

A WORLD IN MOTION



P1 | UNITED STATES

Bombs found in New York and New Jersey are stoking fears of terrorism and lone-wolf attacks in the US.

P2 | EUROPE

European countries continue to fortify their borders with walls and barbed wire fences, mainly in response to the refugee crisis.

P3 | US/GLOBAL

The age-old debate over military spending and humanitarian aid continues as arms deals are made and hunger stalks various regions.

P4 | EVENTS

Save the dates for an upcoming visit from a pastor working among the 'forgotten believers' in Syria.



THE NUMBERS: FEAR AND TERROR



11

The number of attacks in the US with links to Islamic extremism since 9/11 (excluding recent NY explosion)



15

The number of unsuccessful (foiled) terror plots during Obama's term of office (not all Islamic in motivation)



4

The ranking of terrorist attacks on list of American's top fears in 2015 (corrupt government officials was number 1 fear)



\$5.2 million

The amount set for Ahmad Rahami's bail

BOMBS IN NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY STOKE FEAR



A powerful explosion, caused by what the authorities believe was a homemade bomb, injured at least 31 people on a crowded sidewalk in the bustling Chelsea neighbourhood of Manhattan on Saturday night (17 September). A few hours later, the authorities found and removed what they described as a second explosive device four blocks away, raising the possibility that two bombs had been planted in the heart of the city. Mayor Bill de Blasio called the explosion "an intentional act" but initially said there was no connection to terrorism and no immediate claim of responsibility. (*New York Times*)

Developments and findings

One day after the explosion in New York, five devices were found near New Jersey train station, after two men called police and reported seeing wires and a pipe coming out of a suspicious package. Despite no official statements from known terrorist groups, people started calling the homemade bombs 'terrorist attacks that were going to be carried out by the Islamic State'. One New Yorker spoke about the fear that Americans are living with and about being tired of always being a target, saying that "enough is enough".

A few days after the explosion, police arrested and charged Ahmad Ramani, a 28-year-old US national who was born in Afghanistan. While no official ties to terror groups have been found,

Ramani's journal reportedly expressed his desire to die as a martyr, as well as admiration for Osama bin Laden and other Muslim extremists. He also made mention of the US government's "slaughter against the mujahideen, or holy warriors" in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Palestine. Because no mention was made of the Islamic State, investigators think that Ramani was inspired by Al-Qaeda, but at present, it would seem that he was acting on his own initiative, without any outside help or instruction. More than two years ago, Ramani had been investigated by the FBI for possible links to terrorism, but nothing concrete had been found. Adam Schiff, of the House Intelligence Committee, said that this shows how – despite the best efforts of intelligence agencies and law enforcement – it is not always possible to "catch people who mean to do us harm".

In recent decades (especially in the era of the 'War on Terror'), the United States has been a primary target for terrorist groups worldwide, most notably from Islamic terrorists seeking to destroy the "great Satan". Since the Al-Qaeda attacks on the US in 2001, the American population has been on high alert. In a bid to prevent further terror attacks on American soil, hundreds of thousands of troops have been sent to the Middle East to fight terrorist organisations. However, this military intervention has actually prompted some US nationals with ties to the Middle East to express their anger through 'homegrown' acts of terror.

The 'collective fear' of the American public relating to terror threats has been something that presidential candidate Donald Trump has been using to his advantage, and it will play a key role in the rest of the campaigning and the upcoming November elections.

NEWS HEADLINES



Fighting has resumed in **Syria** after the week-long ceasefire brokered by the US and Russia came to an end on 19 September. The deal was designed to allow aid to reach civilians, but an attack on a convoy carrying supplies after the ceasefire ended has sparked outrage. However, there were difficulties and tension throughout the brief pause in the fighting. Tonnes of humanitarian aid remained stalled at the border due to lack of assurances of safety from all sides. US-led coalition airstrikes mistakenly killed more than 60 Syrian regime soldiers at Deir al Zor airport, while targeting IS positions.



As hundreds of thousands of **Africans** again face food insecurity, the need for food aid is only one part of the larger story about food, farming, and hunger on the continent.

A new report by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa has been released indicating hope for Africa. In 2003, the African Union's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) called on African governments to earmark 10 percent of their national budgets for agriculture. Thirteen years later, the countries that heeded the call — even while falling short of the 10 per cent allocation — saw productivity on existing farms rise between 6 and 7 percent and GDP increase by about 4 percent. The report's authors declared it "the most successful development effort in African history".

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Fear is a natural human response to threats, but if it is allowed to take hold, it can alter our perception of a sovereign God and His working in the world. When people fear, they begin to lose hope, and when Christians lose hope, they start to lose faith in a God who is in control. Fear of the outside world and all its troubles incapacitates the Church and stops it from reaching out. Fear of nuclear weapons, economic uncertainties and terror threats can become all-consuming, and detrimental to Christian missions.

Take the advance of Islam in Europe as an example. With more and more reports appearing in international media of the possible long-term effect that Muslim refugees from the Middle East will have on Europe, Christians have become fearful that within the next decade, Europe may shift from being 'Christian' to 'Muslim'. This fear has placed the Church in a position where it must choose to either accept these predictions (with fear) or to fight for the Church's survival (with

hope). God has not forsaken His Church, and as long as the Church responds by reaching out to Muslim refugees with hope for their salvation, Islam will not be a threat.

Interpretation is key when it comes to Christians attempting to process and understand media reports. Regardless of what is happening, God is at work in the world, and hope can be found in even the bleakest of circumstances. When believers live in fear, they close themselves off to a troubled world, and limit the ways in which God can use them. When believers proclaim that God is sovereign and able to save a world in chaos, and His priorities are valued and sought after more than self-preservation, believers will be able to stand firm despite terror threats and to actively advance the Kingdom of God instead of turning inwards.

Psalm 111:10 says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, all those who practice it have a good understanding". Choose today to fear God instead of the terror that man may cause.

PRAY > For leaders to deal with threats responsibly rather than stoking fears > For Christians to reach across cultural barriers and embrace opportunities to demonstrate Christ's love

WALLS CONTINUE TO GO UP ACROSS EUROPE AGAIN



purpose of the wall was to stem the flow of refugees leaving East Berlin, which was under Soviet control.

41 years later, walls are again being built, but this time it is not to keep people in — the Calais wall is intended to keep refugees and migrants out (of Britain in particular). And it is not the only one.

During 2014/5, the European Union allowed more than 1.3 million refugees/migrants to enter the region. But with no end in sight to the war in Syria and with conflicts continuing in the wider region, European countries have started limiting their intake of refugees. And with the Turkey-EU deal (for Turkey to limit the number of refugees entering Europe) hanging in the balance, European countries are fearing further waves of refugees that would greatly overwhelm the current reception centres and allocated resources.

In Hungary, Prime Minister Victor Orban announced plans to construct a 280-mile-long razor wire fence to seal off the country from Southern Europe. Austria and Slovenia are also building border fences, while Bulgaria is planning a 100-mile fence along its southern border with Turkey. Greece, having been troubled by illegal migrants from North Africa for years, built a wall in 2012 and now plans to build another along its border with Turkey. Even Norway is building a fence along its arctic border with Russia, where more than 5,500 refugees (mostly Syrian) entered in 2015.

Work on building a wall along the approach road to the French port of Calais, to try to stop migrants from jumping aboard trucks bound for Britain, will begin this month British officials said. Immigration Minister Robert Goodwill told lawmakers that security was being stepped up in Calais, home to the "Jungle" camp where thousands of migrants, fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and Africa, hope to cross the English Channel to Britain. Goodwill said the wall was part of a 17 million pound (\$22.75 million) package of security measures agreed by Britain and France in March. (*Reuters*)

Building walls

Perhaps the most well-known 'dividing wall' in recent history was the one separating East and West Germany after the Second World War. What became known as the Berlin Wall began as a razor wire fence that was first constructed in 1961, followed by an actual concrete wall built in 1975. Removal of the wall began in November 1989. The primary

NEWS HEADLINES



North Korea announced it had conducted its fifth nuclear test, hours after seismic monitors detected a blast near the secretive country's nuclear test site. North Korea's state TV said the North was now capable of mounting nuclear warheads on ballistic rockets. The UN nuclear watchdog said a nuclear test by North Korea was a "clear violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions".



Russian President Vladimir Putin's political party, United Russia, has won a majority in the country's parliamentary elections. According to a report from Russian state-run news agency *Tass*, the result signals an improvement for United Russia, a gain of 105 seats means United Russia has inflicted heavy losses on its opponents.



A bill to block a huge **American** arms deal to Saudi Arabia failed to pass in the US Senate. The bill would have halted a \$1.15 billion sale of arms. A bipartisan group of senators cited the atrocities committed by the US-backed, Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, and the way the war has strengthened extremist groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, as key motivations for the bill.

Not all the walls being erected across Europe are for the purpose of preventing the influx of refugees. Ukraine and Estonia are planning to seal their borders with Russia in a bid to limit Russia's destabilising influence in the region. Ukraine, already struggling to finance its war in the Donbas region, plans to invest \$250 million in building a 1200-mile defence along its border with Russia.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Building walls for security reasons is one thing, but building walls for the purpose of keeping out refugees (who have lost everything and face death if they stay) is another.

Some use passages like Matthew 21:33 to support the principle of defensive walls ("There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, built a wall around it and built a watchtower..."). Pope Francis, however, said the following in response to Donald Trump's proposed wall between Mexico and the US: "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian. This is not the Gospel."

Europe, together with the US, is often still equated with the 'Christian West' (regardless of its gradual secularisation). And for people attempting to flee the conflict in the Middle East, it is widely regarded as a 'safe haven', primarily because of the Christian values instilled within its governments and societies.

Walls that are built to better manage the influx of refugees (having them enter through specified points supported by intake teams as opposed to random crossings) may make practical sense, but walls that are built to stop refugees from entering Europe entirely will have widespread negative effects. In many ways, such walls would confirm the negative teachings that many mosques in the Muslim world give about the 'Christian West', cementing false worldviews and even playing into the hands of hardliner Islamists.

Many churches in Germany (visited recently by an INcontext team) are shining examples of how the 'Christian West' has embraced Muslim refugees, taking them in and sharing the Gospel with them in love and welcome. This has resulted in multiple conversions to Christianity. If walls take root throughout Europe, doing this will no longer be a possibility for European believers. While open borders may be classified as a "risk" by many, they offer the Church an unparalleled opportunity to live out its Biblical mandate among those seeking help and refuge.

PRAY > For there to be a greater focus on building 'bridges', rather than walls > For Christians to be those who reconcile > For the European Church to fully embrace the opportunities afforded them to reach Muslims with the Gospel

FOOD OR FIREARMS: THE ONGOING DEBATE



Service, almost all this aid is in the form of military assistance. Israel is the US' largest and most powerful military ally in the Middle East (the late Republican Senator Jesse Helms described Israel as "America's aircraft carrier in the Middle East"), therefore it makes sense for the US to ensure that Israel's military is well trained and equipped.

The United States and Israel have reached a final agreement on a record new package of at least \$38 billion in US military aid. The deal will represent the biggest pledge of US military assistance made to any country, but also involves major concessions granted by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to officials on both sides. These include Israel's agreement not to seek additional funds from Congress, beyond what will be guaranteed annually in the new package, and also to phase out a special arrangement that has allowed Israel to spend part of its US aid on its own defence industry instead of on American-made weapons, the officials said. (*Reuters*)

Military aid

Since the Second World War, the US has given Israel more than \$124 billion in aid, and according to the Congressional Research

According to the 2015 report of the US Congressional Budget Justification, the US delivered \$35 billion in foreign aid throughout the world. \$5.9 billion went directly to military aid, and 75% of this went to Israel and Egypt (the remaining 25% went to various other nations). Since the Arab Spring revolution inadvertently resulted in the election of radical governments, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Libya, the US has actively invested in building up Egypt as a safeguard against the expansion of Islamic extremism in the region.

Military aid can be a controversial issue, especially in light of what it often produces (empowering and sustaining wars). Military aid from the West to its allies elsewhere in the world has been a hotly debated issue for generations, especially among those who seek answers to the

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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www.incontextministries.org

Please visit our website for up-to-date information on events around the world.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the articles in this publication or on the website, please feel free to contact us at any time.



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Bank: BMO Harris Bank

Account number:

4818649309

Routing Number:

071025661

inequalities that prevail. Some go so far as to suggest that if the West spent less on arming their allies in the Middle East, it would be possible to eradicate world hunger.

Humanitarian aid

According to the *Borgen Project* (one of the largest non-profit organisations in the US, addressing poverty and hunger), the estimated cost of ending world hunger is \$30 billion a year. If one compares this to the annual spending of world governments on defence (\$1,676 billion), the fact that world hunger has not been eradicated is a scandalous shame. According to the most recent report by Global Humanitarian Assistance, the combined humanitarian assistance across the globe in 2014 was a mere \$24.5 billion, with only a portion thereof spent on aid for nations facing starvation.

Consider the following facts: Hunger kills more people each year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. In sub-Saharan Africa, one in every four people (about 23.2% of the population) is hungry. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that about 795 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world (or one in nine) suffered from chronic undernourishment between 2014 and 2016. Almost all hungry people live in developing nations, representing 12.9% (or one in eight) of the population of developing nations. According to research done by the *Borgen Project*, Africa and Asia lose 11% of their GDP due to malnutrition annually, and prevention delivers \$16 in return on investment for every \$1 spent. It therefore stands to reason

that if the world spent more on feeding the hungry, and less on military aid, the possible economic repercussions would see the world economy grow.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The 'big picture' debate of military expenditure (including the arming of allies) versus humanitarian aid (including hunger relief) has been going on for decades, and the situation is not likely to change anytime soon. On this macro level, Christians around the world have a duty to pray for fellow believers who are in a position to influence these critical decisions for good – that their voice would be heard and that God would work and speak through them.

On a micro level, however, there is also a Christian response to this issue that looks closer to home. It is easy to point fingers at world leaders and accuse them of spending money on the wrong things with secular priorities, but what about the finances that God has entrusted to each of us? How do we prioritise our own spending, and how much of our own resources do we actively share with those in need? If every believer seeks to live generously and to follow Godly principles of stewardship, more of the hungry may be fed. Making a difference around the world starts at home, with us.

PRAY > For influential world leaders to value lives above weapon sales > For Christians in key decision-making positions to speak boldly for those without a voice > For Christians to be wise and generous with their resources

UPCOMING EVENTS



REV. HANANI MEETINGS

"If the future is at stake, time is important"

"Restoration and reconciliation are two Christian values that will be key in rebuilding the nation of Syria... and only the Church can provide this platform. The restoration of Syria will depend largely on the extent to which the Church in this nation is equipped and supported. The vision to restore their destroyed cities needs to start today."

INcontext is hosting Rev. Hanani (not his real name), a pastor who serves the 'forgotten believers' of Syria. Rev. Hanani assists believers in this nation (where he travels extensively), strengthening and supporting Christians living in war-zones.

Come and hear their stories. Be informed and inspired. Learn how to interpret the greatest opportunity of our generation.

JOHANNESBURG

Saturday, 29 October

09:00—Rosebank Union Church

Sunday, 30 October

08:30 & 10:30—Word & Life/Woord en Lewe

18:00—Family Worship Church

CAPE TOWN

Wednesday, 2 November

09:00—Stone Shed, Durbanville

Thursday, 3 November

19:00—NG Kerk Durbanville-Bergsig

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE WEBSITE