

### Kazakhstan's changing scene

In Kazakhstan, a Muslim country where a quarter of the populace is nominally Christian, there is a growing drift towards linking Kazakh nationalism with Muslim identity. Christian converts from Islam have always faced hostility, but this hostility is now directed increasingly towards *all* Christians. Today's Kazakhstan is not the tolerant country it was a decade or so ago.

### No retreat for Sudan's churches

In spite of renewed government efforts to return Sudan to Islamist rule, Bible colleges continue to operate and grow. They give valuable Bible teaching to hundreds of present and future church leaders through campus-based classes, distance-learning courses and periodic seminars and meetings. The many churches that still operate in Sudan need wisdom and courage.

*Barnabas Fund*

### Catholicism in Brazil

Roman Catholics in Brazil number more than in any other country, but the church is in crisis. The rate of defection has slowed, but the church continues to lose members to evangelicals, spiritists and the non-religious. Though once holding 95% of the population, Catholicism could one day be a minority religion. About 70% of ex-Catholics are now evangelicals. Even within the church, only a minority remain traditionally Catholic. Some are influenced positively by charismatic renewal but others negatively by spiritism

*Operation World*

### Syria's Christians

The number of Christians in Syria has declined from 1.5 million before 2011 to only 300,000 today. Those left in the country, having suffered at the hands of Islamists, face further suffering through US sanctions (aimed at regime change) and Turkish aggression (aimed at reviving Islamic terror). Many countries that accepted Syrian refugees are now sending them home, even there is no 'home' to return to.

*Religious Liberty*

### Christians impacting Ethiopia

*From an Ethiopian pastor: "We have a community training program and God is changing people. They are learning Christian doctrine through your Basic Christianity books. We also had a development training program for 40 people, and among them ten received Jesus Christ as Saviour. We have holistic programs for more than 300 households. The work is challenging but the hand of God is with us. These people are poorest of the poor, and we are so happy serving them by sharing from what the Lord provides. We show them hope for the future."*

*Bridgeway*

### Myanmar: Prominent Christian arrested

Last month Myanmar's ruling military officials arrested one of the country's most influential Christian leaders. The junta is preparing to prosecute him over words spoken in Bible classes, sermons and speeches. The military systematically attacks villages in the majority-Christian states of ethnically Chin, Kachin, Karen and Shan peoples. Houses and churches are destroyed in large numbers, and land mines laid around former civilian areas and church buildings to prevent their further use.

*Religious Liberty*

### Discipling in Ghana

The Africa Bible Centre for Discipleship-Making is a Ghanaian initiative designed to help equip more Africans to meet the demands of the growing church. It acknowledges that while the centre of gravity in Christianity worldwide has shifted from the West southward (sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America), sound biblical teaching has not kept pace with the rapid growth. If the growth is to be accompanied by strength, the church needs to be better taught.

One feature of the church in Africa is that 70% is aged 30 years and below. A church leader in Ghana notes that a great challenge facing today's church is the combined force of mass secularisation of young people with false conceptions of God. A battle is raging for the hearts and minds of Africa's young people.

*ABCD*



## The church in Chad

Christians account for about one-third of Chad's mainly Muslim population and enjoy more freedom than in other Muslim-majority countries. Although the government is secular, with a separation between state and religion, sharia law is permitted. Muslims dominate politics, civil service, armed forces and business, meaning that many Christians, especially the uneducated, are vulnerable to exploitation.

The church in Chad has always been active in evangelism, church development, education and health services, but its efforts still do not make it a national force. One Christian initiative is the Cultural and Evangelism Centre, set up with the purpose of nurturing Christians and equipping them for Christian outreach and service. Its library contains more than 2500 volumes that provide services to teachers, researchers, pastors, students and evangelists.

*Bridgeway*

## Pakistan today

Amid the chronic suffering of Pakistan's Christians through vindictive use of blasphemy laws and exploitative labour practices, the Supreme Court issued a nine-page opinion affirming, among other things, that the preaching of Christianity 'is not a crime nor can it be made into one.' It also drew attention to the lack of credible evidence that accompanied many blasphemy allegations and the threats of mob violence if decisions did not satisfy the accusers. Pakistan's Christians are a vulnerable minority in the nation's chronic political and religious turmoil

*Barnabas Fund*

## Belgium's spiritual need

Belgium is a country of widespread spiritual apathy where faith has largely been banished from public life. Yet evangelical believers steadily increase in number and are now reckoned at between 1 and 2 percent of the population. More than half of these are immigrants, some of whom came to faith after settling in Belgium. Churches identify themselves as 'international' rather than 'migrant,' reflecting the desire to reach out to native Belgians and other Europeans.

Brussels is a strategic city. It is home to about 50 nationalities, with the growing Muslim segment having large numbers of Moroccans and Turks. Socially, the city ranges from impoverished neighbourhoods to affluent communities of young professionals, from marginalised immigrant groups to the powerful Eurocratic community. All need the gospel.

*Operation World*

## A changed life in Mongolia

*Like many in Mongolia, Mayagmar was in bondage to idols and addicted to alcohol. One day a friend told him of Jesus Christ and in time he responded to what he heard by committing himself to Christ. He became part of a local church, where he and his wife raised eight children. But he now lives in a remote area, so isolated from regular Christian fellowship that Christian radio broadcasts have become his main source of spiritual sustenance. He takes notes which he combines with his own Bible study notes so that he can ground his children in the Word of God.*

*FEBC*

## Asians to Asia

MAP Partners is a Malaysian-based ministry that for more than twenty years has partnered with local Christian work and workers in 13 countries of Asia – places such as Vietnam, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Cambodia and China, as well as West and East Malaysia. Their training and support programs extend to more than 450 local evangelists and pastors, which has resulted in over 6 million people receiving the gospel through literature and personal sharing, over 204,000 salvations for Christ, over 2,000 rural churches planted and over 53,000 Bibles given to new believers. Their goal is to be partnering with and supporting 1000 evangelists by 2030.

*MAP*

## The Christians of Algeria

Alongside Algeria's 99% Muslim majority is a small but growing Christian population. Although Algeria's constitution guarantees religious freedom, the reality is that most churches suffer from official obstruction. In 2006 a national commission for non-Muslim worship promised permits to build churches, but so far no permits have been granted, in spite of repeated requests from churches. On the contrary, many church buildings have been shut down by the authorities on spurious administrative grounds. Algerian Christians ask for prayer that they may be able to meet together for worship without these constant threats hanging over them.

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