

A WORLD IN MOTION



P1 | SOMALIA

The truck bombing on 14 October in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, is the worst in the recent history of the highly unstable nation.

P2 | US-IRAN

US president Donald Trump's decision to not certify Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal has shaken US allies and angered Iran.

P3 | KURDISTAN

In the wake of the Islamic State's 'defeat' in Iraq, Kurdistan's renewed quest for independence continues to raise many geopolitical eyebrows.

P4 | PUBLICATIONS

INcontext has a number of new publications available for purchase.



THE NUMBERS:

SOMALIA



1991

The year in which the Somali regime collapsed into turmoil, factional fighting and anarchy



5th

The ranking of Somalia in terms of source countries for refugees



7,000-9,000

Al-Shabaab's estimated troop strength (as of 2014)



771

The estimated number of fatalities due to attacks in Mogadishu this year to date

SOMALIA REELS AFTER WORST TERROR ATTACK



By Gustav Krös

World leaders from the United States, UK, Turkey, Canada and France strongly condemned the truck bombing [on 14 October] in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, which left at least 276 people dead. The explosion – the worst single explosion in the East African country's history – occurred at Zoobe junction, a bustling area of the city with many shops, hotels and offices. The deadly blast also left more than 300 people wounded. (*Aljazeera*)

Al-Shabaab connection?

Since the attack, the death toll has reached more than 350, and many families have still not been able to find their loved ones. The president of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, blamed the Islamist extremist group al-Shabaab for the attack and asked for international assistance to combat the group. Although al-Shabaab did not claim responsibility, the attack does resemble their previous onslaughts, though none have been on this scale. The Somali government has been fighting the group for almost a decade, and managed to remove them from the capital with help from African Union forces in August 2011.

International response

International leaders were quick to condemn the attack and offer assistance. The US and Qatar sent medical aid, while Turkey and Djibouti sent humanitarian assistance. Hundreds of neighbouring Kenyans donated blood in their capital, Nairobi. France showed solidarity by turning of the lights of the Eiffel Tower, and President Emmanuel Macron tweeted: "Solidarity with Somalia. Support to the African Union against Islamist terrorist groups. France stands by your side." Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted: "The attacks in Somalia are horrifying & Canada condemns them strongly. We mourn with the Canadian Somali community today."

Turkish involvement

Turkey, however, is the nation that stands out above the rest. Within the first 48 hours, they not only evacuated critically injured victims to Turkey (a Turkish air ambulance took 40 injured victims to Turkey for medical treatment), but they also sent their Health Minister, Ahmet Demircan, to oversee the operation, together with surgeons to assist Somali doctors in the overcrowded hospitals. Their swift response drew praise from Somalis, with Information Minister Abdirahman Omar Osman saying: "Turkey is always first to help us. They are our only genuine brother."

Turkey has been investing heavily in Somalia for the past few years, through the building of roads, hospitals and schools. This was done not only with the hope of return on investment in the future, but also as part of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan's global promotion of 'compassionate Islam'. His 'success' can be seen in Osman's further comment: "Others might give more money but Turkey is perceived by the people to be the ones really helping Somalia."

Comparison to Western attacks

Many Somalis questioned the perceived lack of support from Western nations, and the lack of support from the international community in general. Questions were also asked about the lack of media coverage of the incident, and the lack of support on social media platforms. Comparisons were made between tragic incidents in the West (like the Las Vegas shooting on 1 October) and those in developing nations. These debates mostly took place on social media platforms, where people asked whether life in the West is somehow seen as being 'worth more'.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Scripture tells us that we should mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15). What makes this



Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, vowed to return the country to "moderate Islam" and asked for global support to transform the hardline kingdom into an open society that empowers citizens and lures investors. In an interview with the *Guardian*, the powerful heir to the Saudi throne said the ultra-conservative state had been "not normal" for the past 30 years, blaming rigid doctrines that have governed society in a reaction to the Iranian revolution, which successive leaders "didn't know how to deal with".



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged to work with the US, China and Russia to contain North Korea's nuclear threat with "strong, resolute diplomacy", as he "humbly" accepted his landslide victory in a snap election. Fresh from clinching a two-thirds "super-majority" that enables the nationalist premier to realise his dream of revising Japan's pacifist constitution, Abe vowed to forge a "national consensus" on the divisive issue.



A rerun of **Kenya's** August presidential election is set to go ahead, after a last-minute attempt to block the vote failed at the Supreme Court. Opposition Raila Odinga leader plans to boycott the poll, which was decided on after the Supreme Court last month annulled the August 8 presidential election result.

attack especially tragic for Christians is that it happened in a country where 99% of the population is Muslim. The attack was an opportunity for Christian aid workers to travel to Somalia and show Somalis that Christians mourn with them, care about them and love them. Instead, the 'Christian' West sent condolences and support via social media and some medical aid. While such support is good, it lacks the personal touch that shows genuine care.

Turkey, on the other hand – a predominantly Muslim nation – sent their health minister and surgeons to show care and support for the Somali people. This prompted the comments about Turkey being Somalia's "genuine brother" and "the ones really helping Somalia". The difference was the personal travel to Somalia

and that people could physically see them assisting in the hospitals.

Throughout history, people have turned to Christ in the midst of hardship and tragedy, because in their time of need, they experienced the love, care and compassion of the Saviour through the hands, words and presence of His children. In a country where less than 1% of the population is Christian, and where tragedies occur on a regular basis, there is much need for the global Church to go and show the people of Somalia the love, care, compassion and salvation that is found in Christ.

PRAY > For God to meet all those suffering and mourning in the wake of the bombing > For the Gospel to be heard in Somalia despite all opposition

TRUMP BACKING OUT OF IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL?



By Andrew Richards

US President Donald Trump struck a blow against the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement in defiance of other world powers, choosing not to certify that Tehran is complying with the deal. "Based on the factual record I have put forward, I am announcing today that we cannot and will not make this certification," Mr Trump said at a White House event as he unveiled a tougher strategy against Tehran. Mr Trump's move does not pull the United States out of the agreement. (*Reuters*)

What did Mr Trump do?

Long before Donald Trump became president of the United States and publicly rejected the Iran nuclear deal – describing it as "the worst deal ever negotiated" – critics warned the Obama administration that Iran would never be able to hold to the agreement. As part of the deal, crippling economic sanctions against Iran were lifted in exchange for promised limitations of its controversial nuclear plan – controversial because of Israel's insistence that Iran's eschatological ('end times') talk combined with nuclear weapons equalled the destruction of the Jewish state. A nuclear Shia Muslim state would also threaten the Sunni Muslim majority in the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia threatened a nuclear arms race if Iran were to acquire a nuclear bomb.

Thanks to social media and the flow of news, there is much confusion as to what exactly Mr Trump's refusal to certify the Iran deal really means. Is Mr Trump overstepping his presidential powers or side-stepping his European allies? Will Iran retaliate? And what does it all mean for American interests in the Middle East?

Firstly, it is important to note that a sitting US president must review Iran's compliance with the deal every three months. So it should come as no surprise that Mr Trump reviewed the agreement – by law, he must do so. Secondly, although the Trump administration did not certify the Iran deal (based on evidence that Iran was not keeping to its side of the agreement), it does not mean that the US is distancing themselves or withdrawing from it. Yes, Mr Trump has threatened to do so, but has passed it on to Congress, which will have 60 days to decide whether to reimplement sanctions or change legislation that covers US participation in the accord.

The Trump administration's decision not to certify the deal ties in with the president's insistence that the deal was no longer in America's interest. Mr Trump intends to renegotiate the deal to include Iran's ballistic missile programme and the role of the Revolutionary Guards Corps (a military unit loyal to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei) in conflicts throughout the Middle East.

Consequences

The leaders of the UK, France and Germany all say that despite Mr Trump's threatening attitude towards what they call "the culmination of 13 years of diplomacy", they would stay in the deal with Iran. The agreement with Iran was signed in 2015 by the US, Russia, France, Germany, China and the UK, and Germany, France and the UK warned that unilateral US action would harm US and European interests.

Stephen Walt, professor of international affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School, said: "Trump's erratic behaviour at home and abroad has gravely damaged confidence in US steadiness and leadership, and his policies are leaving other states with little choice but to explore other arrangements." The German Foreign Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, hinted at what form those "other arrangements" might take: "Trump's drive to decertify the deal was putting a wedge between the US and Europe and pushing countries in the EU closer to China and Russia."

In a world where Europe is becoming more and more suspicious of Russia, what implications does Gabriel's statement have? In brief, it implies that if the US

NEWS HEADLINES



The **Philippines** declared an end on to five months of fierce urban warfare in a southern city held by pro-Islamic State militants, a battle that has marked the country's biggest security crisis in years. The siege stunned the Philippines and stoked wider concerns that Islamic State loyalists have ambitions to make the Muslim areas of the island of Mindanao a base for operations in Southeast Asia.



Spain's central government said it would suspend Catalonia's autonomy and impose direct rule after the region's leader threatened to go ahead with a formal declaration of independence if Madrid refused to hold talks. The war of words increased uncertainty over a standoff that has raised fears of social unrest, cut growth prospects for the euro zone's fourth-largest economy and rattled the euro.



Chinese President Xi Jinping opened a critical Communist Party Congress with a pledge to build a "modern socialist country" for a "new era" that will be proudly Chinese, steadfastly ruled by the party but open to the world. Xi promised, in what was likely an indirect reference to US President Donald Trump's "America first" policy, that China would be fully engaged with the world, and reiterated pledges to tackle climate change.

continues to isolate itself, other world powers would have no choice but to band together. Within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with its five permanent members (the US, the UK, France, China and Russia), a closer move towards Russia and China could potentially see a 4-to-1 vote on UNSC issues. That said, the US has the right to veto any resolution set before the UNSC, and even if there is a majority vote against the US, its veto power could still ultimately decide the outcome of the resolution. But continued opposition of the US by the other four permanent UNSC members would have a negative effect on the US' geopolitical influence.

It is highly unlikely that the EU would align itself politically with Russia and China – there are just too many disparities between them: Russia and China support the Assad regime in Syria, they unashamedly arm Iran despite weapons embargos, and both are against the US' global influence (to name a few issues). But what Gabriel is saying is that by going against its allies, the US is slowly isolating itself from the rest of the world – the world it needs to engage with to remain a political and economic superpower.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In response to recent developments, Iran's Supreme Leader said: "I don't want to waste our time [responding] to the rants and whoppers of the foul-throated president of the United States. The US is the agent of the international Zionism; it was the US that created Daesh [Arabic acronym for Islamic State] and Takfiri movements [Iran's terminology for Sunni extremist groups]."

Iran is clearly anti-American and therefore automatically anti-Christian, because of the incorrect belief that Christianity is rooted in the West. Persecution of Iranian Christians remains aggressive, and could worsen because of the US-Iran tensions over the nuclear deal. However, despite the ongoing persecution, it is believed that Iran is home to one of the largest group of Muslim-background believers in the world. According to the *Gospel Coalition*, more Iranians have become Christian in the last 20 years than in the previous 13 centuries combined (since Islam came to Iran). In 1979, there were an estimated 500 Muslim-background Christians in Iran, but today there are hundreds of thousands (some estimates say there are more than 1 million).

The *Gospel Coalition* suggests there are two factors that have contributed this openness to the Gospel. Firstly, violence in the name of Islam has caused widespread disillusionment with the regime, prompting many Iranians to question their beliefs. Secondly, many Iranian Christians are boldly and faithfully telling others about Christ, despite the risk. Contrary to popular thinking, renewed persecution due to tensions with the US could provide a spiritual platform for more growth.

PRAY > For US leaders to seek Godly wisdom and direction as they move forward > For the underground Church in Iran to continue growing in strength and numbers > For Iranian Christians to be a voice and influence in their nation

TENSIONS BETWEEN KURDISTAN AND IRAQ



By Andrew Richards

Iraqi government forces captured the major Kurdish-held oil city of Kirkuk, responding to a Kurdish referendum on independence with a bold lightning strike that transforms the balance of power in the country. A convoy of armoured vehicles from Iraq's elite US-trained Counter-Terrorism Force seized Kirkuk's provincial government headquarters, less than a day after the operation began, a *Reuters* reporter in Kirkuk said. Neither side gave a casualty toll for the operation. But an aid group working in Kirkuk said several Kurdish Peshmerga fighters and Iraqi soldiers had been killed in an overnight clash south of the city – the only serious fighting reported. (*Reuters*)

Friends or enemies?

Historically, tensions between the KRG (the Kurdish Regional Government) and Baghdad have

seen an upsurge when the Baghdad government has felt strong enough to take on Kurdish militias. Periods of peace have existed between them when Baghdad's military position has been weak.

The fight against the Islamic State (IS) is a good example of how easily peace between enemies can be achieved. When Iraqi security forces were struggling to make gains against IS, the Kurdish Peshmerga forces helped turn the tide. For the military offensive against IS to succeed, Baghdad had to work with the KRG on a united front. But now that the threat of IS has been removed, old issues are coming to light again.

Iraq is not alone in opposing Kurdish independence – the US, Turkey and Iran are also opposed. They all fear that Kurdish independence would destabilise the region even further. Ironically, it has been those four countries that have been most responsible for the instability in the region over the past decade.

One of the major debacles in the post-IS Kurdish-Iraqi standoff relates to American support. After the removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the US helped to establish a new regime with continued military support. When IS came to prominence in 2014 and took over armoured vehicles, arms and ammunition from the Iraqi military and police – given to Iraq by the US to protect itself from groups like IS – the US helped arm the Iraqis again for the fight. Because

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.

INcontext Team Details



Contact:

General - Mike:

Mobile - 0828657380

mike@incontextministries.org

AWIM - Andrew:

andrew@incontextministries.org

Communication & Prayer - Donnelly:

donnely@incontextministries.org

Seminars - Eric:

eric@incontextministries.org

Events - Hanlie:

hanlie@incontextministries.org

Projects - Gustav:

gustav@incontextministries.org

Travel /IT- Stefan:

stefan@incontextministries.org

Book orders - Beatrice:

lom@incontextministries.org



INcontext Banking Details

SOUTH AFRICA

Bank: ABSA

Name: INcontext

Cheque acc no: 4078983933

Branch: Durbanville (632 005)

the Kurds were making significant gains against IS in the north of Iraq, and because the Kurdish region gave refuge to thousands of Iraqis fleeing IS, the US decided to help arm the Kurdish Peshmerga as well. In the eyes of foreign-policy makers in Washington, the arming of both was key to defeating IS in Iraq.

Now that IS has been 'defeated' in Iraq, will the US continue to back both sides with the growing conflict between them? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, because without US support it would be increasingly difficult to maintain the upper hand against IS, and no, because if actual war were to break out between the two, it would drag Turkey, Iran and possibly Russia into another Middle Eastern conflict.

Oil and financial interests

Although Kurdish independence is opposed throughout the region, the stability of the Kurdish region remains key. Both Turkey and Russia gain huge financial benefits from the Kurds and would rather encourage peace than confrontation. Turkey's statement, however – that it would help Iraq get rid of Kurdish fighters in the city of Kirkuk – goes against the stability it seeks. Turkey is locked in a decades-old conflict with the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), seen by Turkey as a terrorist organisation threatening national sovereignty, but Turkey needs peace in Kurdistan because of the \$10bn trade between the two countries.

Another reason why a stable Kurdistan is preferable is because it sits on some of the largest untapped gas deposits in the world. For this reason, Russia has been investing in Kurdistan for years, lending billions of dollars to the government in return for oil. Russia and the Kurdish government signed a \$1bn gas pipeline deal that

will eventually see natural gas exported from Kurdistan via Turkey to Europe. Therefore, stability in Kurdistan is key to both Turkey and Russia. Turkey could even possibly bargain with gas in exchange for membership in the European Union.

But the question is not about who makes the most money, but who would fight for whom if war were to break out between the Kurds and the Iraqis. Because of its financial investments in Kurdistan, Russia would likely support the Kurds in some way. And with the US already so deeply invested in Iraq, their choice would be obvious.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

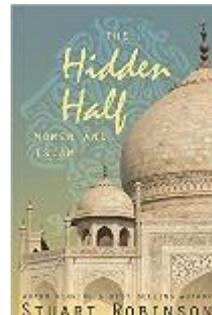
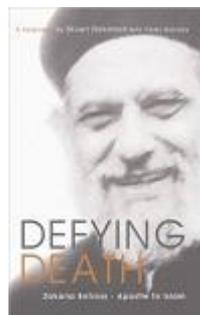
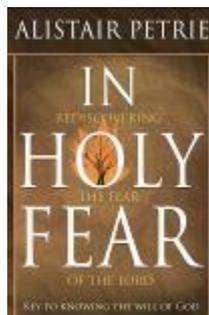
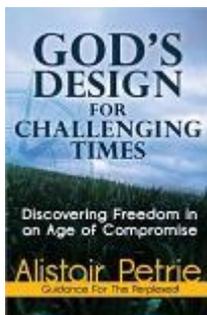
The fact that the history of the Christian community of the Middle East goes back more than two thousand years (even before Islam) has done little to persuade Muslims that the Christian Church is not a 'product' of the West. Kurdistan, however, is quite unique in the Middle East. As one of the least corrupt states in the region, Kurdistan is able to combine Western democratic principles with Islamic values, and stands as a beacon of hope among the many war-torn countries around it.

Kurdistan is perhaps the most pro-American state in the Middle East, aside from Israel. Because the US plays such an important role in the geopolitics of the region, backing of Iraq against the Kurds could spell disaster for the local Church: Kurdistan could retaliate against its Christian population and refugees. Now is the time to pray for immense wisdom and Godly direction for leaders and role-players in the region.

PRAY > For God's will to be done for the people of Kurdistan > For the Iraqi government to seek co-operation and not oppression

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

NEW BOOKS ON THE INCONTEXT BOOKSHELF!



God's Design for Challenging Times (Alistair Petrie) - A look at "God's redemptive shakings" in the world today

In Holy Fear (Alistair Petrie) - A look at the fear of God and the balance between love and fear

Defying Death (Stuart Robinson) - A biography of the life of Zakaria Botross, an "apostle to Islam"

The Hidden Half (Stuart Robinson) - A look at women in Islam

Traveling Through Troubled Times (Stuart Robinson) - A study of Habakkuk, and the release from fear through faith

EACH BOOK IS AVAILABLE FOR R100 (POSTAGE EXCLUDED).

To place an order, email lom@incontextministries.org