



PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Race chief backs Straw on veils

Jack Straw was 'completely right' to raise the debate about Muslim women wearing veils, Commission for Racial Equality chief Trevor Phillips said. Mr Straw had the right to ask a woman to remove her veil at constituency meetings, and the woman had the right to refuse, Mr Phillips told MPs. His remarks prompted much debate and was criticised by some Muslim groups. Mr Phillips said: 'This is not a matter of public policy; it's a question of social etiquette and manners. I think it's perfectly reasonable for him to say 'would you mind not making me feel uncomfortable' in this particular case - as long as it's understood the answer to that can be 'no'. Whether there should be social pressure to make the wearing of the veil unacceptable is, in my view, a separate question to that,' he told the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee.

Pray: [that reasoned arguments such as this would be listened to by all the community. \(Prov 16: 23\)](#)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6040016.stm

■ Kelly penalises mosques' failure to tackle terror

The Government withdrew its support from Britain's largest Muslim organisation yesterday after accusing it of failing to lead the fight against religious extremism. Ruth Kelly, the Communities Secretary, attacked the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) for boycotting Holocaust Memorial Day, criticising police anti-terrorist operations and 'sitting on the sidelines' in the campaign against extremists. Ms Kelly said that she was embarking on 'a fundamental rebalancing' of the Government's relationship with Muslim organisations. Until now ministers have viewed the MCB, which represents 400 organisations and hundreds of mosques around the country, as the most important voice among Britain's two million Muslims. But Ms Kelly said that in future she would engage with and give funding to organisations that represented young Muslims and Muslim women and which were taking a 'proactive leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values'.

Pray: [for our government and all religious leaders that God would give them His wisdom as they try to resolve the conflicts between them.](#)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2400151,00.html>

■ Church of England considers evangelism of other faith groups

The General Synod of the Church of England is being urged to debate whether parishioners should try to convert Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and those of other faiths to Christianity. A controversial Private Members Motion from a new Synod member has the potential to be explosive should the required 100 Synod members give it their support, which would lead to a debate on the matter. To date, the Bishops and the Synod, have shied away from publicly declaring where the Church of England stands on evangelism amongst other faiths, and nowhere in its Mission Shaped Church strategy, or Fresh Expressions campaign, is mission to Muslims, or others, mentioned. The motion requests the Bishops to report back on

'their understanding of the uniqueness of Christ in Britain's multi-faith society, and offer examples and commendations of good practice in sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone with people of other faiths and of none'.

Pray: for the Church as it faces up to the challenges that evangelism brings to our relationships with other faiths. (Matt 28: 19-20)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.of.england.called.to.debate.stance.on.evangelism.of.other.faith.groups/7940.htm>

■ Tagged offenders went on to kill

More than 1,000 violent crimes, including five killings, have been committed by prisoners released early with electronic tags, it has emerged. Home Office figures show tagged offenders have committed one murder and four manslaughters, among other crimes, since the scheme began in 1999. Minister Gerry Sutcliffe said a balance had to be struck between rehabilitating prisoners, and public safety. But the Conservatives said it showed a 'shocking disregard for public safety'. Under the Home Detention Curfew, prisoners can be released up to four and a half months early, as long as they wear an electronic tag. MPs on the Commons Public Accounts Committee said it cost £70 a day less to enforce a curfew than keep people in jail. But chairman Edward Leigh said too many crimes were being committed by people released early with tags, and not enough information was getting back to the prison governors who made the decision.

Pray: that the authorities will be wise in their decisions over the early release of prisoners.

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/6038926.stm

■ Church backs legal rights for unmarried couples

The Church of England has risked the wrath of traditionalists by backing legal rights for large numbers of unmarried couples. The Church is 'sympathetic' to the reform of the law for cohabiting couples where there are children involved, it has said. It also suggests that more limited legal reform might be necessary for unmarried couples in cases not involving children where there is a risk of 'manifest injustice'. The proposals are put in the Church of England's response to Law Commission recommendations which would allow unmarried couples the right to a share of each other's wealth in the event of a break-up. The Church of England told the Law Commission that it believed marriage was central to the stability of health of human society and provided the best context for bringing up children. But it said it believed there was a 'strong Biblical precedent' for not only upholding standards but also protecting the vulnerable.

Pray: for the church in England that it would uphold its biblical principles and not let the pressures of society rule. (Matt 10: 22)

More: http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/this_britain/article1835190.ece

■ Christians prepare for fourth Global White Band Day

Churches and Christian aid agencies amongst others are gearing up for next weeks 'World Poverty Day' - the culmination of a Global Month of Action. The month has seen the reintroduction of the symbol of the White Band, used in last year's MakePovertyHistory campaign. In the UK, eight million people wore a white band, more than half a million people sent a white band email to Tony Blair, and around the country local groups and activists wrapped buildings in giant white bands or formed human white bands. The new Global Month of Action has seen millions of people in over a hundred countries unite again under the banner of the white band, standing up against poverty and renewing the calls for trade justice, debt cancellation and more and better aid. The Month culminates on 17 October, with the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, in a Global White Band Day.

Pray: that God would intervene and the governments would listen to the people as they stand up for justice. (Prov 21: 15)

More: http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/content/news_syndication/article_061010whitebandday.shtml

EUROPE

■ Row over Danish cartoon escalates

The row over the latest cartoons in Denmark mocking the Prophet Muhammad has sparked international reaction. Danish people have been warned against visiting several Muslim countries, after a video showing far-right activists drawing the images was aired. And a majority of Iranian MPs have urged President Ahmadinejad to suspend relations with Denmark. Iran and Indonesia have both summoned the Danish ambassador to their foreign ministries in protest of the video. Activists from the Danish People's Party were filmed at a summer camp, drinking, singing and taking part in a competition to draw images of the Prophet Muhammad, including one depicting him as a camel with beer bottles as humps. The Danish government, which condemned the drawings, has warned its citizens to expect "negative reactions" abroad and cautioned against travel to the Middle East. The footage is said to have first been posted on the website YouTube, and then later aired on two Danish television channels.

Pray: that this new controversy will not escalate and lead to the violence that the previous 'cartoons' caused. (1 Tim 2: 1-2)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6037597.stm>

■ Armenia, questions surround French President's visit

Opinions are divided about the purpose of French President Jacques Chirac's recent state visit to Armenia, with some observers contending that the mission had more to do with Turkey's candidacy for European Union membership than with the South Caucasus state itself. Some have charged that opposition to Turkey's membership bid for the European Union

prompted the French leader's visit. By visiting Armenia and discussing the Ottoman Empire's 1915 massacre of thousands of ethnic Armenians, Chirac was, in effect, reiterating long-standing European scepticism about Turkey's human rights record, a potential barrier to European Union (EU) membership. 'Judging by the deeds and the words of Jacques Chirac [during the visit], his thoughts were in neighboring Turkey rather than in Armenia,' commented former Armenian Foreign Minister Aleksander Arzumanyan in an October 6 interview with the Russian newspaper Izvestia. 'And this is understandable, as now serious problems have emerged between united Europe and Turkey.'

Pray: for an honest decision process to be used to determine membership of EU (James 3:14-16)

More: <http://eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101106aa.shtml>

WORLDWIDE

■ Shocking extent of persecution in Colombia

Christian Solidarity Worldwide has released details of a report which reveals for the first time the extent of religious freedom violations in Colombia. The report documents at least 6 clear cases of targeted assassinations of pastors or church leaders, the kidnapping or forced disappearance of at least three others, and the attempted assassination of a pastor that left more than 70 bullets embedded in his body. Also two violent attacks that took place during church services and resulted in four deaths and left 14 worshippers wounded. The English version of the report, which is entitled 'A Prophetic Call', was released this month by Justapaz and the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace (CRVP) – an arm of the Colombian Council of Evangelical Churches and a partner of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). The project is unprecedented in Colombia, and is a new drive to document the extent of violations of religious liberty, alongside human rights abuses committed against members of Colombian churches.

Pray: for protection of volunteers who are documenting these cases at great personal risk; and positive lasting changes for the persecuted church in Colombia. (Ps. 94:14-15)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/new.report.reveals.shocking.extent.of.persecution.in.colombia/7922.htm>

■ Death threats hound Aglipayan priests

Following last week's prayer alert article re Philippines bishops murder; an Aglipayan priest helping supporters of slain Bishop Alberto Ramento has been getting death threats. The threat comes mainly in the form of cell phone messages being sent to Pastor Gilbert Garcia, who is assigned in the Diocese of Tarlac. Early last Oct 9, a member of the Aglipayan Church noticed three hooded men roaming the vicinity of the church. The Aglipayan Church, was convinced that the unidentified men were military agents monitoring the movements of Garcia, himself a human rights advocate like the murdered bishop. Garcia is also actively supporting the plight of Hacienda Luisita workers in a protracted dispute over land reform and just compensation. Last Monday, five Aglipayan priests expressed fear that they were being targeted by the same people purportedly behind the killing of their 70-year-old bishop. Like many of their peers, the priests believed that the killing was no simple case of robbery.

Pray: for the protection of Fathers Terry Revollido of Pangasinan, Romeo Tagud of Negros, Marco Sulayao of Panay, Sonny Teleron of Western Middanao, Antonio Ablon of Cagayan de Oro and Pastor Gilbert Garcia. (Ps 91:3-7)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s06100065.htm>

■ Azerbaijan broadcasting regulatory body want to stop foreign prepared programming

The Azerbaijani government is clamping down on independent media outlets. Officials ordered local radio stations to cease broadcasting programming prepared by foreign news organizations, including the BBC, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America. Representatives of Azerbaijan's most listened-to broadcasters -- including ANS TV and Radio, Antenn FM, and state radio -- were summoned to a meeting with the government's chief media regulatory agency. They informed broadcast executives that broadcasting foreign-prepared content by local outlets was 'illegal.' Media observers in Azerbaijan view the regulation as part of a broad government effort to restrict access to information. They point to the October 4 drug-possession conviction of a prominent opposition journalist whose brother is the editor-in-chief of the leading opposition newspaper. Lawyers representing Zahidov insist the verdict was politically motivated. Zahidov, who often wrote about government corruption, received a three-year prison sentence. He vigorously denied that he had ever used illegal narcotics.

Pray: for freedom of information in Eurasia and particularly in Azerbaijan where accurate information needs to be heard and acted on. (Prov.19: 5)

More: <http://eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101106.shtml>

■ Child labour ban comes into force in India

The Central government's ban on employing children below the age of 14 in homes, hotels and restaurants came into effect on Tuesday. Children's rights activists say there are between 10 and 15 million children across the country who work, which will make the enforcement of this ban a nightmare. What's even worse is the absence of a rehabilitation package for the children who lose their jobs because of the ban. Mania Panda, a domestic servant, is in tears. Last year, both his parents died so he had to give up school in Bhadrak and come to Bhubaneswar to find work at a roadside dhaba, found work, food and shelter. Now, after the centre's ban he has lost even that. -The dhaba owner says there's not much he can do now. 'If the government takes my job it should make arrangements for me and admit me to a school. I want to study,' said Mania Panda.

Pray: that the government will provide a rehabilitation package for the thousands of children like Mania Panda

More: <http://www.efionline.org/articles/499.htm>

■ **Warning of outbreak of locusts in north and west Africa**

Locusts eggs in Mauritania are expected to hatch in the next 10 days, said the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation. It warned Algeria, Mali, Morocco and Senegal to step up monitoring and to prepare to treat any outbreaks quickly. While locust infestations were not uncommon in the area at this time of year, they must be dealt with or they could develop into the devastating swarms seen in 2004 when 400,000 people needed food aid. The FAO said the outbreak would offer the chance to test a new environmentally friendly pesticide which uses a natural fungus which kills locusts within one to three weeks. Locusts can eat their own weight in food every day, which means a single swarm can consume as much food as several thousand people.

Pray: For effective preventive measures to be set in place before the locusts arrive (Ps.123)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6043276.stm>

■ **Jordan plans new Temple Mount minaret**

The minaret, which will be constructed on the eastern wall of the Temple Mount near the Golden Gate, will at 42 meters be the highest of the minarets on the Mount and the first to be built in more than 600 years, Dr. Raief Najim, vice chairman of the committee running the project, told The Jerusalem Post in a telephone interview from Amman. He said he spoke with Israeli authorities about the plan last year and did not hear any objections to the proposed construction. He revealed that he toured the intended site with a top Jerusalem police commander, a senior government official and the head of the Antiquities Authority and none of them voiced any opposition. 'Even though the political situation has changed, I do not think they will refuse to construct such a thing,' he said.

Pray: that Jewish Authorities hold on to their inheritance in the face of opposition from other religions. (1 Kings 6:12-13)

More: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1159193420982&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **News update on Religious Hatred Bill**

News came from the Government late last week that the proposed SORs have been delayed by 6 months, as Government lawyers try and re-work the controversial law which Christian groups had argued was unfair and unworkable. It is thought that the delayed implementation was a response to the thousands of submissions made by faith groups to the Government's consultation. We must continue to pray and exert pressure. The Bill is not shown as listed in the business before Parliament which we have published until 19 January. The government will continue to try and reach a compromise with the opposition parties. It would suit the government much better to settle this in the Lords with a compromise as the government realises it could face a rebellion when the Bill returns to the House of Commons. We must continue to lobby to say that no compromise will work.

Praise God for this answer to our prayers and let us pray for any ongoing discussions. (Lev 19: 15- 18)

More: <http://www.christianconcernforournation.co.uk/Freedom/incite16dec.php>

■ **Fund aids Christian minority in Darfur**

Among the displaced people who have fled the ongoing violence in Darfur is a small minority of Christians. As Christians are so often excluded from aid distribution in contexts where other faiths are a majority, Barnabas Fund has been providing food aid for 100 Christian families since December 2004. Sudanese Christians organise the food distribution programme which provides sorghum, beans, lentils, rice and oil to the families. Food is usually bought in Nyala, the capital of South Darfur State, and the cost per family per month is £67 (plus transport and administration). With an average family size of seven people, this is about 30p per person per day. This feeding programme has enabled families to stay together, when otherwise children might have had to roam around as 'street children' seeking their own support.

Praise God for the provision for his people amongst such chaos. Pray for a lasting solution for Darfur.

More: http://www.barnabasfund.org/archivenews/article.php?ID_news_items=227

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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