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Media Release 13 November 2019

Please find below information on two important and coinciding events.

1. The release of the biennial report *Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their Faith 2017- 2019*.
(Findings and summaries from the report that can be used in your publications are below)
2. Information about Red Wednesday events occurring in several Cathedrals around Australia.

Persecuted and Forgotten?

A report on Christians
oppressed for their Faith
2017-19



A snapshot of a
deepening crisis



Aid to the
Church in Need
ACN AUSTRALIA

Red Wednesday

Stand Up
for Faith and
Freedom



20th November 2019

Red Wednesday

Stand up for Faith and Freedom

20 November 2019

The release of the report *Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their Faith* coincides with **Red Wednesday** an annual event and day which draws attention to the plight of those who are persecuted and oppressed for their religious beliefs. Cathedrals, churches and public buildings around the world will light up in red to show solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Faith.

In Australia, seven cathedrals in five states will light up in red and eight cathedrals will hold **Red Wednesday** events to highlight those persecuted, discriminated against or killed for their Faith. For a list of Red Wednesday events taking place around Australia and to find out more. Visit:

www.redwednesday.org

Donations in support of suffering and persecuted Christians can be made at: www.redwednesday.org

Findings of Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their Faith

The countdown to Christianity's disappearance in parts of the Middle East is ticking ever louder – and can only be stopped if the international community acts now – according to a new report produced by the Catholic charity, *Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)*.

The 2019 *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report, warns of Christianity vanishing from towns and cities in the Middle East – despite the defeat of Daesh (ISIS) – the impact of the genocide has led to haemorrhaging numbers of the faithful. There were 1.5 million Christians in Iraq before 2003 but by mid-2019, they had fallen to well below 150,000 and perhaps even less than 120,000 – a decline of up to 90 percent within a generation.

In Syria Christian numbers have fallen by two thirds since the conflict began in 2011. The ACN report notes that the international community has shown unprecedented concern about the persecution of the region's Christians, but failed to provide the aid required to ensure its survival during that period covered by the report (2017-19).

Persecuted and Forgotten? found that “Governments in the West and the UN failed to offer Christians in countries such as Iraq and Syria the emergency help they needed as genocide got underway.” The report warns that the Church in the region could vanish if radical Islamists were to mount another attack on vulnerable communities – a threat highlighted by reports of jihadists escaping prison, as a result of the renewed violence in north-east Syria.

The *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report concludes: “Were there to be another Daesh-style assault on the faithful, it could result in the Church’s disappearance. However, if security can be guaranteed there is every indication that Christianity could survive in Nineveh and Erbil.”

The report also found that the persecution of Christians has worsened the most in South and East Asia – noting that, in 2017, 477 anti-Christian incidents were reported in India. In the same region, 300 people died – and more than 500 were injured – in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday 2019 when jihadists bombed sites including three churches.



A priest blesses the graves of victims of the 2019 Easter attacks in Sri Lanka.

Photographer: Roshan Pradeep & T Sunil

In a number of African countries Christians were threatened by Islamists seeking to eliminate the Church – either by use of force or by dishonest means, including bribing people to convert.

In Nigeria's north and the 'Middle Belt' regions, militants continued a reign of terror against Christians and Muslims alike –3,731 Christians were reportedly killed in 2018. While in other parts of the African continent, the main threat to Christians came from the state – over a 12-month period, more than 70 churches were attacked in Sudan's Nuba Mountains with 32 burnt down.

National Director of Aid to the Church in Need Australia, Mr Bernard Toutounji said the report was a sobering reminder about the extent of religious persecution around the world. "Christians sadly continue to be a favoured target for violent militant extremists. In our own region, we are particularly conscious of the persecution faced in countries such as Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines, reflected in increasing Church attacks", Mr Toutounji said. "Christians in these countries are facing not only the threat of Islamic extremism and populist nationalism, but that of authoritarian regimes as well", he added.

The *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report can be viewed as an interactive website.

Visit: persecutedchristians.acninternational.org

Or it can be read as an online booklet (that can also be printed)

Visit: www.aidtochurch.org/reports

Images that can be used in your publications can be found [here](#).

There is also a 5 minute video summary about the *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report that can be shared on your websites and social media

platforms: <http://bit.ly/2XeeHTh>



Persecuted and Forgotten 2019



Watch later



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