



Edition 131 – February 2015

## **Good News: Iranians Becoming Christians**

For years there have been reports that Iranians nationwide are turning to the Christian faith. They often have dramatic experiences of prison and escape behind them. In particular in Berlin, it is in the rather conservative churches such as the SELK (Independent Protestant Lutheran Church) or the Protestant Fellowship in Buckow, where dozens of Iranians are coming to Christ and being baptized. Following an introductory course about Christianity, many were baptized in the Presbyterian Farsi-language church. Many of them are educated young people who want to stay in Germany and are very interested in a quick integration.

## **Left-Wing Extremists Regroup**

Even with the dissolution of the "Anti-Fascist Left Berlin" (ALB) and the collapse of the "Anti-Fascist Revolutionary Action Berlin" (ARAB) there is no noticeable decline in left-wing extremist crimes. On the contrary, according to Interior Minister Frank Henkel, Berliner left-wing extremists are becoming more active and more aggressive. In the first half of 2014, there were a total of 240 such crimes, about 60% more offenses than in all of 2013. The attacks are also getting more brutal. There were 57 attacks on police officers, who are especially hated by the left-wing extremists. Participants in demonstrations against planned refugee housing were attacked by left-wing extremists with telescopic batons during clashes.

Since the May 1 demonstrations have become more peaceful, the hatred is now being carried into the streets through small groups. This could be attacks on residential houses that are supposedly being upgraded, thus displacing them or the destruction of shops in such buildings, or even attacks on security personnel.

Meanwhile, the fragmented radical left-wing groups have joined together to form a new group called "Radical Leftists". Ideological divides among them do not seem to be insurmountable. (Source: Tagesspiegel January 3 and January 18, 2015)

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray that politicians and the police find effective strategies to curb violence**

- **Pray that God's love will touch and change hate-filled hearts**
- **Pray that planned attacks will be revealed before they can be carried out**

## **Body Worlds-Exhibition**

The ruling of the Administrative Court in December prohibiting the planned Body Worlds-Exhibition in the rooms below the TV tower on the Alexanderplatz has been overturned. It is the opinion of the Court that the exhibited bodies are not corpses, because they cannot be buried, nor do they decay. In the meantime District Mayor Christian Hanke (SPD) has had the new ruling closely examined, and has turned in an appeal against it. The initiators want to open the exhibition in February. The district has threatened daily fines if it opens. It seems the argument is not over yet.

### **Prayer:**

- **Pray for wisdom to use all possible means of appeals so that life that honours God rather than "corpses" will move into these rooms**

## **Stumbling Stones**

Small commemorative brass plates with the name of a Nazi victim engraved on them are being found more and more often on the sidewalks of Berlin. They are memorials made by the German artist Gunter Demnig. He views them as gravestones in memory of murdered Jewish citizens who once lived in the houses where they are laid. In 1996, the first stumbling stones were laid in the context of an art project. To date there are over 6000 such stones.

Here is an article about the impact this initiative has had on the people living there now as well as the impact on the descendants of those murdered: <http://tinyurl.com/n3evgfg>

In a short street in the district Moabite that has only 27 house numbers, a resident discovered the one stumbling stone that has been laid until now. He began to investigate and found out that over a hundred Jewish citizens had lived on his street, all of which were murdered. He now wants to lay more stumbling stones himself. Anyone desiring to order



such stones must know the biographical information of the victim.

And that's where the moving story begins: neighbours on the street are brought together in an intensive search, lives are touched and changed - both on-site in Berlin and among the Jewish descendants scattered all over the world.

Stumbling stones, which began as an art project, have become a way to keep people from forgetting and to confront the past (including your own family history). Stumbling stones have now spread to 18 European countries. About 47,000 such memorials have been laid so far. There are 12 stumbling stone initiatives in districts in Berlin. There will certainly be more. (<http://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/berlin>)

#### Prayer:

- **Thank God for this initiative**
- **Pray that more and more people will be interested in honouring murdered Jewish citizens with these memorials**
- **Pray for the establishment of a sustainable commemorative culture in the city**

### **Berlin Housing Market**

The housing market in Berlin continues to be strained. The main cause is the rapid increase in residents and number of households compared to a low rate of construction of new housing (until recently).

In 2013 there was an increase of about 42,000 residents. Births exceeded deaths by 8 percent, the highest in Germany next to Hamburg in Germany. However, the biggest factor is the rise in people moving to Berlin, mostly from abroad. In addition, in 2014 the rapidly growing number of refugees was added. Only about 6000 new flats were built in 2013. The new Mayor Michael Müller has made the construction of new affordable housing a priority.

According to the Tenants Association, the price-brake planned for 2015 should help residents, but people are being warned that they should still assume that the rents will rise. The federal government passed the bill in October, but a date for the final consultation in the Bundestag has not been set yet. According to the rent-brake, housing rent for a tenant change may rise to be no more than ten percent more expensive than a comparable apartment of the same location position and size.

However, this applies only in areas that have been categorized as "tense housing markets" by the government. Neukölln has the highest rate of rent increase in Berlin. In Neukölln, which is celebrated as the new "In" district, rents have risen by 54.5 percent in the last five years. But also in Kreuzberg, Friedrichshain, and Treptow (with rises of 42 to 44 percent), the rents of available housing are skyrocketing.

Nevertheless, living in Berlin is still comparatively inexpensive. Experts say the rental and purchase prices found in other German cities will not be reached in Berlin for another 20-30 years.

#### Prayer:

- **Pray for quick success of the accelerated housing program of the Senate**
- **Pray that the rent-brake will have a significant impact, particularly for low-income earners**

### **Protection against Terrorism**

The attacks in Paris have increased the risk and vigilance against possible terrorist attacks from Islamist fighters. Experts say it is only a matter of time before such a terrorist attack will take place in a German city such as Berlin. Let us counter this "secular prophecy" with fervent prayer for God's protection. Security agencies are particularly watching returning IS fighters from Syria and Iraq and young men who are being radicalized through the Internet and Salafist groups.

#### Prayer:

- **Thank God for His protection up until now**
- **Pray for successful detection of attacks being prepared and for prevention of attacks**
- **Pray that the fascination of IS and Al Qaeda for young Muslims will fade**
- **Pray for real alternatives for Muslims through encounters with authentic Christians**

### **Keeping-On: Refugees**

The number of refugees arriving in Berlin, especially from the war zones in Syria, Iraq, and Nigeria is still very high.

Many of them are persecuted Christians. Since December, the Berlin Stadtmission has set up well-equipped air domes as reception centres. Demonstrations against new refugee shelters are diminishing; the welcoming culture is getting better.

### **Dates**

- **Feb. 11, 6pm: Prayer for City Politicians** in front of the Rote Rathaus
- **Jan. 27-May 8: 100 Days of Prayer for Germany and Israel** – remember, turn around, pray – more at <http://100tagegebet.de>,
- **from Feb. 18 on, together with 40 days of prayer and fasting for our nation**, <http://www.40tagebetenundfasten.de>  
We encourage you to take part in these prayer events.

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