



PRAYER ALERT...



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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Britain now No 1 Al-Qaeda target - anti-terror chiefs

Britain has become the main target for a resurgent Al-Qaeda, which has successfully regrouped and now presents a greater threat than ever before, according to counter-terrorist officials. They have revised their views about the strength of the network abroad, and the methods terrorists are able to use in the UK. Intelligence chiefs with access to the most comprehensive and up to date information have told the Guardian that Al-Qaeda has substantially recovered its organisation in Pakistan, despite a four-year military campaign to seek out and kill its leaders. In that time, the organisation has become much more coherent, with a strong core and a regular supply of volunteers. More worrying, officials say, is evidence of new techniques that would-be terrorists within the UK have adopted. The structure of individual Al-Qaeda-inspired groups is much more like the old Provisional IRA cells, with self-contained units comprising a lead organiser/planner, a quartermaster in charge of weapons and explosives acquisition and training, and several volunteers.

Pray: [against this evil and the threat to our nation by the possibilities this news brings. Pray for our police and security forces that they will be given wisdom to meet the needs of the challenge of terrorism. \(Ps 7: 9\)](#)

More: <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/terrorism/story/0,,1925700,00.html>

■ Deal could make history says Hain

The St Andrews Agreement may come to be seen as a pivotal moment in Irish history, Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Hain has told the Commons. Mr Hain said the NI parties face a choice between the St Andrews proposals and dissolution of the assembly. He said the plan opens the way to a new dawn for democracy in Northern Ireland. 'A new democracy based for the very first time in NI's tangled history on the twin foundations of the rule of law and power sharing,' Mr Hain said. 'These two foundations stand together or fall together: on the one hand, unequivocal support for the police and unequivocal support for the rule of law; on the other an absolute commitment by all the parties to share power in a restored Northern Ireland executive. Delivery on both these foundations was absent from the Good Friday Agreement; now it is in prospect.'

Pray: [Keep praying for the outworking of this latest agreement and the commitment of all those involved. \(Matt 5: 9\)](#)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6053530.stm

■ Elderly home care 'needs change'

Inspectors have criticised the standard of home care for hundreds of thousands of elderly people in England. The Commission for Social Care Inspection said many people found their carers too rushed, and there was little time to build trust. It said the system of giving 15 minute slots of help, before the worker moved to the next individual, could be 'undignified and unsafe'. The government said there had been improvements, but issues remained. Home care covers

services like help with washing, dressing, feeding or assistance in going to the toilet, but it does not cover nursing care. Commission chair Dame Denise Platt said the report 'Time to Care?' painted a 'mixed picture' of the quality of care. The report said councils should rethink the way services were offered, and give people more choice.

Pray: that there will be a shift in the thinking that would allow the care of the elderly to be improved. (Lev 19: 32)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6061130.stm>

■ Bishop launches Halloween supermarket campaign

The Bishop of Bolton, the Rt Rev David Gillet, has revealed a shocking poster which shows the typical range of supermarket goods on offer to children for this year's Halloween. The poster forms part of 'Halloween Choice', a campaign that is challenging supermarkets and stores to offer a wider range of merchandise to people who want to celebrate Halloween in an alternative way. The poster features actual masks available for parents or children to buy, one of which depicts a serial killer from a film, and carries the tag line 'Not all parents want to see their kids dressed as monsters or murderers this Halloween.' Last month the Bishop sent a letter to the UK's top supermarket chains challenging them to offer some alternatives to the horrific masks and costumes on sale, so that parents and children could make up their own minds on how to celebrate Halloween. He also wanted to begin a debate on exactly what place Halloween should take in modern Britain.

Pray: that initiatives like this and the many alternatives the Church can offer such as 'All Hallows' celebrations may prevail.

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bishop.launches.halloween.supermarket.campaign/8048.htm>

■ Radiation overdose girl dies

Lisa Norris, 16, died at her home in Ayrshire, Scotland, on Wednesday, surrounded by her family. In January, she was given 17 overdoses of radiation therapy during treatment for a brain tumour which left her with severe burns to the back of her neck and head. She had recently undergone treatment to remove fluid from her brain. Her father Ken, 51, told the Daily Record newspaper: 'She was determined not to give up her fight and she stayed fighting until the end. That's my Lisa. She was our inspiration. She kept us going in many ways.' Human error has been blamed for the overdoses during treatment at Beatson Oncology Centre in Glasgow but an investigation is continuing. Sir John Arbuthnott, chairman of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde which runs Beatson, said in a statement: 'This is extremely sad news and I have written to the Norris family to convey my condolences on behalf of the whole organisation, especially the staff that cared for her.'

Pray: for the Norris family at this time in their loss (Matt 5: 4) and also for all our doctors, nurses and the medical profession that they will be guided in their choices of treatment of those who are in need.

More: http://today.reuters.co.uk/news/articlenews.aspx?type=domesticNews&storyID=2006-10-19T090842Z_01_L19208579_RTRUKOC_0_UK-BRITAIN-RADIATION-DEATH.xml&WTmodLoc=NewsArt-C2-NextArticle-1

■ School bans Christian chastity ring but allows Muslim and Sikh symbols

A secondary school has come under fire for banning Christian pupils from wearing rings symbolising a belief in chastity until marriage. Millais School in West Sussex has banned the silver 'purity rings', arguing that they fall foul of the school's no-jewellery policy, which only allows pupils to wear simple single stud earrings. But the school has been accused of double standards as it allows Muslim pupils to wear headscarves and Sikh pupils kara bracelets as a means of religious expression. The ban is the latest in a series of episodes where organisations ban Christian jewellery. Earlier this week British Airways banned an employee from wearing a cross necklace. The Rev John Brown of Middleton-on-Sea argues that the ban should be lifted as it is 'discriminatory' against Christians. 'The girls are wearing rings to show their religious belief in abstaining from sex until marriage, it means a great deal to them, so I think it's quite wrong it should be banned.'

Pray: for all those Christians who are being challenged for wearing symbols of their faith. (Heb 4:14)

More: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=410959&in_page_id=1770

EUROPE

■ Belarus: New Life Church hunger strike

In Minsk today, some 180 Protestant Christians are on a hunger strike, protesting repressive government actions against them and Belarus' lack of religious liberty. What started as a protest by 17 believers inside the New Life church is drawing support from believers all over Belarus and even beyond. Amongst the hunger strikers are some senior citizens who have given up both food and water. One protester who has been without food since day one is Uladzimir Matskevich, the head of the organisational committee of the Belarusian Christian Democratic party. Charter 97 quotes him as telling Radio Svaboda, 'We are keeping cheerful. People understand more and more that the situation is complicated, that some urgent actions are possible, and we are getting ready for them. We are also getting ready for the situation to last for many months'. This situation needs maximum exposure, and these believers need our prayers.

Pray: that many will hear of this and stand with our brothers and sisters in their battle. (Ps.119:153,154)

More: <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s06100100.htm>

■ Church critical in uniting Europe, Says EU Polish Commissioner

The first Polish Commissioner to the European Union said on Tuesday that the Church is critical to efforts to reconnect Europe with its people. Dr. Danuta Hübner, the EU Polish Commissioner, opened the 2006 European Evangelical Alliance

(EEA) and the European Evangelical Missionary Alliance (EEMA) General Assemblies and the EEA Youth Forum in Warsaw on Tuesday evening by encouraging Christians to engage in the dialogue about the future of Europe. 'The responsibility and the future of Europe is our common responsibility,' said Hübner, the commissioner responsible for Regional Policy, according to the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). Hübner said that the EU has become 'too far away from the people,' and emphasised the common need to 'work closely with the local people'. More than 150 Evangelical leaders from 38 European countries were present for Tuesday evening's opening address. The EEA and EEMA Assemblies and EEA Youth Forum will take place 17 to 21 October.

Pray: for Godly discernment in all decision making; and for His protection over all action resulting from the conference. (Ps.145:15-17)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.critical.in.uniting.europe.says.eu.polish.commissioner/8045.htm>

WORLDWIDE

■ With cash, defectors find North Korea's cracks

The increasing ease with which people are able to buy their way out of North Korea suggests that, beneath the images of goose-stepping soldiers in Pyongyang, the capital, the government's still considerable ability to control its citizens is diminishing, according to North Korean defectors, brokers, South Korean Christian missionaries and other experts on the subject. Defectors with relatives outside the country are tapping into a sophisticated, underground network of human smugglers operating inside North and South Korea, China and Southeast Asia. Pieced together, the accounts provide glimpses of a government that, while still a repressive police state, is progressively losing the paramount role it used to enjoy in society, before it found itself incapable of feeding its own people in the famine of the 1990's.

Pray: that the state control would continue to weaken and that God's purposes for North Korea would be fulfilled.

More: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/10/19/asia/web.1019defect.php>

■ Worldwide Christian community shocked as priest beheaded in Iraq

The beheaded and dismembered body of Father Boulous Iskander, 59, a Syrian Orthodox priest, was found in a suburb of Mosul, Iraq last week. Christian Solidarity Worldwide has told Christian Today that Father Iskander was abducted from Mosul on Monday afternoon, according to reports from Compass Direct and Middle East Concern. His family was later contacted by the kidnappers, demanding a US\$350,000 ransom. They agreed to reduce the sum to US\$40,000 if the priest's church would publicly reject remarks made about Islam by Pope Benedict XVI last month. The St Ephram parish church subsequently posted 30 large signs around Mosul separating itself from the Pope's comments and the family managed to raise the ransom money. However, Father Iskander's remains were discovered the next day and brought to a local hospital. Open Doors UK had warned at the beginning of this month of a sharp upturn in violence against Christians in Iraq.

Pray: for the comfort and protection of the Christian community in volatile situations. (Ps.125:2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/worldwide.christian.community.shocked.as.priest.is.beheaded.in.iraq/8023.htm>

■ RSF asks Turkmen president to Pardon two activists

Paris-based media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has asked Turkmen president Saparmurat Niyazov to extend his traditional pardon to jailed rights activists Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khajiev. A Turkmen court on August 25 sentenced each man to seven years in jail on charges which rights groups have described as trumped-up. A third defendant, RFE/RL reporter Ogulsapar Muradova, received a six-year sentence but died in custody within days under dubious circumstances. In a statement dated October 17, RSF says it is concerned about the health of Amanklychev and Khajiev and calls on the Turkmen leader to show 'clemency.' More than 10,000 inmates are expected to be set free this week under a presidential pardon that traditionally marks the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Amnestied prisoners include eight individuals convicted of involvement in an alleged plot to kill Niyazov four years ago.

Pray: for authorities to be led by God's Spirit and work effectively for justice. (Prov.19:5)

More: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/10/DA24A068-FECB-4C63-AE5B-8C796B17AD48.html>

■ Egypt: Christian convert from Islam jailed

October 18 A Muslim sheikh jailed in Egypt for 18 months has declared from his prison cell that he is under arrest for 'insulting Islam' by becoming a Christian. Egypt's secret police transferred Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad, 57, to the Wadi el-Natroun Prison last month. He was told he would remain there indefinitely unless he agreed to work as a government informer against other converts to Christianity. According to the prisoner's Cairo attorney, Athanasius William, his client remains incarcerated in this desert prison 'only because he has chosen a different belief, to be a Christian.' When courts ordered El-Akkad's release from provisional detention 10 weeks ago, State Security Investigation authorities deliberately ignored the ruling.

Pray: for strengthening of faith and spiritual encouragement for Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad and others imprisoned for their belief in Jesus Christ. (Is.40:30,31)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php>

■ Canadian federal liberals blast 'radical right-wing' appointment

Bill Graham, interim leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, blasted the appointment of an evangelical Christian to a senior government position last week as 'an affront to our democracy.' He was responding to the appointment of Darrel Reid as deputy minister to Minister of the Environment. The Liberal Party issued a news release criticizing Reid's appointment on the basis that he had been head of 'a radical right wing group.' Reid was president of Focus on the Family Canada. Focus is a charitable organization, based on Christian principles, which supports, encourages and strengthens Canadian families through education and resources. Graham accused Reid of threatening 'the rights of minorities' because he opposed some legislation dealing with gay and lesbian issues. In particular, Graham said Reid 'compared members of [the House of Commons], who voted in favour to protect Canadian citizens who happened to be gay or lesbian against hate crimes, as being similar to Adolf Hitler'.

Pray: for the continuing presence of Focus on the Family, and other evangelical charismatic bodies in Canada. Pray also that all Christians in the Canadian government will be free to declare their beliefs without being discriminated against. (Ps.40:9-11)

More: <http://www.canadianchristianity.com/cgi-bin/na.cgi?nationalupdates/061012liberals>

■ **Kidnappers of an Italian journalist in Afghanistan have offered to free him in exchange for a Christian convert**

Photo-journalist Gabriele Torsello was seized last week while travelling on a bus in southern Afghanistan. The kidnappers will free Mr Torsello, a Muslim convert, if Abdul Rahman returns from Italy where he was granted asylum earlier this year, the aid agency says. Mr Rahman had escaped a possible death sentence for becoming a Christian. He had been charged with rejecting Islam and released this March after being deemed mentally unfit to stand trial on a charge of apostasy. The kidnappers demanded the exchange of the two men should take place before the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan which falls early next week, the website added. The foreign ministry in Rome has not commented on the demands, but an Italian politician who helped obtain asylum for Abdul Rahman ruled out any exchange. A Taliban representative who spoke to Reuters news agency distanced himself from the kidnapping, blaming it on criminals.

Pray: for the criminal element in Afghanistan to be restrained and silenced and for the speedy release of Mr Torsello (Ps.73:27,28)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6061236.stm

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **London mega-mosque latest**

On the 17th October the BBC programme Newsnight dedicated a substantial section of its show to the proposed mega-mosque in east London. Challenging the assertion of the mosque's backers that it will be an open centre, inclusive of Muslims and non-Muslims, the revealing programme interviewed people from both sides of the debate (see link below). The same evening there was a public meeting, organised by the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, in the Houses of Parliament hosted by Baroness Cox and Julian Brazier MP attended by 200 people including shadow Home Secretary, David Davis. At the meeting a vote was taken, which was passed unanimously, calling for a Public Inquiry into the mosque.

Pray: God for the results of this meeting and the proposed Public Inquiry.

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/6056354.stm>

■ **BBC gives Fiona Bruce green light to wear a cross**

A top BBC executive has given news reader Fiona Bruce the green light to continue wearing a crucifix on screen. According to Head of TV News Peter Horrocks it is 'absolutely fine' for presenters to wear religious emblems - as long as they remain discreet. 'A large shiny cross would be too distracting,' he wrote on the BBC News website. Two weeks ago BBC chiefs banned the news reader's discreet necklace, but since then Mr Horrocks has canvassed viewers' opinions. The vast majority were in favour of religious emblems being allowed if they were part of a presenter's cultural identity. Writing yesterday, he said he had reached the same conclusion: 'Some respondents thought any symbols had the potential to distract and could compromise impartiality. But the majority of people from all religious and non-religious backgrounds believed if a presenter is wearing religious clothing as part of their identity then it is absolutely fine for them to continue to do so.'

Pray: God for this answer to prayer and this victory for common sense.

More: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=411396&in_page_id=1770

PRAYER ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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