

A WORLD IN MOTION



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SOUTH SUDAN REFUGEES PASS 1 MILLION IN UGANDA



By Andrew Richards

The number of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda hit one million on Thursday [17 August], the United Nations said, as hundreds of desperate families pour across the border every day seeking a haven from the civil war. The conflict in South Sudan has created Africa's biggest refugee crisis since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Women and children make up more than 85 percent of the arrivals. There is no end in sight to the conflict; international peace-making efforts have stalled, said South Sudan analyst Alan Boswell. The United States, which played a key role previous negotiations, has not yet appointed a top official for Africa. *(Reuters)*

Update on the conflict

In an interview with the *Sudan Tribune*, South Sudan President Salva Kiir said that social media was to blame for the millions of refugees that have fled the country. "The people who ran to Uganda were chased away by social media. There was no fighting in that area. They were told to leave because they know a UN [United Nations] official came in to assess the humanitarian situation to decide if there was need for assistance. Instead, he [the UN official] went and reported that there was a looming genocide in South Sudan, which has not happened up to now. People were called from their houses and told to run away, that if you don't go after one hour you would be a dead person," Mr Kiir said.

Mr Kiir claims that his opponent, rebel leader Riek Machar, is to blame for the ongoing fighting and

for the ensuing result of up to 1,800 refugees leaving the country for Uganda every day. The number of refugees entering Uganda is based on official UNHCR figures and account for only half of the total refugees fleeing South Sudan.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In March, INcontext International East Africa director, Aron Mwasile, visited several South Sudanese refugee camps in northern Uganda on a fact-finding mission and to encourage pastors in their efforts to bring hope to a people deprived thereof. When the deep trauma that the people had suffered became clear, Mwasile asked a South Sudanese refugee, Pastor Abure, about the challenges they were facing. Abure's answer was also a plea for help: "How can we [Christian leaders] counsel traumatised people while we are also traumatised? We need special training as leaders on how to do trauma counselling." In response to this request, INcontext launched Project Restoration to provide both trauma counselling and trauma counselling training for South Sudanese refugee pastors who would then counsel the members of their own congregations.

In August, Mwasile led a team of counsellors to Uganda for training that was attended by 34 refugee pastors from the Rhino, Bidi Bidi and Moyo refugee camps. Upon their return, we asked Mwasile about the time spent there.

What did you learn from the refugees?

"There are two things that we all learnt from the South Sudanese refugees. First is that those people are very religious. Despite the hardship in camps, they still make efforts to seek the face of God. We saw refugees gathering under the trees, dancing with joy for the Lord. In one church, we heard the refugees singing 'God is our provider, we will never beg for bread.' Another thing is that the South Sudanese are very generous. We realised that in almost every family, there are adopted orphaned children."

THE NUMBERS: SOUTH SUDAN REFUGEES



6kg

The amount of maize each South Sudanese refugee in Uganda gets from the UN every month



62%

The percentage of South Sudanese refugees under 14 years old



416,000+

The number of South Sudanese refugees who fled north to Sudan (2nd most after Uganda)



44

The number of months South Sudan has been locked in conflict (since December 2013)

NEWS HEADLINES



More than 40 million people have been affected by devastating floods and landslides in **South Asia**.

Torrential monsoon rains have killed at least 1,200 people and left millions fleeing their homes in India, Bangladesh and Nepal over the last fortnight. Governments and aid agencies are working to bring clean water, food, shelter and medical aid to people affected as tens of thousands of homes, schools and hospitals have been destroyed.



Two million Muslims from across the globe converged on Mecca in **Saudi Arabia** for the hajj pilgrimage. This year saw the return of pilgrims from Shiite Iran, regional rival to Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia, and came with the Gulf mired in political crisis and Islamic State group jihadists squeezed in Iraq and Syria. The hajj is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, which every Muslim is required to complete at least once in a lifetime if he or she has the means to do so.



The United States decided to deny **Egypt** \$95.7m in aid and to delay a further \$195m because of its failure to make progress on respecting human rights and democratic norms.

The decision reflects a frustration with Cairo's stance on civil liberties, notably a new law that regulates non-governmental organisations that is widely seen as part of a growing crackdown on dissent.

Why is serving these refugees so important?

"Serving the South Sudanese people is not only about South Sudan but also about the strategic position of South Sudan in the God's Kingdom. South Sudan is a 'gateway' to the North African Muslim Arab countries. Empowering South Sudanese Christians means taking the Gospel to these Muslim states."

What's the next step in serving these refugees?

"There are more than one million South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. A group of only 34 trained trauma counsellors cannot be enough. There is a need for more training to equip more counsellors. The director of YWAM Arua, Mr Bosco Tuli, exposed to us another opportunity related to this goal. He said that in the camps, there are school teachers who stay with children from morning to evening, and because the children are the most traumatised people in the camps, it would be good to think

of training the teachers about how to do trauma counselling with the children. Mr Bosco said that if we deal with a child, it means we deal with his/her past through healing and at the same time we deal with his or her future through empowerment – empowered children are needed for the future of South Sudan."

INcontext plans to continue with Project Restoration by training more counsellors to serve the people of South Sudan, with the hope that, through healing, the future of South Sudan is brighter.

PRAY > For the refugee Church among the South Sudanese to be a source of comfort, hope and healing > For wisdom and strength for all working among the refugees > For the global Body of Christ to get involved in the needs of the refugees

ROHINGYA MUSLIM CONFLICT IN MYANMAR



By Cherolyn Amery

Myanmar's government and advocates for the country's Muslim Rohingya ethnic minority traded charges on Sunday [27 August] of killing civilians, burning down buildings and planting land mines, as clashes that began last week when insurgents launched attacks against police posts continued. An announcement posted online by the office of the country's leader, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, said the death toll from the violence that started on Thursday night had reached 96, mostly alleged Rohingya attackers but also 12 security personnel. Myanmar is overwhelmingly Buddhist, but about 1 million Muslim Rohingya live in the northern part of Rakhine, the western state where the violence is taking place. *(Associated Press)*

Ongoing violence and oppression

The recent onslaught against the Muslim Rohingya minority is the "most significant" since October 2016 when attacks on border posts prompted a widespread crackdown by the military against the Rohingya (*BBC News*), but violence in Myanmar against the Muslim minority is a long-standing concern for the international community. Reports of the military's actions include extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate shooting, arson attacks (including mosques and madrasas being burned down) and other brutalities. However, very little about the situation (including an exact death

toll) is able to be confirmed with absolute certainty – journalists and aid workers are not allowed access to the Rakhine region. Reports come mostly from Rohingya who have fled to Bangladesh, and from videos and witness accounts that have been recorded on smartphones by Rohingya and sent to others outside the country.

The Rohingya people, described by the UN as the "world's most persecuted minority", mostly live in the Rakhine region (the poorest in Myanmar) and face widespread discrimination by the country's Buddhist majority. Despite having lived in the area for generations, they are denied citizenship and are "widely reviled as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh" (*Aljazeera*). The government officially refers to the Rohingya as "Bengalis" to reinforce their illegitimacy as citizens of Myanmar and to link them to Bangladesh instead. There are severe restrictions on the Rohingya's movement within the country, as well as on employment, access to healthcare and education, and birth rates. For a number of years, international media has been reporting on the thousands of Rohingya "boat people" who risk dangerous journeys across the sea in order to seek refuge elsewhere in the region.

Human rights activists have accused the Myanmar army of carrying out ethnic cleansing and genocide, but the military and government insist that the Rohingya are "terrorists" who initiate attacks to which the military responds.

Silence from the leadership

Myanmar, previously known as Burma, has been wracked by conflict and war for more than half a century. The rule of an oppressive military junta from 1962 to 2011 made the country a "pariah state" due to gross human rights abuses, but many have been hopeful about the country's future since 2010, when Myanmar began to enter a gradual liberalisation process. Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, an internationally lauded figure in the fight

NEWS HEADLINES



Iraqi forces battling to retake the small town of al-'Ayadiya where militants fleeing Tal Afar say the fighting is "multiple times worse" than the battle for Mosul's old city. Hundreds of battle-hardened fighters were positioned inside most houses and high buildings inside the town, making it difficult for government forces to make any progress. Government troops captured the Mosul from Islamic State in June, but only after eight months of grinding urban warfare.



India and **China** agreed to back away from confrontation over a slice of territory high in the Himalayas, easing tensions between the world's two most populous countries. For weeks, worries had been growing of a major conflict between the two nuclear powers, in what had developed into one of the worst border disputes between the countries in 30 years. Both sides agreed to give some ground in order to end the standoff.



Global business tycoons and politicians from 48 countries committed to ending human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery at a landmark gathering of high-profile leaders in the Australian city of Perth. The Global Slavery Index estimates that 45 million people around the world are victims of modern slavery.

for human rights and democracy, has been central to this forward progress and became Myanmar's official ruler in 2016. Ms Suu Kyi gained global recognition while under military-enforced house arrest for 15 years, and was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 in recognition of her nonviolent resistance campaign. She was described by the Nobel committee as "an important symbol in the struggle against oppression", and by former British prime minister Gordon Brown as "the world's most renowned and courageous prisoner of conscience".

Her 'silent' response, therefore, to the plight of the Rohingya people has been widely criticised. In 2015, Penny Green (a law professor at the University of London and director of the State Crime Initiative) wrote in an op-ed for *The Independent* that with Ms Suu Kyi's "enormous moral and political capital", she could have "challenged the vile racism and Islamophobia [that] characterises [Myanmar's] political and social discourse". Instead, however, she seemed to 'court' the Buddhist majority in order to win the 2015 election, and has since been mostly silent about accusations of atrocities committed against the Rohingya.

David Baulk, a Myanmar human rights specialist with Fortify Rights, wrote in an article for *Aljazeera* in June that Ms Suu Kyi and her government are in a "delicate spot" because "behind the scenes, Myanmar's military leaders are doing everything they can to frustrate [Ms Suu Kyi's] administration". Though unlikely, the 2008 constitution does allow the military to declare a state of emergency and suspend the government if they see fit, which gives them significant power in the country.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

A day before the most recent outbreak of violence, a panel under the leadership of former UN chief Kofi Annan called for Myanmar to respond to the crisis of the Rohingya people in various ways, and said that the "status quo" cannot continue as it currently stands. According to the panel, there is a danger of radicalisation if problems are not addressed: "[if] the population remain politically and economically marginalised – northern Rakhine State may provide fertile ground for radicalisation, as local communities may become increasingly vulnerable to recruitment by extremists."

From the time of Jesus, the Gospel message has often been embraced by society's marginalised and oppressed, due to its promise of hope and freedom that go beyond earthly circumstances. For Myanmar's Rohingya, this could hold true as well – in a context where extremism may appear to be a way out for some, the Gospel may be embraced by others. According to a 2014 census, 6.2% of Myanmar's population profess Christianity, and according to some sources, Christianity has been the fastest growing religion in the country for the past three decades. Pray that the Church in Myanmar would continue to grow in strength in order to be a change agent in the nation, and that Christians would be able to reach the Rohingya with open hearts and the message of the Gospel.

PRAY > For the Church in Myanmar to gain access to the Rohingya people > For the Myanmar leadership to become bold in their defense of the Rohingya > For the Rohingya people to be protected against extremist influence

SOLAR ECLIPSE PROMPTS PROPHETIC WARNINGS



By Andrew Richards

The August 21, 2017 eclipse is one of the biggest Internet events in history, and NASA released the numbers to prove it. "We were a bit blown away by the sheer magnitude of the response," Office of Communications spokesman Jim Wilson said in a post on the agency's website. NASA recorded nearly 27 million unique Facebook views before and after the eclipse and 12.1 million unique views during the event. The agency's main webpage, nasa.gov, and eclipse recorded more than 90

million page views. The live broadcast on nasa.gov and other social platforms had more than 40 million views, NASA estimates. Several million more viewed on UStream, YouTube, Periscope and Twitch. The federal government says this is the largest government event measured since monitoring began in 2012. (*Al.com*)

The Great American Eclipse

Although the solar eclipse of 21 August was only visible over the United States (and was therefore nicknamed the "Great American Eclipse"), it gained much interest outside the US as well, with religious groups of various faiths declaring the importance of this natural event. Why would this be? What makes this eclipse so different? It was mostly to do with the fact that the last total solar eclipse to pass over the entire continental US (and no other region) was in the year 1257. Some saw it as a judgement from God on America, while others focused more on it being a sign of the coming of the 'end times'.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

INcontext Website:

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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FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Solar eclipses are fairly common according to NASA: in any one calendar year, the maximum number of eclipses is four solar and three lunar. Total solar eclipses take place every eighteen months. As for prophecies concerning the moon and sun (and their connection to the Biblical end times), they are also nothing new. Before this particular eclipse, the 'Blood Moons' prophecy generated much fervour in recent years.

One passage of Scripture that is often quoted in connection with end-time prophecy and solar-lunar eclipses is Matthew 24 v 29-30: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." A preceding verse, however (Matthew 24:14), is often ignored in this context: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Instead of focusing on omens and connecting regular natural events with the end times, Christians are called to rather focus on getting the Gospel to "all nations" so that Christ will come and glorify His name. According to the *Joshua Project*, a research initiative seeking to highlight the ethnic people groups of the world with the fewest followers of Christ, there are 16,856 people groups in the world today and 6992 of them considered "unreached" by the Gospel. In the global population of more than 7.4 billion, the "unreached" account for 3.15 billion people worldwide.

For most believers, messages about the end times that point out signs and even state specific dates of the 'final days' generate one response more than hope or excitement: fear. The coming of Christ and the creation of a new Jerusalem should produce incomparable hope in believers, not fear.

If the Gospel must first be preached to every nation before the end will come, then every opportunity must be taken to share the Gospel with those who have never heard. One area in which this can be done today is among the millions of Muslim refugees fleeing the Middle East. Beyond Turkey, Jordan and Egypt (where evangelism is strictly forbidden), many refugees are in Europe and Lebanon where the Christian Church has almost unlimited access to a people in search of hope.

NOTE:

As a rule, INcontext Ministries focuses on mainstream news reports relevant to today's mission field. In general, end-time prophecies fall outside these parameters, as many of them are based on subjective speculations that are often impossible to verify. We do not, however, deny the reality of natural revelation as used by God. While we do not share the same focus, we share the same sense of urgency. We do believe that time is running out for the Church and that we live in critical times. Our sense of urgency, however, is not based on speculation but on factual events such as the global increase in extremism, the increase of persecution, the Middle East refugee crisis and other key global developments.

PRAY > For Christian leaders to speak with wisdom against sensationalist rumours that distract the Church > For the Western Church to focus on Kingdom matters rather than fearing the end times

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BOOKS & DVDs by Mark Durie

INcontext International carries a few publications by Mark Durie, Australian theologian and friend of the ministry. He is an expert on Christian-Muslim relations and religious freedom. The following titles are available (as long as stocks last):

The Third Choice (book) - R150

A study of Islam, dhimmitude and freedom

Which God? (book) - R150

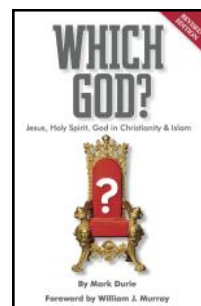
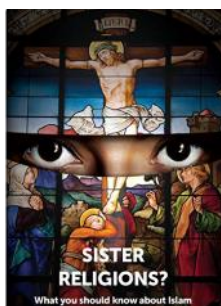
A study of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God in Christianity and Islam

Sister Religions? (DVD) - R150

An interview with Mark Durie that addresses key questions like whether Muslims and Christians worship the same God, and whether Judaism, Christianity and Islam are 'sister religions'

Liberty to the Captives (book and DVD combo) - R200

A unique resource aiming to help those seeking freedom from Islam



The prices above are in South African Rand and do not include postage costs.

If you would like to order any of these, please email lom@incontextministries.org or send us a message via the website (www.incontextinternational.org)