

The Living Stones of the Holy Land Trust Newsletter



No 1: November 2010

An ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighbouring countries. UK registered charity No. 1081204

Continued and sustained violence against Christian Iraqis:

This information has been circulated by Iraqi Christians In Need; www.ICIN.org.uk, in the hope that readers will use this text to write to MPs, religious and secular leaders:

I am sure you have heard about the horrific massacre of Christians at the Syrian Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Deliverance in Baghdad, Iraq. Over 50 parishioners were killed while attending mass on Sunday the 31st Oct. 2010.

This barbaric crime was perpetrated by a gang of Islamic fundamentalists two of whom were suicide bombers. No doubt backed by internal and external elements, this heinous act has left a trail of devastation.

Since the invasion in 2003, the extreme Islamic fundamentalists' religious movement and some regional political organizations have unleashed a carefully orchestrated campaign of intimidation, kidnapping and killing, aiming at forcing Christians to leave their homes. The result is that many are displaced inside Iraq, with others forced to leave their historical homeland altogether.

As a consequence, not only have these people lost their homes, but also their livelihood, and the young are left with no means to pursue their education. These proud people have been turned into homeless refugees. The population of Christian Iraqis is now one third of what it was before the invasion; it is now thought to be less than 500,000.

What is more significant and ominous is that the Christians of Iraq are currently being subjected to this ferocious onslaught of violence and displacement in the historical heartland of Christianity. A vicious campaign to vacate Iraq of all Christians is taking place, with the Iraqi government not interested in their plight nor taking any action to prevent these attacks.

You are probably aware of all this, yet the British Government has chosen to turn a blind eye to these activities. Condemnation of such acts is not enough, action is needed. It is time that the British government reflects the compassion that the British people are known for and take pride in.

I am writing to you in the hope that you would raise this subject in parliament and bring the issue to the attention of the British Government. I ask you to please pursue the British Government to provide help in finding a solution to the plight of Iraqi Christians in and outside Iraq, be it support in relocation, or otherwise.

To expose the forces behind these acts, which amount to genocide, an international commission needs to investigate the consistent waves of killings, kidnappings, and forcible displacement committed against our Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq.

Finally we thank you in advance for your attention and look forward to your action with anticipation.

Vatican meeting demands Israel end occupation

By NICOLE WINFIELD Saturday, October 23, 2010;
© 2010 The Associated Press; photo Jo Simister.

VATICAN CITY -- Bishops from the Middle East who were summoned to Rome by the pope demanded Saturday that Israel accept U.N. resolutions calling for an end to its "occupation" of Arab lands.

In a final joint communique, the bishops also told Israel it shouldn't use the Bible to justify "injustices" against the Palestinians.

The bishops issued the statement at the close of their two-week meeting, called by Pope Benedict XVI to discuss the plight of Christians in the Middle East amid a major exodus of the faithful from the birthplace of Christianity.

The Catholic Church has long been a minority in the largely Muslim region but its presence is shrinking further as a result of war, conflict, discrimination and economic problems.

During the meeting, several bishops blamed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for spurring the flight - a position echoed in their final paper. While the bishops condemned terrorism and anti-Semitism, they laid much of the blame for the conflict squarely on Israel.

They listed the "occupation" of Palestinian lands, Israel's separation barrier with the West Bank, its military checkpoints, political prisoners, demolition of homes and disturbance of Palestinians' socio-economic lives as factors that have made life increasingly difficult for Palestinians.

They said they had "reflected" on the suffering and insecurity in which Israelis live and on the status of Jerusalem, a city holy to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

"We are anxious about the unilateral initiatives that threaten its composition and risk to change its demographic balance," they said.

They called on the international community to apply U.N. Security Council resolutions adopted in 1967, which called on Israel to withdraw from Arab land conquered in the Six-Day War that year.

"The Palestinian people will thus have an independent and sovereign homeland where they can live with dignity and security," they said, while Israel will be able to enjoy peace and security.



WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2012: PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

Living Stones have decided that it would be wise to postpone the 2011 pilgrimage for one year. Financial and job security considerations are impacting on many people who would have been interested, and by delaying we are allowing a year for people to plan. Please see the website for the proposed programme.

For those who would like an opportunity to visit Bethlehem and Jerusalem next spring, please see the notice about the Michael Prior Memorial Lecture in February 2011, on the back page.

**Save the date:
MICHAEL PRIOR LECTURE
AND CONFERENCE
Saturday, May 7th, 2011
Catholic Chaplaincy,
Rose Place, Oxford, OX1 1RD**

‘WHERE IS CHURCH LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS?’

Speakers: Dr Sebastian Brock, Anthony O’Mahony and **Bishop Michael Nazir Ali**

Tickets £10; FREE to LS members and students with ID (see website for details)

EDUCATING FOR PEACE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

Felicity Young

On 13th April this year Abuna Chacour spoke at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, by the invitation of Friends of BibleLands with generous financial support from Living Stones. With great enthusiasm and not a little humour Elias Chacour took us through the story of his life, starting with the arrival in his village when he was seven, of the first Jews from Europe who had survived the Holocaust. His description of his parents bringing up their five sons and one daughter to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus, who walked the same Galilean hillsides, is both inspiring and heartbreaking. His father led the family in accepting and welcoming these “blood brothers” who had suffered so terribly, and this simple and sincere Christian remained welcoming throughout his life, never veering from the path of peace, in spite of the horrors which followed. We also accompanied the Archbishop through the story of his years of strenuous academic study until he was given his first charge in Ibillin, a village which he had never heard of and which he could not find, yet which today is known worldwide because of what he has achieved there. The gradual process of embedding himself in the community, and enabling healing, reconciliation, the return of self-respect, then the aspiration to improve and achieve, has in fact taken decades. The frustration which one feels hearing about all the obstacles to the development of education raised at each stage by the Israeli government and knowing that more than thirty years on that is still the situation, is considerable. But Abuna Chacour has continued throughout to seek to see the face of Christ in every soldier, official, and thief-in-the-night, who has tried to thwart his efforts.

But his most important message came at the end. He declared that if our reaction was to grow hatred in our heart for the oppressors then he did not want our support. The way forward has to be one of peace and reconciliation, mutual understanding and love for all humanity. This striking attitude is one I encounter often when meeting the indigenous Christians in the land we dare to call Holy.

This address can be found on www.biblelands.org.uk/events.

Under the GIFT AID rules introduced in April 2000, LIVING STONES, as a registered charity, can recover basic rate tax on your membership and other donations provided you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax equal to or more than the amount of relief LIVING STONES is claiming in the tax year that the donation was made.

GIFT AID DECLARATION

I wish LIVING STONES to reclaim tax on all donations I have made for the six years prior to this year and on all future donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise. I have read the notes set out below and agree to notify LIVING STONES of any change in my circumstances.

Title:.....Forename(s).....

Surname:

Address:

.....

.....Postcode:.....

Signature:.....Date:.....

NOTES:

1. Please notify LIVING STONES of any change in your above details or in your tax circumstances
2. You can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying LIVING STONES.
3. If you pay tax at the higher rate, you can claim further relief in your Self-Assessment tax return.



THE LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST
Registered charity No. 1081204

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

[PLEASE USE CAPITAL LETTERS THROUGHOUT]

YOUR BANK DETAILS

To the Manager of:.....Bank/Building Society

Address:.....

.....

.....Post Code:.....

Your Full Name:

Your Account Number:

Your Bank Sort Code: - - .

INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUR BANK

Please pay the sum of £(in words).....
**monthly / quarterly / annually to:

LIVING STONES
Account Number: 8 913 7808
Bank Sort Code: 72 – 00 - 05.

Commencing from: (insert date)
and until further notice in writing.

**[delete as applicable]

Your Signature :..... Date:

Please send this Standing Order Mandate after completion to:

LIVING STONES
c/o Jamil Bullata FCA
Hon. Treasurer & Trustee
1 Gough Square
LONDON, EC4A 3DE

Violence, Non-Violence and Religion

Third International Conference on Christian-Muslim Relations

9- 11 February 2011 at Bethlehem University

including the third Michael Prior Memorial Lecture, to be given by

Professor Nur Masalha, Professor of Religion and Politics

St. Mary's University College

Extension Pilgrimage 7-13 February 2011

LS offers a longer stay in Bethlehem and Jerusalem for £350 (single supplement £45) plus flight.

Includes half board and in-country transport provided by Universal Tourist Agency, a Palestinian Christian family-run travel firm in Jerusalem

Contact tour leader Rev. Dr Duncan Macpherson for more information, booking form, etc: Duncan@deaconduncan.com

LIVING STONES MEMBERSHIP entitles you to our newsletters and conferences and to receive notification of pilgrimages and other events. Please fill in the form below, and overleaf, as appropriate.

THANK YOU!



THE LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST
Registered charity No. 1061204

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I wish to be considered for membership of Living Stones.
 I would like to renew my membership / make a donation.
(Please tick / delete as applicable)

Title: Forename(s): Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone: Fax:

Mobile: E-mail:

Church and/or other organisation(s) of which you are a member:

Other relevant information:

Signature: Date:

Membership rates:
Single subscription: £20 per annum. Family subscription: £30 per annum.

Low income/unwaged: £5 per annum.

Payment by standing order: The easiest way to pay your membership is to have the bank/building society pay for it directly by standing order. This is not only more convenient for you but also saves LIVING STONES administrative costs, savings that go towards supporting LIVING STONES.

Please complete the attached Standing Order Mandate and send it to the Hon. Treasurer at the address shown below and on the mandate.

Payment by cheque: Please make your cheque payable to: LIVING STONES and send it with this application form to the following address:

LIVING STONES
c/o Januli Ballata FCA
Hon. Treasurer & Trustee
1 Gough Square
LONDON, EC4A 3DE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT