

# A WORLD IN MOTION

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The 'Yarovaya law', designed to combat terrorism and extremism, could have severe implications for the Church in Russia.

## P2 | NORTH KOREA

Long-term enemies North Korea and the United States have a complicated relationship. We take a look at some of the conflict's history.

## P3 | ZIMBABWE

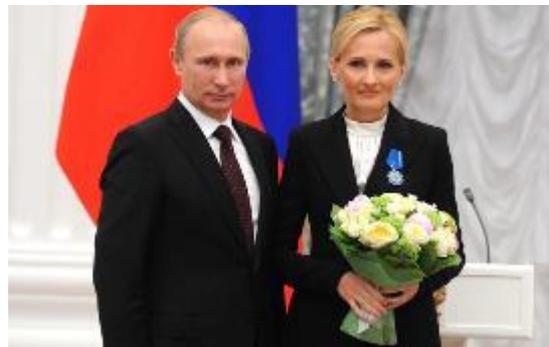
After a Zimbabwean pastor and protest leader was cleared of charges in an unprecedented pardon, we share an eyewitness' testimony.

## P4 | PUBLICATIONS

COMING SOON: Winter book sale of INcontext publications and various titles by Canon Andrew White.



## IMPACT OF NEW RUSSIAN LAW ON CHURCH



In signing a new anti-terrorism law, Russian President Vladimir Putin could have authority to crack down on non-government-aligned churches, said Archbishop Andrew Maklakov, administrator of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of America. The law that Putin signed on July 6 restricts religious proselytising and imposes heavy fines for doing so. While the law exempts the Russian Orthodox Christian Church, opponents point out that exemption only extends to the Moscow Patriarchate critics say has been entangled with the Russian government since the Soviet era. (*Newsweek*)

### From terrorism to religion

The 'Yarovaya law' – named after Irina Yarovaya, a member of Russia's State Duma (an advisory/legislative assembly) and head of the Parliamentary Committee for Security and Anti-Corruption – was implemented to 'combat terrorism' and includes a prison sentence of up to one year for 'failure to report a terrorist threat'. The law also obligates cellular and internet providers to store communication data for the purpose of helping security officials identify possible terrorists within the country. Additionally, the law allows for Russian nationals to be stripped of their citizenship if they have served in foreign armed forces or have worked for international organisations that do not have any links to Russia.

The new law was drafted in reaction to the October 2015 bombing of a Russian aeroplane over the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, which killed 24 people. But human rights activists say that Russia is using the downed aircraft as a pretext to clamp down on basic freedoms. As mentioned in the news extract above, the law also bans proselytising (advocating a certain belief or

attempting to convert someone), preaching, praying and sharing religious materials outside officially recognised institutions. While the focus of this article is on the impact that the law will have on Christianity in Russia, it is interesting to note that the law covers all religions in Russia aside from Orthodox Christianity, and that Islam constitutes the second-largest religion in Russia after Russian Orthodoxy. All religious groups' activities will be limited, for the purposes of 'fighting extremism'.

In some ways, the restrictions that the Yarovaya law places on the Russian Church are reminiscent of the persecution carried out against non-orthodox Christians in the days of the Soviet Union. Missionaries will need to have official permits, and all religious activity will be limited to registered church buildings (making it illegal to congregate as a 'house church'). According to a joint open letter sent to the government by the Russian protestant churches, the law is "the most draconian [excessively harsh and severe] anti-religion bill to be proposed in Russia since Nikita Khrushchev promised to eliminate Christianity in the Soviet Union".

### FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Sergey Rakhuba, president of *Mission Eurasia*, made the following statement concerning these new legal developments: "We don't know yet how these laws will be implemented, but it is already clear that they are achieving their goal of creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion within society, while allowing the government to restrict freedom in violation of the Constitution and international norms. Believers will soon need to make a very important choice: whether to obey God or these new Russian laws."

The monitoring of churches in Russia is nothing new, especially protestant and Evangelical churches who are viewed as being 'pro-Western' and 'opposed to the state-sanctioned Russian Orthodox Church'. But although there is still much to be seen in terms of how the new restrictions are applied – INcontext's partner in the region says the implementation of the law could vary from region to region – it would seem that today's Russian Church is entering a new season of opposition that could either destroy it or make it stronger.

## THE NUMBERS: RUSSIA AND RELIGION



18%

The percentage of Russians without any religious affiliation in 2008, down from 61% in 1991.



41%

The percentage of Russian Orthodox believers in 2012



6.5%

The percentage of Muslims in Russia in 2012 (the second largest religious affiliation)



23%

The percentage of Russians who think religion does more harm than good (up from 5% in 1990)

# NEWS HEADLINES



Three terror attacks have recently shaken **Germany**: A young Afghan attacked passengers on a train in Bavaria with an axe, severely wounding four Hong Kong residents and injuring a local woman before police shot him dead. A shooting at a Munich shopping centre which left nine people dead was carried out by a German-Iranian who then killed himself. A failed asylum seeker from Syria killed himself and injured 12 other people after setting off a bomb near an open-air music festival in Ansbach.



Two of four main generals resigned in protest against the government's ongoing purge in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt of July 15. The **Turkish** government has dismissed more than 1,223 officers from the Turkish army, including 87 generals. At the same time, the government has shut down several media outlets, including 16 television channels and three news agencies that are said to be supportive of Fethullah Gulen, the US-based exile and businessman blamed by the Turkish government for the failed coup attempt.



An 84-year-old priest was killed and four other people taken hostage by two armed men who stormed a church in northern **France**. The two attackers said they were from the Islamic State (IS). Police raided a house in the suburb in the aftermath of the attack.

When the Iron Curtain 'fell' in 1989, the Church across Eastern Europe rejoiced in its new-found freedom, and there were unprecedented new opportunities for evangelism, church planting, Bible translation and theological education. As a result, the Church almost doubled in numbers. Yet the open doors also brought some new challenges, including the introduction of 'prosperity theology' that came hand-in-hand with the wider Western influence. This weakened rather than strengthened the Church, and paved the way for a kind of 'secular Christianity'.

A common consensus among Christian leaders who have lived through persecution is that trials strengthen the Church – roots grow deep during times of persecution, which allow the Church to flourish in spite of all opposition. In the global

picture, and despite how things may seem at the time, persecution has never been 'bad' for the Church – it 'redirects' the Church in the short-term, but the Kingdom of God remains strong, vibrant and growing. There will certainly be some challenges for the Russian Church in terms of adapting to the new faith environment at this time, but all hope is not lost. Pray with us that the new challenges lead to an outward vision instead of an inward retreat.

**PRAY > For Russian Church leaders to make wise decisions > For the activities of all missionaries in Russia to not be stifled > For Russian Christians to grow in faith, courage and steadfastness and to share their faith with others despite the risks**

## NORTH KOREA AND THE US—AN ONGOING BATTLE



Early Tuesday morning (19 July) North Korea test-fired three ballistic missiles which flew up to 600 kilometres (373 miles) into waters east of the peninsula. North Korea is barred from testing ballistic missile technology under several United Nations Security Council resolutions, but it has continued to defy those restrictions throughout this year since carrying out a nuclear test in January (its fourth such test). The country has ignored all international demands to curb its military programme, despite increasingly debilitating sanctions.

Seoul has warned that Pyongyang could carry out its fifth ever nuclear test at any time. Tuesday's missile launches are seen as a reaction to the planned deployment of an American missile defence system – THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) – in South Korea (under US military operational control) by the end of next year. South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn was greeted with flying eggs and bottles when attempting last week to allay residents' concerns about having a THAAD battery stationed in Seongju County, nearly 300 kilometres south of Seoul. North Korea's neighbours, China and Russia have both reacted strongly against the proposed installation of the THAAD system. (*Turkish Weekly and Washington Times*)

### Failed negotiations

For years, the United States and the international community have tried to negotiate an end to North Korea's nuclear and missile development programme, along with its export of ballistic missile technology. Those efforts have included periods of crisis, stalemates and tentative progress towards denuclearisation.

When negotiations broke down in 2009, North Korea stated that it would never return to the talks

and was no longer bound by their prior agreements. The other parties have stated that they remain committed to the talks, calling on North Korea to recommit to its 2005 denuclearisation pledge.

### How does the situation compare to Iraq?

Former US president George W. Bush, in his State of the Union address on 29 January 2002, used the term "Axis of Evil" to describe governments accused of aiding terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction. He highlighted Iran, Iraq and North Korea in particular as 'enemies' of the US. Of these three countries, North Korea was by far the greatest threat: their standing army was larger than Iran and Iraq's combined, and the country had more missiles and submarines as well as nuclear material.

It was Iraq, however, that the US and Britain invaded in 2003, on the premise that its dictatorial leader, Saddam Hussein, had consistently violated UN resolutions regarding weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Looking back today, there still seems to be a vast discrepancy between the invasion of Iraq and the 'multilateral diplomacy' approach used for North Korea. Mr Bush described the threat from Iraq as "standing alone" among the many dangers in the world, but following the invasion, John Bolton (US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control) warned North Korea to 'draw the appropriate lesson'.

### Nuclear deterrent against US aggression

North Korea has consistently maintained that it developed nuclear weapons "to protect its sovereignty and vital rights from the US nuclear threat and hostile policy which have lasted for more than half a century". Rudiger Frank, a professor of East Asian Economy and Society at the University of Vienna, argues that three 'signal events' in the last two decades have underscored for North Korea that the decision it took to develop nuclear weapons was the right one:

Firstly, there was Mikhail Gorbachev's mistaken belief that his policies to end the arms race and confrontation with the West would be rewarded with respect for the Soviet Union's existence and support for its faltering economy. Instead of this happening, the once mighty Soviet Union was weakened and ridiculed. Secondly, there was Iraq's humiliating defeat in the First Gulf War, which resulted in the country being forced to allow Western control over about half its airspace in

## NEWS HEADLINES



Republican presidential nominee **Donald Trump** said he might abandon NATO's guarantee of mutual defence and would renegotiate or scrap the NAFTA trade deal if he is elected, drawing fire from some senior Republicans and his Democratic rival. National security officials and some Republicans said abandoning NATO's mutual defence guarantee would abandon 66 years of US foreign policy and threaten the world's most powerful military alliance.



More than 8,300 refugees fled violence in **South Sudan** and crossed into neighbouring Uganda in a single day last week, UN officials said. The refugees, nearly all women and children, were escaping stepped-up fighting between forces loyal to South Sudan's president and those loyal to its former vice president. More than two years of ethnically charged fighting has killed more than 10,000 people and forced more than 2 million others to flee their homes.



The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on a peaceful protest in the **Afghan** capital that killed at least 80 people and wounded more than 200, raising fears of the extremists' growing strength and capability in Afghanistan. The attack was the deadliest to hit Kabul in 15 years of civil war.

1991 and to endure sanctions that led to the "oil for food" programme of 1995. And even Saddam Hussein's compliance did not keep the country from a second Gulf War. Thirdly, there was the situation in Libya: in 2003, after long negotiations with the West, Muammar Gaddafi made a surprise announcement that Libya would give up their WMD development programme and would allow unconditional inspections. Despite the dictator's attempts to ingratiate himself with the West, he was later killed by militia allied to NATO.

None of these events were lost on North Korea, who seemed to 'learn a lesson' that was quite different to the one that the US intended. A February 2013 article in *Rodong Sinmun*, the official newspaper of North Korea's ruling Workers Party, observed the following: "Had it not been for the nuclear deterrence of our own, the US would have already launched a war on the peninsula as it had done in Iraq and Libya and plunged it into a sorry plight as (Yugoslavia) at the end of the last century and Afghanistan early in this century."

### FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

North Korea's leadership has a very poor track record when it comes to caring for the people of their nation. Military expenditure is prioritised over socio-economic upliftment and reforms. In this atheist

state, where public religion is discouraged and persecuted, Christians are forced to meet in secret or face imprisonment and torture (in 2005, there were thought to be about 406,000 Christians in North Korea, constituting 1.7% of the population). Analysts often link the North Korean government's antagonism towards Christianity to their hatred for and distrust of the US (seen as a Christian nation).

Should the threats of invasion by the US ever become a reality, one can be sure that Christians in North Korea would be classified as 'co-conspirators' and suffer severe consequences. Perhaps the time has come for the rest of the world to take a new approach with North Korea. There are already a number of Christian organisations who reach out to North Korea in love, often persevering when other non-governmental organisations leave amidst political or military upheaval. If North Koreans see Christians sticking with them through hardship and isolation, many hearts may be opened to the One whom those Christians serve.

**PRAY > For US leadership to deal wisely with North Korea, for the good of the people > For the softening of the hearts of North Korean leaders > For all underground Christians in North Korea**

## TESTIMONY OF A PROTESTING CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE



officially withdrawn their support from Mr Mugabe, Zimbabweans are hoping for a glimmer of light in their future.

### FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The following is a testimony from an eyewitness to the events of 13 July 2016 (as shared in *The Zimbabwean*):

"I reckon I will never forget this day as long as I live. I cried tears of utter joy as I drove home with my hand on the horn all the way, as the whole city erupted in joy. What an experience. These are a few of the many things I cried about as I drove home:

We saw today the leaders of the national Church, across all denominations, in unity with each other bringing prayer, blessing, peace and joy whilst massive tear-gas trucks and riot police stood aghast on stand-by. We saw today these church leaders issue bold statements, speaking truth in love to all Zimbabweans, giving direction and challenge.

We saw today the President of the EFZ [Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe], Dr Shingi Munyeza, sit from morning to night in solidarity with Evan [Mawarire] and many other church leaders there. I saw him lead an entire courtroom in prayer for Evan, for the magistrate, for the police and for Zimbabwe. Authority, humility, wisdom, truth and courage with every word.

We heard today 5,000 people chant 'Pastor, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor' from outside the magistrate's court as the Church lead the way in today's proceedings.

We saw today hundreds of lawyers standing for justice and offering their services 'pro-Deo' and pro bono –

**O**n 13 July 2016, a seemingly impossible event took place in Zimbabwe, a nation marred by decades of authoritarian rule and a dying economy. Zimbabweans rejoiced after the high court dropped the charges (concerning an 'attempt to overthrow the government') against activist-pastor Evan Mawarire, declaring that his arrest was unconstitutional.

Pastor Mawarire, leader of the *#ThisFlag* movement (which sought to put pressure on the ruling government of the 92-year-old Robert Mugabe), called for a nationwide shutdown to protest government repression, poor public services, high unemployment and widespread corruption. During the protests – which saw widespread demonstrations and key staff members leaving government offices – more than 100 people were arrested. Protest organisers say they are still fearing a violent crackdown by authorities in response.

In the past, protests have been common in the country, but they were almost all violently oppressed and the opposition leaders were convicted on trumped-up charges. The release of Pastor Mawarire surprised everyone, and with the War Veterans' Association (a long-time ally of the government, often helping to suppress opposition) having

# FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

## INcontext Website:

[www.incontextministries.org](http://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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many holding up their lawyer's ID when the magistrate asked who is taking this case.

We saw today a defence lawyer lay down his vanity and allow for a team effort from all lawyers, thereby receiving a torrent of legal advice, as half [of those in] the courtroom were some of the best legal minds in the country. Every word the defence lawyer uttered seemed to build the most insurmountable defence that the magistrate had ever heard.

We saw today the accused, Evan Mawarire, come up from the cells, from the bowels of the magistrate's court building, and hold his head high in the dock with a Zimbabwean flag around his neck. He stood resolutely, courageously trusting in God and continuing in his purpose.

We heard today 2000+ people outside the courtroom hold a five-minute silence/prayer time as the court hearing started at 2:15pm.

We heard today people excited in the courtroom about Sean Mullens who had just led the masses outside to pray in groups as the afternoon entered its most challenging moment with some unrest setting in. I believe this altered the course of the day.

We saw today every race and tribe loving Jesus, loving one another and loving Zimbabwe.

We heard today an overflowing courtroom sing 'Ishe Komborera Zimbabwe, Come Spirit, Holy Spirit' as we waited two and a half hours for the verdict. Police [were also] singing.

We saw today, after singing and praying in the courtroom, the riot police enter with AK-47s,

truncheons and shields. We saw them honoured by all inside and respectfully asked by a lawyer about their actions. We saw them reconsider and walk out after five minutes to great applause.

I sang today of 'The Blood of Jesus' (directly translated from Shona as 'The Blood of God') at the top of my voice in the courtroom with hundreds of others. And many other amazing songs of worship.

We saw and heard today a judge bring a just and righteous judgement. not a word out of place – like poetry from beginning to end.

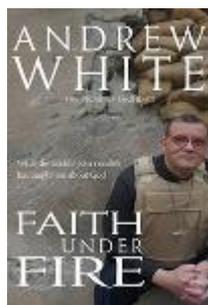
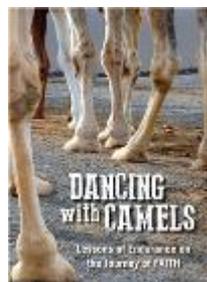
We saw something I have prayed for over years – dancing in the streets and joy in homes. We saw this as Evan and his family left the courts for home and the thousands [who remained] kicked off the biggest street party that Harare may have ever seen. I watched this guy love his wife and kids, preferring them to personal glory or fame.

We saw today what could be something extraordinarily special for reconciliation and foundation-laying in Zimbabwe, even the influence of a continent. I thank the Lord for doing immeasurably more than we could have asked for or imagined today.

Tomorrow is another day and no doubt there will be challenges to face. The most important thing is that the Kingdom of God is advancing, the Church is growing and Jesus is working out His purposes in an amazing way, for His Glory!"

**PRAY > For the Church in Zimbabwe to grow in influence > For Christian protestors to act in a godly manner > For a miraculous healing and breakthrough for the nation**

## PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE



### UPCOMING WINTER BOOK SALE

Watch this space for more information next week!

In the coming week, INcontext Ministries will be sending out information regarding a winter book sale, with prices of publications lowered for a limited time only.

Titles include INcontext publications (*World Hotspot List* and *Dancing with Camels*) as well as four books by Canon Andrew White, renowned Christian leader who has spent many years working for peace in the Middle East (Iraq, Jordan and Israel).

