

A WORLD IN MOTION



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Israel and Turkey, whose relations were severely strained in 2010, are taking steps to mend ties, shifting dynamics in the Middle East region.

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THE NUMBERS: ISRAEL-TURKEY RELATIONS



1950

The year in which Turkey began its diplomatic mission in Israel



37

The number of nations represented on the 'Gaza Freedom Flotilla', attacked by Israel in 2010



22.03.2013

The date when Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu apologised (via phonecall) to Turkish PM Recep Erdogan for the flotilla attack



8-10 bcm

The amount (in billion cubic metres) of natural gas that Israel could supply to Turkey per year in the future

ISRAEL AND TURKEY MEND COMPLICATED TIES



Turkey on Monday [22 August] slammed Israel for its retaliatory strikes on Gaza overnight in response to a rocket attack launched by terrorists in the Strip, saying it would not desist from such condemnation despite the reconciliation of ties between Ankara and Jerusalem. The Turkish Foreign Ministry lambasted Israel for its "hostile attitude," while avoiding any denouncement of the Gaza projectile strike that landed in a populated area of the southern Israeli city of Sderot. (*Jerusalem Post*)

Repairing relationships

On 27 July this year, Israel and Turkey mended ties that were strained six years ago when Israeli commandos killed nine Turkish nationals on a flotilla (small fleet of ships) destined for Gaza, with humanitarian and building aid for Palestine on board (the main ship involved was the MV Mari Marmara, whose name became synonymous with the incident). The attack took place in international waters off the coast of Gaza, and drew massive outrage around the world.

Aside from Egypt and Jordan, Turkey is the only Muslim-majority country in the Middle East region to recognise Israel's sovereignty. It was also the first Muslim-majority country in the world to accept Israel's re-establishment in 1949. The flotilla attack in May 2010 was a huge blow to Turkey-Israel relations, and with Israel facing opposition on almost every side, the loss of an ally was significant.

Now, after six years, Israel and Turkey are actively attempting to restore relationships. According to

the agreement that was signed in June, Israel will allow Turkey to transfer goods (humanitarian and building supplies) to Gaza (via Israel), and to build a new 200-bed hospital, a power station and a desalination plant for drinking water. Additionally, Israel will be giving \$20 million in compensation to the families of those who were killed or injured in the flotilla attack. Turkey, meanwhile, has agreed to help remove Hamas military headquarters and activists from Palestinian territory.

Amos Harel, military and defence analyst for Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, commented on the agreement: "The main benefit the parties expect, in addition to natural-gas trade (Israel needs to export new-found quantities of natural gas and Turkey needs to alleviate its dangerous dependence on Russian gas) and the expansion of tourism, has to do with Gaza. Israel gains another channel of mediation and restraint vis-a-vis the Hamas government, in addition to the ties between the group's leaders in the Strip, Egypt and Qatar."

The complication of shame

In the Middle East region, the desire for honour and the avoidance of shame dominates almost all actions, decisions and responses. According to this cultural worldview, the agreement between the two countries is seen by many as a 'disaster'. Harel explains why:

"In the reconciliation deal, Erdogan has sacrificed one of his most deeply felt convictions, that the Israeli marine blockade around the Gaza strip is illegitimate. He, who once threatened to send the Turkish navy to Gaza, is now accepting Israeli control over Gazan trade. As Palestinian Parliament member Hanan Ashrawi put it: 'Erdogan has signed over Gazan sovereignty to Israel'. For Benjamin Netanyahu, the whole affair has been an equally bitter chalice. To Israeli nationalists, the pain of the Mavi Marmara [flotilla] killings comes not from remorse over the fate of the Turkish activists, whom they regard as little less than terrorists. Israel's Minister of

NEWS HEADLINES



Russia used Iran for the first time as a base from which to launch air strikes against Syrian militants, widening its air campaign in Syria and deepening its involvement in the Middle East. It was the first time Russia has used the territory of another nation, apart from Syria itself, to launch such strikes since the Kremlin launched a bombing campaign to support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in September last year.



Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said it was evacuating its staff from six hospitals in northern **Yemen** after a Saudi-led coalition air strike hit a health facility operated by the medical aid group killing 19 people. MSF is one of handful of international medical aid groups operating on the ground in Yemen where a 16-month civil war between a Gulf Arab coalition and an Iran-allied militia has killed over 6,500 people and brought one of world's poorest countries close to famine.



One person was killed and 30 others injured after two bombs exploded in a busy nightlife district in **Thailand's** troubled southern province of Pattani. A series of bombings across central and southern Thailand on August 11 and 12 left four people dead and more than 30 injured.

Education, Naftali Bennet (who voted against the Turkish deal in the security cabinet), said paying compensation to 'terrorists' was a dangerous precedent which will expose Israel to similar claims from other adversaries. The hardest part of the Mavi Marmara drama has to do with Israeli military and national prestige. Netanyahu, himself a former commando fighter, is keenly aware of the huge embarrassment of the bungled boarding of the Mavi Marmara."

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Both Israel and Turkey are key nations from an ancient Biblical perspective, and both nations have missional significance. Israel is the birthplace of Christ, and will always fulfill the 'prophetic' role as a nation set apart by God for Kingdom purposes. Turkey, on the other hand, is the birthplace of Paul and was central to the establishment, growth and spread of the early Church. These two nations with a history of salvation and the message of salvation are playing key roles in the "new Middle East".

Nathan Shachar, writing for the *Turkey Analyst* (a publication of the *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Joint Center*), commented on the deeper significance of the repairing of relations between Turkey and Israel: "Whatever dividends the fresh Turkish-Israeli rapprochement will bring, it reveals something fundamental about the new Middle East: the number of unknown variables in this ever less predictable environment is steadily growing, and even the most arrogant and unrepentant leaders will have to eat crow from time to time in order to salvage their national interests. Leaders who stand by their words and their principles will be severely handicapped."

The Arab Spring revolutions that started in late 2010 epitomised the volatile nature of this "ever less predictable environment" in the Middle East, and the recent Turkey-Israel reconciliation is just one of a number of "unknown variables" that have happened since. Among other developments, there has been the rise of the Islamic State and their proclamation of a caliphate, the changes in Libya that allowed it to become a haven for extremists, and the growing role that Russia is playing in conflict areas in the region. In the midst of these shifts, it is difficult to unravel all the motivations at play (and what ranks as the most important): personal honour, nationalist interests, economic considerations, religious principles etc.

What is clear at present is that anything can happen in the coming weeks and months, but as Dr David Aikman (former *TIME Magazine* journalist) says in his book "The Mirage of Peace", a lasting peace in the Middle East is perhaps an impossibility.

Lasting peace can only come through Christ, and amongst all the uncertainty and changing relations is the Middle East Church, still holding on in the places where it first grew and took root. From North Africa to Israel to Turkey, pray that this Church may remain as a witness, however small and battered it may be, until Christ's return.

PRAY > For positive repercussions from the Turkey-Israel deal > For mission strategies in the Middle East to adapt to changing conditions and circumstances > For the steadfastness and endurance of the Church in the region

UPDATE ON UKRAINE CONFLICT SITUATION



Russia plans to take "exhaustive measures" against Ukraine in response to what it called an attempted terrorist attack in the annexed Crimean peninsula earlier this month, but will not go as far as suspending diplomatic relations with Kiev, the country's foreign minister said. The killing of the two Russians appears likely to have greater repercussions for the conflict in eastern Ukraine than in Crimea, where Russia has built up its military presence in recent weeks. (*Financial Times*)

InContext's correspondent in Ukraine (known for the purposes of this article as Joshua) recently visited areas within the conflict zone in East Ukraine, reporting on the situation and the state of the Church. Public sentiment in the region

points to the conflict being far from resolved, and as long as Russia continues to support separatist fighters, East Ukraine will remain a war zone. But despite continued fighting and loss of life, the Church seems to be 'rising from the ashes' and offering people hope.

In the bigger picture, who is winning the war? Joshua says that in some ways, Russia is gaining popular support, mainly due to the lack of Ukrainian communication structures. "The broadcasting towers for Donbas (able to send out television broadcasts) are on the separatist side, so only Russian TV is broadcasted. The Ukrainian government plans to build new ones but so far has done nothing. Because of this, Russian propaganda is winning the minds and hearts of people in Donbas."

State of Crimea under Russian rule

What has changed in Crimea, once a thriving tourist destination, since Russia annexed the region? Joshua shared the following perspective:

"Since the occupation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, minority groups have suffered human rights

NEWS HEADLINES



For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the **German** government plans to tell citizens to stockpile food and water in case of an attack or catastrophe, a German newspaper reported. Germany is currently on high alert after two Islamist attacks and a shooting by a mentally unstable teenager last month. Berlin announced measures earlier this month to spend considerably more on its police and security forces and to create a special unit to counter cyber-crime and terrorism.



Nearly 18,000 people died in government custody in **Syria** in 2011-15, an Amnesty International report says. The Amnesty document includes interviews with 65 "torture survivors", who described appalling abuse in jails and detention centres. The Syrian government has repeatedly denied such allegations. The group estimates that more than 17,723 people died in custody between March 2011, when the uprising against President Bashar Assad began, and December 2015.



A suicide bomber aged between 12 and 14 carried out the attack on a wedding party in the **Turkish** city of Gaziantep that killed at least 51 people. The attack was the deadliest in a series of bombings in Turkey this year, and President Tayyip Erdogan said the Islamic State was likely behind it.

violations, murders, disappearances, imprisonments without trial, and other various forms of oppression. With Russia threatening war against Ukraine, justice for the people of Crimea is still far off. In Russia's pursuit to purge any opposition to its rule in Crimea, it banned one of the most prominent minority groups, the 'Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People', as a demonstration of its force against opposition.

In a move to solidify its resolve that Crimea never be given back to Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin consolidated the country's Southern and Crimean federal districts in July into the united Southern Federal District, shuffling and replacing several governors, local representatives and one ambassador. Despite international outcry, Russia stated that it was not interested in any sort of discussion or negotiation."

In the 28 July edition of *A World in Motion*, we reported on the new Russian anti-terrorism law that could affect Church freedoms dramatically, and Joshua says that these developments are causing Christians in Crimea to fear repression. "There is a fear that is present in Crimea as in the former Soviet era – people are scared to speak out about human rights abuses, and human rights organisations monitoring the situation in Crimea say that because of this, the various abuses could be much higher."

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Joshua notes that despite an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, the Church in Crimea is growing. "Crimean churches previously registered under Ukrainian law have been able to re-register under Russian law, and besides the application of the

laws that govern religious groups (which have always been quite stringent), the Church continues to operate as normal. Foreigners are issued religious visas without hindrance, and are able to visit churches in Crimea. The churches seem to have accepted the situation and continue to reach out to the lost, and in some churches, growth is reported."

Joshua was also able to visit churches in the war zone in recent weeks and to assess the situation there: "Once again I saw how the Church is getting busy with long-term vision in Donbas. Churches are growing and new churches are being planted in villages, but it is still very dangerous due to troop movement and the many land mines that have been laid. Church unity is improving as churches work together to serve in Donbas.

I spoke to some civilians in Stanytsia Luhansk (a disputed settlement) who come over to the Ukrainian side to collect their pensions and to shop. They said that people just want peace and stability in their lives. People on both sides have lost faith in their governing authorities, and this is where the Church must seize opportunities. There is a good response from the Church, but there needs to be more. Churches are starting to move towards a church-planting strategy, and away from a mostly humanitarian aid supply position."

PRAY > For a breakthrough in the conflict between Ukraine and Russia > For all Christians reaching out to those suffering in the conflict zones > For the Ukrainian Church to be a voice of hope, peace and reconciliation

MODERN-DAY SLAVERY STILL PREVALENT GLOBALLY



Guest article by a friend of INcontext Ministries

Almost 60 percent of countries are at high risk of using slave labour in their supply chains, according to a new global index launched on Thursday [11 August], which ranked North Korea as having the worst record of slave labour in the world. By assessing incidents of human trafficking or slavery, national laws and the quality of law enforcement across 198 countries, risk analytics company Verisk Maplecroft found that 115 countries were at high or extreme risk of using slaves. Nearly 46 million people around the world are living as slaves, forced to work in factories, mines and farms, sold for sex, trapped in debt bondage or born into servitude, according to the 2016 Global Slavery Index by rights group Walk Free Foundation. (*Aljazeera*)

Slavery: Then and Now

For many, the thought of slavery is connected with the image of African families captured and sold across the continent, Europe and America.

It was largely due to the efforts of one man, William Wilberforce, that slavery was abolished in Britain in 1833. It was Wilberforce's conviction as a Christian that led him to fight for the abolishment of slavery. He would cringe in horror if he saw what was happening today. In an age where slavery is meant to be abolished, there are more slaves today than when slavery was legal.

According to A21, an organisation dedicated to combatting this evil, every 30 seconds someone becomes a victim of modern day slavery, with the average victim being 12 years old. The form of the slavery is mostly 'human trafficking': currently the fastest growing crime, with an income turnover of 32 billion dollars. Men, women and children are forced into manual and sexual labour against their will. Of the millions of slaves that exist, only 1% escape.

In the case of forced prostitution, women are cruelly treated in order to enforce compliance.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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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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Many are lured from foreign countries through the promise of job offers. Violence and drugs are the norm, and women are told to look as if they are enjoying themselves under threat of further violence. Survivor stories are horrific.

Slavery in the Bible

The Bible has its fair share of criticism for not being outspoken about clearly condemning slavery. Instructions such as Paul's in Colossians 3:22 would not go down well in today's rights-oriented culture: "Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart." (Colossians 3:22)

What people miss, however, is that God met people within their context, and in Paul's time of writing, institutionalised slavery was a fact of life. Prisoners of war, or people who could not pay debts, became slaves. God's instructions reveal a radically different approach to the normal master-slave relationship: an insistence on respecting the dignity of the person enslaved.

In earlier Old Testament history, Israelites were not allowed to kidnap fellow Israelites as slaves. To do so meant the death penalty (Exodus 21:16). If an Israelite had to become a slave to another as a result of poverty or debt, then the limit was six years (Exodus 21). Sometimes slaves were so well treated that slaves then chose to be life-time slaves (Exodus 21:5-6).

Perhaps the most well-known slave in Christian history is the runaway Onesimus, who was the slave of Philemon. The name Onesimus means 'useful' or 'beneficial,' and Paul in his letter uses this meaning in the form of a pun in making his radical appeal, which in essence amounts to setting the slave free since he is a brother in Christ.

God meets and relates with people within a context, and just because He made laws about

slaves, this does not mean He condones slavery. The abhorrence of God against slavery is seen in the redemption story itself: the Israelites were set free from slavery to become a free people of God, and Jesus came to set us free from our slavery to sin so that we could be free to be worshippers of God.

Slavery today

There is one crucial difference between the slavery the Bible deals with and what we are encountering today through human trafficking. Human trafficking is illegal, and there is simply no way of justifying the ill treatment of a person, against their will, for the pleasure of another.

Trafficking is a global phenomenon, and South Africa is one of the countries identified as a source, transit and destination country for victims. In August 2015, South African legislation was finally passed that enabled prosecution for this crime. While only 1% of victims escape, only 1% of perpetrators get prosecuted.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

There is much that Christians can do today regarding modern-day slavery. We can prevent further trafficking by educating young people about the reality of the situation, and how to protect themselves and others (organisations like A21 are willing to talk at schools to both pupils and parents). A little awareness can go a long way. We can financially contribute to organisations that tackle this issue. We can report suspicious happenings or circumstances.

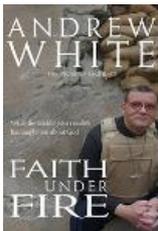
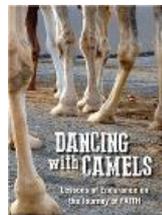
And obviously we can pray: for those caught up in slavery, for those involved in the frontline of rescuing and restoring victims, and for those who are prosecuting perpetrators.

PRAY > For the release and comfort of all those suffering as slaves today > For all working to end slavery and human trafficking

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Don't forget the
WINTER BOOK SALE
on until the end of August

For the rest of the month, INcontext is selling the following titles at reduced prices (postage excluded):

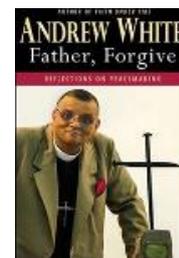
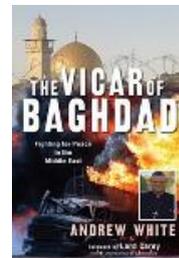


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