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Hundreds of churches, monuments and buildings will be illuminated in red light in a global call for religious freedom

In spite of the coronavirus pandemic, **#RedWeek 2020**, a campaign initiated to draw attention to the persecution of Christians all over the world, will still take place this year from 18-25 November. “COVID 19 may have brought many changes, but Christians continue to be the most persecuted religious community in the world. In order to raise awareness about this painful fact, cathedrals, churches and public buildings will be illuminated in red light in many countries across four continents. Furthermore, a large number of initiatives will be offered online,” confirmed Thomas Heine-Geldern, Executive President of *Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)*. He explained that the initiative represents a strong sign of support for all those who are suffering discrimination but cannot speak freely about it themselves and hope that others will raise their voices in their stead.

#RedWeek is an initiative launched in 2015 by the international pontifical foundation ACN, an international Catholic charity that supports suffering and persecuted Christians. About 250 million Christians all over the world are living in environments in which they are violently persecuted, discriminated against or prevented from freely practising their faith.

This year the initiative will begin in Austria. On Wednesday 18 November a Mass for persecuted Christians will be held in red-lit St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna. On this day, the red spotlight will shine on almost 50 participating Austrian churches and state institutions such as the Austrian parliament in Vienna.

Many countries all over the world, from Canada to Australia, will take part in **#RedWeek**. During this time symbolic monuments will be bathed in red light, such as Bratislava Castle or the Notre-Dame Basilica in Montréal. It is very likely that also the statue of Christ “Cristo Redentor” in Rio de Janeiro, where the campaign first began in 2015, will again be a part of the campaign this year. In years past, the colosseum in Rome has also set the stage for the initiative commemorating the suffering of Christians.

A highlight is planned for 25 November with special events in Great Britain and the Philippines. In Great Britain, the day will include the presentation of a report on Christians who have unjustly been incarcerated because of their faith. It bears the title “Set Your Captives Free.” Contributions are expected by Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama from Abuja, Nigeria, the former British member of parliament, Rob Ffello, and Maira Shahbaz from Pakistan, whose case of kidnapping and terror is discussed in the report.

In the Philippines, the focus of **#RedWeek** is completely on the COVID-19 pandemic this year. The objective is to raise awareness about the many clergies and religious sisters who are

working on the frontline assisting those who have fallen ill and who are performing their service at great personal risk. Although in previous years the focus was on churches and schools, this year the initiative is also calling upon hospitals to take part.

This year cathedrals and churches across Australia will participate in **Red Wednesday** on **25 November** and this year ACN Australia has also launched **Red November** which seeks to highlight the suffering Church during the whole month of November.

Both Red Wednesday and Red November provide the opportunity to learn more about 'the suffering church' and to make spiritual and material offerings in solidarity with those who share our faith but do not enjoy our freedom.

For more information please visit: www.aidtochurch.org/RedWednesday or www.aidtochurch.org/RedNovember

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