

INSIDE
THIS WEEK'S**U**
Lifestyle**Arlene Phillips**

The 75-year-old is super-glamorous, looks far younger than her years and is still working – but even she's had to accept that ageing does have a consequence

31

Nadiya Hussain

The *Bake Off* winner talks about her food highs and lows

33

34

Lost savings

Could you be sitting on a forgotten windfall?

THIS WEEK

In conversation with...

Opera star
Russell Watson
page 12

**£1.50 €2.00**

Friday 23rd November, 2018

Catholic universe

Britain's most trusted Catholic Newspaper

West is still failing to act as nationalists target religion

EXCLUSIVE: New report on religious freedom unearths increase in attacks on Christians as militant, aggressive nationalism takes hold

A surge in aggressive nationalism in key parts of the world is to blame for a rise in violence and other intimidation against religious minorities – and the West is failing to convert words of concern into action, according to a report just out.

Assessing all 196 countries around the globe, the Religious Freedom in the World 2018 Report concludes that “ultra-nationalism” by both government and non-state sectors has caused a spike in hatred against faith minorities in countries including leading regional powers such as India, China, Pakistan and Burma (Myanmar).

The report, produced every two years by the charity Aid to the Church



'Most Western governments have failed to provide urgently needed assistance to minority faith groups...'

in Need, finds that religious illiteracy, including within the media, and the lack of political action in the West, has exacerbated the problem, concluding that many faith minority groups suffer behind a “curtain of indifference”.

The Religious Freedom in the World 2018 report criticises governments, stating: “Most Western governments have failed to provide urgently needed assistance to minority faith groups, especially displaced communities wanting to return home.”

The report says most governments failed to offer displaced minority faith groups the help they themselves have requested to enable their return to northern Iraq and elsewhere following

the ousting of Daesh (Islamic State) and other militant groups.

The investigation by the Catholic charity finds that media coverage about militant Islam has focused almost exclusively on the fight-back against Daesh and affiliate groups during the period under review – 2016-18 – but has largely ignored the relentless spread of militant Islamist movements in Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

According to the report, a main driver behind the growth in extremism is the growing clash between Sunni and Shi'a, the main rival branches of Islam.

The report states that in the 25-month review period the situation for minority faith groups deteriorated in almost half of the countries classed as having significant violations of religious freedom – 18 out of a total of 38 countries.

Worsening intolerance towards religious minorities meant that for the first time in the report's 19-year history two new countries – Russia and Kyrgyzstan – were placed in the “discrimination” category.

The report adds that in a number of cases, such as Saudi Arabia and North Korea, the situation was already so bad that in the period under review it was virtually impossible for it to get any worse.

Turning to the West, the report highlights a surge in extremist attacks by militants against targets in the West.

Such terrorism striking at the heart of liberal democracies means that the threat can be called “neighbourhood terrorism”.

Continued on page 2

YEMEN ASKS: WHEN WILL OUR SUFFERING END?



A malnourished child receives treatment at a medical centre in Sanaa, Yemen. Catholic and international aid organisations are pressing for an end to the country's civil war. Photo: Yahya Arhb, EPA

CAFOD has led international calls for the UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt to use his influence in the Middle East to broker a lasting ceasefire in Yemen.

In a statement the Catholic aid agency joined others in imploring him to ‘urge parties to the conflict to end violations against civilians’.

Hunt visited Saudi Arabia earlier this month, telling its leaders that they must not risk a humanitarian disaster in pursuit of military victory. But as many as 150 civilians were killed in air raids on the vital Yemen port of Hodeida within 24 hours of his comments, according to news reports.

“We see immense suffering in the faces of children whose young lives have been stunted by malnutrition, and the agony of their parents who

can only watch their children waste away,” said Giovanna Reda, head of Middle East humanitarian programmes for CAFOD, the overseas aid agency of the Catholic bishops of England and Wales. “A comprehensive ceasefire across the country is urgently needed now, to halt the suffering of millions of people,” she added.

“Humanitarian access is vital to reach vulnerable families on the brink of famine. ... Any disruption of (Hodeida) port's operation will severely affect our ability to get emergency aid to where it is needed most,” Reda said.

Signatories to the appeal include CARE International UK, Christian Aid, International Rescue Committee and the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Pope Francis repeatedly has urged the international community to make every effort to end the Yemeni crisis.

“I'm following with concern the dramatic fortune of the people of Yemen, now extreme following years of conflict,” he said. “I call for the international community to not withhold efforts and to join all parties involved for negotiations, so the tragic humanitarian situation doesn't worsen even more.”

Full story - See page 16

Lord Alton demands answers over Asia Bibi case - see pg 3

ISSN 2631-844X



9 772631 844018

47