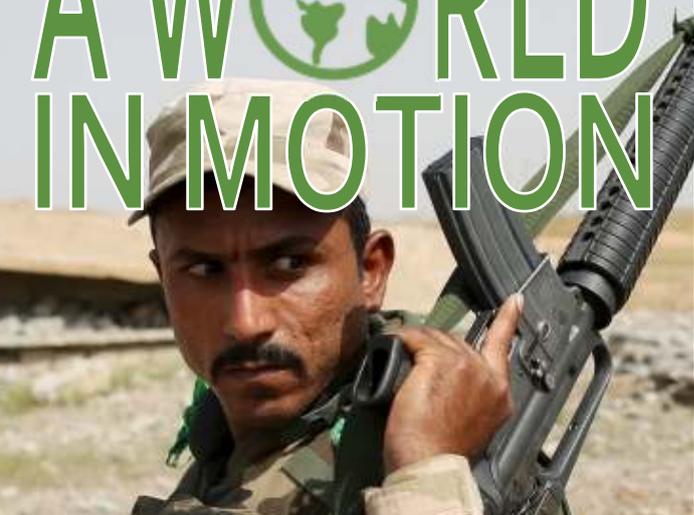


A WORLD IN MOTION



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P1 | IRAQ

The long-awaited military campaign to liberate Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, from the Islamic State (IS) has begun.

P2 | YEMEN

As the US fired on Yemeni targets, UN officials again raised concerns about the worsening humanitarian disaster in war-torn Yemen.

P3 | UNITED STATES

A guest writer offers his perspective on US republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump (first in a two-part series on the candidates).

P4 | PUBLICATIONS

INcontext's 2017 calendar—featuring Syrian refugees in Lebanon—is now on sale to support Christians in Syria.



THE NUMBERS: MOSUL OFFENSIVE



10.06.2014

The day Mosul was occupied by the Islamic State (IS)



1,846,500

The estimated population of Mosul in 2004



35,000

The estimated number of Assyrian Christians living in Mosul pre-IS invasion—none are said to remain (signifying end of 1600 years of continuous Christian presence)



5,000-7,000

The estimated number of Yazidis (minority group) enslaved by IS in Mosul—mainly women and children

CAMPAIGN TO LIBERATE MOSUL HAS BEGUN



Iraqi forces have launched a campaign to retake Mosul, the self-declared Islamic State (IS) capital in Iraq. Up to 1.5 million civilians remain in the city, according to the United Nations, voicing fears that the vastly outnumbered IS fighters could use them as human shields as they seek to repel the assault on its last major stronghold in the country. "The hour has come and the moment of great victory is near," Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said early on Monday (17 October) in a speech aired on state TV, surrounded by the armed forces' top commanders. (*Al Jazeera*)

Mosul, the 'crown jewel'

After the previously-held cities of Fallujah, Haditha and Tikrit (along with many other communities across Iraq) were systematically wrenched back from the Islamic State, the focus has now shifted to the 'crown jewel' of Mosul, once home to the majority of Iraq's Christians.

Historically, Mosul was a prosperous trading hub of 1.5 million people, but the city has been suffering under Islamic State control for the past two years, and the population is believed to have dropped to between 750,000 and one million civilians. Mosul was quite a diverse city, but when IS took control in the summer of 2014, they enslaved and executed the Yazidi population and drove Christians out, infamously marking Christian homes with the Arabic letter "N" (for "Nasrani" or "Nazarene").

For the past six months, the US-led coalition has been working with local forces in Iraq and Syria to isolate Mosul from its supply routes in Syria. But

Mosul is not simply a military challenge. According to Brett McGurk, US Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State (IS), "it is a political, economic, diplomatic and humanitarian challenge that, if not done right, may well outstrip the capacity of the Iraqi government, and the Kurdistan Regional Government, to manage alone."

Mosul offensive

The military offensive to retake Mosul is a very complicated operation, due to the mix of forces that are participating: the central government in Baghdad, Iraqi forces, Iraqi counterterrorism units and the Kurdish Peshmerga who, though allied in this fight, differ from their Iraqi counterparts in certain respects. There are also the controversial Iranian-backed Shia militias, whose role in the campaign, to retake the Sunni-majority Mosul, raises questions. Some fear that if Shia militias enter the city, there will be reprisals. But the Iraqi government insists that these militias will stay at the perimeter of Mosul and will not advance towards the city centre.

The issue of civilians in Mosul is also a complicating factor. There are perhaps as many as 700,000 people still in the city, constituting the largest population to be present during an urban liberation battle against IS.

Despite months of planning, much could still go wrong. A comprehensive post-battle arrangement for the governance of the city and the surrounding Nineveh region has not yet been finalised, meaning that even the best-executed military operation could unleash new tensions. It is also unclear whether the allies are prepared to handle the humanitarian needs of hundreds of thousands of civilians who might flee the fighting.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The manner in which the citizens of Mosul are dealt with during the battle to retake the city – and in the ensuing months – will determine

NEWS HEADLINES



The 193-member **United Nations** General Assembly unanimously appointed former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres as the ninth secretary-general of the world body for five years beginning 1 January 2017. Guterres (67) will replace Ban Ki-moon (72) of South Korea. Ban will step down at the end of 2016 after serving two five-year terms. Guterres was Portugal's prime minister from 1995 to 2002 and UN High Commissioner for Refugees from 2005 to 2015.



Behnam Irani (43), the **Iranian** pastor held in prison for six years for Christian activities that Iran brands crimes against the state, has been released, according to charity and advocacy groups. Christians make up a half a percent of Iran's population. Iran has a long history of human rights abuses and persecution of Christians. In 2010, Ayatollah Khamenei branded house churches a threat to national security.



Indian Prime Minister Modi branded Pakistan a "mother-ship of terrorism" at a summit of the BRICS nations, testing the cohesion of a group whose heavyweight member China is a close ally of India's arch rival. Modi's remarks escalated his diplomatic drive to isolate Pakistan, which India accuses of sponsoring cross-border terrorism.

whether there is any hope for a united Iraq. Unless governments reduce corruption, calm sectarian divisions, integrate all groups into the political process and deliver services to their citizens, extremists will surely rise again.

The *Pre-emptive Love Coalition*, a global movement of peacemakers (whose stated goal is "changing the way we engage the world's most polarising conflicts by confronting fear with acts of love"), was quick to respond to the desperate needs of Iraqis fleeing Fallujah when Iraqi and coalition forces recently retook the city from IS. They brought food and water to thousands of displaced families, but also actively went beyond, to 'love their enemies' by going to the detention compounds where suspected IS members and sympathisers were being held (many of them in a state of limbo between a proven connection to IS and suspicion being cleared, while others were confirmed guilty).

When the *Pre-emptive Love* team requested permission to take much-needed resources to these detainees, some Iraqi leaders were astonished, asking: "How did you even think to do this?" Another stated: "We haven't heard this

idea from anyone else." Others countered: "You can't do that, they're getting what they had coming to them", and some were adamant: "Security first."

The only real hope for Mosul, and Iraq as a whole, is Christ's love in action: unconditional love, even to the worst of sinners (including IS). Before IS began its quest for a caliphate, Mosul (known as Nineveh in ancient times) had the highest proportion of Christians in Iraq and was home to some of the oldest churches in the Middle East. The Church in Iraq, dating back to the first century, was the centre of missionary expansion to India, Central Asia and China. Many believers beyond Iraq's borders owe their salvation to fearless martyrs who laid down their lives to share the Gospel, an outflow of the mercy God extended to the repentant people of Nineveh to whom Jonah was sent. Pray for the survival and revival of the remnant of believers in the midst of military endeavours.

PRAY > For a minimum of casualties in the campaign to retake Mosul > For civilians fleeing the conflict to receive help and protection > For Iraqi believers to be ambassadors of peace and reconciliation

'FORGOTTEN' HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN YEMEN



(supporting the Yemeni government) and Iran (supporting the Houthi rebels) – has received relatively little attention.

However, there is a rising concern that the people of Yemen are facing a humanitarian disaster. According to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Yemen has more people in need of humanitarian aid than any other country in the world, even surpassing Syria.

Humanitarian crisis

The Syrian humanitarian crisis was largely overlooked by the West until more than a million Syrians fled across the Mediterranean into Europe, in effect demanding that the West take notice of the destruction taking place in Syria.

Meanwhile, much of the world seems to be missing the warning signals emanating from sources acquainted with the situation on the ground in Yemen. The UN estimates that more than 21 million people in Yemen (82 percent of the population) are in desperate need of life-saving humanitarian aid – this is only slightly less than the combined numbers of those in Syria (13 million) and Iraq (11 million) currently at risk. The war in Yemen has left at least 10,000 dead, including almost 4,000 civilians, and has displaced 3.2 million Yemenis (out of a population of 27 million). The conflict has decimated the economy of what was already the poorest country in the Arab world, and sparked a deadly famine (approximately 370,000 children under the age of five are at risk of starving to death). Yemen's infrastructure is in ruins.

Added to this, two influential terrorist groups – Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State – are active in the country, seeking to

The US military launched cruise missile strikes on three coastal radar sites in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, retaliating after failed missile attacks [last week] on a US Navy destroyer, US officials said. The strikes authorised by President Barack Obama represent Washington's first direct military action against Houthi-controlled targets in Yemen's conflict. The Pentagon said initial US assessments indicated the radar sites were destroyed. "These limited self-defence strikes were conducted to protect our personnel, our ships, and our freedom of navigation in this important maritime passageway," said Pentagon spokesman, Peter Cook. (*Reuters*)

Conflict overview

The brazen attempt by Houthi rebels to sink a US warship patrolling off Yemen marks a significant escalation of a conflict that has been alternately fuelled and ignored by Western powers. What began as a predominantly internal uprising in Yemen (inspired by similar revolts in other Arab countries, known as the 'Arab Spring') devolved into a full-blown war involving a multitude of international players, much like the situation in Syria. Unlike Syria, however, the war in Yemen – seen by most as a 'proxy war' between regional giants Saudi Arabia

NEWS HEADLINES



President Rodrigo Duterte has said the **Philippines** is willing to hold joint military exercises with China and Russia, while reiterating that he will no longer allow war games with long-time ally, the United States. Duterte made the remarks in a TV interview ahead of a four-day visit to Beijing aimed at improving ties that soured over competing claims in the resource-rich South China Sea.



Jihadist group Boko Haram has freed 21 of more than 200 girls it kidnapped in April 2014 in the northern **Nigerian** town of Chibok, after mediation by Switzerland and the International Red Cross, officials said. Their release comes as a boost for the government of President Muhammadu Buhari. Boko Haram has expressed a willingness to negotiate the release of another 83 girls.



Sunni Muslim groups have coordinated mass demonstrations across **Pakistan**, chanting slogans and displaying signs calling for the Christian woman Asia Bibi to be hanged. Their protests were sparked by the Supreme Court's postponement of the decision on the case of the mother of five, sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2010, and still waiting for the judgement in her final appeal.

gain territory and influence in the chaotic circumstances and power vacuum in which they thrive. Their presence and agendas only exacerbate the bleak situation.

New wave of refugees?

An estimated 180,000 Yemenis have already fled the country, and some are fearing that this could result in a new wave of asylum seekers entering an already-overwhelmed Europe. But this situation seems unlikely. Most Yemenis do not have the same opportunities as Syrians to flee: a comparison of these two nations prior to 2011 shows that Yemen's GDP was less than half that of Syria's. In Yemen, life expectancy was less, infant mortality was almost three times higher than in Syria, unemployment was double, and a Yemeni was four times more likely than a Syrian to live below the poverty line. According to *BBC News*, about 61% of the population needed some humanitarian assistance even before the war, and about two-thirds of Yemeni youths were unemployed. Mogib Abdullah, a Yemeni spokesman for the UN refugee agency UNHCR, told *Reuters* that "people do not really have the courage or means and resources to [flee]... they are trapped."

Those who are able to flee the country have limited options: their northern neighbour, Saudi Arabia, is directly involved in the conflict and has closed their border to refugees. Many of those who have already fled have headed to countries in the Horn of Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Djibouti (which are facing many challenges themselves, including conflict and food shortages). Because Yemen has, for many years,

welcomed refugees from Africa, most of those going to these African nations now are actually 'returnees' rather than Yemeni citizens. The only other feasible destination is Yemen's other direct neighbour, Oman.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Some have described Yemen as the "forgotten war". And with the likelihood of so many civilians being trapped inside the country, it would seem that Yemenis are, for the most part, the 'forgotten suffering'. In a way, this can be expected by human nature – if the situation does not impact one directly, such as the Syrian refugees arriving on European doorsteps, it is far more difficult to become emotionally invested to the point of getting involved to make a difference.

The Church, however, is called to go above and beyond this natural human tendency, and to actively fight against 'compassion fatigue'. There is a small population of Christian believers in Yemen who desperately need the global Church's prayers borne in anguish, and there are also millions of people desperate for hope and a Saviour. Proverbs 31:8 tells us to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves", and in the case of Yemen, we are called to remember and care for those who would otherwise be forgotten or overlooked.

PRAY > For renewed efforts from key leaders in Yemen to work towards peace > For godly wisdom for international role-players involved in the conflict > For Christians to be a voice for those suffering, and that the Yemeni people will come to know the true Saviour

A GUEST PERSPECTIVE ON TRUMP



The following opinion piece is by a guest correspondent from the US, Luke Smith. The next edition of AWIM will feature his analysis of Hillary Clinton.

Who is the real Donald Trump? What is his objective?

Mr Trump's presidential candidacy prompts so many questions that an experienced observer would consider this atypical of the American general election cycle. Typically, in American politics, voters would answer these questions regarding their party's candidate during the primary elections, and eliminate those about whom uncertainty and vagueness abound. But confusion hounds not only the 'Washington shakeup' banner that Mr Trump is flying – his own party is perhaps the most confused as to what his

objectives are and how he intends to accomplish them.

Loyal subscribers to the 'Make America Great Again' movement, however, cite stories of terrorists and illegal immigrants maintaining long furloughs in the United States, some of them collecting benefits from the Social Security Administration. One such case (chronicled by James Bamford in *Foreign Policy*), involves a Cuban who became a famous enemy of the Castro regime and was prosecuted across the Western Hemisphere for various acts of terrorism. Now residing in Miami, Luis Posada was involved in the planning of attacks on diplomatic facilities, hotels, and even a car bomb planted in Washington D.C. that killed Orlando Letelier, a friend of Fidel Castro.

Individuals such as Mr Posada no doubt should be extradited from the United States to stand trial for crimes, and it is obvious that past presidents have overlooked more cases such as his. On this point, Mr Trump was expected to have stood firm, recommending that all illegal immigrants be extradited. Regardless, some assessments of Trump's immigration policy indicate 'wiggle room' in his campaign rhetoric, making his foreign policy unclear (or in the extreme, 'non-existent').

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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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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Liberal news media, most notably the *Washington Post*, have called Mr Trump "uniquely unqualified" for the job he seeks. Others, including news media outside the direct influence of the American political sphere, have labelled him as a "divider", and love to quote those in the United States who 'threw him under a bus'. In response to Hillary Clinton's 'rap sheet' listing of Mr Trump's controversial statements, the Republican Party offered a meagre defence, most notably party chair Reince Priebus, who seemed to turned a blind eye.

Yet it is remarkable how Mr Trump has stumped many academics by rising to his current pedestal without getting even 10% of the adult population to vote for him. A well-known public relations expert, Joseph Cabosky, claims that Mr Trump was able to accomplish this by reaching and convincing the right people, not all of them. Most news media have people believing that almost all Americans think poorly of him, but this perspective is flawed, and leaves out the influence of social media that Mr Trump is using (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter) to reach millions of followers. There are also various pro-Trump online pages, such as the Drudge Report, which reached 17 million individual users in April 2016.

William Bonvillian explained that the main message Mr Trump is broadcasting through these channels is: that of American recovery from loss. The loss Mr Trump speaks of is specifically in the manufacturing sector – the result of 30 years of the United States failing to match the capacity of China, and the Chinese manufacturing sector steadily growing. Bonvillian cites studies and polls that show Mr Trump's supporters to be primarily working men without a college degree, who feel as though their political influence is not what it should be.

Mr Trump's popularity is now described by some theorists as "grievance mitigation", but the American political system is baffled by this reality. Mahamat Dodo explained one reason for this: The

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which Mr Trump mentioned more than once during the first presidential debate in late September. Mr Trump wanted to connect with those among his supporters who want the return of jobs that have 'left' the United States, and implied that the Democratic Party is largely responsible for current market woes. The NAFTA agreement, signed by former president Bill Clinton, is blamed by many for critical industries leaving the United States.

What Mr Trump realises, and has accepted, is that many voters will support Hillary Clinton's appeal to logic and experience. His own strategy for victory was solidified at the first debate, when he repeatedly accused Ms Clinton of failing to be part of the solution during her 30 years in politics, and connecting her to her husband's NAFTA agreement and the job migration. While Mr Trump's unconventional foreign policy continues to confuse (such as the statement he made about not wanting the Islamic State to "know what our strategy is"), the touchstone of Mr Trump's message is, in simple terms, a realist, America-centric policy and a resurrection of trade-dominance and corporate tax breaks to "bring back our jobs".

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton will continue to influence America no matter who emerges victorious in November. We must "pray for all people", especially because many fear what may come. It is our mandate to pray for "kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:1-2, NLT). Given the weight of what will be decided in November, I (as an American), ask the Church to pray, and that when America is mentioned in conversation, to speak life.

PRAY > For Mr Trump and his advisors > For US voters as they contemplate the upcoming presidential vote > For Christians in the US to prayerfully consider their vote and for those outside the US to pray for and speak life over America

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Don't miss this opportunity to get involved in supporting fellow believers in Syria! The calendars make excellent Christmas gifts, so why not make this Christmas gift-giving something special that makes an impact?

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