

GENERAL SYNOD 2016

Council for Mission Motion: Persecuted Church Seconder: Mr Derek Neilson

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Check Against Delivery**

In the Western World we have, to a large extent, got used to the expectation that someone professing Christian beliefs will be accepted without stigma. We also believe that we practise religious tolerance towards others and this may, in general, be true. However, this, I believe, has led many people to become complacent to the religious persecution of our Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world.

In the early years of the Christian church, many followers paid the ultimate price for their faith, pursued by those who afraid and ignorant of that faith. Today, the same situation still exists.

There are about 40 countries throughout the world in which Christians have suffered some form of persecution, discrimination and sometimes death. Some cases such as that of Meriam Ibrahim from Sudan make headlines that may result in some form of resolution. However, others such as the bombing of churches or the throwing overboard of Christian refugees from Ghana and Nigeria from a boat making its way to the safety of Italy are instances that occur too suddenly for action to be taken.

Those affected by such persecution and discrimination are often the old and the poor who find it impossible to leave their homelands where others, who have money, may be able to pay traffickers to get them to the relative safety of somewhere like 'the Jungle' in Calais.

As Christians we should and must show tolerance to all religions and we should also express our support to those who are oppressed. We, in the Church of Ireland Council for Mission believe that it is right and just that we raise awareness and stand together with Christians throughout the world who are suffering persecution and discrimination.