

**Prayer Perspectives from the Peninsula ~ November 4th
Ruach (Breath of Life) Ministries**

Twenty years ago, a powerful word of prophecy was given at Barnabas Church, Shrewsbury, (then part of Crowmore Baptist) calling us to share in *all* of the Lord's heart – even when He mourns. A similar word was given there the other day. It reflects the theme of this edition, calling us to pray and identify with those who are suffering for Jesus.



Remember God's Suffering People

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- Ø **Pray for American authoress – *Therese Marszalek is compiling a book on miracles but is under severe testing herself in the area of her health***
- Ø **East Timor Reports of Pastor Ferdie's execution – *The Lord is using even a false report to inspire necessary prayer.***
- Ø **Indonesia – *Teenagers beheaded and Christian women imprisoned for working with Muslim children. Effectively, this poses a threat to all forms of outreach to the Muslim community. Much intimidation; churches forced to close.***
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My People as you gather today to remember Me by taking communion in peace and comfort, I desire you to reflect on this: you are one together. If in your heart or your life you are not one – with Me or with any one else, come to me and confess it, or go that person or people and clear the air between you. Come to Me happy and clear in heart and mind and spirit.

Be open in your hearts and remember the members of My Body who also gather to remember Me. Some gather out of habit, with little fire or personal experience of My grace. Pray for them, that they might awake and be strengthened. Others come together in emptied buildings which the world walks by and has forgotten. Pray that they might see the fire come to them again and awaken. But for many of your brothers and sisters in these days, they have had to gather together in darkness, in great fear, for in the eyes of the laws of the countries in which they live they are gathered illegally, rebels, assembled out of love for Me. Others have come fearful of their relatives, yet for My sake – and yours, they come to break bread and remember Me.

Beloved I ask for more than remembrance in these days. The tide of the lost and those who are misled to follow false ways, even in this land,

grows. I ask you to be one with My people in the Middle East, in the countries of Pakistan, in Indonesia, in India. Remember the church in chains in China and Korea,

Remember them, wherever they live, my people. Keep alive in your hearts their meetings, their actions and lives. In your hearts, pray for them with fire and enthusiasm. Speak about them to each other when you meet, for they are as much part of your families as I am your father. Beloved, they are praying for you. They remember you. Find room in your hearts for them, that you may be one as your Father intends you to be.

To you all I say, I have the victory, Mine is the glory, and one day every knee will bow and acknowledge me as Lord.

Pastor Ferdie: Pressure in Timor

We have been inundated with requests to pray for Pastor Ferdie, who was supposed to have been beaten to death in East Timor (Timor Lorosae). So far as we have been able to ascertain, this report is inaccurate. Rather than dismissing it as a hoax email, however, I believe the Lord wants to spur us on to pray for what Pastor Ferdie is really experiencing. He is certainly under enormous pressure from local people. Please take the time and trouble to copy and paste this address and read the update on his ministry and present situation: <http://fbc-misawa.org/missionaries/Flores.htm>.

Ferdie writes 'For we have found this man a pestilent, a mover of sedition' (Acts 24:5a). 'For the Timorese mindset, it is shocking to know that somebody is converted. They believe that this man must have ridiculed or mock at the religion they embraced in the last 450 years, he must be punished. Similarly, the person who causes such conversion must suffer the worst consequence. I felt Apostle Paul's situation in Acts 23-26 is real to me when he was accused of being a troublemaker for preaching the name of Jesus. Whenever trouble arises, the blame stops on the missionary!

Few months back, we rejoiced for the breakthrough in Lacro, a village 12 km southwest of Manatuto. Four families with 10 of them follow the Lord in believer's baptism. Since then

we started to have a regular Bible study every Saturday.

On October 8, I and my family with two other believers went to Lacro for our regular Bible study. There were about 25 believers gathered in one of the church member's house. While I was preaching I noticed that there were people surrounded the house, making a noise and trying to destruct our service. Just when I finished preaching I heard a commotion. I went outside and saw people running away back and forth chasing each other. I noticed some believers lost their patience and were drawn to the rumble. While we are trying our best to pacify the situation, I feel terror is imminent. Jeannie then rushed our children to safety. In the next few minutes a mob appeared from every direction, coming towards us. As the mob comes closer I sat calmly and some hot tempered, furious catechists started to ask intimidating, long and tedious questions. I tried to cut the questions short and try to evade discussion. In spite of this trouble, the Lord is in control. Finally the fire was subdued. It is a very long and horrifying day but praise the Lord the mob left us unharmed.

The believers later told me that they had already heard the rumour that some notorious fanatics are planning to beat me, but they didn't inform me about it at the time. In the eyes of our companion, the aborted horror is still obvious. Maria, our companion had a nervous breakdown in the last few days. Jeannie also bore the trauma as well. Help us pray. His

servant and yours, *Ferdie Flores and Family*.



Ferdie and his family have experienced persecution

recently that was instigated by the Roman Catholic Church. Several threats have been made by priests, but there has not been any physical harm done to Ferdie as of yet. Although last week a mob of about 250 people did surround Ferdie with stones, sticks, and machetes, the Lord intervened and the crowd was dispersed without incident. As of now things are calm, but could erupt at any time. We do want to encourage you to continue in prayer for the Flores family.'

Teenagers Beheaded (Sulawesi, Indonesia, source: Open Doors. See also: www.barnabasfund.org)

A group of girls from a Christian high school in Indonesia have been attacked and beheaded, according to an online news report from Fox News.

Unidentified assailants attacked a group of high school girls on Saturday in Indonesia's tense province of Central Sulawesi, beheading three and seriously wounding a fourth, police said.

Fox News, quoting police Major Riky Naldo, said the students from a Christian high school were ambushed whilst walking through a cocoa plantation in Poso Kota sub district on their way to class. The rural area is close to the provincial capital of Poso, about 1,000 miles North-East of the Indonesian capital Jakarta.

The police spokesman said the heads of the three dead girls were found several miles from their bodies.

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim nation, but Central Sulawesi has a roughly equal number of Muslims and Christians. The province on Sulawesi island was the scene of a bloody sectarian war in 2001–2002 that killed around 1,000 people from both communities.

At the time, beheadings, burnings and other atrocities were common.

Fox News reports that a government-mediated truce ended the conflict in early 2002 but since then, there have been a series of bomb attacks and assassinations targeting Christians. A market attack in the predominantly Christian town of Poso killed 22 people in May.

Christian leaders have repeatedly criticised the authorities in Jakarta for allegedly not doing enough to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

The Christian–Muslim conflict in Sulawesi was an extension of a wider sectarian war in nearby Maluku archipelago in which up to 9,000 people died between 1999 and 2002.

Soon after it erupted in 1999, the Maluku conflict intensified with the arrival of volunteers belonging to Laskar Jihad, a newly created militia from Indonesia's main island of Java that was supported by hard-line elements in the security forces.

Fox News says analysts and diplomats accused senior army commanders of funding and training the militia, which was hurriedly disbanded following the terrorist attacks on the tourist island of Bali in 2002 that killed more than 200 people including 88 foreigners.

Some former militiamen are believed to have moved to Poso.

Conviction of Children's Workers in Indonesia poses threat to all outreach (Published by the

Jubilee Campaign) Three Christian women went on trial in Haurgeulis, Indramayu, Indonesia, for converting Muslim children to Christianity. Dr. Rebekka Zakaria, Eti Pangesti and Ratna Bangun, on trial since June 30, were found guilty on September 1 of all charges and sentenced to three years in prison. The women were convicted under the Child Protection Act of 2002, which prohibits the enticement of minors to convert to another religion.

Zakaria, Pangesti and Bangun had operated a Sunday School program known as "Happy Sunday" out of one of their homes until it was closed by a local branch of the Muslim Clerics Council (MUI) earlier this year. Originally designed for Christian children, the program began accepting Muslim children only after receiving the permission of the children's parents or guardians. The MUI claimed that they had no such permission, and pressured the police to arrest them, which they did in mid-May. The women remained in jail for the duration of their trial.

The trial itself was marred from the beginning by vociferous protests by radical Muslim activists, who conducted prayers and made speeches both outside and within the courtroom and loudly demanded that the defendants be convicted. An observer who had attended most of the court sessions informed us that Thursday was no different. He said, "Today [the protestors] arrived in nine trucks and brought a coffin to bury the accused if they were not



found guilty. Their violent threats continued in their speeches before the session began. When the panel of judges read the verdict the crowd erupted with 'Allahu akbar.' Many observers fear that, in addition to being a gross miscarriage of justice, the conviction of the women will set an ominous precedent for the interpretation of the Child Protection Law. They suggest that Thursday's decision could prevent any kind of Christian ministry to Muslim children, whether or not conversion is the goal.

Emboldened or inflamed by the trial, radical Muslims in West Java have continued their campaign of church closures. Thirty-five churches have been shut down by the MUI and its affiliates since the end of July, and at least sixty in the past year. The authorities claim the churches are unlicensed and therefore illegal, which is technically true, but sources in Indonesia explain that it is practically impossible for churches to receive registration anywhere in Indonesia.

The women's conviction, combined with the continuing church closures, send an alarming message about the state of religious freedom in Indonesia. Please join Jubilee Campaign in praying for the embattled Christian minority in West Java, especially Ms. Zakaria, Ms. Pangesti and Ms. Bangun. Pray also for the rule of law.

Signs and Wonders for the Arabic World

The finishing touches are now being put to an Arabic e-book, "The Jesus Visions: Signs and Wonders in the Muslim World." This is to be released on an Arabic website shortly. That way it will be available to the Arab-speaking world via the Internet. This will save printing and publishing expenses, and because so many Arabs visit the Internet and learn about Jesus in cyberspace, it will be truly cost-effective.

Please pray for the project to be gloriously fruitful, and for the author to be protected at all times by the precious Blood of the Lamb.

Pray for Therese Marszalek

I mentioned some time ago that I am contributing to an American compilation on miracles. (We have also invited Suzanne Pillans and Jennifer Rees Larcombe among others to contribute a chapter too). An earlier collection is about to be published in China as well as America. Therese is currently in need of prayer however. I asked her to send the following summary:

After 41 years of complete health, I have faced a wide variety of very difficult health challenges for the past three years. I've been through a multitude of doctors, surgeons, specialists and medications. This vicious attack on my life has only furthered my resolve to proclaim the wondrous works of God. Although I look completely normal, my body suffers severe fatigue, tremors, hashimotos disease, sleep disorder, neurological problems, fibromyalgia, migraines, severe joint and bone pain, to name just some of the problems. In the past 12 months, I've had 4 surgeries and the last two involved severe complications which are currently unresolved. We've spent a small fortune on medical costs,

medications, specialists, etc and I am no better in any way physically (worse!) than I was when it started three years ago. Hmmm . . . it's time to reach out in faith and touch the hem of His garment!

My Dad also has less than two weeks and I need to go home to be with him.

I definitely need a BIG heavenly blast! Although the enemy has tried from every angle to abort the plan and purpose of God, he will not succeed. I will live and not die and will continue to proclaim the wondrous works of God! And as I've said before, God will not waste one little part of the suffering, but will turn it around for my good and will use it for His glory. What the enemy meant for evil, God will use for good! And the miracles book, which has been birthed in the furnace, will be used to the ends of the earth to draw multitudes to the God of miracles through our wonderful Saviour Jesus. Every test I've been walking THROUGH, is being transformed into a TESTimony. There are some wonderfully anointed messages in the works - I get to walk through them first!

Oh! I've preached myself happy!

Key Article One by Elizabeth Kendal.

What is Christian persecution and how widespread is it?

Christian persecution is a very broad definition and can cover everything from state-sanctioned execution through to enforced poverty. It is estimated that around 200 million Christians suffer and live with the threat of severe persecution (imprisonment, torture, execution, violence, murder) while a further 400 million live with non-trivial discrimination such as enforced homelessness, dispossession and unemployment, simply on account of their faith in Christ.

In which countries is Christian persecution the most severe and what factors have contributed to the growth of persecution in these countries?

Christian persecution is most severe where hardline non-Christian religious groups form the majority. In Saudi Arabia it is illegal according to the Saudi Constitution for

any Saudi to be anything but Muslim. Apostates are executed - Saudis have absolutely no religious freedom. In North Korea it is estimated that some 300,000 Christians "disappeared" after the border closed in 1953 and today some 100,000 believers are believed to be incarcerated in the most harsh, cruel and appalling conditions in North Korea's gulag of concentration labour camps.

How has persecution affected the growth of Christianity in these countries?

Christianity grows as the Holy Spirit blesses the word/gospel that goes forth. The main problem with religious oppression is that it forces the Church, the salt of the earth and light of the world – along with its gospel message, underground. Persecution is often a consequence of Church growth. Persecution is designed to stunt, limit or reverse Church growth.

In many places, particularly in strict Islamic nations, persecution has threatened the Church's existence, and severely limited its growth. People often cite China and say, "Look how the Chinese Church has grown under persecution." I would contend that the Chinese Church has grown **in spite of** persecution, because of the commitment of evangelists who are willing to suffer to spread the gospel. I believe that when religious freedom comes to China it will be a decisive moment in Christian history – the Chinese Church will explode and an enormous mission force will emerge prepared for sacrificial service.

Where is persecution increasing and why?

Persecution of Christians increases as Islam becomes more hard-line. Also, as Communist regimes seek to open up to the West they crack down oppressively to maintain power and control of their people. The rise of Hindu nationalism in India and Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka has led to increased persecution against Christians in those nations.

What, in your opinion, is the greatest threat to the Church today?

I personally believe that the greatest threat to the Church today is not Islam or Communism or nationalism - but the temptation to conform our minds to the thinking of the world, i.e. to do exactly the opposite of what Romans 12:2 tells us to do. The Bible tells us clearly and demonstrates consistently that God's strength is perfected in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9) and that God's ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). In the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties (such as persecution), Christians are tempted to look for solutions that are clever or strong in worldly terms. We must however, look first to God for HIS direction, wisdom, strength and intervention. This spiritual battle is bigger than us. If we try to stand or to win in our own way, in our own strength and in our own wisdom, we will fail. To accept this takes great humility – something fallen mankind is pretty short on. In summary - independence is the greatest threat to the Church. To win this battle (which is actually the Lord's battle) we must be totally God-dependent and obedient.

Is it possible for you to give a general portrait of a persecuted Christian?

Persecuted Christians are most likely to be Asian, Middle Eastern or black, and poor. Apart from that, they can be men or women or children, young or elderly, illiterate peasants, servants and farmers or educated pastors, doctors and lawyers. The thing they have in common, is deep love for Jesus - a love that will not deny Him.

What are some of the major challenges facing those who are suffering for their faith? How are these challenges overcome?

Many of their challenges are very basic and we can help a lot with these things – things such as alleviation of extreme hardship. If a Vietnamese husband is imprisoned for sharing his faith, his wife becomes destitute, often homeless as well, and his children may be denied the right to education. Christian ministries that supply the practical needs of suffering Christians require as much support as we can give them.

One of the great challenges is government and social attitudes to Christians. This is something we must pray about, constantly calling for God's intervention. Another great challenge can be the temptation to doubt God's love or presence. We can also pray about this, that suffering believers will know the peace of God that transcends understanding and guards hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).

What are the unique challenges Christian women face in countries where they are oppressed?

The countries where Christians are persecuted are countries with very poor human rights records. Women are treated poorly simply because they are women and not treasured or valued as equals. In many countries where Christians are persecuted, Christian women receive a double portion of hatred. They are frequently victims of hate rape, abduction, murder and acid attack.

How do persecuted Christians worship and how does this differ to typical worship services in countries with religious freedom?

In countries where Christian worship is illegal, Christians worship quietly and in secret. In countries where Christians have freedom to worship but are persecuted by a hostile society, worship is often very quiet and in small groups, sometimes very early in the morning. Recently in China, the authorities sent bulldozers to demolish a very old established church founded by China Inland Mission in 1930. Thinking they could avoid trouble by doing their work very early, the police and bulldozers arrived at the Tu Du Sha Church at 4am, only to find that some 300 believers were busy praying in the church. The thing that really stands out about the persecuted Church, is that it is centred around prayer and totally dependant upon God.

How have governments of free countries reacted to the persecution of religious minorities in general?

Most Western governments have little understanding of Christian persecution. They make the false assumption that improvements in the economic arena will automatically lead to improvements in human rights. This is false and it is being proved false over and over again but most Western governments refuse to open their eyes as it is not convenient for them, and not in their economic interests. Most Western governments are also very secular and simply do not understand religious conviction. They understand how someone might suffer for political beliefs, and so they have sympathy for them; but they just can't understand why anyone would suffer for religious beliefs. They have little or no sympathy for those who suffer for their faith, and this translates into little or no action.

How has the global Church responded to the tragedy of persecution? Is this response sufficient?

The prayer response has grown significantly over recent years. This is greatly encouraging. Certainly, in answer to prayer, Christians are becoming more aware and more concerned about the global body of Christ and particularly their brothers and sisters who suffer for their faith – the faith we too hold. It has been wonderful to see prayer ministries multiply and prayer mailing lists grow and grow. I believe God is doing a work. I believe it is God's desire to display his power and glory, in answer to prayers. I believe God is building His Church just as He promised (Matthew 16:18) and that he will do it in answer to our prayers.

How should we pray for Christians who are persecuted?

Prayer is the foundation and the starting place. The WEA RL Prayer ministry <http://www.evangelicalalliance.org.au/rlc/news.php> can assist by keeping pray-ers informed and up to date. It is good to have the church prayer co-ordinator and/or cell group leaders on the WEA RLP list so they can bring one issue per week to the group/church for prayer. The RLP bulleting also has a 120 word summary that is designed to be published in church news bulletins or used as a summary in a prayer group.

When we love and see ourselves as ONE (John 17:21) then prayer will be both natural and passionate. It is important to be informed and intelligent – but it is essential to love both the believer and God, whose heart must break for the suffering of His children.

How have you seen God working through the persecuted Church?

I personally have been greatly, deeply affected by the struggle, courage, and faith of the persecuted Church. It is the place where miracles happen – both miracles of deliverance and miracles of supernaturally enduring faith and grace. These are the miracles of God's strength being made perfect through human weakness. The persecuted Church has shown me what the gospel is really worth – how valuable it really is. I will never again take God's gospel for granted, nor take lightly the fact that some people don't have access to it. It has put my fears and woes into perspective – I will never again complain about losing the TV remote! It has given me a great and consuming love for the global body of Christ, and a deep passion for the lost and for the world. Thank you for your time and insights.

http://www.christianmonitor.org/documents.php?type=Interviews&lang=English&item_ID=2&action=display&

See also http://www.mandaeenworld.com/mhr_iraq_2003_2.html for a powerful article on the tribulations of one particular ethnic group in Iraq.

And visit <http://www.evangelicalalliance.org.au/rlc/news.php>

Key Article Two:

Pray for Egypt in the aftermath of violence in Alexandria.

By Elizabeth Kendal, World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission (WEA RLC) www.assistnet.net. (We would highly recommend this ministry, founded by Dan Wooding, which has raised up over 14,000 missionaries to Asia).

ALEXANDRIA (ANS) -- Massive Muslim riots, Islamist web threats, and the stabbing of a Coptic nun have forced Egyptian authorities to place an armed guard around St George (St Girgis) Coptic Orthodox Church in Muharram Bik, Alexandria on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. The sudden eruption of aggression against the Church demonstrates the extremely fragile nature of religious harmony in

Egypt where Muslim hostility and contempt towards the Christian minority simmers just below the surface and very little provocation is required to make the volcano blow. In this case, the provocation consisted of totally unsubstantiated reports that a theatrical production performed in St George Coptic Orthodox Church had defamed Islam.

As the Egyptian weekly 'Al-Ahram' explains, "...the sectarian tension in Alexandria began in much the same way previous Muslim-Christian disputes had: with the publication of a tabloid story. This time, the newspaper in question – Al-Midan – published an article about a church play that defamed Islam." According to Al-Ahram, "Waleed Orabi, the journalist who wrote the Al-Midan story, said he had obtained a CD of the performance from a source inside the Alexandria church where the play took place. He refused to provide any other details on the matter." Orabi goes on to describe Muharram Bek, where the protests took place, as "a hotbed of Islamism".

INCITEMENT

On Friday 14 October, the day after the article was published, a group of Muslims entered the neighbouring mosque with copies of the article and incited the worshippers to protest. Al-Ahram describes what happened: "An angry crowd of about 100 people promptly marched towards the neighbouring church. As word spread around, the crowd got bigger, with some 3,000 people eventually taking part. Some were there to support the demonstrators' demands, while others were just curious about the goings on. Local police were quickly deployed in the hundreds; and by three in the morning, had dispersed the angry demonstrators." Adnkronos International (AKI) reports that the protesters shouted slogans such as, "Oh Islam, we will defend you with our body and soul!" and "Christians and Jews, the army of Mohammed will return". Jihad groups linked to al-Qaeda posted video footage of the protest on their websites along with exhortations to follow this example and attack Christians.

On 18 October, the Islamist group "mujahadeen of Egypt", which claimed responsibility for the Sharm el-Sheikh bombings, posted a notice on the Internet inciting Muslims to take action against Christians in revenge for the alleged offence against Mohammed.

AKI reports, the mujahadeen described their posting on the Internet as, "an urgent message to the followers of the cross living in Egypt". The message made specific reference to the "crusaders' church", which it deemed guilty of staging a theatre performance offending the Prophet Muhammed. According to AKI, the "mujahadeen of Egypt" decided to destroy the church, but found the security too tight to perpetrate an attack. As the militants explain in their Internet statement: "After hearing this news, we had decided without hesitation to destroy that church. The mujahadeen prepared themselves but found what they were expecting. The ... police, secret services and internal security forces had surrounded the area of Muharram Bik, protecting the church. If those responsible for the offence do not admit their guilt, then every Christian holding a sermon in the incriminated church will become a target of the mujahadeen."

NUN STABBED

On 19 October, the day after the incitement from "mujahadeen of Egypt", a Muslim student in his early 20s entered St George Church as a prayer service was finishing. He shouted "Allah akbar" (God is great) and stabbed a novitiate nun in the chest with a knife. The nun, aged in her mid-40s, required surgery for her wounds. One other worshipper, Ali al-Jani, was wounded as he intervened to protect the nun. Father Augustinous, head of St George Church was not present during the attack. However, it was reported to him by eye witnesses that after

stabbing the nun, the attacker knelt and prayed "as if he was thanking God for finishing a task".

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION AND MOUNTING ANGER

Following Friday prayers on 21 October, after the ultimatum demanding an apology from Coptic Pope Shenouda III had expired, more than 5,000 angry Muslims demonstrated outside the front of St George Church. They brandished sticks and threw rocks. Around 90 people were injured as police fired tear gas and fought to disperse the angry crowd. Twenty police officers were amongst those injured. Two protesters and two policemen died in the violence – one protester being trampled to death. Nine cars and seven Christian-owned businesses were torched and a gold store was looted.

Seven churches in Alexandria were attacked by a violent mob of Muslim youths that Friday evening. Reports are coming from Alexandria that tell of significant damage to church property, including broken gates, doors, windows, and furniture. Pews were reportedly burned and Bibles were thrown into the street to be trampled by angry crowds. Families, especially pastoral families who live in the churches, have been traumatised. Many from the congregations were too afraid to meet on Sunday.

New York Times (NYT) reports, "In Alexandria, several shopkeepers and pedestrians spoke of their waning patience for their Christian neighbours, and of a sense that their tolerance has been taken for granted and abused."

Ahmed Ali Mahmoud, 25, a pharmacist whose shop is opposite St George's Coptic Orthodox Church told the NYT, "People are very, very provoked. They are boiling. Did we make plays that insult the Christians? They will pay the price in terms of their security, comfort, and now no priest will be able to walk in the streets."

NYT also spoke to a shoemaker who said his name was Muhammad Abdo. He said that police first fired tear gas into the crowd, which only served to anger those in the streets. They then went wild, turning over cars and setting them on fire, smashing storefronts and looting a gold shop. " 'No one will stop until they give a formal apology,' Mr. Abdo said, adding that he heard the play denied a central tenet of the Islamic faith - that Muhammad was God's prophet."

THE PLAY

The play which Muslims allege defamed Islam is called, "I Was Blind but Now I See". It was based on a 1990s movie called The Terrorist, which starred Egyptian comedian Adel Imam. It is the story of a poor Coptic University student who converts to Islam after a group of Muslim men offer him money to do so. However, the young convert becomes disillusioned after the local sheikh exhorts him to kill priests and destroy churches. Abused and maltreated by the sheikh and his group, the young man eventually abandons Islam and returns to Christianity. His apostasy enrages the Islamists who then seek to kill him. His life, however, is ultimately saved by his faithful Muslim friend.

According to Coptic leaders, the play was a statement against extremism and radicalism. However, Islamic voices are claiming that the play "defamed" Islam. Osama Gado, of the Muslim Brotherhood claimed the play "clearly harms the image of Islam". Tamer Harfush also lambasted the play saying, "The play compares Islam and Christianity, Jesus and Prophet Muhammad, presenting the first as a man who sacrificed his life and the second as more preoccupied with earthly pleasures." (Link 7)

The most critical thing about this play is that it was performed once, **TWO YEARS AGO!**

QUESTIONS

Apart from the standard questions: "Does this defame Islam?" (the dictionary defines "defame" as: To damage the reputation, character, or good name of by

slander or libel), and "Why riot?", the most obvious question is: Why now? Considering the play was performed once, TWO YEARS AGO, why is this sectarian hatred, specifically anti-Copt hatred, being whipped up now?

ELECTIONS

Legislative elections commence on 9 November. Already the trouble in Alexandria has driven Maher Khella, the local Coptic candidate of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), to withdraw from the parliamentary race "to defuse tensions". Maher Khella was one of only two Copts amongst the 444 candidates fielded by the ruling NDP.

According to Al-Ahram, Al-Midan is not the only newspaper inflaming Islamic sentiments. Al-Ahram reports, "Sameh Fawzi, the editor of Watani (My Nation), a prominent Coptic newspaper, says that 'reading a number of tabloid newspapers will clearly reveal how a sensitive topic like religion is often manipulated to pit Muslims and Christians against each other.' Several newspapers, for instance, have recently been running stories claiming that churches are doing intensive missionary work among university students across the country."

On Thursday 20 October, supporters of the banned Muslim Brotherhood marched in Cairo in an effort to encourage Egyptians to vote for their Islamist candidates in next month's parliamentary elections. As noted by Reuters, the Muslim Brotherhood sidesteps its ban by fielding candidates as independents. As they marched they chanted "Islam is the Solution" as well as other slogans such as "We make the pledge and guard the dhimma...".

(Dhimmis are second-class citizens in historic, orthodox Islam, with limited rights and no equality before the law. Dhimmitude (see <http://www.dhimmitude.org/>) is based on Islamic theology and is an Islamic form of religious apartheid. Historically, in the context of Islamic imperialism, it has permitted the preservation of Jews and Christians for the purpose of exploitation. To receive and maintain "protection"/right to life, dhimmis must live in subjugation and submission, eternally grateful for and humbled by the "protection" afforded them.)

These religious issues – "defamation" of Islam, Christian evangelism, and dhimmis abusing Muslim tolerance and taking it for granted (NYT) – will ensure that Islamic zeal and anger are running high. This should give the Islamists a boost at the polls at the expense of Copts, other Christians, and secularists. Many observers suspect that political Islamists, who can gain political mileage from sectarian tensions, are behind the Alexandria riots.

COPTIC CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON

Al Ahram reports, "A US-government sponsored conference on Coptic grievances in Egypt is scheduled for 16 November in Washington. Participants will reportedly press for the Egyptian government to provide more freedoms for Copts. They will also demand the amendment of a constitutional article that considers Islam 'Egypt's official religion and main source of legislation'. The meeting is seen as a means for Washington to exercise more pressure on the Egyptian government, and for Copts to extract more concessions at home."

Some analysts believe that State Security Forces have orchestrated the Alexandria protests in order to embarrass and discredit the Copts at home and abroad before the Washington Conference so as to limit, or even cripple, its effectiveness.

INCENDIARY SITUATION

Even though more than one hundred rioters have been detained for 15 days pending investigations, Christians in Alexandria are afraid and are staying home indoors.

Several facts indicate that this situation has potential to escalate and spread like wildfire:

- 1) The approaching legislative elections will arouse further sectarian zeal and tension, especially as media provocation and the riots in Alexandria have already ignited hostility and fractured unity.
- 2) In the light of the troubles and controversies in Alexandria, the Washington Conference on Coptic grievances will doubtless now receive more attention on the street in Egypt than it otherwise might have done, and the Muslim response will probably be further anger and resentment.
- 3) The involvement of al-Qaeda linked organisations calling for jihad against Christians and churches is extremely worrying.
- 4) Because of the fasting and other restrictions, Ramadan can tend to raise Islamic zeal and cause frustration and irritability to overpower tolerance.

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Appendix: East Timor



East Timor declared itself independent from Portugal on 28 November 1975 and was invaded and occupied by Indonesian forces nine days later. It was incorporated into Indonesia in July 1976 as the province of East Timor. An unsuccessful campaign of pacification followed over the next two decades, during which an estimated 100,000 to 250,000 individuals lost

their lives. On 30 August 1999, in a UN-supervised popular referendum, an overwhelming majority of the people of East Timor voted for independence from Indonesia. Between the referendum and the arrival of a multinational peacekeeping force in late September 1999, anti-independence Timorese militias - organized and supported by the Indonesian military - commenced a large-scale, scorched-earth campaign of retribution.

The militias killed approximately 1,300 Timorese and forcibly pushed 300,000 people into West Timor as refugees. The majority of the country's infrastructure, including homes, irrigation systems, water supply systems, and schools, and nearly 100% of the country's electrical grid were destroyed. On 20 September 1999 the Australian-led peacekeeping troops of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) deployed to the country and brought the violence to an end. On 20 May 2002, East Timor was internationally recognized as an independent state. For more background information on East Timor, see:

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/tt.html>) from which the above information was taken.

Photographic Links:

A photo essay of destructive forces at work in East Timor:
www.time.com/time/daily/special/photo/timor2

A satellite photo of East Timor: www.etan.org/timor/et-nasa.htm,

Ruach (Breath of Life) Ministries ~ www.ruachministries.org