

STATEMENT FROM BARNABAS FUND

CHALLENGES TO ASSISTING MINORITY REFUGEE GROUPS

We recommend:

1. OSCE states recognise the genocidal nature of actions of Islamic state and other armed groups in Syria and Iraq, against Christians, Yazidis and other minorities.
2. OSCE states recognise that refugees from vulnerable minority groups, fleeing violence, have a particular call on aid and for asylum, and should be included among other priority groups.
3. All countries should ensure that aid programmes into the region actually reach minority groups, as marginalised groups are rarely helped by generally distributed aid.
4. All states should ensure that vulnerable religious minorities, especially Christians and Yazidis, are adequately represented among asylum places provided. This is especially important for the USA and UK, whose own figures show minorities to be woefully under-represented among Syrian refugees receiving asylum.
5. OSCE states address issues of minorities among refugee groups, who are often persecuted by larger groups within refugee populations. Christians, Yazidis, converts from Islam, should not be placed within housing centres dominated by a hostile majority population.

In April 2015 Italian police arrested 15 Muslim migrants in Palermo¹ after they arrived on a boat carrying 105 people. They had apparently thrown 12 African Christians off the boat to their deaths in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, after a frenzied attack motivated by religious hatred.

In July 2015, Christian migrants in Sweden² were hounded out of asylum accommodation by other Muslim residents. The group consisted of two Christian families who lived in an asylum house of approximately 80 individuals – the majority of whom were Syrian Muslims. The other residents, described as “fundamentalist Islamists” by major Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, oppressed the Christians by telling them they were not to wear any symbols of faith in the building and they would

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/16/italian-police-arrest-migrants-alleged-to-have-thrown-christians-overboard>

² <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/kristna-flyktingar-flyttade-fran-asylboende-efter-hot-av-islamister/> and <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/07/21/christian-asylum-seekers-hounded-out-of-immigrant-housing-by-muslim-residents/>

not be allowed to use the communal areas while they were in use by Muslims.

In September 2015, the respected German magazine *Die Welt* featured an article³ about the persecution of Christian refugees by Muslims in asylum centres. Jörg Radek, deputy head of Germany's police union, said⁴ that Christian and Muslim refugees should be housed separately to prevent the escalation of religious violence.

In October 2015, John Bruton, former Irish Prime Minister, wrote⁵ about cases of attacks in Germany on Syrian Christian asylum seekers by Muslim asylum seekers.

The danger is particularly high for ex-Muslims, who are regarded as apostates and therefore traitors by their former co-religionists.⁶ All schools of sharia (Islamic law) view this a major offence and designate death as the appropriate penalty for adult males. Apostasy is a criminal offence carrying the death penalty in at least six Islamic countries, and elsewhere it is often an informal penalty enacted by the family or community. It impacts ex-Muslims in the UK today.⁷

The fact that other refugees may be a cause of concern has been highlighted by, among others, the Irish Muslim Council.⁸

That Christians and other minorities are poorly served by the current refugee and humanitarian asylum regimes is starkly illustrated by American data. Of 2,184 Syrian refugees admitted into the U.S.A. over several years after the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011, only 53 were Christians while 2098 (or 96 percent) were Sunni Muslims, according to State Department statistics.⁹ The remaining 33 included one Yazidi, eight Jehovah Witnesses, two Baha'i, six Zoroastrians, six of "other religion," seven of "no religion," and three atheists.

The situation in the UK is little better.

³ <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article146919471/Islamisten-bedrohen-Christen-in-Fluechtlingsheimen.html>

⁴ <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/09/29/christian-and-muslim-refugees-should-be-separated-says-german-police-chief/>

⁵ <http://www.faiobserver.com/region/europe/refugees-persecuted-in-europe-12901/>

⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34357047>

⁷ <http://www.secularism.org.uk/blog/2015/09/sectarianism-in-modern-britain>

⁸ http://iinanews.org/page/public/news_details.aspx?id=98412&NL=True#

⁹ http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/InteractiveReporting/tabid/393/EnumType/Report/Default.aspx?ItemPath=/rpt_WebArrivalsReports/MX%20-%20Arrivals%20by%20Nationality%20and%20Religion