

Table of Contents

- [30 Missionaries Died in 2000 while Fulfilling Ministry](#) - (01.01.2001)
- [Religious freedom deteriorating globally, report says](#) - (06.11.2000)
- [Somali Christian arrives in New Zealand Haji: 'It was God Who Saved Me'](#) - (30.08.2000)
- [Panel seeks labeling N. Korea, 3 others religious oppressors](#) - (31.07.2000)
- [The Open Doors World Watch List, July 2000](#) - (25.07.2000)
- [Freedom of Religion Remains in Peril](#) - (19.07.2000)
- [Map of Religious Persecution in the World](#) - (14.05.2000)
- [Two Thirds of all Martyrs killed in the 20th Century](#) - (05.05.2000)
- [31 Missionaries have been killed during 1999](#) - (29.12.2000)

30 Missionaries Died in 2000 while Fulfilling Ministry *Three Offered Their Lives Serving Victims of Ebola Virus in Africa*

ZENIT (01.01.2001) / HRWF International Secretariat (04.01.2001) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - Thirty Catholic Missionaries died during the year 2000 while carrying out their ministry. Three offered their lives while helping victims of the Ebola virus epidemic in Africa, the international agency Fides reported.

The above mentioned Vatican missionary agency published a list of "martyrs of the year 2000," among whom are 19 priests, 6 nuns, 3 seminarians, and 2 lay people (one consecrated, and the other a lay volunteer nurse). Although the newsletter uses the term "martyrs," it must be understood that this is in no way a statement concerning the possible or probable canonization of these missionaries. The term should be taken in the sense of the original Greek term, which means "witnesses."

Africa has become the most dangerous continent for missionaries. Seventeen of them lost their life in the year 2000: 4 in Uganda, 3 in Burundi, 2 in Nigeria, 2 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 12 in the Central African Republic, 1 in Angola, 1 in Zambia, 1 in the Ivory Coast, 1 in Rwanda, and 1 in Kenya.

Asia was second in numbers of missionaries who died. Four of them died last year in India, where a wave of fundamentalist persecution of Christians has been unleashed;

2 more died in the Philippines, victims of pro-Independence Muslims, 1 in Pakistan, and 1 in Indonesia.

To the above list must be added the 4 priests who lost their lives in the Americas, victims of crime (2 in Colombia, 1 in Mexico, and 1 in Jamaica), and the religious brother killed in Albania by the local mafia.

"The circumstances in which they met their deaths highlight the powder kegs of the planet: Central Africa, where diamonds and gold are worth more than life; the Asia of fundamentalism, Islamic and Hindu; the Latin America of guerrillas and drugs; the Albania of mafias and illegal trade," explained Fr. Bernardo Cervellera, director of Fides.

During the 80s "Fides" documented the killing of 115 missionaries. During the 90s and in the year 2000, the figure rose dramatically to 630.

According to Fr. Cervellera, the increase is due in large part to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which brought at least 248 victims among ecclesiastical personnel; as well as the greater speed of the media in communicating the news of the killings, even those in most remote areas.

By publishing the list, "Fides" does not wish to make a "sterile denunciation," but to "give hope. "It is known that some of them prayed for their killers and forgave them. With their death, all expressed a sign of victory over hatred and evil."

Because of this, "Fides" included 2 nuns and a volunteer nurse in their list of "martyrs" because they deliberately defied death to care for the victims of the lethal Ebola virus in Uganda.

"A body swollen, broken, and bleeding from Ebola has nothing to envy a bullet-riddled body. In our world, which tries to exorcize sister Death with euthanasia, they are proof that the only 'good death' is the one offered out of love," Fr. Cervellera stressed.

The list does not include the hundreds ("perhaps thousands") of dead in the Moluccas, Indonesia, or the many anonymous Christians imprisoned in China, Sudan, and Rwanda, of whom nothing is known, Fr. Cervellera explained.

According to Protestant scholars, the martyrs of 2000 (including Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and Evangelicals) number some 165,000 Christians.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Religious freedom deteriorating globally, report says

Worthynews (06.11.2000)/ HRWF International Secretariat (13.11.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - Religious freedom around the world is deteriorating, according to a report by Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C..

Published as a book by Broadman & Holman, "Religious Freedom in the World: a Global Report on Freedom and Persecution," ranks 75 countries encompassing more than 90 percent of the world's population.

As an accessible, comparative survey of religious freedom, the report is the first of its kind, explained general editor Paul Marshall. The report shows that large countries in particular have been trending downward, especially since the mid-1990s, potentially jeopardizing a range of human rights should religious freedom continue to erode, Marshall told Newsroom.

Center for Religious Freedom director Nina Shea said the report would be useful to journalists and religious groups as well as to members of Congress determining where the U.S. should send foreign aid or bestow favorable treatment. "It may force political leaders to make sure religion is brought up in debate," she said.

At present, the U.S. State Department puts out a voluminous annual religious freedom report as required by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act.

Shea, who serves on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom that was established by the 1998 legislation, explained that a reader would get lost in the government report's "welter of detail" without being able to effectively prioritize information.

By contrast, the Freedom House survey is slim and uses a grading scale to organize countries along a continuum. A ranking of 1 to 3 qualifies a country as "free"; a 4 or 5 signifies a country is "partly free"; and a 6 or 7 gains the recipient an "unfree" status. More than 60 scholars from the U.S. and abroad representing a variety of disciplines and religions participated in the survey.

Shea said the report meets the need for a "non-government source that can track religious freedom and be disinterested in the outcome." She expressed concern that the State Department's document might be reluctant to "stir the pot" with certain governments in which the U.S. has an interest. "Religious Freedom in the World," she explained, uses a detailed list of criteria - printed as an appendix to the book - to measure the religious freedom of each nation and "lets the chip fall where they may."

Following are some of the survey's findings:

- Conditions for religious freedom are worsening, particularly in large countries such as China, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. However, India and - as of last year - Indonesia both hold democratic elections. Nonetheless, India's Muslim minority and smaller Christian minority have come under increasing attack in an atmosphere of inflamed Hindu nationalism, the report states, especially in Gujarat. Persecution has included destruction of churches, rape, and murder, among other things. Since late 1998, the report claims, attacks have increased in number. This fall, for example, a mob in the state of Orissa killed a Roman Catholic and a nun was kidnapped in Bihar, an eastern state.
- Contemporary conflict seems to be taking on an increasingly religious nature. In Indonesia, violence appears to be marked by escalating religious rhetoric and stated

religious motivation. In 1999, inter-communal fighting between Muslims and Christians in Ambon resulted in hundreds of deaths. This year what Marshall called a "new component" has changed the nature of such conflict, giving it more structure. Thousands of "jihad warriors" have been "organizing in militia camps in Java," according to the report. Additionally - and not included in the survey - the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict has shown signs that it, too, is becoming more religious than formerly, Marshall said, noting recent attacks on Joseph's tomb, synagogues, and mosques within Israel as well as heightened religious rhetoric. Neither Hamas nor Hezbollah existed 30 years ago, he pointed out.

- Religious freedom is not a Western phenomenon. Countries like Botswana and Namibia scored higher than Belgium and France, due partly to an intensifying reaction against so-called "cults" in Western European nations. In France, for example, the prime minister and the president together issued a decree in 1998 establishing an anti-cult task force possessed of broad investigatory powers. Late last year, the Senate approved a proposed law that would permit the dissolution of groups that "threaten public order" or "constitute a major danger to individuals."

- Nor does there seem to be much correlation between religious freedom and wealth. The report gave the United States a score of 1, Saudi Arabia a 7.

- Though relatively free countries can be found on every continent, those surveyed in Western Europe and the North Atlantic area all scored from 1 to 3. Latin American nations, save Cuba, Colombia, and Mexico, likewise scored within the "free" category. Four of the six African nations surveyed are religiously "free." Eastern European and former Soviet bloc countries garnered a range of scores - from Estonia, 1, to Turkmenistan, 7 - . Most of these countries fall in the middle of the continuum, indicating the currently transitional nature of their societies. Countries in the band stretching from northern Africa through the eastern Mediterranean to West Asia scored low. Israel rated a 3, the highest score given among these nations. Saudi Arabia, as previously noted, Sudan, and Iran received 7s.

- While the report concedes that governing regimes may not reflect the religious backgrounds of their respective nations, it nonetheless notes patterns and correlations between countries' religious freedom scores and their religious backgrounds. Countries that are historically Christian tended to score the highest in the reports ranking, comprising 29 of the 34 "free" countries. Israel and four countries of mostly Buddhist background also qualified as "free." With the exception of those under communist control and a couple of others, Buddhist countries generally scored high. Hindu countries scored low. Muslim countries qualified as the least free, with almost half falling into the "unfree" category and none emerging as "free." Marshall noted that if the survey had been conducted in 1970, traditionally Christian countries under communist control would have scored in the "unfree" category.

Freedom House is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes liberty and democracy throughout the world.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Somali Christian arrives in New Zealand

Haji: 'It was God Who Saved Me'

By Barbara G. Baker

FLASH NEWS from COMPASS DIRECT - Global News from the Frontlines (30.08.2000)/ HRWF International Secretariat (01.09.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - Yesterday, four days after they flew out of Yemen, Somali Christian convert Mohammed Omer Haji and his family arrived for permanent religious asylum in Auckland, New Zealand.

"This is a very far place here," a sleepy Haji told Compass by telephone today.

More than 24 hours after their arrival, the Somali refugee said he and his wife Sarah were still sleeping off the four marathon days and nights they had spent in planes and airports between Yemen and New Zealand. After the initial leg of their journey to the Eritrean capital of Asmara, they were routed through Jeddah, Bombay, Singapore and Sydney.

"Really it was God who saved me," the former Muslim told Compass. "I am happy that all the believers prayed for me everywhere, Christian people," Haji said. "It's a miracle that I am free."

Haji, 27, was released from a Yemeni prison in Aden on August 24, seven weeks after a local judge threatened to execute him for apostasy if he did not return to Islam. The case was halted in the courts after it was reported in the international press.

After extended negotiations with local representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), under which Haji had official refugee status, the government of Yemen agreed to allow Haji and his family to be deported for resettlement elsewhere.

A refugee living in Yemen since 1994, the Somali had converted to Christianity two years ago and adopted the name "George." He was first jailed last January by Yemeni security police, who reportedly beat him and tried for two months to coerce him to return to Islam. Haji was later rearrested and put on trial in June for apostasy, a capital offense under the strict Islamic law observed in Yemen.

"There is no religious freedom in Yemen," Haji commented. "Nobody knows about Jesus, and it's a sin to believe in Him."

The former Muslim had been given a one-week ultimatum at his July 5 trial to recant his faith in Christ and return to Islam, or face execution. Four days later, he told Compass, the judge at a closed-door July 9 hearing on his case offered to "give me everything I wanted" if Haji would come back to Islam.

"I don't want everything, I want Jesus Christ. I don't want anything else. If I die, I die with Jesus. He died for me and also for you," he said he told the judge. Although UNHCR staff were present at this hearing, Haji's court-appointed lawyer was neither informed nor invited.

According to the Somali refugee, one of the many miracles he experienced while in jail for his Christian faith was actually forgiving the Yemeni policeman who had beaten him the most. "That man, he beat me so much," he said. "But I forgive him, because of Christ."

Haji and his wife and son are being housed temporarily at the New Zealand Immigration Service's refugee resettlement center in Auckland. Several local churches have applied to sponsor the Haji's resettlement process since the New Zealand government offered the family asylum in late July.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Panel seeks labeling N. Korea, 3 others religious oppressors

Kyodo News Service (31.07.2000) / HRWF International Secretariat (01.08.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - An advisory panel to the U.S. Department of State has recommended to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that the country designate North Korea, Laos, Saudi Arabia and Turkmenistan as "countries of particular concern" in terms of religious freedom, according to a report issued Monday.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom wrote to Albright on Friday, suggesting that the four countries be added to the list of countries where violations of the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act occur, the report said.

The department is scheduled to issue a new list in September. The first list released last year designated seven countries -- China, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Serbia and Sudan -- as countries of particular concern (CPCs).

Under the law, the U.S. president is authorized to shrink diplomatic ties with listed countries and impose sanctions on them by such measures as preventing financial aid from international institutions.

The commission, which has investigated violations of religious freedom based on information supplied by victims, religious groups, private organizations and reports issued by the department, said that in North Korea, it is apparent that religious freedom is "non-existent."

"The government has imprisoned religious believers and suppresses all organized religious activity except that which serves the interests of the state," the report said on North Korea.

It also pointed out that in Laos, increasing numbers of Protestants, Baha'is and Catholics have been subjected to detention during the past 12 months.

The commission further concluded that all of the seven governments or entities named by the president last October as CPCs continue to engage in particularly severe violations of religious freedom and therefore should continue to be designated as CPCs.

Among the seven countries, the United States criticized China for banning activities of the Falun Gong meditation group and suppressing Tibetan Buddhism and accused Myanmar's military junta of continuing to violate religious freedom.

The panel also urged the department to closely monitor religious freedom in India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam and expressed deep concern about religious violence in Indonesia and Nigeria.

It recommended that the U.S. urge the Indonesian government to take every possible measure to prevent further religious violence in the Maluku islands, where 4,000 Christians and Muslims have reportedly died since January 1999.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

The Open Doors World Watch List, July 2000

General Developments First Half of 2000

WEF (25.07.2000)/HRWF International Secretariat (10.08.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - As we were unable to produce a World Watch List in April, this version will cover the entire period of the first six months of the year 2000. This period proved to be a rather stormy one as far as the position of Christians is concerned. In Nigeria and Indonesia there were persisting clashes between Muslims and Christians during which many thousands perished, churches were destroyed, and many hundreds of thousands had to flee for their lives. In other countries pressure on the Christians was kept high. This was the case in Turkmenistan, Laos, China and Vietnam. In yet other countries tension seemed to lessen. Examples are Algeria, Sudan, and Russia.

Going into more detail, it seems that the situation in Indonesia is rapidly getting out of hand as fanatic Muslims and Christians continue to target each other. The Indonesian government seems incapable of taking sufficient measures to end the atrocities. The Indonesian army and police are either unwilling to interfere, or they are scheming the clashes to increase their power which have been clipped by the new regime of President Wahid. Since the war erupted 18 months ago, more than 2,500 people are reported to have died. These are official figures, the actual number of dead may be higher. In the first six months of this year, nearly a thousand people were killed. Most of the victims are Christians.

Nigeria also experienced a wild start of the year. There were two major waves of violent clashes between Christians and Muslims. One struck in February, the other in May. Both started in Kaduna, but the waves of violence swept over much wider areas. The divisive force that caused the clashes was the planned introduction of Shariah law in a few northern states. Though the regime of President Obasanjo did its best to stop the violence by issuing a cooling-down period on the introduction of Shariah, it remains to be seen how much authority the regime still has. In clear signs of ignoring the regime's decrees, several northern states have by now implemented Shariah law. Many Nigerians give nothing for the chances of the Obasanjo regime, and it seems likely that the country will either split up, or that the army will take power again in another coup d'etat. Whatever the future will bring, thousands of

Christians have decided to leave the north in order to save their lives. Nigeria may never be the same again.

In India Christians continued to suffer from a large number of negative events. Still, the police and the regime of Prime Minister Vajpayee insist that the incidents are not related, and that there is no major plan behind the attacks. As a result, the government is unable to provide the necessary protection to the 25 million Christians in India. In the first half of 2000 the number of attacks continued at a high level. At least two priests died at the hands of Hindu fanatics, four churches were bombed, and there were numberless cases of harassment, destruction and attempts at 're-conversion' of Christians to Hinduism.

One other remarkable event we should not leave unmentioned is the trip to the Middle East of Pope John Paul II. Though he had to drop his plans to visit Iraq because the regime in Baghdad could not guarantee his safety, the pope managed to visit Egypt (on a separate trip), Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The pope claimed from the start that his trip was not political but a personal pilgrimage. He still had to do a tightrope-balancing act in order to avoid offending one party or another. He did a remarkable job. In one of his speeches the pope clearly sympathised with the cause of the Palestinian people who are seeking a homeland of their own, and in another he showed he was sorry for all the wrongs that the church had done to the Jewish people over the centuries.

In the first half of 2000 four major reports were issued on human rights:

- On 25 February the US State Dept issued its annual report on human rights. China and Russia were lambasted. Other critical reports were on North Korea, Iraq, Syria and Cuba.

- In early May, the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Committee of US State Dept issued its first annual report, focusing on China, Russia and Sudan. The report drew much criticism. According to this criticism, the commission, in its first year of work, had not contributed to the protection of religious freedom. The Commission report provided no clear understanding of the nature of the problem of religious rights, nor did it provide a solution.

- In June the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) warned that religious minorities - particularly Christians - face serious threats from the majority communities in all South Asian countries. CCA pointed in particular to the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India and Nepal, Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives, and Buddhist extremist tendencies in Sri Lanka.

- In mid-June Amnesty International (AI) issued its Yearbook 2000. AI reported that human rights were violated in some form or other in 144 countries.

Apart from the major political developments described above, I'll proceed with a survey per continent. Please note that not all developments will have consequences on the ranking of a country in the WWL - most are just confirmations of current positions.

Africa

- The tensions in Algeria have abated further as President Bouteflika issued an amnesty to all Muslim fundamentalists willing to lay down their arms. Though not all violence is over (one of the most violent groups, GIA, is still active), life has become less problematic for Christians.

- The situation for Christians in Chad has improved markedly according to information from our Sub Sahara Africa office.

- The magical year 2000 had hardly started when a violent clash between Christians and Muslims occurred in the village of El-Kusheh in Upper Egypt. At least 20 people died, most of them Christians. As ever, the regime in Cairo tried to downplay the event by claiming it had nothing to do with religion. Though the authorities reacted promptly to end the fighting, they cannot be accused of treating the aftermath in a balanced manner. Though both Muslims and Christians were involved in the conflict, the authorities aimed their attention only to the Christians. In January they ordered the arrest of a Coptic bishop, and in June Christian Shaiboub was sentenced to 15 years for murder. On a more positive note, President Mubarak relaxed church repair regulations in February, and the visit of the Pope in the same month drew the world's attention to the plight of the Christians in Egypt.

- In Ethiopia the number of Evangelical Christians continued to grow rapidly mainly at the expense of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Often, the family, who accuses the converts of betraying their Church, their culture and their family, does not understand a conversion. As a result, converts often find themselves in an extremely hostile environment. In Ethiopia, converts mainly faced persecution from their families. In February and June our Sub Sahara Africa office reported widely on the issue.

- The most populous country in Africa, Nigeria, made the headlines of the world news a few times in the first half of 2000. The multi-ethnic and multi-religion republic came on the verge of collapse on at least two occasions when huge riots broke out in which hundreds if not thousands of people died. The divisive force in Nigeria is Shariah law. A number of states in the north of the country (where Islam is the dominating religion) have indicated their wish to introduce Islamic law into their societies. In most of these states Christians form such a small minority that they cannot object. This is the case in Zamfara, Sokoto, and Niger States. In other northern states like Kaduna and Kano, there are huge Christian communities in the larger cities. Here the introduction of Shariah turned out to be the spark that set the whole area alight. The first conflict broke out on 21 February in Kaduna city. Christians were protesting the planned introduction of Shariah when they were attacked by Muslims. In the fighting that followed hundreds of people died, churches and mosques were burnt, and shops looted.

Our Sub Sahara Africa office came with a detailed report on the destruction of the Baptist seminary in Kaduna. The violence spread to Sokoto and Borno States. The regime of President Obasanjo had to send in the army to put an end to the fighting, but could not prevent that retaliation violence took place in the south-east, in Aba, Imo State, where Christians attacked Muslim Hausas. In order to stop Nigeria from disintegrating, President Obasanjo called on the northern states to return to the status quo ante, i.e. the status before the introduction of Shariah. At the same time, he indicated that he considered Shariah to be in contradiction with Nigeria's secular constitution. After some pressure, most of the northern states agreed. Zamfara State,

which had introduced Shariah in December 1999, remained the only state that refused to comply. Thousands of Christians living in the north decided to leave, selling their shops and properties at dump prices, thus further weakening the north's fragile economy. Niger State decided to follow Zamfara's example in May by introducing Shariah, and thus increased tensions further.

An uneasy calm settled in the north, as the government looked for ways out of the crisis. In April, two Baptist churches were destroyed in Shaki, Oyo State. More and more, the northern states, like Sokoto, Kano, Katsina and Bauchi States announced their support for Shariah. In May the situation exploded again in Kaduna as hundreds of people were killed again, and more churches and mosques were set alight. Muslims put a price (about \$ 2,000) on the head of every Catholic priest killed in Kaduna city. One Catholic priest was indeed killed, his name was Fr. Clement Ozi Bello. While the riots were going on, Sokoto State officially introduced Shariah. To the great surprise of the Christians Kano State decided to introduce Shariah in June. To prevent more clashes, the army was sent in. Christians showed they didn't want to wait and see what it would all lead to and decided to leave the north in great numbers. As a clear indication that the government of Nigeria is not united in its approach to the divisive question that Shariah is, one of the cabinet ministers, Foreign Affairs Minister Lamido, said that any Muslim who does not believe in Shariah has renounced his faith. Tensions are still high, as the country is more

divided than ever on the question of Islamic law. In the Nigerian press there are lengthy discussions what the options for Nigeria will be. Some believe that Nigeria will disintegrate, others hold that the army will intervene to prevent this. No one believes that the regime of President Obasanjo can hold the situation much longer.

- In Sudan the rift between President Bashir and parliamentary speaker Turabi that became visible in December 1999 continued to deepen. The two former allies now seem to be bitter opponents. In a few moves Bashir consolidated his power and outmanoeuvred Turabi, who in June started his own party. Local experts believe Turabi still has important backing. Ever since the removal of Turabi the regime in Khartoum seems to have taken a milder position towards the Christians (this was supported by information from our Sub Sahara office). The Episcopal Church of Sudan could appoint a new bishop in March, and a Catholic priest could be ordained in Rumbek in May. Still, the fighting with the rebels in the south continues with all the atrocities connected. In January the peace talks resumed, but with little hope to end the war. Khartoum extended the existing ceasefire for another three months. In February a government bomber plane dropped bomb on a school, killing 14 children and a teacher.

In early March, Government of Sudan planes dropped 12 bombs on the Samaritan Purse hospital headed by Franklin Graham, son of American evangelist Billy Graham. A number of people were killed and others injured. On 11 April the hospital was bombed again. Christians in the south had to face another major crisis, but this was not caused by Khartoum. At the end of 1999, the SPLM/A leaders issued a demand that all NGOs active in their area had to sign an agreement. Part of this agreement would mean that the SPLM/A would be allowed to use transport facilities of the NGOs. Churches, UNICEF and the World Food Programme were not required to sign the agreement. As this would mean that the NGOs would become legitimate targets for the Government forces, all major NGOs refused to sign. The SPLM/A then told them to leave the region by the end of February. Soon, the relief work collapsed. In March,

Human Rights Watch urged the SPLM/A to start negotiations with the NGOs to save peoples' lives. At the end of June only five NGOs had resumed their work, but the major organisations are still not back.

- In Uganda LRA rebels kidnapped two Italian missionaries in March.

Asia

- Compass Direct reported that the situation for Christians in Azerbaijan had improved as religious restrictions that were imposed earlier were eased. At the same time Islamic opposition parties made it clear that they wanted a ban on Christian outreach.

- In January Bahrain and the Vatican established diplomatic ties.

- The military regime of Burma persisted in its policies to restrict minority rights. Reports about forced labour (i.e. almost slavery) were issued. As a result the UN issued a highly critical report on Burma's human rights record in March.

- In January Time Magazine carried a lead story about China. The basic theme was "More tolerance does not mean less control." Time was right about the fact that in China there was no less control, but the events of the first half of this year indicated that there also was no drive for more tolerance. Several sects like Falun Gong were banned, and there were various huge waves of arrests.

Thousands were sent to labour camps or prison. Harassment was the order of the day. Some perished while in captivity. The officially sanctioned churches in China experienced relative freedom (they could even see the unprecedented fact of having a Christian television programme aired on state television, and in the case of the patriotic Catholic Church to have a seminary re-opened). But the unofficial churches, both the underground Catholics and the Protestant House Church movement encountered many problems. Six House Church leaders and five Catholics, among them a bishop, were arrested in January.

In February China burnt down and blew up churches and took dozens of clerics into custody, among them another bishop, in an intensified campaign against the underground Catholic Church. In March news leaked out that China had written new guidelines for attacking believers. In May there was another wave of arrests, this time in Anhui province. 47 members of the House Church movement were arrested. In the same month a Catholic priest was arrested and sentenced to 6 years for printing of Bibles and religious books.

The West showed how important human rights and freedom of religion are to them. The UN, the EU and the US all issued sharp criticism of China's record in these areas during the first three months. The US energetically went off to get China condemned in the UN. But the end of the affair was predictable: China escaped condemnation in the UN yet again, and it was even granted Most Favoured Nation status permanently. The inevitable

conclusion of this affair is that the West may be interested in human rights and religious freedom, but when it comes to taking serious decisions economic values still dominate.

- Christians in India continued to suffer from various forms of attacks. Though until recently most such attacks occurred in the north (primarily in Gujarat State), the summary below indicates that the violence is spreading. Early in January a priest was beaten up in Panipat, Haryana State. Around the same time houses of Christians were burnt in Berhampur, Orissa State. That state also introduced legislation that restricted conversions and angered Christians since it was clearly aimed against them. Also in January, prominent Christian Chandrakant Shourie was beaten up by Hindu fundamentalists.

Gujarat State considered conversion restrictions, but backed down after protests. At the end of the month a man named Dara Singh was arrested for the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines. In February Uttar Pradesh State issued a draft for a new Religion Bill, which was met with much criticism. In early March Christians in Mysore, Karnataka State, were pressurised by fundamentalist Hindus to donate part of their church land for building a Hindu shrine; threats against the Christians were added if they would not comply. At the end of March, Hindu fundamentalists in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh State, ransacked a school and attacked a priest. Another priest was attacked in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh State in early April.

Around the same time in West Bengal State, the VHP, a fundamentalist Hindu movement, 're-converted' 50 tribal people by having them pour milk and paddy into a blazing ritual fire. At the end of April religious literature (i.e. Bibles) were burnt in Agra, Uttar Pradesh State. In the same period in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh State, another priest was attacked, while in Rewari, Haryana State, three nuns were attacked. Amnesty International issued a highly critical report, lashing out against various Hindu fundamentalist movements like the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal. In May, two churches in Andhra Pradesh State were blasted in bomb attacks. In the first attack at least 12 people were injured. There were other attacks against three more churches in Andhra Pradesh State in the same period. In Karnataka State and Goa State, two more bomb attacks against churches occurred in May. Christians immediately claimed that the Sangh Parivar (another Hindu fundamentalist group) was responsible for the bomb attacks.

A Christian girls' hostel was attacked in Nasik, Maharashtra State in May. In early June, a Roman Catholic priest named Brother George Kunji Kandham (42) was murdered in his mission home, in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh State. It was the fourth sensational incident of an attack on the missionaries and their activities in Mathura during the past three months. A key witness in this murder case later died under mysterious circumstances while in police custody. The Indian Pentecostal Church assembly hall in Madla, Madhya Pradesh State, was seized by Bajrang Dal activists and converted into a Hindu temple.

At about the same time, the stabbed body of a priest named Ashish Prabash Masih (25), was found in his rented apartment in the city of Jalandpur, Punjab State. Also in June, a priest was beaten up by some youths in the southeast of Madhya Pradesh State. The youths shaved the head of 22-year-old priest Rajendra Masih and paraded him through the village of Vishrampuri, near the city of Jagdalpur. A Roman Catholic church was ransacked by unidentified persons in Yavatmal district in the east of

Maharashtra State. In Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh State, two crosses were removed from Christian graves. Uttar Pradesh State alone accounted for more human rights violations than the rest of the country put together. Statistics compiled by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for 1999-2000 indicated that 26,829 cases were reported in Uttar Pradesh State, which was over 55% of the year's total.

To summarise the situation of Christians in India in the first half of 2000, I'd like to quote Archbishop Alan de Lastic who said that ever since the BJP ruled India (i.e. the last two years) attacks against Christians have escalated. It is very unfortunate that Archbishop De Lastic died in a car crash in Poland at the end of June. He was known for his straightforward and staunch support of the rights of Christians.

- The first half of the year 2000 saw a continuation of the religious war in Indonesia. The mass killings concentrated in the Moluccan or Spice Islands, the only region in Indonesia where Christians form the majority of the population. Practically every single island in the Moluccan archipelago was hit by violence: Ambon, Halmahera, Seram, Buru, Haruku, Obi, Morotai and Bacan - everywhere dozens of mainly Christians were killed. The violence was also spread out over the entire period, there were hardly any moments for the Christians to recover from the attacks. Apart from the mass killings, churches were damaged and burnt, and rewards were issued for the killing of pastors.

Thousands of Jihad warriors travelled to the Moluccan Islands to fight the Christians. The Indonesian army and police, sent in originally to end the fighting were accused of taking sides and of not interfering. It is generally believed that the fighting has spun out of control of the Indonesian government, and regularly calls were issued to allow an international peace keeping force to control the situation. This was consistently turned down by Jakarta. It is estimated that over the past 18 months (the religious conflict started in January 1999) more than 2,500 people have died. It was estimated that during the reign of President Wahid 55 churches have been closed, destroyed or burnt down. The violence was not limited to the Moluccan archipelago.

There were occasional outbursts of inter-religious violence in other parts of Indonesia as well. In January riots broke out on the tourist resort of Lombok island. A few days later south Sulawesi was the scene of riots. Also in January, two churches were burnt on Sumbawa island. In May a church was bombed in Medan, Sumatra. In June central Sulawesi saw the killing of at least 120 people. There were several Muslim protest marches in Jakarta and other cities on Java over this period. Christians are desperate and hide in the tropical forests, or they are leaving the Moluccan Islands by the thousands (there are between 80,000 and 100,000 refugees). But even here they may run into trouble, as was proven when in June an overcrowded ferry carrying some 500 Christian refugees from Halmahera to northern Sulawesi was caught in a storm and sank, killing all but a few survivors.

- In March the BBC reported that the number of Christians in Israel and the Palestinian Authority is remaining constant at about 180,000, while the population as a whole is growing fast. The relative decline of the number of Christians is caused by emigration. The result is that Christians in the Holy Land form an increasingly smaller part of society. In January (and again in June) the Orthodox Arabs issued a statement accusing the church leaders of selling lands to the Israelis, a 'no-no' issue

among Palestinian Arabs. Also in January a Messianic congregation was intimidated, after new Orthodox Jewish initiatives at anti-missionary legislation.

In February the Vatican and the Palestinian Authority concluded a pact about the position of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land. Israel reacted furiously. In March, three Messianic Jewish believers from Ethiopian background were threatened with expulsion from Israel. The Israeli Interior Ministry even went as far as declaring that Messianic Jews were 'enemies of the state.' Also in March the Pope did a tightrope-balancing act when he paid a visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The Pope clearly sympathised with the Palestinian cause in one of his speeches. Speaking at the Holocaust monument in Israel, the Pope later asked for forgiveness for the many mistakes the Church had done to the Jews. In April the WEF reported that Evangelical Christians were facing KGB-style tactics in the Palestinian Authority areas.

- The usually quiet kingdom of Jordan had some stormy days in February when a majority of members of parliament suddenly called for the introduction of Shariah law in the country. This was the result of cunning tactics of the Muslim Brotherhood. As most of the MPs withdrew their support to the motion immediately after the vote, the initiative was killed the next day. Muslim fundamentalists were furious. In March Pope John Paul II arrived to start his Middle East tour. He later went to Israel. In April the government cancelled a Christian celebration which would be held in Amman's Roman amphitheatre, although permission had previously been granted in February.

- According to information from our office working in the Gulf region the situation for Christians in Kuwait has improved somewhat.

- The regime in Vientiane, Laos, launched a new wave of persecution against Christians in January as Christians were arrested who were listening to the radio programmes of FEBC. In May, the regime sent an official delegation to China. Part of the delegation was formed by members of the official Lao Evangelical Church. Their task was to study how the official church functions in neighbouring China. It seems obvious that Laos would like to copy the Chinese example. In June news reached the West that another wave of persecution had struck the Christians of Laos. Laotian Christians were called 'enemies of the state' and were forced to recant their faith in public. Those who refused were held in wooden stocks.

- Christian Solidarity Worldwide claimed that religious violence against Christians in Lebanon is on the increase. At the same time Syrian Catholic bishop Melki spoke of his fears that Christianity will fade away in Lebanon as more and more Christians are emigrating. In May members of the radical Muslim movement of Hezbollah arrested some co-workers of a Christian TV station. In an unrelated event, a Hezbollah fighter killed Christian in southern Lebanon.

- In West Malaysia Islam is taking an increasingly central position in society. Johor State is among those who have introduced Shariah, and more states like Selangor, Kedah and the Federal Territory are eagerly considering doing so. This already has had repercussions on the rest of society. Karaoke bars have been closed, special food outlets for Muslims have been asked for, and tourist resorts have been put under restrictions as far as the sale of drinks and bathing clothes are concerned.

- As Compass Direct discovered, Christians in Nepal continue to face discrimination. The government of Nepal has refused to register the Bible Society in the country because its board members are Christian converts from Hinduism. In another development, local villagers in Gorkha, a Maoist area in western Nepal, destroyed a church, beat Christians and looted their property. The villagers destroyed the homes of six Christians.

- It seems that North Korea is cautiously coming out of its isolation. In June there was a meeting between the presidents of North and South Korea and the atmosphere was very cordial. As a result of the warming climate, more news is coming out of North Korea. What became known about the situation of the church in North Korea was not good. WEF reported that in 1999 400 North Korean Christians were executed because they were caught in possession of a Bible. It was also reported that another 100,000 Christians are believed to be in one of the 200 labour camps. In February this year three missionaries were killed in North Korea.

- According to information from our office working in the Gulf region the situation for Christians in Oman has improved somewhat.

- The new regime of military leader General Musharraf gave the Christians in Pakistan new hope for an improvement of their deplorable situation. However, the first cracks in this confidence appeared when in April two brothers, Saleem and Rasheed Masih were arrested and charged with blasphemy. Compass Direct reported in June that both brothers were later sentenced to a 35 (!) year prison term. At the end of April the Catholic Church in Pakistan started a campaign against religious apartheid.

- The Philippines made the headlines due to the widespread violence of Muslim rebels and the army that occurred in the south of the country. The islands of Mindanao, Basilan and Jolo became battlefields where extensive gunfights were fought. In April the fighting had taken such proportions that 100,000 people had to flee. Apart from MILF rebel fighters, another Muslim rebel group became known all over the world. Abu Sayyaf continued its tactics of raiding villages in the south and abducting citizens for ransom. With this money they then buy weapons to continue their activities. In March Abu Sayyaf attacked a Catholic school and kidnapped four people, one of them a Catholic priest. Abu Sayyaf was holding several groups of hostages. When in April their demands were not met quickly enough, members of Abu Sayyaf threatened to behead two of their hostages, a threat they carried out later. Then at the end of April, Abu Sayyaf raided a holiday resort in eastern Malaysia and kidnapped 21 tourists. The rebels loaded the hostages in a speedboat and made for their base on Jolo island. The negotiations for the release of the hostages are still dragging on. The rebels demand a separate Muslim state in the south, but Manila refuses to consider this. In an exchange of fire in May between Abu Sayyaf rebels and the army a Catholic priest was killed.

- The Gulf state of Qatar, one of the most conservative on the Arabian peninsula, permitted the opening of the first church in the country in January. It is a Catholic church, that will serve the spiritual needs of the expatriate community.

- Saudi Arabia's vigilante religious police (mutawa) raided a private Christian worship service in Riyadh on 7 January, arresting 15 of the estimated 100 persons gathered in a private home, including the small children of two families. This time, the Saudis

decided not to sentence the Christians to jail. By 15 February everyone was released and deported. Since then, there have been no known Christian prisoners in Saudi. March was the climax of the pilgrimage season, as more than 2 million pilgrims came to Saudi Arabia for the annual hajj. At the end of March Amnesty International issued a highly critical report on human rights on Saudi Arabia. The regime of course denied all accusations based, as WEF wryly added, on their peculiar interpretation of the issue of human rights.

- In Sri Lanka an Evangelical Church in the city of Makola was attacked and demolished by mobs on Sunday 15 January. The mobs were mainly Buddhist extremists.

- Turkmenistan has moved further in the direction of a police state. Turkmen President Niyazov has imposed a cult that smacks of the old Stalinist times and of the leadership's cult of Kim Il Sung in North Korea. All churches are under close surveillance. Turkmen believers are regularly harassed, meetings are as good as impossible, and when they are held they run the risk of being raided by the police as happened in February. In the same month the regime forced the family of Christian prisoner Shagildy Atakov to move house. In a new move, the regime in Ashgabat lashed out against non-indigenous Christians. The work of tentmakers has become very difficult, if not impossible. Many are not allowed to return after they have left the country. In a series of arrests six Russian and Ukrainian Baptist pastors were hunted down and deported one by one from Turkmenistan.

- According to information from our office working in the Gulf region the situation for Christians in the United Arab Emirates has improved somewhat.

- After toning down their attacks on Christians in 1999, the regime of Uzbekistan has adopted a more low-key approach. There are no more displays of large-scale campaigns aimed at disrupting church life. Still, it is obvious that the regime is persisting to crush all fundamentalist movements, be they Muslim or Christian. In February Uzbek police arrested more than 30 young people for distributing Islamic leaflets in the city of Karshi. Human Rights Watch issued a report accusing Uzbekistan for persistent police harassment in March. In the same month pastor Stanislav Kim marked his first year in prison.

- In Vietnam another Christian was arrested in January. It is Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thuy. She was sentenced to 1 year in prison for "interfering with an officer of the law doing his duty." In February WEF received 24 documents of complaints and petitions directed towards the Vietnamese authorities, including actual government summons, court documents and news of prisoners. On 29 April WEF published a list of known prisoners. The list contained the names of 21 Christians. Vietnam freed more than 12,000 prisoners on Sunday, 30 April, its largest amnesty in history, marking the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. But no Christian imprisoned for religious beliefs was known to be among those released.

Latin America

- After the Christmas cease-fire between the government and the rebel movements ELN and FARC ended Colombia returned to its daily routine of kidnappings, crime and

killings. Violence against pastors continued. Our Latin America office issued a detailed report on the abduction and killing of pastors. Pressure on Christians led to an exodus from the troubled regions to quieter areas. Meanwhile the peace talks between the government of President Pastrana and the rebels continued and in June some progress was reported.

- In Cuba there were contradictory developments. First, a group of high profile dissidents was arrested. In May most of them were released again. In May Compass Direct reported on the unprecedented opening of Baptist churches in Cuba. The June issue of the same magazine reported that a Havana Baptist church was forced to close down on Easter. It was the Catholic Church that made the loudest appeals for more religious freedom. The Pope issued an appeal to this purpose in January, and in June the Cuban bishops demanded access to the state media. It is still too early to see if this more assertive approach of the Christians in Cuba will have positive and lasting consequences.

- In February the UN published a critical report on the situation of human rights in Mexico. Our Latin America office came with the news that 42 Protestant pastors have been arrested unjustly, and have been given prison terms of 35 years on false accusations. In March Protestants were banned from a Mexican village. However, Evangelicals in Chiapas continue to grow in numbers despite persecution.

- There was no news from Peru about the cases of unjustly imprisoned Christians. Colonel David de Vinatea, the best known of these prisoners, sent a few letters from his prison cell.

Europe

- The centre-left government of Greece decided to remove religion from the ID documents because it considered this to be not of this time. However, this proposal met with fierce opposition from the Greek Orthodox Church with organised a massive demonstration in June.

- The fragile peace in Kosovo was put to the test many times as there were confrontations between the Muslim majority of Albanians and the Orthodox Christian minority of the Serbs. In the first half of 2000 two churches were attacked. In January an Orthodox church was destroyed, and in May there was an attack on a Pentecostal church.

- In an end of the year speech for Russian television on 31 December 1999, President Yeltsin announced his immediate withdrawal as president. He appointed Valentin Putin as his successor. Though there were many fears that this former chairman of the KGB would cause a new crisis for the Christians, this turned out to be unfounded. Putin soon showed that he was interested in religion. He showed up during various Orthodox celebrations. One of Putin's earliest measures was to extend the deadline for the registration of religious organisations. Putin's greatest goal was to end the crisis in Chechnya as soon as possible, and for this a massive military campaign was launched. Hundreds of thousands of people fled for their lives and thousands perished. The Russian army used its heaviest weapons and dirtiest tactics against the Chechen rebels. This led to widespread western protests of human rights violations, but the Russians went ahead undeterred. Putin became immensely

popular among his own people with this hard-line approach. This was indicated when in the May presidential elections he didn't even need a second round to officially become the next Russian president.

Most of Chechnya was soon under Russian control, but the Russians never managed to extinguish the last Chechen resistance. The Muslim Chechen rebels turned to guerrilla tactics. Everything that was even remotely connected to the Russians became their target. This included Christians. As a result, practically all non-indigenous Christians have now left Chechnya. It is unknown what has happened to those who remained behind. There no longer is a church in Chechnya.

- In Turkey two Christian evangelists were arrested and jailed in March. They were released after 30 days. In June a Bible study meeting in Istanbul was raided by police, and 8 members were arrested.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Freedom of Religion Remains in Peril

Helsinki Commission Panelists Report Grim Findings

in Search of Religious Liberty Protections

CSCE (19.07.2000)/ HRWF (28.07.2000) Website <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - Governments are still imposing restrictions on individual religious liberties, despite a prior agreement to curtail anti-religious laws and governmental practices designed to prevent people from practicing or expressing their religious beliefs, according to panelists at today's Helsinki Commission briefing on religious liberty.

At a Capitol Hill briefing today, the Helsinki Commission formally released an in-depth study examining the religious liberties laws and constitutional provisions of twelve countries: Austria, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the United States, and Uzbekistan.

The report documents a "frightening" trend in France to limit an individual's right to freely express religious views or participate in religious activities according to one Library of Congress researcher who, as part of a team of legal experts, has spent nearly two years compiling information for the report.

The lower house of the French parliament last month passed a law creating the new crime of "mental manipulation" and established civil and criminal penalties for activities by religious or philosophical groups that government officials have deemed unacceptable.

"This is the latest French parliamentary action to threaten the religious liberty of French citizens," said Helsinki Commission Chairman Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ). "I have urged the French Parliament to abandon this course of action."

France is not alone in its zeal to curtail citizens' religious activities. Greece had implemented a policy requiring one's religious affiliation to be listed on government-issued identification cards. But in a welcomed development, that policy was recently rescinded. Such a scheme to identify members of groups left minority religious groups in Greece vulnerable, not only in their homeland, but wherever else they may have traveled, Smith said. "I commend the Greek Government's decision to abandon that policy," Smith added.

Chairman Smith added that religious liberty conditions in Turkey remain in question, along with those of other OSCE countries included in the report.

"In Turkey, various raids on Protestant groups over the last year and the continuing conflict over the closure of the Greek Orthodox seminary on the island of Halki indicate serious issues of religious discrimination in that country," Smith noted.

The Helsinki Commission requested the Law Library of Congress to prepare a comparative study of legal systems in selected participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the effect of those laws on religious liberty. The countries were selected for their diverse geography, history and religious communities.

The study is the culmination of research by legal experts from the Law Library of Congress, and the Congressional Research Service. The project was inspired by the agreement of OSCE participating States to "ensure that their laws, regulations, practices and policies conform with their obligation under international law and are brought into harmony with the provisions of the Declaration on Principles and other OSCE commitments."

The study is available to the public in order to further understanding of various legal approaches to religious liberty issues and encourage compliance with relevant OSCE commitments. Copies of the report can be obtained by calling the Helsinki Commission office or by downloading the document from

<http://www.house.gov/csce>

<http://www.house.gov/csce/LOCRELLIB1.pdf>

<http://www.house.gov/csce/LOCRELLIB2.pdf>

The presentations, made by several Library researchers, which summarize the study's reports on France, the Netherlands, Russia, Ukraine, the United States and Uzbekistan may also be downloaded from the Commission's website.

To schedule a print or broadcast interview with Helsinki Commission Chairman Rep. Christopher H. Smith, please contact the Commission office at 202-225-1901.

HELSINKI COMMISSION NEWS

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

234 Ford House Office Building Contact: Ben Anderson

Washington, D.C. 20515-6460

(202) 225-1901

Rep. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman

Ben.Anderson@mail.house.gov

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Co-Chairman

<http://www.house.gov/csce>

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Map of Religious Persecution in the World

1999 Report of Aid to the Church in Need

ZENIT.org. (14.05.2000) / HRWF International Secretariat (15.05.2000) - Website: www.hrwf.net - Email: info@hrwf.net - Last Wednesday, the international organization Aid to the Church in Need presented a report in Rome on religious persecution in the world. The report divides the globe into various areas: communist regimes, Islamic countries, African genocides, Hindu fundamentalism, and the Middle East. But it also denounces some countries with well established democracies for "certain legislation against sects," which runs the risk of "suffocating the faith experience."

The map has all the colors of the rainbow, but is anything but rosy. Red, green, yellow, blue, black, and white designate as many degrees of religious liberty in the international organization's report, from "open" persecutions, which in this century are responsible for the greatest number of Christians killed for reasons directly or indirectly related to their faith, to persecutions through legislation, which either limit or violate religious liberty. The report was presented by Attilio Tamburrini, director of the Italian section of Aid to the Church in Need, and Fr. Bernardo Cervellera, director of the Vatican agency "Fides."

The 1999 report on religious liberty in the world paints a worrying picture. The research, which was carried out in 193 countries by Andrea Morigi, Vittorio Emanuele Vernole and Chiara Verna, shows clearly that virtually no country is exempt. Fr. Cervellera said that religious liberty is the result of "simultaneous recognition of the freedom of faith, the right of expression, and of international relations among those who adhere to the same religion. Offenses to this liberty occur when the cohesion of these elements is destroyed, limiting one or another, or creating a simultaneous control over them all."

Red Area

The red area includes China, Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba, in other words, the communist countries. It is an area that, up until recently, was expanding, but at present seems to be on the way out. The chapter on China is especially voluminous

where, despite the legal formality that attempts to favor religious liberty (like the norm that provides for a 2-year prison term for employees who deprive citizens of the exercise of religious liberty, something that has never been applied), detentions, arbitrary arrests and violence against Christians continue to be verified. But these are not the only ones in the Chinese authorities' watchtower. In particular, the report quotes the case of Falung Gong, a group against which a violent repressive campaign was unleashed in 1999, which led to the imprisonment, internment in insane asylums, and forced labor of 36,000 sect members. The media reported that some of them committed "suicide" in prison.

Green Area

The green area marks the Islamic countries in which Christians continue to be regarded as second-class citizens, as in Mauritania and Sudan. These countries sometimes even apply the death penalty for apostasy. Between these two extremes is a whole series of violations of religious liberty that go from striking cases like East Timor, to specific incidents that are not attention catchers but denote a hostile environment to other religious confessions. Such is the case of the Filipino engineer who was arrested and later expelled from Saudi Arabia for "Christian activities."

Black Area

Black is the color that marks the African continent on the "Aid to the Church in Need" map, an area where limitations to religious liberty and persecutions are increasing. This is an area that registers a high number of dead missionaries, illustrated by a country like Uganda, where religion is mixed with tribal factors or control of economic resources by political groups supported by international capitalism. The report highlights the case of Rwanda, where the consequences of the 1994 genocide are not yet over. Reference is made to the case of Bishop Augustine Misago of Gikongoro, who is in prison accused of genocide and crimes against humanity, although no proofs have been given, but for whom the death penalty has been requested.

Yellow Area

India and Nepal are in the yellow area, where Hindus are attacked by extremists of their religion and by the State, through laws that oppose conversions or through administrative dispositions (such as disallowing State benefits to converts), which, in fact, are a denial of the liberty of conscience.

Other Areas

The blue area indicates border territories with Israel and under the control of the Palestinian Authority. These are areas of constant tension in which religious extremists are active. The white area refers to countries with well established, consolidated democracies, such as France and Belgium, where the tendency to promulgate laws against sects is leading to the danger of suffocating "strong" experiences of a religious nature, the report states.

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

Two Thirds of all Martyrs Killed in the 20th Century

Statements by President of Commission of New Martyrs

ZENIT (05.05.2000)/HRWF International Secretariat (10.05.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - In the 2000 years of the Church's history, two thirds of all the martyrs died in the 20th century (close to 27 million out of a total of 40 million). This was the revelation made by Bishop Michel Hrynchyshyn, Exarch of the Ukrainians of the Byzantine rite in France, and president of the Commission of New Martyrs of the Vatican Jubilee Committee, a group of 10 experts established a few years ago by the Pope, with the task of gathering information on the martyrs of our century from the Churches of all the different Christian confessions.

Bishop Hrynchyshyn opened the sessions of the international symposium "The Martyrs of Eastern Europe and Nazism," which the Pontifical Athenaeum "Regina Apostolorum" of Rome offered as its contribution to the Jubilee Martyrs' Day on May 7, when John Paul II will preside at the "Commemoration of the 20th Century Witnesses of the Faith" in the Coliseum.

-- Bishop Hrynchyshyn, why is it true that the 20th century has had the most Christian martyrs?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: In the "Christian World Encyclopedia," scholar David B. Barrett maintains that during the last 20 centuries there have been close to 40 million "martyrs," 26,685,000 of them in the 20th century. Of course Barrett uses the term "martyr" in a very broad sense. But the Pope is in agreement with this tendency. "This century has seen very numerous martyrs, especially because of Nazism, communism, and racial and tribal conflicts (Cf. Bull Incarnationis Mysterium).

-- What are the reasons for such a large number of "martyrs"?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: There are close to one billion Catholics in the world, in addition to other Christians; all groups have been persecuted and have been killed for their faith all over the planet, in more than 70 nations. The perverse ideologies of Nazism and communism spread throughout the world: these are responsible for the elimination of many Christians.

- What is the geography of martyrdom that is reflected in the work of the Commission you preside? How many martyrs have you counted? What countries or continents have been most affected by this phenomenon?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: Martyrdom is emblematic of the 20th century; it is striking and marks our time. Undoubtedly the greatest number of martyrs has been registered in Europe, where Christians were persecuted in virtually every country. The Commission of New Martyrs was given the task to prepare "catalogues" of "martyrs." We have contacted the various Episcopal Conferences around the world to gather documents and information on "martyrs" in different countries. To date we have received records relating to 10,000 cases. The information has been classified according to established criteria and catalogues have been made. In nations like Sudan, Algeria, North Korea, China... Christians are still martyred for their faith.

-- What distinguishes these modern martyrs from those of other centuries of the Church's history?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: Today's martyrs are less known, less "glorious" in people's eyes. The details of many of their stories are unknown. They were killed almost secretly. Some languished for years in prisons and "gulags." We don't even know where they died and where they were buried. It is something totally different from the glory of those who were torn apart by lions in the Colosseum:

-- What are the most unexpected aspects of the census on which you are working?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: Martyrdom is a great treasure and blessing for the Church. But this treasure has been neglected and ignored until John Paul II began insistently to attract our attention to this unique grace of the 20th century. This Pope has beatified some 900 martyrs in his pontificate. "I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life" (Jn 4, 35).

This is the stimulating challenge which the Church faces today: the harvesting. And it is already a fact. Good texts have already been written on the subject: I think the studies of Andrea Riccardi (in Italian), Didier Rance (in French) and Robert Royal (in English) will be available for the May 7 celebration. The German Episcopal Conference has edited two volumes on Witnesses for Christ; Charlotte Molette an additional two volumes on the Martyrs of the spiritual resistance. Moreover, remarkable study meetings have been organized, like this congress of the Pontifical Athenaeum "Regina Apostolorum" of Rome on "The Martyrs of Eastern Europe and Nazism"; or like the conference announced in April 1999 in Lvov, Ukraine.

-- >From the point of view of ecumenism, what has your research found? What confessions have been the most outstanding for witnesses of faith in our century?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: In his address to the Synod of Europe last October, Anglican Bishop John Hind of Gibraltar said: "All our Churches have martyrs." I am moved to remember that every year, when I was rector of a seminary, we remembered a former student who gave his life in Papua New Guinea in 1942. He did not die for the Church of England, but for Jesus Christ and those he was called to serve. This commemoration was useful so that the students could think again about their calling. And I anxiously await the day when we will each learn to honor the other's martyrs. We were all profoundly moved by the martyrs to the European dictators of the 20th century. They come from different confessions, like the companions of St. Charles Lwanga and those who sacrificed their life under Idi Amin in Uganda, as, for example, Archbishop Janani Lurum. During the 10th Orthodox Congress of Western Europe (Paray-le-Monial, 1999), Bishop Kalixto spoke about the martyrdom of Orthodox Christians. The ecumenism of the "gulags" was certainly one of the most splendid Christian testimonies. In the "gulags" all Christians were one; they spoke the same language.

-- As regards the martyrs of Nazism and communism, the subject of this congress at the Pontifical Athenaeum "Regina Apostolorum," what are its common aspects and what are its differences in your opinion?

-- BISHOP HRYNCHYSHYN: Communism declared itself without God or against God, while Nazism, instead, was a perverse philosophic system. Nazism did not declare war on the Church, but simply persecuted Christians when it was necessary for its objectives. Communism, on the other hand, openly proscribed some Churches, destroying them as happened in Romania and Ukraine in the respective Greek-Orthodox communities. Christians have been expressly persecuted for their faith. In any case, both ideologies generated millions of "martyrs."

[Back to the Table of Contents](#)

31 Missionaries have been killed during 1999

Four "daughters" of Mother Teresa die witnessing to the Gospel

ZENIT (29.12.1999)/ HRWF International Secretariat (04.01.2000) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - In honor of the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the Fides agency has published a list of all missionaries known to have been killed in 1999. These heroic witnesses to faith, even if not yet officially recognized by the Church as "martyrs," serve as examples to lead the way into the Jubilee Year.

Fr. Bernardo Cervellera, director of the "Fides" news agency, states that martyrdom in our day, especially in the often forgotten parts of the world, is a sign of hope. Cervellera said that the majority of the 31 missionaries killed during this year have died in countries, "that if analyzed through the eyes of the mass media offer no significant hope".

Martyrdom, nevertheless, instead of being a reason for sadness, "shows that the Church was and is there to proclaim, peace, forgiveness, the love of God for man," stated Fr. Cervellera.

Among the murdered missionaries of 1999, there are a priest who lived his last moments celebrating the Eucharist in the jungles of the Congo, another who died aiding the refugees of East Timor, and another preaching on the rivers of Colombia. All of these, emphasized the director of "Fides", were on a journey. Because of this, these "martyrs", as he called them, are models for that "journey-pilgrimage" that every Christian must travel, on account of this Jubilee year.

Fr. Cervella cautioned that the list published is necessarily incomplete, being that the witness of many who have given their life for Christ has not been recorded publicly.

Of the 31 killings recorded, 17 were priests (10 diocesan, 7 religious), 8 women religious, 4 seminarians, and two lay catechists.

Fifteen died in Africa, 10 in Asia, and 6 in Latin America. The countries where the most missionaries have died are East Timor (9), Angola (6), and Colombia (4). Most of these missionaries were natives of these countries, witnessing to their fellow citizens.

Not long after Mother Teresa's death, her daughters, the Missionaries of Charity, have become the religious family that has had to pay the highest price in blood, in

order to fulfill their mission of love. During this year four have been killed (three in Sierra Leone and one in Guinea-Conarky).

Next May, John Paul II will dedicate a special day for these murdered missionaries as well as for all witness to the Christian Faith, including Protestants and Orthodox.