

# A WORLD IN MOTION

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President Trump's executive orders, including a jumpstart on the Mexico wall and a ban on travellers from some Muslim countries, have prompted protests.

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Six years after the January 25 revolution that saw the ousting of former president Hosni Mubarak, we take a look at the current situation in Egypt.

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An attack on a mosque in Quebec City shocked the nation that has become known for its policies of tolerance and inclusivity.

## P4 | WEBSITE

INcontext International's new website is now in use—take a look!



## THE NUMBERS:

### US TRAVEL BAN



18

The number of executive orders and memos Mr Trump signed in his first 12 days in office (Mr Obama signed 19 during his first 12 days)



31%

The percentage of people who said the ban made them feel more safe (26% said it made them feel less safe)



721

The number of people reportedly not allowed to board flights to the US after the travel ban was enforced



40+

The number of anti-ban protests across the United States

## PRESIDENT TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE DECISIONS



By Andrew Richards

President Donald Trump moved aggressively to tighten the nation's immigration controls on Wednesday [25 January], signing executive actions to jumpstart construction of his promised US-Mexico border wall and cut federal grants for immigrant-protecting "sanctuary cities." As early as Friday [27 January], he paused the flow of all refugees to the US and indefinitely barred those fleeing war-torn Syria. "Beginning today the United States of America gets back control of its borders," Trump declared during a visit to the Department of Homeland Security. (IOL)

### The Mexico wall issue

Mr Trump has suggested a 20% tax on all goods imported from Mexico as a means of raising the necessary funds to build his proposed wall along the US southern border with Mexico. Having already signed an executive order paving the way for the wall, estimated to cost between \$12-15 billion, tensions between the two countries have never been worse with Mr Trump adamant that Mexico will pay for the wall, while Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto says "Mexico does not believe in walls. I've said time again; Mexico will not pay for any wall."

Cross border trade between the US and Mexico amounts to some \$1.6 billion per day, with Mexico being the third largest goods (import) trading partner of the US. President Nieto has laughed off Mr Trump's flawed assumption that Mexico will pay for the wall, insisting that a 20% tax increase on imported goods from Mexico would mean that US tax payers will in fact be the ones paying, as the price of imported goods will rise.

### Controversial travel ban

The order to jumpstart the building of the wall was overshadowed by the far-reaching implications of the travel ban imposed soon after. The order effectively suspended the US refugee admissions system for 120 days, suspended the Syrian refugee process indefinitely, banned entry of peoples from seven majority-Muslim countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen) for 90 days following the signing of the order, temporarily banned entry of dual-nationals who are from those seven countries (but have an additional passport) for 90 days following the signing, prioritising refugee claims based on religious persecution, and reducing the number of refugees that will be accepted in 2017 from 110,000 to 50,000.

The effects of the order were felt almost immediately, with confusion and despair descending on ports and airports across the nation as some travellers were detained, some barred from boarding planes and others ordered out of the country. Universities, tech companies and hospitals were reeling in the wake of the order as it impacted thousands of doctors, students, researchers, engineers and others.

### American response

Several lawsuits in federal court are already underway, while thousands protested the order outside various airports. According to a *Reuters* poll conducted on 30-31 January, approximately one in two Americans are in favour of the ban, and about one-third believe the action makes them 'safer'. But there were sharp divisions along party lines. Some criticised Mr Trump's order and said it could backfire by giving terrorist organisations a new recruitment message.

### FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Mexico wall and a hard stand against Muslim refugees and immigrants entering the US were of the most popular proposals during Mr Trump's presidential campaign, with supporters often shouting "build that wall". With America sending out more missionaries than any other country in the world (an estimated 127,000 per year), the question is

# NEWS HEADLINES



US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis said he would sound out ally **South Korea** on efforts to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs as he arrived in Seoul on Thursday, including plans to deploy a US missile defence system there.

Mattis' visit comes amid reports that the North may be readying to test a new ballistic missile in what could be an early challenge for President Trump's administration.



African countries are considering a co-ordinated withdrawal from the **International Criminal Court** if it is not reformed to address what they see as its bias against the continent. Almost a third of the ICC's 124 members are African, and a withdrawal by a large number of them would cripple a court that has yet to fulfil hopes that it would punish perpetrators of war crimes and genocide.



The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting at the request of the United States, to discuss **Iran's** latest ballistic missile test. The US Mission to the UN said it wanted the UN's most powerful body to talk about Sunday's launch of a medium-range missile, which defies UN sanctions. Israeli UN Ambassador Danny Dannon called for the Security Council to "act immediately in response to these Iranian actions which endanger not only Israel, but the entire Middle East".

whether Mr Trump's negative attitude against Muslims entering the US could have a negative effect on American Christian workers throughout the Muslim world?

INcontext asked Dr Daniel Shayesteh (an Iranian convert from Islam and refugee to the West) to explain how Mr Trump's indefinite bar on the refugee flow to the US will impact Christians. "Generally speaking, *Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen were already no go zone for American Christian workers before Mr Trump's victory. Christians have been slaughtered in these countries in horrifying ways when there was no name of Trump around. Committed Muslims in these countries are not that harsh to non-American Christian workers as much as they are towards American Christian workers*".

Asked whether the visa freeze against Muslim refugees and immigrants will disappoint those who are seeking refuge in the West, Shayesteh commented: "America is just one country among many Western countries. When I and my family were in Turkey, America was closed, but Australia was open and we therefore migrated to Australia. So, the full door is not closed to refugees." (An executive decree signed by Mr Trump does not close the West.)

Asked what the impact of Mr Trump will be on Christian missions to the Muslim world, Dr.

Shayesteh said: "I believe the presence of Mr Trump will anger the radical Muslims more in comparison with a liberal leader. This may harshen the life for American Christians in Islamic countries. However, the Christian impact on these countries in our contemporary time is not much via Christian workers but via media ministry."

Dr Shayesteh makes a very important point when he says that media ministry has a greater impact on the Muslim world than single Christian workers. In an age where the Taliban communicates with smartphones while hiding in caves, and social media topples corrupt regimes (Arab Spring), it's important to identify the doors opened by God by means of technology. Satellite TV is reaching millions of Muslims throughout the Middle East with the Gospel being proclaimed right in their homes.

Donald Trump's negative attitude against Muslims could very well cause American Christian workers to experience an increase in persecution in countries like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, with the likely effect that missionaries will move out. This effect could be reversed by means of strategically using technology such as social media and satellite TV, as means of reaching the millions of Muslims seeking the truth.

**PRAY > For Mr Trump and his administration > For all those affected by the travel ban > For the safety of all US Christian workers in Muslim nations**

## EGYPT: SIX YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION



By *Cherolyn Amery*

Israel warned citizens visiting the Sinai Peninsula to leave the area and those who planned on visiting to change their plans over fears of attacks coinciding with January 25th's anniversary of Egypt's 2011 uprising. Prime Minister's Benjamin Netanyahu's counterterrorism office said there was a "very high concrete threat level" on the sixth anniversary of the uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak. Unlike past January 25 anniversaries marred by deadly clashes between police and protesters, this one was mostly quiet, with the deployment of a larger-than-usual number of security forces in Cairo and elsewhere in the country. (*Associated Press*)

### Current state of affairs

While this year's anniversary of the January 25 'Arab Spring' uprising in Egypt may have passed with fewer protests than in previous years, many Egyptians would have been contemplating the changes that have occurred over the past six years in the Middle East's most populous country. Ziad Bahaa-Eldin, who served as interim deputy

prime minister after the July 2013 ousting of President Mohamed Morsi, wrote in *Ahram Online* that "there's [not] one Egyptian who hasn't paid some price over the last six years in the conflicts and crises the country experienced following the January 25 revolution". Bahaa-Eldin believes that the revolution was "inevitable" and "neither right nor wrong", and he is, for the most part, optimistic about what the future holds for the country.

Amr Hamzawy, previously a senior associate in the Middle East programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was far less positive in an article published by *Aljazeera*, entitled "The Tragedy of Egypt's Stolen Revolution". He describes how Egypt's "new authoritarianism" under former military leader Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has grown to include the arrest of peaceful demonstrators, forced disappearances, torture in places of custody, control of media institutions, crackdowns on independent civil society organisations and political opposition, and "unprecedented aggressions on human rights and freedoms and on the fragile social fabric". In summary, he writes that "repression has been the major structuring reality of Egypt since 2013".

When President Sisi assumed power after Morsi's ousting, a great sense of relief was felt by many Egyptians who had become deeply disillusioned by the extremist-leaning direction that the new Muslim Brotherhood-led government had been taking. Hamzawy writes that Mr Sisi "presented himself as the ultimate guarantor of restoring stability", and that many Egyptians saw him as "a saviour in uniform". Today's Egypt, however, is wrestling with

# NEWS HEADLINES



**China** will crack down further on what it calls “cults” with a new judicial interpretation mandating harsh punishments for groups proselytising to government officials or children or linking up with foreign groups. In cases considered less serious, where adherents repent and leave the “cult”, there is an option for punishment not to be imposed, the interpretation states. China routinely denies accusations from rights groups and Western governments that it seeks to restrict religious activities, but says they must be conducted legally.



A judge in **Sudan** sentenced Pastor Petr Jasek to life in prison for espionage, to six months in prison for spreading ‘rumours that undermine the authority of the state’, to a fine of 100,000 Sudanese Pounds (approx. USD 16,000) for undertaking NGO work without a permit, and to one year in prison for ‘inciting strife between communities’, for entry in and photography of military areas and equipment, and illegal entry into Sudan. Two other pastors were given shorter sentences.



The **Romanian** capital, Bucharest, has seen one of its largest ever anti-government protests after a decree was passed that could free dozens of officials jailed for corruption. A crowd of at least 150,000 was reported outside government offices.

worsening social and economic conditions and growing terror threats in the Sinai Peninsula. Poverty and unemployment rates are high, and the ‘stability’ is far from easy.

Jack Shenker, author of *“The Egyptians: A Radical History of Egypt’s Unfinished Revolution”*, writes in the *New York Times* of a “central fault line” in Egypt today: a deep-rooted struggle more than half a decade old about “whether politics is to remain the preserve of elites, or whether the defences around the existing model of power can be swept away by a tide of popular sovereignty from below”. Later in the article, he writes of the enduring uncertainty about the future: *“Egypt’s younger generation, weaned on television images of barricades and tear gas, and veterans of their own personal battles with patriarchs in the classroom, mosque, factory floor and family dining room, do not accept the status quo as immutable... The future is vague and foggy, far more so than the confident proclamations of Egypt’s rulers suggest. And who will shape that future remains fundamentally up for grabs.”*

## FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

For Egypt’s Christian population (the largest Christian community in the Middle East), the revolution had major repercussions, including increased opposition and direct attacks as the Muslim Brotherhood grew in power. Numerous churches and Christian-owned properties were ransacked or destroyed.

Leaders of Egypt’s Coptic Church supported the army’s ousting of Mohamed Morsi in 2013, and stood with Mr Sisi in his bid for power, with the hope that his leadership would ensure greater protection for the Egyptian Church. But while Mr Sisi was the first Egyptian president to attend a Christmas mass (in 2015) and has promised to rebuild churches that were damaged or destroyed in recent years, some Coptic Christians are losing faith in Mr Sisi and his promises of security.

This loss of faith in the president was exacerbated by the attack on St Mark’s Cathedral complex on 11 December 2016, in which 27 people were killed and

49 were wounded. The government blamed the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood for the attack, but the Islamic State claimed responsibility, and vowed that there would be more attacks against Christians. Aside from this overt threat by the Islamic State, Christians in Egypt face ongoing opposition, sometimes in direct ways (such as discrimination and limitations in higher-level employment opportunities, and restrictions on church construction) and sometimes in more subtle ways (a 2013 study by the *Pew Research Centre* reported that some 75 percent of Egyptians surveyed believed that Islamic Sharia law should be applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike).

In recent months, there have been both positive and negative developments for the Egyptian Church. On one hand, some of the legal restrictions on building churches have been eased, and on 6 January, President Sisi announced plans to build both the largest mosque and church in Egypt in the ‘new capital’ that is under construction. He also said that he would be the first to donate money to this project. On the other hand, a new law that strictly regulates NGOs operating in Egypt may hamper the work of churches and Christian missions (no groups may engage in “activities that might harm the national security of the country, or activities that might violate the public order, morals, or health”). According to *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*, this new law “effectively eradicates civil society”.

In this context of opposition and uncertainty, Egyptian Church leaders are encouraging their congregations to hold fast to the teachings of Jesus. Early in January this year, Bishop Makarios (head of the Coptic diocese in the Minya province), said in an interview: “I will tell the people at my church to pray for those who attack them... to love thy enemies... to forgive... not just for the sake of Christians, but for all of Egypt.”

**PRAY > For Mr Sisi and his government > For despairing Egyptians to encounter hope in Jesus Christ > For the Church in Egypt to strengthen their roots and to grow in influence**

## SHOCK ATTACK ON MOSQUE IN CANADA



*By Donnelly McClelland*

**A**lexandre Bissonnette, the alleged gunman who killed six and wounded eight at a Quebec City mosque on Sunday [29 January], was charged with six counts of first degree murder and five counts of attempted murder at the Quebec City Courthouse late on Monday afternoon. The shooting on

Sunday, the first time someone had been killed in a mosque in Canada and, at least recently, a rare event outside the Muslim world, shocked a nation that has prided itself on openness and has been lauded for its welcoming acceptance of Syrian refugees. The shooting, however, underscored a growing anti-Muslim sentiment that has been particularly virulent in some parts of this French-speaking corner of the country. Mr Bissonnette was well known to people who monitor far-right groups in Quebec, where he was a frequent commenter on sites speaking about immigration and Islam. The attack came after Mr Trudeau said that Canada stood ready to continue welcoming refugees from terrorism and war and as Mr Trump’s executive order on immigration stranded people around the world and provoked condemnation that it was directed at Muslims. (*New York Times*)

## FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

### INcontext Website:

[www.incontextinternational.org](http://www.incontextinternational.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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## Unfolding events

In the wake of the attack, Prime Minister Trudeau was the first to offer condolences and assurances in Parliament, asserting that the victims were targeted simply because of their religion. He then directly addressed the more than one million Muslims living in Canada, saying: "We are with you. Thirty-six million hearts are breaking with yours. Know that we value you." He concluded with the following: "It was an attack on our most intrinsic and cherished values as Canadians – values of openness, diversity, and freedom of religion."

Leaders of the Quebec City mosque said that the suspect in the shooting was not known to them. But they said the shooting had followed acts of harassment and bigotry that had led the mosque to install eight surveillance cameras. The acts ranged from hate mail to swastikas painted on its doors to a pig's head left in front of the mosque last June.

## Quebec – race and religious accommodation

Canada is generally known for its welcoming attitude towards immigrants and people of all religions, but the French-speaking province of Quebec has had a long-standing debate on race and religious accommodation. The province's previous separatist government went so far as to call for a ban on overt and conspicuous religious symbols, such as the hijab, in public institutions.

A contentious topic in Canadian politics has, for many years, been Quebec's demand to be recognised as a "distinct society". There were those who argued that entrenching Quebec's "distinct society" was "frankly racist". The root of intolerance is not a recent development – it runs deep in Quebec with some historians tracing it as far back as the 1800s. In 1807, Ezekiel Hart, a Jewish merchant who'd been elected to the assembly of Lower Canada (the first Jew to be elected to public office in the British Empire) was not allowed to sit because he refused to swear an oath "as a Christian" on the New Testament. In the 1930s, Quebec resident Adiren Arcand founded a fascist political party that sought to deport the country's Jews to the Arctic.

In Quebec, multiculturalism has often been perceived as a threat to Québécois culture. *CBC Canada* explains: "Whereas advocates of globalisation claim it comes with the creation of a global 'we', the far right sees it as a process by which a 'they' encroaches upon an 'us'. Left

unchecked, they believe, globalisation and its corollary – immigration – threaten to erase all that is unique to the Québécois way of life." But, admittedly, this often-ugly debate over the place of religion and immigrants in Western society is hardly unique to Quebec. The issue of the "burkini ban" in France and the case of the mixed-gender swimming classes in Switzerland are cases in point.

## FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Mr Couillard, the provincial premier of Quebec, made an important point when he said that solidarity should not just be something simply expressed during difficult times. "It's normal in times of crisis that everyone will speak the same voice of tolerance, integration and inclusion," he told reporters. "The real challenge will be three weeks from now, to continue saying this."

Christians are often criticised for their apparent lack of tolerance – their commitment to truth as depicted in the Bible is often misconstrued as arrogance and intolerance. Believers are also challenged regarding their 'exclusivity' and their 'peculiar' identity, complete with certain terms and jargon.

In a world where the speed of globalisation, the advances in technology and the mass movements of people have got so many people concerned and looking inwards, the challenge for Christians is to act in the opposite spirit. How does one remain "in the world, but not of the world", maintaining that uniqueness of being a child of God without lording it over others, being the bridge-builders and peace-makers long after the crises have become statistics, and being effective salt and light in the world without compromising on truth as presented in the Word of God? Essentially it comes down to acting from a spirit of love, not from a place of correctness. There is nothing wrong with being whatever 'kind' God created (culturally, racially, nationally, etc – He is, after all, the Creator of wonderful variety) or even with wanting to preserve and cultivate those things. The problem comes when we seek to divide and to exclude based on these aspects of difference.

**PRAY > For all those grieving after the attack > For God to work in the hearts of all those seeking to harm others who are different from them > For the Church in Canada to be an example of love in action and of welcome to strangers**

## NEW INCONTEXT WEBSITE



**INcontext International has launched a NEW WEBSITE with the goal of offering information and resources in a more user-friendly way.**

[www.incontextinternational.org](http://www.incontextinternational.org)

If there are any resources not yet provided that would be of value to you, your church or your ministry from a missions or Kingdom perspective, please let us know! Contact the Communications Department:

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