



BUDAPEST REPORT ON  
CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION  
2018

Edited by  
JÓZSEF KALÓ  
LÓRÁND UJHÁZI

Dialóg Campus

# BUDAPEST REPORT ON CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION 2018



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Edited by  
József Kaló and Lóránd Ujházi

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## FOREWORD

The *Budapest Report*, presenting the situation of persecuted Christian communities in the world is published in 2018 for the second time. The Hungarian Government initiated the publication of a summary report in 2017 with the aim of familiarizing the Hungarian general and scientific community with the traditions, life and prospects of specific Christian communities in a credible manner every year. The report was also published in English last year making it accessible for the international community as well.

Several international research institutes also deal with the evaluation of the current situation of Christian communities. The Hungarian Catholic Bishops Conference regularly sends round the hat to assist persecuted Christians in the Middle East, the donations, with funds from the Hungarian Government were used to build a school in Erbil, Iraq, which is attended by Christian, Yazidi and Muslim children alike. It is an unprecedented act that assistance to persecuted Christian communities is also an aim of the Government besides the obvious engagement of the Church in Hungary.

The studies in this publication present the situation of Christian communities in 2018 from several perspectives. The general security policy studies help us understand the situation in the regions involved, especially in the Middle East and the African continent. Thus a comprehensive picture is generated about the life of Christian communities, which are threatened by economic and political crises, natural disasters, the climate-crisis, as well as by interreligious conflicts like in this particular case.



Finally, the publication discusses the efforts of specific Hungarian and international (charity) organizations, which are focused on the ministerial humanitarian support to persecuted Christians. This is the part of the publication where the activities of the Holy See and the Pope of Rome are also discussed. Pope Francis, just like his predecessors in the 20<sup>th</sup> century emphasizes the international protection of the rights of religious and ethnic communities in his addresses, as well as – in several cases even with funds – assists persecuted minorities. In October 2018 our Holy father personally met the group of Christian students, studying in Hungary with a scholarship from the Hungarian Government, and had an opportunity to learn the solidarity of the Hungarian people first hand, which, as he put it “deeply touched him”.

The publication does not simply provide comprehensive information on persecuted Christians, but it also aims at promoting solidarity and assistance to persecuted communities.

I request all the readers of this publication to pray for our persecuted Christian brethren so that besides mental and material support, they also get spiritual assistance. I am pleased to extend my pastoral blessing to the authors and the readers of this publication as well as to our persecuted Christian brethren.

Cardinal *Péter Erdő*  
the Primate of Hungary, Archbishop  
of Esztergom–Budapest



## WELCOMING THOUGHTS

Dear Reader,

This publication would be redundant if Christians were not persecuted. Four out of five people persecuted for their religion in the world are Christian. I must start my introduction with this sheer fact to highlight its real importance, despite the limitations in length of this publication. At the same time, this statement also illuminates the reason for and the purpose of the mission we undertake – to assist persecuted Christians. Extremist organizations fully exploit the volatile situations in the crisis regions. They ravish the foundation of the Western world, which is also our shared, universal heritage, and endeavour to obliterate the Christian past forever. Meanwhile, most of the Western leaders, being afraid of losing their status, are trying to understate these issues or they give a politely evasive answer: “We do not deal with religious issues”. Contrarily, Hungary has continuously been working to help the persecuted. The foundations of our program are common sense and social solidarity: we have asked the leaders of the persecuted communities how we could be of effective assistance to them. From this simple question we have learned that they want to stay home, in their homeland, and to do so they need security and the reconstruction of their institutions. Hungary provides an adequate answer with its own program, by assisting their resilience, their repatriation and providing security at home, as well as ensuring them a decent standard of living. In the near future, our intent is to make more people realize: the transformation of the faulty Western aspect and the stability of the crisis regions may

bring about change in the protection of the persecuted Christians and all communities living in the affected countries. Our cause, in which we can also count on the help of the Visegrád countries, is a noble one. Finally, I wish that reports on persecuted Christians would become redundant as soon as possible, in which respect we have a lot to do together. I trust that this book will make benevolent people act, so that the peace we have promised may come true.

*Zsolt Semjén*  
Deputy Prime Minister

I.

GENERAL SECURITY  
POLICY – REFLECTIONS CONCERNING  
THE SECURITY OF CHRISTIANS



*István Resperger*<sup>1</sup>

# THE BASIS OF ANTI-CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES OF THE ISLAMIC STATE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

“We declare Fallujah an Islamic State and call on you to side with us!  
We are here and defend you against Maliki’s army and the Iranian Shiite.”<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

0845 hours, 11 September 2001 is the start of a new era in the history of mankind, as well as a major milestone in the fight against terrorism. At 1545 hours on 9 April 1865 the Civil War<sup>3</sup> ended in the United States of America, since then the US has not suffered such a great loss of life on American soil.<sup>4</sup> In the aftermath of the attack, terrorism, religiously motivated terrorism and fighting against it have become priorities. Nobody would have thought that in 2015 the infamous Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – hereinafter Islamic State (IS) – terrorist organization would endanger the delicate balance of the Middle East. It has quickly made it to headlines and news reports, shocking the world, utilizing every element of information warfare on the Internet and in all forms of the media.

The IS has not only created a crisis, but it has also been born as the result of a multi-layer crisis, a power vacuum. Starting from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the supremacy of the US was unquestionable

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<sup>1</sup> National University of Public Service, Institute of National Security

<sup>2</sup> Fallujah, 13.01.2014.

<sup>3</sup> General Lee surrendered at Appomattox on 9 April 1865 and that was the military end of the war. On 29 May 1865 President Andrew Johnson declared amnesty and the war officially ended. (DUPUY–DUPUY 1993, 904.)

<sup>4</sup> Victims of the New York attacks: 6,807 deaths, 2,100 injured. In the bloodiest battle of the Civil War at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1–3 July 1863, the Southern forces suffered 28,000, the Northern army 23,000 casualties including dead, wounded and missing men. On 7 December 1941 at Pearl Harbour, 2,403 sailors, soldiers and civilians were killed in the Japanese attack. (DUPUY–DUPUY 1993, 923.)

internationally, but the US was not omnipotent even though it was the one and only global superpower until 11 September 2001. Unfortunately, the US – after launching multiple military interventions in the region – was incapable of establishing functioning states in North Africa and the Middle East. The case of Libya, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are not good examples either. We live in a world in which not just the greatest powers have the influence to change the regional status quo, but a newly born terrorist organization, too. (HERMANN 2015, 27.) As a consequence of the existence of the IS, it is dangerous to be Christian. Whether in the Middle East or in Europe, we may become first priority targets. (UJHÁZI 2013)

The latest databases on terrorism depict the following picture. Based on those data we can see that the death toll of terror attacks rose by 286% between 2008 and 2016 (from 8,466 to 32,175). (Global Peace Index 2017) Between 2008–2017 the same indicator was 247%, (Global Peace Index 2017) the number of refugees was 63.9 million, and mankind spent 12.6% of the global GDP on armed conflicts and violence. So every single person spent 5.4 dollars a day on war. The death toll was 32,175 and this number has been constantly rising in the last 10 years. There were 13,000 terrorist incidents in 2014; 80% of these incidents occurred in 2013–2014. (Global Peace Index 2017) According to the data available so far, most of the attacks in 2017 were carried out by international terrorist organizations, these include the Islamic State (270 attacks, 1,986 victims), Boko Haram (63 attacks, 317 victims), the Taliban (62 attacks, 764 victims), al-Shabaab (48 attacks, 318 victims), al-Qaeda (31 attacks, 258 victims), Kurdish terrorist organizations (18 attacks, 27 victims) and other organizations (232 attacks, 989 victims). (Global Terrorism Index 2016) In the OECD countries, terrorism-related deaths have increased by 650% compared to 2015. The global effect of terrorism in 2015 amounted to 89.6 billion dollars. (Global Terrorism Index 2016) The chance of being attacked by terrorists in the United States is 1:46,000, according to experts. (WELLER 2017)

## The Formation of the Islamic State

This organization created a considerable military force in a rapid fashion and was also able to occupy large areas and to get settled there. In the autumn of 2015, it ruled over 22–25,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land, where – quite significantly – it enjoyed the support of most residents.

*Changes in IS fighting strength (hardcore members):*

- 2005: 1,000 members. (Country Reports on Terrorism 2005)
- 2006: 1,100 members. (TILGHMAN 2007)

- ✦ 2011: 1,000–2,000 members. (Country Reports on Terrorism 2011)
- ✦ 2014: 11,000 members (6,000 members in Iraq, 3,000–5,000 members in Syria), or according to other data 20,000–31,500 members. (YEGINSU 2014)

The Islamic State separated from the al-Qaeda international terrorist organization. It first belonged to the Abu Musa’b al-Zarqawi-led Jama’ al-Tawhid wal-Jihad organization, later it became the leading terrorist movement of the region and the leader of the *umbrella organization* of many groups. As al-Qaeda earlier, the Islamic State became the *primus inter pares* – first among equals – terrorist organization to which all major terror groups pledged allegiance.<sup>5</sup>

## The Structure of the Islamic State

The head of the organization, based in their claimed capital city Raqqa, Syria, is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (born Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri), who supervises a shura council (13 members), a military council (13 members) and an intelligence and reconnaissance council. The other pillar is the religious council with the religious police assigned to it. These bodies – as they claim – are devoted to preserving the foundations of Islam, those who violate them can be executed on the spot. Baghdadi calls himself the Caliph of the state. His two deputies are the governors of Iraq and Syria, whose *work* is *assisted* by the leaders of the 13 provinces and almost 1,000 middle *managers* in the occupied areas of Iraq and Syria. The latter receives 300–2,000 US dollars plus perks from the leadership, depending for example on the number of the *fighter’s* wives and children.

The military council of the organization is responsible for different operations (military, economic, administrative, terror, financial and informational), the staff is made up of officers or *experts* who used to be leaders in the military, police, political organization or the secret service – being members of the privileged Sunni minority group – in Saddam Hussein’s regime. (BARRETT 2015)

The members of the cabinet are responsible for *defence*, running the armoury, foreign fighters, suicide bombers, public security, prisoners, coordination, administration, finance, as well as social services. (HERMANN 2015, 29–32.) What can IS offer to its recruits? First of all, the chance to satisfy the desires of violence and

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<sup>5</sup> Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia in March 2015, the Lybian Islamic Youth Shura Council in 2014, the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2015.



brutality. It also offers opportunities of success for Muslim fighters, who have often been defeated and humiliated earlier, to act as victors and to shape the future of the region. New IS recruits have to undergo tough training, and then they are assigned to their new units. IS operations rely on a mixture of increased mobility, attrition and terror. They proved especially effective in using small, mobile subunits in ambushes. The use of unbridled and apocalyptic terror is also crucial, which is a decisive element of the organization's psychological warfare operations.

## **Their Goals and Plans**

The Islamic State is engaged in long-term planning not just as a terror organization, but also as a well-organized politico-military group. By analysis we can find examples of strategic planning (on the political level), the military objectives of their military strategy and the procedures and methods at the tactical level in their planning methods.

The IS wants to achieve the following political goals (LEWIS 2014, 9.) by the means of hard power at the high-strategic (political) level:

- ✦ oust the current governments in Iraq and Syria, take over the political rule
- ✦ establish the IS and defend it against outside threats
- ✦ extend the territory of IS and establish the great Muslim community (ummah)

They intend to employ hard power in order to partially destroy disbelievers by proliferating their attacks, which will be extended to the cities of the region. Then, they exploit the chaos and the opportunity to fully destroy disbelievers. As their next step they intend to fill the power vacuum and take control over the entire territory.

The grand strategy of the IS (LEWIS 2014, 10.) is to establish the Caliphate, which has also been announced by al-Qaeda earlier, and to abolish the existing borders in the region:

- ✦ establish and stabilize the IS
- ✦ convince masses of Muslims to join IS
- ✦ further expansion in the wider world

The military strategy of the IS (LEWIS 2014, 11–12.) is to control Sunni territories, cities and critical resources in the region:

- ✦ create a defensive zone at the border of the Kurdish territories against Kurdish military attacks
- ✦ further, destroy Syrian military and Iraqi security forces and weaken their defence capabilities
- ✦ occupy Iraqi territories, to put up defences against possible attacks from Shiite territories
- ✦ neutralize al-Nusra in Syrian territory
- ✦ conquer further areas

The medium-term goal of the IS is to control and rule Iraq and Syria, as well as the Sunni population and territories in the adjacent countries of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, as their next step. They wish to govern their Caliphate, led by a Caliph, under the provisions of the Quran and the Sharia law. In the understanding of Muslims, the Sharia law is the “realization of the complete man”, which regulates every aspect of human life. It classifies acts as ethically forbidden (haram), specifically ordered (wajib), disapproved but not forbidden (makruh), recommended but not ordered (mandub), indifferent (mubah). There are only a few things which are specifically forbidden or ordered, most everyday activities are classified as mubah. “Everything that is outside haram (forbidden), is allowed.” (ROSTOVÁNYI 1998, 168.)

Following the literal interpretation of the Sharia law, women and man are separated, everybody is obliged to pray five times a day and to refrain from consuming alcohol and tobacco. Men are obliged to wear a beard.

Those who cannot escape are obliged to pay a tax, protection money. Nasserani (N) letters indicate houses where Christians live, Shiite houses are marked with the derogative letter RAID (R), used by extreme Sunnis. Civilians are responsible for the production and distribution of electricity, cooking gas and the operation of bakeries in case of subsidies. Hospitals are allegedly free of charge, IS also runs charity cookhouses and a food safety authority inspects the quality of the products cooked there. IS also operates homes for the elderly, religious schools and other social services. (ZAKARIA 2015) Although a state with an ID card, a currency, a flag, it still is a pseudo (fake) state. Their goal of establishing a Caliphate is assisted by the incompetence of Iraqi security forces, the Syrian civil war and the marginalized position of Sunnis in both states.

## The Strategy of the Islamic State

The organization conducts conventional terror attacks against certain groups of its enemies, killing as many as they can to instil fear amongst them. The targeted assassinations and executions also serve as a deterrent factor. To achieve this goal, the first subunits occupying a town conduct arbitrary executions on the main square, which aims to make some of the population leave in addition to raising fear. As the propaganda section of the Islamic State distributes videos about these executions, the population of the conquered areas is aware of what to expect from IS. (Global Terrorism Index 2016) The other face of the organization is its activities to help the population and to care for people's health and welfare. For example, they started a campaign for the vaccine against polio. In fact, they are carrying out the old American *Shock and Awe* strategy.

Recruits are trained in camps. Such camps exist in each major city under IS control. Jihadists go to war with the firm belief that if they die, they will become *martyrs* (shahids), and surely get to Paradise as a result of their death. The fact that they are ready to die while killing disbelievers makes negotiations impossible with them. They have lost the ability of compassion and grief; they take pleasure in ruthless violence, even in decapitating children and women.

## The Role of Violence in IS Activities

Upon examining the religious ideology of the Islamic State, we find that it is characterized by the fundamentalism of the Salafist school. Fundamentalists are those believers of Islam who consider the provisions of the Quran as an unchangeable foundation, that is the fundament, and want to reintroduce the ancient Islamic world. They force their views onto other believers of Islam using violence and terror. (ROSTOVÁNYI 1998, 168.) Islamic fundamentalism has evolved on the soil of the *Islamic world* and is feeding on it. It is closely connected to Pan-Islamism: the idea of integrating the various peoples following Islam into a religious and political unity. Let me quote the words of the Quran on fighting, war and the role of violence; the literal interpretation and implementation can be seen in the activities of the IS.

*On the war against disbelievers:*

Fight them until there is no more persecution, and worship is acknowledged to be exclusively for Allah. But if they cease, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors (Quran 2:193, 23; 8:39, 127.) Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them. (Quran 9:73, 138.)

*On peace:*

“And do not be weakhearted so as to cry for peace – and you are the uppermost.” (Quran 47:35, 366.)

*On defence against enemy attacks:*

“And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you!” (Quran 2:190, 23.)

“And kill them wherever you overtake them, and expel them from where they had expelled you... But do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque, unless they fight you there. If they fight you, then kill them. Such is the retribution of the disbelievers.” (Quran 2:191, 23.)

*Standing the ground in fight:*

Participation in combat is also meticulously regulated in the Quran: “Take your precautions, then go forth in detachments or go forth in a body!” (Quran 4:71, 64.)

“If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment, and bring in your place people other than you. What (excuse) have you that when it is said to you, go forth in Allah’s way, you should incline heavily to earth?” “Go forth, light and heavy, and strive hard in Allah’s way with your wealth and your lives. (Quran 9:39, 41, 134.)

“May it not be that you will not fight if fighting is ordained for you?” (Quran 2:246, 30.)

It encourages its fighters to elude retreat: “O you who believe, when you meet those who disbelieve marching for war, do not turn your backs to them. Anyone who turns his back on them on that Day, except

while manoeuvring for battle, or to join another group, has incurred wrath from Allah, and his abode is Hell – what a miserable destination!” (Quran 8:15, 16, 125.)

It also gives the faithful moral exemption to an extent: “So you did not kill them but Allah killed them, and you did not strike when you struck (the enemy), but Allah struck (him), and that He might confer upon the believers a benefit from Himself.” (Quran 8:17, 125.)

“Fight them; Allah will punish them at your hands and bring them to disgrace, and assist you against them...” (Quran 9:14, 132.)

Brutality and the mutilation of the enemy are also specified for Muslim fighters: “...So strike above the necks and strike every finger-tip of them.” (Quran 8:12, 125.)

Taking prisoners is only allowed when the bloodbath has been realized: “It is not fit for a prophet to take captives, unless he has fought and triumphed in the land.” (Quran 8:67, 129.)

“So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, strike the necks; then, when you have overcome them, make (them) prisoners, and afterwards (set them free) as a favour or for ransom till the war lays down its burdens.” (Quran 47:4, 364.)

Perseverance in combat is a major virtue of Muslim fighters, those, who have faith, so they can succeed even if they are seriously outnumbered: “[...] If there are of you twenty steadfast, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there are of you a hundred, they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve [...]” (Quran 8:65, 129.)

What is the reward of fighters? “Allah has made those who strive with their property and their persons to excel those who hold back by a (high) degree. And to each Allah has promised good. And Allah has granted to those who strive above those who hold back a mighty reward (high) degrees from Him and protection and mercy.” (Quran 4:95, 96, 66–67). “Those who believed and fled (their homes), and strove hard in Allah’s way with their wealth and their lives, are much higher in rank with Allah.” (Quran 9:20, 132; see also 49:15, 371; 8:72, 130; 2:218, 26.)

Who can get to Paradise? The reward of heroic death: “Do you think that you will enter the Garden while Allah has not yet known those from among you who strive hard (nor) known the steadfast?” (Quran 3:142, 49.)

It promises afterlife for the martyrs: “And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Rather, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive...” (Quran 2:154, 19; see also 3:157, 50; 3:169, 52; 3:195, 54.)

“And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can. And whoever of you turns back from his religion, then he dies while an unbeliever – these it is whose deeds are fruitless in this world and the Hereafter. And they are the companions of the Fire: in it they will abide.” (Quran 2:217, 26.)

“Allah has prepared for them Gardens in which rivers flow, to abide therein. That is the mighty achievement.” (Quran 9:89, 139.)

The issues of armed fight and jihad are also supposed to be discussed in the activities of the Islamic State. The JHD root does not simply indicate *holy war*, but also a certain physical, moral, spiritual and intellectual effort. The Arabic language has several words for the armed fight. These include *harb*, *war*, *síra*, *battle*, *maaraka*, *clash* or *kitál*, *massacre*, and could have been used in the Quran if Muslims had considered bloodshed the only possible way to reach their goal. The text uses a word, though, which can be interpreted in several different ways. Jihad is not one of the five pillars of Islam. Yet Muslims are obliged to do their utmost in every aspect – whether it be moral, spiritual or even political – in the struggle to establish a just society, which does not allow the exploitation of the fallen and the vulnerable, thus returning to the path designated for man by God. Going to war and wielding the sword is indispensable from time to time, but the idea of jihad, *fight* is a lot more than that. (ARMSTRONG 1998, 262–263; ROSTOVÁNYI 1998, 208–212).<sup>6</sup>

## Summary

One feature of asymmetric conflicts is that they take place on a hexagonal chess board. In Iraq and Syria the role-players are the IS and its supporters, the coalition and its supporters, the international organizations (UN, EOCED, EU, African Union) and the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). The middle of the chess board is unfortunately occupied by displaced persons and refugees. One can only win this game if he can win the peace after winning the war, and can provide better conditions for the long-suffering population and the refugees.

In this story of several actors, active geo-political role-players (USA, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey) and geo-political pillars (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq), the endless number of national, religious and ethnic conflicts can significantly influence the outcome. All parties involved should demonstrate the will, dedication and strength to reach a compromise to achieve peace and the coexistence of religions. As Napoleon put it: “For war, you need hardness, desperation, and perseverance.” The same virtues are thought to be required to solve the essential problems of the region.

<sup>6</sup> *Holy war*, fight, effort, nowadays it is: “Fight in the cause of Allah.” (ROSTOVÁNYI 1998, 208–212.)

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# ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE HUNGARIAN STATE IN THE PROTECTION OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

## **Introduction**

The increasing number of religiously motivated attacks, acts of terrorism and negative discrimination on religious grounds in the past few years has been endangering the historical and cultural foundations of the world, and of Hungary. The Hungarian Government, recognizing the danger, with an unprecedented government initiative, established the Deputy Secretariat of State for the Aid of Persecuted Christians in 2016, which was elevated to the level of Secretariat of State in September 2018.

## **Mission**

The Secretariat has been established to provide humanitarian assistance to the persecuted and negatively discriminated Christian communities in the Middle East and Africa, answering their need for staying in their homeland where they have been living for two millennia. Another task is to analyse and make public the phenomena of increasing Christian persecution, thus encouraging governments of other countries and international organizations to act against Christian persecution.

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<sup>1</sup> Deputy State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians

### *The establishment of the Deputy Secretariat of State for the Aid of Persecuted Christians, first contacts*

The Hungarian Government started the program after a conference, held in Italy in 2016 to discuss the situation of Christians in the Middle East. At the conference Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, and Zoltán Balog, then Minister for Human Capacities, had talks with the leaders of various Middle Eastern Christian Churches – Junan III, Syriac Catholic Patriarch, with Bechara Boutros Raï, Maronite Patriarch, with Jean-Clément Jeanbart, Melkite Archbishop and Ignatius Aphrem II, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, who provided first-hand information about the persecution of their churches. Just one month after the conference, the National Assembly endorsed a declaration with the support of all five political parties which were then represented in the Parliament on the condemnation of Christian persecution,<sup>2</sup> on the genocide in the Middle East and Africa, on the assistance for the persecuted, and the Hungarian Government established the Deputy Secretariat of State for the Aid of Persecuted Christians, Ministry for Human Capacities, which started work on 15 October 2016.

The mission of this program is to directly support persecuted communities, and for this reason, stable and sincere relations must be established with the local community and the church leaders. In order to facilitate this goal and to improve cooperation with the Church leaders of regions suffering from Christian persecution, there have been regular official visits: multiple state officials from Hungary, including members of the government, have visited these communities on several occasions. Church leaders of communities suffering from persecution have also had the opportunity, through various events held in Hungary, to inform the national and the international public about their situation.

### *The Hungary Helps Program*

The purpose of the new Hungary Helps Program, established in 2017, is to coordinate activities providing assistance and growth in developing countries and in crisis regions. Hungary does its best to stand by those in need and takes an active part in international humanitarian actions. The government is committed to moving forward with this humanitarian development policy and its expansion.

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<sup>2</sup> National Assembly Resolution 36/2016. (XII.19.)

The framework program, based on the government decree on the Hungary Helps Program,<sup>3</sup> consists of Act XC of 2014 concerning the activities on international development cooperation and international humanitarian assistance, and of donations, to the delivery of which foreign representation offices of Hungary contribute with the approval of the donor. It does not include military support or donations neither for educational or cultural programs nor for programs and support aimed at solidifying the cultural and language preservation for Hungarians around the world.

As part of the Hungary Helps Program several humanitarian and reconstruction programs supporting persecuted Christians have also been accomplished.

## Measures, Funds

The principle of the support program is that it intends to meet the requests of the persecuted communities. Accordingly, Hungary Helps only provides funds for purposes approved by the representatives and Church leaders of the communities, in each case considering to what extent the project supports the survival of communities in the crisis-stricken areas. The purpose is that those communities may thrive in their homeland, where they have been living for centuries or since the birth of Christianity, but their situation has become volatile as a result of war, violence, or negative discrimination by Islamist or other extremist religious groups.

### *Humanitarian assistance*

Hungary contributes to the humanitarian activities of the Antiochian Syriac Catholic and the Syriac Orthodox Churches in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. The funds provided to the two churches are 310–310 million HUF, spent on reconstructions after the war, on sustainment of refugees and displaced persons. As an example, we can mention the Saint Severius Syriac Orthodox educational institution in Beirut, which renovated its kindergarten due to the assistance provided by the Hungary Helps Program, as well as the Saint Paul Home, also in Lebanon, which is currently under construction using Hungarian funds and where Christian refugee families will receive temporary accommodation.

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<sup>3</sup> Government Decree 244/2017. (VIII. 28.)

In Erbil (Kurdistan), Iraq, the Hungarian State has provided 145 million HUF to fund the costs of the annual medication supply of the Saint Joseph Hospital which is run by the Chaldean Catholic Church. The agreement was signed on 29 May 2017 by Minister Zoltán Balog and the Archbishop of Erbil, Bashar Matti Warda on his visit to Hungary.

The Government of Hungary has also provided 12 million HUF for the improvement of the energy efficiency of the Roman Catholic School for Christian refugee children in Marka, Jordan, which institution is run by a parish of the Latin Patriarchate. The State of Hungary has also contributed funds to the completion of the Baptism-church by the Jordan river, to the construction of the Helping Virgin Mother church, to acquiring furniture for a secondary school for asylum seekers in Irbid, north Jordan, to a project assisting sustainment activities for Iraqi and Syrian refugees, run by the *Garden of Piety* organisation established by the Apostolic Nunciature in Amman and Madaba.

### *Funds for reconstruction*

The assistance by the Hungarian State also provides an opportunity for the revival of crisis-stricken areas. An outstanding example is the reconstruction of the small town of Tell-Askuf, which is inhabited by Christians, in northern Iraq. Here residential buildings for about 990 Iraqi Christian families, who have been expelled from their homes by the Islamic State and became internal refugees, were reconstructed due to a 580 million HUF (approximately 1.88 million Euros) grant provided by the Hungarian State. As a result of this program, close to 1,000 out of the 1,300 expelled Christians have returned to their hometown.

In 2016 Hungary added 120 million HUF to the 80 million which was collected by the Hungarian Catholic Church, to fund the building of a school for displaced children in Erbil. Education in the school started in October 2017 and the building was formally opened by Zoltán Balog, then Minister for Human Capacities, on his visit to Iraq on 5 March 2018. The Hungarian State also provided 143 million HUF for two projects of the Erbil Bishopric of the Assyrian Church of the East: the completion of the Saint George temple, and to the construction of a priest school that replaces the only former seminar in Iraq, which closed down because of religious persecution and threats.

After the Archbishop of Aleppo, Jean-Clement Jeanbart visited Hungary, we assisted the Christians of this besieged city by financing multiple projects designed to help the repatriation of Christian families, and the building of a school from the 620 million HUF fund provided through the framework of Hungary Helps.

One of the results of a meeting between Péter Szijjártó, Hungarian Foreign Minister, and Gebran Bassil, Lebanese Foreign Minister, which was held on 20 December 2016, was that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Ministry of Human Capacities in cooperation with the Pázmány Péter Catholic University and the Lebanese Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, played a role in the reconstruction of medieval Lebanese churches damaged in the civil war. The indirect aim of the project has been to slow down the tempo of the ever-increasing process of emigration of Lebanese Christians, by reconstructing their churches – one of the centres of their communities – which were destroyed during the Lebanese civil war. The reconstruction of these buildings started at the end of 2017.

Furthermore, due to an agreement signed in August 2018 in Hungary by His Beatitude Patriarch Moran Mar Bechara Boutros al-Rai, the Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, Hungary will contribute 310 million HUF to the employment and family programs of the Antioch Syriac Maronite Catholic Church. The entire program includes the establishment of a family community facility, an educational workshop for professional development and the development of light industry infrastructure, which may help the employment of women. The project promotes that the Lebanese Christian community should remain in its homeland and the improvement of their social structure.

Besides the Middle East, Africa is also an important target area for the program, mainly because of the fact that the existence of many Nigerian Christian communities is threatened by the Boko Haram Islamist terror organization. In this country, three schools and one hospital have been reconstructed due to Hungarian funding, at the amount of 310 million HUF, in Maiduguri Parish.

### *Scholarship program*

Our country has also started a scholarship program for the youths from persecuted, negatively discriminated and threatened Christian families, so they can continue or finish their studies in Hungary, and after graduation, they return home and strengthen their communities. Under the program, 67 young people from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Israel and Nigeria have started their studies in 2017. During their stay in Hungary, these students are assisted by a pastoral program to ensure they preserve their religious identity. The scholarship program was not a one-off event, and from September 2018 another one hundred young people from persecuted Christian communities started their studies in various higher education institutions in Hungary.

### *Shaping attitudes and human rights protection*

On 26–27 January 2017 leaders of many international organizations dealing with Christian persecution met in Budapest. Out of the major research and charity organizations Aid to Church in Need, ADF International, International Christian Concern and Open Doors were all represented at the workshops and the conference.

The participants agreed that the repatriation of persecuted Christian communities to their liberated homelands must be assisted by international security and protection guarantees, and financial support for reconstruction. It is urgent to promote peace between the Christian and the other religious-ethnic communities inhabiting the Middle East. This is crucial for Christians since their communities have to face multiple threats and they will only return to their homelands if they can live in the spirit of trust and reconciliation, and in the hope of a future peaceful life. The representatives of international organizations, in accordance with the Hungarian position, decided that the atrocities committed against Christians in the Middle East must be described to the public as genocide and crimes against humanity. They have also pledged that, as soon as possible, international condemnation must be followed by joint action, including the prosecution of the perpetrators and their accomplices by either an International Tribunal or by national or regional courts.

Another important achievement of the Hungarian Government in calling attention to the sufferings of the persecuted was that they organised an international consultation called *International Conference on Christian Persecution* in Budapest between 11–13 October 2017. This event was attended by leaders of various Middle Eastern and European Churches, politicians, and the representatives of many national and international organizations involved in the process. As a summary of the participants' position, the conference issued a declaration (Budapest Declaration), which urged the international community to take meaningful action in defence of the persecuted.

In addition to the events and forums in Hungary, the Government has grabbed every opportunity to talk about this problem at the international scene. This is illustrated by the attendance of state officials at the *Churches and Religious Organizations' Accessibility to EU Funding Cooperation Projects* conference in Brussels organised by György Hölvényi, Member of the European Parliament. Besides this event, these representatives also met with representatives of multiple organizations, related to the European Union, which have to deal with humanitarian and religious issues, e.g. the leaders of the group for European External Action Service for Iraq and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE).

The government officials leading the Hungarian program for persecuted Christians also had talks with representatives of both the State Department and the Vice President's Office of the White House,

and of non-governmental organizations like The Anglosphere Society, the Center for Religious Freedom at the Hudson Institute and In Defense of Christians in the US.

These talks focused on saving the Christian communities in the Middle East and on the possibilities for reconstruction in the region after the devastation caused by the so-called Islamic State.

An important task of the Secretariat is to represent persecuted Christians internationally, so on 7 March 2018 together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it organised a side event at the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council, together with Poland and the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations Office in Geneva. The event called *Religious Minorities in Armed Conflicts: Situation in the Middle East* was attended by the Hungarian Government as a sponsor.

The Ministerial visit to the USA in March 2018 was of outstanding importance. A significant event was the official opening, by the minister himself, of the *In Cross-fire* exhibition demonstrating the sufferings of persecuted Christians. This exhibition was jointly organized by the Hungarian Government and the Hungarian National Museum. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of multiple embassies, Members of Congress, representatives of senators, leaders of influential NGOs, officials from the USAID (The United States Agency for International Development) and the State Department. During the visit, many talks were held with the officials of these organizations.

A similarly important and significant event for international cooperation was the Paris Consultation, held between 21–22 March 2018, where contacts were established not only with French state officials, including the leader of the Foreign Ministry's religion diplomacy section, the ambassador for persecuted minorities and Oriental Christians but also with representatives of aid organizations, like SOS Chrétiens d'Orient and Fraternité in Iraq.

This year so far, Hungary has participated in multiple Ministerial-level international conferences on the freedom of religion. The first of these was held on 14 May 2018 in Brussels where the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ministerial Conference focused on the victims of religious and ethnic conflicts in the Middle East. The second such event was the Paris Action Plan Process Conference, and Hungary was also represented at a ministerial conference called *Promoting Religious Freedom*, which was organized by the State Department in Washington. The fact that the leaders of USAID consider the Hungarian approach as an example, as announced by Vice President Mike Pence, for their own programs supporting persecuted Christians, also signifies our recognition in the US. The permanent increase in the number of international sponsors is a positive signal in delivering our message.



The acknowledgment for our commitment to the case of persecuted Christians and of the *Hungarian model* is also signified by the People of the Cross prize, which was awarded to Hungary by the Center for Security Policy (CSP). The latter organisation was set up in 1988 due to the influence of the late President Ronald Reagan.

## **Evaluation and the Future**

The most important goal of the projects funded by Hungary – reconstruction or building of churches, homes, schools, seminars, shelters for refugees or providing medicine supply for hospitals, and Hungarian scholarship for Christian youths discriminated against in their countries – is to strengthen communities and create opportunities for Christians for a better future in their homeland. Several communities have already received assistance in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Nigeria. Further expansion of the funds is needed since Christian communities suffer from persecution or live as refugees all over the world from the Philippines to Ethiopia. The action of the Hungarian State is a groundbreaking initiative which can only be really successful if we can find more international partners willing to help persecuted Christians.

József Kaló<sup>1</sup>

## VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN 2018

There are different forms of Christian persecution ranging from the slightest to the most severe: cultural isolation, the restrictions on the free practice of religion through official discrimination to intimidation. The most brutal way of repression, which also gets the biggest amount of attention, are acts of violence committed against Christians. There are various reasons for these atrocities: they can originate in religious conflicts or can be generated on the basis of political and economic tension. The objective in all these cases is to restrict or make impossible the religious practice of faith for individuals and communities alike. Acts of violence also vary widely: from minor physical abuse through attacks on buildings and/or symbols, deportations to labour or annihilation camps, to the total annihilation of certain individuals or whole communities.

The latest version of the reliable World Watch List, published by the Open Doors International<sup>2</sup> foundation is the *World Watch List 2018* which was published in early 2018 based on data collected in 2016 and 2017. The first 10 countries of the World Watch List which mentions those 50 countries where Christian persecution is the most prevalent are those which were mentioned in its previous edition: North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Pakistan, Eritrea, Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Iran.<sup>3</sup> However, the order of these countries have changed: Pakistan gets the first place with 99.8%, followed closely by Nigeria with 99%, then the Central African Republic (96.5%), India (86.5%), Egypt (74%), Sudan (72%), Colombia (71%), Iraq (68%),

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<sup>1</sup> National University of Public Service

<sup>2</sup> The annual report by *World Watch List* and *Open Doors International* has been published annually since 1992. The report is published in January but the data refers to the previous year (the 2018 report, for example, is based on data from between 1 November 2016 and 31 October 2017). The list assesses and ranks the fifty countries where Christian persecution is the highest based on six criteria. The repression includes measures and acts against private life, family life, community life and national public life, as well as religious life. The sixth highly important category of its own represents the scores for violent acts against Christians and their church. For more information see [www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/about-the-ranking/](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/about-the-ranking/) (Accessed: 15 September 2018.)

<sup>3</sup> The makers of the list opine that in 8 of the 10 countries above, Christian persecution is induced by forceful Islamization. (World Watch List 2018)

North Korea and Bangladesh (63–63%), then with also equal results in tenth place are Somalia, Ethiopia, Libya and Mexico (all four countries with 62%). (World Watch List 2018)

In the period examined by *World Watch List 2018*, 3,066 Christians were killed, 1,252 were abducted, 1,020 were raped or sexually harassed, and 793 churches and other sacred sites were attacked out of anti-Christian motivation. The Open Doors International foundation estimates that almost 215 million Christians are exposed to potential violence due to their religious beliefs.

This year so far<sup>4</sup> in the above-mentioned countries the following major anti-Christian actions are worth mentioning:

## **Pakistan**

Examining countries where the number of violent activities against Christians is the highest, Pakistan is the first where most perpetrators come from radical Islamist groups. These groups are supported by political parties, the military and the government, this is why they can establish and operate thousands of Islamic educational centres. In these centres, the youths are encouraged to persecute religious minorities, including Christians. (World Watch List 2018)

After a bloody series of attacks on Christian churches between 2013–2015, the number of such attacks decreased. However, despite this positive turn of events the amount of anti-Christian violence and discrimination intensified. Based on the existence of the so-called Blasphemy Act,<sup>5</sup> Muslims can easily weaken the bargaining position of their Christian business partners, and during land disputes Muslim landowners can drive their Christian neighbours away from their land. In February this year, the Pakistani police arrested a Christian man who was accused, because of this act, of sharing a blasphemous picture on his phone. One of the consequences of this charge was that 800 Christian families had to leave their homes as a result of the public anger fuelled by the accusation. A few days later, the suspect and one of his family members were

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<sup>4</sup> 15 September 2018.

<sup>5</sup> The definition of blasphemy is discussed in sections 295–298 of the Pakistani penal code entitled the *Abuse of Religion*. The act originates in the British colonial past, and it was designed by the European colonizers to prevent the formation of religiously motivated conflicts, but in 1986 the original act was amended with the section which stipulates that the person who insults prophet Muhammad or the Quran can be sentenced to life imprisonment or death. (The Persecution of Ahmadis 2018)

sexually tortured by the police, as a result of which one of his family members jumped out of the window of the interrogation room on the fourth floor. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 4 March, five members of a family were attacked with weapons in Northeastern Pakistan when they were helping to build the wall around their church. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 18 March the posting of a banner – citing the words of the gospel – induced an attack on a Christian community celebrating a service in Punjab province. A local government official was also involved in this armed attack. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 22 April a 24-year-old Pakistani girl died of her wounds after she was set on fire by a man. 80% of her body was burnt. The attack followed a debate in which the man tried to convince the girl to marry him and to convert from Christianity to Islam. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

In the middle of March, a Christian man was beaten to death in a hospital when he protested against the treatment of his pregnant sister by the midwives. The doctor started a fight with him, pushed him to the floor, called him an infidel, and then alarmed the security guards of the hospital. Thirty people attacked his family and the man died as a result. (Asia News 2018; S4C News 2018)

On Easter Monday, 2 April, four members of a Christian family were shot dead by gunmen on motorbikes in a street in the city of Quetta. Two weeks later, in a similar attack in Quetta, two more people died and five were wounded. In both cases, the attackers were Islamic radicals with ties to the Taliban, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. (Origo 2018)

On 6 May a rich Muslim family tied and strangled a 17-year-old Christian maid in her father's presence, as they were not satisfied with her work. (The Christian Post 2018)

On 9 July a young Christian man was accused of abducting a Muslim girl in Punjab province, which led to attacks, fuelled by the local Imam, on Christian families and the looting of their homes. The young man and his mother were arrested by the police. A few days later, the Muslim girl appeared, reporting to the authorities that she left her village on her own will to live together with a Muslim man. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## Nigeria

Considering the intensity of violent attacks on Christians, Nigeria, where the driving force behind these attacks is also Islamic radicalism, closely follows Pakistan. In the northern part of the country, which is composed of federal states, the great majority of the people are Muslims, while Christians are the absolute majority in

the south. Jihadist groups like Boko Haram and the Muslim Fulani herdsmen violently persecute the followers of Christ in the northern part of the country and in the federal states of the so-called Middle Belt of Nigeria. In the Muslim majority areas of Nigeria, Christians are treated as second-class citizens. Christian converts from Muslim families are persecuted by their own families, who reject them and force them to deny their Christian faith. (World Watch List 2018)

Although this year's data will only be compiled early next year, it can be concluded with great certainty that it was in Nigeria where most Christian faithful were murdered in 2018 for their faith.

New Year's Day started with a series of attacks claiming the lives of dozens in the country. There were Islamic extremists behind these attacks. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 10 January, in the federal state of Taraba, 55 Christians were killed and on the next day, the so-called Black Thursday, 73 Christians were massacred in Makurdi, the capital of the Benue state. The perpetrators of these vile crimes were Fulani herdsmen. (World Watch Monitor 2018; Sahara Reporters 2018)

On 5 February, at least 75 were killed in an attack by the Fulani herdsmen in the Christian majority Miango settlement. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 19 February, 110 girls were abducted from Dapchi by the resurgent Boko Haram. Later most of these girls were released. The only exception is Leah Sharibu who did not want to convert to Islam. (World Watch Monitor 2018; The Guardian 2018; Daily Post 2018)

In February, Fulani tribesmen destroyed 15 Christian villages in Nasarawa state, starting with attacks on their churches. (Express 2018)

On 14 March, the armed militias of Fulani herdsmen attacked the Christian population of three villages in Plateau state, killing at least 57 people and dozens more went missing. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 24 April in Benue state gunmen attacked a Catholic church killing two priests and seventeen acolytes. (World Watch Monitor 2018) On 30 April, the American President Donald Trump urged the Nigerian President during his US visit, to do his best to prevent further attacks on Christians. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

At the end of May, the Governor of Benue state said in an interview that the number of attacks by Fulani herdsmen reached a new record this year, and at least 492 Christians were murdered by them in his state only in 2018. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

Between 21–24 June, Fulani herdsmen massacred another 235 Christians in Plateau state. (CSI 2018) On 29 June, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria demanded the resignation of President Muhammadu Buhari, since he was not willing to protect his Christian citizens from sectarian attacks. (CSI 2018) By the end

of June, based on data from Amnesty International, violence committed by Islamist Fulani herdsmen have claimed 1,800 lives. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

In the last week of August, another 20 Christians were killed by Fulani herdsmen in Plateau state, and the attacks continued throughout the first week of September when dozens more were murdered. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## Central African Republic

Although close to 4 million out of the 5 million people who live in the Central African Republic are Christians, a sizeable Muslim minority lives in the northeast of the country. The Seleka group, made up of armed militias, successfully mobilized earlier marginalized Muslims to fight the Anti-Balaka group, made up of people of animistic religions and pseudo-Christians. This civil-war-like conflict is a major source of persecution as both militant groups carry out attacks against local Christians and their communities.<sup>6</sup>

The new year started with violent acts: a Catholic priest was stabbed to death on 4 January by unknown attackers, and three days later gunmen entered the cathedral in Bangassou, robbed it and took several valuable relics with them. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 25 February, gunmen killed a group of six and set their car on fire in the city of Markounda, close to the border with Chad. Two members of the group were officials of the Ministry of Education, three worked for UNICEF, the sixth person was the leader of a local congregation of the Baptist Church. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 21 March, dozens of people, including a Catholic priest, as well as women and children, were killed in clashes between armed groups. The village of Seko was attacked by radical Islamist gunmen, the priest of the village had been planning to move due to the increasing tension in the region before he was killed. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 1 May, in Bangui, which is the capital city of the Central African Republic, at least 25 people, including a Catholic priest, were killed and more than 100 were wounded when Islamist gunmen attacked a Christian church. (World Watch Monitor 2018) After the attack, Pope Francis himself – who visited the country in 2015 – called on the Christian world to pray for the victims and for peace. (Vatican News 2018)

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<sup>6</sup> Most attacks are carried out by the Seleka group.

On 29 June, the Catholic Church again suffered a great loss in the Central African Republic when gunmen attacked a local congregation in Bambari and killed the vicar general of the St. Joseph Cathedral. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

On 4–5 September, allegedly 42 people – including a pregnant woman – were murdered by Islamist gunmen near the city of Bria. The massacre lasted for two days and it took another two days until a group of young men dared to enter the city and count the dead victims. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## India

In India, almost 64 million of the 1,400 million population are Christians and they are primarily targeted by Hindu nationalist groups. These radicals want to cleanse the Indian nation from Muslims, Christians and atheists alike, and they consider violence as an appropriate tool. The government did not do its best to prevent attacks on religious minorities, which lead to the intensification of violence. (World Watch List 2018)

In 2017, 351 confirmed hate crimes were committed against Christians in India, so it is not surprising that the Gospel Association of India declared 2017 one of the *most traumatic* years for Christians.

On 20 January 2018, members of the local congregation in Adayachery village found their pastor hanged sometime after he had complained to the police of harassment by local Hindu extremists. Based on data provided by Open Doors International in January 2018, 78 hate crimes were committed against Christians in India.

On 4 February, in the town of Suleeswaranpatti, Hindu extremists attacked a Christian house congregation which was celebrating a service. They damaged the building and threatened to kill the members if they continued their religious activities in the future.

On 27 February, 6 Christians were seriously wounded and a house was set on fire by Hindu extremists in Tangaguda in the eastern part of India. The attack occurred after a two-year-old Christian girl was buried after local Hindu families demanded that the dead girl's family bury her body outside the village. At the night of the burial, 30 Hindu extremists arrived, setting their house on fire and beating up all the members of the family, including women and children.

On 11 March, in a southern state of India, Hindus attacked 5 Christian congregations which were celebrating the Sunday Mass, the attackers undressed and beat up several Christian women. They burnt Christian



texts including some copies of the Bible. The organizers of the attack, who during this attack were assisted by a police officer, were members of an extremist Hindu organization.

On 12 March, in the town of Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh state, which is in the middle part of India, a crowd of almost 100 were instigated by Hindu nationalists to attack a Christian missionary hospital and they inflicted serious damage on the building with bulldozers.

On 21 March, in Andhra Pradesh state, in the southern part of India, a young man killed an elderly Christian woman on the terrace of her house while she was praying. The lady had converted to Christianity 10 years earlier. She was beaten to death and her skull was shattered. According to locals, the chief priest of the local Hindu temple might have masterminded the attack.

On 28 March, in Uttar Pradesh state, in the eastern part of India, during a Baptism ceremony, Hindu extremists attacked a local Christian congregation using sticks and knives. Several people, including the pastor, were seriously beaten and needed hospital treatment.

On 5 April, in Bakel settlement in Chhattisgarh state, Hindu extremists attacked members of a Christian congregation, who were eating while having a break during a Bible study session. The aggressors physically abused 35 Christians, and as a result, every Christian living at this settlement fled in fear of being slaughtered.

On 1 May, in the village of Kubasal in eastern India, approximately 25 masked attackers abducted a Christian pastor, who was found dead the next day close to a reservoir. The police assumed that his attackers were Maoist guerrillas who tied the pastor's hands, cut his throat and decapitated him. However, the perpetrators let the driver travelling with the pastor go.

In the summer, in the southern states of India, the number of attacks by Hindu extremists further increased; as a result, on average, one congregation per state ceased its operations every week.

In the first half of 2018, the most anti-Christian hate crimes were committed in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Here 79 hate crimes were committed in this period, far more than in any other Indian state. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## Egypt

Christians, making up 10% of the 95 million population of Egypt, suffer from different forms of persecution. For example, Muslims who converted to Christianity are under immense pressure to return to Islam by their immediate and extended family. The life of Christian congregations is subject to rigorous regulations, such



as the prohibitions of certain services and communal congregations. Those who violate these measures are frequently attacked. Christians, especially women, have to face negative discrimination and abuse in their workplace and in public alike. (World Watch List 2018)

On 13 January, as he was arriving home from work, a Coptic Christian man was killed by Islamic extremists, for having a cross tattooed on his wrist.

On 14 March, a young Coptic Christian soldier committed suicide in Giza, according to an official report. But his family assumes that he might have died because of his Muslim superior, who regularly abused him due to his religious convictions, ordered his murder. The circumstances of his death are also suspicious because he was shot twice in the chest. On 23 April, another Coptic Christian soldier committed suicide under suspicious circumstances. In this case, the victim *shot himself from behind*. Before his death, the young man had complained to his family of being persecuted for his faith.

In April, more than seven Coptic Christian girls and women were abducted by Muslim men to force them to convert to Islam and then marry their kidnappers. Experience shows that police only takes action in similar cases if they are under pressure to do so.

On 26 May, an angry crowd attacked the Christian church in the Village of Abou El-Shukaf near Alexandria. They threw Molotov cocktails on the building and as a result, seven Coptic Christians were wounded.

On 9 July, in the village of Menhal, 225 km south of Cairo, the Muslim population got angry due to a Facebook post of a local Coptic Christian a few days earlier, in which he compared Muhammad to Jesus. So on this day, a mob attacked many Christian houses, including the house of the local priest, and the church. Several Coptic Christians were wounded, and the local security forces had to fire warning shots to disperse the crowd which was about to lynch a number of Christians. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## Sudan

In Sudan, radical Islamist groups and the government alike participate in the persecution of Christians, which is carried out systematically, using methods similar to ethnic cleansing. Due to the authoritarian nature of Omar al-Bashir's government and his party, there is no rule of law in Sudan. Islam has deep historical roots in the Sudanese society and the government strictly applies the policy of *one religion, one culture, and one language*. (World Watch List 2018)

On 11 February, right after a Sunday service in the morning, one of the churches of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church of Sudan was completely destroyed in Khartoum, the capital city of the country. Following governmental instructions, the 29-year-old building was bulldozed in a police-led operation, and the authorities confiscated furniture, Bibles, and musical instruments belonging to this congregation. The destruction of the church happened despite a pending legal appeal. The leaders of this congregation were happy that they were not personally attacked by the government during the destruction of their church. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## **Iraq**

Several groups are involved in the persecution of Christians in Iraq. Radical Islamist groups, like the Islamic State, frequently abduct and kill Christians and people belonging to other religious minorities. National and local government officials often encourage Christians to leave the country. Christian converts from a Muslim background are usually under hard pressure by their tribe, family, and community, and this often leads to the murder of these converts. (World Watch List 2018)

On 8 March, 3 members of an Assyrian Christian family were killed in their own home in a Shiite majority area, close to the capital city Baghdad. A few weeks earlier, also in Baghdad, a young Christian man was killed in front of his house. The local Christian community considers both cases as the logical consequence of long-lasting religious intolerance and intimidation, as well as a message that they will be driven away from their land and homes. The murdered family had fled Iraq previously, but they returned five years ago. They were planning to emigrate from Iraq again in the near future. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## **Bangladesh**

There are hardly 1 million Christians in the 164 million people of Bangladesh. Christian converts from Islam have to face increasing restrictions and persecution. Radical Islamist groups, local Muslim religious leaders and the families alike are all involved in the persecution of Christians. Often fatwas (religious legal decisions of Islamic laws) determine the ways of everyday life in this country. (World Watch List 2018)

On 20 January, southwest of Dhaka, three Christians were physically abused and their church damaged by men belonging to a local Islamist political group. At the same weekend, also in the vicinity of Dhaka, local youths physically abused another young man because he converted from Islam to Christianity.

On 8 February, a Christian church was broken into in the capital, the vicar was tied up and beaten up, and all valuables were stolen from the building. Local Christians say that the police did nothing to find the perpetrators, so more than 200 people protested in the streets.

On 14 February, two members of an armed Islamist group were arrested in Dhaka who, according to charges, were planning an armed attack on Christians who had previously converted from Islam. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## **Ethiopia**

In Ethiopia, the government, proponents of secularism and quite interestingly, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are all responsible for the persecution of Christians. The government rigorously restricts the freedom of religion, while conservative Muslims are exerting pressure on Christians, especially on those who converted from Islam. Secularism prohibits the broadcasting of religious programs, religious activities in schools, restricts religious services, teaching and the organization of preaching. Those who join another denomination after leaving the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are persecuted even by their own family and community members. (World Watch List 2018)

On 2 January, an Ethiopian court refused bail for 7 Ethiopian Christians, who were arrested on charges of praying against the government. In the northwestern part of the country, in the city of Chagni, the local militia, hearing that the group prayed “against the power and the kingdom of Satan”, arrested the praying Christians, as this action was considered an attack against the government.

On 2 February, in the southern part of the country, in the city of Arba Minch, a judge sentenced an Evangelical Christian to 7 months in prison, after he was accused of “abusing religious feelings and peace” by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. After a court hearing on 23 January, several Evangelical Christians were attacked outside the court and 5 of them were injured. On 19 March and 20 June, the court dismissed the suspect’s appeal.

In the first half of August, in a Somali populated region in eastern Ethiopia, Muslim extremists murdered 15 priests and damaged 10 Christian churches. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

## Mexico

Although Mexico is a traditionally Christian country, peculiarly, authorities do not protect Christians. The reason is the decades-long drug war, which has so far demanded the lives of tens of thousands of people, as well as that the money from the drug cartels corrupts the government. Organized crime groups often assault priests and pastors, while leaders of indigenous groups persecute those people who converted to Christianity from their tribes. (World Watch List 2018)

Attacks on clergymen by organized crime groups have also been constantly increasing. Priests are becoming targets because they preach against injustice, violence, drug trafficking, and thus influence their communities. Violence related to organized crime is becoming the most significant threat to Mexican Christians.

On 5 February, a priest was killed on the Iguala–Taxco highway, in the infamous state of Guerrero.

On 8 June, another priest was killed in Juarez, close to the Mexican–Texas border, presumably on order of a drug cartel.

On 12 June, also in Juarez, another pastor was the victim of attempted murder, but the assassin's weapon misfired when he broke into his house. (World Watch Monitor 2018)

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# CURRENT CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION – THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PROTESTANT ANSWERS

## HISTORY OF THEOLOGICAL, RELIGION-PHENOMENOLOGICAL STATE- MENTS, CURRENT SITUATION AND TREND ANALYSIS

### Introduction

In our short study we cannot deal with the subject matter thoroughly and with the required detail. Nevertheless, it is important to entice further research, to indicate the most significant findings, to outline key factors, based on the latest results of international and domestic experiences, for further research in Theoretical-Theology and Sociology of Religion and Futurology Studies. We have to come to terms with the idea of minimal inspiration, of sending a signal, which is important but far from enough. This is, for better understanding, why we divide this study into a theoretical and a practical part.

In the theoretical part, we discuss the theological and historical necessity of the persecution of Christians, its initial forms, reasons and related reflections, then its *modern and postmodern forms*, phenomena and the reasons thereof. Our answers are based upon three theoretical sources: the anti-secular concept of Berger's religious renaissance, Schirrmacher's history-theological facts, the findings of Open Doors, an international organization studying Christian persecution, based on their current causal link analysis.

In the practical part we highlight the features of the more complete and complex Hungarian concept and implementation of the European defence wall, the unique nature of the Hungarian experiment, including

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the answers proposed by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian Protestant/Reformed Church theologians to the *Turkish danger* and the feasibility of their ideas today. We briefly touch upon the manifesto of the conference on Christian persecution, held in Madrid in 2015, and preview how the international organizations study present-day Christian persecution.

## THEORETICAL PART

*The basic question: is the persecution of Christianity and Christians a theological, historical necessity, or the fulfilment of a promise in the gospels?*

### *Basic definitions*

The phenomenon of *Christian persecution* or *martyrdom*, with a variable extent, has shown multiple forms and has produced astonishing numbers of victims in the course of its history, from the time of Jesus to the present day. One of the most thorough studies, which provides the most statistical and theological information, has been done by a German Protestant theologian, (SCHIRRMACHER 2011, 1.) who defines Christian persecution in his 187-page study as a phenomenon affecting us all, so despite its modernity or postmodernity, humanity is not over it. That is why the famed Protestant theologian has made an attempt to create the *theology of martyrdom* by forming 70 biblical-theological theses and using a vast amount of data. His data are shocking: according to his research in 1970, as many as 230,000 Christians from multiple different denominations died as martyrs just because of their Christian faith. In 1988 this number rose approximately to 300,000. By 2000 the number has increased to 500,000. There is a group of researchers who attempted to calculate the number of Christians who died as martyrs from the first martyrdom, the crucifixion of Jesus, to this day. Their estimate from 1990 was around: 40,725,000–43,300,000.



Figure 1.  
*Different forms of Christian persecution in 2017*

Source: Serving Persecuted Christians Worldwide, Open Doors, USA

These shocking figures – highlighted in a different connection in an *infographic*, (Figure 1) which I have found on the Talk Jesus website – illustrate the current state (2017) of Christian persecution. According to this figure 322 Christians are killed each month in the world because of their faith, 214 churches or other Christian sites are attacked, destroyed, set on fire and 772 other violent acts are committed against Christians (in the form of beating, flogging, kidnapping, rape, arrest, forced marriage).

This figure is also important, as it makes the following point clear: *the persecution of Christianity is a broader term than the physical persecution of Christians*. The term persecution of Christianity covers not just violent acts against individual Christian believers as individuals, but also violent attacks against Christian institutions, temples, buildings, facilities, creations, monuments, symbols. If we hear/see the phrase Christian persecution in the news, we must be aware that this term may involve damage or destruction of material items, violent attacks against individual Christians, or death or injury to the faithful inside a church during a religious ceremony (church-bombings, committed by Boko Haram in Nigeria, which have become recently prevalent in Nigeria and in Egypt, and the destruction of ancient monuments by ISIS).

### *Definitional changes*

Let us now define *what we mean by the persecution of Christians*. In addition to the options found in Wikipedia, we quote the definitions given by Open Doors and one coined by the author of this study. It is notable that the English definition entitled *persecution of Christians* (Persecution of Christians 2017) is not a real definition, instead, it is a summary of the various forms of persecution in different ages and in different parts of the world. In the German entry of *Christenverfolgung* (Christenverfolgung [The Persecution of Christians] 2018) a prudent definition is given: “*The persecution of Christians is defined as the regular and systematic social or governmental oppression, existential intimidation of Christians because of their faith. The reason of the persecution of Christians can be the minority policy of a state, as Christians are considered a minority. It can also evolve as a result of ethnic conflicts or social discrimination.*” The Hungarian entry *Keresztényüldözés* (Keresztényüldözés [The Persecution of Christians] 2018) provides a concise, abridged definition: “*All attacks against Christians – that occur due to their act of faith – are defined Christian persecution.*” In order to be less short-spoken the entry adds: “*The reasons of the persecution of Christians can be psychological, religious, the jealousy of those in power.*” (Open Doors 2018, 449.) A Protestant institution having a wide range of data and almost up-to-date-information, in its 472-page report on the persecution of Christians in 2017, which is based on scientific data collection and analysis, defines Christian persecution as follows: “*As persecution does not have a generally recognized and accepted legal definition, the institution applies a theological definition instead of a sociological or legal one. In this sense “persecution is defined as all hostilities experienced as a result of identification with Christ. This identification may trigger hostile behaviour, words or acts against Christians.”* And now let the definition by the author follow: “*Christian persecution is defined as putting Christians into a disadvantaged situation, threatening them in their existence, or even killing them for their faith, with regular and systematic, social or/and governmental, or religious justification or means. The forms of persecution can be physical and spiritual/psychic in nature. Regarding the source, it can be a Church phenomenon, but also an ideological, atheistic act motivated by state, power, religion or even hegemony.*” (BÉKEFY 2015, 23.)

### *The realism of the gospel*

Having considered all this, I provide the answer to the question put in the title of the paragraph: *is persecution a necessity or the realism of the gospel* when the persecution of Christians or Christianity is discussed? Before

it is misunderstood, I do not mean that Christianity provides a rationale for its own persecution, as there are realistic predictions in case of the chosen people, Israel, as spiritual Israel, so that nothing should affect them unexpectedly or unprepared. This can be called *paradoxical realism of the gospel*, as persecution is realistically predicted, yet not with a fatal or gloomy pessimism, or challenging destiny, self-fulfilling blind faith, gullible self-confidence, or recklessness. The word in the New Testament διώκω/dioko = persecute, διωγμός = persecution (lat.: persecutio) defining persecution, appears thirty times in the gospels, in the Acts of the Apostles, in Paul's letters, and in the Revelations. The biblical view of persecution is paradoxical, as it says: *persecution is a negative phenomenon, but it is also the justification of a positive situation that we really stand by God*. As Jesus puts it: “Happy are those, persecuted for justice.” (Matthew 5:10) *The realism of the gospel* is shown by the fact, that it *assumes reciprocity* and requires it: “If I am persecuted, you will also be persecuted.” (John 15:20) That is why Luther<sup>2</sup> put it right: “Let us remember: all kinds of persecution, even the internal, agitated by the devil in the heart, *happens for Jesus!*” (SCHIRRMACHER 2011, 60.)

In the history of the Jews, there were several waves of pogroms and persecution. In the time of the ancient Church, there were several waves of *the human cult*, which was a Roman pseudo-religion, which idealised the Emperor no matter who he was, and demanded a high death toll of innocent people. This fundamental position, in the sense of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament and the general New Love commandment of the New Testament which absolutely rejected the Roman concept of the human cult, was often followed by bloody persecution of Christians. This Roman attitude of power, an early, yet highly developed technique of scapegoating, was described by Church Father Tertullian of Carthage (155–240) in 196–197 AD: “Christians are blamed for everything. If there is a disaster or catastrophe affecting masses, the Christians are to be blamed. If river Tiber is flooding the Christians are blamed, if water is scarce in the Nile the Christians are blamed. If there is an earthquake, famine or epidemic, the Christians are to be blamed” – he wrote aptly. (SCHIRRMACHER 2011, 77; WEINRICH 1981, 223–272.) It was Tertullian, who reversed the interpretation of this negative phenomenon, in the spirit of the gospel, when he wrote in his famous *Apológy*: “Semen est sanguis Christianorum”, introduced by: “*The more you are harming us, the more we are becoming, as the blood of Christians is the sowing of seeds of the Church.*” (SCHIRRMACHER 2011, 77.) In the 20<sup>th</sup> century B. Dyck (1983) expressed this idea in the following way: “Persecution made our congregation grow [...] It was one of the strongest factors which helped the spread of the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ all over the world. This is a peculiar way of God to expand his Country.” (DYCK 1983, 5.)

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Luthers *Sämtliche Schriften*. Bd. IV. 263.

## **Increasing interactions of religions – politics – global politics: Interpretations from the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century on the intensifying rivalry of religions**

### *The desecularization concept of Berger and other trends*

It was Peter Ludwig Berger (1929–2017), an American sociologist of religion, who came up with the thesis, as early as 1962, that religions are going extinct, and secularization will put a final end to the religious era of humanity. However, he came out with a totally different concept in 1999, which can be called a *religion-sociological paradigm shift*. Berger (1999) then published his discussion and program paper entitled *The Desecularization of the World*, (meaning to be free from the spiral of secularization). In this – to put it briefly now – he clearly shows that modernity and consumer society have undermined the former (religious) certainties of people, but the human psyche cannot tolerate uncertainty in the long run, so masses of people will return to religions which have provided such security for millennia. In his religious-sociological forecast he says that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see a *religious neo-renaissance* where religions will achieve an unprecedented golden age. (For more details see BÉKEFY–BIRKÁS 2015, 217–252; BÉKEFY–BIRKÁS 2017) In fact, this positive case carries a serious danger: if religious fundamentalism increases within any world religion, *which does not tolerate the diversity and co-existence of different religions and creeds and will demand the exclusivity of one religion*. This may lead to serious conflicts. The fact-finding efforts and permanent monitoring activities of certain research institutes are increasing in this respect, as *religions are becoming factors in global politics* (see the para migration/pseudo-migration phenomena triggered by Islam, the extreme cases of Islamist fundamentalism in Pakistan and elsewhere etc.).

The University of Boston or the *Center for Religions and Modernity* or *Religion in der Modernität*, established by Berger at the University of Munster, are permanently monitoring, studying, tracking these phenomena in terms of Christian persecution. If we add research predictions to Berger's positive forecast, like the conceptual work of Huntington (1996) entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (HUNTINGTON 1996) in which he wrote that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will witness clashes between blossoming civilizations and cultures, which are frequently permeated by the great world religions, will rewrite history books and everyday realities. The revival of religions can be considered as a *la revanche du Dieu*, the revenge of God, he opines. So, future conflicts will not be clashes of civilizations any more, but instead, they will be clashes of religions. Berger's student, a young researcher at Harvard University, USA, Toft (2011) is the editor and co-author of a study entitled *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. (TOFT–PHILPOTT–SHAH 2011) She points out the following: faith will have a significant role in politics and international relations.

British academics Micklethwait and Wooldridge (2009) in their book *God is Back* (MICKLETHWAIT–WOOLDRIDGE 2009) discuss the cultural war that has broken out between America and Europe. The US succeeded where Europe failed: reconciling religion with modern freedom, equality and common sense. Churches in Europe have become complacent, their innovative power has weakened. However, in the US religious rivalry has led to the revitalisation of many religious communities. Let me also mention the shocking work of Jenkins (2008), which is a giant question mark, addressed to our continent: *God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis*. (JENKINS 2008) The term *Eurabia* was created in the 1970s, describing Europe as a *subcontinent of Islam*, where the remaining Jewish and Christian population will become second-rate citizens. About the term *Migropa* we learn that it was created by *Heinz Fassmann*, an Austrian sociologist, who made an attempt to define *the human potential* of Europe. Let me add to all this one of the most successful books of the present day written by Sansal (2017), a French Muslim writer of Algerian descent. This book is a *prophecy* about *the end of the world in 2084*. (SANSAL 2017) Sansal said the following in an interview: “Islamists are aware that they cannot defeat the West militarily. They have to resort to a different tool, which is the *generation of fear*. That process includes confusing Europe, dividing its population, and then Europe will collapse on its own.” (KEGEL 2016) *Having considered all this, what is it all about? The rivalry or the final clash of world religions?*

## **Eight factors which might be behind Christian persecution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The globally known Christian trend research organization *Open Doors* has been analysing and reporting anti-Christian activities, procedures, atrocities in the world since 1955. It has annually been publishing world reports about Christian persecution for years, listing such cases country by country, continent by continent. Unfortunately, the number of pages and cases of the reports has been growing due to the increasing number of atrocities. In the blog of [agnusradio.ro](http://agnusradio.ro) of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), I have been publishing detailed analyses for years (BÉKEFY 2018 – [bekefy.agnusradio.ro](http://bekefy.agnusradio.ro), with 874 blog posts), so this time I will resort to the latest report, *Weltverfolgungsindex 2018*. This publication includes eight casual factors behind religious persecution. (Open Doors 2018) These factors, which have a role in the persecution of Christians are the following: 1. *Islamic extremism*, the fundamentalist Islamic conviction and objective which says that the world must be Islamised, with the final goal of establishing the world caliphate; 2. *increasingly militant religions*, like e.g. Hindu nationalism (“India belongs to the Hindus – hindutva”), and the advance of certain Buddhist trends; 3. *resurgence of traditional tribal religions* and their resistance, or active engagement religious “partisan



activities”, fanaticizing their communities against everything that is alien, including Christianity; 4. *religious exclusivity, sometimes arrogance, humiliation*, based on the false belief, that only “our denomination” and Church are true, “we are the only ones, in the body of Jesus”; 5. *post-communist/communist oppression*, when communist ideology is not just a pressure, but a monolith with no alternative (North Korea); 6. *aggressive secularism, enforcing coarse secularization*, obliterating the roots of religion: obliterate all religious aspects from public life and hearts (consumerism, communism, atheism, coarse materialism); 7. *totalitarian paranoia: to do everything, to keep the regime in power, and to fabricate self-justifying ideologies*, monopolizing power; 8. *organized corruption: to be above the law and legislation, punishment, bribing the police, courts, employing gangs, hired persons, groups to intimidate, expel, blacken Christians, spreading false news and disinformation, even masterminding murders.*

## PRACTICAL PART

### **Build a Hungarian defence wall in both senses of the word! – The unique Hungarian strategy**

#### *Political/security and spiritual strategy in one*

Despite diverse public opinion about the Hungarian border barrier, which is officially called the *temporary fence for border control*, (Temporary Fence 2018) built alongside 175 kilometres of the country’s southern border in 2015, has clearly achieved one thing, it irrefutably bridled the flow of migration into the country. In addition to ensuring the physical defence of the country’s borders, some elements of the government’s *strategic foreign policy* played a key role in the fight against the persecution of Christians. As part of this strategy, the cabinet established a *Deputy Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians*. (Hungary Plans 2017) EU MP György Hölvényi (2017) – in line with the Government’s intent – came up with the idea that Hungary may become *the centre of the fight against Christian persecution*. Hölvényi argued that: “Europe is not united against Christian persecution, that is why the decision to set up the Deputy Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians is very important.” (Deputy Secretariat 2017) Since then the construction of schools, flats, the reconstruction of multiple hospitals and neighbourhoods in the areas worst affected by persecution has been carried out by using considerable funds through the Hungary Helps Program. This organization, led by State Secretary Azbej

Tristán, provides assistance where it is most needed. Thus, Hungary has been able to connect and operate together with the different elements of its government policy in an exemplary manner: they built a *border barrier* and *provided material aid for those in need*. However, these practical activities must be accompanied by something else, by *building a different type of defence, a conscious spiritual wall*. A stronger and more purposeful internal construction must be built up during school religious education lessons which are part of the compulsory school curriculum, to make these efforts even more efficient. This is where the Churches have to contribute during their religious education activities to help the government’s political efforts in defending Europe. Conferences, consultations on the persecution of Christians, whether held in Hungary or abroad, provide an excellent opportunity to represent this *simultaneous Christianity defence strategy* by authorized and well-prepared experts.

## **Raising awareness in our Hungarian Protestant historical and theological heritage**

In his 2015 book entitled *In Crossfire*, (BÉKEFY 2015) the author of this paper, has already predicted the current migration challenge. In that book, he cited classic authors of the Hungarian Reformed Church martyr theology, which we can read about in the excellent book by György Szikszay (1789) entitled *Mártírok oszlopa* [The Pillar of Martyrs] quoted by János L. Győri. (GYŐRI 2015) Why did “Christ’s lily, dove, the suffering Church”, suffer from the Turks, the previous Islam? – this question was asked by multiple Hungarian Church Fathers. Why has God let this march of conquerors upon us? – was also his basic question. It is worth remembering the thought provoking answer even today. 1. “Muhammad”, meaning God, has punished our sins by Islam: idols, dissension, partisanship. 2. He had a missionary purpose in letting us bear the Turkish yoke, to make us convert them from Islam to Christianity. How far we have gone from this historical-theological perspective!

As the minister of the Reformed Church, István Czeglédi (1620–1671) put it: “If we stay together by the word of Christ, the Turks will not pose a problem. That is forever our homeland.” We can see that the governmental decisions of today follow basic truths from centuries ago, and the conditions to act accordingly are better than ever before. Only a strong Hungarian Christianity can defend Europe and itself, as both have weakened in their faith. Vishal Mangalwadi (2014), the ingenious contemporary Indian pastor and philosopher discussed in his 600-page book what the Bible meant for Europe, the high-quality culture that the Biblical people have created through the centuries. (MANGALWADI 2014) He has closed all his presentations since 2014 by saying: “My friends, your biggest enemy is not Islam. You yourselves are your biggest enemy. You



have broken your Christian roots. If you do not find your way back to those roots, Europe is lost. We need Christian awakening!”

## **Practical, multi-dimensional action options – pragmatic simultaneity**

### *Dialogue, opinion exchange, resolutions*

Due to limitations in length, I can only touch upon a few aspects. There was a conference in Madrid on 17–19 April 2015 which wanted to inform governments, Churches, international organizations about the *approaching danger of religious genocide and the current brutal atrocities committed against Christians*. The proclamation of this conference, which I call the *Madrid Manifesto*, and I have published several times its resolutions, findings, aspects, action plans are valid to this day. As a result, supporting Hungarian proclamations were published in 2016 at congregational and church conferences, like the *Győri Manifestum* [Győr Manifesto] issued in Győr in 2016, and the *Kerepesi Manifestum* [Kerepes Manifesto] in Kerepestarcsa in 2017. The local, congregational, village, town and region level occasions are extremely important to ensure that the problem of the persecution of Christians becomes known in the local public opinion, which sphere is still suffering from partial information and informational scarcity. I have delivered close to 40 presentations, with high attendances, about this topic all over the Carpathian Basin. More effort, attention and initiatives should support local community events like mine. The intensive media presentation of international or governmental level forums about Christian persecution or reconstruction, or about initiatives trying to support the resilience of persecuted Christians is very important. Nevertheless, it is also indispensable to hold other forums where Church and secular experts share their knowledge about these issues. It is not enough to have just a few excellent Western or Christian experts who speak in the news. That is why the conference held by the Madrasha Islamic Cultural Association of Germany in September 2014, was such a milestone event. 120 Islamic scholars participated at this event and condemned the activities of the Islamic State in 24 points, in line with the spirit of the Quran. It is important to establish contacts with Muslim politicians, theologians, scholars, who are open to discussion. These people include the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shawki Ibrahim Allam and other like-minded individuals. In his book entitled *Ideological battlefield* he points out: “The real danger is if Islam becomes a political ideology, and as such, Islamism poses a serious international threat as it may lead to the war of civilizations.” (Islamiq 2014)

### *Cooperation with international Church and non-Church organizations*

We know of 18 international organizations, most of them with Church background, others are governmental organizations or research institutes, which monitor, watch, analyse and publish regularly about the situation of Christianity/Christians globally on a daily basis, and document anti-Christianity/Christian atrocities. Let us mention just a few websites which are worth reading: Open Doors website in English or German, Voice of Persecuted Christians (for 50 years!), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Christian Freedom International, Scottish Voice for Persecuted Christians, Christian Solidarity International (CSI), International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF). Four practical aspects are present in the strategic mission, philosophy or mission statement of most of these organisations: 1. *Praying for the persecuted and persecutors*; 2. *Helping the persecuted – personal dimension*; 3. *Donating, financially supporting them, especially to boost their resilience*; 4. *Contacting them, lobbying and protesting at national, governmental and international forums against the crimes committed at the expense of Christians*. Our domestic churches, governmental bodies should also do the same!

### *Sustainable, realistic, good domestic decisions and actions*

*Examples:* A good example is last year's decision by the Board of the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Hungarian Churches to turn the national opening service of the Ecumenical Prayer Week into a prayer day for persecuted Christians from 2018 (the persecutors should also be prayed for – Jesus: "Pray for those, who persecute you" – Matthew 5:44). (Pray 2018) We must also mention the activities of the various denominational charity services (Catholic Caritas, Reformed, Baptist, Evangelical Charity Services), the Ecumenical Charity Service, and last but definitely not least, the governmental commitment and sacrifices, so as a result, "Hungary shows the way in assisting persecuted Christians" over its capabilities. (Magyar idők 2017) A few examples in HUF: in 2015 the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference donated 30 million HUF to Christians living in refugee camps, in the summer of 2017 it collected 90 million HUF for both returnees and those who stayed at home; in 2017 the Evangelical Church donated 15 million HUF to Middle Eastern Christians, the Reformed Church donated 10 thousand Euros to Middle East Reformed Church believers. In 2017 the Government donated 1.2 billion HUF to rebuild the Iraqi city of Telskuf, 310–310 million HUF to support the charitable activities of the Syriac Catholic Church of Antioch and the Orthodox Church of Antioch, 580 million HUF to reconstruct the damaged buildings in the Iraqi

Tell-Askuf. In addition to financial support, the Hungarian State has also donated 145 million HUFs' worth of medicine to the Saint Joseph Hospital in Erbil. This adds up to almost 3 billion HUF donations in aid, but this is still not the entire sum.

### *Raising awareness, educational tasks, opportunities*

The compulsory religious school education is a great opportunity to raise awareness, to highlight issues, to react to problems, to be sensitive toward others, to show solidarity, whereby the next generations can be prepared for upcoming dangers, and for managing conflicts in a mental, argumentative way (e.g. bringing world religions in the school bench). In order to help this initiative, I have translated into Hungarian, as a recommended piece of reading, the book written by an Egyptian Coptic Christian, Maggie Gobran. (KÜHL-KUBITSCHECK 2015) In this book, she writes about her 100,000 adopted children and about those almost 100 houses of love and schools she runs. To achieve these goals pupils at religious education classes should take part in discussion circles, invite persecuted Christians living in our communities and hear their presentations... another key strategy is that students should work in focus groups, which study a given world religion and invite their representatives; they should talk about their religions and the future, modernity, and finally doing multilevel casual processing of religions in school groups. In addition to school classes, community forums, church events, ecumenical dialogue or triologue groups can also make important contributions to an information and not hatred-based opinion-formation process about other religions. The regular review of religion by Pew Research Center in the USA, with the involvement of many young people, is an excellent opportunity to identify recent changes to the map of world religions and to make predictions for the upcoming 40–50 years.

### *Encouragement from the present for the future*

“Among the extremities of *deadly and aggressive intolerance*, terrorism, and the exploitation of religions by politics we are learning and we also must learn the perspective of critical tolerance and behaviour and healthy self-esteem!” (LACHMANN 2005) This approach has a future and the future can only be built upon such an approach, accordingly motivated by European identity, Hungarian identity, and Christian responsibility.

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## II.

# THE SITUATION OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN SPECIFIC AREAS AND REGIONS



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## THE SECURITY SITUATIONS OF CHRISTIANS IN IRAQ AND SYRIA IN 2018

In 2016 Cardinal Fernando Filoni published a book in Italian on the history of Christianity in Mesopotamia. In the second half of the monography, the Cardinal focuses on the Christian communities inhabiting the newly-born states, in more detail on Iraq and in less on Syria. (FILONI 2015) In the book, he summarizes the hardships of several centuries and expresses his hope that the fate of Mesopotamian Christians will soon turn to the better. Unfortunately, the situation of Christians in the region has not improved, but instead, they have been exposed to permanent atrocities and deprivation up to this day, and a lot of them have been forced to leave their homeland. According to a study by the Knights of Columbus, Iraq and Syria rank among the first ten countries of the world in terms of Christian persecution. (Knights of Columbus 2018) Since the borders of Syria and Iraq have been artificially drawn after the First World War, the geographical situation of the *Christian* communities and the internationally recognized borders do not overlap. This is why we are supposed to analyse the communities of Iraq and Syria and their tight historical relations together, despite the fact that the security situation in the two countries presently is quite different.

### **The Origins and Wealth of Mesopotamian Christianity**

If we want to analyse the present security situation of Christians in Mesopotamia, we must consider the rich Christian past and traditions of the region. This illuminates what the world will lose if the Christians are forced to leave these two countries, and Christianity will be gone from the region for good. In the article on Syria, in his Catholic Lexicon of 1933, Aurél Vecsey said that “Syria is the world’s most complicated country

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in terms of religious government and transparency". (VECSEY 1933, 278.) Because of the changes to the security situation and large-scale migration, this is even more relevant today, and the complexity in the issues mentioned is true for the whole region, not just for Syria. The fragmentation of the Christian community is the result of early theological disputes, as well as of the need for compliance with the political and power balance situation.

The origin of the *Syrian* Christianity, or at least of certain ancient communities, is related to the time of the apostles: the tradition has it that Apostles Saint Peter and Paul, as well as Barnabas, Paul's disciple, started evangelization in the region. Another tradition says that on behest from Apostle Thomas, they evangelized in Edessa. (GRIFFITH 1998, 1100.) Since the Jews of Palestine were not receptive to the new faith, the inhabitants of nearby regions became the primary target. This was where Christianity found fertile soil in its early centuries. It was favourable for the mission that Antioch in the Roman Empire had a unique autonomy, so punishments used in other regions of the empire were not effected for missionaries. That is why the region could become the most significant centre of Christian thinking and philosophy in its first centuries. The ancient Christian past of the city is supported by biblical evidence (1 Peter 5, 13) and archaeological excavations (Dura-Europos frescos) alike.

The Christian communities existing today have been formed after centuries-long theological-philosophical disputes. (RUZSICZKY 2008, 310–311.) This diversity is characterized by Jewish traditions, (ROUWHORST 1997, 72–93.) the Syrian language heritage, and by their rich theology and liturgy. The Greek and Coptic translations of the second century confirm it: Odes of Solomon, Acts of Thomas, scriptures of Clement or the gospel of Thomas. The significance of Saint Ephrem the Syrian's works was emphasized by Pope Benedict XVI in his writings. (XVI. BENEDEK 2009, 177.)

The richness of theology and philosophy has led to denominational diversity. Concerning Syria and the *Syriac Orthodox Church*, the former Antioch Patriarchate is the most significant community. Despite the historical name, since 1959 the church has been based in Damascus and has been the centre of this community. However, many members of the five million-strong community now live in India and Lebanon, too. The *Antioch Orthodox Church* considers itself the legal successor of the ancient Antioch Patriarchate. It ranks third after Constantinople and Alexandria among Orthodox Patriarchates. (UJHÁZI 2014, 136.) Although it has been seated in Damascus since 1268, they still retained the *Antioch* title. This denomination has followers in the entire region: Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey. But as a result of recent conflicts and migration, several thousands of them now live in North and South America. The liturgical language is predominantly Arabic, although some communities speak Aramaic, which was the vernacular spoken in the days of Jesus. They have

preserved their language despite the latest civil war and the activities of IS, as several priests claim. (Hanna Ghoneim's presentation at the University of Public Service, in Budapest on 25 September 2018.)

The *Assyrian Church of the East* is a smaller community, but its followers also live in the entire region – Lebanon, Iran, Syria. Immigration is a decisive factor in this case as well: many of them live in North America and Europe. In the early 1900s, after the so-called Assyrian Holocaust, a great deal of them settled in the United States. One of the most important consequences of this migrations was that they moved the centre of this to the USA in 1933. The history of this community is closely related to one of the most decisive theological disputes of the third century: the Theotokos–Christotokos issue and the personality of Nestorius, whose missionaries allegedly travelled as far as China, Mongolia and Turkestan. (KOMORÓCZY 2005, 10–12.)

One-third of the Christians in the region belong to the Catholic Church, though several Catholic rites exist today. (POSPISHIL 1960, 5.) Some followers of the Syriac Orthodox Church joined the Catholic Church in 1781. This has become the *Malankara Catholic Church*. The Western Syrian *Maronite Catholic Church* remained loyal to Rome after the schism in 1054 as the only oriental church not joining Constantinople. (The Syrian Catholic Church) Due to repeated persecutions, the seat of the Patriarchate was first relocated to Mardin in 1850 (nowadays North Turkey) and in the 1920s to its current seat of Beirut. (UJHÁZI 2017, 357.)

The Chaldean Catholics converted from the Assyrian Church of the East. (SZABÓ 2012) Currently, they are predominantly present in Iraq. The primacy of the Roman See was endorsed at several councils (1445, 1553, 1778), and that is how the Catholic Church has become increasingly significant. (The Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with both countries, the creation of which was long and eventful.) (FILONI 2015) One of the members of the Chaldean Christian community was, for example, Tariq Aziz, Saddam Hussein's advisor, Foreign Minister and later Deputy Prime Minister. Although fewer in number, but some Armenians also live in the region. They belong to either the Armenian Catholic Church or to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

With the rise of the IS, a lot of Christians fled from Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Arbil, Kirkuk and the so-called Nineveh plain. The latter is important because this region was regarded as the cultural and spiritual centre of Christians. (For example, one of the most ancient Christian monasteries, the Monastery of Saint Matthew, is located there.) The reason why many Christians have either immigrated or simply have not returned to their homes after the departure of the extremists, has increased due to uncertainty, unemployment, poverty and humanitarian catastrophe.

## The Development of the Security Situation of Christians in Iraq

The security situation of Christian communities in the region has been continuously changing in the countries which were formed after World War I. The conditions were alternately favourable or unfavourable in both of the two countries. This fact has significantly contributed to the changing size of these communities and to the transformation of Christian communities themselves.

The period of Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq was not the same for all Christians. The secular state tolerated the Christian communities, but some of Baathist Iraq's ethnic and cultural policies, like the prohibition on the use of the Aramaic language and writing, the nationalization of Christian schools, the termination of the Jesuit University and the complicated circumstances regulating Christian studies in state educational institutions were harmful to the Christian community. (BIACSI 2003, 544–552) The deportations from 1987, the concentration camps, the executions and the use of chemical weapons – e.g. the infamous al-Anfal operation – were not primarily aimed against Christians, but all these actions had several Christian victims. (BLACK 1993, 312–313.) Deportation programs, when Christians had to leave some oil-rich and strategically important regions, occurred contemporaneously, and Sunni Arabs moved into their homes. Saddam was able to exploit the historic conflicts among Christian communities since the centuries-long conflicts among Christians did a great deal of harm and significantly weakened their bargaining position. The fact that a great number of shrines and monasteries were renovated, and some of the Christians fleeing from adjacent countries chose Iraq as a refuge, because of the relatively peaceful conditions there, adds another layer to the picture.

The atrocities against Iraqi Christians – attacks on holy Christian sites, torture, kidnappings, forceful conversion to Islam, ordering Christian women to follow the Islamic dress code – multiplied after the Gulf Crisis. (HARRISON 2015) The stereotype that radical Islamist groups considered the Christians *Western collaborators* also had a role.

Thus, the once 1.5 million strong Christian community has gradually decreased to eight hundred thousand after the events of 2003. A major wave of immigration was triggered in 2004. However, the mass migration did not begin then. It only started in earnest when it became clear that attacks against Christians are partly religiously motivated. Another factor was that before the Syrian crisis, Syrian Christian communities also took part in the aid programs for Iraqi Christians. Since Christian pastors were those who were most often exposed to sectarian attacks, they left the country in even larger numbers than the general population. (MORVAY 2014) Several religious leaders called on their priests not to travel abroad. (VALENTE 2014) According to UNHCR, half of Iraqi Christians left the country by 2011. According to the UN and the charity Kirche in Not, only half

a million Christians live in Iraq today. (Christen im Irak 2015) Other organizations believe that the number is closer to three-four hundred thousand and because of the aggression they suffered, they opine that Christians would not return even if they had the chance. (WILLIAMS 2016)

Although the new constitution of 2005 adopted the idea of the freedom of religion, it also contains a clause which grants Islam a privileged position. The constitution provided equal rights to every religious community, but no law can be effective if it goes against the regulations of Islam. (PACI 2011)

The actions against Christians by extremists were institutionalized in the areas occupied by the Islamic State after 2014. It is widely known that the organization, which claimed to be a state – which it was surely not – introduced official, systematic measures against Christians. It is impossible to fully publicize the atrocities and destruction – the destruction of churches, cathedrals, chapels and other Church property, measures taken to fully obliterate communities, kidnappings, confiscation of personal property, forcing people to leave their homes, brutal killings etc. committed by the IS. (SZILVAY 2014) Because of the atrocities, Pope Francis was also willing to accept an armed intervention, although earlier he himself and his predecessors, as well as the Holy See, were absolutely against military intervention in serious conflicts. (UJHÁZI 2015, 63–65.) Several thorough analyses have been written on the foundation, name, expansion, leaders, supporters, ideological and religious views, principles, foreign volunteers, tactical capabilities and the regional and European effects of the IS. (BARRETT 2014)

In March 2018 the BBC broadcasted a programme concerning the inevitable retreat of the IS having lost their oil and tax revenues after the loss of big cities due to the anti-IS military actions. (BBC 2018) These analyses leave no doubt that despite all of this, the IS still has a strength of about 20–30,000 in the region. Terror attacks targeting Christians must still be expected in the future. Although they have been weakened, the uncertainty about the *governance* of Syria and Iraq, as well as diverse regional interests lead us to conclude that the IS may regenerate in the future. (BYMAN 2018) Besides, other atrocities may also occur. Workers of the French Catholic Charity reported the hidden presence of IS personnel and cases of phone call threats. Other studies have highlighted the dangers of the consequences of Kurdish autonomy since these are often underestimated from the point of view of Christians' security. (PENTIN 2017)

The reconstruction of the infrastructure is difficult even after the disappearance of IS repression. Several Christian, in particular Catholic, charities are taking an active part in the reconstruction. Besides the high number of destroyed buildings, it is difficult enough to regain the people's trust and convince them to return to their old homes. This situation is worsened by current economic problems and the lack of social support and medical services. This is why the Bishop of Erbil, Bashar Warda, said: "Not only workplaces but other

sustainable programs are also required. More than 90,000 Christians used to live in the region, but their numbers now have dropped below 40,000.” (PENTIN 2018) In Qaraqosh, which used to be a Christian majority town, the Christian community is struggling for survival. This town, according to several sources, is of outstanding importance for Christianity. Today, it is not the extremist Islamist terrorists, but the Christians’ critical number which is the greatest challenge. Around 25,000 of them have returned but this number is only half of those who fled because of the IS. Moreover, just a quarter of the houses destroyed by the IS have been rebuilt so far. The situation is similar in the nearby Christian town of Bartella, where just 6,000 Christians have returned. Most of the families who have not returned live in a refugee camp in Erbil. The difficulty, in this case, is that the former Christian property was either expropriated or sold under IS. The biggest challenge of all – according to several pastors – is the rebuilding trust. In other cases, for example in case of Tell-Askuf, which was reconstructed using Hungarian Government funds, reconstructing infrastructure remains the greatest challenge. It is difficult to get to big cities because of dilapidated roads and the lack of public transport. Different NGOs and the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee, (Nineveh Reconstruction Committee 2018) which tries to unite Christian denominations, have been of considerable help. In 2017 and 2018 the Knights of Columbus also gave immense assistance – they spent more than 19 million Dollars on reconstruction and food aid. It included the reconstruction of Christian buildings and flats in the city of Karemlash, assistance to the Christian refugees of Erbil, support to hospitals of the city including food, medication and everyday items. (ANDERSON 2018) The Open Doors Human Rights Organization launched a campaign to protect Iraqi and Syrian Christians, concerning the human rights aspects – equal treatment and living conditions – as well as reconciliation and social reconstruction. (Open Doors 2018)

Catholic organizations are encouraging Christians to return, but because of the donor fatigue in Western European countries and the United States, many have become disappointed. They have expressed similar disappointment because of the inaction of the UN in providing assistance to Christians.

The Christian organizations and communities have utilised the opportunities offered by the media and the Internet. (SZABÓ–HORVÁTH–NAGY 2017) There are regular international TV and radio broadcasts, social media posts, YouTube videos, and websites. Some people remarked that the world is not paying enough attention to situation reports in the news. (MORVAY 2014) The Maronites, the Melkites and the Syrian Catholics published further declarations which were also welcomed by the Syriac and Greek Orthodox Patriarchs. It is through these channels that Christians ask the international community to assist them in the release of Christian prisoners and in the defence of Christian sacred sites. They also provide information about the refugee situation, kidnappings, murders and violence against sacred sites.

The damage caused by IS, by the Syrian civil war and the turbulent security situation requires cooperation among Christians. On 9 February 2010, the Iraqi Christian Community Leaders Council was established. They have reported on the regional security of Christians several times. The Maronite Patriarch of Antioch, Bechara Boutros Raï, has negotiated with other oriental patriarchs and foreign ambassadors to solidify the situation of Christians. The ecumenical dialogue has become an important issue in the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, which is proven in the present serious crisis. Declarations and actions of the ecumenical spirit serve the same purpose.

Cooperation and peaceful dialogue between religions have become an important factor since the council. Because of the Islamist extremists, it seemed for a while that this effort would fail. That is why both Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, State Secretary of the Vatican, have repeatedly emphasized the following: “It would be a simplification to speak about a war between Islam and Christianity since the Church represents just a fraction of the Islam community and most Islam believers reject extremist behaviour.” (TORNIELLI 2016) Furthermore, the Pope and other leaders of the Holy See have made several gestures. Cardinal Jean-Luis Tauran, the former leader of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, who died in 2018, emphasized on several forums that Muslim communities should also reject aggression. In 2018 it became especially important to commemorate martyrs of persecution and important individuals who stood up against it. Faraj Rahho, the Archbishop of Mosul, who was murdered ten years ago after he was kidnapped, was a figure like this. The Chaldean Church has been making significant efforts to canonize him. (Radio Vaticana 2018)

The presence of armed Christian militias is also a sensitive issue. There are church leaders who, when they speak about autonomously-formed armed Christian groups, say that everybody, including Christians, has the right to self and family defence if the state is incapable of doing so. (VALENTE 2015) Representatives of Christian denominations support armed organizations of self-defence. Although there were Christian militias earlier, the diplomacy and rhetoric of the Vatican have usually emphasized reconciliation and as far as the local Catholic Church leaders are concerned, they seldom support these formations. However, the Nineveh Plain Protection Unit, established by the Assyrian Democratic Party, is supported by a couple of local Church leaders.



## Christians in Syria

Syria before the Civil War was considered the island of peace for Christians. They were not discriminated against by state regulations and their personal documents did not specify the holders' religious identity. It was not forbidden to convert to Christianity, either. Islamic and Christian elements were combined in the religious beliefs of many people (e.g. respect of Maria, sacred sites, prayers). Even before the Syrian *civil war*, there was a certain amount of fear that if the conditions in Iraq worsens then the conflict may spill over into Syria. The decrease in the number of Christians is not happening just because of the civil war and IS. One hundred years ago half of the country's population was Christian, twenty years ago this number reduced to twenty per cent, while today only less than ten per cent of the population was Christian. Another pre-Civil War difficulty is that in 1974 schools, which have played an important role in preserving the faith of Christian communities, were nationalized in Syria. The living conditions of Christians are worsening due to challenging economic circumstances in Syria like unemployment and the growing Christian–Muslim tensions.

In the attitudes of Christians toward democratic change, there are several similarities between Iraq and Syria. It is also true for Syria that Christians prefer forces which promise their protection instead of democratic values. This is why, despite the dictatorial nature of his regime, Christians accepted President Assad. Declarations of Christian leaders suggest that they still consider him the best choice for the survival of the Christian community in the country. (KASS 2013) Local Christians often blame the Western world for not considering this when they speak about his ouster and military intervention. At the same time, there are also Christian reports in the media which criticize President Assad. Some Syrian Christians who settled in Europe argue that the President's support for Christians is just a hoax and propaganda. They claim that Christians have never been equal citizens: according to the constitution, the President has to be Muslim and Christian leaders who speak about human rights abuses are silenced. They also criticize that Church leaders cooperate with the regime and become beneficiaries of it. They obviously reject the Assad regime. (Deutschlandfunk 2014)

During the civil war, extremist groups have been gradually strengthening. In the vision of the Al-Nusra front, the Pan Islamic state, the Caliphate and the introduction of the sharia law were already present before the IS expansion. Al-Nusra has had multiple members like al-Qaeda. Among Al-Nusra members there were Muslim converts and fanatic extremists from Western Europe, amongst the veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq. Besides Christians, they also attacked *Alavite* Muslim communities. For long Al-Nusra has not been given the attention it deserved in the shadow of the articles on the IS. Recently Al-Nusra has also changed its name and declared that they have severed their ties with other international terror organizations. According to many

observers, after the repression of IS, Al-Nusra may cause as many problems as the IS and they may seriously endanger the stabilization of the region, including the security of Christians. There are also concerns that exactly like IS, this organization may provide a base for those willing to carry out terrorist attacks abroad. A large part of the territory declared by the IS as their caliphate was in Syria where, in addition to the introduction of the sharia, they used the methods we already mentioned in case of Iraq. According to the Open Doors Human Rights Organization though, the Syrian society stepped on the way of radicalization long before that. Syrian Christians have been deprived of several basic rights and they were forced once again to accept the *dhimmi* status, well known from history. (Open Doors 2018) Mtanios Haddad, the Greek Catholic Envoy of the Vatican, emphasized the importance of exterminating extremist-related infiltrating groups from abroad – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya and other countries. He thinks these groups disturb the peace between local Christians and Muslims.

Just like in case of Iraq, we cannot fully report on the number of destroyed churches, monasteries (e.g. the Franciscan monastery of Saint Anthony), of displaced, murdered and tortured monks, priests and believers, as well as the suffering of masses in Syria during the terrorist rule of IS and the civil war. Another important fact is that several ancient Christian relics, which are a unique part of the World Cultural Heritage, are situated in Syria. A good example is the city of Maalula with its ancient temples and monasteries, as well as the Saint Tekla monastery, where the mortal remains of Saint Tekla, the disciple of Saint Paul, are kept. The city, the monastery and the Christian relics have been seriously damaged during the civil war. (NASSER 2013) It was in 2018 that the damaged Saint Tekla Orthodox monastery was reconstructed with the help of the Russian Alliance of Comrades. So in that year, on Saint Tekla's day, it awaited pilgrims in its full beauty. (Agenzia Fides 2018) This is also of importance because before the civil war pilgrims from all parts of the world arrived in Syria for Christian celebrations, like the glorification of the Holy Cross and Saint Tekla's day. The reconstruction does not mean that every custom has returned, but at least the infrastructural conditions are present. In 2016 on the proposal of Pope Francis, the Holy See started the process which resulted in the coordination and harmonisation of charity work in Syria and Iraq. This event of 2016 obviously illustrates that the Holy See believes that the Syrian and Iraqi crisis will be solved soon and this should be reflected by the Catholic Church with the establishment of permanent institutions.

The events which occur during the Holy Mass or other religious services or attacks against religious officials are also regarded as direct attacks against the Christian faith. Unfortunately, several attacks occurred when Christian services were held. So besides many damaged buildings a lot of people were also killed or suffered permanent injuries. Reliable data is difficult to find as there are significant differences between



the multiple reports. (HILL 2017) Kidnappings are also prevalent in Syria: Gregorious Yohanna Ibrahim, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo, and Boulos Yazigi, Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Aleppo, were both kidnapped near Aleppo. Christian priests and believers are often captured to be released for ransom. In December 2013 twelve nuns were kidnapped from Maalula. These are only a few examples to demonstrate the phenomenon. (DURM 2014)

## Conclusions

The presence of Christianity has continuously developed in Mesopotamia. The size of Christian communities has always been determined by the political and military forces of Islam, as well as the Western policy in the region. Christians, although in ever-decreasing numbers, have always been present in the region. In the successor states of the Ottoman Empire we cannot speak about a unified Christian population, instead, we have to study every specific Christian tradition and rite, according to their ever-changing security situation. The communities with different philosophical and theological traditions are already present in many regions of the Middle East besides the original homeland of their religion's evolution, as well as in Europe and North America due to migration.

The Second Vatican Council's theological-philosophical position on ecumenism, religious dialogue and state-Church relations has been vindicated in the region by the Holy See. The fears of John Paul II have seemed to prevail since the first and second Gulf Wars, and after civil wars and the expansion of the Islamic State, extremists filled the power vacuum. Despite the fact that several Church and civilian organizations have been trying to restore the status quo in the past few years, the situation remains fragile. Although considerable amounts of money were spent on the reconstruction of Christian sacred sites and homes, to provide aid, food and medical support in 2018, just a small part of the Christian community have returned home. According to local Church leaders, it is still a long process – if it is at all feasible – to restore the trust of the Christians in the region.

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## THE SECURITY SITUATION OF EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS IN 2018

Recent analytical assessments on the security situation of Christians in the Middle East usually focus on the situation in Iraq and Syria, or on the issue of migration. At the same time Christianity in Egypt – where most Christian faithful follow the Coptic Orthodox Church – is often ignored, although one of the largest Christian communities in the Middle East lives here. (HABIB EL MASRI 1982) Despite the fact that Egyptian Christians live in a relatively safe and secure environment, it is worth analysing their situation as well, especially if we consider recent developments: the Egyptian *uprising*, the strengthening influence of the Muslim Brotherhood and the developments after their fall, (BRUNNER-TRAUT 1993) or the later isolated actions against Christians like the Palm Sunday bombing in 2017. (Vatikáni Rádió 2017) To get acquainted with the culture and history of Coptic Christians, several studies are at our disposal, especially in English. (BASSALI 2015) Although it is difficult to identify the exact religious proportions of Egypt, as most surveys are politically motivated, we can safely say that approximately 90% of the population is Sunni Muslim.

### **Historical Review**

Not much information is available on the circumstances of the formation of Egyptian Christianity. The tradition has it that the founder of the community was Saint Mark the Evangelist, who established the Patriarchate of Alexandria in about 30 AD. (HABIB EL MASRI 1982) The sources of Eusebius and Irenaeus speak about the existence of Christian communities in Egypt. Accounts on dialogues between local philosophical schools and Christianity also support this assumption. The discourse with philosophical schools elevated

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Egypt to become a spiritual centre of Christianity. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, the vivid philosophical dialogue among Christian communities resulted in heated debates which finally divided the community. This division later proved to be favourable for the expansion of Islam.

The philosophical and theological divide among Christians was primarily related to the nature of the founder of Christianity, Jesus of Nazareth, and these debates gradually escalated. (DIÓS-VICZIÁN 2004) The political-economic-social balance of the region was also influenced by different trends from the 4<sup>th</sup> century (see the life and acts of Bishop St. Athanasius). *Coptic* Christians presumably started dominating the country in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The *official Church*, the Alexandrian Orthodox Church, was in opposition to *Coptic* communities because of its diverging philosophical and theological positions and cultural roots. The biggest sociological difference between the two groups was that representatives of the Alexandrian Orthodox Church were primarily town-dwellers of Greek origin, unlike the rural *Copts*. (AZIZ 1991) The latter were primarily the indigenous inhabitants of Egypt who lived in villages and incorporated their customs and traditions into their religious practices. (RANKE-HEIDELBERG 1936)

The term *Copt* became widespread in the 7<sup>th</sup> century when Arabic tribes arrived in the region. (SWANSON 2010) After the Arabic and Islamic conquest, the community was pushed to the background.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the availability of higher education for the Coptic community – especially in European Universities, in England and France – supported their development. Due to the return of educated people, their religious life blossomed again. By organizing Sunday schools, they passed down their traditions, values – including the preservation and dominance of their national identity – to their offsprings. (HASAN 2003) An example of the success of the movement is that one of the most predominant Coptic Church leaders, Pope Shenouda III, also came from this circle.

## The Situation of Egyptian Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

The situation of Egyptian Christianity was characterized by divisions, which is also true for the present situation to an extent. Currently, the Egyptian Christian community is divided into three parts. The most dominant are those who belong to the Alexandrian Coptic Orthodox Church, while the Catholic and Anglican Coptic communities are also present, although with a lot fewer followers. There were also earlier attempts by the Catholic Church to convert people, especially by members of the Franciscan, Jesuit and the Capuchin orders. During their missionary work, they usually targeted the clergy of the Coptic Orthodox

Church. (KING 2007) The method proved successful at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when many converted to the Catholic Church. (PIZZO 2003) However, this method cannot be reconciled with the ecumenical perspectives of the Second Vatican Council.

By the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Coptic Orthodox Church became dominant, which is shown by the growing number of monasteries and dioceses, as well as the development of institutions responsible for training priests. Different Protestant denominations and later Neo-Protestant denominations have also arrived in the region. (PHILIPP 1985) However, these communities have never gained much influence.

Concerning the secular legal regulations of freedom of religion and conscience, the Constitution of 1923 discussed the issue of religious denominations and religious practice. The constitution states equality before the law – it ensures free religious practice regardless of the person's religious convictions. However, the constitution did not end tensions between Muslims and Christians. Surprisingly according to some researchers, this constitution has even provided the foundations for the development of religious extremism. (DE GAYFFIER-BONNEVILLE 2005)

As Islamic law had to be considered, if anyone wanted to build a new Christian church, the builder had to receive a permit from the President, while for the renovation of an existing one, only the provincial governor's license was required. In 2003, a proposal was submitted to Parliament to harmonise the rules on Holy sites, but it was not passed by the legislation. Under Mubarak's rule, for a period, no permission was granted to build Christian churches, however, several sources agree that the secret service licensed the functioning of specific buildings as sites of religious practice.

Regarding the religious elements of the party system, the Coptic Christians had two political parties, the Christian Democratic Party and the Coptic National Party. They relied on a concept of national identity which originated from the Sunday schools: they encouraged the Copts to use the Coptic language and they equated the term *Coptic* with an Egyptian identity. (REID 1982)

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the good personal relationship between Nasser and Pope Cyril VI assisted the institutional relations between the state and the church. This situation ended with the death of these two leaders. (HEIKAL 1983) From the second half of the 1970s, the number of atrocities against churches and chapels grew during Sadat's rule, which in many cases was related to the lack of construction licenses for Christian holy sites. (WATSON 2002) Major clashes occurred after the amendment of the Egyptian Constitution in 1980. The most important change passed by the legislation at this period was that Sharia law was also accepted as one of the key foundations for the country's legal system. (CSEH 2015) The hostile relations between the Coptic Church and the state were somewhat reconciled when Hosni Mubarak became



the president of Egypt. The new relationship between Mubarak and the religious leaders – which was based upon mutual support – was considered by many a restoration of the Nasser era regulations. (The American Coptic Union 2010) Furthermore, by the early 2000s, the censorship of the media also subsided. However, there were still several reports about atrocities committed against Christians.

## **The Security Situation of Egyptian Christians since 2000 to date**

The majority of anti-Christian attacks happen in the northern part of Egypt. This is partly due to the fact that only a small number of Christians live in the southern part of the country. In the early 2000s, the entire country was suffering from deteriorating social conditions which walked hand in hand with the deterioration of public security. (UNICEF 2015) In 2008, for example, an Arabic group attacked the monastery of Abu Fana, around which – to prevent further attacks – a wall was built later. (IBRAHIM 2011) Violent actions committed under the name of the so-called *blood revenge*, also demanded a lot of Christian victims.

Official government communication intended to create the impression that these crimes were committed because extremist ideas were infiltrating the country from abroad, and the perpetrators were not Egyptians either. This was the case when on 6 January 2010 a bombing attack had left seven people dead and three seriously wounded in Nag Hammadi in Central Egypt. The armed assassins attacked the congregation after the Holy Mass on Christmas Day.

Many Coptic youths and several Christian NGOs participated in the uprising against Mubarak during the Arab spring. This means that they are partially responsible for the total destabilization of the already vulnerable security situation of the country. (BASSALI 2015) The uprisings, which were disguised as democratic revolution developments, and the period after their victory have proven that political ideologies cannot be separated from religious factors in this region. In addition to Islamist organizations, many Coptic movements, like the Kefaya or the Maspero Youth Union, also became quite influential. However, it must be mentioned that relations between these political and civilian organizations and the Coptic Church have become ambivalent. The civilian groups expected that religious leaders should only be involved in strictly religious affairs. (WITTEVEEN 2014) Within the Coptic community, many difficulties arose from these debates, and from the fact that the uprising did not fulfil their expectations. The number of atrocities against Christians grew significantly, although many anticipated a decrease: there were 45 anti-Christian hate crimes in 2010, this number grew to 70 in 2011, and 112 in 2013. One of the most infamous attacks was the Maspero massacre of

2011 when protesters clashed with state security forces. (ISKANDER 2012) An almost logical consequence of this worsening trend was the bloodshed on Palm Sunday in 2017. (EDWARDS 2015)

At the 2012 elections, which was held after the fall of the Mubarak regime, three parties were trying to win seats on the platform of Islamic values. These three were the WASAR, the Salafist Nour Party and the Party of Freedom and Justice. The latter party had the added benefit that it had the support of the Muslim Brotherhood. (The Carter Center 2012) Each of the three parties had one Coptic candidate whose only role was to gain some Egyptian Christian votes. However, none of the parties was successful with this strategy.

Nevertheless, the elections of 2012, with high turnout, were won by the Party of Freedom and Justice. The second and third place went to the Nour Coalition and the Wafd party, winning most of the votes for Islamist actors. Six Coptic candidates were elected as MPs, which was 1.2% of the legislative body. Some say that the real losers of these elections were the women, the youth, and the Copts. Besides those who were elected, the military headquarters convinced the Prime Minister to nominate five more Coptic MPs to ensure that Christians are properly represented in the legislation. According to Egypt's electoral laws, the Prime Minister of Egypt can directly nominate ten MPs to the Parliament. The fact that eleven Coptic MPs were either elected or nominated to this body was an increase compared to the previous period. In 2000 there were only 7 Coptic MPs, while in 2010 ten Coptic MPs had parliamentary seats. However, no Copt was nominated to a leadership position in a parliamentary committee (e.g. environmental, defence, foreign affairs).

The first round of the 2012 presidential elections ended with a virtual tie between Muhammed Morsi and Ahmed Shafik. However, by the second round, Morsi's was able to increase his support and therefore he was elected as the new President of Egypt. One of the reasons of his success was the mobilization power of the Muslim Brotherhood – as the members of the Brotherhood advertised Morsi as the sole presidential candidate who represents *real Muslim* values in different forums (e.g. in mosques).

In his first address, the new President expressed his intent to be the President of all Egyptian citizens. This statement was controversial due to the circumstances of his election. Under his presidency, the situation of the country's population further deteriorated. As unemployment grew the welfare of households dropped, and public safety deteriorated, the number of violent attacks on Christians suddenly started to grow. At certain locations, atrocities by the Muslim population and authorities became more and frequent (e.g. many Copts were imprisoned). In many cases, the reason behind these attacks or imprisonments was alleged blasphemy. The human rights group Amnesty International voiced its disapproval when it learned about the abuses committed against Christians. They accused the state and the authorities of not mobilizing its security

apparatus to defend Christians and their livelihood, or to protect their churches, schools and charity centres. (BUCHANAN 2015)

In addition to these well known international organisations, a few new bodies were formed, to defend Copts in particular, aiming to find legal remedies for them after anti-Christian atrocities. (Doss 2014) Due to the gradual economic decline and the worsening security environment, Morsi started to lose his supporters. This situation enabled General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to lead a successful military coup against President Morsi. In the summer of 2013, General Sisi became the new leader of Egypt with the open support of Coptic Pope Tawadros. Pope Tawadros threw his weight behind al-Sisi because he was looking for a change in the deeper layers of the society, not just in the political life. (ALLEN 2015)

In 2014 Abdel Fattah al-Sisi won the official elections as well. Due to the influence of the Coptic Pope, the general also won the support of Christian communities. (FAHIM 2014) The new President, intending to secure the support of the communities, made further gestures to the Christians. The new Constitution explicitly states that no political party may be organized on the grounds of either race or religion. Besides, in 2015 the President visited St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo and attended a Christmas Orthodox service. During his visit, he reiterated that the Christian citizens of Egypt are entitled to the same rights and protection as their Muslim countrymen. In another address, he also spoke about the licensing requirements of church construction. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi promised to issue these licenses and to renovate existing Christian holy sites. The help from a Muslim community in Cairo can lead to real success. The believers raised enough funds to renovate a Christian temple in Al Manufiyya. (Agenzia Fides 2015)

Behind the gestures al-Sisi made towards Christians there is probably an intent to improve Egypt's economic indicators and foreign relations. The country's stability is tightly connected to the activities of the religious and ethnic groups in the broader region. This is why, it was in the President's interest to join the fight against religious extremism, and to strengthen the power of the state. So, Al-Sisi is considered a positive actor by the Egyptian Christian population. However, there were opinions criticizing the differences between his promises and reality (some of these people argued that his real aim was to capture the Coptic vote, and not to achieve true change, while others said that the promises in the Presidential address were nothing more than empty phrases to hide reality).

However, it is an unquestionable fact that you cannot root out deeply-implanted negative attitudes and prejudice in a short period of time. Based on Open Doors data, since Al-Sisi assumed office, 70 Christian institutions (churches, monasteries, schools) were attacked. In May 2017, twenty-eight Egyptian Christian travellers, on their way to a monastery in the Minya region of Egypt, were massacred by ISIS fighters,

(Open Doors 2018) and we also have to remember the previously mentioned Palm Sunday atrocity in 2017. (Open Doors 2015) As a response to this attack, two key Egyptian religious leaders, Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of the al-Azhar mosque, and Pope Tawadros II condemned and rejected the religiously motivated violent attacks, calling on the population to respect each other's creeds and believers. Moreover, they both reiterated that extremist religious organizations like ISIS, misinterpret the principles and values of Islam. (FOUAD 2015)

Accounts from 2018 also describe another wide range of atrocities committed against individuals, communities and Christian sites. Based on Open Doors data, Christian women and children disappear in increasing numbers. The torture of abducted girls and women, and using them as targets of blackmail and forced conversion, is a popular tool in the hands of the extremists. These players have a well-designed system of intimidation which includes custom-made flat and house complexes, other, often technological devices which increase the efficiency of blackmail. Based on surveys, the number of kidnapped victims has been growing for years. Currently, the country is 17<sup>th</sup> on the world list. (Open Doors 2018) In addition to women and children any person who wears any visible symbol of Christianity is also in danger. In August 2018 for example, based on his family's account, a Christian male was murdered because he has not hidden his religious identity. Besides frequently attending religious services, he also wore symbols of Christian faith (e.g. a necklace with a cross). (Open Doors 2018)

## Conclusions

In order to analyse and assess the security situation of Egyptian Christianity, it is indispensable to review and understand the events of the past. In the early centuries, the evolving Christian faith provided a basis for vivid philosophical discourse. Nevertheless, it can be observed from the very beginning that fragmentation walked hand in hand with the development of philosophical and theological schools. Social differences disguised as religious divisions have been present since the 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries. We can conclude that religious communities in Egypt were highly fragmented even before the Islamic conquest. After Islam became dominant, relations between the two religions and the rules governing the coexistence of different religious communities have changed with time. The various allowances and gestures provided for Christians gradually faded away, but after the European intervention in Egypt, they reappeared.

The dialogue between the communities was conducted under the aegis of the religious leaders for a long period. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the role of religious leaders proved to be significant but it was followed by a rapid decline of their influence. After the 1950s, political and religious spheres seemed to totally separate. Both religious groups elected their secular representatives, and the influence of religious leaders was restricted to religious affairs. However, it did not mean that the growth of the secular Egyptians had erased the cultural difference formed throughout the past centuries. Instead, the situation of Christians living in Muslim majority Egypt has remained practically unchanged.

After Islam became dominant, the security of Egyptian Copts relied on the policies of the Muslim leaders of the country, who represented the majority, which is still true to a certain extent up to this day. That is well illustrated by the case of the Nasser regime which was based upon the cooperation of the leader of the Coptic Church and the President. A similar case was the Mubarak era which provided opportunities for Christians by circumventing the existing official rules.

It is difficult to fully assess the present regime and the rule of President al-Sisi as it is. However, it is a fact that compared to the confusion in the previous era, relative balance can be observed in the legislative and executive fields alike. The occurrence of atrocities against Christians is due to external effects, as well as internal economic and social problems.

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## THE SECURITY SITUATION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

Christians are currently exposed to an increasing degree of suppression and persecution around the globe. This phenomenon can also be witnessed in the broader Middle East. In 2017 Open Doors, an American non-profit organization which assists persecuted Christians published a list containing those 50 countries where it is the most dangerous to be Christians. Almost every Middle Eastern country, with the exception of Israel, is included on this list. (Open Doors USA 2018) Although Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, (WOOTLIFF 2018) followers of the three great monotheist world religions live within its territory. As its capital, the city of Jerusalem holds the most sacred sites of Judaism and Christianity, and the third most sacred site of Islam, so exceptional attention is given both to the city of Jerusalem and the whole country of Israel.

### **The History of the Holy Land**

As it is widely known Judea, a province of Ancient Rome, was the cradle of Christianity. The province mostly consisted of territory which is currently under Israeli authority. (Livius Judea s. a.) Jesus Christ of Nazareth – himself a member of the Jewish people – was born, brought up and taught here. Later according to the Christian faith, he was crucified and resurrected in Judea. The ancient church was formed here and Christianity started to spread from here. The new religion was initially persecuted by the Roman Empire for 300 years, but later the persecution stopped and by 380 AD Christianity became the state religion of the Empire. While Christianity became the dominant religion in Europe, the Christians in the Holy Land

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itself could not enjoy this favourable situation for long, as the territory of today's Israel fell victim to Islam conquest quite soon.

Jerusalem was occupied by the second *true caliph* Omar in 636. From that period to the end of the First World War – aside from the period of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (1099–1291) – the territory remained under Muslim rule (the last Islam monarchs were the Turkish sultans). (ELDAR 2014) In this period, Christians and Jews were free to practise their religion but only if they paid a tax, the *jizya*, which was imposed upon them by their Muslim rulers. (MATUZ 1990, 90.)

After the Great War, the Holy Land became a part of the *British Mandate for Palestine* and the new rulers introduced full religious freedom for their subjects. These mandatory regulations were later incorporated by the Israeli legal system, (SHETREET 2001) and the Independence Declaration of the state founded in 1948 also contains some parts of these regulations. (Knesset 1948) So after the end of the Muslim rule, the Christians of the Holy Land have not had to pay an extra tax due to their religious beliefs, they have had the freedom of religious practice and they are regarded as equal under the law. While during the Israeli Independence War of 1948 a great number of Christian Arabs were forced to leave their homes, (TSIMHONI 2001, 33.) yet a considerable Christian community still exists in the Holy Land up to this day.

## Basic Data

Based on the CIA World Factbook, the state of Israel (including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) has a territory of 22,000 km.<sup>2</sup> If we add the approximately 6,000 km<sup>2</sup> of Judea and Samaria, we get an area of approximately 1/3 of Hungary, about a third of which is a scarcely populated desert. Despite its small size, Israel has a population of 6.2 million Jewish (74.7% of the population) and approximately 2.1 million non-Jewish inhabitants (25.3% of the population, most of them are Arabs). The number of Arabs living in Judea and Samaria is about 2.75 million.

The proportion of Muslims is quite high among the non-Jewish population: only 1–2% of the population of Judea and Samaria is Christian, almost everybody else is Muslim. While the 2.1 million non-Jewish population of Israel is 70% Muslim, 16% atheist, Samaritan, Bahai or of other religion, 8% is Christian and the final 6% is Druze. If we turn these percentages into actual numbers we will find that up to 170,000 Christians live in Israel, and approximately 50,000 in the territory of Judea and Samaria. Out of the approximately 1.8 million population of the Gaza Strip, less than 1% is Christian, (CIA World Factbook 2018c) and according to

the State Department this means that approximately 1,300 Christians live there. (US Department of State 2016, 31.)

The vast majority of Israeli Christians (approximately 80%) are ethnically Arab, while the remaining part are mostly immigrants of Jewish origin who arrived from the Soviet Union after 1990, who have received their Israeli citizenship under the provisions of the *return act* (in addition to them, there are smaller denominations like the Jehovah's Witnesses or Christian Jews). (TSMHONI 2001, 35.) This study focuses on the situation of Christian Arabs. Almost all of them live in towns, mainly in Nazareth, Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv–Jaffa, Bethlehem, while Christian majority communities can be found around the lake of Gennesaret (in Israel these are Eilabun, Rama, Kfar Yasif, Jish, Fassota and Ma'ilia; in Judea and Samaria e.g. Beit Jala and Beit Sahur). (MFA of Israel 2000; Jewish Virtual Library s. a.)

The ratio of Christians is continuously shrinking within the entire population in Israel, Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The reason for this is that they have, in comparison with the Jews and Muslims of Israel, a relatively low fertility rate, (TSMHONI 2001, 34–38.) and large numbers of Israeli Christians are willing to emigrate from their homeland. (US Department of State 2016, 31.)

## Security Situation

The methods used during the persecution of Christians are varied all over the world: in some cases, communities are exposed to government-led physical persecution, in others the government relies on legislation to make life miserable for Christians. One of the most frequent consequences of this legal harassment is that many Christians choose emigration instead of enduring state persecution. As a result, the remaining Christian communities lose their political influence and representation because of their decreasing numbers, and they become more and more vulnerable. Certainly, these factors often occur either in combination, or simultaneously, or in correlation. An analysis of the security situation of Christians in the Holy Land – based on the aforementioned facts – shall be conducted to answer three questions:

1. Are they exposed to state-led physical violence and persecution?
2. What legal framework governs the freedom and practice of religion?
3. Are they adequately represented in society? What are the causes of their decrease?

The analysis studies the State of Israel, Judea and Samaria, and the Gaza Strip.

### *Physical threats*

The 2017 study of Open Doors made a list of the fifty most dangerous countries for Christians which unfortunately includes almost every Middle East country, except Israel. (Open Doors USA 2018) This is an indicator showing that Israel is a unique Middle Eastern country where Christians can live in physical safety. Israel is a democratic state which tolerates the religious diversity of its people. Not just Christians but every other religious community present in the country (Muslims, Druze, Bahai) is free from persecution. (SHETREET 2001) However, there have been isolated cases of religious extremism when either the infrastructure or the representatives of a minority religion were attacked.

The government has created a special department within the Prosecutor's Office to investigate religiously motivated crimes. The department is headquartered in Jerusalem. Its jurisdiction extends to Judea and Samaria, as well. This department is obliged to act in case of *price tag* attacks: which are attacks committed by Jewish extremist individuals or groups against non-Jews, willing to retaliate a state measure imposed on a Jewish radical group. The most frequent targets of these groups according to the police are vehicles, property owned by a religious minority, Muslim and Christian sacred sites, and last but definitely not least non-Jewish individuals. (US Department of State 2016, 20.)

However, the Jewish extremists are not the only ones who commit atrocities against Christians in the Holy Land. They are also the targets of Muslim extremists. Although neither the Palestinian Authority nor Hamas, which organisations officially control Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip, support the open persecution of Christians, yet the level of physical threats to Christians is higher in these regions than in Israel. The situation is better in Judea and Samaria than in Gaza, where Christians are exposed not only to atrocities committed by Muslim extremists but also to Israeli military retaliation to Hamas's rocket attacks. Nevertheless, there have also been a number of serious attacks in these regions. (US Department of State 2016, 47–48; The Year 2011; Shin Bet 2007; MILLAR 2018; ICEJ 2018)

All in all, it can be stated that Christian communities enjoy the greatest physical safety inside the territory of the state of Israel while the Gaza Strip is the most dangerous place for them.

*The legal situation*

In terms of religious freedom, the review of legal history must be started from the time of the British. The first important milestone is the Palestine Order in Council of 1922, which was basically the constitution of the British Mandate. Chapter III of this legislation declares: “All persons [...] in Palestine shall enjoy full liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of their forms of worship subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals” and it also declares that no provision may violate these liberties. (The Palestine Order in Council 1922) Those provisions are also recognized by the Israeli judiciary system. (SHETREET–HOMOLKA 2017) The next significant document is the Declaration of Independence of Israel, which declares: “The state will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.” (Knesset 1948) Although the provisions of the declaration are not legally binding, based on a ruling by the Supreme Court, which also acts as the Constitution Court of Israel, all of its provisions shall be respected by all state authorities. (SHETREET–HOMOLKA 2017)

The State of Israel does not have a constitution but its legislation passed a number of basic laws to replace it. The provisions of these laws, amended by Knesset regulations, the Supreme Court decision and the common law, protect free religious practice. In terms of religious freedom, the Basic Law of 1992 on Human Dignity and Freedom is the most important piece of legislation. (Basic Laws of Israel 1992) Although its provisions do not discuss religious freedom as such, court decisions and judiciary opinions lead us to believe that the free practice of religion is considered a part of human dignity and freedom, indirectly defended by the basic law. (SHETREET–HOMOLKA 2017)

Israel does not have an official state religion. (SHETREET 2001) The state recognizes five religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the religions of the Druze and Bahai people. Within Christianity ten denominations are recognised by the state: Roman Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Maronite, Chaldean, Anglican, Syriac Orthodox, Greek Orthodox (Greek Oriental) and Armenian Orthodox. (AJAJ–MILLER–SUMPTER 2016) The following denominations have requested state recognition (requests pending): Ethiopian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, the umbrella organization of Protestant Churches and United Churches Council of Israel. The benefits of being a state-recognized Church include that they can apply for government funding, (e.g. tax exemption), and they can change the personal legal status of their members. This is especially important in case of marriage or divorce, as these two institutions are not regulated by the civil code in Israel.

Therefore, Church decisions in marriage and divorce are legally binding, (SHETREET 2001) unlike most secular states like Hungary. Nevertheless, even if a religious group is not recognized by the state, it can still conduct its activities freely in terms of religious freedom and practice. (US Department of State 2016, 4.)

Israel, especially Jerusalem, is a highly sensitive area in terms of religion, as a lot of holy sites of several religions can be found there. One of the holiest sites of Christianity is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built at the site of the alleged Golgotha. That shrine incorporates the sites of the crucifixion, the tomb and the place of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The protection of holy sites is particularly important, as these are highly significant for billions of people and they also represent the religious status quo of the local communities. Although the State of Israel was founded in 1948, it has only gained authority over the holy sites of Jerusalem after the Six-Day War in 1967. In the same year, the Knesset passed a law on the protection of holy sites, (Knesset 1967) and this law was later incorporated into the basic law of 1980 which declares Jerusalem as the one and indivisible capital of Israel. (Knesset 1980)

In Judea, Samaria and Gaza the religious freedom is set out in the internal basic law of the Palestinian Authority. It declares that the official religion of the Palestinian Authority is Islam, but also calls for respect towards the other two Abrahamic religions (Judaism and Christianity). Free religious practice is permitted if it is not against public order and morals. Although the law prohibits religiously based discrimination and accepts the concept of equal rights, yet this piece of legislation defines the Sharia as one of its major sources. (US Department of State 2016, 32–33.) Muslim institutions and worship sites receive state funds for the wages of imams and the maintenance of mosques is covered by the Palestinian Authority, too. The case of the Christian clergy and charities is different since only some of them receive limited funds from the Authority. (US Department of State 2016, 44–45.)

The regulations of the Palestinian Authority are formally binding in the Gaza Strip as well; in practice, however, Hamas, an Islamist–Jihadist terror organization exercise full power there. (US Department of State 2016, 32.) For example, the *moral police* of the organization can fine inhabitants for inappropriate (Western) clothing (e.g. wearing jeans, t-shirts, or if women do not wear a headscarf). (US Department of State 2016, 47–48.) Another also important problem is that Hamas continually prohibits the Palestinian Authority from exercising its rights to investigate crimes against Christians. (US Department of State 2016, 47–48.)

We can state that religious freedom is guaranteed by serious constitutional safeguards in Israel. Israel does not have a state religion (only a handful of states can say so in the Middle East), although the primary role of Judaism is obvious. The state also constitutionally protects the holy sites of different religions and grants internally autonomy to the denomination(s) involved. As there is no secular marriage and divorce in Israel,

the decisions of Churches are recognized by the state as legally binding. As a result, those Christian Churches possess greater power than in many Christian majority countries. The protection of Christians, Christian churches and the holy sites are absolutely guaranteed from a legal point of view.<sup>2</sup>

The legal system allows narrower religious freedom in Judea and Samaria: Islam is identified as the official religion, Sharia is a major source of legislation, and liberties are only given to Judaism and Christianity. These regulations are officially valid in Gaza, too, but in reality, the terror organization, Hamas, ruling in the Strip allows a lot less for religious minorities, and regularly hampers the investigations of the Palestinian Authority in reported violations of constitutionally protected rights. The protection and religious freedom of Christians is legally guaranteed in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, but not as extensively as in Israel.

### *Social representation and the reasons for the diminution of communities*

In terms of socioeconomic status, the local Arab Christians in Israel are much closer to the Jewish than to the Muslim Arab population. (PENTIN 2012) Their unemployment rate (4.9%, compared to that of the Jewish population 6.5%) is the lowest in the country. (LEV 2012) Due to their excellent educational institutions, many of them work in scientific or white-collar jobs. (DAVID 2014, 184.) In the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, there is an Arab Christian representative, and although there has been an Arab Christian party in Israel, since the *Arab Spring* (B'nei Brit Hahadasha, Sons of the New Testament Party), (BERMAN 2013) the representatives of Christian Arabs have always been elected from a joint Arab list. (SCHWARTZ 2013) The reason is that in the Israeli electoral system the whole country is treated as a single constituency and people vote for candidates on party lists. In order to gain a seat in the Knesset, a party must pass a threshold of 3.25%; (LUBELL 2014) and it is not probable for any Christian party to get such amount of support.

The Christians living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza also belong to the middle-class, have more Western style education than the average Israeli. (TSIMHONI 2001, 37.) In the Palestinian legislative body, which has not assembled since 2007, 6 of the 132 seats are reserved for Christians, no such rule applies to other religions. Furthermore, in eight historically Christian cities regulations compulsorily specify that these jurisdictions

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<sup>2</sup> Although there are disputes, if a regulation, concerning Christians is to be changed, those have always been resolved through negotiations. An example was the shutdown of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by the supervising denominations, because of a draft regulation concerning the taxation and real estates of the historical Christian Churches. As a result of the protest, the government suspended the vote on the draft and formed a government committee to find a solution. (CASPER 2018)



must have a Christian mayor and a Christian majority local government. (US Department of State 2016, 33.) The fact that Palestinian leaders expect the sympathy of the West for their solidarity with the Christians probably plays a part in these rules.

So basically Christians are an organic part of the society, they are reasonably well represented, although much stronger in Israel than in Judea, Samaria or Gaza, yet their numbers and significance are decreasing. Researchers have identified several possible reasons:

- The greatest problem in Israel is the low fertility rate of Christians when we compare these to Jews and especially to Muslims and emigration in the hope of a better life. (TSIMHONI 2001, 34–36.)
- In Judea and Samaria, the low fertility rate remains a problem, the changing of city borders (whereby they *import* Muslims), the security situation, the increasing Muslim influence, the economic difficulties and the limitations posed by the Israeli security wall make the situation more disappointing. In Gaza those factors are even more serious, exacerbated by Hamas. (TSIMHONI 2001, 37–38; US Department of State 2016, 33.)

The relations between Jews and Arab Christians in Israel, and the relations between Muslims and Christians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, must also be discussed. As a starting point, we have to state that Arab Christians have a unique dual identity: they are Christians on the one hand, so religiously different from their Jewish and Muslim countrymen, on the other hand, they consider themselves Arabs, Palestinians. This is important, because under British rule Arab Christians supported the Arabic Nationalistic movement, fought against Zionism, and were the advocates of the Palestinian cause, so they were basically against the ideas of Jews. As a result, the State of Israel treats them, mainly because of their political positions, as part of the Arab society, e.g. they have not received total religious autonomy like the Druze, but, unlike the Druze, they are exempt from compulsory military service.

However, Arab nationalism has, from almost the beginning of this movement, been permeated by many Muslim traits, so Christians became marginalized within the movement and often they were regarded as Western collaborators. (TSIMHONI 2001, 33–34.) In summary, in Israel Christian Arabs are not discriminated against because of their religion, but for other reasons, e.g. their ethnic-demographic background. In other areas, just the opposite is true, i.e. their religion is their greatest problem which distinguishes them from the majority population there.

## Summary

The present study has analysed the situation of Arab Christians in Israel, Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Based on the criteria mentioned above, we can say that the security situation of the group in terms of physical, legal and representational safeguards is the best in Israel, and is the worst in Gaza. The communities are not exposed to persecution led by the central government in any part of the region, although there are some such incidents in the Gaza Strip, e.g. activities of the Muslim *moral police*. The decreasing proportion of the Christian population is mainly due to the relatively low birth rate and voluntary emigration. The reason of the latter in Israel is a desire for better living conditions, while in Judea, Samaria and Gaza it is the security situation, economic difficulties and limitations introduced because of Israeli security measures. The protection of the Christian holy sites in Israel is guaranteed by the State of Israel. The dual identity of Arab Christians is a major source of conflicts within society.

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## CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

### General Introduction

The political and security policy changes developments of 2017–2018 have further increased the number of persecuted Christians on the African continent. It is especially important in this respect that Africa accommodates 26% of the Earth's Christian population, having the greatest share among the continents, and forecasts predict that this proportion is about to grow to 40% by 2060. (McCLENDON 2017) Based on the studies of Pew Research, all credit should go to the black continent for the birth of a lot more Christian children than of Muslims (between 2010 and 2015, 31% compared to 24%). It is also true that most probably Islam is going to take over the lead by 2035 as the result of a prolonged demographic transition in the Muslim world and the dropping birth rates – and increasing secularization – in the Christian countries of the developed world. (Pew Forum 2017) The role of Africa is important for the Muslim world, as well, since Sub-Saharan Africa will become runner-up to Asia<sup>2</sup> in the number of Muslims per region in the coming decades by overtaking the cradle and historic centres of Islam, the regions of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). (McCLENDON 2017)

Although Islam and Christianity peacefully co-exist in several states of the continent, a great number of clashes between different denominations add another layer to the picture. As we described above, (MARSAI 2017b) those clashes are triggered not just by clearly religious factors. The population explosion and the negative effects of climate change on the continent will unquestionably lead to the scarcity of resources, subsistence,

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<sup>2</sup> The territorial division by Pew Research considers Sub-Saharan Africa, the MENA region and Asia separate entities despite being geographically deceptive.

water, pastures, further fuelling the existing religious and ethnic tensions, which are dressed in religious attires to be more *presentable* for the local population.

A good example for us is a study by the UN Development Program (UNDP), which analyse half a thousand interviews with African jihadists. According to this study 57% of radicals have never read or understood (!) the Quran at all, (UNDP 2017, 49.) and they joined radical organizations for social, economic and psychological reasons and not for ideological ones. At the same time, it is undeniable that these groups, vulnerable to radicalization, have mostly been successful because they use some kind of Islamist ideological narrative.

In relation to the UN study, the responsibility of governments must be highlighted: the most important finding of the study was that the respondents found jihadist organizations a charming alternative to challenge the governments' status quo which is decreasingly acceptable for marginalized groups. (UNDP 2017, 7.) It is possible to generate exceptionally grave tension between two denominations if, in the social narrative, which does not necessarily coincide with reality, the dominant and the suppressed marginalized groups belong to different religions. In Nigeria, Ethiopia or Kenya this has greatly exacerbated the persecution of Christians since according to the local Muslim narrative it is the believers of Christ who govern these countries and suppress Muslims.

Beyond these universalities, attention must be drawn to two specific phenomena of the last years which may explain the deterioration of the situation. One is related to the transformation of jihadist groups, the other to local political instability.

Concerning jihadist movements, we can encounter two disturbing trends. One is that these organizations are expanding deeper south in the sub-Saharan region and gaining a foothold in countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique) where they did not have a bridgehead before. Those are mostly countries, where Christians are either the majority or they are a sizeable minority. This is why the expansion of radical ideas is posing a serious threat to all of them.

This is even more threatening, given another change in the strategy of jihadist organizations, namely that they have reconsidered their attitude to the local people as the result of their recent failures.

The opinion *if you are not with us, you are against us* intensified earlier, in the framework of which the main target of attacks were moderate Muslims rather than Christians. It is a shocking fact, that more Muslims have died and die in Islamist attacks than Christians. As a result, several organizations, especially Boko Haram in Nigeria, experienced alienation from local communities without whose support these movements cannot survive. So the focus has more and more shifted to some targets including government officials, military facilities, and the Christians whose attack is more justifiable to the local population. (MAHMOOD-ANI 2018, 19–21.)

Beyond the *high* pressure of jihadist movements, another problem is the issue of *grass-roots* attacks evolving from local conflicts. These are usually ad hoc events which are aimed at Christian individuals or communities to expel them from their homes and to rob their property. The incidents in eastern Ethiopia in the summer of 2018 are a good example of this challenge. Here masses of people in the cities of the Somali Region of Ethiopia, which is mostly populated by Muslim Somalis, was becoming more and more dissatisfied with the central government, which according to their interpretation is Christian. So during the summer of 2018, they set at least seven churches on fire and killed several orthodox priests, as well as looting the shops of fleeing Christians. (Hiiraan 2018a) Although these local attacks do not receive as much publicity as the terror attacks in Nigeria, for African Christians they are equally, or even more, threatening than the attacks of jihadist extremists.

After this general introduction, this study analyses, not exhaustively, those African states, where Christian persecution is prevalent. Because of the strict limitations on scope and length, the facts described in last year's report are considered as known, and this study focuses on the new period and on changes which have not been discussed earlier.

## Egypt

The Arab spring of 2011, and the following, in Egyptian terminology, the *second* revolution broke the fragile balance that existed between the Coptic minority and the Muslim majority. After the Mubarak era, when the Coptic population was protected against atrocities, the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood and the strengthening of conservative ideas greatly worsened the acceptance of Christians. All this is illustrated by the number of terrorist attacks against them. The Sisi Government, rising to power in 2013, has been making efforts to restore the pre-revolution balance, and to protect the Christian population. The state intervention though, has had difficulties counter-balancing the spread of conservative Islamist tenets, especially among the rural population. As a Coptic monk told the author, "even if we cannot speak about full-scale persecution, the discrimination against Christians is widespread".<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Sisi has had to fight strengthening jihadist groups, who have continued their terror attacks on Christian churches. Since 2013 eight hundred, not just Christian, people have been killed by terrorists in Egypt. The most serious ones which had multiple Christian victims included the still unexplained explosion of the Metrojet Flight 9268, a Russian charter airplane carrying

<sup>3</sup> Interview with a Coptic monk, Great Monastery of Saint Makarios, Wadi El Natrun, March 2018.

tourists from Sharm-el-Sheikh; the bombing against the Saint Peter and Paul Cathedral, the seat of the Coptic Pope; the Palm Sunday attacks in 2017 against churches in Tanta and Alexandria; the attack on a bus transporting Coptic Christians in Minya, and the massacre in the Saint Menas church of Helwan. (RAGHAVAN 2018; BBC 2017) Several hundred Christians were killed in these attacks.

## Ethiopia

The roots of Christianity in Ethiopia go back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, and due to the Solomonic dynasty, which rose to power in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and ruled in different forms until 1974, Christianity has become an organic component of the Abyssinian and later the Ethiopian state. Islam, according to a legend, appeared not later than in the life of the Prophet on the Ethiopian Highlands. During the conquests of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ethiopian rule reached the present borders of the country and Menelik II subdued a great number of Muslims under Ethiopian Christian rule. These Muslim ethnic groups, including the Oromos, Somalis, Hararis and Afars, were considered secondary citizens by the Christian Habeshas, Amharas, Tigrayans, who formed the Christian state. (MARCUS 2002) The co-existence of more than 80 ethnic groups was not feasible in this structure, so after the regime change in 1991, the country's constitution accepted the concept of *ethnic federation* (Crisis Group 2009) which did not officially take religion into consideration. The new state system gradually eroded the dominance of the *Christian Ethiopia* image, fostering dialogue and reconciliation between religious groups. All this played an important role in Ethiopia's successful resistance to the jihadist advance in the region. (MARSAT 2017a)

However, the centuries-long established ideas have not gone away overnight, and tensions continue to blaze up in conflict situations, since the religious boundaries in many cases are also ethnic boundaries in the country. On 4 August 2018, the Ethiopian leadership decided to remove the President of the Somali federal state, the infamous Abdi Umár Illai. Abdi ruled the state using authoritarian means (torture, executions, illegal imprisonment) and he successfully pacified a formerly unstable region. His star started to fade when he refused to carry out the reforms of the new Ethiopian leadership, rising to power in the spring of 2018, and he even tried to undermine them.

His ouster was not without problems as his loyal forces clashed with the intervening government forces, and his supporters organized demonstrations in several cities, where the rioters looted shops of the Christian Amhara and Tigrayan people, considered to be sympathizers of the new cabinet. Many were killed in the riots and several churches were set on fire. (Hiiraan 2018a) The clashes claimed dozens of lives even by conservative

estimates, hundreds of thousands had to leave their homes – most of them Christians. Since refugee organizations do not register the religion of the refugees, the extent of hardships caused to Christians can only be estimated from the number of internally displaced people, which has risen to 2.8 million by mid-2018 compared to the 1.6 million at the beginning of the year. (Xinhua 2018) Even so, if many of these people left their homes because of clashes between rival Muslim groups, floods, and droughts in other parts of the country, the number of Eastern Ethiopian Christian refugees can be approximately one hundred thousand. The spiral of violence is taking on new significance as Christian Ethiopians, on account of anti-Christian pogroms, had to flee even from the adjacent Djibouti, which is partly populated by Somali Muslims, and in a couple of days, 30,000 people crossed the border to find protection in Ethiopia. (Hiiraan 2018b)

## **Kenya**

In Kenya, the situation of the Christian majority has improved compared to the period of 2016–2017: due to efforts by the security agencies and their external allies. One of the results of their work is that attacks by al-Shabaab and other similar Kenyan jihadist groups are limited to the region mostly populated by Muslims close to the Somali border, where extremists are waging a prolonged guerrilla war against government forces. However, the extensive recruiting activities of the radicals who can convince dozens of young Kenyans to join their units remain a serious problem. (DW 2018)

## **Central African Republic**

The unorganized armed fight between different Christian and Muslim militias, characterized by mutual atrocities and massacres, has flared up again. As a result, instead of political objectives, the focus of attention has shifted to lootings, banditry and sexual violence, which has brought immense suffering for Christian and Muslim communities alike. Open denominational violence is also strengthening: in the capital city of Bangui, gunmen attacked and set a Christian church on fire, killing the pastor and his 25 followers in March 2018. Following the attack, Pope Francis himself – who visited the country in 2015 – called the Christian world to pray for the victims and peace. (Vatican News 2018)



## Mozambique

Mozambique is a typical example of the problem mentioned in the introduction, the essence of which is that jihadist groups are advancing further south in the continent. 58% of the country's population is Christian, 18% is Muslim, (CIA World Factbook 2018) and the two religious communities had co-existed peacefully in the past decades. However, as a sad recent development, the new jihadist group called Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamâ (or al-Shabaab) started attacks in Cabo Delgado province.<sup>4</sup> Their attacks targeted Christians and Muslims alike, some of whom were decapitated by the assailants. Although the local church official, the Bishop of Pemba, Luis Fernando Lisboa, does not regard these developments as systematic persecution of Christians. Nevertheless, the believers of Christ are afraid of the strengthening of terrorists. (Church in Need 2018) Another obstacle in making a clear judgement is the abundant gas reserves of the region, and local rumour has it, that instead of Islamist extremists, deputies of various security companies and business groups were behind these attacks, intending to force a higher amount of protection money from foreign companies because of the danger posed by jihadists. (FABRICIUS 2018)

## Nigeria

Another big scene of Christian persecution and denominational conflict on the continent is in Nigeria, where both ad hoc and organized violence can be witnessed. As a result, in the states of the so-called middle-belt<sup>5</sup> there are regular clashes between Muslim Fulani shepherds, and farming Christian Beroms and Anaguts for pastures and farmland. (Crisis Group 2012) In the north-east, the infamous jihadist group, Boko Haram conducts its attacks against believers of Christ, but they do not spare Muslim communities either. This indifference has greatly contributed to the organization's loss of support in recent years and its military defeat.

Many have hoped that Boko Haram will be annihilated soon, but in the summer of 2016, a more alarming incident took place. The *more moderate members* of the organization, being dissatisfied with the leadership of their Emir, Abubakr as-Sekau, namely indiscriminate violence, formed a new group under Mamman Núr and Abu Musab Barnavi, which is referred to in the literature as the Islamic State of Western Africa (ISWA).

<sup>4</sup> As we know today, despite the same name, the groups of Mozambique and Somalia/Kenya are not in direct contact.

<sup>5</sup> The Nigerian form of government is a federal republic.

The declared objective of this splinter group is to regain the support of local communities which have been alienated by Sekau.

In practice, this means that ISWA is only targeting government forces and Christians, and the locals are willing to accept this. (MAHMOOD–ANI 2018, 19–21.) Although currently ISWA focuses on the former, its latest attacks show what Christians can anticipate from them: in February 2018 the organization, similar to the Chibok attack by Boko Haram in 2014, attacked a school and kidnapped 100 schoolgirls. But unlike Boko Haram, ISWA returned the girls to their parents with just a warning: girls cannot go to school as it is unacceptable by Islam. One girl was not returned though, a Christian pupil, who has been in captivity ever since. (MAHMOOD–ANI 2018, 25.) All this supports the radio message of Barnavi, in which the group defined Christian communities as the focus of their attacks. Although those have been happening occasionally, the future does not look to be optimistic. (MAHMOOD–ANI 2018, 21.)

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## THE SITUATION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN MOROCCO

### **Introduction**

Morocco today, and the Maghreb region in a broader sense is a positive example of the peaceful co-existence of different cultures according to the public opinion. However, in fact, the co-existence of the religious communities of the region has been characterized by permanent conflicts influenced by the power relations of adjacent states. Morocco, lying on the boundary of different cultures, forms a bridge between Africa and Europe where Christianity encounters Islam. In respect of religious freedom rights, this duality characterizes the Kingdom of Morocco: it tries to provide its citizens with religious freedom in line with Western norms, based on the principles of Islam. As part of the Muslim world, the country aims to play a leading role internationally in this respect.

The democratization processes, a characteristic the country recently adopted, have had a considerable impact on laws governing religious freedom. Due to this, religious freedom rights are generally guaranteed in Morocco. In this field, the Moroccan measures are outstanding compared to other countries in North Africa.

The provision of peaceful co-existence between the Muslim majority and the non-Muslim minorities is an essential priority for the Moroccan government. Built on historical traditions, the government also guarantees extensive rights for its Jewish minority. Still, it is a serious challenge to repel religious extremism within the Muslim population. The propagation of Maliki (mālikī) Islamic jurisprudence, which is the dominating religious school of the country, provides the opportunity to stop and repel it.

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Actions, taken by the Kingdom of Morocco, both in the field of migration and in the field of repelling the religious extremism have outstanding importance for the European Union since the country is its direct neighbour. It has one of the most stable governments in the north of Africa and the entire region – recognizing the common goals and interests – can be an important partner state of European policies in the region.

## Demographic Data

Morocco has a population of 34 million, (CIA World Factbook 2018) its vast majority (99%) is Sunni Muslim. The remaining 1%, that is 340 thousand people, are Jews, Shiite Muslims, Bahai believers and Christians. Most people of the Sunni Muslim majority follow the tenets of the Maliki jurisprudence school. The religious tenets of the Maliki school are essentially based upon the Medina traditions, and are closely related to the written tradition, promoting the literal interpretation of the Quran with no hidden messages. (COTTART 1997, 278–283.)

In addition to certain proto-Shiite groups, who have become extinct in our time, the most ancient, permanently present and essential religious minority of Morocco are the Jews. The Moroccan presence of Jews was strengthened after the publication of the Alhambra Decree (1492) when Jews expelled from Spain found refuge in North Africa. Before the foundation of Israel, the Jewish population of the country was more than a quarter of a million strong. After the declaration of the Jewish state, this figure dropped to its one-tenth due to emigration. Nevertheless, major Jewish communities have remained in big cities, especially in Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakesh, Meknes and Tangier. Under the reign of Mohammed VI (1999–) good relations have been formed between the Jewish community and the state, and Moroccan–Israeli relations are also steady. (World Jewish Congress 2018)

The number of Christian inhabitants of Morocco is about two thousand but no exact figures are available. The Christian community is made of up several groups: locally converted Berbers, Christian immigrants from the Sub-Saharan region and some Europeans who settled down in Morocco. The newly converted mainly belong to various Evangelical Churches, a great number of black immigrants are Protestant, but there are also some who follow the Catholic Church.

In addition to the relatively homogeneous religious composition, heterogeneity is more prevalent in the ethnic composition of Morocco. Berber speaking people are also significantly represented besides the Arabs (approximately 45–50%). No exact data is available on the figure of those claiming to be or speaking Berber.

(YASIR 1999, 339–340.) The emergence of Berber identity movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a strong influence on the change in these figures. In this relation, it must be noted that those claiming to be Berbers have also rediscovered the Christian traditions of Berbers, together with unearthing their Berber origins. In that spirit, the many Evangelical congregations find a lot of followers among the mainly town-dwelling Berbers, who want to reinforce their ethnic identity.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon occurs in Morocco and in Algeria alike.

## The Situation of Islam

The Muslim conquest reached the territory of present-day Morocco as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, yet the actual Islamization of the region took a long time. The Sunni Maliki branch of Islam has become prevalent in the country. The Maliki interpretation of the religion and of the law is strongly associated with the written tradition of Islam. The Maliki religious and legal scholars stick to the literal interpretation of the Quran, rejecting the hidden interpretation between the lines. For the Malikite jurisprudence, the tradition of the Prophet (sunna) is the other most relevant source besides the Quran, namely the collection of acts which were attributed to the Prophet and have become authoritative for Muslim communities.

The constitution declares Islam to be the state religion of the Kingdom of Morocco. The monarch is the leader of the true-believers (*amir al-mu'minin*) with the title of Monarch and is responsible for guaranteeing religious freedom. There are approximately 50,000 mosques in Morocco under the control of the Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs (*Wizārat al-awqāf wa-shu'ūn al-islāmiyya*). (The Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco 2011, Art. 3., Art. 41.)

The advance of extremist Islam has not left the Moroccan society untouched, either. The number of Moroccans who have joined the so called Islamic State terror organization is about a thousand. A great number of them have now returned to the peaceful Morocco. (AVNI 2015) The area most affected by terrorism is the Rif region in the north of the country, where the presence of religious extremists is accompanied by economic underdevelopment, causing difficulties for the local population in terms of self-sustainment. In the Rif region drug trade and trafficking is also a serious problem, thus greatly affecting the security of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> The separation of Berbers from Arabs is primarily shown in cultural and folklore initiatives. The musical and visual culture of the Berbers appears in popular culture, providing the opportunity for the youths to express their Berber identity. (BRUCE-MITFORD 1993, 189.)

The government of Morocco is making efforts to repel religious extremism by training imams to the moderate tenets of Maliki Islam. In a state-initiated program one hundred thousand imams are retrained to spread the tenets of moderate Islam – the religion of the state – in the mosques of the country. This initiative aims to solve the repulsion of Islam extremism within the framework of the religion.

Besides rejecting religious extremism, the strong adherence to Maliki tenets pervades the religious behaviour of the country. The commitment to the conventional interpretation of religious traditions is represented by the prohibition of the distribution of Rachid Aylal's book, in which he criticizes one of the most widely known medieval collection of traditions related to the Prophet. (SHIBLI 2018)

## Christian Communities

In a historical perspective, the Christian population of North Africa largely disappeared after the Arab conquest (7<sup>th</sup> century) or was totally pushed to the background. However, in the Maghreb region, some Berber tribes were able to preserve their Christian identity until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (S. 1904, 343–346.) With the support of the popes in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, relatively large numbers of Christian mercenaries served Muslim monarchs, which meant the repeated appearance of Christianity in the region. (LOWER 2014) In the territory of today's Morocco, the first bishopric was formed in Fez in 1226, followed by the formation of the Marrakesh Episcopate in 1234. Then, due to the conquering-colonizing attempts of European powers, a number of Christian exclaves were formed in North Africa, for example, an episcopate was formed in 1459 in Tangier which was then controlled by Portugal.

After the French colonization of Morocco in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more Christian settlers arrived in the region. One of the major architectural monuments of Morocco from the period of the French protectorate is Saint Peter's Cathedral in the centre of Rabat, an important sight in the city's scenery, the cornerstone of which was laid in 1919. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic Church in Morocco was organized into two Sees, one in Rabat in 1955, the other in Tangier in 1956, and this structure has been in existence to this very day. (Catholic Hierarchy 2018)

The Protestant denominations appeared in Morocco as late as the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The construction of Saint Andrew's church in Tangier, which is the most significant building of the Anglican Church in Morocco, was started in 1880 on a plot donated to the British Government. Besides Tangier, a sizeable Anglican community also lives in Casablanca today. The Moroccan Anglican community, the Russian and the Greek



Orthodox church were registered as international organizations in line with Moroccan regulations and with the cooperation of the embassies involved. (US Department of State 2016)

The most important Protestant church of the country is the Moroccan Evangelical Protestant Church; it has congregations in Agadir, Marrakesh, Casablanca, Rabat, Meknes, Fez, Oujda and other major cities. The Church provides spiritual care for the Protestants in Morocco, and also through funds and support projects, food aid, housing, clothes and medical support, it also provides assistance to migrants transiting the country. Most non-Moroccan Christians are immigrants who arrived from the Sub-Saharan region, mainly from Nigeria. (Global Ministries 2018)

The Moroccan laws require that religious communities must be registered as associations at the Ministry of the Interior if they want to be represented as a community. To evade this, several communities congregate in private houses for religious services. Like in other Muslim majority countries, the ministry is responsible for religious foundations and matters related to Islam, they supervise the services in mosques and Muslim religious education. In fact, the ministry is responsible for the preservation of the Muslim religious aspect of the country. (US Department of State 2016)

## **The Legal Status of Non-Muslim Denominations in Morocco**

Generally, we can say that a wide scale of religious freedom rights is guaranteed in Morocco. The leadership in Morocco, an Islam state by definition, has made forward-looking steps to promote religious freedom rights in the country. A significant example is a document, known as the Marrakesh Declaration, which prescribes religious freedom rights-related expectations of the right, modern approach for Muslim majority countries with a proper point of view considering Muslim traditions.

As a result of demands for democratization arising from the 2011 Arab Spring, Article 3 of the Moroccan Constitution, enacted in 2011, declares that the state religion of Morocco is Islam and guarantees for every citizen the right of free religious practice.<sup>3</sup> Among the non-Muslim minorities, Jews possess a privileged status, as a historically present denomination which had a significant effect on Moroccan culture, and are recognized as a community. In line with this, the free religious practice of Jews and other denominations is guaranteed nationwide, though the free religious practice of Shiite and those Moroccans who converted to Christianity is

<sup>3</sup> الإسلام دين الدولة والدولم تضمن لكل واحد حرية ممارسة شؤون الديني



limited to some extent. The constitution also declares that no regulation may go against the tenets of (Maliki) Islam.

According to the Constitution<sup>4</sup> the Monarch, as the leader of true believers, presides over the Supreme Council of Religious Scholars, which may create religious laws (*fatwa*). These only become effective if the king issues them in a decree (*zāhir*). Family law disputes between Jews, who are the only legally accepted historical denomination in addition to Islam in Morocco, are decided by a number of special courts, working on rabbinic traditions, which have full jurisdiction in such cases. Family law disputes of non-Muslims or non-Jews are decided by judges who are familiar with the Maliki–ashari tenets. (US Department of State 2016)

Article 220 of the Moroccan Criminal code prohibits religious conversion, so agitation against Islam is punishable by imprisonment from six months to three years. This is primarily applied against missionaries conducting conversion. The distribution of the Bible in English, French and Spanish is also limited. In specifically specialized book stores, Arabic translations of the Bible are available, although primarily for University research and to promote education. (US Department of State 2016)

Although in theory, the state does not prohibit conversion from Islam, there is a strong social opposition against it. (FARID 2017) Converts, according to Muslim family law, lose their inheritance rights and guardianship rights over their children. There are strict regulations in effect for Muslims in other fields as well, for example, it is forbidden to eat or drink, or violate fasting in any other way, during Ramadan, the time of fasting.

The state, in order to inhibit conversion from Islam, limits the importation and distribution of non-Muslim religious texts, audio-visual contents and artefacts. (US Department of State 2016)

## The Media

The Supreme Authority for Audio-visual Communication supervises Moroccan TV channels. According to its regulations, TV channels have to broadcast religious programs in five per cent of their broadcast time. The same regulations make it compulsory to broadcast the call for prayer five times a day as well, following the rules of Islam. (US Department of State 2016)

<sup>4</sup> Art. 41. (2011)

In the online space, and primarily on YouTube, several videos can be found about Moroccan Christianity. Some Moroccan Christians launched their own YouTube channel, under the name Moroccan and Christian (*Mağribī wa masīhī*). (FARID 2017)

## Religious Education

Muslim religious education is compulsory in educational institutions. The state funds Muslim religious education in public educational institutions from an allocated fund. Foreign maintenance educational institutions (French, US and Spanish schools) can freely decide if they provide Muslim religious education or education related to another religion. Jewish private schools are allowed to teach Judaism. The primary objective of the Moroccan Government is to repel religious extremism. In the spirit of this, in February 2016, Mohammed VI ordered that religious textbooks and religious education curriculum must be reviewed, and those materials which may support religious extremism be disposed from these resources. In higher education, the state urges the research of non-Muslim religions, and accordingly, at the Mohammed V University in Rabat, the Department of Muslim Studies supports the study of Hebraism and of Comparative Religious Studies. In June 2016 the Foundation for African Islamic Scholars started working to strengthen religious tolerance and dialogue. (US Department of State 2016)

## The Marrakesh Declaration<sup>5</sup>

The greatest achievement in strengthening tolerance and interreligious dialogue has been the compilation of the document called the Marrakesh Declaration. At Mohammed VI's invitation, a large international conference was held between 25–27 January 2016 in Marrakesh which was attended by Muslim religious and legal scholars, political decision-makers, and internationally recognized experts. The purpose of the event was to comprehensively study the situation of religious minorities in Muslim majority states.

<sup>5</sup> Full text of the declaration: <http://marrakeshdeclaration.org/files/Declaration-Marrakesh-Eng-27-ar.pdf> It is important to note that the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016 in defence of religious minorities should not be mistaken for the document called Marrakesh Political Declaration, related to the migration action draft plan, also known as the Rabat Process. The latter to be found at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/20180503\\_declaration-and-action-plan-marrakesh\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/20180503_declaration-and-action-plan-marrakesh_en.pdf)

The background of the initiative was to increase religious tolerance in Muslim countries. The purpose of the event was to analyse how Muslim religious law can be reconciled with the rights of religious minorities. Besides, the conference attempted to give an account of the historical traditions and issues in international law about the co-existence of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The primary purpose of the initiative was to convince Muslim religious leaders to participate in the fight against religious extremism, which is a large problem in many of the Middle East and North African countries, where the central governments cannot prevent the spread of extremism. The declaration considers the religious minorities living in Muslim countries an organic part of Muslim societies.

The declaration intends to promote religious freedom in Muslim countries with the help of Islam traditions. This is why they wish to guarantee the religious freedom rights of non-Muslim minorities by following the instructions of a 7<sup>th</sup> century document, also called the Constitution of Medina. The Constitution of Medina is basically the compilation of agreements between Prophet Muhammad and the residents of Medina, namely the tribes which converted to Islam in the early times. This is the period of the history of Islam when the Prophet personally led the Muslim community, so it was in this epoch that, according to Muslims, governance truly followed the will of God. This is why the deeds of Prophet Muhammad in Medina should be exemplary for later epochs concerning the governance of the community by divine laws (*siyasa ash-shari'a*).

The Marrakesh Declaration declares that the signatories are committed to maintaining the basic rights, such as the right of free movement, the right of possession, as well as justice and the principle of equality under the law, and these rights were also specified in the Constitution of Medina.

According to the declaration, the principles of the Constitution of Medina provide a sustainable frame for constitutions of Muslim majority countries in order to establish peaceful coexistence with their non-Muslim minorities. Furthermore, it also states that the contents of the Constitution of Medina are in harmony with the United Nations Organization Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The declaration expresses that the solution for the crisis affecting humanity is the cooperation between different religious groups. So the Declaration also promotes reconciliation between religious communities.

As the promotion of moderate Islam tenets, on the monarch's behest, is a requirement in Moroccan education, it is not surprising that the Marrakesh Declaration also urges governments to repel extremism with the help of education. The declaration also supports the establishment of an extensive social movement to promote the rights of religious minorities living in Muslim countries, and to make joint efforts of maintaining them.

In its final paragraph, the declaration condemns the use of religion, that is Islam, against religious minorities living in Muslim countries.

## Migration

The development of the religious demography in Morocco is closely related to the issue of migration from Africa to Europe, as great numbers of Christians, primarily from Sub-Saharan regions, have arrived in Morocco. For them, larger cities like Casablanca or Tangier are just temporary stations. Most people arriving in Morocco come from Nigeria or the coastline of the Gulf of Guinea. Some of them arrive in Morocco by travelling along the ocean coast across Western Sahara, while most of them travel across the African mainland and cross the Moroccan border close to the Spanish enclaves. For those going to Europe, the city of Tangier is an important stop. The city holds a great number of migrants from Nigeria and from other parts of black Africa, as well. The European coastline, which is visible from Tangier, is a great attraction for so many depart to cross the Strait of Gibraltar without considering the dangers of the crossing. (SABBATI 2018)

The initiative called the Rabat Process (*the Euro–Africa Dialogue*), based on international cooperation, is intended to regulate the West African migration process. (Processus de Rabat 2018)

## Summary

Since the demonstrations demanding democratization in 2011, Morocco has made significant progress in guaranteeing general human and religious rights and freedoms. Some of the credit for this goes to the European Union which supports the democratic changes in the country with funds. The initiatives of the Moroccan Government are especially forward-looking in the field of religious freedom. The free practice of religion is basically guaranteed, although Christian converts have to suffer some limitations.

The country's relations with its own Jewish community and with the state of Israel, amongst Muslim states, are considered exceptionally good. The Moroccan initiatives, such as the Marrakesh Declaration, have been launched in support of religious minorities living in Muslim majority countries, are exemplary. If these proposals achieve their goals, they can really help in establishing stability in societies divided by religious conflicts.

In order to repel religious extremism, the measures taken by the state of Morocco are of outstanding importance to maintain the stability of the kingdom and to guarantee the freedom of religion in the country. Morocco, as a direct neighbour of the European Union, plays an essential role in the migration flow from Africa to Europe, so preserving the balanced situation in the country is a common security policy objective of European countries.

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## THE SITUATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN FRANCE: A SITUATIONAL PICTURE AND DEBATES

### **The Legal Status of Churches in France**

The first article of the French constitution (Constitution 1958) declares that France is a secular, which is called *laïc* in French, republic, meaning that the state and the Churches are separated. But being a secular state means more than this in French legislation and thinking: it also encompasses the principle of a state which is neutral in religious and creed-related issues. In practice, the content of the expression *laïc* is defined in the Act of 1905 on the separation of state and Church. (Loi 1905) According to this law, the state does not recognize or finance any Church and their religious activities. So in France, there are no recognized or traditional Churches. All religious communities can operate as an association regardless of their *historical* background (the regulations are shortly introduced and compared with the new Hungarian regulations in ANTALÓCZY 2013). Although the state, the government and the political establishment do not have specific relations with each Church, the *historical* and *major* Churches have plenty of alleged advantages.

The temples, synagogues, mosques are the properties of the state and the Churches can use them for free of charge. It is important to note, that religious associations have to finance their operations, new constructions, religious activities using private funds: in this respect, the Christian denominations and the Jews have a great *advantage* over Islam. Islam, which has become the second biggest denomination in France is handicapped by the fact that in 1905 there were hardly any mosques in the country, which the Muslim community could use free of charge, but today the Muslim communities cannot receive any direct state support for new construction work. That issue keeps the questions of foreign influence and financing, sovereignty and national security



on the agenda of politicians, and it also necessitates the possibility of state intervention in control of Muslim communities, which is considerably probable currently.

Article 28 of the law of 1905 on the separation also prohibits the placement of religious symbols in public places, these include for example the cross, the crescent or the star of David. The law does not affect symbols already in place in public places before 1905. Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, other sites of worship, denominational cemeteries, and museums are also exempt. That law passed 112 years ago is the reason for the case, which was met with incomprehension in Hungary, when the State Council, which is the highest administrative court of the land, ordered the removal of the cross from a statue depicting Pope John Paul II. That was not the case of anti-religious, liberal bias, or a case of over-expansive legal interpretation, but the literal, conventional interpretation of the law of 1905. To put it simply, a religious symbol, the cross, appeared in a public place after 1905, and as such, it did not meet the legal requirements. At the same time, the State Council separated two things: it ruled that John Paul II was both a political and a historical figure, so his statue is not a *religious symbol* in itself, so only the cross was ordered to be removed. The resolution of the debate was pragmatic, the Church bought the statue and transported it, by moving it 30 metres farther, to a private area owned by the Church, where there were no legal obstacles against its placement. The statue can still be seen from public areas. (AFP 2018)

## The Situation of Religion and Religious Persons

The law of 1905 chose and applies the strictest of the applicable models to regulate the relations between the state and the Church. In the French thinking, religious creed or faith is not a public matter, but rather a private matter. Religion is not used as a political buzzword: although there are some denominational parties in France, politicians usually refrain from direct references to faith and religion, as public opinion and tradition consider that a violation of the principle of being *laïc*. At the same time, the constitution and the law protect religious freedom, the only limitation being the protection of public order. In the French Government the Minister of the Interior deals with religious matters, e.g. violence against religious communities, but other members may also get involved, like the President of the Republic, in his traditional New Year's Addresses, amongst other trades and communities, mentions the religious communities, as well.

Minor disputes, related to the separation, relations, cooperation of the state and the Church do occur even today. However, at the same time the entire political elite supports the Law of 1905, this is true even

for the National Alliance, the former National Front, which increasingly emphasizes the acceptance of the cornerstones of traditional Republican thinking. The Hollande Administration of 2012–2017 considered the churches' lobbies in the sense of partial interest, group interest principle, but the Macron Administration has taken a different approach and in the summer of 2018, after a fierce debate which even divided the majority party in the Parliament, (Franceinfo 2018) made the National Assembly remove the Churches from the law mentioned earlier. (Loi 2018)

The French State, as it does not finance or recognize any religious communities, does not collect data on faith and religious people, either. The French republican thinking resists recognising any *sub-national* groups, interest groups, whether they are religious, ethnic or of any other nature, as their recognition could open the way for distinct rights and obligations for them, which would violate the Republican idea of equality. So in the French thinking, if neither special rights nor obligations can be originated for a group, then it is not compulsory and is redundant to collect data on them or register which people belong to any given group. So officially there is no ethnic or religious data collection in France, but recently the public and political thinking are going through a change about this issue, as without any proper data, conflicts between groups cannot be adequately addressed by policy-makers. The regulations on the prohibition of registration are regulated by the Act of 6 January 1978, (Loi 1978) which was amended by the National Assembly in the summer of 2018, specifying and elaborating the scope and definition of data collection.

As a result, we can only get information on the ratio of religiousness or denominational divisions in France from public surveys and studies. Those surveys, though, present high differences as it does matter how the question is worded, and how the answers are interpreted. It is not the same if they ask whether somebody was baptized or has a Catholic identity, for example, or whether someone goes to church at least once a week, the result and the conclusions drawn by the researchers can be the same in each case, saying that the proportion of Catholic people in the society is *this* and *that* much – for the possible theoretical approaches to the *Christian society*. (Soós 2016)

In 2015 for example, having studied different surveys, *Le Monde* (MARCHAND 2015) informed us that 40% of respondents claimed to be atheists in 2010, while in 2012 this figure went up to 63%. In 2018 *Pew Research Center*, after a survey came to the conclusion that 64% of respondents have a Christian identity, 18% of them go to church, 46% are non-practitioners, and 28% are atheists (8% are of different religion or did not respond). (Pew Research Center 2018) Contemporaneously, the data of *CIA World Factbook* state the following: based on estimates from 2015 the proportion of Christians is 63–66%, of Muslims 7–9 %, of Jews 0.5–0.75 %, and of atheists 23–28%, highlighting that French regulations make it difficult to come up with accurate data.

(CIA World Factbook 2018) It is clearly seen that the way, the purpose of, that it inquires about identity, practising of a religion, being baptized, faith etc., asking the question have a great effect on the responses we receive. Regardless of it, one thing can clearly be seen from the data: Roman Catholic Christianity is still the leading religion in France, and by all means, the majority of the society have some connection to this identity.

## **The Prevention of Violence Against Holy Sites and the Prevention of Religiously Motivated Hate Crimes in France and the Middle East**

The protection of public order is an essential state interest and the prevention of violence against holy sites and the prevention of religiously motivated hate crimes, and keeping a record of such cases, is obviously the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior. That record is made public by the Ministry of the Interior each year. At the same time, the tensions between denominations do not necessarily appear in these statistics, as not much is known about the identity, the affiliations of the perpetrators because of the prohibitions mentioned above. In 2015, for example, there was a huge debate when Roger Cukierman, the President of Crif, which is an umbrella organization of French Jewish organizations, stated that most violent acts against Jews are committed by Muslims. As a reply CFCM, the French Muslim umbrella-organization boycotted an important annual event of Crif. (AFP 2015) Certainly, there are no available official data which can prove or disprove Cukierman's point since what he said reflected the opinion of the Jewish community.

According to the available official statistics compared to the estimated number of the Jewish community, the Jews are factually at risk of anti-religious violence in France. If we examine the absolute figures, regardless of the number of people in the community, most attacks are against Christian holy sites, facilities, this is not surprising since this religion is the most prevalent in the country. In 2017, 878 such cases were registered by the Ministry of the Interior, which is a 7.5% drop compared to 2016. In 2017, 72 Muslim and 28 Jewish religious buildings were also attacked. (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2017)

Concerning violence against Christian communities and interests, it is important to note that authority investigation continued in 2017–2018 in case of the Catholic priest Jacques Hamel, who fell victim to a terror attack in 2016 while he was celebrating a mass. In 2017 for example, the court sentenced a young man to 5 years in prison who, having received and watched a video threatening with an immediate terror attack, did not inform the police. As it turned out, the video featured one of Jacques Hamel's murderers who carried out the attack two days later. (DE VRIENDT 2017) The first-anniversary commemoration of the brutal attack was

in 2017 and it was attended by the Prime Minister, as well. The church started the canonization process of the martyr priest in 2017. (TRANIÉ 2018)

As there have already been terror attacks against Christian people and churches in France, it is quite obvious that Christian holy sites, events and celebrations pose an outstanding risk, and this is what police activities also suggest. Since 2015, in the framework of operation Sentinelle, the army has been conducting continuous street patrols, one of their tasks being the protection of religious sites – church buildings, including Christian buildings and events. It is important to note that after the termination of the state of emergency (and partially enacting it in the criminal code) in 2017, operation Sentinelle continued. (ROUDEN 2017) The operation remains active on the occasions of Christian holidays, events, (Christmas) markets. In 2017 for example, at around Christmas approximately 100,000 service members, Sentinelle soldiers, police officers and the gendarmerie, were mobilized by the French state to protect believers and attendees of the celebrations, considering the high level of threat. (Huffington Post 2017) Eventually, members of the armed services also became targets, for example in 2017, in front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral a police officer was stabbed.

The French state also cares about the vulnerability of Oriental Christians. This is not a new topic, for example in March 2015, France called for a discussion of the issue by the UN Security Council. (BOZONNET 2015) At the end of 2016, the Prime Minister hosted a solidarity reception for Oriental Christians living in France as refugees. (Gouvernement.fr 2016) In this term of the National Assembly, there is a group concerned with the situation of Oriental Christians, (Assemblée nationale 2018) just like there was one such group in the previous term. (Assemblée nationale 2017) In the autumn of 2017 the Institute of the Arabic World (*Institut du Monde Arabe*) organized an exhibition on the history of Oriental Christians and the opening address was delivered by the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron. (AYAD 2017)

The situation of the Middle East and Africa was also discussed at the meeting of Emmanuel Macron and Pope Francis in June 2018, the meeting was unusually long: the two Heads of State talked for almost an hour. (France24 2018) At the time of the Pope's visit, it was announced that the President of the Republic of France assigned a well-known expert with the task of developing proposals to preserve the Oriental minority heritage and to assist the Christian educational networks, most of those French native speakers. (MALINGRE-CHAMBRAUD 2018) It must be important for France, not just in terms of value, but also in terms of geopolitics and language-dominance, to assist Oriental Christian networks and it is not probable that these efforts would not be promoted by the Vatican.

## The Current Relations Between France and the (Christian) Churches: What Is the Way Ahead?

Since his inauguration in 2017, Emmanuel Macron has been continuously making gestures to the Catholic Church. For example, at the end of 2017, he agreed to accept the title of Honorary Canon of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, which the Head of the Republic has inherited from the French monarchy, the *ancien régime*. However, they did not always accept it formally: since 1958, the two left-wing Presidents François Hollande and François Mitterrand did not accept this honour. Similarly to them, George Pompidou, who was Head of State between 1969–74, also rejected this gesture.

In April 2018 the French President delivered an important, although highly-debated, speech when he was invited by the Bishops' Conference of France. He declared his intent to *improve* the relations between the Church and the State. (CHAMBRAUD 2018) In the speech, he voiced his conviction that the Church has had a role to play in society and its opinion must be listened to in debates and that the idea of the laic or secular state should not be built on the *negation of spirituality*. This is not the first time that the liberal-centrist Macron offers a hand to the French believers, in the election campaign he voiced his conviction that with the introduction of gay marriage the religious people of France were *humiliated* (GARCIN 2017) since they were not considered as a legitimate partner in the debate.

Although it could be argued that Macron is moving away from the traditional laic ideas, he was seriously criticized after accepting the title of Honorary Canon and for addressing the Bishop's Conference, he had a good reason for both steps and especially for delivering that speech. One factor for writing that speech may have been to earn the vote of Catholics, but most probably it was not his relations with the Catholic Church that was on his mind.

The French Head of State is currently working on a program to *organize* the Muslim community in France. At the time of writing this study, his proposals have not yet been publicized, but experts close to Macron have already mentioned a number of concrete ideas and points of intervention. The organization and reorganization of the Muslim community in France are only possible politically if the state offers a hand to them, if only with a few symbolic speeches, and promises a new type of regulation for Muslim communities. The challenge is that this may involve more significant state intervention than what the spirit of the Law of 1905 suggests while not raising anxiety or distance them from the rest of society. However, at this moment nobody is willing to seriously discuss the risky-sounding word of *concordat* in laic France, but the processes are moving towards a deeper and more elaborate state control for which the state may need cooperative partners.

So, the developments within the church-state relationships, especially his gestures towards the Catholic Church in 2017 and 2018, and the whole church and religious policy of President Macron must be analysed in a broader context. The full picture of this policy during the Presidential term of 2017–2022 will only be fully clear when the reform plans about Muslim communities have already been published, and we can see to what extent will they attempt – if they try it at all – to transform the framework of 1905. Will they be able to reach this goal without changing the legislative *status quo*?

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# THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: PRIORITY AND A POLITICAL ISSUE?

## Introduction

The present analysis aims to introduce the role of promoting international religious freedom in American foreign policy. While guaranteeing free religious practice is a theoretical issue in the US, its priority in the US government policy is strongly debated, as it can be seen from the domestic and foreign policy program of Donald Trump based on Christian (mainly Evangelical) communities. The Trump Administration considers the issue of religious freedom a priority, which is embodied primarily in international awareness programs and initiatives aimed at cooperation, at the same time in certain cases, like the persecution of Christians in Iraq or Andrew C. Brunson's fate in Turkish custody, Washington manifests spectacular amount of individual support.

## America and Religious Freedom

The free practice of faith is closely related to US history. On the one hand, free religious practice was one of the essential expectations, as it manifested as a significant social demand in the colonies. On the other hand, the first article of the Bill of Rights, which is an amendment of the American constitution, also declares the right of freedom of speech and press, as well as the right of peaceful assembly. (JANDA-BERRY-GOLDMAN 2011, 488–489.) The latter closely follows the spirit of the laws of Virginia of 1786 on religious freedom, a document

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which was the source of so much pride for its author Thomas Jefferson, that he made special provisions to mention it in his epitaph, in addition to the Declaration of Independence and the foundation of the University of Virginia.

The first amendment to the constitution declares: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”, which also means the separation of church and state, thus the political institutions of the United States may not positively discriminate any of the religions. Keeping a distance from religions is not an obstacle to expressing faith publicly. What is more, a considerable proportion of US citizens emphasize their religious life: religious voters expect the President to be a believer, and in political life, there are frequent public prayers and other open acts of faith. (KOLLMAN 2012, 56.) The social importance of faith is reflected by the fact that the expression “In God we trust” appears on American Dollar coins and banknotes, and that politicians often finish their speeches with the closing sentence “God bless America”. The level of acceptance towards someone expressing their beliefs in public varies within society, in which the liberal-conservative disagreement about the significance and expression of religion is manifested – especially if it is in conflict with the enforcement of laws.

The situation is similar when we examine the role of religion in foreign policy. In the relations of the US and other countries, the idea of exceptionality is often present, the roots of which are partially of a religious nature. Namely, America is a state which has been chosen by a supreme power with the mission to change the world, and the difficulties encountered in conducting the mission are the embodiment of the fight between good and evil. (JUDIS 2005, 1–3.) Nowadays the role of religion in foreign policy has a mixed reputation: unlike Evangelical voters who are enthusiastic about it, others only support religious freedom from a liberal consideration, yet another only support it if it serves America’s interests. Officially the law on the international religious freedom of 1998 (IRFA), which was passed by bipartisan support in Congress, is intended to promote religious freedom internationally. In order to assist those persecuted because of their religious beliefs, the State Department has established a number of organisations. The first of these is the Office of International Religious Freedom, the second is the position of the United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. Finally, the lawmakers set up the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, with members drawn from both parties; unlike the previous two offices, the Commission is an independent body which is not part of the State Department. The Ambassador assists the Secretary of State in making annual reports to the Congress on the situation of religious freedom in different countries, based on which USCIRF issues proposals to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress. (Public Law 105–292 1998, 2–12.) In 2016 IRFA was amended by the Frank R. Wolf Act which among others included non-state actors possessing

considerable political power and control, amongst those who violate people's religious freedom, extended the co-ordination role of the Ambassador to the Federal Government and ordered the State Department to conduct training on religious freedom for all Foreign Service officers. (Public Law 114–281 2016, 3–7.)

## **In the Crossfire of the Trump Administration and Free Religious Worship**

Since the 2016 presidential elections, Donald Trump has consciously been trying to preserve the support of religious (first of all Evangelical) voters, so religious freedom as a priority is reflected in his domestic and foreign policy alike. (EASLEY 2017) For the former, his policy against abortion,<sup>2</sup> his decrees promoting freedom of religion and conscience, as well as his political position supporting Jack Phillips in the Masterpiece Cakeshop-case<sup>3</sup> are typical examples.<sup>4</sup>

### *Foreign policy priorities*

Donald Trump has made steps in his foreign policy which are appreciated by his political supporters. On the one hand, in May 2017 on his first overseas tour, he visited the centres of all Abrahamic religions, starting in Saudi Arabia (which was an unprecedented choice for American Presidents), then Israel and the Vatican. On the other hand, in his address in July 2017 in Warsaw, he stressed the importance of defending the Western civilization, highlighting culture, faith and tradition as decisive values of Western civilization and the threats of radical Islam and international terrorism. (The White House 2017b) The address highlighted the divisions in

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<sup>2</sup> This is primarily reflected in nominating Neil Gorsuch, who opposes abortion, as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, and in changing some regulations. An example for the latter is that in October 2017 the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) allowed employers to remove birth control as a compulsory element of the health insurance packages for employees if it was not in line with the employers/insurance companies' religious or moral convictions. (Barack Obama's program allowed this option only for religious institutions.) (TAWFIK–ZURCHER 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Masterpiece Cakeshop is Jack Phillips's baking enterprise, which in 2012 received an order from a gay couple to make a cake for their wedding. Phillips refused to fulfil the order citing his religious convictions. Then the couple submitted a complaint to the Colorado Civil Rights Commission which ruled against the baker. Phillips took the case to the Colorado Court of Appeals, where the commission's ruling was approved because they rejected Phillips's argument, the commission was biased against his Christian faith, which had been reflected in similar cases (citing as an example a cake topping order, quoting biblical sentences and ideas against gay marriage in other bakeries, which the commission found insulting). Phillips petitioned the Supreme Court which sided with him on 4 June 2018. (BRANNON 2018, 2–3.)

<sup>4</sup> An example is his more lenient policy for employees refraining from certain HHS services, citing conscientious reasons. (The White House 2018a)

domestic policy because while the conservatives agreed with the President about the pillars of Western civilization, the liberals considered this limitation inadequate and claimed further universal values of democracy and liberalism. (BERKOWITZ 2017)

The critics of the Trump Administration claim that it does not identify itself with the values of the liberal international order, namely free trade, cooperation through international institutions and the promotion of liberal democracy. In their opinion, the result is that the administration is more tolerant, for real or imagined reasons, towards governments which do not wish to comply with liberal values. This is debatable but aside from all this, religious freedom is considered an essential value and its international support is included in the National Security Strategy. (The White House 2017a, 41.)

The highlighted position of religious freedom is reflected by the President's nominations. After the departure of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in March 2018, he was succeeded by Michael R. Pompeo who is considered to be an advocate of the case. Before his Senate hearing, American religious groups, domestic and international NGOs and former representatives expressed their support for Pompeo. These letters of support, emphasized that religious freedom was a key foreign policy priority on the road towards peace and stability in the Middle East, as well as indicating Pompeo's probable intent to introduce this priority. (PERKINS et al. 2018)

After his inauguration, Pompeo stressed the latter by nominating Samuel D. Brownback as the next Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. (US Department of State 2018e). Pompeo's conservative bona fides must also be mentioned, regarding his personal and professional dedication, proven by his legislative initiatives as a Senator promoting religious freedom and human rights. (CIMMINO 2017) Despite all this, the Senate approval of Brownback's nomination was a tough procedure, which was another sign of the topic being considered a highly political issue. The Democrats criticized his views against the LGBTQ group and also accused him that as an Ambassador he would act only against the persecution of Christians.<sup>5</sup> This issue came up during Pompeo's hearing as well, highlighting his earlier divisive remarks against Islam. (BEINART 2017)

Brownback's case shows that the increasingly stiff party political division has reached its full extent with Donald Trump's election and that it has also affected the issue of religious freedom, which was earlier agreed on by both parties. President Trump's executive order on immigration adds another layer to the situation (LUPFER 2018) as it primarily targets Muslim majority countries (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, as well as North Korea and Venezuela), so it has become known as prohibition on Muslims, although officially it is about national

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the unanimous vote by Democrats and the absence of 2 Republican Senators, a 49–49 tie vote occurred in the Senate, which was finally broken by Vice President Mike Pence's vote. (SULLIVAN–ZAUZMER 2018)

security, decreasing the danger of terrorism, and in June 2018 the Supreme Court ruled that the order was not discriminative on a religious basis. (HURLEY 2018)

### *Comprehensive international picture and agenda*

Concerning the analysis of the situation of international religious freedom, it would be difficult to speak about bias because the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious freedom and the USCIRF reports have always been investigating the violation of the free practice of any religion.<sup>6</sup> The latest report on international religious freedom was published on 29 May 2018, investigating the situation of free religious worship in 195 countries in the calendar year of 2017. The information in the report has been collected by US embassies and the officials involved, through discussions with government officials, religious leaders, NGOs, representatives of local civil society and international organizations among others. The report is accessible on the website of the American State Department, (US Department of State 2018e) so it publicizes the different forms of religiously-based state and social discriminations and atrocities all over the world. In April 2018, based on its observations USCIRF published its report for the US government and Congress, which is also available for the general public. (USCIRF 2018) This latter gives a more comprehensive picture on the international situation of religious freedom and the possible American actions.

The 2018 USCIRF report has proven that in 2017 international religious freedom further deteriorated, highlighting 28 countries, where the most brutal atrocities occurred. These atrocities were ranging from abuse, deportations, imprisonment and forced conversions to mass murder. Those countries were divided into two tiers depending on the extent of religious freedom violations. Tier 1 includes *countries of particular concern*, in which the state either tolerates or engages in *particularly grave* violations of freedom, which are egregious, systematic and ongoing. The list includes Myanmar (Burma), China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Syria and Vietnam. The report also includes a second category, USCIRF's Tier 2, for countries where the violations meet one or two, but not all three, of the elements of the systematic, ongoing, egregious test. Tier 2 includes Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, and Turkey.

<sup>6</sup> Reports on primarily Christian persecution have not been made recently. The last special report made by USCIRF in December 2016 deals with the Christian minority in Myanmar (Burma).

In addition, the report makes recommendations of *entities of particular concern*, or for non-state actors in 2018: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria; the Taliban in Afghanistan; and al-Shabaab in Somalia (USCIRF 2018, 1–4.) The primary value of the report is that it highlights atrocities against the exercise of religious freedom, shown for Tier 1 countries in Table 1, for Tier 2 countries in Table 2.

Table 1.  
*Partial list of atrocities and problems concerning religious freedom  
in Tier 1 countries in the USCIRF Report of 2018<sup>7</sup>*

<b>Eritrea</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ religious communities recognized by the government are Orthodox, Islam, Catholic, Evangelical. All others are illegal. Regular detentions of people belonging to unregistered denominations (e.g. in 2017, 2 Pentecostal and approximately 210 Evangelical Christians were detained)</li> <li>+ since the devotees of the Jehovah’s Witnesses did not participate in the 1993 referendum on the independence of the country, they lost their nationality the following year, so many of them have no official documents to date, making their legal employment and travel impossible</li> </ul>
<b>North Korea</b>	+ suppression of all kinds of religious practices
<b>Iran</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ situation-based death penalty to converts from Islam</li> <li>+ the government also continued to regulate Christian religious practices closely, to enforce the prohibitions on proselytizing and conversion</li> <li>+ anti-Semitic rhetoric in official government statements</li> <li>+ discrimination against the followers of the Bahai faith</li> </ul>
<b>Peoples’ Republic of China</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ permission of worship of only registered denominations (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant), severe sanctioning of others by the Chinese authorities</li> <li>+ state atrocities against Muslim Uyghurs, close observation of Christian denominations; removals of crosses and church demolitions</li> </ul>
<b>The Central African Republic</b>	+ clashes between Christian and Muslim militants which the government could not prevent

<sup>7</sup> For the source of information in this table, find the summaries of country reports in the international religious freedom report: US Department of State: *International Religious Freedom Report for 2017*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 29 May 2018. [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper) (Accessed: 31 August 2018.)

<b>Myanmar (Burma)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ ethnic cleansing of Muslim Rohingya people</li> </ul>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Christian–Muslim clashes</li> <li>+ Boko Haram terror attacks</li> </ul>
<b>Russia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ stamping or substantially classifying Jehovah’s Witnesses as an extremist denomination</li> </ul>
<b>Pakistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ attacks against Christians and Muslims by banned armed groups</li> <li>+ terrorist attacks by the Islamic State</li> <li>+ forced conversion of women to Islam</li> <li>+ use of blasphemy laws</li> </ul>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Islam as the official religion and the prohibition of the public practice of other religions</li> <li>+ discrimination against Shia Muslims</li> </ul>
<b>Syria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ the public crucifixion and beheadings of hundreds of civilians (including women and children) by the Islamic State</li> <li>+ interreligious hatred due to atrocities in the civil war (e.g. atrocities against Alawites for their supposed favouritism by the government)</li> </ul>
<b>Sudan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ a ban on converting from Islam</li> <li>+ state interference in real-estate transactions of Christian churches</li> <li>+ fining and flagging of Christian and Muslim women for wearing trousers</li> </ul>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ raids and observations against registered and unregistered denominations (e.g. the imprisonment of a Protestant pastor because of extremist views and for possession of prohibited religious literature)</li> <li>+ restrictions on women wearing religious Muslim clothes</li> </ul>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ the government – with the cooperation of ministries – internal, foreign, justice, national security – register religious groups and bans and punishes religious activities by unregistered groups</li> <li>+ house raids, seizure of literature, levying of fines against Jehovah’s Witnesses and Protestants</li> </ul>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ state limitations on religious conversion speeches and literature</li> <li>+ presumably imprisonment of approximately 7,000 people on religious grounds</li> <li>+ the observation of unregistered Christian denominations, the abolition of the 2017 Catholic Youth Summer Camp</li> <li>+ social disapproval (contempt) of Uzbeks converting from Islam to Christianity</li> </ul>



<b>Vietnam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ multi-level registration of denominations, harassment of unregistered groups</li> <li>✦ occasional harsh social disapproval of Catholics (e.g. harassment by local and provincial authorities, interruption of the Mass by armed groups)</li> </ul>
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Table 2.

*Partial list of atrocities and problems concerning religious freedom  
in Tier 2 countries in the USCIRF Report of 2018<sup>8</sup>*

<b>Afghanistan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ severe punishment for converting from Islam</li> <li>✦ the secret exercise of Christian worship due to contempt of conversion</li> <li>✦ the assassination of religious minorities by the Islamic State and the Taliban</li> </ul>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ state control of the distribution of imported religious literature</li> <li>✦ tolerance for <i>traditional</i> (Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish) religious minorities, but it is more and more difficult to re-register some religious groups</li> </ul>
<b>Bahrain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ religious freedom unless it violates the foundations of Islamic doctrines</li> <li>✦ state observance of religious minorities, as well as prevailing social opinions on conversion</li> </ul>
<b>Egypt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ in addition to Islam, which is the official state religion, the constitutional licensing of Christian and Jewish religions, the contempt of conversion from Islam</li> <li>✦ initiatives supported by the state (the reconstruction of Saints Peter and Paul church in Cairo, the planned reconstruction and preservation of a Synagogue in Alexandria), but at times the destruction of legally established Christian sites of worship by extremists</li> </ul>
<b>India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ limitation of conversion in 8 states despite official religious freedom</li> <li>✦ weak official action in case of attacks on Muslims transporting/processing cattle (e.g. non-prosecution)</li> <li>✦ assaults on Christian churches and missionaries</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> For the source of information in this table, find the summaries of country reports in the international religious freedom report: US Department of State: *International Religious Freedom Report for 2017*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 29 May 2018. [www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper) (Accessed: 31 August 2018.)

<b>Indonesia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ religious freedom can be officially limited to defend public moral, security, order and democratic society (e.g. in May 2017 a panel of judges for the North Jakarta District Court found the Governor of Jakarta, a Christian, guilty of blasphemy against Islam and sentenced him to two years in jail)</li> <li>♦ state support of religious tolerance, which is opposed by locals (e.g. the construction of the Santa Clara Catholic Church which has been opposed to by local residents)</li> </ul>
<b>Iraq</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ in addition to Islam, the state religion, the freedom of exercising only those religions (e.g. Christianity) which are specified in the constitution</li> <li>♦ obstacles to conversion to Christianity (e.g. Christian families formally registered as Muslim were forced to choose to register their child as a Muslim, or to have the child remain undocumented, which would affect eligibility for government benefits)</li> <li>♦ harassment of Christians and restriction on their free movement in the Nineveh plain</li> <li>♦ the settling of Shia in traditionally Christian areas, an intent to cause demographic changes</li> </ul>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ strict inspection and state limitations on religious freedom and <i>non-traditional</i> religious denominations e.g. <i>non-traditional</i> religious groups labelled as <i>destructive sects</i> in the media</li> <li>♦ arrest, detaining, and imprisonment of members of religious groups which have not been formally registered</li> </ul>
<b>Cuba</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ despite the formal religious freedom, the communist party's influence in religious life, and sometimes the restriction or punishment of religious leaders</li> <li>♦ improvement in the freedom of religious work of religious denominations (e.g. in education, participation in the operating of libraries)</li> </ul>
<b>Laos</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ the government officially recognizes four religious umbrella groups – Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahai Faith – and generally requires other religious groups to affiliate with one of these four groups to operate legally</li> <li>♦ atrocities against mainly Christians in villages (e.g. arrests and deportations)</li> </ul>
<b>Malaysia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ prohibition of conversion from Islam in spite of the formal religious freedom</li> <li>♦ occasional negative discrimination against Christians (for example, in 2017, a ban on public prayer to avoid disturbing the Muslims celebrating Ramadan)</li> </ul>
<b>Turkey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ the government provides religious minorities in terms of security (and in certain reconstruction projects material) support, but restricts the training of their clergymen</li> <li>♦ following the 2016 coup attempt, Jews and the Orthodox patriarch were accused by some government-close media commentators</li> </ul>

The secondary value of the detailed country reports and the comprehensive USCIRF report is important for US governmental policy. The former discusses American reactions to atrocities in specific countries which are represented by diplomatic pressure, international awareness campaigns, meetings with religious leaders and civilians involved, communications promoting religious freedom and tolerance, as well as programs and events promoting interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, the USCIRF Report makes proposals for the future for the US Government and the Congress. In terms of their objectives and means, they equal with the practices mentioned, including exerting pressure on the countries to give up their policy restricting religious freedom and to respect international human rights, as well as introducing international cooperation and targeted sanctions by the US (e.g. visa restrictions). (USCIRF 2018, 5–8.)

Nevertheless, the government is not obliged to automatically implement the proposals. The USCIRF Report of 2018, for example, highlights that the 10 countries proposed to receive the *country of particular concern designation* were classified as such several months earlier, in December 2017 by the State Department.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the document mentions that this classification was the continuation of the former US policy, which did not make those countries change their attitude. On top of that, in case of 4 of the 10 countries involved, the Trump Administration exercised its right not to impose sanctions, citing vital *national security interests*: the reason for this in case of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was the collective fight against international terrorism and in case of Saudi Arabia it was the energy security of the US. (USCIRF 2018, 11–12.)

On the other hand, the Trump Administration keeps the issue of religious freedom on the agenda, an example of which was a ministerial-level international religious freedom conference, which was also attended by religious and civilian organizations. The event, held in Washington, D.C. between 24–26 July 2018, was attended by 80 delegations, including government officials, who discussed challenges of religious freedom and the potential cooperation activities, after listening to the accounts of persecution by members of various religious groups. The Potomac Declaration, issued at the end of the conference, called for the universality of religious freedom, about religion's role in providing peace, stability, political freedom, economic development and the rule of law. However, the participants expressed their disappointment that 70 years after the approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which promoted religious freedom, almost 80% of the world's population still suffered serious harm in this respect. (US Department of State 2018c)

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<sup>9</sup> Countries involved: Eritrea, North Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the People's Republic of China, Myanmar (Burma).

The declaration was accompanied by an action plan, which in fact is the signatories' position against the atrocities, frequently occurring in Tier 1 and 2 countries of the international religious freedom report of the US in 2017. (US Department of State 2018d) Finally, separate statements (US Department of State 2018g) were issued on religious freedom violations by Iran, the Republic of China and Myanmar (Burma), about those which carried out under the disguise of blasphemy laws, counter-terrorism activities, or by non-state actors like terror organizations. The persuasive force of these documents is debatable since these documents are merely political statements and not every delegation leader have signed them.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the conference has proven to be a successful forum for raising awareness since representatives of a *country of particular concern*, Uzbekistan, and of two Tier 2 countries, Kazakhstan and Bahrain took part at this event. The Uzbeks presented a list of their achievements and a plan to alleviate state orders restricting religious freedom, for example the termination of the registration system, (LEE 2018) Bahrain declared the establishment of a post for an Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom, whose task would be to promote peaceful relations between religions in the Middle East. (SMITH 2018)

### *Important initiatives and measures*

The intent to increase awareness is signified by Michael R. Pompeo's announcement that his Department is holding a workshop called Boldline in October 2018, to find new ways of cooperation between the private and public sector to the promotion of religious freedom, and also proposed an idea to continue the conference in the form regional forums organized by multiple participants. Pompeo also heralded a ten-day long IVLP program,<sup>11</sup> designed to promote religious pluralism and the rights of religious minorities, expecting attendees from all over the world. (US Department of State 2018f)

Another example of international cooperation under US management is the International Religious Freedom Fund, announced by Vice President Mike Pence, which exists to provide funds to victims of religious discrimination and atrocities in the form of social integration initiatives, medical assistance and the restoration

<sup>10</sup> Regarding Iran 5, regarding the People's Republic of China 4, regarding Myanmar (Burma) 10 countries signed the relevant document. The one regarding the blasphemy law, the disguise of counter-terrorism was signed by 15–15 states, the one regarding non-state entities by 25 states.

<sup>11</sup> The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is a scholarship program financed and run by the US Government, available for individuals designated by US embassies.

of confiscated property. As the personnel, administrative and operating costs of the Fund is covered by the US, the voluntary and individual contributions of donor countries will directly flow to the victims. (US Department of State 2018a) There is another new program, also designed to directly support the victims of religiously based discrimination, which through the American International Development Agency (USAID) will provide communities suffering from persecution and genocide, with resources that, in the long run, will contribute to the strengthening of local civil societies. (The White House 2018b)

Although the above initiatives work at the global level, the Trump Administration gave priority to the case of Iraqi Christians, which highlights the influence of Christian organizations on the Trump Administration. In October 2017 Mike Pence sided with those organizations which were upset at the way international aids to Iraqi Christian minorities were distributed. Calling the work of the UN Development Program (UNDP), which was responsible for the distribution of international assistance, *ineffective*, the Vice President ordered that American aid to minorities must be directly distributed through USAID. It must also be mentioned, that the greatest difficulty for the UNDP is not the utilisation or the distribution of funds, but instead their scarcity. According to the organization to repair the damage caused during the fight with the Islamic State requires approximately 88 billion Dollars, whereas only 1% of the amount is at its disposal. (MORELLO 2018b)

The original source of the debate was a 150 million Dollars' worth of aid package which was allocated for any stabilization related project by the UNDP. This was finally halved upon US request so that the UN organization could have spent 55 million out of the first 75 million Dollars to support religious minority groups, while the second 75 million Dollars would have been made available by the US for the UNDP if specific requirements were met. This case has brought up issues about the professional approach of American aid policy. The notion of the Trump Administration's bias towards the Christians of the Nineveh region also triggered a debate within the government; since some people worried about the potential negative consequences of this action. These may have included the intensification of religious divides and conflicts inside Iraq, or the alienation of the Iraqi central government, resulting in the decline of American influence in Baghdad.

On the other hand, not every foreign partner supported the reallocation of American funds from the economically more developed Mosul and its densely populated neighbourhoods to the Nineveh region. These partners were worried about the absence of required investments in the city which might pave the way for the return of the Islamic State. Then again the Iraqi Christians and Yazidis are threatened in their very existence, as the Islamic State wanted to totally eradicate them. This is also highlighted by the decrease of the local Christian population of Iraq. Before 2003 they were approximately 1.4 million Yazidis and Christians in Iraq, by 2016 their numbers dropped below a quarter of a million. There are no technical obstacles of

directly supporting religious groups if the funds are not used for missionary purposes. (DUBIN–De Luce 2018) This fact was reiterated by Mark Green, the head of USAID, who emphasized that the purpose of the funds was not to rebuild churches but to re-establish the worst affected local communities.<sup>12</sup> At the international religious freedom conference, Michael Pompeo announced an additional 17 million Dollars for clearing mines in the Nineveh region, with which the total American aid to Iraq will have exceeded 100 million Dollars in 2018. (US Department of State 2018f)

The other important item on the Trump Administration's agenda was the fate of Andrew C. Brunson, an Evangelical pastor imprisoned in Turkey. Brunson was imprisoned by Turkish authorities for his alleged involvement in an attempted coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in July 2016. On 25 July 2018, he was transferred from prison to house arrest. This move was announced by Mike Pence at the above mentioned religious freedom conference where the Vice President expressed that although this was an encouraging development, the USA still demanded the release of the pastor and his repatriation to the US. To give weight to these demands Pence threatened Turkey with the imposition of sanctions. (The White House 2018b)

This plan had the support of Donald Trump, and sanctions took effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2018. The main targets of American financial sanctions were the Turkish Minister of Justice Abdulhamit Gül and Turkish Minister of the Interior Süleyman Soylu. After the imposition of sanctions, they could not travel to the US, could not have property there, and they were banned from transactions with American citizens. The relations between the American and Turkish Governments had not been problem-free even before Erdoğan's retaliatory measures after the attempted coup. As part of these steps, Turkey requested the extradition of Imam Fethullah Gülen, who resides in Pennsylvania and who, according to Erdoğan, was the alleged mastermind of the coup. Besides this demand, 20 US citizens, including Brunson, were also arrested in Turkey which angered Washington so much that sanctions were issued against Turkey. The peculiarity of the sanctions is that they are only imposed against two ministers and spare the rest of the Turkish state. (HENNIGAN 2018) Nevertheless, the sanctions are against two people whose positions are high enough to draw ample attention, not to mention that the Trump Administration imposed sanctions against a strategically important NATO ally, which is unprecedented in US history. (WILHELM–TOOSI 2018)

The step contributed to the weakening of the Turkish lira which lost 30% of its value in the previous month, and this process became even more dramatic in the week after the announcement of sanctions. On top

<sup>12</sup> Frank R. Wolf, former representative from Virginia – after whom the 2018 amendment to the 1998 religious freedom act is named – supported the idea of re-establishing small communities, reminding the public that these groups have no serious lobby power in Washington. (MORELLO 2018a)



of all that, Donald Trump doubled the import taxes on Turkish steel and aluminium, by 50 and 30% respectively, which led to the exclusion of 13% of Turkish exports from the US market. This further weakened the Turkish economy and the ever-weakening Turkish lira scared the financial markets which have already lost its confidence in Turkish government bonds. (GALL–EWING 2018) Although it is highly contentious whether there was a political motivation behind the steps, the Trump Administration has chosen to adopt Pastor Brunson's case which caused a further deterioration in US–Turkey relations. Nevertheless, it is clear that the President lived up to his promises to American religious groups in other issues as well, so the sanctions might have secured votes among Evangelicals during the November 2018 midterm elections. (SEVASTOPULO 2018)

## Summary

In the US, supporting religious freedom domestically and internationally has strong constitutional and legal foundations, and this is usually compatible with both social expectations and value – and interest-based foreign policy. Washington does a lot to highlight international atrocities against free practice of religion, which includes the persecution of Christians, too. Since the same legal, social and theoretical foundations require general religious freedom, the American promotion of religious freedom may not positively discriminate any denomination over the others.

This balance is sensitive, especially in the shadow of the party-political division which has further increased with the election of Donald Trump. The Trump Administration has been openly advocating the fight for international religious freedom, but as it is trying to do this, they have found a delicate balance. Because if they consciously overemphasize the persecution of Christians in order to gain the political support of, mainly Evangelical, Christian communities, it may prove counterproductive in Washington, D.C. Furthermore, the main benefit of this policy, besides generating material support for those who need this the most, is in international awareness campaigns where the US is looking for partners to help its efforts to succeed.

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III.

LEGAL ASPECTS  
OF THE CHRISTIAN SITUATION



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## THE EVALUATION OF THE MASS MIGRATION OF MUSLIMS INTO EUROPE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE CATHOLIC ITALIAN AND THE BRITISH NEO-CONSERVATIVE THEORETICAL POSITIONS

### **The Formation of the First Theoretical Conservative Reflections on the Mass Islamic Migration**

It is probably right to perceive that certain Catholic and conservative reactions to the migration crisis, even if they occasionally oppose each other, start to gain an elaborated form, especially so as the simple and usual presentation of the related news do not draw the attention of the readers who are bored with the topic. At the same time, the European migration policy has taken a new direction compared to the previous mass admission, as in the wake of the changing political decisions migration has slowed down, so in this recess, the reflections on mid-term processes, which are the result of social changes due to migration, can also be more considerate. Although those who support the admission of masses of migrants still argue by using slogan-like expressions that the admission and respect of diversity is important, diversity is a virtue, multi-cultural society is unavoidable and also desirable, etc. Besides this approach books demonstrating the positive effects of Islamic culture are also being published, which provide additional arguments supporting the admission of masses of Muslim migrants as they enrich European culture. On the other hand, they do not analyse the internal tensions of multi-ethnic societies, they do not even discuss the problem that if a melting pot of peoples is

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continuously receiving masses, then after a certain point, it will not be the same society anymore. D. Murray's words on the problem in his influential monography are the following: "Despite earlier fears, we have been able to integrate many, but we are not a melting pot which can receive anything while expecting the same outcome." (MURRAY 2018, 302.) When admission and tolerance are mentioned, they do not answer the question how the situation would change if the Muslim community, once it has become the majority, will not be tolerant towards the European society which was the previous majority in these districts, towns or countries. We are in the very early pre-phase of the awareness of the possible problem, as firstly the facts related to the migration of Muslim masses should be openly assessed, for example, in terms of the violent crimes they commit.

As a result of its historical development, conservative thinking always *reflected in retrospect* on large-scale historical events, the conservative thinker – eventually, Edmund Burke when he was considering the social-political consequences of the French Revolution, or rather getting upset about them – *pragmatically* criticises that way of thinking which draws the conclusions simply and mechanically from the doctrinal principles of morality. We think the time has come for neo-conservatives that they analyse the practical, moral and cultural effects of immigration from the distance of a few years.

## **Contrasting the Reflections on Mass Immigration of Muslims into Europe Between Two Influential, Intellectual Italian Catholic Trends with the Anti-immigration Ideas of Douglas Murray**

As a result of the fertile interdisciplinary discourse triggered by the issue, it is actually impossible to present a general introduction of the studies related to the topic in the title. Considering this, in the present study, due to the developments concerning the ships full of refugees which did not receive permission to disembark, (compare LOPAPA 2018)<sup>2</sup> and because major new restrictions on immigration – I will highlight two out of the many educated Catholic opinions in Italy, which to some extent give an insight into diverging theoretical trends. One of them is by Franco Cardini, a professor of medieval history, who agrees with the ideas in Pope Francis's manifestations regarding the investigation of the causes which have led to mass migration and

<sup>2</sup> "ROMA. Porti italiani chiusi. È la svolta senza precedenti imposta in queste ore da Matteo Salvini. Porti chiusi per la nave Aquarius, che batte bandiera di Gibilterra, in navigazione con 629 naufraghi provenienti dal Nordafrica, tra cui 123 minori non accompagnati. Lo stesso Salvini ha avvertito le autorità maltesi con una lettera: è loro il porto più sicuro e Roma non offrirà approdi alternativi."



the solutions to it, which he also underlines. (Linkiesta 2018)<sup>3</sup> He presents Pope Francis's positive opinion of Islam as his own in a provocative manner, which is illustrated by the titles of his most recent books. (CARDINI 2015; CARDINI 2016) The other opinion represents the position of traditionalist, Thomistic, conservative Catholics, which is illustrated by two short, assertive, and clearly defining studies by Stefano Fontana; (FONTANA 2018a; FONTANA 2018b) these writings focus on the pre-council, Catholic-centred, Thomistic, natural law tradition of the Catholic church.

Next, let us make a few remarks regarding the new elements of the conservative, pragmatic approach of the British neo-conservative thinker Douglas Murray, who created an upheaval with his newly published book and also gained several acknowledgements.<sup>4</sup> These remarks will be contrasted – in an indirect way with Cardini's reasoning and some of his major statements. Apart from this, no position will be formed on how to deal with the mass immigration of Muslims, as it is thought that contrasting the arguments of the authors mentioned above can lead to a valid conclusion of what we can consider as humane in case of refugees, and really wise, careful concept in case of migrants in the mid- and the long term. This concept, though courageous and generously helpful in finding solutions for refugees – as it is advocated by Pope Francis being the living conscience of Europe –, is also based on the realism of sociology and politics and avoids all ways of simplification, as it is highlighted in the document of the Italian Bishops' Conference.<sup>5</sup>

Franco Cardini, a renowned professor of medieval history, considers the positive cultural, economic, diplomatic, and other effects of Islam on European culture, showing that despite their bloody nature, the Crusades and jihads, all in all, played a lot smaller role in the relations of Christian Europe and Islam than the *friendly interactions* (CARDINI 2015, 141.) which had a positive outcome, for which he gives many

<sup>3</sup> This is the question and the answer in one of his interviews: "I populist hanno lo sguardo corto, l'establishment dello status quo ci ha cacciato nei guai, chi è il catechon oggi, Cardini, la figura che può trattenere il male? È il papa: io non ho dubbi su questo."

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. the commentary of Rabbi Sacks: <https://goo.gl/1uiAKv>. Norbert Filemon's opinion on him in a portrait at Mandiner.hu: "A thoughtful provocateur and a sensitive soul at the same time, who wants to defend the soul and ethos of Europe. He defends the Christian heritage like an atheist, stands by the ethos of the family like a gay, and attacks the Islamist and the extreme left-wing efforts as a radical expression of freedom activist. Douglas Murray is a real British elitist, publicist and writer, a new decisive figure of the conservatives." (FILEMON 2018)

<sup>5</sup> "Nel Messaggio per la Giornata mondiale del Migrante e del Rifugiato 2018 papa Francesco, in continuità con il Magistero di Papa Benedetto e del Santo Papa Giovanni Paolo II, ha ribadito che «tutti i credenti e gli uomini e le donne di buona volontà sono chiamati a rispondere alle numerose sfide poste dalle migrazioni contemporanee con generosità, alacrità, saggezza e lungimiranza, ciascuno secondo le proprie responsabilità». [...] Siamo consapevoli che nemmeno noi cristiani, di fronte al fenomeno globale delle migrazioni, con le sue opportunità e i suoi problemi, possiamo limitarci a risposte prefabbricate, ma dobbiamo affrontarlo con realismo e intelligenza, con creatività e audacia, e al tempo stesso, con prudenza, evitando soluzioni semplicistiche." Commissione Episcopale per le Migrazioni della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana: *Comunità accoglienti, uscire dalla paura, Lettera alle comunità cristiane a 25 anni dal documento "Ero forestiero e mi avete ospitato" (1993–2018)*. [www.chiesacattolica.it/fratello-migrante/](http://www.chiesacattolica.it/fratello-migrante/)

examples. On the one hand, the professor points out the multiple problems which are the result of the West's faulty political decisions towards the Islamic world. Among others, he accuses the West of instigating religious fundamentalism and *l'art pour l'art* instrumentalization, not ungrounded arguments, (L'Espresso 2015)<sup>6</sup> highlighting the responsibility of certain *Western* multinational companies in escalating the famine in Africa, which was one of the triggers that started the contemporary migration crisis. (Linkiesta 2018)<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, as a historian, he emphasizes the historic richness of European–Islamic encounters and is optimistic about the possibilities of a future in which guarantees mutual prosperity for both sides. He does not go into much detail on the European presence of religiously motivated Islamic terrorism, he just points out that even within Islam there is an ongoing multi-layer civil war (*fitna*), (L'Espresso 2015)<sup>8</sup> which – in his opinion – is also discernible in the trends of European terrorism, neither does he discuss the possible problems, tensions as the result of the continuously increasing proportion of Muslims in the European population. If there are real tensions within the Muslim society that to an extent lead to terrorism in Europe by religious fanatics, then

<sup>6</sup> “Sia i governi europei che quello americano hanno delle responsabilità non solo recenti, ma che iniziano nel periodo post-coloniale del Medio Oriente. Il peccato originale fu quello di voler fare delle vecchie colonie dei nuovi protettorati economico-finanziari. Gli inglesi soprattutto tentarono di mantenere de facto il controllo di quelle zone, negando l'anima islamica di quel mondo e a seguito di ciò nacquero i primi movimenti islamisti, come i Fratelli musulmani in Egitto. Da allora fino ai nostri giorni le forze occidentali hanno trattato strumentalmente il mondo islamico, facendo i propri interessi. Ancora oggi si pensa che il fondamentalismo sia strumentalizzabile. Gli Stati Uniti, per esempio, favorirono lo stabilirsi degli jihadisti provenienti dallo Yemen e dall'Arabia Saudita in Afghanistan durante la guerra contro l'Unione sovietica, per trasformarla in una guerra santa anti-russa. Essa fu vinta, ma gli jihadisti rimasero e formarono il movimento dei talebani che fino a metà degli anni Novanta fu appoggiato da Washington. Poi i talebani si svincolarono avvicinandosi alla Cina, cosa che ha portato all'11 settembre e a tutte le conseguenze che oggi abbiamo sotto gli occhi.”

<sup>7</sup> “La gente scappa dall'Africa. Perché? Si dice: la fame, la guerra, le dittature, le malattie. D'accordo. Vuole una spiegazione più precisa? Certo La gente scappa dall'Africa perché oggi in Africa si muore di fame e di sete (non genericamente a causa delle guerre, delle dittature ecc., che sono un effetto, non una causa); e si muore di fame e di sete perché gli africani sono stati privati del loro suolo e del loro sottosuolo. Attraverso l'imposizione delle monoculture che servono ai mercati mondiali (caffè, ananas ecc.) e attraverso l'economia estrattiva intensiva da parte delle lobbies multinazionali che lavorano in combutta coi governi corrotti africani protetti dai loro vecchi padroni europei. E così capita che appena dall'ONU si levi una risoluzione, magari votata a larghissima maggioranza dai paesi membri, che chiede per esempio alle multinazionali di reinvestire nei paesi africani interessati una congrua quota parte di profitto da destinarsi allo sviluppo ordinato del continente accade, guarda caso, che puntuale cali il “No” soprattutto di Francia e Inghilterra. Paesi i cui governi esercitano la maggior parte delle funzioni di protezione delle lobbies, che sono sopravvissute e/o si sono sostituite ai vecchi poteri coloniali. In questo modo il vecchio colonialismo, politicamente battuto dalla decolonizzazione, ha potuto riciclarsi come ricolonizzazione da parte delle lobbies private in genere egemonizzate da azionisti euro-occidentali (ma anche statunitensi, canadesi, sudafricani, arabi, australiani, giapponesi; ora anche cinesi).”

<sup>8</sup> “L'Europa non ha capito cosa realmente stia succedendo. In molti pensano che l'unico nemico del Califfato sia l'Occidente. Ciò è errato e i fatti di questi giorni lo mostrano chiaramente. La maggior parte delle vittime sono infatti di religione musulmana. Gli attentati in Kuwait e Somalia mostrano una forte lotta che è in corso tra sciiti e sunniti, oltre che tra jihadisti e moderati. C'è in atto una guerra civile all'interno del mondo islamico che spinge migliaia di persone in bocca ai fondamentalisti, molti dei quali offrono un programma sociale ed economico fondato sul prestito senza interessi delle banche islamiche che attrae tantissimi giovani. Quello che l'Europa non ha capito è che non c'è solo fanatismo violento, ma anche proposte di alternativa al mondo occidentale.”

the credit must go to Murray who says that it is absolutely not certain that *Europe should take on the violent conflicts of the world or import them* by facilitating the mass migration of Muslims, as these problems cannot be solved in Europe while the attempts claim dozens of European lives and hundreds of injured people. “[...] if you import the denizens of the world, then you also import the problems of the world, and might also create new ones.” (MURRAY 2018, 322.) The uncritical and doctrine-like implementation of the slogan “Let’s build bridges instead of walls”, which is generally true and valid, resulted in concrete walls and barriers on all bridges in London. “The traditional slogan of Open Borders movement has been for years ‘Let’s build bridges instead of walls.’ The members of the movement should visit London today where all the bridges are blocked by walls.” (MURRAY 2018, 316.) This should really make us all think.

Instead of the concept of the *melting pot*, Cardini recommends the *salad bowl* as its opposite, as a representation of the desirable model for a multicultural society.<sup>9</sup> The problem in this respect is that he does not discuss what is the guarantee that, for example, the *pillarized* societies like the Dutch and the Belgian<sup>10</sup> will not collapse ethnically if the integrating constitutional institutions, as well as the social and political cultural components, cannot provide the required cohesion. So the *integrating force* described as desirable in case of plural-multicultural societies, that is multi-ethnic, (MURRAY 2018, 101.) is not present, bearing in mind that it is not the encounter of internally integrated peoples in their own way and to their own extent, so that they all live in their homeland as it was the case for centuries (with minimal or less mutual invasion and conquest), but Muslim people became the majority in several districts of European towns, while their social integration has not made any progress for decades. The theories for the integration of immigrants were made when their numbers were far smaller, and when they wanted to integrate. In my opinion, reality is made to manifest in

<sup>9</sup> In other instances, it keeps a larger distance regarding the two Western integrational models: “La massima concessione che si accorda quindi alle società musulmane è quella di »maturare«, di farsi sempre più »moderate« in modo da pervenire prima o poi a un livello qualitativamente analogo a quello dell’Occidente: restano poi da discutere, com’è evidente, le fasi e i caratteri di tale occidentalizzazione, conseguibile per »integrazione« multiculturalista o per »assimilazione«, cioè attraverso i modelli rispettivamente detti del *salad bowl*, dove le differenti civiltà convivono armonicamente mantenendo però ciascuna la loro identità nei limiti consentiti dalla convivenza (quindi cedendone ciascuna una certa quota-parte), o del *melting pot*, che dovrebbe pervenire a una nuova sintesi nella quale tuttavia i caratteri principali sarebbero conferiti dalla componente culturalmente più forte. E’ evidente che, al di là dei molti ostacoli alla pratica realizzazione di tali modelli, quel che resterebbe da valutare sarebbe il fattore-tempo: quante generazioni, e sulla base di quali presupposti socioeconomici e sociogiuridici, sarebbero necessari per rendere commestibile l’insalata multiculturalista o la zuppa assimilazionista? Appare evidente che il vero malinteso alla base di questi pur diversi modi occidentocentrici di considerare il problema – ispirati entrambi a una tolleranza teorica e dichiarata e a una pervicace intolleranza pratica e implicita – consiste nel rifiuto di accogliere la diversità come una ricchezza e una risorsa e nella superba convinzione che tutto il mondo vada ridotto ad accettare o comunque a subire i valori di una civiltà che giudica se stessa come migliore delle e superiore alle altre.” (CARDINI 2016)

<sup>10</sup> The *ethnic enclaves*, parallel societies coexisting within the nation, may become an explosive mixture, this is why it must be avoided. Special attention must be given to the societies with a *pillarized* or *segmented* plural political culture: especially Belgium and Holland.

Douglas Murray's book in which, building on several facts and surveys, the author notes that the facts and figures in his book have never been criticized, (MURRAY 2018, 329.) and points out that the culture of Europe will change fundamentally, and it will not be Europeans who will decide on the direction and features of this change.

A lot of Europeans today may have a chance to experience the feeling of becoming a *minority in their own city or district*. (MURRAY 2018, 304.) An immigrant minority may become the majority whose culture and interests will prevail, while the Europeans cannot make their culture and interests prevail, as in theory all cultures are equal, the German culture, according to Murray, (MURRAY 2018, 304.) may not be preferable to the Eritrean because a person who does so will be regarded as old-fashioned and uninformed, but most of all as a racist, to say the least. The example given by Murray is not an appropriate one, as the Eritreans arriving in Europe are probably real refugees, but in case of people migrating in the hope of a better life from countries where their human rights are adequately protected, it can be a real problem that the legitimacy of the principle that every nation should primarily be responsible for the welfare of its own citizens and to preserve its own culture – which has a significant moral and cultural integrative role – will not prevail.

Under the slogan of multiculturalism, the nations of the European society are expected *not to emphasize their own cultures* and not to consider them more equal, that is more valuable, in the spirit of a desired silent *politically-correct positive discrimination* regarding immigrants. How is it possible to like the culture of others as our own, we may ask, if it is not polite to appreciate our own in an open way, given that the emphasis is put on the negative aspects and historical crimes, especially so, if the bad conscience regarding it is artificially generated and maintained? (MURRAY 2018, 156–175.)

“In the interest of multiculturalism, countries have realized that they have to reduce their self-esteem and started concentrating on the negative aspects. So, those countries which once were so open and liberal that they allowed large-scale migration, were basically described as racist. As a result, in Europe, every other culture could be celebrated but it became suspicious to acknowledge the positive aspects of the continent. In the period of multiculturalism, Europe degraded itself to an extent that it seemed that the indigenous society is fully retreating, and is hoping to be taken as nothing more but a harmless actor.” (MURRAY 2018, 102.)

So the foundations of the *Golden Rule* – that is, “Do unto others as you would have them do to you” – do not work, meaning *the healthy standard of self-esteem*, to which degree the culture of others can be, must be appreciated. The problem is, as Murray points out, that the political class does not want to respect that *Europeans love a Europe which is theirs*. The Europeans – he writes – are extremely but not endlessly compassionate. (MURRAY 2018, 312.) From this, we can derive that *we should not destroy this healthy appreciation of our countries*

and Europe, which is the basis and the standard of our identity, and the generous European solidarity with other peoples, and abuse the helpful benevolence of European peoples. (MURRAY 2018, 308.)

Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to introduce the policy of *Willkommenskultur* was probably motivated by the desire not to have the term *wall-builder* added to her biographies, (MURRAY 2018, 323.) a role she wanted to avoid at all costs because of her East German experiences. She lived and worked in East Berlin until 1990, but even when she was forced to change her migration policy, she was unable to realize the faults of her former decisions, (MURRAY 2018, 327.) and the consequences of which she wanted to shift on the shoulders of the European countries, including the states of the V4 cooperation, even by enforcing the set of sanction of the EU.

For a conservative political thinker, who is pragmatic and realistic, it is absolutely acceptable in terms of epistemology and morals, that political learning is based on challenge-reaction, that is the collective wisdom's response to new challenges in a trial and failure like fashion, always seeking balance and subsequently making corrections. (BURKE 1990, 270–271.) However, the political step by the Chancellor would never be taken by a conservative British politician: yet, the mistakes could have been corrected later by drawing the right consequences of the decision, which she also found faulty later, after admitting her mistakes. According to the conservative view, policy-making has to be the result of collective political prudence, building on the collective wisdom of the predecessors, while also considering the interests of the successors. In his book, Douglas Murray stresses that politicians, especially the Germans, have been separated from the realistic opinion of the majority of the society and represent a migrant admission policy to serve their short-term objectives, which will completely change Europe and which is completely rejected by the citizens. Besides, he discusses the phenomenon of terrorism by meticulously analysing specific events, showing their ethnic, extremist religious nature. He also shares his experiences that scholars at conferences, (MURRAY 2018, 221–222.) politicians and the media in public discourse do not permit the factual discussion of the consequences of mass Muslim migration. That is why the conditions of cultivating collective wisdom cannot evolve. Opponents of mass Muslim migration, even when talking about terrorism or sexual violence, are quickly condemned with the most slanderous adjectives (xenophobic, Islamophobic, Nazi, racist, Fascistic etc.) and those who condemn them are the prosecutor and the judge alike of those who are condemned. (MURRAY 2018, 237–238.)

In such communication space, it is impossible to openly discuss all relevant aspects of this extremely complicated and sensitive social issue. If, for instance, the *mainstream media* does not openly broadcast the facts of crimes committed by immigrants arriving in Europe, but rather distorts or suppress those. And if the opposing political opinions about this subject cannot be openly discussed, then the appropriate political decision cannot

be achieved by clashing arguments and measuring the weight of each point raised. Besides, the decisions which have proven wrong cannot be corrected later in the lack of the above discussion. Right decisions are difficult if authorities and politicians do not openly do something about asylum applications and ineligible asylum seekers. For example, if they do not send back ineligible immigrants, fake minors, the number of whom reached 82% of all responders in an inspection in Sweden (MURRAY 2018, 322.) and if they cannot efficiently identify those who provided false data, those who registered under several names or who provided false personal identification for the immigration/refugee management system. In order to adopt the right opinion, the citizen must know that those who are registered as refugees are really refugees, if they come from that particular country, if they are really minors etc. All these are important pieces of information to justify eligibility, but it should also be borne in mind that by providing false data they want to get a status with the highest amount of protection and support, which can also be the method used by terrorists to get into a country.

Having discussed these issues, we have to analyse a factor which is not examined in its full scope in the studies of many Catholic theoreticians, like in the writings of Professor Cardini. We must conclude that the defence against religious fanaticism-motivated terrorism is not a primary factor in the migration policy of several Western European countries in the era of mass immigration of migrants and refugees. They emphasize the right of refugees to be admitted, and all the, assumed, benefits that go with it, above national security considerations. They prefer defending Christmas markets, bridges and public buildings with armoured personnel carriers, concrete barriers, fences and heavily armed soldiers too, if these measures are really needed, instead of enforcing such security measures at the borders of the country, (MURRAY 2018, 326.) and institutionalizing a more careful system of security checks, or starting the assessment of asylum applications at asylum seeking points established outside Europe. (MURRAY 2018, 291–292.)

They rather speak against the reasonable, public anger after a terrorist attack, than efficiently prevent it. The refugees' right to protection, in cases of reasonable terrorist threats, should be compared to the citizens' right to life and security, their real collision, those wishing to kill people are not real refugees, and to their practical compatibility. If these crimes are committed not by refugees but legally admitted migrants, then the question is even more pointed: how can the most essential human rights of citizens, the right to life and security, basic welfare, that is public security prevail with such immigration policies? It seems that without proper national security measures, that is without preliminary security checks, mass immigration should not be made possible, neither for refugees nor for immigrants.

The conservative way of thinking compares the harmful effects to the beneficial effects of political decisions that affect national integrity regarding the future of its nation, which it feels responsible for. That is why,



the British neo-conservative writer discussed in this study, who lives in a highly tolerant and plural society, comes forward realistically considering the indefensibility of the aforementioned position on mass migration: “We should also accept that immigration is favourable in the case of small immigrant communities, a large mass of people can destroy the society.” (MURRAY 2018, 293.) To solve the problem of the ageing society there are different, more sophisticated methods – he writes, than “importing generations from Africa”. (MURRAY 2018, 293.) The Government of Hungary, for example, wishes to reinforce the nation by stopping the demographic decline with its family policy, as a major political objective.

It is also important to validate the wisdom of identifying the existence of differences and of making linguistic distinctions between those: this is what the British author does when he declares that “the European society, while opposing mass immigration, presented an outstandingly tolerant behaviour to the immigrants”. (MURRAY 2018, 293–294.) Without highlighting this, we could only make expeditious and false statements.

One of the British neo-conservative author’s key statements is that the future of the European society may hinge upon its relation to its own past. He says that “a society may certainly not survive if it permanently fights against its origins and suppresses it”. (MURRAY 2018, 297.) Europe has to analyse its past with criticism, but it also has to remember its glory days in addition to the grievances and has the chance – he writes – to forgive itself. By almost personifying Europe, he states that because of its past, the old continent has all the reasons to feel tired, but also asserts that it is also dangerous not to discuss the social problems of immigration due to feeling enervated, to forbid the open discussion and debate on these problems despite assertive attempts to do so. This fuels extremism, as many will ask the following question: if all immigrants can fight for their cultural and ethnic interests, then why is it prohibited for the European peoples to do the same?

“And it is absolutely uncertain that Europeans will ignore racial problems in the long run. After all: if every group may discuss racial issues, why are the Europeans not allowed to do so? As it is impossible to forever blame the Europeans for their crimes in the past, it is also possible that the time will come when racial politics will not be just a prerogative of others.” (MURRAY 2018, 307–308.)

So quite surprisingly, race-centric politics, which many thought will never reappear, has returned. “Achieving ‘diversity’ and celebrating ‘differences’ have become the objectives, instead of making efforts to become blind to the colour of the skin and to implement integration; as a result in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Europeans have become obsessed with the concept of ‘race’. Instead of totally disappearing from public thinking, it has become more important.” (MURRAY 2018, 306–307.) The British author is committed to the fight against the spread of anti-Semitism, which is unfortunately due to the anti-Semitic acts of radical Muslim immigrants. In the author’s opinion liberties and peaceful, plural coexistence cannot prevail any longer in Europe, due to

Muslim ethnoreligious radicalism. It is also our position that we reach very perilous waters once the term race enters the discourse of European politics even if we are aware that it is used as a *symbolic marker*, to tell two groups socially apart, so *it can be construed in a discursive way*, and it is not about biological/genetic but *cultural* races. (compare HALL 1997)

## The Least Prerequisite to Aid and Integrate Admitted Immigrants Is Their Efficient National Security Check

The previously mentioned document<sup>11</sup> by the immigration committee of the Italian Bishops' Council encourages mutual acceptance, to experience mutual contacts by personal encounters, to overcome fears generated by the arrival of alien persons, with the aim of facilitating the formation of a pluralistic society.<sup>12</sup> This document starts off from the morality of the interpersonal sphere based on *alien-home residents visits*, and considers that as a central element. Fear is present on both sides, that is on the aliens' as well fear is generated by their situation, but it can be overcome under any condition resulting in all kinds of enrichments. However, it should also be considered that this letter is written by a pastor to the communities of the parishes, where Catholics encounter people looking for aid as part of their charity activities. In that interaction real *interpersonal encounters* do occur, for example the Pope said that every parish should adopt a family and it is not about integrating masses or administrative official policy.

The question is: can this form of behaviour be adapted to the level of dealing with undistinguished masses? Another question is whether the major cause of fear about Muslim masses arriving in Europe is due to the misunderstanding of the lessons of history – which is suggested by Franco Cardini – or is this just nationalistic xenophobia simply generated by the fear of other cultures? If people in need request help, we have to help

<sup>11</sup> Commissione Episcopale per le Migrazioni della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana: *Comunità accoglienti, uscire dalla paura, Lettera alle comunità cristiane a 25 anni dal documento "Ero forestiero e mi avete ospitato" (1993–2018)*.

<sup>12</sup> "La realtà del fenomeno, la sua complessità, le domande che suscita, chiedono alle nostre comunità di avviare "processi educativi" che vadano al di là dell'emergenza, verso l'edificazione di comunità accoglienti capaci di essere "segno" e "lievito" di una società plurale costruita sulla fraternità e sul rispetto dei diritti inalienabili di ogni persona, come ci ricorda papa Francesco nella *Evangelii gaudium (...)*" Commissione Episcopale per le Migrazioni della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana: *Comunità accoglienti, uscire dalla paura, Lettera alle comunità cristiane a 25 anni dal documento "Ero forestiero e mi avete ospitato" (1993–2018)*. 3; "È questo il passaggio più difficile. L'integrazione è un processo che non assimila, non omologa, ma riconosce e valorizza le differenze; che ha come obiettivo la formazione di società plurali in cui vi è riconoscimento dei diritti, in cui è permessa la partecipazione attiva di tutti alla vita economica, produttiva, sociale, culturale e politica, avviando processi di cittadinanza e non soltanto di mera ospitalità." Ibid. 5.



them if they do not want to harm those who help them. We can reasonably assume that if the border guards and the national security apparatus can efficiently find potential criminals among the migrants. However, in the absence of such checks, the defenceless citizens should not be exposed to such potential dangers. Within a country, it can be reasonably assumed that a citizen does not encounter a criminal as they have been arrested and imprisoned. However, there are masses of immigrants in the country who have been administratively expelled, yet they have not left the country. Others have provided fake ID data on purpose, several of them gave the first day of the year as their date of birth. Furthermore, if reliable sources allege that the number of terror attacks and acts of sexual violence has increased because of mass immigration, then the citizens of the country can reasonably feel threatened, and their fear is not the manifestation of prejudice but it is a piece of experience-based wisdom and precaution.

However, when citizens can interact with persons who really need assistance and clearly do not pose any danger for society the aversion coming from the feeling of otherness or distance must be overcome, so they receive the help they need. In this case, the other person has to be as any other human being who is like us and for whom we have the absolute responsibility to help because he is a fellow human being. (compare FRIVALDSZKY 2016, 70–74.)

That country which is in a position that makes it to be the most appropriate to admit a person who is fleeing because his life is endangered, has to provide assistance to refugee who is not a citizen of another state but a member of the universal human race, in which case it is a moral duty of every citizen, especially of Christians, to aid that fellow man and the neighbour whom they are the nearest ones who can help. However, it requires an efficient national security check of people, as the citizens are exposed to a higher risk than the personnel of immigration authorities. The national security service of the state which admits immigrants has to be able to guarantee that the life, security or moral integrity of the person who will aid the immigrant will not be endangered when they are providing help, especially so as these helpers are usually women or young girls. The question is whether the present situation is like this. If not, then it is particularly sad, as in the lack of security, charity work is not safe, so even those immigrants really requiring help will not get social charity support and aid from the third, non-profit, sector, which can only be provided by the members, that is volunteers, of the civil society and the families of the country. Moreover, in that case, social integration will not occur, despite that it was the prerequisite, theoretically, of hosting masses of immigrants. In case fear is unjustified from the point of national security and criminology, and this can be guaranteed by the authorities responsible, then the behaviour discussed in the document of the Italian Bishops' Conference is reasonable. In that case, *the mutual enrichment* can set off the parties towards a *new unity which is based on diversity*, which can

be exemplary as the role model of full integration. Evidently, the more suchlike good *practices* occur, the more successful is the integration. The tragedy which occurred at Lampedusa should serve as a historic memento for all generations that it is an obligation to aid refugees. However, the most important is to ensure that *no one is forced to leave their home* due to inhumane, adverse conditions, which can only be realized through international cooperation.

Finally, we have to note that one of the problems of the traditionalist Catholic spiritual circle, represented in our case by Stefano Fontana, is how they can connect the social teaching of the Church they identify with to the theoretical prerequisites of Pope Francis's positive affiliation to migrants in an organic way.

### **Is It Possible and Is It a Must to Measure Any Culture of Religious Morality by the Standards of Natural Law?**

The awareness of the several centuries-long cultural encounters and mutual gestures – as done by professor Cardini – is not enough in itself to disperse the above-mentioned fear. Even less so when violent acts of extreme fanatics who are not related to *true Islam* dominate the news. Unfortunately, this is one of the most remarkable and painfully perceivable aspects of mass Muslim immigration. Hundreds of people were killed or were injured in terror attacks committed by radical Muslims recently, and several women and girls have also been raped. These facts cannot be ignored when we want to understand the fear of Europeans and determine its justification. It is a false picture that most citizens are unaware, prejudiced or xenophobic while Western politicians and the *mainstream* media are illuminated, generous and hospitable. I think Murray's book provides several arguments to debunk this idea.

In my opinion, professor Cardini's books contain true historical facts and credibly illustrates the cultural values of Islam and its many cultural and other ties with Europe. However, contemporary Islam in Europe, due to the behaviour of a small, noisy minority, is unfortunately responsible for the unfavourable image that European citizens have about Islam. I do not think that Europeans are troubled by the building of the crèche which turned out to be a pseudo-problem, first of all, (CARDINI 2016, 202–203.) but they worry about their and their family members' security and safety.

However, everybody is obliged to care for their own family and someone may love his own family members more than those whom he does not know, and for whom he is not obliged to provide care. Conservative thinking emphasizes the epistemological validity and moral truth of the nation's collective awareness of political

decisions. Certainly, the collectively experienced truth also has pragmatic and even utilitarian components, but these elements – following a Thomistic natural law approach – cannot go against the standards derived from human nature. That which is esteemed to be useful and suitable for the people or the nation and that which is proven by customs can only be accepted within this framework.

In judging the latter, we are guided by the natural reason, focusing on the natural moral law, which reveals itself through the course of history. As Jacques Maritain pointed out, the ontological contents of the natural moral law are a given, but the recognition of the compulsory powers of its particular components is the result of a collective historical recognition that is a civilizational process. That is how the peoples of Europe recognised the equal dignity of people despite religious and “racial” differences, the equal dignity of man and woman, based on natural law, and that all mutilations are inhumane and are against human dignity, as well as the immorality of war.

The question is if all Muslim peoples are at a similar level and act accordingly. It is known that they do not regard non-Muslims equal to Muslims, women to men; in particular Muslim cultures the genital organ of women is mutilated, it is worth noting that Cardini is making efforts to narrow down the scope and normative basis of this practice, probably wishing to understate its significance. (CARDINI 2016, 200.) Furthermore, they wage the terrorist form of jihad which is the meanest *war*, as it is *fought* against defenceless civilians. So it seems that true arguments are mentioned by those who emphasize the need to judge the equality of cultures on the basis of their compliance with the rules of natural law. This is not just a question of civilizational development but also the problem of the predominance of basic human rights.

There are some practices in the Western civilization which are different and at the same time should be fully condemned as they are against the natural law, alleged marriage of homosexual couples, *legalization* of abortion and euthanasia, etc., still these do not authorize us to ignore the certain predominance of the valid contents of the natural law, which is the achievement of Europe recognized on the basis of the natural moral law: like the equal dignity of men and women, the prohibition of *racial* or religious discrimination, and the general condemnation of war at least on the level of words and international legal documents.

However, it is a different issue that the above mentioned cultural practices of Europe, and especially of Western Europe, which gravely violate the natural law, also discredit its moral position, so it lacks the moral credit to advocate rights deriving from human dignity against Muslim procedures which violate them. The question is what Western European countries have been willing or capable to do against the sexual mutilation of Muslim women.

Stefano Fontana pointed out quite correctly that the Western liberal society cannot be identified as a society described by the social teaching of the Church. (FONTANA 2018b) Moreover, it is also important to recognize this fundamental distinction because radical Islam attacks the West because it identifies it with Christianity. That libertarian and moral relativist Western approach which tends to nihilism and accepts the practices of abortion, euthanasia and propagates same sex marriages ought to meet the demands of the precepts of natural law, which are also advocated by the Catholic Church. The same is true for radical Islam which wishes to appear in Europe en masse, while ignoring the provisions of the above mentioned natural law.

Similarly, Stefano Fontana, when analysing the mass immigration into Europe, points out that certain peoples and religious cultures do not acknowledge the predominance of the natural moral law, which provides the foundation for the social teaching of the Catholic Church. (FONTANA 2018a)<sup>13</sup> Some basic human rights and institutions stipulated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which is a milestone in terms of the recognition of the natural law,<sup>14</sup> – the chairman of the committee wording its preamble was Maritain himself – are gravely violated by the European society which adopted legal practices that go against the natural law. On the other hand the Muslim countries, instead of this Declaration,<sup>15</sup> which several of them criticized in the past, adopted the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam*,<sup>16</sup> and consider the exclusive predominance of the Sharia law even in the field of human rights.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Il primo è il diritto naturale che, fino a prova contraria, è una delle fonti insostituibili della Dottrina sociale della Chiesa. E’ noto che non tutte le religioni rispettano il diritto naturale. Quelle che ammettono la poligamia o la superiorità antropologica di un gruppo su un altro oppure dell’uomo sulla donna lo fanno in dispregio del diritto naturale. [...] Senza parlare poi delle mutilazioni fisiche rituali, della prostituzione sacra o di altri atteggiamenti ancor più terra terra.”

<sup>14</sup> “The Church’s Magisterium has not failed to note the positive value of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948, which Pope John Paul II defined as ‘a true milestone on the path of humanity’s moral progress’”. The Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace: *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, section 152. <https://goo.gl/weouzM>

<sup>15</sup> “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a whole, was adopted by 48 votes, with 8 abstentions. The voting was as follows: In favour: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Iceland, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Siam (Thailand), Sweden, Syria, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela. Abstaining: Byelorussian SSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Ukrainian SSR, Union of South Africa, USSR, Yugoslavia.” *Yearbook of the United Nations 1948–1949*. 535. <https://goo.gl/dxgkq5>. Several Arabic countries and most African countries were not a member of the UN at the time of the vote.

<sup>16</sup> The *Organization of Islamic Conference* approved and proclaimed it in its order 217 A (III) of 5 August 1990.

<sup>17</sup> In the preamble of the declaration, this statement is also included: “In contribution to the efforts of mankind to assert human rights, to protect man from exploitation and persecution, and to affirm his freedom and right to a dignified life in accordance with the Islamic Shari’ah.” *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam*, Aug. 5, 1990, U.N. GAOR, World Conf. on Hum. Rts., 4<sup>th</sup> Sess., Agenda Item 5, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.157/PC/62/Add.18 (1993). <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instreet/cairodeclaration.html>

But the situation is that Muslims who carry out terrorist attacks deny everything that is sacred in religion, and kill innocent people in the name of God. This is why it is extremely important that Pope Francis<sup>18</sup> and the leaders of the moderate Muslim majority unanimously condemn those; we also have to mention the contents of a useful book by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks entitled *Not in God's Name – Confronting Religious Violence*, published in 2015.

### **Only Concrete Community Experiences, and Not the Historic Largescale Generalities or False Example-parallelism, Can Teach the Lesson: The Example of the Cumans' Integration in Hungary**

Unlike Franco Cardini, we have to say that the casual *fundamentalism*, bias, the civilizational superiority consciousness of Western thinking cannot be judged as being the same as the religious fanaticism resulting in Muslim terrorism. (CARDINI 2015, 141–142.)<sup>19</sup> This is just like the fact that, despite the horrific abuses which took place there, Guantanamo cannot be compared to Auschwitz, (CARDINI 2015, 73.)<sup>20</sup> not even so to the level of parallelism. As it is the basic requirement of political wisdom to be able to distinguish what is different in reality, that is in its features (in essence) and extent, and not to merge them as one, as it does not support the adequate understanding of the facts and correct political actions. Political issues are also often morally complicated, like the management of mass Muslim immigration. This is why collective reflection and learning from our mistakes are important. The lesson is not taught by the civilizational and cultural history of the past, but it should contain the consequences drawn from the incorrect German management of mass Muslim migration, as well as the correct and open assessment of European multiculturalism. It is worth being realistic: the unchecked mass Muslim immigration does not result in the mutually enriching encounter of respected religions but in everyday terrorist attacks, the isolating *no-go* zones, which are the hotbeds of violent crimes.

<sup>18</sup> “Lo ribadisco con forza: «Nessuna religione è terrorista». La violenza è una profanazione del nome di Dio. Non stanchiamoci mai di ripeterlo: «Mai il nome di Dio può giustificare la violenza. Solo la pace è santa. Solo la pace è santa, non la guerra!».” *La nonviolenza: stile di una politica per la pace. Messaggio del Santo Padre Francesco per la celebrazione della Giornata Mondiale della Pace*. 01.01.2017.

<sup>19</sup> “Esiste d'altronde, com'è noto, anche un fondamentalismo occidentalistico: figlio di una caratteristica intolleranza ma che al contrario è profondamente, deterministicamente convinta che il mondo delle democrazie liberali e del liberismo economico sia il migliore dei mondi possibili e l'unico, finale e necessario traguardo possibile di qualunque umana cultura.”

<sup>20</sup> “Guantanamo, a parte la differenza d'intensità, di estensione e di aspetti tecnici dei due fenomeni, non è diversa da Auschwitz.”

A several-centuries-old nation, like Hungary, which has always been threatened in its very existence, had to learn through bitter historical experiences those intuitive abilities, whether it is possible to integrate those wishing to enter the country. In the formation of this ability, experience based on past interactions, and not on prejudice, played a decisive role. We could mention the Cumans, for example, who earlier attacked the Hungarian Kingdom,<sup>21</sup> and whose assimilation was not without problems in the beginning. Yet the mediaeval kings of Hungary, based on national security and religious considerations, settled them down and gave them an important role in the defence of the country. Contrast this case with the fact that Hungary, due to known justifications, was fighting the Turks and defending Christendom for centuries.

<sup>21</sup> “[...] I think both Cuman attacks on the Hungarian Kingdom occurred in the summer of 1091. The first military attack can be taken as an individual raid by the Cumans probably returning from the battle of Lebnion, while the second one was the revenge of the Cumans. I think that the Byzantine and the Russ *instigation* as the cause of the attack was ungrounded as neither Alexios I nor the ruler of Terebovlia had a reason to send the nomads against the Hungarian Kingdom. As a consequence, both attacks on the Hungarian Kingdom can be considered an adventurous campaign of the Cumans.” (Kovács 2012, 251.) Initially, Hungarians had indirect relations with the Cumans, they learnt their significance, recognized their potential role which could be favourable for the Hungarian Kingdom: “So, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, between the Cumans and the Hungarian Kingdom there *were only indirect relations*, that is both powers were involved in the hostilities of Russ rulers against each other. About the Cumans we can surely state that in the studied period they did not fight alone but as a contingent of military units from the Russ. Even if they did not fight each other, based on data from sources, *the Hungarian Kingdom obviously was aware of their significance.*” (Text in italics by me: F. J.) (Kovács 2012, 260.) “The rule of Andrew II was determined by his efforts to conquer Halics. The number of his campaigns in this directions proves it. I think that it is obvious from the above that the Cumans played a significant part in nullifying his efforts. Later, it was this – i.e. he could not successfully fight his enemies if they were supported by the Cumans – that Béla IV realized in 1245 when his son-in-law Rostyislav Mihajlovič, supported by Hungarians, was defeated by the army of Danyil in which Cumans also fought. So, the Hungarian King probably reconsidered his policy after the defeat in 1245, and it is possible that he decided to invite a group of the Cumans following that. Of course, news about the return of the Mongols also played a part in his decision.” (Kovács 2012, 263–264.) The Cumans, who lived in a large area, got in contact with the religions of their settled neighbours several times through their history. So, probably there were Christians and Muslims among them. The latter is proven by the Christian names of Cumans in the old Russian annals. However, not a great number of Cumans followed any world religion until the Mongol conquest. That was partly due to the lack of missionaries until the 13<sup>th</sup> century among the nomads living in the South Russian steppe. It was the territory of a Christian country where Cumans settled in big numbers, as a natural part of assimilation they converted to Christianity as they did in the Georgian Kingdom or the Byzantine empire. A significant change was that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with support from the Hungarian Kingdom, members of the Dominican order carried out missions in the southern Russian steppe of the Cumans. *The early 13<sup>th</sup> century is one of the most intensive expansion periods of the medieval history of Western Christianity. The Hungarian Kingdom got involved in those decades – due to its political interests and the contemporary Christian missionary ideas – in the fight against heresy and pagans.* The Cumans’ support in this period was not only needed by the rulers of Russ who were preventing the Hungarians from conquering Halics, but the II Bulgarian Kingdom also wanted to influence its neighbouring nomads in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as it was with their support that the Kingdom was established. The Cuman attacks on Hungarian territory may have sometimes been backed by Bulgarian interests. At the same time, *spreading Christianity was also another objective of the Hungarian Kings.* Evidence for this is that in this period the Hungarian Kings established 4 new bishoprics, including the so-called Cuman bishopric. It was also at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century that, urged by the Pope, the first and only Crusade led by a Hungarian King was launched. Both the Church and the Royal power hoped to expand their rule and authority with these new institutions.” (Text in italics by me: F. J.) (Kovács 2012, 264–265.)



Based on reasonable political and religious considerations, the Cumans were allowed to settle down in Hungary by way of applying a functioning and peaceful defence and integrational practice,<sup>22</sup> that suited the welfare of the inhabitants of the realm and served the interests of the Cumans alike.

While certain groups of the Cumans were willing and able to be integrated into the Hungarian society, although there were some initial difficulties and resistance, the violent storm of the Turks was destructive, so Hungary could not afford to be conquered by the Turks and it resisted as long as it could, while sometimes it allied with them whenever that was required by its interests of survival or dominance.

In my opinion, Hungarians must also learn this history lesson for this illustrates how the proper political behaviour must be governed by issues like homeland defence, integration and foreign conquest and not by the question how to relate towards Islamic religion. The historical lesson can only be *a more concrete collective historical experience*, which can be the norm as an example of the past, (BURKE 1990, 145.) for generalization. Such statements, which are otherwise correct, e.g. the European culture and Islam have had fruitful relations for centuries, do not give us any guidance whether a multi-cultural society in Europe, created by mass immigration can operate or not. These consequences can only be drawn from practical experiences.

## Our Commitment Is to Pass Down a Viable Society to Our Grandchildren

Any transfer of a population into another nation can only be sensible as long as it promises integration. What is avoidable by all means is the *formation of an unviable society* because it serves the real interests of neither the host nation, nor the hosted nation, so it goes against *public good*. Murray, based on the ideas of Edmund Burke, who is considered to be the first great conservative thinker warns that we are responsible for the quality of our society for the sake of our children and grandchildren with whom we are tied together with an invisible bond, (BURKE 1990, 190.) so we cannot simply think and argue in everyday terms regarding the decisions on mass Muslims immigration:

<sup>22</sup> “[...] after Andrew II expelled the members of the Teutonic Order from the country using military force in 1225, he made efforts *to peacefully prevent the attacks by neighbouring nomads*. He considered that mission was the force which could make the nomadic Cumans quit their former lifestyle and *force them to settle down*, which was an indispensable condition of the new faith. For this task, the begging religious orders (Franciscans and Dominicans) established against paganism and heresy, proved to be the right tool.” (Text in italics by me: F. J.) (Kovács 2012, 266–267.)



“The influx of the great quantity of cheap manpower, more diverse dishes and the peace of conscience of a generation, may seem promising, nobody has the right to fully change a society. The society always transmits that which it considers to be good. Even if we want to improve the decisions of the former generation, it does not mean that we may pass down to our descendants a society which is fragmented, chaotic and unrecognizable.” (MURRAY 2018, 289.)

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## THE FRAMEWORK OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE EAST AND IN THE WEST

### Introduction

The unique character of religious freedom is that compared to other human rights it has more elements and those elements have different qualities. (FÖLDESI 1994) But what makes religious freedom so unique among human rights? Regarding state-recognized religions, religious freedom was regarded as sacrosanct (*sacrosanctus*) as early as in the Roman law, since the right to choose (1) religious conviction and separation from it has always been considered inalienable in Europe. Besides the freedom of the religious thought,<sup>2</sup> another component is free religious practice (2): the freedom to express or to withhold religious conviction, by joining a church or separating from it, as well as participation in that church's liturgy, or visiting its holy sites.<sup>3</sup> (UJHÁZI 2011) In order that Churches should have a preaching, educational and congregational life and charity activities free of influence, autonomy (3) is required. Another right is choosing religious education for children (4). No state authority may apply positive or negative discrimination (5) to churches or the believers of churches, based on their denomination. (FÖLDESI 1994)

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<sup>1</sup> National University of Public Service

<sup>2</sup> The right to freely choose religious belief is evident with a European view. In fact, it is far from reality, as in several non-European states there are serious (legal) consequences of conversion, mission and especially apostasy. (USCIRF 2017)

<sup>3</sup> The holy sites become holy as a result of consecration or blessing in line with liturgical texts, by which the church authority excepts holy sites – buildings, areas, temples, chapels related to the lives of Saints – from everyday use. Holy sites are primary targets of religious intolerance, which makes their protection the interest of the entire society. (UJHÁZI 2008, 26–46.)

## The Framework of Religious Freedom in Western Europe

The Western European states – given their democratic principles – expansively provide basic rights to their citizens, and those who stay there legally. Conscientious and religious freedom have extensive safeguards, nevertheless the abuse of those rights requires resolute action.

### *France*

In France the constitution guarantees the basic right of its citizens to choose, change or practise their religion. The President and several government officials condemned the anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and anti-Christian incidents in the country and the government deployed a seven thousand-strong security force to the most threatened parts of the country, including sites of worship. The French Government terminated the state of emergency on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2015, replacing it with amendment set of regulations which allowed the prefects to close sites of worship for up to 6 months if they find that it supports violence, hatred, discrimination or terrorism. It is forbidden in France to wear a veil, the niqab, which covers the entire face or to publicly wear religious symbols in educational institutions. (BOEHME 2018)

### *Germany*

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany prohibits religiously-based discrimination, guarantees the freedom of religion and conscience, as well as all requirements of free religious practice.<sup>4</sup> Since the First World War, religious freedom has been strongly protected in Germany. (How Germany ticks Deutschland 2018) The German state is committed at constitutional level to treating religions and ideologies in a neutral way, not being identified with the support of denomination. But this neutrality does not mean that the state is hostile or indifferent to religions, since there is full political consensus about the fact that religions contribute to the cohesion of the German society. Thus the state employs the policy of *constructive neutrality* towards religions and ideologies. It means that the state and religious communities cooperate in several fields, for example

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<sup>4</sup> Based on Article 4 of the Basic Law.

the German state finances hospitals and social institutions which are run by religious communities. The state has been trying for years to govern Islam according to the existing legislation, which is difficult as Muslim communities are organized in a different way than Christian ones (e.g. believers are not registered). (How Germany ticks Deutschland 2018)

### *Italy*

The constitution of Italy guarantees the citizens' equality under the law, regardless of their religion.<sup>5</sup> Every citizen may freely confess their faith, follow religious rituals individually or in a community, unless it violates public morals.<sup>6</sup> The constitution guarantees the right for every religious community to establish and operate their institutions according to their own rules, unless they violate state law by doing so.<sup>7</sup> The state may not impose restrictions or punitive taxes against communities because of their religious identity or objectives.<sup>8</sup> The constitution of Italy declares that the state and the Catholic Church are unrelated.<sup>9</sup> Blasphemy is still a crime in Italy, but authorities do not conduct many procedures in this regard. The use of Catholic symbolism – especially that of crosses – has been questioned by religious minorities at courts and schools, as it violates, in their opinion, the principle of religious freedom declared in the constitution. (BBC News 2009) Crosses and Catholic symbols are not considered religious symbols but cultural ones, according to the ruling of the Supreme Court of Italy, so they can be seen in public places. In the Republic of Italy religious communities may request registration by the state, which is a prerequisite for tax exemption, and they may also sign cooperation agreements with the state. For example, in February 2017 the Minister of the Interior of Italy signed the latest agreement of this kind with the largest Muslim organization, in order to prevent radicalization and to fund the training of Imams who will handle finances transparently and preach in Italian. (BOEHME 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Article 8, Italian Constitution.

<sup>6</sup> Article 19, Italian Constitution.

<sup>7</sup> Article 3, Italian Constitution.

<sup>8</sup> Article 20, Italian Constitution.

<sup>9</sup> Article 119, Italian Constitution.

*Great Britain*

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland do not have a state religion. As Supreme Governor of the Church of England, the Monarch is always the head of the Church and has to take an oath in its defence. The Church of Wales and the Church of Scotland have been independent of the state since 1920 and 1921, respectively. (The official website of The British Monarchy 2010) In England and Wales the General Register Office (General Register Office 2018) registers denominations, which is not compulsory, but offers several benefits (e.g. provision of sites of worship free of charge). In public education, law requires the religious education of children between ages three and seventeen. Parents, for its full duration, and children, above the age of thirteen, may request exemption from religious education. The lessons are usually taught by government employees, not clergymen. In non-church schools Christian values are taught, but the activity is not aimed at conversion, other main religions of the state have to be taught, as well and students may not be obliged to attend services. (BOEHME 2018) In defence of Christianity blasphemy was considered a serious crime until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United Kingdom, and the law on its punishment was only repealed in 2008. (IHS 2008) In the interest of the Muslim minority there are 30 Sharia councils operating alongside with British courts, deciding in religious matters like religious divorce, which is not recognized by the state (it has no legal effect). Parties may only turn to Sharia councils on a voluntary basis. The councils do not have the legal status as legal courts and their scope consists of arbitration and mediation only. (BOEHME 2018)

## **The Framework of Religious Freedom in the Middle East**

The legal status of Christians in the Middle East, especially their right to religious freedom, has been subject to changes on a wide spectrum for the last two thousand years. It has played several separable roles and has gone through several phases ranging from prohibition to the most serious sanctions, as a state religion with manifold rights, to identity pillars of minorities. The present phase Christian religious practice in the Middle East started with the Iranian revolution (1979), and it has become acceptable with the Arab Spring (2011). With the advance of Islam in Iran, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria and Bahrain, the secular governments have been toppled and Christians have been pushed to the shadows which includes the narrowing on their rights. This process has had an effect on the Christians of those Middle East countries, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, Jordan, Mauritania, Sudan, where governments were able to preserve their rule due to extensive reforms.



## Iran

The Iranian constitution of 1979, amended several times, defines the country as an Islamic Republic. The state religion is Shia Islam. Under the constitution every law and regulation has to be based upon *Islamic criteria* and the official interpretation of sharia. Under the constitution the citizens have legal, political, economic and other rights *in line with the criteria of Islam*.<sup>10</sup> The criminal code stipulates death penalty for non-Muslims, if they attempt to convert Muslims, as well as in cases of blasphemy and for insulting of the Prophet. Iranian courts consistently use these punishments (U.S. Daily News 2018) and observe the prohibition on missionary activities. (USCIRF 2017) The law prohibits Muslim citizens to convert to another religion or to become an apostate. Under the constitution only Christians, (the government only recognizes Armenian and Assyrian Christian communities, which existed in Iran before the arrival of Islam), Zoroastrians,<sup>11</sup> and Jews are recognized as legal religious minorities who have the right to worship and to form a religious community *within the boundaries of the law*,<sup>12</sup> and they are entitled to representation in the Iranian Parliament. Every citizen, who is not a member of the three accepted religious minorities or cannot prove that their family was Christian before 1979, is treated as Muslim by law. The denial of belonging to a religious community or participating in a congregation which operates without registration may have serious legal consequences. (BOEHME 2018)

## Iraq

The state religion of Iraq – under the constitution of 2005 – is Islam.<sup>13</sup> Legislation cannot go against the democratic principles, basic rights and Islam, as it is specified in the constitution. The constitution defends the Muslim faith of the Iraqi people, and it also guarantees religious freedom for Christians, Yazidis<sup>14</sup> and Zoroastrians,<sup>15</sup> but it does not protect the followers of other religions and atheists. The state recognises a number of religions, like the Assyrian Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, Roman Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Evangelical, Protestant Assyrian, Adventist, Coptic Orthodox Churches

<sup>10</sup> Based on Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution.

<sup>11</sup> Monotheistic religion, mixing tenets of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

<sup>12</sup> Based on Article 64 of the Iranian Constitution.

<sup>13</sup> Paragraph (1) Article 2 Iraqi Constitution.

<sup>14</sup> Religious minority with Kurdish ethnic identity.

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph (2) Article 2 Iraqi Constitution.

etc., makes it possible for them to have legal counsels, to buy or transfer real estate, to set up courts which decide in marriage or inheritance related legal cases. The Iraqi penal code punishes violations of the religious freedom of religious minorities, the distraction of their services, vandalism against their religious symbols or buildings, printing or distributing materials which purposefully misinterpret the tenets of a minority religion.<sup>16</sup> The Iraqi regulations allow a simple procedure for non-Muslims to convert to Islam. However, they prohibit Muslim conversion to another religion. The Iraq identity cards contain the religious identity of the card holder. (BOEHME 2018)

### *Syria*

The Syrian constitution declares that the state respects all religions and guarantees the free practice of religions, unless it disturbs public order. The constitution also declares, that “the status of religious communities is protected and has to be observed”, and “the citizens are equal in terms of rights and obligations, regardless of their gender, origin, language, religion and creed”. Under the constitution, Islamic law is the most important source of law. It is illegal to join the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafi<sup>17</sup> organizations. In those cases, the law threatens imprisonment or even death penalty. It is illegal for Muslims to convert to another religion. All religious groups have to be registered. Recognized religious groups and their officials – including the state-recognized Muslim, Jewish and Christian groups – are subject to services free of charge and exemptions. The legal framework described above exclusively exists in government-controlled areas, where violations are also frequent. In other areas, where the local *authorities* apply non-official *procedures*, the freedom of religion varies widely. A great number of worship sites, including sixty-three churches and several mosques, have been destroyed during the civil war. (BOEHME 2018)

<sup>16</sup> Paragraph (1)–(4) 372. § of the Iraqi penal code.

<sup>17</sup> It is a legal interpretation problem which organization is Salafi.

## *Pakistan*

The Pakistani constitution defines Islam as a state religion and declares that all regulations of the country have to be in harmony with Islam. However, every citizen has the right to confess, to practice and to spread<sup>18</sup> their religion within the existing legal and moral framework, “with reasonable restrictions for the glory of Islam”.<sup>19</sup> The constitution guarantees the right of self-governance for religious communities and permits voluntary contributions for the upkeep of religious institutions. Article 15 of the Pakistani penal code rules on religious crimes and threatens ten years in prison for the insult of religious feelings.<sup>20</sup> Pakistani courts often mete out life imprisonments, or even death penalties; in 2017, 17 persons received such sentences for *insulting Prophet Muhammad*. Members of religious minorities often voice their concerns that the Pakistani Government does not defend their rights, that authorities do not intervene when violent acts are being committed against religious minorities and the police often does not arrest the perpetrators of such abuses, and that in official procedures negative discrimination is used against those who belong to religious minorities. (BOEHME 2018)

## Summary and Proposals

After the First World War, Western European democratic states, based on the rule of law, have extensively guaranteed religious and conscientious freedom and the registration of churches. But the tragic events of the last half decade have made it clear that the loosened conditions of religious freedom, which were formed step by step in the last seven decades enable abuses of this basic law. For example, some groups misuse state support funds for religious communities, others use worship sites to incite hatred, violence and discrimination, and organizations can be registered as churches, even if they are not religious in nature. Western Europe is currently threatened by several jihadist groups and individual criminals with a religious background, which have prompted the states involved to eliminate the abuse of religious freedom in order to repel religious radicalism. (Europol 2017)

The religious communities have not fully been secularized in the Middle Eastern countries. These communities – especially the Muslim ones – have policy-making powers while they do not operate in an institutionalized way. In countries where legislation is based upon Sharia, religious freedom is usually declared at

<sup>18</sup> a) Paragraph 20. § of the Pakistani Constitution.

<sup>19</sup> 19. § of the Pakistani Constitution.

<sup>20</sup> 295/A. § Pakistani penal code.

constitutional level, yet the exceptional status of Islam is preserved. In real-life law enforcement, the role of Islam is quite dominant. This is due to the fact, that Sharia law combines legal and religious components which, according to the Islamic theology, is the one and only, eternal and right way defined by God, meaning, that it cannot be modified like European legal interpretations, it can only be interpreted in more lenient or strict terms. The religious freedom and acceptance of Islamic law, thus its tolerance towards Christians, will probably remain the most sensitive and controversial field of individual liberties. (BOEHME 2018)

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## FAILED STATES AND THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIAN MINORITIES: DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPY<sup>2</sup>

“On that day a small country disappeared from the map. I was trying to imagine what the people might be thinking in that foreign county, who woke at dawn and learned that their life, lifestyle, and everything they trusted, they pledged allegiance to is now redundant, and something completely new is about to start [...]”

(MÁRAI 2016)

### The Definition of Failed States

It is an essential criterium for modern states that, besides observing and guaranteeing restrictions on the exercise of their power with democratic means, to be adequately centralized and strong. According to Francis Fukuyama, it is a hard, but not impossible *mission* to establish efficient political institutions and governments which are strong, compliant and at the same time accountable in the political sense. As for him, the fundamental reason why poor countries are poor is that they do not have efficient institutions. In his opinion, the quality of liberty can only be considered better when the state and society possess strong positions, so the key to success is to have a relative power balance between the integrated state and the well-organized society, capable of efficiently defending its interests. (FUKUYAMA 2011, 29, 258, 552.) But this set of requirements is difficult to achieve by a number of states nowadays. The changes happening to states after the devastation of the state have long been

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<sup>2</sup> Due to limitations in length, the author just outlined the problems of failed states and state-building. For more details see PONGRÁCZ 2015, 23–37.

analysed by the scholars of the theory of the state, yet specific research on failed states only started in the early 1990s. (RATNER–HELMAN 1992–1993, 3–20.)

The term of weak, unserviceable state has been used since then to describe the phenomenon, when the state structure disintegrates, and the political and legal order becomes unstable. In this situation, the state is incapable of exercising its most important authority: the territorial power, as it cannot control its entire territory, or a part of it, (ROTBERG 2002, 83–96.) thus it cannot enforce – at least not fully – its laws in these areas. This situation may lead to the formation of non-desirable entities, which have *escaped from* state control, like terrorist organizations, organized crime groups, warlords, clans or drug cartels. Using the striking definition of William Reno, the once a sovereign state is turned into a *shadow state*, then, after all, it will be nothing more than one of the several social powers openly warring to control state resources. (DANNREUTHER 2016, 102.)

The government of a failed state often proves to be incapable of maintaining the loyalty of its citizens, and as a result it lacks the necessary potential to maintain public order and security, as well as the ability to produce essential public utilities and services for the citizens. (RADA 2009, 45.)

Thus, prolonged and escalating conflicts, weak institutions, the absence of political debate, loss of control over its territory, the divisions and polarization of the society, deteriorating economic indicators, and the intensification of criminal activity are the main characteristics of a failed state. Even in case of such countries, it is not necessary that they remain a failed state forever since with efficient external support and intervention they can regain their influence and powers. If the expected positive change does not happen, the state may collapse forever. A *collapsed state* does not have a government which is capable of controlling its territory; the provision of political essentials and the maintenance of public services fail completely, there is no justice, and the defence of the population is not guaranteed. For those countries, the summary judgement is usually that they only exist in the geographical sense. In case of disintegrated states, the attributes of statehood are completely missing: the state has lost all or some parts of its law enforcement monopoly, which may have several consequences. One possible outcome is the birth of a *criminal state* like Somalia, but it is also possible that unclarified territorial entities or new states are established on the former territory of a former state like in case of South Sudan. (ERDMAN 2003, 267–292; GETTLEMAN 2009, 61–69.)

## Who Fell in the Long Fight?

Let us go through the states, which deserve the *failed* adjective. In the literature, *Somalia* is unanimously regarded as a typical failed state. In a study, published in 2010, in addition to Somalia, Doornbos listed Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia, El Salvador, Sudan, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti and Tajikistan as states exposed to the possibility of collapse. (DOORNBOS 2010, 3.)

Rotberg's list of the failed states of this decade is smaller than Doornbos's, since in addition to Afghanistan only a few African countries Angola, Burundi, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan were so much dysfunctional as to become failed states. (ROTBERG 2003, 10.) Studying the events of the last one and a half decade, we can see that factors which may turn a state into a *failed state* have emerged in regions outside Africa, as well. Right after the invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, the debate started whether Iraq was a failed state or not. (WAGNER 2009, 102–123.) After the civil war came to an end, the central government faced a new challenge: due to the permanent deterioration of the security situation, it had lost control over one-third of the country by 2014, and these areas fell under the control of Islamic State (IS) fighters. There was also some heated debate over the weakening of the central Syrian government for the benefit of ISIS in the Northeastern part of the country, and whether it was a symptom of failure, as the Assad regime was unable to defend the territory of the entire country. (DORNFELD 2014, 21–23.)

The string of events, which became known as the *Arab Spring* put several countries of the region with stable, albeit authoritarian governments into a position where they had to face the possibility of a civil war or even an actual one. According to Rostoványi's summary evaluation, the Arab Spring was not followed by the *Arab Summer* but by the *Islamist Winter*, and in several states, Yemen, Libya, Syria, the possibility of a bloody civil war or becoming a *failed state* loomed large. (ROSTOVÁNYI 2012, 44–71.)

The only hope for optimism is that the Islamic State is slowly, but perhaps surely, being defeated in the Middle East after a series of long and complex military operations against the *Caliphate* which was proclaimed in 2014 in the great mosque of Mosul. The most important result of these military campaigns is that the IS has shrunk in size, lost several of its leaders and soldiers. In 2017 ISIS had to surrender the city of Mosul which was a symbolic success both in a military and psychological sense. ISIS-controlled territories in Syria also shrank to *few, tiny enclaves* by 2017 after the capture of Raqqa, the capital of the *Caliphate*, by Kurdish and American forces. While the Kurdish and American alliance were fighting against ISIS in Western Syria the Syrians and Russians were able to clean the Islamists out of the central regions of the country. The *song* was far from over; because in 2017 hundreds of ISIS fighters left Syria either to go to Libya and Afghanistan to



establish new bases, or a great number of them were trying to return to Europe or Central Asia to fan the fire of Islamic fundamentalism there. (MARSHALL 2018, 190.)

Concerning the list of failed states, a document, ranking the countries based on the parameters of being a failed state, is published annually: this is the so-called Fragile (earlier: Failed) States Index. This list, published by The Fund for Peace foundation based in Washington, puts the civil war-stricken South Sudan in the first place in 2018 which country, not for the first time, overtook Somalia which was number one for years to win this dubious honour in 2018; the runner-up is Somalia, while Yemen came in third. Compared to earlier years, the potential for operations has considerably deteriorated in Syria (4<sup>th</sup> place) as well. Using a Formula 1 metaphor, Afghanistan with its 9<sup>th</sup> place was able to win 2 points as they finished within the *Scorers' zone*, but it is also notable that Iraq (11<sup>th</sup> place) and Nigeria (14<sup>th</sup> place), both infamous for the persecution of its Christian population, ranked high on the list containing 178 countries. (MESSNER 2018, 6–7.)

## Connections Between the Persecution of Christians and Failed Statehood

By definition, persecution of Christians means open or hidden attacks on Christian individuals or communities due to their religious beliefs; these may include abuse, harassment, oppression in the physical, moral and administrative sense, as well as risking one's life for one's faith – including the arbitrary killing of individuals. (GYÓRFI 2015, 34–35.) The persecution of Christians has deep historical roots since it is as old as Christianity itself; one of its most intensive periods of persecution of Christians happened in the Roman Empire between the 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. In this period from the rule of Emperor Nero (64 AD) to the reign of Diocletian (303 AD), there were ten periods of active persecution. (SOMOGYI 1882, 252.)

Sadly, the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has also become an era when Christians have to suffer for their faith. Although no exact data is available on the number of Christians killed for their faith, we can probably say that this number reaches thousands a year on average, based on exaggerated and cautious estimates. (SZALAI 2012, 15.) Based on the 2015 report of the US-based *Pew Research Center* Christians have to suffer persecution, discrimination or other negative distinction for their faith by state or non-state actors in 102 out of the world's 198 countries. (HORVÁTH–SÁNTHA 2016, 27.) The *Open Doors* organization, which regularly monitors countries on the severity of the persecution of Christians, according to their 2015 *World Watch List*, we can safely state that 35 out of the 50 countries where Christians have to suffer the most are Muslim-majority ones. The 2015 ranking of the organization showed that in all countries ranked among the top 11, Christian

persecution is extremely severe. Number one North Korea is followed only by Muslim or Muslim majority states in the following order: Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, Pakistan, Eritrea, Nigeria and the Maldives. (GYÖRFI 2015, 47–53.)

Among those listed 2<sup>nd</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> Nigeria is the only state which has a Christian majority, however, the terror organization Boko Haram still persecutes the Christian population in an unprecedented way. It can also be seen that many top-ranking countries (Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan) show some symptoms of failed statehood. The situation has not improved significantly ever since: number one North Korea was followed by Afghanistan and Somalia, then came Sudan, Pakistan, Eritrea, Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Iran. This time Nigeria and Syria *qualified* 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> respectively. (Open Doors 2018) In the last couple of years, there was at least a minimal improvement for persecuted Christians.

The intensification of Christian persecution was assisted by the events of the *Arab Spring* because many Islamist groups, which had been banned by the previous authoritarian governments, now had a chance to break out of this quarantine, or even to control the government in some countries. So some individuals who were involved in terrorist attacks earlier, or who had strong ties to terrorist organisations after the Arab Spring, were suddenly occupying high leadership positions and some of them even became government officials in countries like Egypt and Tunisia. This, almost predictably led to the persecution of Christians, which forced thousands of people to flee. (BESENYŐ 2011, 51–75.) The number of people fleeing the Arab world has grown to tens or hundreds of thousands, depending on wars and riots, while the number of Arab and Syrian Christians have also significantly decreased recently. (SZALAI 2012, 15.)

In several countries, the Arab Spring was followed by an endless stream of riots and civil wars instead of the democratic transformation that many people have desired. The involvement of Western countries in the Middle East has also contributed to the fact that we can find failed states outside Africa. To summarise the problems, Marshall explains that “in the complicated fight within Arabic societies, religious denominations, recognized moral values, tribal bonds and weapons play a more decisive role than the Western ideas of equality, freedom of speech, and general right to vote. Prejudice and hatred rule the Arabic countries, of which the layman of the West knows little, thus will not believe in their existence even if they are obviously visible. We are more or less aware of our own prejudice, but we often watch the people from the Middle East world blind and deaf. The demonstration of hatred toward others in the Arabic world is so prevalent, that it hardly draws any attention, and it only generates responses from the liberal few, educated in the West, who sometimes get the floor in the mass media”. (MARSHALL 2018, 210–211.)

Most of the time, the Christians are in the crosshairs of *everyday hatred*. Due to lack of space, the motivations behind Christian persecution cannot be discussed in more detail. According to Szalai, several factors may cause the persecution of Christians: local ethnic tension (Northern Nigeria), economic conflicts (South Sudan), global policy developments (Iraq, Syria) or general religious oversensitivity. Another possible trigger of anti-Christianity among Muslims is the conflict between the *Islamic world* and the *Western world*, or with an ethnic, economic, or political community at the local level if the members are Christian. Besides, it must also be mentioned that certain texts from the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet can be used to fanaticise people against local Christians. (SZALAI 2012, 22, 25.)

## What to Do?

Asking the question: what means do we have at our disposal to protect Christian minorities – is truly justified. We can condemn the persecution of Christians as a general principle; we can pass pathetically worded resolutions in the European Parliament, on our National Assemblies and we may issue similar government orders,<sup>3</sup> which are necessary but not satisfactory elements in solving the challenge. If we use Carl Schmitt's ideas on war (SCHMITT 2002, 34–35.) to describe the present, we can say that a community may solemnly condemn the persecution of Christians, but doing so does not prevent this phenomenon, and the most such moves do not make it illegal.

The way forward will probably be more promising if we can provide tangible and intangible assistance in order to rebuild the failed states. A prerequisite of state building includes filling the *security vacuum*, looking after basic human needs, ending the war, establishing public order and security, securing safe living conditions and food supply, building housing free from external impacts. Other basic needs include the reconstruction of the damaged physical infrastructure, public roads, bridges, housing estates, hospitals and public utilities within the failed state, and remove the remnants of war. (RADA 2009, 53–56.)

Only then can we start to focus on creating democratic institutions and pay attention to other important areas like the appropriate utilization of natural resources, in harmony with sustainable development, the improvement of education and training, and innovation and research and development related activities. However,

<sup>3</sup> The EU Parliament's statement of 12 March 2015 on the Annual report to the High commissioner of the EU for foreign and security policy [2014/2219 (INI)]; 1513/2016. (IX. 22.) Gov. Order; 1829/2016. (XII. 23.) Gov. Order; 36/2016. (XII. 19.) National Assembly Order.

when we plan the above-mentioned measures we must always be aware of the traditions of the country and the needs of the local society since we can only accept real results if we select a custom-made solution for each and every country. Huntington's warning must also be taken into account. It says that Western leaders should not make efforts to transform other societies to look like those in the West but to preserve, protect and revitalize the unique values of Western civilization. (HUNTINGTON 2015, 538.) However, Kissinger's claim must not be forgotten either: "In the epoch of the proliferation of suicide terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, the religious confrontations spanning across entire regions must be considered a hazard, threatening global stability, the defences against it requires cooperation by every reliable superpower, at least based on the acceptable definition of global order. If that order cannot be established, large regions may fall prey to anarchy and extremism, with an unstoppable spill-over effect to other regions." (KISSINGER 2015, 154.) The task ahead is clear: in the interest of our Christian brethren the war fought against them must be transformed into peace by remembering it. In order to do so, it is time we arranged our common tasks, that is our duty, and not a small one, as that. (JÓZSEF 1963, 580.)

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## BLASPHEMY AND RELIGIOUS ABUSE IN THE HUNGARIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

### Introduction

Prejudicial expressions aimed at religions, religious feelings, or the believers themselves are basically as old as religions. In the early days of religious expansion, legal restrictions on such opinions and their persecution with serious punishments were generally accepted. With the expansion of fundamental rights, which include the freedom of expression, debates have intensified on how to resolve a legal problem, which exists due to a clash between two key rights, the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion, in cases involving blasphemous or offensive remarks about religions, religious actors or religious life.

Currently, it is widely-accepted in democratic states that legal restrictions on the freedom of expression are only possible in a limited number of situations. Furthermore, there is a generally held consensus in European thinking that rancorous, abusive opinions, including those which hurt the human dignity of believers, are within these limits. However, a great number of thinkers say that the possibility of restricting the freedom of opinion or the specific standards governing this are not crystal clear.

The issue of restricting blasphemy is a complicated one, not only because it is difficult to determine which law or rightful interest is violated by someone who makes a blasphemous opinion. If we accept that hurting religious feelings may be the valid reason for the restriction of expression, we would be facing a problem that is almost impossible to find a general definition about what level of injury should warrant the limitation of freedom of expression. The reason this task is so challenging is that religion belongs to the innermost core of

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an individual's personality, it is one of the most important components of one's personality and the attitude of believers towards religion is so diverse, that it is extremely difficult to identify a generally accepted legal standard protecting religious feelings from blasphemy. This is difficult to do even for the followers of one religion, whose opinions are clearly not homogenous about this issue, so logically, finding a valid general standard applicable for multiple religions is almost impossible.

That is why, I do not intend to go into much detail in my theoretical inquisition about the limits on blasphemous opinions, instead I will only outline the history of the Hungarian regulation of blasphemy and the effective (criminal-, civil-, and media-code) regulations, highlighting the application of these regulations in judicial practice.

## **The History of the Hungarian Regulation of Blasphemy**

Legal efforts aiming to repress blasphemy, thoughts against religions or religious people go back to the period of the Turkish conquest in Hungary. (ANGYAL 1902, 32–51.) The first act, which punished profanities was enacted in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The justification for the prohibition of blasphemy by Act 42 of 1563, similarly to many contemporary foreign regulations, was “fear of the wrath of God and so the propitiation of God”.

Profanity, which here means blasphemy, was also prohibited in the Feudal and Early Modern era criminal law. (MEZEY 1986, 56.) The proposed bill in 1791 would have dedicated a whole chapter to verbal, written or physical blasphemy. According to this draft legislation these acts would have been punishable by the criminal courts. Although the bill did not pass, still, it can be regarded as a decisive breakthrough since legal experts agreed that blasphemous acts should not be penalized by grave physical punishment like mutilation or death.

The next significant achievement in the codification effort was the bill of 1843, which unlike the previous bill did not mention blasphemy at all. According to the written text of the bill's debate, (ANGYAL 1902, 42–46.) which happened at the session of the National Assembly, a wide spectrum of pros and cons were voiced. For example, representatives who supported making blasphemy a misdemeanour argued that this was necessary for “the promotion of religion and good morals”. However, those who opposed this proposition were of the opinion that “if profanity is penalized, it is the most serious anthropomorphism, as if God was a human being, with feelings of love, anger, revenge”.



Similarly, the bills of 1873 and 1875 did not originally mention blasphemy, yet during the debate in the Parliament, there was a clear demand for its inclusion in the new Criminal Code, therefore, the draft legislation was amended accordingly. So the first Hungarian Penal Code, the so-called *Codex Csemegi*, contained a clause which made it legally possible the punishment of a person who “causes a public scandal by the use of blasphemous words”. (190. §) Besides, the Penal Code on Infringements (Act 40 of 1879) also indirectly included blasphemy and threatened any person with imprisonment who “causes a public scandal by publicly abusing a subject of the religious respect of a state-recognized denomination, outside the facility of religious service and not at the religious service”. (51. §)

The current Hungarian legal system does not include a specific prohibition of blasphemy, yet certain regulations can be relevant in this respect. These regulations are the following.

## Media Regulation

### *The restriction of hate speech in the media regulation before 2010*

The Hungarian media regulation has restricted expressions of hatred since the passing of the first media act (Rttv.)<sup>2</sup> became effective in 1996. The Rttv. Section 3. § (2) stipulated the prohibition of incitement to hatred regarding minorities, religion or religious group, section (3) of the act prohibited the insult, discrimination, presentation or condemnation of communities, based on racial aspects.

Regarding the exact contents of incitement to hatred and discrimination, the Constitutional Court (CC) in its resolution 1006/B/2001 formulated the justifications, based on which it ruled that – besides contents qualifying as incitement to hatred – all, including less severe prohibitions, are constitutional, even if they are not part of the penal code. According to the court’s decision:

“[the] penal law is the final means in the legal responsibility system. Meaning, if concerning a socially harmful behaviour – in this case, incitement or instigation to hatred – criminal responsibility is not excessive, nor unconstitutional, more lenient prohibitions in other branches of law cannot be excessive or unconstitutional either.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Act I of 1996 on radio and television broadcast (Rttv.).

<sup>3</sup> 1006/B/2001 CC resolution, commentary Section III. 5. 1.

So the CC uses the term instigation to hatred in the media law as an equivalent to “incitement to hatred”, meaning, even if its constitutionality is not disputed, the law enforcement regulatory authorities – based on the above interpretation – have to judge the contents strictly, in harmony with the standards of the penal law, in order to avoid restricting unnecessarily the freedom of expression.

However, regarding the interpretation of discrimination, the above-mentioned decisions of the CC did not include any guidance, although the court agreed, that “broadcasts aiming at discriminating persons, social groups, (minorities, or even the majority) [...] can have a negative, unforeseeably harmful effect.”<sup>4</sup> In this decision, the court decided that discrimination is considered a less harmful type of behaviour than incitement to hatred and the corresponding penal law category, instigation to hatred.

One emblematic example of legal practice under the 1996 Media Code towards powerful remarks about religious communities, in this case, about Christians, proved to be unlawful. The 2003 case of Tilos Rádió (Prohibited Radio) deserves to be mentioned. In that case, the National Radio and Television Board (NRTB), which body was responsible for the regulation of the media under the Media Code, ruled that some of the above-mentioned radio’s December 2003 broadcasts seriously violated the above-mentioned section 3. § (3) of the Media Code. One of the broadcasts entitled *Biciklis század* [Bicycle Century], violated the law once, while the other, entitled *Honty és Hanna* [Honty and Hanna], violated it two times.<sup>5</sup>

According to the board, the broadcasts – one of which was aired on Christmas day – included expressions, which were insulting to Christian symbols, they “interpreted the Biblical text in a sacrilegious way”, this broadcast was deemed to be harmful towards Christian people because “they distortedly told a fake Biblical story, and the hosts of the program used several expressions which were openly or obliquely insulting”. Besides the use of multiple obscene expressions by the hosts, they also said “I want to exterminate all the Christians”, which attracted large media attention. The radio channel admitted the violations, so the subject of the legal debate was reviewed by a court to find out if the board’s decision was proportionate or not.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 1006/B/2001. CC resolution, commentary Section 5. 2.

<sup>5</sup> 54/2004. (I. 21.) NRTB resolution.

<sup>6</sup> See Capital Court judgements 24.K.30820/2004/5. Capital Court of Appeals 2.Kf.27.153/2004/7. judgements.

*The current hate speech regulation in Hungary*

The currently binding media regulations, which became effective on 1 January 2011 (Smtv.)<sup>7</sup> on the regulation of hate speech, were basically copied from the text of the 1996 media regulations. The text of the relevant law [Smtv. Section 17. § (2)] was amended twice within a year of its passing. After the first amendment of the Media Code, which was prepared after consultations with the European Commission, which led to the deletion of the phrase “open or oblique violation” from the legislation. So after April 2011 only messages containing direct incitement to hatred or expressions classified as discriminative remained prohibited. So in the future, content believed to be injurious to communities cannot be restricted by legal means. A couple of months later, in August 2011, another amendment became effective which removed the prohibition of content which could be classified as incitement to hatred or discrimination. The amendment was justified saying that the prohibition of hate speech already protected communities, social groups, so it is needless to include the clause in the Media Code which would have protected the individual. Regarding the scope of the regulation, the current media regulation rules apply not just to television and radio broadcasts, but also for the online and the printed media. It must be noted that in its December 2011 decision the CC ruled that effective regulation is constitutional in terms of its contents and scope – partly following its previous ruling.<sup>8</sup>

*The protection of religious, ideological conviction in the media regulation*

Regarding the protection of the dignity, e.g. religious, of communities, a piece of regulation must be mentioned, which in cases of content injurious to religious, faith-related and any other convictions, made it into a requirement for broadcasters to warn audiences about this fact. It is important to highlight that this regulation – a provision also present in the Rttv. with similar wording – significantly differs from the legal limitations mentioned in the previous sections of this paper, both in terms of its length and its nature.<sup>9</sup> The new regulation simply sets broadcasting limitations for potentially injurious content, so it clearly lowered the standard of protection. However, it is important to note that this regulation may not be considered a clear prohibition in cases of incitement to hatred and discrimination, since for these type of content, the freedom of

<sup>7</sup> Act CIV of 2010 on basic regulations of the freedom of press and media contents (Smtv.).

<sup>8</sup> 165/2011. (XII. 20.) CC resolution.

<sup>9</sup> Act CLXXXV Rttv. (Mttv.) 14. § Section 5. § (1) on media services and mass communication.

expression is more important than the feelings of the potentially offended audience, and the law only requires the broadcaster to warn its audience about this fact. So for such content, there is a kind of relative prohibition, but it must be added that the regulation does not focus – as a standard – on the hurt sensitivities of the person or group; instead the standard is linked to the injury of the conviction itself.

In addition to the aforementioned rule, the Media Code absolutely prohibits the broadcasting of one type of content deemed to be injurious toward religious convictions: in line with Smtv. 20. § (5) “in [m]edia contents, commercials injurious to religious or ideological convictions may not be broadcasted.” This type of commercial does not have to either target or popularize a Church, religion or their activities, religious events, services etc., but just the mere fact that its contents are injurious to the religious, faith-related conviction of the individuals of the communities involved led to a ban.

However, there is no long-standing and consistent domestic law enforcer practice about how to deal with such commercials. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that a few years ago the NRTB discussed several times the case of a commercial which used the story of the Genesis from the Bible in Biblical style to publicize a weekly paper.<sup>10</sup> The board issued several decisions which said that the ad violated the binding media laws.<sup>11</sup> Yet in a later decision, the members of the board changed their minds and overturned one of their previous resolutions.<sup>12</sup> In the decision, the board justified their latest decision, amongst other arguments, by saying that “using a sacred object, text or story in a secular/profane context in itself does not qualify” so the broadcaster did not violate the prohibition of sharing a commercial which was injurious to religious convictions.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The commercial’s contents: “On the first day there was light, then the skies and the land. On the fourth day, the Lord created the Sun and the stars. On the fifth day he populated the waters with fish, the skies with birds, and on the sixth day, he created man. On the seventh day, you also buy *Vasárnap* *Hírek* (*Sunday News*)!”

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. 416/2008. (II. 27.) and 1369/2008. (VII. 15.) NRTB resolutions.

<sup>12</sup> 1369/2008. (VII. 15.) NRTB resolution.

<sup>13</sup> 1759/2008. (IX. 24.) NRTB resolution.

## Penal Law and the Law of Misdemeanour

### *Prohibition on instigation against communities*

The Penal Code (Btk.)<sup>14</sup> in Section 332 defines instigation against communities as inciting to violence or hatred “publicly a) against the Hungarian nation; b) against a national, ethnic, racial, religious group, or its members, or c) against specific groups of the society, or its members – especially on grounds of disability, sexual identity, sexual orientation.” (A relevant change in the facts of the text is that until 2016 only incitement to hatred was included in it as a criminal offence.)

Based on the 30/1992. (V. 26.) CC resolution, incitement to hatred is punishable if these hateful expressions are capable of inciting active, hostile behaviour or anger towards others. It is irrelevant that the intent to incite hate is not present, it may still be treated as a criminal act even if the accused does not expressly call for actual violence, but the perpetrator has to be aware of the fact that his/her words might lead to violent actions.

The protected legal subject is dual: on the one hand, it must include a threat to public order, on the other hand, incitement to active behaviour implies the danger of infringing the rights of an individual. The incitement to hatred in itself does not qualify as a crime if it is not capable of triggering other criminal acts. The CC did not define the extent of danger which is required to justify the restriction of the freedom of expression, what is certain – being an endangering, immaterial crime – that someone can commit a crime even if no hatred is created in the audience or if nobody commits, prepares or plans another criminal act after these remarks. The objective possibility, the suitability of the expression to cause harm to any member of the targeted community transforms a speech into a punishable crime.

Later, the court decided in its 18/2004. (V. 25.) CC and 95/2008. (VII. 3.) CC resolutions that exclusively “the acts threatening individual rights and the obvious, direct threat of violent acts” can be constitutionally penalized.

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<sup>14</sup> Act C of 2012 (Penal Code).

*Further provisions of the penal law and the law of misdemeanour*

The penal code in its chapter entitled *Crimes Against Human Dignity and Specific Basic Rights* prohibits the violation of religious and ideological freedom (215. §): “If a person a) restricts another person’s ideological freedom with violence or threats; b) restricts another person’s free practice of religion with violence or threats, can be sentenced with imprisonment up to 3 years.” Based on this provision (in line with the prohibition of identical contents in section 174/A. § of the 1978 penal code), the Supreme Court found that the crime was the same, as when the defendant drove his car into a procession and threatened using his pistol against the participants if they would not let him drive on.<sup>15</sup> The code also made it illegal to damage or destroy religious objects or buildings which are used for religious services (considered a case of vandalism, 371. §). Based on the provisions of section (188. §) Act II of 2012 on misdemeanours, misdemeanour procedures and misdemeanour registration system, a person can be penalized if “a person causes a public scandal in a church or site of religious service, or abuses objects of religious respect, or those used in religious services in or outside a site of religious service, which qualifies as a misdemeanour”. This provision is classified as a more lenient misdemeanour, compared to the regulations in section 191. § of the Codex Csemegi.

It is common in these provisions, that they penalize the peculiar expression of the opinion, not the opinion itself, so applying them indirectly may bring about a state action against blasphemy, they do not qualify as a restricting blasphemy-prohibition judged by the contents of the opinion.

**Prohibition of Hate Speech in the Civil Code***The provision of the Civil Code (Ptk.)*

The Civil Code (Ptk.),<sup>16</sup> which was passed in February 2013 and is effective since 15 March 2014 – following its failed constitutional review in 2007 – made another attempt to restrict hate speech by the Civil Code. Based on section 2:54. § (5):

<sup>15</sup> BH 1999. 292.

<sup>16</sup> Act V of 2013.

“Any person may, on the grounds of his or her Hungarian or other nationality or affiliation with an ethnic, racial or religious community that is an integral part of his or her identity, seek to enforce all applicable rights if the relevant community is publicly insulted in a gravely offensive manner or in a manner that is unreasonably disparaging in terms of the way in which it is expressed, and may do so within a final deadline of 30 days following the violation. Any member of the relevant community may seek the enforcement of all applicable penalties with the exception of conceding financial advantages gained by the violation.”

The provision narrows down, those qualifying as protected communities (including religious communities) and states, that an act qualifies as a misdemeanour if being a member of the community involved can be considered an important feature of the person enforcing the law. The facts of the case prohibit expressions which are “gravely insulting or unjustifiably injurious in style”; the act of violation, requiring restriction, is a lot less serious than “instigation to hatred” as defined in the Penal Code.

### *Case law*

The restriction of hate speech was applied as it appears in the Civil Code, in a case where the defendants organized a demonstration against the abortion act in front of the Polish Embassy in Budapest, and one of the defendants – publicly – dressed in the clothes of a bishop, called on the people present “Come to the Holy Communion!”, then imitating the acts of a priest during a communion service, placed white pills from a bag with a clearly visible sign of *abortion pills*, on the tongue of another defendant, and on the tongues of others while saying “The body of Christ”. Meanwhile, the third defendant assisted them by holding a megaphone. The Capital Court of Appeals, in its sentence published later, stated the violation of the right of human dignity and religious freedom saying:

“[the] conduct complained had to be judged objectively, the conduct of the defendants mentioned above, evidently qualifies as the abuse of religion. However, the derisive conduct did not represent the position of the defendants in the issue of abortion, and like a scene in the performance, the placing of abortion pills on the tongue while communicating the message the body of »Christ«, could not be interpreted as the critique of the Church’s position in the abortion debate. The »communion« using abortion pills could be interpreted as



the abuse of the plaintiffs' religion by the defendants, which met the conditions stipulated in section 2:54. § (5) of the Civil Code, seriously and publicly injured the Catholic community."<sup>17</sup>

The resolution of principle, published in relation to the case, reached the conclusion that the opinion involved was outside the defensive scope of the freedom of expression:

"[t]he performance cannot be interpreted as the critique of the Church's position in the abortion debate, neither as an act of the freedom of expression, in which the participants mocking the faithful practising the Holy Communion of the Catholic Church, as they changed the host, symbolizing the body of Christ, to »abortion pills« which were placed on the tongues of the participants by the person acting as a priest while saying »the body of Christ«. This behaviour is outside the scope of public debate and is derisive in its contents, so it is seriously injurious to the individual feature of the members of the Catholic Church, and qualifies as the abuse of the religion."<sup>18</sup>

The Christmas 2014 issue of the *HVG* weekly paper appeared with the title *Nagy Harácsony* [Great Looting] on its title page, and the picture below showed the faces of government politicians in a transformed version of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch painting. The picture on the title page was made using the painting by Gerard von Honthorst entitled *Adoration of the shepherds*; its presumed message may refer to the politicians, public actors in the picture as people pursuing material riches.

The lawsuit, in this case, was filed by a member of the Catholic community. The Curia considered that the title page was a political opinion which did not aim to injure the religious community:

"[the] title page involved, basically expresses the author(s)'(s) opinion that the persons depicted manifest a behaviour which can be interpreted, even in the scope of the freedom of expression, that the depicted persons show religious awe toward material assets and the different ways of gaining those, and form a community, based on material assets. This expression of opinion and the depicted subject matter did not aim to humiliate the Christian religion and its faithful community. So basically and definitely, it is the expression of political opinion, judgement of values, neither the title page nor the contents of the paper deals with religious life, the behaviour or judgement of the faithful."<sup>19</sup>

Compared with the former case, it is worth noting that even the abortion pills–communion case could have been linked to the discussion of another important public issue, birth control, yet in that case, the court of appeals decided that this behaviour-action was unjustifiably injurious, insulting, and can be penalized as such.

<sup>17</sup> Court of Budapest 70.P.22.286/2016/13. and Court of Appeals of Budapest 2.Pf.20.151/2017/3/II. verdicts (the latter published: ÍH 2017. 53.).

<sup>18</sup> ÍH 2017. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Court of Budapest 22.P.20.171/2015/4. Court of Appeals of Budapest 7.Pf.20.862/2015/5. and Curia Pfv.IV.20.636/2016/4. verdicts.

## Summary

The legal regulations of the modern age permit the restriction of blasphemous contents only in extreme cases when the rights of others are violated, and instead of approaching it from God, it does so in the interest of the dignity of believers and of those who express their opinions. Different branches of the law make parallel efforts to protect the dignity of those exercising their religion. Despite all this, it cannot be said that the followers of certain religions do not have to tolerate opinions they dislike or they find injurious.

The individual, personal feeling of injury in itself does not constitute a ground to restrict the opinions of others. However, the interests of discussing public affairs and establishing democratic publicity must also be considered, so unlike in the early, medieval paradigm when the blasphemous opinion was judged by its contents, today they must be judged by its form or style of expression.

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## IV.

# RELIGION, RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE LIGHT OF PEACE AND CONFLICTS



Csaba Török<sup>1</sup>

## INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND SOCIAL PEACE

It has been becoming increasingly evident that interreligious dialogue is not an internal matter of the communities involved, but rather a task of all people, without the success of which no peace of any kind can be achieved. That is why Pope Paul VI said “We also pray for the true followers of other religions to let friendly dialogue, which has already begun, evolve, and to work towards peace in the world together”. (POPE PAUL VI 1975)

In 2013 Pope Francis, successor of St. Peter, was faced with the enormity and the unavoidability of the problem in Argentina. As the Archbishop of Buenos Aires he did not only promote the well-established Jewish–Christian dialogue, (BERGOGLIO–SKORKA 2014) but also cared to send two of his priests to Cairo to study Arabic language and culture, and the theology of Islam. He knew that we can only manage the challenges of global migration, already facing us in our homes, if we get to know each other. As the Bishop of Rome in December 2013, in his Apostolic encouragement starting with the words *Evangelii gaudium*, his first independent document, he stated: “Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities.” (FERENC PÁPA 2014, 250.)

This prompts us to ask the question: What is the point in interreligious dialogue? How has it contributed to the success in the way towards peace and security and where has it failed?

### The Dialogue Between Christianity and Judaism

Christianity, by definition, has been conducting a permanent dialogue with Judaism: it reads, contemplates, prays the Torah, the Prophets, and the Scripts (tenets), and is linked to the chosen people with millions of

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links. This relationship has been more than troubled through the centuries, with the Shoah, unquestionably being its most outrageous chapter. (RITTNER–SMITH–STEINFELDT 2009)

That is why the main field of Jewish–Christian dialogue happens on two levels. The first level is the process of historical confrontation, apology and reconciliation, in the words of John Paul II: “the purification of the memory”. (Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews 1998) The two religious communities have taken enormous steps in this field, that is shown not just in jointly issued documents, (DOBOS–NAGYPÁL 2011) but in many highly significant symbolic gestures and deeds.

This intent, analysing the past, must necessarily lead to the present. The institutionalized forums for dialogue have an outstanding role to play in this process. The Holy See decided to set up a permanent organization, which is the *Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews*. In addition to this body, the ICCJ – *International Council of Christians and Jews* organizations form an international network, with local organizations, which met in Budapest in July 2018.

Informal organizations, whose effect is sometimes greater on the local population, must also be mentioned. In Hungary, the Christian–Jewish Society holds monthly conferences and runs a free university. The annual March of the Living event, also held in Budapest, following the international example attracts a great number of participants every time. These events are extremely important in making the society more sensitive towards interreligious dialogue. Upon the initiative of Pope Benedict XVI, a joint Jewish–Christian prayer is held during the closing of the prayer week, relating to the memory of Apostle Saint Paul’s experiences in Damascus.

These symbolic gestures effectively announce what Pope Francis keeps saying: “A Christian cannot be an anti-Semite.” Besides, he has made it clearer than his predecessors: “As Christians, we may not regard Judaism an alien religion”; (FERENC PÁPA 2014, 247.) later he also added: “The dialogue and friendship with the children of Israel is a part of the life of the Disciples of Jesus.” (FERENC PÁPA 2014, 248.) Currently, it is of immense importance to declare that tension, rejection and hatred are unacceptable. When the followers of the two religions voice their commitments in this regard, they do an indispensable service to social peace and security.

However, the dialogue has highlighted a number of difficult issues, as well. Among Christians, a kind of anti-Judaist religious rhetoric still survives. As long as this is present, it can provide the basis for anti-Semitic expressions. Regarding the Jews, the dialogue is made more difficult by the religious judgement of Israel as a state and its actions. There are groups which place the political manoeuvres or even military violence there into the Messianic perspective of the Bible. This is a highly sensitive issue because there are a great number of Israeli Christians of Palestinian origin. Their fate should be closely monitored. In addition to these issues,



political measures regarding the status quo in the Holy Land are repeatedly becoming more and more problematic. The sensitive balance between the different religions of that region was preserved by centuries-old common law, which has been damaged several times so far.

So, we could only consider the dialogue successful if political factors are removed from religious communication on both sides. Unless this happens, both sides will take steps which will undermine the peaceful co-existence of the two religious communities.

## The Dialogue Between Christianity and Islam

As a world religion, Islam must be mentioned in the second place. There are two reasons for that: one of these is the theological connections, while the second reason is the series of the permanent conflicts between the two religions since the appearance of Muhammad. The connection in divinity is documented in the Quran itself, which considers the divine revelation as a continuous, linear process, starting from the Torah through the Gospels to the seal of the prophets, Muhammad. That is where a basic inequality between the sides can be observed: while a Jew or a Christian may easily convert to Islam accepting the fulfilled form of their religion, a Muslim may not convert to Judaism or Christianity as it would be a step backwards for him/her. That is why, the followers of the other two monotheistic religions are in a more protected position in areas under Islamic rule than those of other religions, yet they are not recognized as equals to Muslims. They may keep their religion if they pay a *protection tax* but they cannot exercise their faith publicly and missionary activities are also illegal. This means that in Muslim countries, Christian priests and pastors may operate under strictly regulated way but their status is highly fragile. As we have seen recently, just one unstable period is enough, and the state or the wrath of the people, fuelled by a fanatic will easily strike down upon them.

What can religious leaders do to improve the situation? Clear, evident and consistent communication, capable of illuminating points in which the faulty religious interpretations can lead to damage and casualties, is of primary import; Benedict XVI's address in Regensburg is a good example, whereby the Pope examined the relations between faith and the mind, discussing Christianity and Islam. (XVI. BENEDEK 2007) The reactions were depressing: in the wake of an out of context interpretation of a medieval Byzantine quote, politically motivated protests started from Indonesia to Sudan demanding the life of many Christians. Nevertheless, the course of events showed that the issue of the relation between faith and the mind definitely requires further

analysis. That is how an organized, theological-academic series of talks started between the Holy See and several Muslim religious leaders.

In relation to the violent actions, one of the biggest difficulties is that there is no theoretical framework in Islam, which could make a Western type separation of state and church possible, so interreligious dialogue is also a governmental issue. What could be a possible outcome? The dialogue is impossible at the pure divinity principle level (or it is only possible between individuals). Interreligious connections are also political relations, and behind the divinity principle approaches and distances, reconciliations and tensions, we must always consider factors with no primary religious content at all.

This already hardly manageable situation is further exacerbated by the complexity within Islam. In addition to the Sunni–Shia denominations, there are also other groups like the Harajites, which is the smallest Muslim denomination, yet it is the state religion in Oman. On top of that, both the Sunni and the Shia are further subdivided by canon law schools into smaller groups which are not homogenous either. So, although we can say that the Arab peninsula is mainly Sunni, yet the unity is not complete: in the north (Syria, Jordan, Iraq) we find Hanafites, Saud-Arabia (and Katar) are Hanbalite, while the southern peoples (Yemen, United Arab Emirates) are Shafiite. So during the dialogues we always have to be aware of exactly who we are talking to, this is why we must understand that these talks will not automatically affect all Islamic communities around the world. That is why, it is proper to say that we discuss parallel, sometimes converging, but more or less autonomous Christian–Muslim or Catholic–Muslim dialogues. Understanding that unfortunately restricts the foundations of our expectations concerning successes or results.

In relation to this vast and diverse issue, another important factor must also be considered. If there is a divinity debate in the Catholic Church, there is a way to reach a final and decisive answer. However, in Islam, in contentious issues, the religious leaders and benchmark scholars of religion (*ulemas*) will start a discussion, which may result in a common interpretation of the Quran or a *judgement*, the majority consensual answer to the question (*idjma*), which in theory may discard private interpretations, but it was just recently shown, that the case is not like that. If a radical teacher has a strong base of followers and enough patrons, support and political protection, he can continue preaching his beliefs undisturbed.

Nowadays the media, especially the Internet and the possibilities offered by *social networks*, may lead to the situation that the believer can always find a teaching which he likes, which will always counter the consensus reached in interreligious dialogue. In Europe alone, there have been several recent examples that sites of worship and their religious schools, due to the radical religious interpretation of the Quran by its leaders and learnt tenets, in an open and straightforward manner reject any kind of openness and dialogue with

other religions. This situation can be the hotbed of terrorism and violence in a given case. The significance of this phenomenon has just been understood by European decision-makers. This is a formula, which discards the basic principles of our democracy, which is based on the principle of the classical separation of state and church. How can a secular state control and supervise the teachings of a religious framework? How can we prevent that the Western idea of religious freedom will not turn into an ostrich policy, which can be misused by harmful actors?

On the whole: successful dialogue requires common frameworks and rules. A scholar of modern glossematics, Ferdinand de Saussure, compared language-based communication to a game of chess. The key to success is to play on a common board by common rules. The practical realization of interreligious dialogue with Islam shows that at this essential stage there are still some unsolved grave problems. It must be considered a success that the Western world, the Christians, are getting to know the Quran, its teachings, its standard interpretation and its basic (well-understood) religious principles more profoundly. However, there is an endless number of failures. All this shows that the Christian side must be aware of a completely different approach to faith, religion, society, law etc. which he is about to encounter outside his circles, and that is why the expected results of his efforts primarily depend on the selection of the adequate frameworks and methods. In the Islamic world, some kind of internal maturation is indispensable. A great breakthrough is only possible if the dialogue inside Islam will be strong enough to provide a suitable basis for external dialogue.

## Christianity and Oriental Religions

Because of historical and theological reasons, the religious dialogue has long been restricted to the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, at the Second Vatican Council it became evident that relations must be established with the great Oriental traditions, which are more ancient than Christianity, and in a given case they exist in great, ancient high cultures. (Second Vatican Council 1965) It was Paul VI who actually established contact in an institutionalized way with Hinduism and Buddhism. That was when it became a tradition that the Pope and the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue address the Hindus and Buddhists every year in relation to their important celebrations.

It has recently been shown how Oriental states and societies, which first gained independence then redefined their identity, evaluate their religions and philosophies. India can serve especially important conclusions in this respect since Hinduism gained a renewed political influence. President Ram Nath Kovind in his 2018

independence day address (KOVIND 2018) repeatedly referred to *national pride* and Gandhi, and defined the idea of *Indianness*. The meter of it is empathy, unity, humanity. He did not discuss religious problems, however, it is an emerging issue how this strong identity will face the Indian reality since the paramilitary forces he mentioned are under the influence of radical Hindu religious leaders and these forces often act violently against followers of other religions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a typical example how tolerating or even implicitly supporting Hindu violence can build someone's career. As the Prime Minister of the Gujarat state, he unleashed anti-Muslim sentiments and showed a strong commitment to Hinduism. Soon he became irremovable from this position, even though he was frequently attacked by international organisations after 2000 because his government regularly violated the principles of religious freedom. He has been the Prime Minister of India since 2014 and in this post, he behaved as a more moderate politician. Although in his 2018 independence day address he did not use any direct hints, his words were flavoured by the manifestations of the Hindu soul, as well as "the new hope, the new courage, and the new trust (in Indians)", and also used sacred and religious-spirited scripts and quotations. (MODI 2018)

We can conclude that using religion in politics poses a real security policy risk. Parallel developments with the Indian situation can be experienced in other states of the Indochinese region, too. In a given case even Buddhism, which is often regarded as a peaceful religion, may get involved in the vortex of party politics or the formation of national identity, see the situation in Myanmar, the conflict between the Buddhist majority and the Muslim Rohingya people, which has turned into genocide by now. Despite all the fruits of interreligious dialogue, we can conclude that failure can be expected in certain cases.

## Summarizing Considerations

Following the developments of the world, we might have the impression that interreligious dialogue is the experiment of a few intellectuals while the social, political reality does not show any signs that the dialogue of principles, ideals and traditions brings forward peace and security. This sense of failure can be discouraging and unnerving. However, given these failures, we must not give up our commitment to interreligious dialogue, since as Christians we avow that this is not an option but an obligation rooted in our faith. Despite the difficulties, we can state that we have learned more about the teachings of religions; religious sensitivity and interreligious status are indispensable to correctly assess the situations, the consciousness of the conditions of

coexistence has intensified. However, this is not enough. If we read the text of Pope Francis's earlier quoted address, we find important methodological principles (cf. FERENC PÁPA 2014, 250–254.) such as: open behaviour, benevolence, cordiality and the quest for justice in the other person.

Besides, we must bear in mind that our goal is justice and social peace. The dialogue is not a *l'art pour l'art* activity but the peculiar way of the religious person, when meeting new creeds to find ways while comparing his own identity to theirs, toward real peace in the light of reality, which is defined by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is 'tranquillity of order'. Peace is a 'work of justice' (Isaiah 32:17) and the effect of charity." (KEK 2013, 2304.)

If we see that interreligious freedom is fruitless or it just yields pseudo-results, sooner or later we conclude that some or all of the above principles have been violated. A great challenge in this regard is the combination of politics and faith, which may use religion as a tool. That is when we encounter violence and terror in their sheer brutality. Paul F. Knitter's well-founded opinion says: "The reason for religious violence – as well as for international (or internal) violence – is usually economic in nature." (KNITTER 2007, 105.)

If religious dialogue has a potential to establish social peace, then it opens up here, right in front of us: leading us to realize that a) I may trust my judgement, even its uniqueness or primacy, so that I will not turn violent doing so; b) it is just because beholding the divine that I cannot afford to make my religion a tool for non-religious (political, dominance, economic etc.) interests; c) I must accept that the world's religious reality is diverse; d) and the only sensible reaction to this is if I try to live my faith in a more credible way, being mutually open to others. This is why this task, although sometimes it may look impossible, cannot be abandoned. Finally, we ought to remember the wise words of Rabbi Jonathan Sack: "Unless religions become a part of the solution to global violence, they remain important factors of the problem of violence." (KNITTER 2007, 106.)

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## THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC HOLY SEE, OR THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF “SOFT POWER” IN DEFENCE OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The Apostolic Holy See is *sui generis* not just in terms of being a state, but it also possesses specific means for diplomacy and crisis management. The Holy See employs its capabilities in the defence of Christian minorities with mixed efficacy. After the Second Vatican Council, interreligious dialogue and cooperation with states and international organizations emerged as important elements. These aspects were highly valued in the process of *new type* conflict management.

The unique feature of this kind of crisis management is subsidiarity: the Universal Church is inseparable from the particular Churches it is built of (Canon 368). This theological principle is manifested in crisis management in an eminent way, as the local Catholic and Holy See offices, as well as its diplomatic corps, are looking for the possibilities of cooperation.

This study focuses on the recent activities of the Holy See: it introduces the achievements of the Pope’s visits and the unfulfilled expectations alike. It analyses the messages and the documents of the Pope and the Holy See with regard to the defence of Christian communities. It will point on the elements of the *curia reform*, which are specifically designed to strengthen the diplomatic and crisis management mechanisms of the Holy See. (UJHÁZI 2017, 19–41.)

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## **The Diversity of the Pope's Efforts to Assist Persecuted Christian Communities**

The foreign policy of the Apostolic Holy See is defined by the Pope of Rome, expressing his opinion on the assistance to persecuted Christians at various forums. The Pope addressed persecuted Christians earlier as well, emphasizing that: "more die as martyrs today, than in the first centuries of Christian persecution". The papal manifestations have an infinite number of forms, including talks to ambassadors delegated to the Holy See, annual addresses and directions for the staff of the Roman Curia, papal messages at annual Christian celebrations, holy masses, Angelus Masses (Magyar Kurír 2017) and other liturgical events. These have long been the means of communication available for the Pope to interpret the general Christian teaching in the light of the relevant social, political or developing security situation. Due to the increasing significance of the mass media, these messages reach more people as the Pope also uses the latest technologies like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, video messages, etc.

Manifestations, traditionally dedicated by the Popes to solidify peace and evaluate the security situation, have a particular emphasis. Besides discussing relevant security policy issues, the position of the Pope on the developments is published in an official written document. The 1<sup>st</sup> of January is the World Peace Day and it is typically dedicated to the evaluation of security policy issues.

## **The Significance of Meetings and the Pope's Travels Regarding the Assistance to Persecuted Christian Communities**

Papal visits and meetings with political and religious leaders, as well as the resulting documents are special forms of communicating the Pope's opinion. These forums can also be regarded as special manifestations of the Pope's primacy. (BRUNELLI 2007–2008)

At the meeting between the Pope and Donald Trump in May 2017, the promotion of peace, interreligious dialogue and the assistance to immigrants were also discussed besides general security policy issues. (HOROWITZ 2018) The Pope's and the American President's opinion differ on several issues (like the issue of refugees), but the Holy See joint action with the United States in security issues has been of vital importance since the First World War. Regarding the assistance to persecuted Christians, this cooperation is especially important, as the assistance to persecuted Christians is more and more becoming an issue for Catholic, Christian organizations and bodies closely related to the government in the US. The community to assist the Bishops'



Council, the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Charity and the Catholic Association for the Middle East and the churches-in-need, organized a day of prayer on 26 November 2017. On 8 August 2018, the Holy Father expressed his special thanks to the Knights of Columbus for their work aimed at assisting the persecuted Christians in the Middle East. In December 2017 the weekly training entitled *Education and Consciousness* was conducted in the spirit of solidarity with those in need, and it was about the fate of religious freedom and the persecuted Christians in the world. The effort and the day of prayer were supported by Cardinal Daniel N. Di Nardo, President of the Bishops’ Council, who called on the Catholics of the US to join the payer for persecuted Christians. (US Bishops 2017) The organizations have also published a special report, similar to the Hungarian Budapest Report in 2017, about this issue. After the meeting between the Pope and the US President, Cardinal Timothy Dolan talked about the significance of the cooperation between the Pope and the US President and about the initiatives, which were made by the US Catholic Church to assist persecuted Christians. (ALLEN–SAN MARTÍN–GIANGRAVÈ 2018)

The discussion in February between the Pope and the Turkish President Erdogan is an example of discussions on the security of Christians in 2018. The Pope and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State, called the President’s attention to the endangered Christian communities. The discussion with Emmanuel Macron was of similar significance, and it was focused on the Middle Eastern, African and European issues.

The meetings with the leaders of Catholics and other Christian denominations, especially those with Eastern Catholic *sui iuris* churches in the crisis regions, or with Eastern Orthodox Churches, are also important. In February 2018 the Pope met the representatives of the Youssef Absi Greek Melkite Church and celebrated a holy mass together for the persecuted Christians of the Middle East. (ALLEN 2018) On that occasion, the Holy Father talked about the possibilities of staying in their homeland, divine love, community, unity, proximity, solidarity, transparency and also warned the priests about the importance of their work for the faithful. On other occasions, the Pope encouraged Christians to act together and to stay united, for which he used the example of Cyril and Methodius, who are particularly respected by the Eastern Churches. He also called on the Christian world in a video call to help the “two hundred million persecuted Christians” with prayer and material support. (SAN MARTÍN 2018)

An important event of 2018 was the Ecumenical Meeting in Bari, where the leaders of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches discussed the peace in the Middle East. The idea that the Pope should take the lead of the initiative came from the Eastern Orthodox communities. In the Basilica of Saint Nicholas, the Pope talked about “the dying Middle East” which is being systematically exploited. The thirst for profit is willing to do anything in order to seize the gas fields. The Pope mentioned religious *fundamentalism* and *fanatism* which

is present in the region in various forms. Movements were disguised in religious pretexts, yet in reality, they swore at God, who is himself the symbol of peace. The Pope called on the countries of the region to make “Christians full citizens of the state, armed with all rights.”

In April Pope Francis talked to Patriarch Kirill on the phone about Christians in the Middle East. (LUXMOORE 2018) Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church are as important strategic partners for the Holy See as the USA. This is manifested by the meeting between the Pope and the Russian Church leader in Havana in 2016, and a 2017 visit to Moscow by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, as well as the office call to Cardinal Mario Zenari, the Apostolic Nuncio to Syria, who is the envoy of the Holy See in Damascus, by the representative of the Patriarch of Moscow during his Syrian visit in May 2018.

Regarding the dialogue with non-Christian religious communities, the Pope’s visit to Bangladesh was quite important in December 2017. There the Pope spoke to religious leaders about the common desire of mankind: harmony, peace, brotherhood, which are present in the teachings of the religions. He promoted tolerance, mutual trust, acceptance and respect and warned against indifference towards destructive religious ideologies, the poor, refugees, and highlighted needs of persecuted minorities. As early as February 2018, at a conference on *The Management of Violence Committed in the Name of Religion*, the Pope declared: “Violence advertised and committed in the name of God discredits the religion itself.”

Regarding the importance of ecumenical dialogue, the promotion of common goals, during the Pope’s visit to Geneva was also especially significant in 2018, when he attended the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary session of the World Council of Religious Leaders. He stated that members of Christian communities of different denominations of the world fell victim to violent attacks because of their religion.

Recently, the Pope has made gestures like personal meetings with the victims or visiting them, etc. The Lamborghini, which he received as a gift, was auctioned off and the money raised was given to the persecuted Christians of Iraq. (PATRIARCH SAKO 2017)

## **Activities of the Dicasteries of the Holy See**

In addition to the actions of the Pope of Rome, the activities of the specific dicasteries of the Apostolic Holy See and the foreign representatives of the Holy See are also important. Pope Francis has been paying special attention to the more successful operation of the Roman Curia since his election, that is why he has introduced significant changes to its structure and legal foundations. He announced the *motu proprio*

(POPE FRANCIS 2016) *Humanam progressionem* on 31 August 2016, with which he established the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, a new office of the Holy See which was created by merging four former offices into one. The dicastery has general authority over human rights issues, including religion or ethnicity based persecution.

Lately, the Pope has introduced changes within the Secretariat of State, the highest body of the Holy See. Because of the changing political and security environment, and to strengthen the diplomatic corps, he has formed an autonomous section from the delegates' office, responsible for personnel issues of Holy See diplomats, assigned to the first section of the Secretariat of State. Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State, in his lecture entitled *The Holy See's Diplomatic Activities in the Service of Peace*, held at the Pontifical Gregorian University, stated that the Holy See is making efforts to fully exploit its special scope of action and the possibilities to promote peace. He expects to present the real importance of the Holy See in international organizations. He explicitly referred to the application of diplomatic means and the international law to defend persecuted Christians. (PAROLIN 2018)

Regarding the persecuted Christian communities, the situational reports made by the Pontifical representatives are also important. Cardinal Mario Zenari, the Nuncio to Syria, who, for his heroic actions, was made a Cardinal by the Holy Father in 2016, said that in terms of humanitarian aid the situation is “uncontrollable”. The papal nuncios to the Middle East inform one another and the responsible dicasteries of the Holy See about the situation on the ground.

On 22 September 2017, the observer of the Apostolic Holy See and the Hungarian UN mission jointly organised a conference called *The Defence of Religious Minorities in Conflict*.

The Holy See was represented by Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States within the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. He summarized the factors considered important in the defence of religious minorities in seven points. Although the Archbishop's focus was definitely the situation of the various persecuted Christian communities, for political reasons, he talked about persecuted religious minorities in general.

In his opinion, the international concentration of forces is highly important to help religious communities return home. He spoke of the Hungarian support for the Aid to the Church in Need and to the Knights of Columbus in high terms. This cooperation led to the rebuilding of several cities on the Nineveh Plain. He also emphasized that in addition to the rebuilding of cities and buildings, laying the foundations of peaceful co-existence is also vital. The Archbishop also promoted equality between religious communities; the importance of human rights, religious and cult freedom; the possibility of freely choosing a religion without discrimination,

and the significance of legal and constitutional legal guarantees given to religious communities. The factors mentioned are really important since these are those basic rights, which are the foundations of Western societies. However, these rights did not exist within the crisis regions before the armed conflicts (UJHÁZI 2014; 2016) and they are not coming true now, either.

The Archbishop highlighted that besides respecting each other's mutual autonomy, the state and religious communities have to cooperate in crisis management, then he illuminated the responsibility of religious community leaders, to condemn the violence emerging within religious communities. He stressed the importance of interreligious dialogue – since that is the best antidote to interreligious conflicts and to the cynical attitude which says that no peace can be achieved between religions. The Archbishop also emphasised the significance of education, since the correct interpretation of facts is useful in the prevention of radicalization and stopping the emergence of extremism. Finally, he urged to root out weapons smuggling and sources of weapons sales, which threaten the security of religious communities. The Archbishop also analysed the situation of various persecuted religious minorities, based on data from international humanitarian organizations, highlighting that in certain regions these minorities are on the verge of disappearance. He quoted Pope Francis's ideas, especially those which were presented in the address he delivered at the Al-Azhar University.

At the *Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice 2017* conference, Archbishop Gallagher explicitly talked about the persecution of Christians, but he was also prudent to mention “other persecuted religious minorities” as well. Before the event, he met with the Yazidi Nadia Murad Basee Taha, Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, who expressed her thanks to Pope Francis for his attempts to protect the religious minorities in the Middle East.

The activities of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches are also important since most persecuted Christians belong to one of the Middle East Catholic *sui iuris* or Orthodox Churches. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, spoke about the persecuted Christians on several forums. Speaking at the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, he had to analyse the traditions of the congregation and of Eastern Christianity. The Pope himself spoke for the persecuted Christians. This institute is also important since it is the place where priests and Eastern Catholic Church candidates for priesthood conduct their higher educational studies. Both the congregation and the institute have always possessed a particular ecumenical and geopolitical significance, which has recently been more appreciated due to the recent Christian persecution. (LEWIS 2017)

From a practical point of view, the cooperation of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association with the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, and with other offices and foreign representations of the Holy See,

is also very important. The organization maintains surgeries, schools, orphanages and has other institutions of material support to Christians in the Middle East. They assist the elderly, families, those in need, and enable seminary education. Besides humanitarian assistance, they also work to establish relations with non-Catholic communities and their work of interreligious dialogue is also of high value. All of their complex activities are presented in their quarterly journal.

The Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO) has launched similar initiatives: reconstruction of damaged buildings, providing education medical support, and social aid. The Pope has several times appreciated the significance of these organizations, as they, in his opinion, form a bridge between Oriental and Western Christianity. (POPE FRANCIS 2018)

## Summary

In 2018 the activities of the Pope and the Holy See were as manifold as earlier, but regarding the nature of the Holy See it mostly applies soft power. The statements of the Pope and the Holy See illustrate the situation of persecuted Christians at different levels and forums. They provide the opportunity to call on political and religious leaders. Meetings and visits by the Pope serve the same goal. The Holy See makes sure that besides persecuted Christians, every other persecuted minority appears in his rhetoric. Ever since his election, Pope Francis has been taking steps to reform the Roman Curia. His main objective is to defend human rights, religious freedom, persecuted minorities and Christians. The change in 2018 served this goal, by which a third section was established at the Secretariat of State with the purpose of finding better circumstances for the diplomacy of the Holy See.

Regarding the defence of Christians, the significance of interreligious and Christian–Christian dialogue must be mentioned. However, the Christian denominations in the Middle East have a different opinion about the possibilities of the Islamic–Christian dialogue and the dialogue with the state. 2018 has proven that the Holy See counts on the involvement of the local Churches and local Catholic organizations. That is particularly true for countries like the US, where a great number of Catholic organizations exist, with considerable material wealth and influence.

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V.

THE ROLE OF CHARITIES, RELIGIOUS  
AND KNIGHTLY ORDERS IN ASSISTING  
CHRISTIAN MINORITIES



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# THE POSSIBILITIES AND ACTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC CARITAS IN 2018 IN PROMOTING SUPPORT FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

## Introduction

The situation of Christians in the world is highly diverse. Christianity is the biggest world religion with 2.2 billion faithful. (Pew Research Center 2011) Despite the above-mentioned fact, Christian persecution is high in the world and has continuously been rising recently (BALOGH–GALLAI–JANIK 2017, 82.) Nevertheless, the security situation of Christians is quite different all over the world, even in the countries of the Middle East. (UJHÁZI 2017a, 357.) *Persecutio christianorum* (ADRIÁNYI 2000) stands for the open or hidden attacks against Christians. It is important not to narrow down persecution to what is happening in the Middle East or to their persecution by the Islamic State. We must also consider persecution of Christians in dictatorial regimes and state discrimination by military organizations all over the world. Furthermore, intolerance and discrimination against Christians, violence against Christian symbols, and restrictions on religious practice are increasingly present in Europe. This is characterized by the exclusion of equal rights and Christian individuals, as well as the public rejection of Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

Besides security issues, it is worth mentioning the diverse life of Christian spiritual movements, groups, parishes. Next to the globally growing numbers of Christians and developing communities, there are passive religious communities which narrow their activities to the liturgy when they come together, and

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<sup>1</sup> Hungarian Catholic Caritas

<sup>2</sup> Based on the annual report of OIDCE, which researches, analyses and documents cases of intolerance and discrimination against European Christians. (OIDCE 2018)

their membership is on the decline. It must also be mentioned that despite their globally growing numbers, the number of faithful does not necessarily grow on every continent, country or in small church communities. Based on Hungarian census data, the proportion of those who claim to be Christians has continuously been on the decline. (Central Statistical Office 2001; 2011) This proportion, however, is of extreme diversity as a consequence of differences in urban and rural lifestyle and demographic processes. The number of Catholics is also on the decline in Europe. Concerning the number of Christians, we must consider the significant differences in the number of those who claim to be Christians, and who actually practice their religion.<sup>3</sup> According to the survey conducted among European youths, aged 21–29, by (Twickenham) St. Mary’s University in London, most European young people neither belong to religion nor do not practice it. Based on this survey, 67% of Hungarian youths are not religious, 26% are Catholics, 6% belong to Protestant Churches, 1% have a different religion. (BULLIVANT 2018)

Considering all that, we can conclude in terms of Christians and Christianity as a whole, that all over the world they are endangered in the narrow and the broad sense, their future is not ensured on principle, so activities for the development, resilience of Christian communities can be an important factor in the life of all Christian communities.

## The Catholic Caritas as a Church Community

The Caritas is not just a humanitarian aid organization, but a unique community whose motivations is linked to the spirituality of the gospels and the example set by Jesus of Nazareth. (UJHÁZI 2017c, 429.) The charity service they conduct is not a kind of gift delivery service, but it is the essence of the threefold mission of the Church, – “preaching of God’s words (kerygma-martyria), the celebration of sacraments (leiturgia), the service of love (diakonia)”. (XVI. BENEDEK 2005, 25.) The Catholic Caritas conducts the mission of the Church, the service of love in the community of the faithful in parish Caritas groups, diocese caritas centres which control, assist and coordinate these activities, as well as in the National Caritas Centre and social institutions and aid programs. The Catholic Caritas, as the official aid organization of the Hungarian Catholic Church, is an institutional system and community within the Catholic Church with 300 employees

<sup>3</sup> Based on the survey by Medián in 1999, 54% of the population claimed to be members of a denomination, however, most of them (76%) do not observe the teaching of the church. (Medián 1999)

and about 10,000 volunteers who work in 800 parish Caritas groups, (Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference 2014) micro-communities, regularly and in an organized way. The Hungarian Catholic Caritas is a member of the international Catholic Caritas – *Caritas Internationalis* – the global network of Caritas, which is present in 165 countries worldwide. (Caritas Internationalis s. a.) The Catholic Caritas conducts charity and social activities in 8 major areas:

- ✦ Home and institutional assistance to the elderly and the sick
- ✦ Material, with goods and services, and spiritual support of families
- ✦ Homeless care
- ✦ Institutional help of addicts and their relatives, prevention
- ✦ Disabled care, support
- ✦ Help to handicapped minorities
- ✦ Refugee support
- ✦ Humanitarian help in disasters

In these areas our social institutions (17), diocese centres (16), parish Caritas groups (800), and local and national aid programs provide help to those in need.

## **The Caritas for Refugees in Hungary**

The Catholic Caritas, in addition to helping its traditional target groups, provides help to the endangered migrants arriving in Hungary, it supports their integration and it is involved in a complex program for their support. These intentions are expressed through support initiatives with goods and services for individuals with refugee or protected status in Hungary. Furthermore, in the framework of social and support programs, Caritas administered aid to Christian and war refugees. The purpose of this support is to provide help in the first period of the refugee's life in Hungary, to establish basic living conditions and to overcome the difficulties of social integration. Besides arrangements and the provision of housing, the refugee individuals and families receive complex social support: donation, support with goods and services, social support, housing support, personal contact and social arrangements, temporary accommodation, support for events helping integration into the Western society, the means of social work, informational and psycho-social help. In the year-long program, we primarily provide living support, management of housing difficulties, social customer service.

In the first months of 2018, as a follow-on of the 2017 program, the organization continued the support with goods and services and social purpose support of individuals staying in the vicinity of the transit zones in Röszke and Tompa. The goal was to improve their basic living conditions with humanitarian aid and social support for refugees so that they can overcome the difficulties of social integration in the first period after their arrival at the border.

The humanitarian support was provided weekly, considering the emerging demands and the changing number of people. The organization, in coordination with the national centre, in the vicinity of the transit zone in Röszke and Tompa, visited the individuals staying and waiting at the border on a weekly basis, and provided, on a demand basis, basic food, items of hygiene, child protection tools and clothes, primarily for those in the biggest need (children, infants, families, the elderly and the sick).

At the Károlyi István Children's Centre in Fót, psycho-social support and linguistic and cultural integration training was provided for underage refugees who arrived without adult escorts. The classes, courses and studies of the children were held as part of the daily routine of the centre. The purpose of these activities was to familiarize the children in a playful way with knowledge essential for their stay in Hungary and understanding Hungarian and European culture. The activities were primarily focused on Hungarian language and culture, gastronomy, traffic, behavioural norms and learning how to overcome the difficulties created by the differences in cultural, historical, and educational backgrounds, as well as trying to ease the trauma of being a refugee. The target group of the activities were youths between the ages of 14–18.

## **Cooperation for the Christian Communities in the Middle East**

The Catholic Caritas is a member of the International Catholic Caritas network, which includes 165 national Caritas charities, so the international Caritas activity is conducted and coordinated by the national organizations operating in every country. Caritas organizations also assist the Caritas teams of other countries during natural disasters or in other significant crisis situations. This happens either in coordination with the territorial Caritas organization or with support from the national Caritas itself.

Regarding the current refugee crisis and the persecution of Christians, in addition to Caritas Internationalis, the Hungarian Catholic Caritas also started a joint program with a number of local, primarily Middle Eastern Caritas Centres. During the refugee crisis in 2015, the Hungarian Catholic Caritas complemented its refugee-related activities at the Hungarian border and inside the country with taking on additional



international commitments. The Hungarian Catholic Caritas tried to help persecuted Christians in those regions where the presence of the International Caritas and other charities were weaker. Furthermore, it helped those Christians who were fleeing persecution, and it also supported local residents by improving their basic living conditions, the quality of social and other services to protect their lives. These activities also boost the resilience of the persecuted, and it offers an alternative to escape. That is why cooperation has been established with the Lebanese and the Jordanian Caritas, in the framework of which specific development programs were devised to help refugees in 2018. Cooperation with Lebanon started earlier. In 2018 a joint project was devised with Paul Karam, Director of the Lebanese Caritas. As a result of the program, on 23 October 2018, an assistance contract was signed by the Lebanese and the Hungarian Caritas in Beirut to cover one year's operational costs of an institution near Beirut, providing protection for abused and persecuted women and children. The Olive Tree Emergency House can house and provide catering for 80 persons. The purpose of the 9,000,000 HUF project is to protect and rehabilitate the victims of abuse, rape, ill-treatment, violence and persecution by providing shelter, basic, medical, legal and psycho-social assistance. In Lebanon, at the launch of this joint project, the leadership of the Catholic Caritas met with Paul Karam, President of Caritas Lebanon and Maronite Eparch Michel Aoun, who is in charge of the Caritas.

In 2018 there were two important meetings with Tomah Ejbara, one of the leaders of the Jordanian Caritas, and Bishop William Shomali of Jordan. Although Christians in Jordan enjoy the best conditions among Arabic countries, the survival of the Christian community is in danger because similarly to other Middle Eastern countries, the number of Christians is on a continuous decline. Currently, just 2% of the 10 million inhabitants of Jordan is Christian. The development of a joint cooperation project has been started by the Jordanian and Hungarian Caritas. Both countries have to receive refugees from their neighbours which is a heavy burden for both countries. The quality of the services and the reception of the refugees may influence whether they stay or move on. The long-term objective is to support refugees in a way that in the future they can return home. For both countries providing the necessary food supply, housing and the schooling for refugees and their children is a priority.

The Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference has started a donation campaign, which lasts until Christmas in 2018, to raise funds for persecuted Christians. The goal of the campaign is to help "our expelled brethren to return to those towns and villages, where their ancestors have been living for centuries or even millennia". (Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference 2018) The Hungarian Catholic Caritas participates in the popularization of the campaign through its organization and communities.



Picture 1.

*Richárd Zagyva, Deputy Director of the Catholic Caritas, Gábor Écsi, National Caritas Director, Paul Karam, President of the Lebanese Caritas, and Michel Aoun, Eparch of the Maronite Catholic Eparchy in Lebanon*



Picture 2.

*Persecuted women in the Emergency Shelter, assisted by the Hungarian Catholic Caritas in Beyrouth*





Picture 3.

*In the Lebanese Emergency Shelter on 23 October 2018, starting the project of the Hungarian Catholic Caritas*

*Source: Photographs by the author*

## Supporting Hungarian Christian Communities Outside Hungary in 2018

Contributing to the accident prevention of Hungarian families in Sub-Carpathia, on 10 January 2018 Secretary of State Miklós Soltész, retired General József Hatal, President of the Accident Prevention Council, and Gábor Écsy, National Director of the Catholic Caritas, handed over 3,000 high visibility vests to Antal Majnek, Diocesan Bishop of Munkács (Hungarian Catholic Caritas 2018a) to reduce the number of road traffic accidents among Hungarian families living in Western Ukraine, in Sub-Carpathia. Within the framework of the Caritas's Hospital Mission, the Hungarian Catholic Caritas has donated twelve inhaling devices to the pulmonology department of the County Children's Hospital of Sub-Carpathia. The portable devices can also be used in the wards by the children. (Hungarian Catholic Caritas 2018b) The organisation also donated 104 bicycles to Sub-Carpathian children in Visk, in Gyertyánliget and Beregszász. (Magyar Kurír 2018a)

In the framework of the Catholic Caritas's medical mission in 2018, fifteen doctors and twenty medical students participated in voluntary missions to improve the medical condition of the Hungarian ethnic minorities living in Ukraine and Serbia. Until September 2018, this medical team has completed twelve missions, eight in Sub-Carpathia, and two in Vojvodina. In Sub-Carpathia they visited nine settlements, Körösmező, Terebesfejrpaták, Nagybocskó, Gyertyánliget, Aknaszlatina, Técső, Bustyaháza, Visk, Nagyszőlős, while in Vojvodina they were present in four settlements, Drea, Hajdújárás, Muzslya and Szabadka. During their visits this medical mission has conducted screening examinations. (Magyar Kurír 2018b) They checked almost 1,500 children and adults, and they distributed more than two hundred pairs of glasses and about four hundred foot easers for children. Furthermore, they provided medication and vitamins as it was required. In Sub-Carpathia, the Catholic Caritas also supported three hundred and seventy pupils who started school with educational supplies. The donations have reached eleven settlements from Beregszász through Técső and Aknaszlatina to Körösmező. (Magyar Kurír 2018c) The Caritas has also provided one hundred schoolbags to the children of Lurkóházak in Vojvodina. (Magyar Kurír 2018d) In addition to the activity of central bodies of the Hungarian Catholic Caritas, many local Caritas organizations and schools have supplied food and clothes for families living in Sub-Carpathia and Vojvodina all year long.

## Reinforcing the Caritas Movement, Developing the Community

Besides demonstrating solidarity with Christian communities, Caritas as a national organisation considers it primarily important to develop its own community. Several programs have been organized in this direction. In 2018 it expanded the size of the regular training program for its workers and it also developed the basic training plan for Caritas volunteers. Caritas also held thirty courses for those people who take part in the Caritas's elderly-care and patient-visitation activities. Usually, 20–100 people attended each of these events. Caritas also organised a one-week long training camp for sixty volunteers representing the various communities of the dioceses. Local and diocesan events, meetings, spiritual days and spiritual exercises were important tools in community building. The latter aim was supported by the publication of the four issues of the nationwide magazine *Adásidő* [Showtime].

In order to ensure the future of the Caritas communities, a children's movement, *Caritas Junior*, was launched to highlight the importance of charity and raising awareness about its most important fields. The enlargement of the *Young Caritas* groups was also important. In order to better understand the most important elements of crisis management and to promote cooperation with the armed forces, the Hungarian Catholic Caritas and the University of Public Service signed a cooperation agreement in 2018. The first concrete result of the cooperation between the two parties was a one-day training session held in May 2018. This event examined multiple topics like security and national security issues, civilian-military cooperation, and the scope of the Caritas activities during the refugee crisis.

## Summary

To strengthen our existing Christian communities within their homelands is vital if we want to preserve Christianity for the future. So, it is the obligation of every Christian community, in addition to doing their normal duties, to protect and help other Christian communities around the world. The Catholic Caritas, as the official charity organisation of the Catholic Church, is both an institution and a community of faithful people. Out of the many charitable activities of this organization, the programs supporting persecuted Christians and war refugees are of primary importance. The Hungarian Catholic Caritas supported the families and their children at the border near Röszke and Tompa in 2018. It also ran integration programs for refugee children who arrived without guardians in the Károlyi István Children's Home in Fót, and made their lives

more enjoyable by material donations. In addition to these activities, the Hungarian Caritas has developed a detailed social program to support individuals who are either refugees or possess another type of protected status due to a different crisis. In order to help persecuted Christians, the charity organisation, after a careful study of the situation of Christians in Syria and the Middle East, in cooperation with the Lebanese and Jordanian Caritas, has begun a number of ongoing initiatives to make it possible for these people to remain in their homeland. In addition to these international activities, the Hungarian Caritas also provided social and medical assistance to Hungarian Christian communities in Sub-Carpathia and Vojvodina, who live in difficult social conditions and their numbers are continuously decreasing. In addition to these charity operations, Caritas would like to develop its own community as a religious community, so that is why, besides increasing the size of its child and juvenile groups, in 2018 it also held organized training occasions for its members, other types of events for its community members.

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## THE IRAQI ASSISTANCE OF THE ECUMENICAL CHARITY SERVICE, WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO ITS ACTIVITIES FOR IRAQI CHRISTIANS

### **Humanitarian Crisis in Iraq**

One of the most serious ongoing humanitarian crises is taking place in Iraq. There has been an unprecedented movement of people recently. In 2014, 2 million civilians left their homes in Iraq alone, followed by 1.4 million in 2015. In 2016, due to the advance of the Islamic State, another 650 thousand people were forced to leave. In total 6.7 million people live in a crisis situation in Iraq, the number of the internally displaced is close to 2 million, and there are 4 million people who have either returned home, or have been resettled elsewhere, who need external help until they can restart their normal lives. (Humanitarian Bulletin Iraq – OCHA 2018)

Even before the formation of the Islamic State, masses of refugees arrived in Iraq from Syria, as a result of the Syrian civil war which started in 2011. There was a great number of Christians among them. Their situation is particularly sad, as a lot of them, approximately 100 thousand Iraqis, fled to Syria earlier due to the Iraqi civil war, which started in 2003. When the civil war broke out in Syria, most of them had to return to Iraq, especially to Iraqi Kurdistan, but some moved either to Mosul or to the Nineveh Plains which they had to leave after the rise of the Islamic State.

Supplying the internally displaced people, the resettled and the Syrian refugees, making it possible for them to restart their lives, in a period of economic stagnation is a huge burden for the whole Iraqi society. For example, 23 hospitals and more than 230 medical facilities have either been damaged or destroyed during

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the conflicts. The education of almost 3.5 million school children has been disrupted, and more than 600 thousand, internally displaced children have missed at least one full school year. More and more people are becoming vulnerable in the wake of the conflict: for example, the number of people in poverty has doubled in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the unemployment rate has tripled. Agricultural production has dropped by 40% which undermines the food security of the country, prompting tens of thousands to go to cities to find work. (Humanitarian Bulletin Iraq – OCHA 2018)

On the territory of the Islamic State, the population had to face all kinds of horrors: these included crossfire, bombing, execution, kidnapping, rape, abuse, robbery and looting, imprisonment, persecution, threat, forced conscription and brainwashing. Communities have been destabilized, sectarian hatred was at an all-time height. Estimates say that 3.5 million children, one in five, are in serious danger. Millions are suffering from unbearable psychic, mental, physical pain and trauma which will have an effect on the next generation, too.

The public and private infrastructure have been heavily damaged in recaptured areas, the public utilities are down, the inhabited areas are polluted, mined, and many have become useless.

The destroyed infrastructure, the lack of services, the mined areas and unemployment are making the return or resettlement impossible. In areas retaken from the Islamic State, there is a big tension between the returning population and those who stayed, which is worsened by the tension between them, i.e. the mostly Shia liberating forces and the Sunni population. Another difficulty is that the international humanitarian aid and reconstruction programs are similarly underfunded, while the Iraqi and Kurdish governments cannot afford the large costs of reconstruction, the resettlement of families and creating jobs for them in every area.

## **The Situation of Iraqi Christians**

The persecution of Christians was of great concern even before the Islamic State. The number of them in Iraq was about 1.4 million in the early 1990s, which dropped to 600–800 thousand by 2008. This number further decreased due to the expansion of the Islamic State, not to mention the Christians expelled from Syria. (FERRIS–STOLTZ 2008)

In order to understand the role of Christians in Iraq and their situation compared to other minorities, we need to get to know the important minority groups in Iraq. In addition to the Shia majority, the following minority groups live in Iraq currently: Sunni Arabs, Kurds, Christians, Turkmens, Assyrians, Yazidis, Shabaqs,

Kaka'is, Syrian refugees and asylum seekers, Romas, Mandeans, Palestinian refugees, Bahá'is and Armenians. Iraqi minorities are often not ethnic or religious minorities, but they are a mixture of both of these categories. However, most of them are persecuted because of their religious adherence. It is obvious that the territory of Iraq is not homogenous neither ethnically, nor religiously. The situation is further complicated by the fact that intercommunal hostility in Iraq is the product of a long-lasting ethnic-religious divides, and today these tensions are irremediable at the social level.

On the territory of Iraq, Christianity started to expand rapidly, almost from the time of its appearance. Its roots can be traced back to the missionary activities of Apostle Thomas in the first century AD among the Jews who lived in the territory of today's Iraq. The early churches in Iraq were under the control of the Patriarchate of Antioch which was founded by Apostles Peter and Paul.

## **Persecution of Christians in Iraq**

In Iraqi history, attacks against Christians started with the appearance and the expansion of Islam in the country. This process can be demonstrated analysing the number of Christians. Christian persecution has become extremely serious in the last ten years. Many consider 2003 as a turning point: when in the chaotic situation after the Second Gulf War, extremist Islamist groups started fighting against the government and each other. In that chaos the number of assassinations, robberies, kidnappings, torture, bombings, murders against Christians increased.

Since 2003 organized, complex attacks against Christian churches and priests have become widespread. There have been attacks against students, seminary students, women, and several priests were killed. Between 2004 and 2013, there were bombings against 73 Christian churches. In 2014, another 45 Christian churches were attacked by explosives and the Islamic State demolished many churches in the country. Letters threatening priests and the faithful also became prevalent. A great number of deadly attacks were conducted against them, the number of which was several hundred between 2003 and 2013, including the murder of infants and children in several cases. (BETBASOO 2013)

The formation of the Islamic State, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, was the culmination of a long process. The roots of this terrorist group date back to 2006 in Iraq. The extremist Sunni militias and different armed groups in Iraq, the predecessor of the Islamic State was the Iraqi Islamic State, which contained many, mainly Sunni, armed groups; the al-Qaeda in Iraq started persecuting Christians under the same goals and

ideology. The appearance of the Islamic State was a novelty only in terms of size for Iraqi Christians; the former practice, meaning that they either converted, paid tax or left, was in use on Iraqi territory.

Extremist Sunnis did not only persecute the Christians of Iraq. They targeted people belonging to other minority groups and religions as well, such as moderate Sunnis, Shias, Yazidis, Kakais, Shabaks, and Turkmens, and made them flee, because they were classified as their enemies. According to accounts of local Christians, the occupation of a city by Islamic State soldiers was only a matter of hours or days. Although the number of actual IS fighters was not high, the local population *defected* in a matter of moments and sided with the extremists. Probably this was the most shocking reason behind the success of the Islamic State. That was why Mosul, a city with 2 million inhabitants, was fully occupied by a few thousand extremist fighters in a couple of days. The same happened in the Christian majority of towns and villages on the Nineveh plain.

Under the rule of the Islamic State, no Christians remained in Mosul and the Nineveh Plains. Most Church real estate, churches, monasteries, monuments were either destroyed or used for some other purpose, after the removal of every Christian symbol. These events happened in areas where Christians have existed from the earliest period of Christianity. For Iraqi Christians and other minorities, the arrival and incredibly rapid expansion of the Islamic State was completely shocking and unbelievable. Due to the radical persecution of Christians by the Islamic State, now there are only about 200–250 thousand Christians in Iraq.

## **Supporting Resettlement and Staying – The Key to Survival**

The key to the survival of Christians in the region is the reconstruction of private houses, public buildings, infrastructure and public utilities of settlements. The international aid organizations are taking an active role in this process, and the government should also make more efforts to be involved. The process of reconstruction has commenced, the basic living conditions of the resettled have improved, but better coordination and sustainability is still needed. Furthermore resettled people need further support, things like psycho-social assistance and last but definitely not least, jobs.

## **The Ecumenical Aid Organization in Iraq**

*The Ecumenical Aid Organization*, founded in 1991, is one of the biggest, internationally recognized charity organisations of Hungary. The joint efforts of the founding Churches to assist victims and those in need have been increasingly supported by specialists, volunteers, donors and responsible private sector partners. The Charity provides help to those in need, regardless of their nationality, religion or ideology, meeting the highest standards of professional and transparency requirements in Hungary, in the Carpathian basin as part of the international charity community.

The Charity launched its first Iraqi aid program in 2003, then, from 2014, it supported internally displaced people and Syrian refugees, following the expansion of the Islamic State. Among those who received aid, special attention was given to Christian communities.

The most important goal of the Charity is to provide support in Iraq to the repatriation of the internally displaced people and the resettlement of those people in Iraq who fled to Europe. In addition to providing humanitarian assistance, the Charity also participates in the promotion of the reconstruction of the destroyed private and public infrastructure, and tries to contribute to the solidification of local communities. The Charity provides holistic support, in order to achieve its goals:

- provision of repatriation packages, building material and household equipment for people who are being resettled
- creation of jobs for resettled and internally displaced people
- contribution to the rehabilitation of vital local infrastructure
- support of education, contribution to restarting schoolwork
- psycho-social assistance and counselling, child protection support, community building

The Charity, with help from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, opened an office in Erbil, to support refugees through humanitarian and development programs. The Charity operates in Iraq, (recognized by the Iraqi–Kurdistan Authority) as an officially registered organization, as a member of the international charities' community under the ACT Alliance, based in Geneva.

The activities of the Ecumenical Charity Service in Iraq are conducted under the supervision of the Hungarian central office with guidance from the humanitarian representative in Erbil, who cooperates with Hungarian members of the service in Iraq, 2–3 persons at present, as well as with local staff, specialists and local partners.

Major local partners of the charity:

- CAPNI: an organization with Duhoki Christian background, conducts humanitarian and development activities in Iraq in cooperation with primarily foreign organizations with a religious background.
- REACH: one of the longest operating NGOs in Iraqi–Kurdistan with an office in every province, supporting internal and Syrian refugees through significant programs related to its humanitarian and development activities.

### *An Overview of Charity's Activities in Iraq*

- The Charity launched a humanitarian aid program in the country as a response to the crisis situation in the wake of the Iraqi war which broke out in March 2003. In the city of Dujayl, 80 km from Baghdad, medicine and medical equipment was provided for the population, and a school of the city was partly renovated. The program had to be suspended due to the continuously deteriorating security situation. The 25 million HUFs worth of aid was provided by private donors and ACT Alliance.
- August 2014: participates in a joint fact-finding mission with the World Council of Churches, makes recommendations to the UN. The organization provides humanitarian help to people living in refugee camps.
- 2014–2016: distribution of humanitarian aid to refugees living in and outside of refugee camps.
- In the summer of 2016, the foundation, with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, places a permanent humanitarian representative in Erbil (Iraqi–Kurdistan Region). The representative's task is to implement humanitarian and development programs, find further international funds for helping internally displaced people and refugees in the region. In order to provide a basis for the long-term Iraqi activities of the Charity, it develops country-strategy concerning its humanitarian and development activities plus the charity has also conducted surveys, submitted applications to international donors. The Charity's presence in Erbil ensures multilevel local and international coordination.
- 2016–2017: the Charity conducted several humanitarian aid projects, participated in looking after the masses who fled Mosul after its capture by the Islamic State. In cooperation with ACT Alliance,

the Charity provided food, hygiene products and medical psycho-social assistance to refugees and internally displaced people.

- ✦ October 2017 – April 2018, a plan, supporting the repatriation of refugees, was carried within the framework of *Hungary Helps* with support from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Affairs. Its most important elements:
  - Supporting refugees, internally displaced people in and outside refugee camps. Provision of food, personal hygiene products and other basic items.
  - Supporting 3084 Syrian refugees – Suleimania (Sitak, Rania, Tasluja, Halabja and Said Sadiq).
  - Delivery of immediate humanitarian aid to 2,640 people in Alkosh, Sharafyaba and Bandwayaba.
  - The opening of Returnee Support Center in Bashiqa near Mosul.
  - Renovation of 55 private homes in Karakosh.
  - Supply of 100–100 litres of kerosene for 324 returning families.
  - Contribution to the rehabilitation of local basic infrastructure (renovation of a water tower).
  - Support for education: renovating and reequipping 2 schools in Bashiqa.
  - Psycho-social support in Bashiqa.
  - Reconstructions of 17 private homes on the Nineveh plain with support from the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- ✦ 2018: the Charity signed a contract with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and the European Commission (resilience support for refugees, IDPs and host communities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq) about a 2 years long development program in Iraq, in the value of 1 billion HUF in the region. The total budget of the whole program is 23 billion HUF, providing help in 4 countries of the region with the help of several international agencies and organizations. The project is funded by the EU's *Madad Trust Fund* and GIZ. The aim of this project is to reduce the destabilizing effects of the refugee crisis in Iraqi–Kurdistan, and the promoting reconciliation between refugees and their host communities, and the creation of new employment opportunities. The program provides support for 7,800 direct beneficiaries in 3 provinces (Duhok, Erbil, Suleimania). Major activities:
  - Capacity development of local organizations – 3 civilian and 3 governmental – to facilitate better coordination and more efficient support to refugees.
  - Organization of trade training, conversion courses for adults to facilitate better settlement of refugees.



- Development of agriculture and animal husbandry, *livelihood* programs.
- Development of small and medium enterprises: support existing and new enterprises with funds, start-up training (how to make a business plan, marketing plan development, material support).
- In 2018, as part of the ACT Alliance’s IRQ181 program, the Charity also participates in major aid programs. The total budget of that program is close to 10 million USD. Implementation is done by 11 international and local organizations. Within this project, the Charity is renovating private homes in the worst affected areas of Iraq, and improving the living conditions of returnees.

Since 2014 the charity has spent more than 1.3 billion HUF on its Iraqi charity programs. During 2014–2018, the Charity’s initiatives have directly reached 36,995 people in Iraq and Iraqi–Kurdistan. The Charity is planning to remain in the country and take its part in the repatriation of Iraqi refugees, in the reconstruction and development process, in humanitarian rehabilitation and development programs, and indirectly distributing help to tens of thousands of people.



Picture 1.

*Psycho-social assistance at the settlement of Bashika in the Niniveh plains. The program, involving 72 persons has contributed to the restoration of the sense of security of and the mutual trust between ethnic minorities, as well as to the healing of traumas suffered as refugees*



Picture 2.

*Supporting internally displaced people (preparation for the winter) in the province of Duhok*





Picture 3.

*The staff of the Charity Service personally assess the inflicted damage in each case and select the most efficient form of assistance*



Picture 4.

*Humanitarian assistance by the Charity service in Iraq in 2014–2018  
provided direct help to as many as 36,995 people*





Picture 5.

*Life is restarting in settlements previously occupied by the Islamic State.  
Altogether 72 private houses were refurbished in 2017–2018 from funds provided  
by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Hungarian Evangelical Church*



Picture 6.

*An important element of reconstruction is the support provided to reestablish education. The Charity Service, with funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has refurbished two schools at the settlement of Bashika, near Mosul*





Picture 7.

*One of the objectives of the Charity Service in assisting people in Iraq is the support of water management and agriculture by refurbishing irrigation canals and dams*



Picture 8.

*The Charity Service is supporting the long-term livelihood of internally displaced people and repatriates with vocational training and employment incentive programs*

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# GLOBAL SOLIDARITY: HUMANITARIAN AID AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS OF THE HUNGARIAN CHARITY SERVICE OF THE ORDER OF MALTA IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

## **Introduction**

This essay presents how the concept of *global love*, or *Christian caritas* is manifested in the Middle Eastern and African programs of the Hungarian Maltese Charity. The issue is examined from two aspects. One of these is the recent global refugee or migration crisis, while the other is the phenomenon of urban segregation. In both cases, the Hungarian Maltese Charity has a special focus on delivering assistance to persecuted Christian communities around the world. In answering these questions, the Hungarian Maltese Charity's programs which help external and internal refugees and people who live in the slums of big cities are presented as examples for the concept of *Christian caritas*.

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<sup>1</sup> Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta



## **“I am a keeper of my brother”**

The decrease in the size of Middle Eastern Christian communities has reached an alarming magnitude in recent years. The bloody clashes in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan or Iraq, the very places where Christianity was born, have become an everyday phenomenon. Most attacks, a fact the West has frequently ignored, are against Christians, according to surveys prepared by institutes monitoring religious discrimination, among others by Open Doors. (Open Doors 2018) In Syria different religious communities lived in relative peace together for centuries. By 2018 40–50% of Syrian Christians have disappeared. In case of Iraq, this figure is even more frightening since 80% of the Christians have already disappeared from the country. Physical persecution is an everyday experience for Christians living in certain regions of the Middle East, which is one of the reasons why Christianity is slowly vanishing from its birthplace. So the main question is: what can assistance to persecuted Christians achieve in reality? How can targeted aid projects be reconciled with the positive or negative discrimination-free principle of the internationally good practice of assistance?

Not everybody can actively take part in charity assistance activity, but with prayers, good wishes, and spiritual deeds everybody can help the success of such initiatives, as charity is also our obligation. To answer this question and the contradiction, and as a starting point of this topic, the widely known line of the letter by Apostle Paul to the Corinthians has been chosen: “The body is one, but it has several parts [...] If one part suffers, then all other parts suffer with it.” (1Cor, 12–26.) Translating this to the everyday practice of charity, it also means that in regions where Christian communities are suffering from religiously motivated persecution, in addition to regular assistance, it is also our obligation, because of our value system, to provide more aid to them, and we have to find the most suitable method to achieve this goal.

What does Christian assistance mean, does it exist and how does the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta approach this concept in principle and during its implementation?

## **The Role of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta in International Assistance**

The establishment of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta is connected to a milestone event in global history, more precisely, to the East German refugee crisis of 1989. We can say that the Service was born in the crisis. In 1989, citizens of the GDR arrived in Hungary in large numbers to get to West Germany through

Austria. By August, the situation became so critical – since a large number of East Germans, who did not want to return home and were stuck in the Hungarian capital – that it could be classified as a state of refugee catastrophe. Soon after the East German crisis, first, the revolution in Romania, then in 1991 a bloody civil war in former Yugoslavia was the crucible which defined the character of the young organization, which had to be fully prepared at very short notice.

The Charity Service looks after people who have experienced severe humanitarian crises and it sees the refugee as a person in need. A person who is abandoned, who has either lost or was forced to leave behind family, community, home and homeland, essential parts of everybody's lives. To abandon all of these, even when this decision is made voluntarily, always requires a weighty reason. In most cases, heavy outside burdens force people to make such decisions. The uncertainty of the future, feeling alien in a world where even the strongest person requires support to survive and to come to terms with his/her losses. This is especially true for children, for the elderly who have lost their roots, for the sick and the disabled.

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has been actively present in Asia, the Middle East, and the Horn of Africa for almost 15 years, and members of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta have done valuable charity work in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sumatra, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Lebanon, Syria, Burma, Vietnam and Ramallah. They were the first organisation to launch, a Hungarian initiated program in 2011 in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, where a sanitary centre was established in the largest segregated area in Africa, where locals now have access to clean, healthy drinking water and basic sanitary services. (SOLYMÁRI 2014, 5–15.) In 2012, with the support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, a similar but much larger centre was built in a slum of Mombasa, which is a beachside resort city. Thanks to this Hungarian initiative, this Kenyan slum now has access to safe drinking water. Then, in 2013 in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, the members of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta implemented a number of improvements inside 3 segregated slums of this big African city. During operations in Uganda, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta established a number of innovative biogas-operated centres, which are unique in such a slum environment. The solution which was derived from active house technology provides an opportunity for local people to cook food and light their homes without emitting any harmful substances, in addition to powering the supply of water and other sanitary services. In 2014 and 2015 the work continued in Tanzania. (Máltai s. a.)

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta modernized the water supply of one of the worst primary schools in Dar es Salaam, providing water for 2,000 children on a daily basis. All these efforts are the examples of how the Charity Service responds to one of the largest global humanitarian challenges of the world today in the field. (OPH s. a.)



## The Middle East, the Cradle of Christianity

### *Syria*

Civil war broke out in Syria in 2011. Armed conflict spread all across the country, especially in its northern and eastern regions. The cities of Homs and Aleppo were one of the first settlements to be transformed by these dramatic events which led to the total destruction of some neighbourhoods in Homs. The flourishing metropolis of Aleppo also suffered serious attacks, its eastern part was bombed to dust. Its population of 5 million has shrunk to 2 million. In the eastern part of the city, there are no medical or sanitary services, water or electricity supply is missing or badly damaged. There are no doctors, nurses and medical specialists in the city because they were killed in the attacks, were forced to leave their homes, or found other better-paying jobs abroad, instead of their 30-Dollar salaries at home. In eastern Aleppo, there are just a handful of operational hospitals which are working on an open social basis, one of which is located in the district of Al-Nayrab. The hospital struggled with capacity problems and it was hardly able to treat patients. The situation was further exacerbated by the presence of a major Palestinian refugee camp nearby. The source of this further overload is that inhabitants of the refugee camp also seek medical help in this hospital. In 2015 the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta began a project to expand this building and in 2017 they started to take the first concrete steps of this development program, so that in the future the hospital can provide medical services and supplies free of charge.

The hospital is under excessive pressure, since its capacity is absolutely inadequate: technical assets are scarce, the operating theatre has been destroyed during the conflict and key medical staff is missing; at the moment, operations are carried out in an outside container until our work is finished. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta supports the institution as much as its finances allow and is trying to transform it into an efficient medical institution. Due to the conflict, thousands of people have been living without accessible medical services and they are suffering from inefficient services to this very day. There are great numbers of external and internal refugees, from Raqqa or Khanaser, who also rely on this hospital for their healthcare needs. Close to 30% of the patients are women and 40% are either children, the average family has 4–10 children, elderly or physically disabled. The daily patient footfall varies widely, usually, 300 people turn up on an average day, but sometimes this figure exceeds 600, which is an extremely high figure for institutions following Western medical protocols.



Picture 1.

*The hospital in eastern Aleppo enlarged by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

As a result of the work funded by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, during 2017, the floor space of the hospital has been doubled, a new wing has been built to provide more space for patient care, and in 2018, new assets are being procured. The pay of doctors has also been increased: this program includes a 30 USD per month bonus for them, which may entice some specialists to return to this hospital; otherwise, there will not be any sufficient medical staff in the hospital. The mobile care units, the ambulance vehicles and the technical support equipment of the hospital will also be refurbished and modernised. Furthermore, the same is true for mobile surgery, which is a local version of a Maltese MOR.



Picture 2.

*Mobile doctor's surgery, providing gap-filling medical care in the isolated villages near Aleppo*

*Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*



In the absence of development, a hospital with inefficient capacities would not be able to serve the needs of the inhabitants living in war-torn neighbourhoods, and patients coming from the nearby Palestinian refugee camp. One of the consequences of the long civil war is that the area has lots of discarded weapons and unexploded ordnance which can and will cause physical injuries. Without the ongoing development and the provision of basic care, the repatriation of former inhabitants of the city is not realistic at all.

### *Palestine*

Another area in the Middle East where the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has traditionally been active are the refugee camps which were established in the wake of the events in 1947 and 1967 in areas now controlled by the Palestinian Autonomous Territories. The people who live in these camps do not get much attention due to more recent refugee crises and other humanitarian catastrophes. This is somewhat surprising since UNRWA, the UN organization responsible for Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, still looks after more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in the wider Middle Eastern region. These people live in multi-generation refugee camps, which are forty- or fifty-year-old, and the parents and sometimes even the grandparents of today's children were also born there. However, with the world's attention turning elsewhere, the fate of Palestinian refugees is often pushed into the background. In order to prevent that children living in these camps grow up without a future, culture and mother tongue – since some young migrants can only speak the mixed *camp-language* of refugee camps – these children deserve continuous support. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has been active around Ramallah, Bethlehem and other settlements which places are completely suitable for providing long-term humanitarian and psycho-social programs for refugees and internally displaced people (IDP)<sup>2</sup> and generally, for local people in need. This work is done at various places: inside refugee camps established in either 1948 or in 1967, in newly built centres for refugees and hotspots, in the buildings of Christian religious organisations, schools, educational centres and medical facilities.

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<sup>2</sup> The category of Internally Displaced People, in short IDP, refers to people who had to leave their homes as a result of external violence or force. Legally, these people should be under the protection of their own government which cannot be performed in a country where the local unresolved conflicts prompt these people to leave their homes.

## *Jordan*

Another important region for the charity service in the Middle East is Jordan. The historical and social challenges of the country are closely linked to the history of the region. As a result of the events of 1948, 1967, and 1971, and the post-Arab Spring migration crisis, close to 1 million refugees live in camps in Jordan today (e.g. Azraq, Emirati-Jordanian, King Abdullah Park and Zaatari camps), yet even more refugees live outside the camps. A lot of them are refugees from Syria. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta offers many solutions which enable the coordinated implementation of charitable initiatives.

The presence of the Charity Service is primarily strong in the refugee camps, refugee centres and hotspots situated along the Syrian border and in the region between Amman and the Dead Sea. In Jordan the Charity does the following:

- ✦ provide complex institutional support in refugee camps, improve and coordinate its actions with the medical and psycho-social services in refugee camps, purchase new assets, improve the supply of medications and other equipment
- ✦ do psycho-social work in refugee camps with individual tracking, mental-hygiene work, with special attention to victims, youths and children
- ✦ encourage and support education and learning in refugee camps, by promoting, advocating local opportunities, develop information materials, donate school packages and assets required to start schooling
- ✦ donate assets for the education of the local population, promoting, advocating local opportunities in education and learning
- ✦ develop local educational institutions, schools, purchase of new assets, reach, mobilize and strengthen contacts with children of school age
- ✦ support Christian communities with complex charity projects through their religious communities and get involved with their community life (educational support, personal escort, tinned food and sanitary items)
- ✦ support the operations of Christian organisations with training programmes, material support, development of their leadership competencies, improve and purchase assets useful for mobilization and contact



Picture 3.

*A refugee family at the Syrian–Jordanian border with medication  
from the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

## *Lebanon*

According to UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) data, since 2015 more than 1 million Syrian and 500,000 Iraqi refugees have arrived in the country. Also considering the refugees living in Lebanon for decades (many 40–50-year old Palestinian refugees), this huge number is threatening the stability of the country. In relation to its population, Lebanon hosts the most refugees in the Middle East today: more than 1 million Syrian refugees were registered between 2015 and 2018. The Lebanese Government does not recognize most of them as refugees, so they exist in a *legal grey zone*, and they are not entitled to receive any social or charitable assistance at all, or at best only in small numbers. Although the number of refugees arriving in the country has decreased since May 2018, as the Lebanese Government has ordered several *stops of registration*, this care has not improved. There are no large refugee camps in Lebanon, instead, there are a lot of smaller ones spread all over the country. The Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta in cooperation with the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta have been actively present in *camps* in the Bekaa valley and the northern areas of Lebanon where they run humanitarian, medical and sanitary aid programs in cooperation with local partners in the following areas:

- + *deliver aid to refugee camps*, improve and contribute to the medical and psycho-social services of these camps, purchase new assets, improve the supply of medications and other equipment
- + *psycho-social work in refugee camps*, this includes individual tracking, mental-hygiene work, with special attention to victims of crimes, youth and children
- + *encourage and support education and learning in refugee camps* by promoting, advocating local opportunities (e.g. develop information materials, donate school equipment so children can do their schooling – always adapted to current camp conditions, as there is big fluctuation within the camps)





Picture 4.

*Syrian refugees in the mobile doctor's surgery operated by  
the Lebanese Association of the Order of Malta in the Bekaa Valley*

*Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

Many health care work is done in a mobile doctor's surgery which visits refugee camps and other locations where refugees live. The mobile doctor's surgery is fully equipped with every necessary equipment and carries a large stock of sanitary items and medications to supply people who need these products. A doctor and medical staff

work in the vehicle for 8–10 hours a day. Due to the activities of their volunteers and workers, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta is in daily contact with 36% of all refugees in the country.

## Wounds on the Horn of Africa

### *Kenya*

Although Africa was the birthplace of mankind, we know a lot less about this continent than we know about Asia or America. According to the World Bank data, now more than 1 billion people live south of the Sahara, (World Bank Indicator 2018) but it still seems that the continent is still *too far away*, despite the significant activities carried out by many international development agencies and non-governmental organizations. Their activities also highlight the fact that African countries have done little so far to solve the problems of slums where most of their population live. Local decision-makers usually turn a blind eye to slums, but one thing must be clear: the hope for the future is to provide better conditions for their people in terms of housing and work.

Although these slums developed under different circumstances in different countries, their operating mechanisms are eerily similar. It is interesting to compare and contrast various similarities and differences between slums in countries which have had a similar historical experience. Below there are some methods which the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta uses in the segregated slums of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The Hungarian Charity Service has been involved in the water management, hygiene and sanitary development of slums in East African countries since 2010. Now, this charity operates programs in four large cities through local NGOs, specialists, academics and social workers. They are also improving infrastructure and sanitary conditions, and they are working to raise awareness about this issue amongst individual and institutional actors. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta provides help and support for backwards communities, which have not received aid from other donors. The Charity Service tries to improve the circumstances of individuals and communities which have to deal with several challenges, at the same time, using solutions which give adequate answers to these people.



Picture 5.

*The WASH centre, built in Nairobi has been serving the residents of Kibera since 2012*

*Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

One of the biggest and best known segregated areas of Africa is in the capital of Kenya. Kibera, which has become well-known for the poverty of its inhabitants, has – according to estimates provided by international charities which operate in the area – about one million inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> The structure of these slums is simple: big families of 5–6 members live in very small mud houses, which are sometimes washed away by the monsoon rains every year, turning the area into a gigantic field of mud. The rows of houses, which do not have any modern conveniences, wind invisibly into the distance. Families carry out their everyday needs in their one-room homes. Their simple dishes are cooked over kerosene or charcoal fire, both of which is harmful to health. Based on surveys carried out by humanitarian charities working in the slums, every second child under the age of five suffers from a respiratory disease, like asthma, or tuberculosis, which are caused by the toxic fumes of these fires. According to medical services, 50% of the inhabitant of this slum have a serious virus disease like malaria, dysentery, typhus and cholera. It is difficult, or almost impossible, to treat these patients because they do not get general medical care and social allowances because there is just one single state hospital and a pharmacy nearby. Profit-oriented private hospitals are inaccessible for them, so they do not have access to professional treatment. According to a local woman, if somebody gets ill here he or she simply buys medication in the local *pharmacy*, they only recover if they are lucky because they cannot get the right medications from the assistant who is not qualified, or sometimes they get fake drugs. The latter is the biggest problem regarding *treatment* with medication.

The risk of epidemics is also high because there is no drainage system, therefore human and animal waste flows freely between the houses. There are no basic sanitary facilities in the slums either: the inhabitants use ditches surrounded with metal walls as toilets. Another widespread solution is the so-called *flying toilet*, which means that people simply throw away bags full of human waste. The combination of these factors led to a grave public health crisis which means that 40% of the children born here die before the age of five. Inhabitants lack access to basic utilities as they do not have a water system either. Organized criminal gangs first steal 70% of the water from public water pipes, and then they sell the stolen water, which they deliver to the slums through their own pipelines, at extortionate prices. Everybody pays with whatever they have: some try to find legal jobs in the city but a lot of people can only find work at the black market or are forced to live off prostitution. The water which arrives through home-made, leaking, cracked pipes is highly infected. Almost 100% of the water which reaches the slums comes from illegal sources.

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<sup>3</sup> Accurate figures are almost impossible to give; this number was a realistic estimate by the NGO social workers in the slums in 2018.

The principles of the Hungarian solutions in these Kenyan slums follow international examples. The aim of the charity services is to provide cheap, accessible, legal, and healthy drinking water, as well as water for personal hygiene. To facilitate this, the Hungarian charity service built two large *sanitary centres*, their sizes vary between 40 and 80 m<sup>2</sup>: one in Kibera, and the other in Mombasa. The latter one was the first example of how to deliver drinking water from the public water system into the largest slum of the coastal city.

Personal hygiene is important in the fight against infections and it is also an important factor when people who live there want to find jobs in other parts of the city. These centres, like the one in Kibera, are legally connected to the city's public water network. In the interest of stable water supply, the local community which operates these centres fills the 10,000-litre tanks on a weekly basis, from which locals can buy water for a symbolic price. The revenue made by the sale of water is used to cover operational and maintenance costs and staff pay. In order to support the operation of the facility, it is important that services should be paid for. The brick buildings are complex sanitary bases which contain male and female showers and toilets. In the community rooms, which are also the main meeting points of the neighbourhood, essential hygiene awareness is taught. Outside the buildings there is a boiler which produces hot water for the customer, interestingly the boiler is powered by burning waste. Drainage is done through dedicated canals, which is important to reduce the burden on the environment, although waste is not recycled locally, yet. However, there are plans in place for future improvement of these facilities which include the reduction of its ecological footprint. An upgraded version of the model would separate the organic materials, which could be used by local farmers to grow vegetables.





Picture 6.

*The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta uses “simple solutions”,  
like this rooftop-connected rain collector*

*Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

## *Uganda*

The development in the capital of Uganda aims to achieve more in this respect than the one in Kenya. The Hungarian designed sanitary centres built in Kampala are highly similar to the previously mentioned ones and were

produced with sustainability in mind. This is seemingly controversial in an area which ought to be obliterated and not developed, but this is a different issue. Some houses in the slums were upgraded with biogas recycling systems. These houses produce electricity from renewable energy sources, and they produce more energy than they consume. In case of the ones built in the slums, consumption is minimal as they are simple buildings with very little power demand. The principle of the so-called *dry toilets* inside the kiosks is based upon a chemical reaction which occurs in the underground tanks, where solid and liquid waste is collected separately, which generates a gas. This gas is then collected and the residents can use in their households for lighting or cooking purposes replacing kerosene and charcoal powered stoves and their highly toxic fumes.

The structure of urban slums in Uganda is different from those in Nairobi. The Ugandan ones utilize the environment better, and the better cultivation and production methods mean that both the number and the size of segregated urban areas are smaller. Large slums are not typical, instead, small communities and families form island-like settlements. This fact makes development much simpler since it is easier to convince and motivate these closely-knit families and communities; on the other hand, the maintenance of these centres is more complicated than the ones in Kenya. The reason is that these centres are not-for-profit institutions unlike the ones in Kenya, therefore, no payment can be demanded for their use. This means that the success of their operation requires sensible thinking of the small communities, which may cause serious difficulties in the future.

### *Tanzania*

Unlike the previous examples, there are no slums in the capital of Tanzania in the classical sense of the word. Poor streets, areas and neighbourhoods are prevalent but segregated areas, like Kibera, do not exist. It is true for Dar as Salaam that it is a relatively clean viable city, despite the irregularities, operational errors and chaos, which are the characteristics of African metropolises. This is why fewer NGOs operate in Tanzania than Kenya in the field of water management and hygiene developments (WASH). Those which are present implement programs in (what we call) primary and secondary schools. The Charity Service of the Order of Malta improved the water supply and sanitary state of a school in an impoverished part of the city by building new facilities and refurbishing the existing systems. This is the common goal of a joint urban development program of the World Bank, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Tanzanian Government's TURP (Tanzania Urban Resilience Program), among others. The objective of this



initiative is to reduce the risk of humanitarian catastrophes which can easily develop in very quickly growing cities. The project (Open Knowledge 2017) is the result of understanding the reality that global climate change will lead to a huge inland water problem in East Africa, causing difficulties for rural inhabitants who will have to move to big cities leaving their homeland behind. A solution is provided by the World Bank with its program called Greening Africa's Cities. The upcoming years will show if the objectives have been achieved. The only question is if the communities in need have enough time to wait until local governments and Western donors come up with a solution.



Picture 7.

*A complex WASH centre in Tanzania*

*Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

The solutions presented above provide permanently accessible services for tens of thousands of people all year long. The sanitary centres provide coverage for 10% of the total population of slums in Nairobi, and for almost 80% in Kampala. Based on data from social workers responsible for the operation of the centre in Kenya, the number of child stomach problems in the area have halved. The mothers said that using the centre meant that they had to see the doctor a lot fewer times than in the previous years. This is an important issue for slum dwellers, as there is no public medical service there, most medications are fake and private doctors are too expensive. Although the efficiency and immediate health benefits of the centres is a bitter-sweet success, yet the existence of these centres have proved that sometimes even a small development can have huge benefits.



Picture 8.

*A worker of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta teaches how to wash hands in Tanzania*

*Source: The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta*

## Closing Remarks

This essay has presented practical examples of helping love in action based on Christian foundations. The international aid program of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, especially in the Middle East and Africa, has been demonstrated in great detail.

The everyday form of acting love is not easy in our personal lives. But the message delivered by Pope Francis on the first World Day of the Poor can be an encouraging source of power: May the hands be blessed which act, said the Pope, as “they are hands that bring hope. Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no ‘ifs’ or ‘buts’ or ‘maybes’: they are hands that call down God’s blessing upon their brothers and sisters.”

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*Béla Jungbert*<sup>1</sup>

## THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM FOR THE RESILIENCE OF CHRISTIANS IN THEIR HOMELAND

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, due to its duties and commitments, is closely watching the developments in the Holy Land and is taking an active role in providing assistance and humanitarian assets to institutions of the communities which belong to the Middle East Christian minorities. That is why the Hungarian eparchy of the knightly order believes that the Government's dedicated and value-oriented approach towards project funding is exemplary. Many of the projects which receive government funding are designed to improve the resilience of existing Middle Eastern Christian communities. They also support the repatriation of those expelled people who intend to return to their homeland, and the Equestrian Order willingly supports these initiatives. Nevertheless, the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem conducts their activity as an integral part of the Holy See's institutional system, under the guidance of the Grand Master of the Order's Grand Magistracy in Rome. The number one focus of their activities is the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Catholic Church's Supreme Authority representing Rome in the Holy Land. Based on its foundation, historic past and its mandate from the Holy See, the Order's primary attention is dedicated to the Holy Land, by which we mean the current State of Israel, Palestine (Palestinian Authority: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) and Jordan, roughly the region where Jesus lived in his life on Earth.

It can be stated that there is no religious persecution in the territory of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of the Holy Land, our faithful brethren can freely exercise their religion, although the Patriarchate regularly reports that atrocities have been committed against the Christian community. These can include trespassing, deprivation of rights, restriction of their movement, expulsion. As a result of all these issues emigration is

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant in Hungary of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

increasing which derives from the local social and political situation, laden with challenges and tensions. In the best case, they get the freedom of cult, but not religious freedom, i.e. the right to freely decide on one's religion, as converting from Islam to another religion, is considered treason by the community and is punished as such in the Arab world. The Jewish religious and Israeli state authorities prohibit all forms of missions aimed at conversion, keeping under close inspection the exclusively family-based becoming-a-Jew, while Jews prohibit conversion.

The protection of the ever-fragile peace of the region is also accompanied by the Christian's refrain from daily politics, however, it is important to highlight that Israeli Palestinian radicalism and terrorism does not exist among Arab Christians.

It is a fact that the situation of Christians living in the region is inseparable from the general conditions of the region and of the entire Christian world. Western states are also responsible for the safety of the Christians who live in the Holy Land and in the entire region. The unresolved situation of the Middle Eastern crisis and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the destabilization of certain Arab countries in the wider region, the well-known political proxy advocacy of the great powers and Islamist radicalization, forced mass migration and the persecution of Christians, naturally affect the future of Christians in the Holy Land.

However, it must also be stressed that up to this day, Israel has been able to keep the direct effects of the crises in the adjacent regions outside its borders, the benefits of which are also favourable for the Christian minority. Israel is the country of wonders and permanent struggle, a prominent place of the three monotheistic religions: most Christians of the Holy Land live there as a proportionately decreasing minority next to the majority Jews and Muslim Arabs. In 1920 the proportion of Christians in the Old City of Jerusalem was above 50%, today it is just 2%. In Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, before 1948 90% of the inhabitants were Christian now this figure has shrunk below 30%, while in Ramallah, which is the administrative centre of the Palestinian Authority, the former Christian majority has dropped under 10% by now. However, Christian presence has been continuous in the Holy Land for two millennia. No matter how strong is a person's commitment to his or her faith and homeland, it is clear that due to the political, economic, social and cultural situation thousands of Christians from the Holy Land are leaving the region to find a home abroad, especially in America. Their biggest united Palestinian diaspora is in South America, where in Chile alone, more Christians of Palestinian descent live than in the entire Holy Land.

That process is more accentuated for the wider region, and these events cannot be simply linked to the tragic events happening in Syria and Iraq after 2011. In 1910 only 14% of the population in the wider Middle East was Christian. Later, after the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the number of Christians in



Iraq gradually decreased from 1.5 to 0.25 million, and after 2011 Christians totally disappeared from certain areas. Currently, about 11–12 million of the 400 million people living in the one and a half dozen countries in North Africa and the Middle East can be considered Christians at best, and more than three-quarters of them are Coptic Christians in Egypt. Estimates made by the Vatican, and by various Christian rights and humanitarian organizations agree that between 1993–2010 more than 3 million Arab Christians left Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the area of the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Then the consequences of the Arab Spring, the civil wars, and the persecutions by the Islamic State, made more than one and a half million further Christians flee the region.

## On the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem is an Archdiocese spanning across four countries – Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Cyprus – with a total of 187,000 Catholic believers. In Israel and Palestine, most of them are of Arab origin with a Palestinian identity, but we also find people with an *international background*, meaning they are either foreign priests and secular Catholics who are in the Holy Land because they are clergymen or guest-workers. In the Archdiocese – besides the monks – there are 100 Latin-rite priests who serve the community at 55 parishes (ten years ago there were 64). The Latin Patriarchate operates 41 schools and 33 kindergartens where 1,580 teachers and administrative personnel look after 20,000 children and students. Besides, the Patriarchate also has several retirement homes, orphanages and centres for handicapped or disadvantaged youths, as well as medical centres providing hospital care and modern hospitals. Moreover, they recently started paying housing allowance for young Christian families which helps 300 families in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Beit Jala and Nazareth.

The Latin Patriarchate is currently building or renovating several churches primarily in Jordan, where most Catholics live. Besides these projects, several dozen development projects are also underway in Palestine and Israel. They can use the funds they receive directly for facility management, humanitarian support or financing published projects. (Project Development Office s. a.) Although the Patriarchate has some successful investments, yet its developments and its daily operations are financed by donations. So not surprisingly there is a permanent resource deficit at the Patriarchate's institutions which must be mentioned.

The Latin Patriarchate, in addition to doing its pastoral activities, also distributes humanitarian aid to those who are in need, tries to improve the quality and diversity of its services, which are proudly based upon

their confessed Christian values, as a symbol of their faith identity. The Patriarchate expresses its thanks for the donations from all over the Christian world, and they are especially grateful for the moral and regular material support from the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

It must be emphasized that our exclusive goal is to guarantee the operation of Christian institutions and parishes, so our activities are in the Holy Land strictly non-political and not-for-profit in nature. In 2017, our global fellow-knights raised 16.3 million Euros for this purpose. That money is spent to pay the bills of Christian orphanages, schools, hospitals and parishes, to fund development projects, and to provide general education, organized by the parishes, for Christian refugee children living in Jordan. It is also worth mentioning that half of the budget of the Christian University in Bethlehem, and the entire budget of the only Holy Land Roman Catholic Seminary, which operates in Beit Jala, just outside the city, is bankrolled by the order. Last year, half of the Latin Patriarchate's income was provided by the order.

In the educational institutions of the Latin Patriarchate, which are supported by the Order and operated by the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land, not only Catholic pupils can study. Many pupils are not even Christian, the majority of them are Muslim Arabs. Our principle is that we want to support the territory, where many of our Christian brethren live and we want to make it a place which is totally free from discrimination. Nevertheless, our primary goal is to provide Christian education for Christian children. However, experience proves that Muslim children attending Christian schools gain spiritual and cultural protection from radicalism, religious fanaticism, and any type of fundamentalism. In order to avoid misunderstanding, we want to make it clear that in classes which are mixed from a religious point of view, every child receives religious education according to their own religious beliefs, common education involves the secular subjects. Unfortunately, this proven positive experience is only true for the Holy Land, in the countries of the wider Middle East it is impossible for Muslim children to attend Christian schools.

## On the Order

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, under the gracious patronage of the Apostolic Holy See, as the only *dedicated* Equestrian Order recognized by the Holy See, has canonical legal personality and civil legal personality in Vatican City State. The Pope is the sovereign of the order, its Grand Master is a Cardinal appointed by the Pope, while the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem is the order's Grand Prior. The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, by tradition, was founded by the Frankish Duke



Godfrey of Bouillon, who was the leader of the first crusade in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. In order to protect the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, he was elected as the first crusader king of Jerusalem in 1099. He accepted rule under the condition that he would not use the title of king, as he was convinced that the Holy Land should be governed by the Church of Christ and that nobody should wear a crown of gold in the city where the Lord wore a crown of thorns. Instead of the title of king, he adopted the title of *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*, Defender of the Holy Sepulchre. The tasks of the members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem have been dual from the beginning. They had to defend the city of Jerusalem, the tomb of Christ, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, other holy sites and relics in the Holy Land, the pilgrims arriving in the Holy Land, and they also had to fight those Muslim powers which threatened the safety of the Holy Land. The Western military campaigns of the so-called crusader period between 1099–1291 only achieved limited and temporary success. So it is not surprising that many people living in the region consider the Latin Church and its organizations the forward bastions of the West. In 1847, after a long recess, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem was restored by Pope Pius IX and the chivalric order was reorganized. Pope Pius XII issued a new constitution for the order, which was finalized by Pope Paul VI in 1977. The government of the order is based on that constitution to this very day, with a couple of later amendments. John Paul II issued the brevet on 21 January 1994 in which the Holy Father declared Virgin Mary the Patron of the Order with the designation “Our Lady Queen of Palestine the Patron of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre by God”. The representatives of the highly diverse Eastern Christian denominations in the Holy Land belong to Christianity in the Holy Land together with Protestant Churches. The Holy See gave the following task for the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, to strengthen in its members the practice of Christian life, and to support the presence of Christians in the Holy Land. The Popes have restored the original mission of the Order with the significant difference that it is no longer based on weapons, but on the spiritual and material support of the Christians in the Holy Land. In practice, the knight makes efforts to represent the three characteristic virtues of the Order:

- ✦ support the weak and the defenceless
- ✦ promote justice and peace
- ✦ represent a dialogue between religions

The Order – besides closely watching the holy sites – supports and assists the Church’s, especially the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem’s, religious, charity, cultural and social activities and institutions. In the course of

this, it cooperates with other Christian Churches operating in the Holy Land and is in contact with the institutions of Judaism and Islam.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem's motto is "Deus lo vult!" – "This is God's will!" The Knights and Dames are knighted after achieving postulant and novice status in a regulated manner by the Investiture.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem has 30,000 members in 54 lieutenancies, in 40 countries on five continents in the world, which, besides supporting Christianity in the Holy Land, represents the confessed and acted Catholic identity in this world of conflicts and value crisis. In Hungary the order was active until 1945, the last Investiture before the Second World War was held in 1935. The reorganization of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in Hungary after the regime change started was first proposed by Eörs Csordás, Apostolic Protonotary, under the guidance of Cardinal Grand Prior László Paskai. The Hungarian branch of the order was re-founded by Grand Master Cardinal Giuseppe Caprio on 14 September 1991 and the Hungarian branch was elevated to the rank of Lieutenancy by Grand Master Cardinal Carlo Furno on 1 June 1998. Since the reorganization of the order in Hungary, there have been 16 knightly investitures. Currently, 100 Knights and Dames serve in the officer districts of Budapest, Vác and Pécs. The Hermina Chapel in Zugló, which is the seat of the lieutenancy, hosts monthly chapter sessions, weekly masses, community prayers, regular prayer services broadcasted by the Catholic Radio, novice training and different lectures. Other activities of the Hungarian Lieutenancy include national liturgical sessions with community attendance, pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and various cultural and charity events.

## **Christians in the Holy Land in the Stream of History**

The great majority of the indigenous Christian population in the Holy Land today speak Arabic and have a Palestinian identity. This is the result of a complex historical process. Ancient Christian communities formed the early Church of the Apostles in the day of Jesus, made up of people of Jewish and Greek origin from several Middle East cities, suffering from different persecutions from its birth. The history of Christians in the Holy Land has always been turbulent. In 70 AD, after the Jewish Revolt, the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans, then after a difficult period in 135 AD, the Romans did not only suppress the Bar Kokhba-led uprising but also dispersed the Jews all over the world. Due to the expulsion under Roman rule, Jews lived in diaspora far from their historical homeland. Because of different circumstances and reasons, Christians

also suffered difficulties, as Romans considered them enemies. They were persecuted until 313 AD when Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Milan which ended the persecution of Christians, then in 380 AD one of his successors, Theodosius the Great, made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. In the Byzantine era, the Christians living in the East Roman Empire spoke Greek. Before the Muslim Arabs reached the Holy Land in 638 AD, the whole region was primarily populated by Christians, aside from a few Jewish communities. That situation changed with the expansion of Islam and the arrival of the Arabs. After the Muslim conquest, the surviving Christians had three large options: to flee, to convert, or to live as a member of a second-class community which has to pay a penal tax. Some of them requested asylum from the Byzantine Empire and moved to areas which remained under Byzantine rule. Christians who chose to live under Arab rule changed their language to Arabic as time went by. That means that indigenous Christians living in the Holy Land today consider themselves ethnically Palestinian or Arab while sticking to their much-suffered Christian identity, as well.

Crusades were large-scale military campaigns, approved by the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope, in the 11–13<sup>th</sup> century. The aim of the crusades was to occupy, or rather recapture Jerusalem and the Holy Land, where the Holy Sepulchre is situated, from Muslim Arabs. This is one of those periods of history which has been thoroughly studied, although the history of the crusade has often been misinterpreted due to the doctrine of *political correctness*. In mainstream history, which serves political goals, crusades have a bad reputation. They are said to have been bloodier than the Muslim jihads, the crusades were the forerunners of modern colonialism and imperialism, they were a political and military failure which established the suspicion of the West towards Islam. Talking about *attacks* by the West or by *Crusaders*, which caused suffering for the Muslims, causes turbulence on a large scale in the region of the *gunpowder barrel* in the Holy Land. At the same time, the persecution of Christians in the Middle East region either in the past or in the present are not a part of Muslim thinking today, and even if they are mentioned, they are considered to be the side-effects of Muslim responses to Western or *modern-day crusader* attacks in the region, which are designed to destabilize and conquer Muslim countries.

The occupation of Jerusalem in 638 was just the beginning of centuries-long Muslim aggression, and of the ever increasing persecution of Christians in the Holy Land. Although the fall of Constantinople was prevented, the situation of Christians in Muslim conquered areas deteriorated in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The new lords of the Holy Land demanded money from Christians who wanted to transit or enter Jerusalem if they refused to pay, the Muslims threatened to plunder their churches. Due to the persecution, masses of Christians fled the Holy Land to settle areas around Constantinople and other cities of the Eastern Roman Empire. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century,

the situation became unbearable. On Palm Sunday in 937, the Muslims of Jerusalem massacred Christians, plundered and destroyed the Calvary Church, and the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre).

As a response, the Byzantine Empire attempted to recapture a part of its formerly lost territories. But under Islamic law every area which has ever been under Muslim rule belongs to the *house of Islam* (dar al-Islam) forever. Therefore, it is a religious obligation to recapture these lands from the infidels. Then an even more savage group of conquerors, the Seljuk Turks, appeared from the east. Meanwhile, after the Great Schism (1054) Eastern Christianity seemed to be totally abandoned by the West. In the new situation, the Byzantine emperor, Alexios Comnenos I, decided to reconcile with the West and requested help in the *name of the cross*, in starting a holy war to liberate the tomb of Jesus and the Holy Land from the Muslims.

The rest is known, the spiritual, moral, political, economic and military preparations for the Crusades soon began. The two-century-long era of the Crusades (there were eight crusades between 1096–1291) which achieved a very short-lived military success. The failure of the Crusades was only survived by the knightly orders which had formed in the Holy Land, first of all, the order of St. John, the Templars and the Teutonic Order, which represented a combination of the ascetic and knightly ideals. Most probably the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem was also present back then.

After the Mamluk occupation, the Holy Land was ruled by the Seljuks and the Ottoman Turks. The Ottomans controlled the Holy Land for over 400 years, until the end of the First World War. The power of the Ottoman Empire weakened in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the contemporary European great powers, England, France, Germany, Italy and Russia, started to show interest in gaining geopolitical, strategic, economic and military footholds in the region. They also tried to exercise patronage over the Christians living in the Holy Land, to gain influence. After the First World War, the League of Nations assigned England to set up and operate a mandate in Palestine.

In 1948, partly due to the Holocaust, Israel managed to achieve its dream, the declaration of the independent Jewish state, which was able to defend itself in the series of wars that followed the birth of Israel.

Today, Christians are a very small minority within Israel since there are no more than 1,5–2% of the population. Most of them are Greek Orthodox, with a primarily Greek leadership, while most of the believers listen to the word of God in Arabic from local priests, who are also Arab, just like their flock. Within the Christian minority, the Latins, as the Roman Catholics are frequently called, are an even tinier minority with a colourful history. Concerning interreligious and internal Church challenges, the issue of the existence of the Catholic Church in the Middle East and particular concerns of its operations are always on the agenda. The Catholic Church is highly diverse in the region regarding rites, i.e. the so-called *sui iuris* (own right) Eastern

Catholic Churches. Those Eastern Catholic Churches are integral parts of the universal Catholic Church, but all of them retain their particular liturgical, church-disciplinary and spiritual traditions.

It was the job of Franciscan monks, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, to look after the Catholic believers in the Holy Land t, to *safeguard* the holy sites and to guide the pilgrims. The Muslim rulers tolerated their work as they did not take part in either combat or in politics, instead, they begged, taught and prayed, so they simply lived together with the people, in the strict sense of the word.

## Jerusalem

Jerusalem is equally holy for Jews, Christians and Muslims. For the Jews, it is the spiritual centre of their people, the residence of God, the past and the future, the symbol of the destruction they suffered and of reconstruction, the symbolic site of waiting for the Messiah, the symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem. For religious Jews, the most important thing in the diaspora was the desire for the Promised Land and Jerusalem, where finally they could re-establish their country. The third Holiest site of Islam, after Mecca and Medina, is also Jerusalem; where the Prophet was taken by a winged-horse, to the seventh heaven, where Allah gave Muhammad the Quran, just like Moses received the Ten Commandments on the Sinai Peninsula. For Christians, the city's connections with Jesus are important, being the site of his preaching, crucifixion and resurrection, the symbolic place of eternal life. As a result of all of these facts, the holiness of the city is not a source of unity but of division, because none of them can afford to surrender Jerusalem, in the sense that they want to preserve the right to practice their religion there. The security of Christian holy sites and religious freedom is not in danger, but the emigration of Christians, especially from the Palestinian areas, is a serious concern for everyone. Before 1948 90% of Bethlehem's population was Christian while today this proportion is less than 30% and unfortunately, this trend is going to continue. Before 1948, the proportion of Christians was 20% in Jerusalem, while today fewer than 10,000 people are Christian out of the 800,000 inhabitants of the city.

The issue of Jerusalem's unity or possible division cannot be discussed here, or the declaration of it as the exclusive and indivisible capital of the Jewish state, or about the transfer of the American embassy there, or the annexation of the Jewish settlements established in the occupied areas by the State of Israel. When countries make negative comments about Israel's policy towards the Palestinians, i.e. the occupation, and when they accuse Israel of operating an apartheid state, Israel always considers such remarks examples of political bias, and anti-Semitism. Meanwhile, Muslim and Christian Palestinians – with the exception of the Hamas

terrorist organization, as it is unacceptable for the international community – are interested in the two-state solution under the guidance of the Palestinian Authority, based in Ramallah, so that there would be Israel with guaranteed security and the independent Palestinian state.

This crisis could only be solved with a bilateral and internationally guaranteed final peace treaty which would identify the borders, the status of Israel, security issues, sharing of water, refugee problem and all other vital issues under international supervision.

## **Hungarian Aspects**

We could examine Hungary's policies towards the Holy Land from multiple viewpoints like our national history, Christian identity, culture, economic interests and the priorities of our alliance systems alike. This time though, we will focus on smaller numbers of points. First, it must be mentioned as a curiosity that none of the countries had an official, political/diplomatic representative in Bethlehem and that Hungary was the first country, in 2007, to open an honorary consulate there. In the same city, we are also taking part, by providing a significant amount of governmental funding, in the reconstruction of the Holy Nativity Temple, and we were the first country in 2011 to make such an offer. It is also of particular interest for us, that under UN mandate the reconstruction of the building is supervised by a Christian Palestinian engineer who to everyone's satisfaction, received his diploma in Budapest, so he speaks fluent Hungarian.

Our political relations are balanced and problem-free with Israel and Palestine alike; we have excellent economic, cultural and scientific relations with Israel, while we also provide help to Palestine, for example, we provide academic scholarships to Palestinian students. About 250,000 Jews live in Israel, who have ancestral and cultural ties to Hungary, but whose descendants do not all speak Hungarian. The political, scientific and economic elite is also full of excellent individuals of Hungarian origin, whom we can all be proud of. Outside the Carpathian Basin, Israel was the only place where a Hungarian daily paper, entitled *Új Kelet* (New East), was published for a long period of time. This paper was founded by Jews who arrived from Kolozsvár after the Second World War. However, today this paper only exists as an online paper from the past, since those who wrote it have already died and nobody would read the paper anymore in Israel.

Another peculiarity is that you can find graves of Hungarian soldiers in a picturesque British Military Cemetery, with a beautiful view of the Biblical Gehenna valley, on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, which place is where Zionism comes from. These soldiers fought against the British in March 1917 in Gaza during the First



World War; they were ordered to deploy there as Austro–Hungarian soldiers since the country was the ally of Turkey, and the wounded soldiers died in a British military hospital. This also proves that the region is important for all involved parties regarding multiple sensitivity, symbolism, political interest, expressed or hidden commitments.

It is remarkable that as a result of recent Prime Ministerial meetings, Hungary and Israel are strategic partners. However, it is also in our interest that the success of the Hungarian–Israeli relationship must not negatively affect our important relations with the Arab world, but instead, we should contribute to the stability of the region, by boosting the resilience of the Christians who still live in the Holy Land.

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“The *Budapest Report*, presenting the situation of persecuted Christian communities in the world is published in 2018 for the second time. The Hungarian Government initiated the publication of a summary report in 2017 with the aim of familiarizing the Hungarian general and scientific community with the traditions, life and prospects of specific Christian communities in a credible manner every year. The report was also published in English last year making it accessible for the international community as well. [...] The publication does not simply provide comprehensive information on persecuted Christians, but it also aims at promoting solidarity and assistance to persecuted communities.”

Cardinal Péter Erdő  
the Primate of Hungary, Archbishop of Esztergom–Budapest

“The foundations of our program are common sense and social solidarity [...] In the near future, our intent is to make more people realize: the transformation of the faulty Western aspect and the stability of the crisis regions may bring about change in the protection of the persecuted Christians and all communities living in the affected countries. Our cause, in which we can also count on the help of the Visegrád countries, is a noble one. [...] I wish that reports on persecuted Christians would become redundant as soon as possible, in which respect we have a lot to do together. I trust that this book will make benevolent people act, so that the peace we have promised may come true.”

Zsolt Semjén  
Deputy Prime Minister

