

ACN News, Thursday, 23rd October 2014 UK

Charity to release comprehensive religious freedom report

A COMPREHENSIVE report on the struggle for religious freedom in countries throughout the world is expected to make a significant contribution to a subject that has become a defining issue of our times.

Covering the period autumn 2012 to summer 2014, the **Religious Freedom in the World Report 2014** will be launched on Tuesday, 4th November in the House of Lords.

Scheduled to attend and participate at the launch will be government ministers and politicians from all three main political parties, as well as religious leaders and other UK faith representatives.

Produced by the international charity Aid to the Church in Need and compiled by in-country experts – journalists, academics and commentators – the report includes analysis on 196 nations – almost every country around the globe.

The report, which follows on from ACN's biennial *Persecuted and Forgotten?* research on persecuted Christians, is the most comprehensive analysis on religious freedom by a Catholic organisation.

The **Religious Freedom in the World Report – 2014** report examines the degree to which nation states uphold the principle of religious freedom – as enshrined primarily in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – and the impact of destabilising extremist groups within society.

The full report – complete with continent analysis – will be made available only on the web.

In the UK, the report will be accessed via a tablet-friendly microsite, which can be viewed at www.religion-freedom-report.org on the day of the launch.

A 32-page executive summary of the report, which will be available at the Parliamentary launch event, includes a map identifying countries where persecution is worst.

The summary concludes with a table which ranks more than 100 countries on their religious freedom record.

The document, which includes a foreword by Paul Bhatti, brother of Shahbaz, murdered Pakistan Federal Minister for Minorities, also includes 10 case studies describing serious religious freedom abuses and examples of good practice in which different faith communities have worked towards cooperation and understanding.

ACN UK Head of Press & Information John Pontifex, Editor-in-Chief of the **Religious Freedom in the World 2014**, said: “The report analyses a period of tumult and upheaval: events which have seen thousands of people of different faiths persecuted, tortured and displaced.

“We have also seen increasingly intense debate about the role of religion in the public square in the West with growing concerns expressed about the rights and responsibilities of people of faith and those of no belief.

“As Baroness Berridge and others working for religious freedom have stated, religious liberty is an orphaned right – few are the people willing to make a stand in defence of it.”

“Serial human rights abuses – from the threat of massacres in the Middle East and discrimination in the workplace in Western countries – are the direct result of religious freedom violations.

“As a Catholic organisation, it is our duty not only to stand up for Christians suffering religious freedom violations, but for people of all faiths.”

- **The Religious Freedom in the World 2014 Report will be launched in the Attlee Room of the House of Lords on Tuesday, 4th November at 3.30pm. Press and media are invited to attend. Photo identity and a letter of invitation will be needed to access the Houses of Parliament.**

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Editor's Notes



Aid to the Church in Need

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Directly under the Holy See, Aid to the Church in Need supports the faithful wherever they are persecuted, oppressed or in pastoral need. ACN is a Catholic charity – helping to bring Christ to the world through prayer, information and action.

Founded in 1947 by Fr Werenfried van Straaten, whom St John Paul II named “An outstanding Apostle of Charity”, the organisation is now at work in more than 130 countries throughout the world.

The charity undertakes thousands of projects every year including providing transport for clergy and lay Church workers, construction of church buildings, funding for priests and nuns and help to train seminarians. Since the initiative's launch in 1979, Aid to the Church in Need's *Child's Bible – God Speaks to his Children* has been translated into 176 languages and more than 51 million copies have been distributed all over the world.

Aid to the Church in Need UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1097984) and Scotland (SC040748). ACN's UK office is in Sutton, Surrey and there is a Scottish office in Motherwell, near Glasgow.

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