Pakistan



MOTHER-of-five Asia Bibi from Pakistan was sentenced to death for blasphemy, a crime she did not commit.

The accusation that she had taken the name of the Prophet Mohammed in vain came following a disagreement with a fellow labourer over a cup of water.

She was arrested in June 2009, went on trial and was put on death row in November 2010.

Since her incarceration, she has protested her innocence. Her health has suffered and she has been in great pain.

Asia's case, though extreme, is not uncommon.

Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws are often exploited by Islamic extremists wanting to target religious minorities.

Pakistan is 95 percent Muslim and, as a tiny minority, most of the country's

Christians live in abject poverty, working as bonded labour on farms, in factories and as street sweepers.

In September 2015, ACN announced a project involving workshops to promote inter-faith cooperation in Faisalabad diocese,

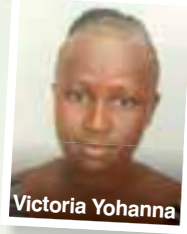
where there has been a history of religious intolerance.

ACN is supporting the project over three years. The charity has supported people accused of blasphemy, providing for their daily needs and organising vocational training. ●



Pakistan grief-stricken women

Nigeria: Victoria, 15, escapes terrorists



Victoria Yohanna

Aged just 15, Victoria Yohanna was one of 400 people kidnapped by Boko Haram in January 2015 in one of the worst attacks by the extremist group in its five-year campaign of violence in northern Nigeria.

The captives were taken to a camp in the town of Kukawa where men and women were separated.

The young men were asked to fight alongside the extremists and those who refused were killed.

Victoria and her family managed to escape one evening when most of the militants left to try and conscript more young men.

According to Maiduguri diocese, 5,000 faithful have been killed and more than 100,000 displaced.

Many rely on ACN for basic aid, having left their belongings and livelihoods behind.

For those returning the diocese of Maiduguri after the Boko Haram attacks, ACN is providing emergency aid for shelter, food and other basic aid. With your help, ACN is able to support Victoria and others. ●



Parish priest Fr Isaac Achi outside St Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla after bomb



Aid to the Church in Need

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