

### **Rev Timothy Butlin; oral evidence summary**

I have 3 layers of recommendations. I have hands-on experience of Israel/Palestine and a region-wide network. Illustrations come from Turkey – funneling point for Iran/Iraq/Afghanistan/Syria refugees - eg of young woman from Afghanistan known to Istanbul church. Convert to Christ. Her family locked her up for 5 days. Her cousin stopped going to the mosque and people began to suspect he'd become a Christian. Some men came to his house and shot him dead just because of this suspicion.

Accessed Bible only from app. Applied for asylum through the UN but was told that Afghanistan was a safe country. The UN is not neutral player in this, nor local staff at our embassies. "Threat to national security" exclusion from Turkey. They're getting away with it even though they are our allies. Hostility to Westerners. We're unfamiliar with powerlessness, so don't understand.

1. We need a sponsorship scheme for persecuted Christians like in Canada (Iranians benefit from this).
- 2A. All diplomats should be given basic religious literacy training (and interaction with local culture). Human rights as depended on Christian roots for 200 years+. In the house of Islam traditions and customs are from a different era.
- 2B. Differences of living in power/fear and honour/shame cultures. You are shame-free if no-one sees.
- 2C. Positive views of religion-dominated society in contrast to secularity of West. Not perceived to be based on religion. Religious texts non-negotiable. Arab strategic tactics effective against our inability to maintain our own values.
- 2D. Training in positive view of our own Christian-based culture. From highest levels down to complete ignorance.
3. Root & branch revision of history teaching needed in school & university. Professor Ninian Smart secularised "Religious Education" teaching – stripping belief out of Religious Studies and replacement with phenomenology. Only what is done is relevant. Therefore people don't understand culture, meaning, values. Need understanding of narratives & cultures of minorities living here and served by posts abroad. It is political heresy, but religion is the way ahead in our world.

**Qs re contact with UK Missions** – I am not aware of any contact with or approaches to UK Missions. The UN is the funnel. Met "[name deleted]" in N Cyprus after eviction from Turkey – connected via '[name deleted]' NGO network which meets annually in various ME countries. UK denied him entry. NO evidence of any FCO support for the network in the field. No support from King Charles Street only through Christians in Govt doing training on strategy 2016/17.

When the "Andrew Brunson" affair was at its peak and a 64 page indictment was given to State Dept it was this "[name deleted]" network who got it translated. Press coverage from all quarters for US pressure on the Turks. The Americans are not afraid of doing religion when it suits them. In the Middle East there is greater understanding of tough negotiations.

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