

JUBILEE CAMPAIGN

# 2021 YEAR-END NEWSLETTER



## A Year of Successes and Renewed Energy

2021 was full of transitions. In the human rights and religious freedom advocacy world, we became so accustomed to working remotely behind our computers hoping for a day we could reunite with our partners in person. IRF Summit 2021 saw our hopes materialized, as we convened with religious freedom activists from across the globe, heard stories from prisoners of conscience who survived persecution, and saw our efforts transcend national borders. Now, our fire has been rekindled, and we are more encouraged than ever to continue our advocacy in 2022. With numerous successes under our belt, such as the release of Pakistani Christian couple Shagufta Kausar and Shafqat Emmanuel after seven years on death row, or the resettlement of an Afghan family in the United States, we hope to further our work in the coming year. We thank you, our supporters, for finding room in your hearts and prayers for our movement to expand freedom of religion or belief for all.



*Pictured Above: Dr. Gloria Puldu, President, Leah Sharibu Foundation*

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## Prisoners of Conscience Updates

### SHAGUFTA KAUSAR & SHAFQAT EMMANUEL

At the outset of 2021, the international religious freedom community was disheartened to hear in February that the appeal hearing of Pakistani Christian couple Shagufta Kausar (52) and Shafqat Emmanuel (49) was postponed indefinitely. Already, the couple had been imprisoned for seven years after they were convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death in 2014 for allegedly sending blasphemous text messages in English to a mosque cleric. In 2013, complainant Muhammad Hussain claimed that he received two blasphemous text messages from a cellphone registered in Shagufta's name. Without a proper investigation, and despite that the phone with the SIM Card in Shagufta's name was never recovered, the couple was swiftly arrested and charged with "insulting the Qur'an" and "insulting the Prophet" before they were transferred to separate prisons to carry out their sentence.



*"It's unfortunate that innocent people are forced to rot in jails for years on false accusations of blasphemy. This practice needs to stop now. The charge is so serious that even judges are fearful of conducting hearings and giving decisions on merit."*

SAIF UL MALOOK  
(SHAGUFTA AND  
SHAFQAT'S ATTORNEY)

*Pictured Left: Shafqat Emmanuel (left)  
and Shagufta Kausar (right)  
after reuniting in 2021*

This harsh sentencing was levied despite the myriad dubious details of the case - such as that the couple was both illiterate and unable to speak or write English and therefore would not be able to send the alleged messages, and that the couple had a previous dispute with their accuser and the allegations could have been an act of retaliation or revenge. One of the couple's lawyers, Nadeem Hassan, has stated that police authorities extracted a coerced confession from Shafqat by physically torturing him and threatening to do the same to his wife. During the couple's time in separate prisons, Shafqat's health deteriorated rapidly; already paralyzed from the waist down from an unrelated accident, he received no mobility assistance or medical treatment.

Shafqat's and Shagufta's appeal hearing was originally set to be heard in April 2020, but was initially pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic; the court further deferred the case twice in 2021, citing that the court hours had already closed for the day on those two occasions. Fortunately, the Lahore High Court of Pakistan heard the couple's appeal in June 2021, acquitted Shagufta and Shafqat of their charges, and ordered their immediate release. Now, we are pleased to announce that the couple has safely resettled in a European country, as they would have likely faced harassment, intimidation, and possibly even violence from Pakistan's radical Muslim community who was angered by their release.

*"Recent decisions by Algerian courts to sentence Christians accused of blasphemy and proselytizing to multi-year prison sentences and to seal protestant churches that have been forcibly closed demonstrates the country is headed in the wrong direction."*

USCIRF CHAIR NADINE  
MAENZA

## Prisoners of Conscience Updates (Contd.)

### **ALGERIA: HAMID SOUDAD & SULEIMAN BOUHAFS**

Jubilee Campaign has been focused recently on two Algerian prisoners of conscience, Hamid Soudad and Suleiman Bouhaf. Soudad, a 43-year-old Christian and father of four, was detained by authorities in January 2021 for sharing a cartoon of the prophet Muhammad via Facebook two years earlier in 2018. Algerian authorities immediately interrogated Soudad upon his arrest before releasing him and then promptly re-summoning him to the local prison, where he slept the first night in detention. The following day, having neither provided access to a lawyer nor a fair trial, a court in Arzew charged Soudad with "insulting the Prophet of Islam" and sentenced him to the maximum of five years in prison according to Penal Code article 144-2.

In March 2021, Oran City Court denied Soudad's appeal and upheld his original sentence. Soudad's attorney, Farid Khemisti, has expressed his belief that authorities leveraged the maximum sentence against his client because Soudad is a Christian; his harsh penalty deviates from the typical practice in which authorities apply milder sentences for sharing allegedly blasphemous posts than the sentences for authoring or originally posting them. In mid-August 2021, Jubilee Campaign submitted a sign-on letter with 21 co-signatories - including Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett of the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights - to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. In our letter, we appealed to the rapporteur to urge for the acquittal of Soudad's charges and his immediate and unconditional release from prison.

Jubilee Campaign has also been working on the case of Algerian Christian Suleiman Bouhaf. In September 2016, Bouhaf was charged with "harming the image of the Prophet" and "offending Islam" for Facebook posts in which he criticized Islam. Without access to legal counsel, the court convicted Bouhaf of blasphemy and sentenced him to three years in prison. Fortunately, Bouhaf received a presidential pardon in 2018 after serving two years of his sentence, and he fled to Tunisia upon his release. While residing in Tunisia, Algerian authorities accused Bouhaf of terrorism for his alleged membership in a self-determination organization. In September 2020, the UN High Commissioner granted Bouhaf political refugee status, but nearly a year later in August 2021, Bouhaf was abducted by authorities and repatriated to Algeria, where it is believed he will be tried primarily for terrorism. However, Jubilee Campaign has received reports that Bouhaf will also be facing blasphemy charges once again. In a press release, Jubilee Campaign called upon the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to intervene in Bouhaf's case and securely resettle him and his family in a third country with a satisfactory human rights record.



## Prisoners of Conscience Updates (Contd.)

### **PAKISTAN: NADEEM SAMSON AND STEPHAN MASIH**



*Pictured Above: Nadeem Samson*

Quite similar to Algeria, Pakistan also enforces laws criminalizing acts of blasphemy in its penal code, and they have been used to target minority faith communities for arbitrary detention and prolonged imprisonment. One such case is that of 47-year-old Christian Nadeem Samson; Samson was accused in late 2017 by two men, Abdul Huq and Sakhawat, of opening a Facebook account to post blasphemous material. Samson's family, including his brother with whom Jubilee Campaign has close contact, asserts that the allegations are entirely fabricated and were used to settle scores from a previous property dispute. Prior to the accusations of blasphemy,

Samson had leased his home from Haq for a period of 18 months. As per the agreement, Haq would reimburse Samson's ≈\$4,000 deposit at the end term of the lease; however, Haq became angered when he was expected to return the money and, according to Samson's family, conspired to frame Samson for blasphemy. Haq had used Samson's public phone number to register a fake Facebook account to post blasphemous remarks under Samson's name in order to level the accusations against him. During Samson's initial time in detention, authorities physically tortured him to extract a false confession, and he now resides in Lahore District Jail where he is relegated to a tiny prison cell which is sometimes filled over capacity. In January 2021, Samson's brother reported that his lawyer was supposed to visit the High Court to request bail the month prior; it is unclear whether the attorney visited the court at all to file the bail request or if the bail request was filed but immediately rejected by the court. By June, an appeal was filed on behalf of Samson to the Supreme Court.



*Pictured Above: Stephan Masih*

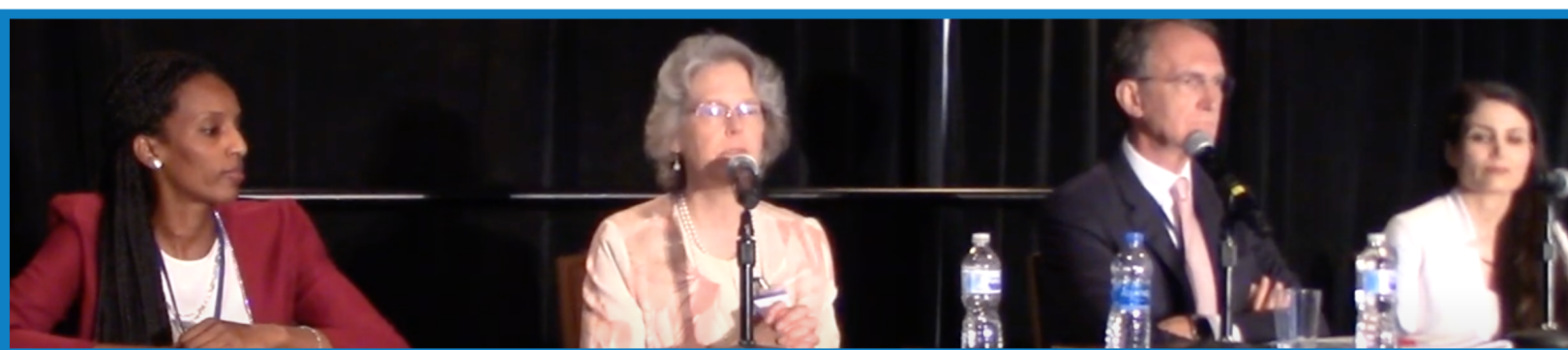
Jubilee Campaign is also working on the case of 40-year-old Christian convert Stephan Masih. In early March 2019, Masih was in an argument with his family and made some verbally abusive remarks towards a Muslim neighbor woman who intervened in the dispute. The woman's husband, a Muslim cleric, visited Masih's home and accused Masih of committing blasphemy before warning him that he would return the next day. As such, the following day the Muslim cleric returned to Masih's home with an angry mob who began to physical assault and accuse Masih of blasphemy. Upon arrival, authorities arrested Masih instead of the assailants; Masih's sister has confirmed that while Masih did use some abusive language, he had made no blasphemous remarks whatsoever. Masih was officially charged with blasphemy in June 2019 and his appeal hearing has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Masih's family has been campaigning for his acquittal and release on account of his mental disability. In March 2020, a medical examination board was convened to review Masih's mental health after four months of pressure from the family. In 2021, after a whole year of withholding the medical results, the Punjab Institute of Mental Health released the findings only after Masih's lawyers and

Voice for Justice pressured them to do so. The results concluded that Masih suffers from Bipolar Affective Disorder which affects his judgement and behavior, and that he is unfit to stand trial; Still, Masih remains imprisoned and is denied medical treatment. Jubilee Campaign has sent a letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; we urged the rapporteur to pressure the Pakistani government to acquit and release Masih on account of the following: (1) laws criminalizing blasphemy are incompatible with human rights; (2) Masih should not be charged for an alleged act he committed or behavior he expressed while being mentally disabled; and (3) there is no evidence to prove that Masih made the alleged blasphemous remarks.

# International Religious Freedom Summit 2021

## FREE TO CHOOSE

In July 2021, Jubilee Campaign participated in the inaugural International Religious Freedom Summit which took place in Washington, D.C. In addition to attending numerous side events hosted by our partners in human rights and religious freedom advocacy, we hosted our own event. Jubilee Campaign teamed up with Christian Freedom International, Set My People Free, The St. Charles Institute, and Religious Liberty Partnership to form the Abolish Anti-Conversion Laws and Apostasy Penalties Coalition. We hosted a hybrid in-person and virtual event "Free to Choose", featuring survivors of apostasy convictions - Mariam Ibraheem of Sudan, Marziyeh Amirizadeh of Iran, and Cheikh Mkhaitir of Mauritania - as well as US Senator James Lankford and US Representative Jamie Raskin, experts Tehmina Arora, Kamal Fahmi, and Godfrey Yogarajah, and the honorable Ambassador Jos Douma who serves as The Netherlands' Special Envoy for Religion and Belief. Our distinguished speakers all shared one common assertion: all nations, regardless of faith tradition or non-faith tradition, must uphold their obligations under international law to advance religious freedom, including the right to express a wide range of beliefs, renounce a faith, abandon a belief, or convert religions. Regrettably, in some countries, being a religious convert could mean prolonged imprisonment, torture, statelessness, indoctrination, mob violence, and even execution. Iranian Christian convert Marziyeh Amirizadeh shared her experience being sentenced to death by hanging for her faith alongside her friend Maryam Rostampour; in detention, the two women were pressured to renounce Christianity, were deprived of clean water and sunlight, and were relegated to cramped and unsanitary conditions. Mariam Ibraheem of Sudan shared her story of being arrested during her second pregnancy for allegedly committing apostasy by being a Muslim woman wishing to marry a Christian man; Mariam repeatedly asserted that she had not committed apostasy, as she had identified as Christian her entire life.



*Pictured Above (from left): Mariam Ibraheem, Ann Buwalda, Ambassador Jos Douma, Marziyeh Amirizadeh*

*"It's very scary to see the things that have happened to people, including enforced disappearance, detainment, imprisonment, house arrest [...] It's going to be a really critical test of the progress of our enlightenment as a civilization whether we can get rid of these laws which are such a danger..."*

US REPRESENTATIVE JAMIE RASKIN (D-MD)

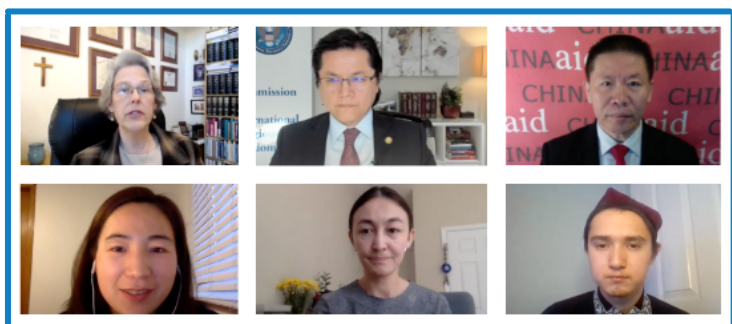
Numerous recommendations were made at "Free to Choose". For example, while abolishing apostasy and anti-conversion laws is a necessary step towards advancing religious freedom in repressive nations, it must be accompanied by legal protections for the free practice of faith and belief, societal movements promoting interfaith harmony, and also the repeal of blasphemy laws. Nations that refuse to repeal apostasy laws should immediately be disqualified for membership in the UN Human Rights Consultative Group; meanwhile, freedom-loving countries should review and adopt Magnitsky Acts or other relevant sanctions regimes and implement them to sanction judges, legislators, government officials, and other state actors who apply apostasy laws to criminalize religious conversions and the peaceful manifestation of one's beliefs.

# United Nations Engagement 2021: Events

## **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 46 PARALLEL EVENT: GRANT EVERY CHILD EVERY RIGHT IN CHINA**

In early 2021, Jubilee Campaign hosted four virtual parallel events to the United Nations Human Rights Council's 46th Session. In "Grant Every Child Every Right", we welcomed numerous distinguished speakers, including four witnesses of persecution - Esther, Cindy, Kalbinur, and Arfat - as well as experts Dr. Bob Fu of ChinaAid and USCIRF Chair Nury Turkel. As was raised by each of our speakers, the Chinese government has embarked on a ruthless campaign to forcibly assimilate and suppress the religious, spiritual, linguistic, and cultural traditions of its ethnic and faith minorities, including Uyghurs, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners, and more. Regrettably, children bear the brunt of this persecution, as they are banned from entering houses of worship and are rebuked for their own beliefs in school. At the same time, children of faith whose parents are imprisoned face tremendous emotional turmoil as a result of family

separation. Cindy, whose father was imprisoned for eight years for his identity as a Falun Gong practitioner, tearfully recalled seeing her father's beaten and battered body after his release and only being with him for a mere thirteen days before he passed away from his injuries. Arfat, a Uyghur, was studying abroad in the US in 2018 when he learned that both of his parents had been detained for their beliefs in Xinjiang. During our event, Arfat implored, "How many more children have joined the stolen generation? Imagine the psychological pain children are subjected to as they are suddenly separated from their family [...]"



*Pictured Above (from left): Ann Buwalda, USCIRF Commissioner Nury Turkel, Dr. Bob Fu, Esther, Kalbinur, Arfat*

## Jubilee Campaign Statements Submitted to the UN in 2021

CHINA VIOLATES CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD BY PERSECUTING CHILDREN OF FAITH

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MUST STEM ABDUCTION AND FORCED CONVERSION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITY GIRLS

THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL MUST ESTABLISH A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IN NIGERIA

CHINA IS WAGING GENOCIDE AGAINST UYGHURS AND OTHER ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

THE TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF NORTH KOREAN WOMEN AND GIRLS

THE MILITARY COUP, EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS, AND THE ROHINGYA IN MYANMAR

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN TIGRAY AND THE ARREST OF ERITREAN CHRISTIANS

THE LOOMING THREAT OF THE HONG KONG NATIONAL SECURITY LAW

ARBITRARY DETENTION CASES IN NEPAL, ALGERIA, PAKISTAN

THE WAVE OF KIDNAPPING AND SLAVERY IN NIGERIA

THE ROHINGYA GENOCIDE, TRANSNATIONAL JUSTICE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

LIBYA: RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND HOUSES OF WORSHIP

*To read Jubilee Campaign's submissions, visit:*

[jubileecampaign.org/un-engagement-2/](https://jubileecampaign.org/un-engagement-2/)

## United Nations Engagement 2021: Events (Cont.)

### **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 46 PARALLEL EVENT: JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA**

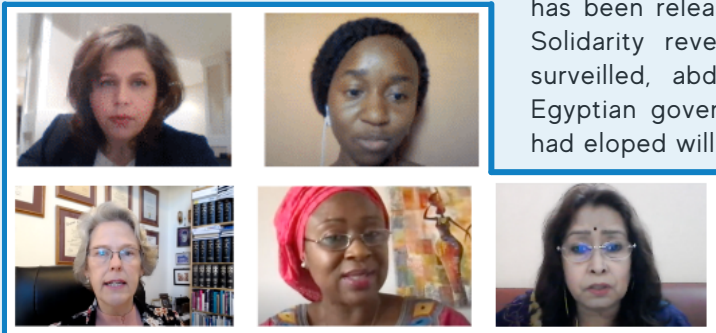
In "Justice & Accountability in Nigeria" Jubilee Campaign welcomed the honorable Baroness Caroline Cox (Member of UK House of Lords; Member of UK All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief; Founder of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust), Tristan Azbej (Hungary State Secretary on Aid of Persecuted Christians), Stephen Enada (Executive President, International Committee on Nigeria), and Alheri Magaji (Co-founder, Resilient Aid Dialogue Initiative) to speak about the decades-long slaughter of Nigerian Christians and peaceful Muslims by groups such as Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), and Fulani militants. The violence being committed in Nigeria has reached - and surpassed - the standards of both crimes against humanity and genocide; in October 2021, the International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law (Intersociety) released statistics that no fewer than 4,400 "defenseless and unprotected" Christians had been "hacked to death" by radical Islamists between January and September 2021, with at least 20 Christian clergies being kidnapped. During Jubilee's virtual event, our speakers highlighted the need for justice and accountability for perpetrators - this would send a clear message that such criminal violence will not go unpunished, and it paves the way for recovery and rehabilitation. We recommend the establishment of an independent, impartial commission of inquiry to investigate atrocities and crimes against humanity, as it would be the first crucial step towards recognizing genocidal violence, providing reparations to victims and survivors, identifying and prosecuting perpetrators, and kickstarting peacebuilding and reconciliation



*Pictured Above (from left): Ann Buwalda, Baroness Caroline Cox, Alheri Magaji, Stephen Enada, Tristan Azbej*

### **HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 46 PARALLEL EVENT: NO ONE LEFT BEHIND**

In Jubilee Campaign's parallel event "No One Left Behind", our speakers discussed the unfortunate reality that in many nations, religious minority girls are kidnapped, married against their will to their abductors, and forced to renounce their faith. The honorable Mangla Sharma, Member of the Pakistan Hindu Council and the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, shared how in Pakistan, radical Muslim men will abduct young Christian and Hindu girls, falsify their age to 18 years, marry them, and force them to convert to Islam; such is the case of 13-year-old Arzoo Raja, who has fortunately been rescued and is safely housed in a government-run facility. Her parents, however, continue to seek prosecution for Arzoo's abductor who has been released on bail. Across the world in Egypt, Ghada Melek of Coptic Solidarity reveals, Coptic Christian women and girls have been routinely surveilled, abducted, and forcibly married to adult men; regrettably, the Egyptian government dismisses these cases by falsely claiming that the girls had eloped willingly. And in Nigeria, which Fatima Njoku of Stefanos Foundation addresses, Islamist militants such as Boko Haram and ISWAP kidnap schoolgirls, force them to convert to Islam, and use them as domestic and sexual slaves. ISWAP continues to hold 18-year-old Christian girl Leah Sharibu captive four years after abducting her as she refuses their demands to renounce her faith.



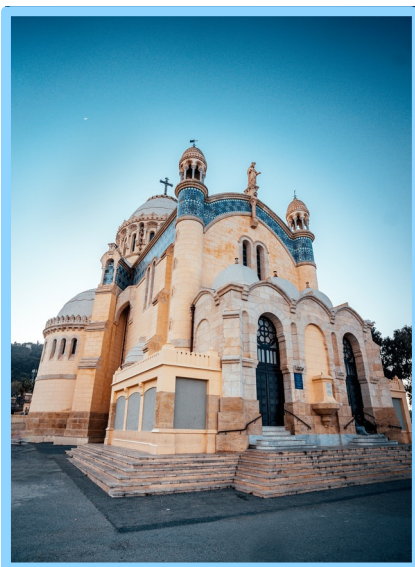
*Pictured Above (from left): Ghada Melek, Fatima Njoku, Ann Buwalda, Hon. Mama Fatima Singhateh, Hon. Mangla Sharma*

# Rejoinders: Nigeria and Algeria

## TO THE NIGERIAN PRESIDENCY

In July 2021, renowned Nigerian Bishop of Sokoto, Matthew Hassan Kukah, spoke at a virtual event "The State of Religious Freedom Around the Globe" hosted by the United States Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC). Bishop Kukah eloquently shared his personal thoughts about the humanitarian situation in Nigeria, notably the mass abductions of young schoolchildren, the midnight killings of Christians and peaceful Muslims by radical bandits, the unequal skew by which Muslims occupy more governmental positions than Christians, and more. The Nigerian government, in response, castigated Bishop Kukah and misrepresented his remarks, stating that he sought to inflame ethnic tensions, exaggerate Nigeria's social problems, and claim that Christians were the sole victims of religious extremism and criminal activity. Jubilee Campaign submitted a rejoinder to the Nigerian presidential spokesperson in which we corrected the false accusations against Bishop Kukah, requested a retraction of the government's defamatory remarks, and urged the Nigerian government to take measurable steps to eradicate mass kidnappings; increase security in locations vulnerable to terror activities such as churches, Christian communities, and moderate Muslim communities; and ensure equitable representation in government roles.

*"Bishop Kukah in his remarks at the TLHRC hearing did not make any attempt to use religious differences as a means to divide the Nigerian populace or 'sow strife', contrary to what Presidential spokesperson Garba Shehu claimed. In fact, Bishop Kukah made numerous statements appealing for the collaboration between faith communities for a peaceful and harmonious future."*



## TO THE ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT

Regrettably, thirteen Protestant houses of worship in Algeria remained closed throughout 2020 that had originally been arbitrarily shut down in 2017 and 2019, and religious freedom conditions continued on a downward trend. However, in January 2021, the Algerian government denied all allegations of engaging in discriminatory or unfair behavior. Jubilee Campaign fought back by publishing a rejoinder which lists all of the Algerian government's activities that violate freedom of religion or belief. Perhaps the most restrictive is Ordinance 06-03 which criminalizes all acts of peaceful proselytism by non-Muslim civilians towards Muslims; moreover, the Algerian Penal Code contains provisions criminalizing acts of blasphemy. By extension, any non-Muslim Algerian individual who is accused of blasphemy or evangelism can face up to five years in prison and a hefty fine. These harsh punishments are imposed on individuals who have exercised their right to freedom of religion, which is ironically outlined in Algeria's Constitution of 1989. With regards to the regulation of Protestant Churches, the aforementioned

Ordinance 06-03 places tremendous obstacles to the establishment of non-Muslim faith communities and their houses of worship, such as that they must register with the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups and submit applications for building permits to construct churches. The Commission, however, has yet to issue a single permit, much to the chagrin of the Protestant Church of Algeria who has been submitting building applications routinely since 2014. Even houses of worship that have been peacefully operating for years have been shut down on allegations that their buildings are not meeting safety regulations; yet, even when improvements are made to meet such standards, the government once again denies their appeals to reopen.



## Letters: Afghanistan, Egypt, and the OIC

### **TO PRESIDENT BIDEN: EMERGENCY PROTECTION AND EVACUATION OF AFGHAN RELIGIOUS MINORITIES**

Prior to the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, Jubilee Campaign signed onto a letter initiative spearheaded by our colleagues at Refugee Council USA. The letter, addressed to President Biden, urged the United States to "urgently welcome Afghans fleeing violence and persecution" through the US Refugee Admissions Program or Humanitarian Parole. In early September following the completion of the US forces' withdrawal from Kabul, Jubilee submitted another sign-on letter to President Biden expressing our concern that minority faith communities, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Shia Muslims, and others would face persecution under the Taliban. We urged the US to "create evacuation corridors and refugee assembly points" outside of Kabul airport to continue evacuations for vulnerable individuals in the months following.

### **TO PRESIDENT BIDEN: URGE UKRAINE TO DROP FALSE CHARGES AGAINST PASTOR YAROSLAV MYSYAK**

Jubilee Campaign in August sent a letter to President Biden urging him to raise the case of Pastor Yaroslav Mysyak in his meetings with Ukrainian President Zelensky. Pastor Mysyak was falsely convicted for his grandparent's murders in 1999. These charges were made despite the lack of evidence tying Mysyak to the incident and despite that his uncle - who had been living with the grandparents - owed money to a group of violent criminals and attracted their attention. In order to obtain a coerced confession, Pastor Mysyak was physically tortured while in detention and threatened that his wife and daughter would be interrogated. The electric shocks he was subjected to left visible burn marks. Despite that his death sentence was overturned due to Ukraine's moratorium on the death penalty, he remains imprisoned 23 years later.



*Pictured Above: Hundreds of Afghan citizens waiting outside the Kabul Airport in hopes of a safe evacuation.*

### **TO MEMBER NATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION: ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY FOR APOSTASY AND BLASPHEMY**

Throughout August and September, member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation condemned the actions of ISIS and have called on the Taliban to protect and respect the "right to life and security and the dignity of the Afghan people, in accordance with human rights treaties". Ironically, however, over ten OIC states themselves continue to enforce the death penalty for apostasy and/or blasphemy, including Brunei, Iran, Maldives, Mauritania, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. In our letter to OIC Secretary-General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen, we highlight this inconsistency and the fact that many OIC members states currently have tens of religious minorities in detention or on death row for apostasy and blasphemy-related charges. We call on all OIC members states to follow Sudan's lead and abolish the death sentence for non-violent conduct.

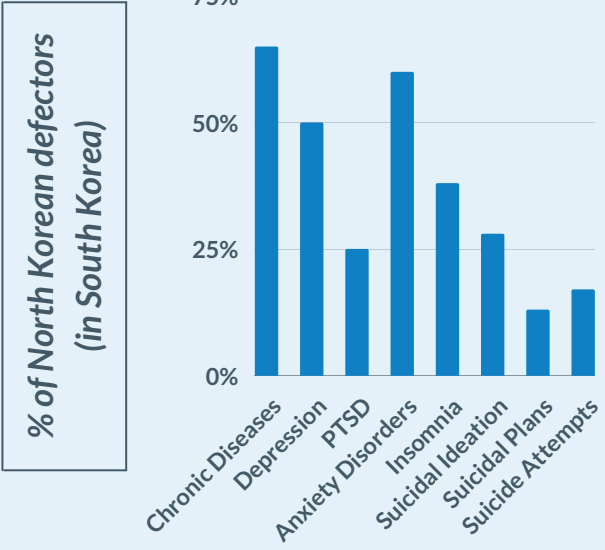


# The Situation of North Korean Women

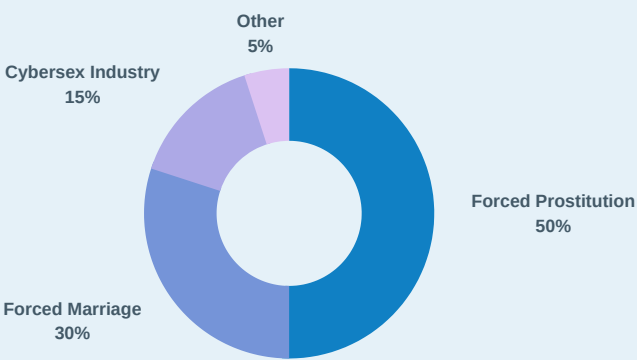
One of the most vulnerable populations in the world are North Korean women. Already, citizens in North Korea face a plethora of hardships including poverty, starvation, and a complete lack of personal and human rights; regrettably, women in North Korea are made even more marginalized due to their gender. In August 2020, the North Korean government announced that to combat the transnational spread of COVID-19 it had established "buffer zones" along the border with China where individuals engaged in irregular movement could be fired at and killed; this disproportionately impacts women who are significantly more involved in travel due to smuggling jobs and even forced trafficking. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced even more problems for North Korean women. Throughout 2020 and 2021, the Kim regime pressured women to be fully present mothers while simultaneously participating in strenuous agricultural work to combat the famine that the North Korean government had exacerbated on its own by rejecting international aid.



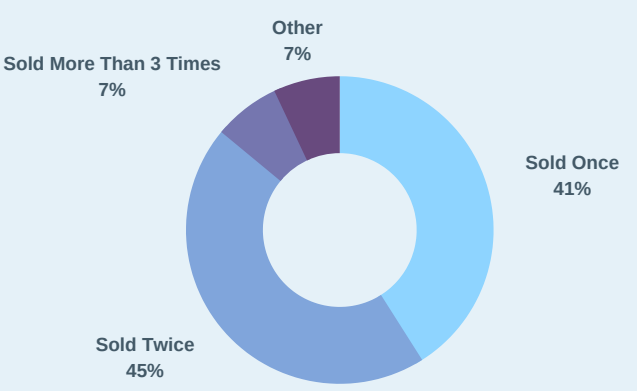
With regards to the situation of North Korean defector women and girls in South Korea and China, they continue to be tricked by 'brokers' into following them out of the country with the false promise of careers; in reality, they are sold into forced prostitution, marriages, and the exploitative cybersex industry. North Korean defector women face a strong negative stigma in both China and South Korea, and this can have a drastic effect on their livelihood. In February 2020, Chinese doctors turned away a defector woman exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 because she was unable to present a national identification card; in December 2020, it was reported that North Korean factory workers in China's Jilin Province - many of whom are women - were facing high rates of tuberculosis because they were relegated to cramped living and working conditions. Meanwhile in South Korea, North Korean defector women who worked in restaurants and cafes faced unemployment as businesses closed down to mitigate the spread of the pandemic.



## Of North Korean Defectors Trafficked into China



## Of North Korean Defectors Trafficked into China



## Afghanistan: One Family's Escape

Jubilee Campaign was privileged to participate in the safe evacuation of one Afghan family consisting of a mother and her four teenaged children; the woman's husband had already been in the United States for some time working three jobs as a registered nurse. Prior to his family's escape, he had not seen his wife and four children in nearly six or seven years. The swift move of all of his family members to the United States at the same time was unexpected but necessary for their safety. For days while the Taliban was solidifying its stronghold in the capital, Jubilee Campaign was in close contact with the family in Afghanistan as they waited outside of the Kabul airport in the cold water, with only the clothes on their backs, with no luggage or food, desperate to escape. Meanwhile, Jubilee Campaign, alongside our wonderful partners, filed documents, spoke with authorities, and did everything possible to evacuate the family as safely and swiftly as possible. And it was a close call; not long after the family boarded the flight out of Afghanistan, militants detonated a bomb on airport grounds. Even as the family took off and escaped what was once their home, they still had to face hours and days of flights, transfers, and uncertainty regarding their next destination.



First, they were taken to Qatar, and then to Germany. No time to shower, change clothes, or calm down from the crisis they narrowly escaped. All the while, they had to communicate with their very rudimentary English skills; fortunately, the daughter was able to communicate and relay the information to her father in the US. As he learned that his family was safely en route to a third country, he could finally rest after spending the past days in a constant state of anxiety. In the DC area, Jubilee Campaign was preparing for the family's arrival, having purchased clean clothes, toiletries, and food staples; prepared comfortable housing with assistance; and assembled documentation for humanitarian parole filings. Finally, we were reassured to learn that the family had safely landed in the United States; unfortunately, however, we were not able to welcome them, as they were transferred to a military base to undergo COVID-19 testing and quarantine. Regardless, everyone at Jubilee Campaign - and all of our partners that made the escape possible - breathed a collective sigh of relief. Despite a plethora of obstacles, we had succeeded in offering an Afghan family a new chance at security and safety. We must remember, however, that there remain hundreds of Afghan civilians who are desperate to escape due to their status as women, faith and ethnic minorities, and people who in prior years had worked closely with US officials in Afghanistan and have now had a target placed on their back - for example, language interpreters and NGO workers. As long as these people are in existential danger, Jubilee Campaign will continue to relentlessly advocate for their safe resettlement in a third country where they can live their lives according to their free will, without the fear of repression and persecution.

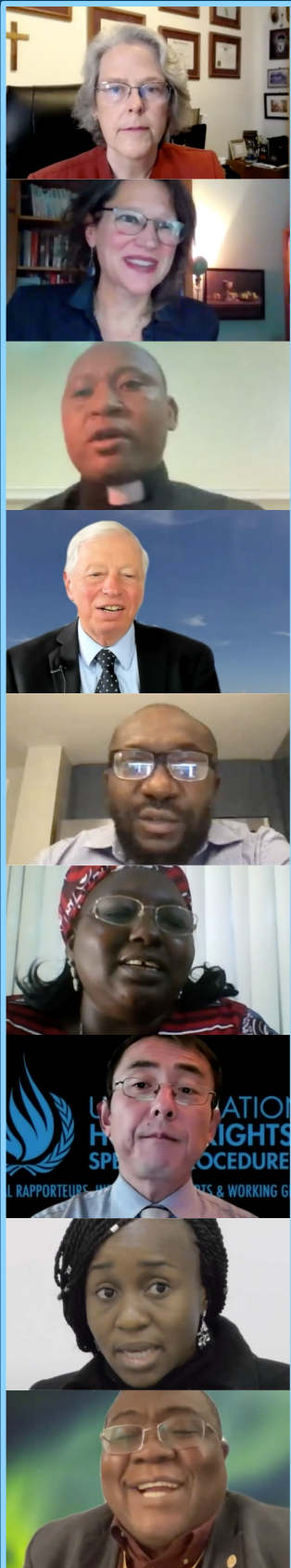
## United Nations General Assembly Third Committee Event

UNICEF reports that criminal gangs have abducted 1,436 Nigerian children, with 16 children having perished as a result of such kidnappings in 2021 alone, and over 200 children still missing and/or in captivity. International Committee on Nigeria (ICON) has, as of June 2021, reported over 2,557 individuals abducted and 2,197 killed by Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), radical Fulani militants, and other criminal groups. In October, the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law reported that no fewer than 4,400 Nigerian Christians had been killed by radical Islamic militants between January and September 2021, and that "not less than 3,500 traveler and sedentary Christians have also been abducted in the nine months of 2021 gone by." Regrettably, a large portion of those abducted are women and girls, who are then subjected to domestic servitude, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and even coerced religious conversions.

Jubilee Campaign was honored to co-host a side event to the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee alongside the Sovereign Order of Malta. Our event was titled "On Stemming the Role of Criminal Groups in Contemporary Slavery Within Nigeria, With a Focus on Women and Children". The event was moderated by His Excellency Professor Michel Veuthey, Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of Malta to combat and monitor trafficking in persons, and we welcomed a plethora of experts, witnesses, and activists, including: Mr. Tomoya Obokata, United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Ms. H el ene Fisher, Global Gender Persecution Specialist at Open Doors; Mr. Teyei Pam of ICON; Ms. Fatima Njoku, lawyer at Stefanos Foundation; Father Joseph Bature Fidelis, Priest in the Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri; Ms. Alheri Magaji, Director of Resilient Aid and Dialogue Initiative (RADi); Dr. Gloria Puldu, President of Leah Foundation; and Dr. Oluwasayo Ajiboye, President of Mission Africa International.

One of our distinguished speakers, Special Rapporteur Obokata, presented some of the findings of his most recent report, "Role of organized criminal groups with regard to contemporary forms of slavery." Though his report was global in terms of content, he focused his remarks on Nigeria, and he raised a joint statement he made with other UN Special Rapporteurs earlier this year calling on the Nigerian government to "ensure urgent rehabilitation of children who have been abducted by Boko Haram." He also explained that, to tackle contemporary abductions and slave-like conditions of kidnapped individuals (not only in Nigeria but globally as well), nations must combat corruption and broader obstructions of justice which prevent criminal actors from being prosecuted and thus embolden them to continue their activities with impunity. Special Rapporteur Obokata also emphasizes that victims and survivors of contemporary forms of slavery should be granted a non-punishment clause for their participation in crimes they were forced to commit under coercion and enslavement, such as, for example, prostitution, exploitative labor, or militant recruitment.

*Pictured Left (from top to bottom): Ann Buwalda, H el ene Fisher, Father Joseph Bature Fidelis, H.E. Prof. Michel Veuthey, Teyei Pam, Dr. Gloria Puldu, Special Rapporteur Tomoya Obokata, Fatima Njoku, Dr. Oluwasayo Ajiboye*



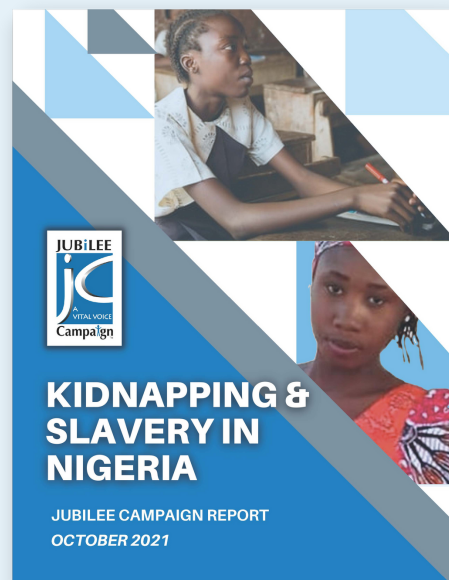
## United Nations General Assembly Third Committee Event (Contd.)

### **DIAGNOSING THE PROBLEM AND HIGHLIGHTING THE CAUSES**

Some of our distinguished speakers raised a myriad of causes of the unending abductions and sexual slavery in Nigeria. Ms. Hélène Fisher highlighted that, as is the case in numerous countries, in Nigeria religious minority women face double vulnerabilities due to both their faith and their gender. While Nigeria's general insecurity, financial struggles, and political tensions certainly play a role in criminal activity, faith and gender play a substantial part in abduction and slavery; there is a reason why a large portion of kidnapped women and girls are of the Christian faith or are moderate Muslims that are considered apostates by radical Islamist groups. The nexus of faith and gender is not limited to just the victims' profiles, however. Mr. Teyei Pam of ICON notes that former and recent organized kidnappings have been undertaken by the male members of radical Islamist groups, such as Boko Haram, Fulani militants, and ISWAP, who subscribe to a fanatic ideology of jihadism and salafism. Ms. Fatima Njoku further explained that the Nigerian government's focus on forgiving and rehabilitating former Boko Haram militants while forgoing the treatment of and justice for victims has only served to exacerbate the situation and embolden criminal groups.

### **PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS AND SOLUTIONS**

Many of our speakers also provided some great recommendations to both the international community and the government of Nigeria. Dr. Gloria Puldu urged the United Nations to place pressure on Nigeria to bring its own domestic laws on the rights and protection of women and girls into line with international standards and conventions; she also highlighted the need for monitoring of the humanitarian situation in Nigeria by the International Criminal Court. Dr. Oluwasayo Ajiboye emphasized that we must work to disincentivize criminal actors by tackling financial instability and the inefficiency of security forces. Father Joseph Bature Fidelis listed three major action points, stating that "we must isolate, designate, [and] prosecute" criminal groups engaged in abduction and slavery.



### **JUBILEE CAMPAIGN PUBLISHES NEW REPORT "KIDNAPPING & SLAVERY IN NIGERIA"**

At our event, Jubilee Campaign Executive Director Ann Buwalda announced the release of our new report, "Kidnapping & Slavery in Nigeria". In addition to providing general information regarding what constitutes slavery conditions and what international and regional legislations prohibit slavery, our report discusses how criminal groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP, and newer formations such as Fulani militants, have increasingly participated in mass abductions for the purpose of enslaving boys as child soldiers and women and girls as domestic and sexual slaves. As has been our prime recommendation in previous years, we urge for the establishment of an independent and impartial Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights violations committed by all parties in Nigeria. Such a commission would create a protocol for gathering and preserving crucial evidence, as well as set the stage for prosecution of perpetrators.

# Thank you!

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We would like offer our heartfelt gratitude to you, our supporters, who have faithfully stood by our side while we continued to advocate for religious minorities around the world who are persecuted. Despite the global pandemic slowing down much of our daily lives in 2020 and 2021, at Jubilee we were presented with more, and new, work; as we tend to say, persecution never stops. In fact, in many nations across the world the situation for faith minorities has tremendously deteriorated during the past two years. Many of these individuals have already for many years have been silenced, imprisoned, subjected to violence, and discriminated against. However, now we see them scapegoated and falsely blamed for spreading the novel coronavirus; unjustly repatriated from safe third countries to their persecutory home countries from which they escaped, all due to mitigating cross-border transmissions of the virus; harassed and intimidated for publicly praying for an end to COVID-19; and detained for prolonged periods of time in overcrowded and unsanitary cells where they face heightened risk of contracting illnesses such as COVID.

Without your support, we would be unable to serve our mission as a voice for the voiceless. As we continuously drafted letters to presidents and national administrations calling for the release of prisoners of conscience, submitted statements to the United Nations, and held multiple virtual events to raise the issue of religious persecution, we were privileged in the fact that we have a dedicated group of followers who share an intense passion for furthering freedom of religion or belief for all.

We now welcome 2022 with a renewed vigor, and we are so excited to continue our religious freedom advocacy. Once again, we would like to express our deepest thanks for your support, and we hope to soon report back to you on great successes and achievements in the world of Freedom of Religion or Belief!

**ANN BUWALDA, ESQ.**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JUBILEE CAMPAIGN**

