



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

#RedWednesday – 25th November 2020

#RedWednesday is a staple part of ACN's calendar. The Houses of Parliament, London, the Colosseum, Rome, and Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC have all been lit red to raise awareness of Christian persecution in the past.

This year, alongside the usual opportunity to raise awareness of Christian persecution, we will use #RedWednesday as a vehicle for change.

To coincide with #RedWednesday, ACN will be launching a report in parliament called *Set Your Captives Free* which will shine a light on the unjust detention of Christians across the globe. We will be focusing on four cases:

1. Maira Shahbaz, a 14 year-old Catholic schoolgirl kidnapped and bundled into a car in broad daylight to be raped and forced to marry and convert to Islam;
2. Bishop James Su Zhimin, a Chinese bishop who has spent 40 years in prison or forced labour camps for his refusal to join the state-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association;
3. Leah Sharibu, a Nigerian schoolgirl kidnapped by Boko Haram at the age of 14 in 2018, who has been kept in captivity for her refusal to renounce her faith and is now reportedly pregnant;
4. Patriarch Abune Antonios, patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Tawahedo Church who has been under house arrest since 2006 for opposing government interference with church affairs.

This is where we need your help. We want UK MPs to help end their ordeal. No one should have their freedom taken because of their faith in Christ.

For more information about our advocacy strategy, please read onto the next page. If you are willing to promote #RedWednesday in your parish or among your friends, you can get event and activity details, as well as an activity pack, at www.acnuk.org/redwednesday.

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Company Number 4747666



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ACN's Advocacy Strategy for 2020

Since it began in 2016, #RedWednesday has helped raise global awareness of Christian persecution, with buildings all over the world lighting up red in solidarity with persecuted Christians – and others.

Building on this success, we now want to grow #RedWednesday as a powerful campaign that will deliver social and political change. This is our plan:

Phase One: August – September

We encourage you to choose one case that you find particularly appealing and to make it your mission to help them. In this early stage, we suggest you share their story on social media. If you don't use social media then we encourage you to share the story with your friends, family and members of your parish.

For those who are interested we can also send you out some #RedWednesday flyers that you can distribute in your neighbourhood, around your parish, and among your loved ones.

Phase Two: September – November

#RedWednesday is on 25th November this year. We ask that you write to your local MP asking them to:

- a) Attend the launch of Set Your Captives Free;
- b) Lend their support to #RedWednesday

We provide draft wording for that letter on the next page. However, we wish to stress that the way to make this as effective as possible ***is to write it in your own words, using our draft as a guideline.*** Further, ***letters sent by post are even more effective than emails.***

Phase Three: November onwards

More details to come.

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Writing to your MP

Below is the draft wording for the letter we wish you to send to your MP. As previously emphasised, we request that you use this merely as **a template** and that you **write the letter in your own words**.

It is much more effective that way.

Dear [fill in blank here]

According to research by Pew Research Center, Christians are the most “widely targeted” religious group, slightly ahead of Islam. Open Doors found that in 2019, 2,983 Christians were killed for their faith. In countries such as Nigeria, Pakistan and China, Christians are persecuted ruthlessly and regularly. Some of the countries with the most egregious violations, we give millions of pounds to in aid.

As a constituent who feels strongly about Christian persecution, I would like you to do more to stop its spread. Catholic charity, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), have a number of ventures I ask you to get involved with:

- *The launch of ACN’s report **Set Your Captives Free in parliament on Tuesday 24th November that looks at the unjust detention of Christians. It will be held at 4pm in the Members’ Dining Room and your attendance will be much valued;***
- ***#RedWednesday, when buildings in many different countries will be lit red to raise awareness of Christian persecution. [You could also ask your MP to light up a landmark in your constituency red]***

I am asking you to attend the launch, and use your influence as an MP to raise awareness of #RedWednesday and Christian persecution.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert your name]

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Our advocacy to date

Our advocacy strategy, to date, has yielded real success to build upon. ACN was heavily involved in the research for the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the UK Foreign Secretary of Foreign and Commonwealth Office Support for Persecuted Christians. The current government have stated that they intend to implement every single one of the review's recommendations.

Rehman Chishti, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, has made it his mission to ensure those recommendations are implemented. In the process, he has become a friend of ACN, even signing up to run this year's London Marathon for the charity.

Other successes include:

- a) Tabling of an early day motion by Jeremy Hunt about the findings of ACN's report *Persecuted and Forgotten?*;
- b) A general debate in Westminster Hall about persecuted Christians where many MPs mentioned ACN by name;
- c) A new parliamentary newsletter that has led to the tabling of an oral question about Nigeria, one of ACN's main countries.

We have had good support from some politicians but now we think it is time for more MPs to step up and help persecuted Christians.

With your help, this will be just the beginning.

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