

A WORLD IN MOTION



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THE NUMBERS:

TURKISH DIASPORA



1960s

The decade Turkish emigrants started leaving Turkey for Western Europe



4 million

The estimated number of Turkish emigrants in Western Europe



66%

The proportion of total Turkish emigrants living in Germany



30%

The number of Turkish emigrants under the age of 18 (80% of whom have been born and schooled in Europe)

TURKEY IN DIPLOMATIC ROW WITH EU NATIONS



By Donnelly McClelland

Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan said on Tuesday [14 March] a diplomatic row with the Netherlands could not be dismissed with an apology, and that further actions could be taken, after Turkey on Monday suspended high-level diplomatic ties with the Dutch. Speaking at an event in Ankara, Erdoğan also accused German Chancellor Angela Merkel of attacking Turkey the same way Dutch police used dogs and water cannon to disperse Turkish protesters outside the Turkish consulate in Rotterdam. Turkey suspended diplomatic relations with the Netherlands after Dutch authorities prevented its ministers from speaking at rallies of expatriate Turks in order to drum up support for an April referendum to grant Erdoğan's office sweeping powers, deepening the row between the two NATO allies. (*Reuters*)

Deteriorating relationships

Turkey, the geopolitically strategic Eurasian nation (straddling two continents), has long been a candidate for European Union (EU) membership, though little progress has been made in the last decade. The signing of the EU-Turkey refugee deal in March 2016, which aimed to address the flow of migrants and asylum seekers traveling across the Aegean Sea from Turkey to the Greek islands, looked to be propelling Turkey towards this long-time goal. However, the failed coup (July 2016), the subsequent waves of arrests of judges, military personnel, civil servants, teachers and journalists, and the increasingly authoritarian style of the Turkish president has alarmed many Europeans.

Turkey's upcoming referendum in April could dramatically affect their government structure as it seeks to transform from a parliamentary system to a presidential one, consolidating three legislative bodies into one executive branch under the leadership of President Erdoğan.

Concern among EU member states over the direction Turkey appears to be heading in has only deepened in recent weeks. Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte voiced his unease over Turkey's proposed constitutional changes, saying it would take the aspirant European Union member state "in a less democratic direction".

Turkish rallies in Europe

President Erdoğan's plans to have Turkish government ministers address rallies in Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere aimed to garner the support of roughly 4.6 million expatriate Turks living in Western Europe, many of whom will be eligible to vote in next month's referendum.

But these planned rallies have been met with stiff resistance from EU nations who have sought to ban such gatherings. Mr Rutte wrote on his Facebook page: "We believe that Dutch public space is not the place for political campaigns of other countries." President Erdoğan lashed out with accusations of "Nazi practices" in response to Germany and the Netherlands blocking proposed rallies.

German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere on Tuesday (14 March) appealed to German residents of Turkish origin not to regard people who disagree with them as 'traitors, Nazis, terrorists or enemies of Turkey'. He went on to state: "We will not tolerate it if representatives of other states try to position whole groups of the population against the country in which they have lived freely for many years or since their birth, where they work, go to school, bring up their children, in which they are at home."

Backdrop of critical elections

National elections in the Netherlands this week (as well as in Germany and France later in the year) serve as a backdrop for the current dispute with Turkey. Incumbent governments face a tight race against right-wing populist parties, many of which focus on Muslim immigration as a central issue in their election campaigns.

In the Netherlands, far-right politician Geert Wilders' campaign promises include 'shuttering' the country's mosques, banning the Quran, closing the borders to Muslim countries, ditching the euro and leaving the

NEWS HEADLINES



The US-led coalition effort against **Islamic State** is killing the group's fighters more quickly than it can replace them, a senior British general has said. It is believed that US-backed forces would recapture Islamic State's two major strongholds - Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq - within the next six months.



Artillery exchanges continue to rock the **Libyan** capital, Tripoli, after forces loyal to the UN-backed government stormed the headquarters of a rival militia. Libya has experienced years of violence and lawlessness since the NATO-backed ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, with rival parliaments and governments trading barbs and militias fighting over territory and the country's vast oil wealth. Russia said it was ready to help unify Libya and wanted to foster dialogue between rival authorities in Tripoli and factions in the east of the country.



After two relatively productive rounds of peace talks in Astana had many hopeful about the possibility of finally negotiating a settlement to the **Syrian** Civil War, the third round of talks appear to be dead in the water, with no rebels in attendance. The rebels "boycotted" the talks to protest Russia continuing airstrikes inside Syria.

European Union. Although his party's popularity has taken a dip in recent weeks, the election outcome is still thought to be uncertain.

President Erdoğan has said that Turkey would seek the help of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation among others to intensify the fight against what he called "hatred against foreigners, racism and anti-Islam trends".

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The deepening rift between Turkey and key EU nations could potentially result in major political and spiritual shifts in the region.

Turkey, a Muslim-majority nation with a long history of secularism but claiming full freedom of religion, has been moving steadily towards intimidation and minority oppression. In the wake of last year's failed coup, local and expat Christians have not escaped the crackdown on dissent. "Turkish President Erdoğan sees anti-Christian conspiracy theories as an effective strategy for galvanising popular support for his one-man rule," said Aykan Erdemir, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies and former member of the Turkish Parliament, in *The Wall*

Street Journal. President Erdoğan could very well use the current, antagonistic atmosphere with the EU as a pretence to clamp down further on Christian practices within Turkey, since many view Christianity as a Western import. Turkey is labelled a "hostile" nation for Christians and "one of the least evangelised countries in the world" by *Voice of the Martyrs*.

Although the concern expressed by EU nations over the mass gatherings of Turkic communities is valid, the suppression thereof (often violently) has the opposite effect to the desire for cohesion. Muslim minorities lash out or feel further alienated from their host cultures, which ultimately plays into the hands of the European populist parties' rhetoric concerning migrants and counteracts the wonderful work that has been happening among Muslim refugees in places like Germany and the Netherlands. It provides fuel to fan the flames of hatred and division, and very effort needs to be made to defuse the rising tensions in the region.

PRAY > For wisdom for international leaders in defusing the volatile situation > For believers in Europe to be bridge-builders with immigrants in their communities

SOUTH SUDANESE SEEK REFUGE IN UGANDA



By Andrew Richards

A new United Nations report describes South Sudan as teetering on the edge of genocide and ethnic cleansing. It's a stark portrayal of the world's youngest country whose crises now include famine. The seven-month inquiry by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights into South Sudan is the most comprehensive report so far into ethnic cleansing and conditions that could lead to genocide in the nation deep in civil war. The report includes new details on deliberate starvation and bombardment of civilians. (*Eyewitness News*)

Growing crisis

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) about 2,500 refugees are crossing from South Sudan into Uganda every day. The South Sudanese refugee crisis has now become the largest in Africa and the third largest after Syria and Afghanistan, with more than 3.5 million people having been forcefully displaced due to civil war. Their report found: "The period between September and December 2016 saw almost half a million South Sudanese seeking refuge in neighbouring countries – an average of almost 4,100 people every day for four months."

Conflict erupted soon after South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011, with an internal power struggle between President Salva Kiir and vice President Riek Machar finally spilling over into civil war in December 2013. Most refugees claim

that the reason for the war is a biased view of the Dinka tribe, favoured by President Salva Kiir, with the government discriminating against all other tribes. Reports of mass killings have compelled the United Nations to conduct a seven-month inquiry, with almost conclusive findings of genocide.

Recent findings

INcontext International East Africa (INCIEA) recently visited refugees in Northern Uganda to find out more about the conflict. INCIEA director, Aron Mwasile says: "Despite the bloodshed, the wars in Sudan and South Sudan have been forgotten and nobody seems to care about it. South Sudanese are being slaughtered like animals, woman raped and children left parentless without anyone crying for these people. The media is only reporting a fraction of the reality."

With a lack of international funding the UN is struggling to alleviate the physical suffering of refugees, opening the doors for Christian organisations like *Global Link Africa*, *World Vision* and the *Lutheran World Fund* to step in and help. Felix, a refugee from South Sudan, explained just how dire the situation is: "It is very difficult to be a refugee, because you start everything at zero. In South Sudan, we had our own farms, cultivated and got our own food plentifully hence we were able to decide what kind and size to eat. But here we are given only 12Kgs of maize and beans per month per person and one cup of cooking oil. There is no sugar, no salt, no soap. We normally sell part of the 12Kgs of maize to at least get some money to buy necessities."

Children and expectant mothers suffer the most with understocked medical facilities only able to provide paracetamol. Refugee pastor Geoffrey Abure explains: "As a result of this, there are many deaths in the camps especially for pregnant women, because we don't have money to take them to hospitals in town." Mwasile also noticed many malnourished children lying hopelessly outside their grass huts, with one mother admitting: "The children cry for so long until their voices are almost gone. The children are crying because they need food and

NEWS HEADLINES



The US says it has begun deploying the first parts of a controversial missile defence system in **South Korea**. The Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence system (THAAD) is designed to protect against threats from North Korea. But the US-South Korean arrangement has angered many on the Korean peninsula and around the region, including China.



Dozens of **Myanmar** soldiers have been killed in several clashes between ethnic rebels and the army along the border with China, threatening leader Aung San Suu Kyi's chief goal of ending decades of ethnic strife. More than 20,000 people from Myanmar have crossed China's border in recent weeks to escape the bitter fighting in the north, prompting Beijing to call for ceasefire between ethnic militias and Myanmar security forces.



A senior US general has confirmed that **Russia** deployed a long-range missile system that threatens the US and NATO and violates an international arms treaty. The deployment of the land-based cruise missile violates the "spirit and intent" of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) between the US and Russia.

we have too little food in the house to sustain them up to the next distribution, so we decided not to feed them during daytime, but only during night so that they get sleep. We feed them just to let them get sleep and not die."

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Through various conversations with Christian refugees and Pastors leading small churches in the camps, Mwasile noted: "Hunger, suffering and trauma have not hindered the Christian refugees from glorify their mighty God through gathering together for worship and prayer. They don't have established structures for worship but they meet under the shade of trees and sometimes they remove the carpets from their huts and make temporary shade for worship on Sundays."

It is also encouraging to notice how church leaders are taking a different view of their situation, with pastor Geoffrey Abure preaching to his congregation: "God has brought us to this country for a purpose that we stay alive, multiply and become a blessing to this country [Uganda] and our country as we return. We will not die here, instead we will return to our country with energy, strength and new strategies to re-establish the kingdom of God in South Sudan."

Mwasile asked Pastor Abure about the challenges they are facing, and their prayer needs. Abure's answer amplifies a desperate call for help: "How can we [Christian leader] counsel traumatised people while we are also traumatised. We need special training as leaders on how to do trauma counselling. We also need prayer for the rampant poverty among us that has made it difficult to spread the gospel to other camps, I am talking about transport. Last, but not least, is the lack of proper worship structures. When it rains, we

cannot meet together, we need at least iron sheets for roofing."

After returning to Kampala, Mwasile had the opportunity to share his experience in the camps with *Global Link Africa* (GLA) Director, Samuel Opolot, who responded by saying: "I think the biggest problem the churches and missions organisations have is neither lack or willingness, nor resources, but it is the lack of information. How can we hear such information like this and stay quiet? We need to be informed."

Mwasile concludes: "South Sudan is a very important gateway if we think of reaching Arab Muslims in North Africa. However, the wars in South Sudan have affected the growth of the church and missions to South Sudan. With the current situation, it is very hard for foreign missionaries to work in South Sudan. However, the civil war has created an opportunity to reach South Sudan through empowering South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Empowering South Sudanese refugees is much cheaper, effective and sustainable than foreigners going to South Sudan for mission. The church in Uganda must start discipling refugees. If the church will not see refugees as an opportunity, other groups will take advantage of the conflict in South Sudan to accomplish their agendas. Al Shabaab, Islamic State, Seleka, and the Muslim brotherhood are all operating in countries very close to South Sudan. My prayer is for the East African church to wake up and see the conflict in South Sudan from a strategic mission worldview."

PRAY > For critical humanitarian aid to reach those most in need > For the Church in Uganda to seize this opportunity to reach the thousands of refugees in their nation with the Gospel

EXPECTED CLAMPDOWN ON ISLAM IN CHINA



By **Cherolyn Amery**

China's ruling Communist Party has hardened its rhetoric on Islam, with top officials making repeated warnings about the spectre of global religious "extremism" seeping into the country, and the need to protect traditional Chinese identity. The government said Xinjiang [province] faces a grave separatist threat from Uighur fighters allegedly linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State [IS], though it provides little evidence for such claims. IS released a video in late February purportedly showing Uighur fighters training in Iraq and vowing to strike China, according to the SITE Intelligence Group. (*Aljazeera*)

Possible new threat

In the video released recently by the SITE Intelligence Group that monitors militant groups' online activity, IS fighters vow that their flag will be 'planted' in China. The video also showed Uigher (Chinese Muslim) fighters training in Iraq (it is reported that between 100 and 300 Uighurs have

linked up with the Islamic State), as well as some images from inside Xinjiang, the north-western province where Uighurs are in the majority. One of the fighters on the video issued the following threat: "In retaliation for the tears that flow from the eyes of the oppressed, we will make your blood flow in rivers."

In response, Chinese president Xi Jinping met with officials in Xinjiang and instructed them to safeguard stability in the region and to erect a metaphorical "great wall of iron" (implying a military response). Before the video's release, regional leaders in Xinjiang had already increased surveillance measures and police patrols due to ongoing violence in the region, where, according to activists, there is a "cycle of repression, radicalisation and violence" (*Aljazeera*). Mohammed al-Sudairi, an expert on Islam in China at the University of Hong Kong, says that such measures are likely to increase, due to Mr Xi's determination to "Sinicise" (make Chinese) all ethnic and religious minorities: "Xi Jinping has been quite anxious about what he saw as the loss of party-state control over the religious sphere when he entered power, which necessitated intervention. I don't think things will take a softer turn."

Who are the Uighurs?

China is home to around 23 million Muslims – approximately the same number of Muslims live in the European Union. According to the Pew Foundation, this figure is likely to increase to around 30 million by

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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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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2030. Of the current Chinese Muslim population (about 1.8% of the total population), approximately 10 million are Uighurs, most of whom live in Xinjiang. One of the major concerns that China has about the Uighurs is their desire for independence – Uighurs speak a Turkic language and are ethnically distinct from the majority Chinese Han population. In the past, the Xinjiang region has been independent from China for periods of time, and various empires and nations have fought to control the territory. Since 1955, Xinjiang has been an 'autonomous region', in the same way that Tibet is autonomous yet incorporated into mainland China. Uighurs identify more closely with central Asia than with China, and refer to Xinjiang as East Turkestan.

In an attempt to limit Islamic practices among the Uighurs, the Chinese government has clamped down in various ways: reportedly banning beards and hijabs in public spaces, keeping minors from religious activities and sending those who have participated to special schools for 'rectification', insisting on the sale of alcohol and cigarettes in Uighur-owned shops and restaurants, attempting to limit travel to Saudi Arabia for the hajj, and confiscating passports. This kind of repression has resulted in much anger among the Uighurs, and violent unrest has become a norm in the region.

The experiences of the Uighurs are notably different to those of the Hui Chinese Muslims, a 10.5 million-strong ethnic minority group who are far more integrated into Chinese society and who are more spread out across the nation. The Hui are descended from Persian, Central Asian and Arab Silk Road traders who intermarried with local Chinese, and they actively distance themselves from the Uighurs. For the Chinese government, the Hui's cultural assimilation is far more acceptable than the Uighurs' sense of a separate identity.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In China, most of the religious minorities are classed together and are seen as a threat to the national identity by bringing in 'outside influences'. For Chinese Christians, however good their intentions might be (i.e. being a blessing to the country), their non-secular faith is seen by many as divisive and rebellious. And unfortunately, any further clampdowns by the government against Islam (especially in light of the recent threats) is likely to extend to the Chinese Church as well – all religious minorities usually face the same restrictions.

In the wider missions perspective, another possible repercussion of harsh clampdowns on Chinese Muslims is retaliatory targeting of Chinese Christians working in Muslim countries. With the Chinese Church's mission movement continuing to gain momentum, there are many believers now serving in 'closed' countries where economic relations have opened doors.

From a Christian perspective, it is also important to consider the hearts of the Uighurs who might be drawn to extremism. Analysts suggest that the appeal the Islamic State may hold for Uighurs is a sense of 'belonging' to something bigger, which is vastly different to the sense of alienation and opposition they experience in their own country. This appears to be something of a global trend – when Muslims feel alienated and persecuted in their places of origin, extremism becomes more attractive. For Christians, this human need to belong to something bigger is met in the Body of Christ – which offers peace and hope rather than a violent quest for paradise – and the challenge is to share this alternative with those who are seeking.

PRAY > For the Chinese authorities to respond to the threat appropriately and fairly > For Chinese believers to reach out to the Uighur community in love > For the Uighurs to encounter the Lord Jesus

KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION



PROJECT HERO

Helping to ensure the future of the Church in Syria

In partnership with Lebanese Christian leaders, INcontext aims to distribute food, clothing, medicine and other basic necessities to the Church in Syria.



Project Hero focuses on those who choose to remain in Syria, who deal with the daily bombings from which others have fled, and who encounter death as part of daily life. Those who have stayed have done so for two reasons: either they have been unable to get out (for reasons such as old age or a lack of finances), or they have refused to leave Syria because it is home and they still believe they have a role to play in the reconstruction of the nation.

"You stand beside us with your big support, we thank you for all your giving for the church and its people" - Pastor in Damascus

The most recent donations enabled a church in Damascus to distribute food and supplies to 97 families.

To support this project, please make use of the INcontext bank details and use HERO together with your email address (as much as possible of it) as reference.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact our project department (gustav@incontextministries.org) or [CLICK HERE](#) to visit the website.