



Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Justice and Peace News

Winter 2022

Welcome to the Winter newsletter of the Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council, which we hope you find varied and interesting

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We regularly update our webpage on the Diocesan website. This can be accessed by going to our page on the [Diocesan website](#).

You are receiving this newsletter because you have signed up in the past to receive information from the Justice and Peace Co-Ordinating Council. If you no longer wish to receive this please contact me at lizarchibald.justiceandpeace@gmail.com.

We do not share your details with any other groups or persons

1. Practical help at the Justice and Peace Refugee Project

Two young men arrived, for the first time, at my English class in St Dominic's Church Hall. They came to England a few months ago from Darfur in Sudan. They have very little English but managed to tell me the bare outlines of their story. It has taken them five years to get to this country! Libya was the worst place they encountered and they spent more than two years travelling to the coast. They had to find work to pay for their journey and often the wages were never given to them or they were robbed and their money was stolen. Eventually they reached the coast and set off to Malta. No welcome there and they continued for the next two years through Italy and France to Calais where they lived in 'The Jungle' for a long time before crossing the Channel. The Home Office Immigration officers brought them to Newcastle.

I took them next door to St Vincent's to be registered in the Project as asylum-seekers. Azad was a great asset because he speaks Arabic and was able to welcome them and explain how the project could help them. They visibly relaxed!

It was a quiet time in the big hall and lots of people welcomed them in a friendly way even though communication was difficult. Very soon they were given food, clothes and shower gel etc. The food was carefully selected as they have no cooking facilities in the hotel. M*** was given a backpack which made him smile a lot! It was so wonderful to realise that at last they were being treated with respect, love and kindness after their horrendous journey over the last five years. They set off back to the Novotel, carrying naan bread from the Co-op, cakes from Greggs and fruit from Stanhope Street! I felt very moved as they waved goodbye to us. Next week we hope to see them again.

Please share this story with the J&P committee and Steering group and thank them for their dedication and efforts to enable such blessed events to happen. All the volunteers who give their time and energy work together as a great team.

Angela Helm

Volunteer English teacher at
JPRP

"That is a story to be shared! Welcoming the strangers, treating them with dignity and giving them hope. It's what the Project has done for over 20 years. When we feel frustrated by things - read this again." (Comment from a member of the steering group.)

Thanks to all our volunteers and supporters.

2. Modern Slavery

Last year 3,068 people were rescued and supported in safe houses and outreach services by The Salvation Army through its work providing specialist support to adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales through the Government's Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract.

The majority of whom had been forced to commit crimes, work against their will, or coerced into sex work. This is a 15% increase on the previous year. The Salvation Army warns in this new report, that this is just the tip of the iceberg. The figures are part of the church and charity's eleventh annual report on its work

The report showed that from July 2021 to June 2022 of the 3,068 people, from 100 different nationalities, referred to The Salvation Army and its partners:

- 46% experienced labour exploitation such as being forced to work in factories, building sites or farms with little or no pay - a 36% rise from 2020/21
- 23% experienced sexual exploitation - a 10% rise from 2020/21
- 19.5% experienced criminal exploitation like being forced to sell drugs - a 27% rise from 2020/21.

Major Kathy Betteridge, The Salvation Army's Director of Anti-Trafficking and Modern Slavery said: "Organised crime is at the heart of the modern slavery. Violent gangs think nothing of trafficking people to sell and force them in criminal activity. It's also important to remember that it's not just people who are trafficked from overseas, British people are the second most common nationality in our services. The sophisticated and often brutal methods used to trick and manipulate people into slavery touches all nationalities.

People trapped in modern slavery are hidden in plain sight in villages, towns and cities across the UK. We can all help fight modern slavery and raise the alarm if we spot something suspicious and are worried that someone is being exploited. So many of the people supported in these services had been trapped for years but your call could be the start of their path to freedom and recovery.

The Salvation Army's free confidential 24/7 referral helpline **0800 808 3733** is available for anyone who suspects they or someone they have met may be a victim of modern slavery and needs help.

Marjory Knowles

3. NJPN Networking Day, 24th September 2022 Welcoming the Stranger in a Hostile Environment

Many of us, perhaps, have some knowledge about what it's like to be a person seeking asylum in UK but it's still shocking to hear the details: 63,000+ applications this year to June 2022; a record backlog of asylum claims at 118,000 with nearly 86,000 waiting over 6 months; the profound impact of the system on people's mental health, people who have already suffered traumatic experiences we would struggle to imagine. And that's even before we learn about the likely effects of the Nationality and Borders Act.

The day gave us an opportunity to hear some excellent speakers who, between them, represented a fascinating range of experience: Jen Laws from Asylum Matters outlined the facts and gave a pessimistic assessment of the future; Fran Wood told us about the inspiring work of Darlington Assistance for Refugees, often against the odds; Amy Whittaker shared how young people in Carmel College are making a massive difference to the refugees living in their community; and David Archibald and Azad Hassan described the great work being done by the Justice and Peace Refugee Project in Newcastle. And all this before lunch! Afterwards, we heard from Austin Oshegbu of Citizens UK about undocumented migrants and the campaign to gain them legal status. And finally, Owen Temple described the 'No to Hassockfield' campaign's attempts to shut down the only Immigration Removal Centre for women in the UK.

It was both a fascinating and chilling insight into the issues face by people seeking asylum in our country. It was also a timely call to arms: the previous government made an already harsh system even harsher, and the new one seems set to continue this trajectory. Asked to highlight any signs of hope, none of our speakers were especially optimistic. Yet there was a consensus that whilst people are working together there will always be hope. Let us pray for the energy and courage to do so.

For possible campaign actions, please see:

- <https://asylummatters.org/>
- <https://schools.cityofsanctuary.org/>
- <https://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/refugees-and-migrants-welcome/settleourstatus/>
- <https://nothassockfield.org.uk/join-as-individual/>

Or you can make a donation at <https://www.darlingtonrefugees.org/>

<https://diocesehn.org.uk/services/caritas/justice-peace-refugee-project>

Jeremy Cain



Catholic Agency for
Overseas Development

Harvest Fast Day

Thank you to everyone who once again supported CAFOD on the **Harvest Fast Day** this year. Your continued support allows us to work alongside our partners in delivering programmes that help empower communities to improve their lives. The money you have so generously raised and donated will go to those in desperate need.

Please do keep all of the families around the world facing a food crisis in your thoughts and prayers.

World Gifts www.worldgifts.cafod.org.uk

World Gifts are a range of virtual charity gifts that will delight the people you give them to and help transform the lives of poor communities and families in developing countries.

This Christmas, give a gift that can help make such a difference and enable CAFOD to continue their work in empowering people all over the world, with money raised used to fund and support programmes focused on improving access to clean drinking water, nutritious food and a safe space to live.

With a wide range of gifts available, these are ideal as individual presents, or why not come together as a Parish, School or Community and fundraise during Advent to see what you can sponsor.

There are some new additions to World Gifts this year, including Super Soup Kitchen, Women Refugees Empowered and Therapy Through Play. Have a look through the catalogue to find a gift that inspires you:

Mark Maughan

Community Participation coordinator DHN

5. Hopes and Concerns for COP27

COP27, the annual climate change conference organised by the UN will be held in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt from Nov 6-18. The stakes could not be higher. COP27 will take place against a complex and challenging backdrop: Putin's war against Ukraine has not only left millions facing acute hunger, but the heavy dependence on Russian energy sources, especially gas, has plunged Europe into an energy crisis which some countries (including the UK!) are using as an excuse to reinvest in fossil fuels, instead of focusing on renewables. Countries also face severe economic challenges as they attempt to recover from the Covid pandemic.

At the same time, the impact of the climate crisis has accelerated with extreme weather events in many parts of the world during 2022 – including the floods in Pakistan, the hottest summer in Europe in 500 years, heat waves in India and China, severe drought in the Horn of Africa and wildfires in California. Each of these events on their own represents suffering and destruction on a massive scale, but taken together are an alarming escalation of the climate emergency and a frightening glimpse of what lies ahead if we fail to take urgent action to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Nature is giving us a final warning which we ignore at our peril – what we are now seeing is the beginning of climate breakdown which has consequences for all life on earth.

UN Emissions Gap Report 2022 [1]

Recent reports published in the run up to COP27 underline how far the world is off track to deliver on the Paris Climate Agreement (to keep the global temperature increase to well below 2C and ideally within 1.5C). To take one such report – the UN Emissions Gap report [1] has described progress made since the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow as “woefully inadequate” and finds that under current plans, the World is heading for a disastrous 2.4-2.8C of warming.

The updated 2030 climate plans submitted by countries this year reduce projected emissions in 2030 by less than 1%. Countries' combined climate plans, including targets conditional on international finance, would reduce emissions by 10% by 2030 compared with projections based on current policies. **That is far off track from the 45% reductions scientists say are needed to keep 1.5C within reach.**

The UN report finds that only an urgent system-wide transformation can deliver the enormous cuts needed to limit greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It provides an in-depth exploration of how to deliver this transformation, looking at the required actions in the electricity supply, industry, transport and buildings sectors, and the food and financial systems.

The key messages from the report are available from this [video](#).

Human Rights in Egypt

This will be the first COP in Africa since COP22 was held in Morocco in 2016. It has been dubbed the “African COP,” in focus as well as location, but concerns have been raised about human rights in Egypt. According to [CIVICUS](#), an organization which tracks the openness of civic space (which allows people and groups to organize and engage in advocacy) in different countries, Egypt is rated as closed — the worst rating there is.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and other civil society organizations have said: “The reality is that almost all organizations and individuals who attempt to expose or ensure accountability for human rights violations in Egypt are imprisoned, tortured, or otherwise subjected to a wide range of threats and attacks.”

[According to a recent report from Human Rights Watch](#), the Egyptian regime has successfully silenced the country’s environmentalists in the run-up to COP27, as part of its wider strategy to repress human rights, which is also threatening to quash meaningful global climate action.

What do we want to happen at COP27?

1. Climate Justice – will be a key issue at COP27. In simple terms the countries suffering the most from climate change are the ones who have done least to cause this problem. For example, Africa is the continent most impacted by climate change, but is responsible for only 3% global emissions. To what extent will rich countries accept their responsibilities to finance developing countries to combat climate change and to provide the finance at the level which is needed. These discussions will be tough, especially in view of the current economic situation. There is a real danger that agreement will not be reached resulting in a failed conference which would be disastrous for the whole world.

2. Climate Finance

- In 2009, wealthy nations pledged to mobilize \$100 billion in climate finance annually by 2020 to support vulnerable nations with mitigation (avoiding and reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and adaptation (adjusting to current and future climate change impacts).
- Wealthy countries must deliver on their promise to deliver the \$100 billion per year to climate-vulnerable countries with immediate effect until 2025.
- In addition, countries must agree on a more ambitious post-2025 finance goal, co-created with developing countries and climate-vulnerable communities.

3. Adaptation

- In the years ahead, countries will need to perfect the art and skill of climate adaptation, to combat the worsening impacts of current and future climate change.
- “Adapting to climate change is a moral, economic, and environmental imperative,” Christina Chan, director of the Climate Resilience Practice at the

World Resources Institute has said “Investing in adaptation is not accepting defeat and failure. It is accepting reality.”

- Wealthy countries need to deliver on their commitment made at COP26 to double adaptation funding by 2025.

4. Loss and Damage

- Loss and damage refers to the destructive impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided either by mitigation or adaptation. Loss and damage is often divided into economic loss and damage, including to livelihoods and property, and non-economic loss and damage, including loss of life and losses to biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- What is needed at COP27 is the establishment of an additional, adequate, and accessible finance mechanism to address loss and damage for the communities on the front line of the climate crisis, especially in the Global South.
- Loss and damage is likely to be the most contentious issue at COP27 with a serious possibility of a breakdown in negotiations setting rich countries against developing countries.
- Possible options for progress could include:
 - debt cancellation (many developing countries have huge interest payments on debts – if cancelled these funds could be allocated to addressing the impacts of climate change as highlighted in this article relating to the floods in Pakistan [2]);
 - imposing a global tax on the fossil fuel companies and use it to establish an international fund for Loss and Damage.

5. Phase Out of Fossil Fuels

- Concrete plans are needed to phase out fossil fuel subsidies by 2025 or sooner, and reinvest this funding in clean, just, and sustainable energy systems, and green recoveries.
- COP27 needs to signal the end to fossil fuels, including gas. In addition, governments must commit to a full coal phase-out by 2030, as a major step toward net zero.
- Countries must enhance their climate action plans (known as NDCs) to achieve a global 45% reduction in emissions by 2030 with net zero emissions by 2050.

5. Progress on COP26 Pledges

An update is required at COP27 on the pledges and commitments made at COP26 including:

- Deforestation and land use;
- Methane reductions;
- Mobilisation on private finance to fund renewable energy projects;
- Progress on nature restoration and enhancing biodiversity is likely to be deferred to COP15 which will be held in Montreal during December [3].

What is at stake?

COP27 is taking place against extremely challenging circumstances globally and, with the increasing impact of climate change, the stakes could not be higher. The

viability of life on earth is under threat with a rapidly closing window of opportunity for action. If we fail to act now it will be too late.

What can we do?

It really is time to act for everyone who cares about the future of our common home.

Suggestions for action include:

- Engaging with your MP and local politicians about the climate crisis and the need to act;
- Examine the COP27 resources produced by CAFOD including prayers, actions and events [4];
- Join the Global Day of Action planned for November 12 including in Newcastle [5];
- Watch the powerful ,recently released film based on Laudato Si' The Letter [6];
- Calculate your own carbon footprint and identify actions to reduce your footprint – the aim should be to reduce it by at least 50% by 2030 [7,8].;
- Hold a conversation within your family, friends, school, parish about the climate crisis.

Dr Chris Myers

Environment Lead

Justice and Peace Co-ordinating Council

Email chrisj.myers57@gmail.com

02 Nov 2022

References

[1] [Emissions Gap Report 2022 \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2022)

[2] [After the floods, Pakistan needs reparations, not charity](#)

[3] [UN Biodiversity Conference \(COP 15\)](#)

[4] [COP27: Take action on the climate crisis | CAFOD](#)

[5] [Day of Action Nov 12 including Newcastle](#)

[6] [The Letter: Laudato Si Film - YouTube](#)

[7] [Carbon Calculators - Climate Stewards](#)

[8] [CALCULATOR - Carbon Savvy](#)

6. Deportation of Refugees to Rwanda

John Dowling, Chair of St Charles Justice and Peace group outlines some of the concerns about the situation in Rwanda in the light of the home offices plans to send people seeking asylum in the UK there. He writes:

In September, the High Court heard the case against the Home Office's plan to deport people seeking asylum to Rwanda, Lawyers argued that the policy is unlawful as those removed to Rwanda face significant risk to their rights to be free from torture and inhuman treatment. The Home Office claimed in their defence that Rwanda is a 'fundamentally safe and secure country, with a track record of supporting asylum seekers', A further case challenging the policy, brought by Asylum Aid, will take place on 10 October, and the High Court will hand down a judgement on both cases. The 2022 Human Right Watch report on Rwanda summarised the political situation in the country as follows: The ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) continued to stifle dissenting and critical voices and to target those perceived as a threat to the government and their family members. The space for political opposition, civil society, and media remained closed. Several high-profile critics.....went missing, were arrested or threatened. Arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and torture in official and unofficial detention facilities was commonplace, and fair trial standards were routinely flouted in cases deemed sensitive. There were credible reports of arbitrary detention and mistreatment of people accused of "deviant behaviours," including street children, sexworkers and petty vendors.

The following is an excerpt from a briefing by Asylum Matters with some suggested actions :

Following the Home Secretary's speech at the Conservative Party Conference (more details below), in which she said that she would '*make it clear that the only route to the United Kingdom is a safe and legal route*', and remarked in a fringe event that it was her 'dream' and 'obsession' to see a plane taking off to Rwanda, lived experience coalition 'One Strong Voice' produced [this video](#) of a stunt outside Conservative Party conference, and [disrupted an international aviation conference](#) in Amsterdam to tell industry professionals to stop the flights. Campaigners branded the Home Secretary's plans as '[barbaric and unlawful](#)'. Campaigning on Rwanda continues, with Safe Passage running a '[write to your MP](#)' action, Care4Calais suggesting [actions](#) to #StopRwanda, and Together With Refugees continuing to run the '[Fill the Skies With Hope](#)' action

7. Church Action on Poverty AGM

As you probably know the Church Action on Poverty North East AGM held at St Joseph's Gateshead on October 21st had a similar theme to the Justice & Peace AGM: 'Is Compassion Enough?' but taking as a starting point, the context of the Cost of Living Crisis.

The business and overview of CAPNE's work since September 2020 were followed by presentations from Gateshead and North of Tyne Poverty Truth Commissions. The motto of Poverty Truth Commissions is 'Nothing about us, without us, is for us' Poverty Truth Commissions bring together people with lived experience of poverty (community commissioners) with civic and business commissioners. The latter are people with the power at local level to make decisions about policies and resources affecting everyday lives. Over a period of about 2 years, stories are shared, relationships are forged, trust is built, which enables both groups of commissioners to work together on issues identified by the community commissioners until better outcomes are achieved or at least the journey towards them has begun.

The meeting concluded with an inspiring contribution from Anna Rowlands associate professor of Catholic Social Thought and Practice and author of Author of: Towards a Politics of Communion: Catholic Social Teaching in Dark Times. You can listen to her talk on the following links

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/catholic-social-teaching-and-human-dignity/>

<https://www.facebook.com/churchpoverty/>

In her talk we can find many echoes of both the ethos of Poverty Truth Commissions and Church Action on Poverty's 10yr strategy 'Building Dignity, Agency & Power':

"The universal destination of goods, referred to by Pope Francis, means a just distribution and access to goods enabling all to live with dignity.....it is intended to meet the needs of everyone without exception"

"If institutions were assessed on the basis of meeting the needs of each one – imagine the impact on energy, immigration, prisons....."

"institutions can only be reformed if they become relational "

"Dignity requires interaction" Dignity is not only the end goal but is acquired "in the act of struggle together"

"the path to live lives that illumine the darkness begins with compassion and ends with justice and fellowship"

NB Look out for information about our North East Church Action on Poverty Sunday event on February 19th and find resources for use in your own parish

<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/>

Pat Devlin

8. Compassion is the wheel that life spins around

(Delivered at the Justice and Peace AGM, Oct 8th 2022)

Compassion is the wheel that life spins around, that without compassion we have no life at all and to understand that compassion is what moves us, what turns us, it's what gathers us.

It gives us an understanding of how to live this life how to project ourselves within this life and how to carry on within this life.

Compassion has both that understanding that compassion lies within ourselves, to be compassion within who we are and compassion to that which we see outside of us.

Compassion, when it's combined with intelligence, understanding, a meditative consciousness, a devotion in one's life then one was able to see inside the very fabric of what is living in what is that life.

What is that word compassion? It is a complete passion of understanding that within this life itself, that when we give from the heart when we can understand from the heart, when we can share with each other and see the vastness of the beauty that lies in the heart of every soul then we have a way of life, that can bring peace to this world.

Without compassion what happens? When we have no compassion then we work from our anger, our subconscious fears, are doubts, our insecurities and we can see that what's happening in the world level that those that have that no compassion no understanding of that life create misery for others and are miserable within themselves.

Is compassion enough?

In the Sikh tradition an important date is 1699 14th of April when the 10th master called upon 100,000 to witness and take part in a new ceremony of initiation, a commitment to the teachings of the Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh (10th Guru) vision was to create the Army of the timeless God called the Khalsa. He brandished a sword and asked for a head, a person who was willing to give his life for God and service.

Several times of asking one came forward, his name Daya Ram (long story cut short) 10th Guru asked again, in fact after each one came forward he asked 5 times, the following came forward.

Dharam Das, Himmat Rai, Mokham Chand and Sahib Chand. Meaning of the names: Daya – Compassion Dharam – Righteousness Himmat- courage, valour Mokham- strength, determination, will power. Sahib- Master, Number 5 has a special reference in the Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak talks of the 5 stages of spiritual

development in Jap Ji sahib (the song/chant of the soul) he also mentions that Dharam- Righteousness (faith, religion, path of truthfulness) is the son of Daya – compassion. One can't be complete without the other.

Religious/spiritual wisdom. The need of courage to walk the path and enter spaces of sometimes conflict one needs that courage, Mokham-Strength and finally , to be understanding of one's self you have to be in your self-mastery -Sahib. For me I'm certainly being challenged today, and its in these moments and times we are tested of our paths. Compassion is, what is, life itself. What is the givenness of life and if we start our life with compassion and we finish our life with compassion,

then we live a full life and giving life of healing life, and that selfless service, we call Seva, that is given, that help that we give to each other and to see the beauty of the heart of each other and to speak from our heart to speak from our soul to speak from that which is the essence of our own understanding of how precious is this human life that we live. When we see another, when we look into their eyes and we feel them and we see maybe they've had a hard times maybe they had good

times it doesn't matter, what matters is if we embrace each other and we embrace each other with an understanding of the purity of our heart and to hold that purity of heart. And with that compassion comes the intelligence, to apply the intelligence. What is that we call applied intelligence? First we comprehend, then we compare, and then we apply our intuition. Through that intuition comes that compassion, intuition comes from a meditative mind compassion and intuition comes through the balance of the negative, positive and neutral, to become neutral within one's own self, and then we can share that true love with each other to create a better world for all people to live in a world of peace and prosperity and consciousness. That was the essence of Guru Nanak Ji, he taught that one should have compassion in all realms of life, should have compassion towards themselves and understand that we come from that one creator that created all creation and with that compassion and love in our heart that giving you so we give to each other the sharing that we can give the caring that we can give sharing and caring is a compassionate nature of life but when we add to that a deep understanding of the ebb and the flow of the life that we live and how we apply consciousness in every aspect of this life and when we breathe into the life of compassion, we breathe into the life of living , and without compassion there is no living without compassion , there is no future for humanity , without compassion we can't find in essence of our own being and soul and with compassion comes the passion of living and will compassionate living and complete passion of living is the compassion of all humanity and is the compassion of every human being .

Jaswinder Singh

Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Saba Temple Newcastle

9. Consequences of War

Since February, the conflict in Ukraine has, understandably, grabbed the world's attention. But Ukraine is not alone in suffering terribly from the consequences of war.

The war in Yemen

Yemen remains one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world, with around 23.7 million people, two thirds of the population, in need of assistance, including almost 13 million children.

Since the conflict escalated in March 2015, the country has lost more than half of its health facilities, and many that remain operational lack basic equipment. According to UN estimates, by the end of 2020, the war had already caused an estimated 233,000 deaths, including 131,000 from indirect causes such as lack of food, health services and infrastructure. More than 10,000 children have been killed or maimed since the

beginning of the conflict, and thousands more have been recruited into the fighting, An estimated 2 million children are internally displaced. The damage and closure of schools and hospitals has also disrupted access to education and health services. More than 2 million children are out of school, leaving them even more vulnerable. Multiple emergencies have pummelled the country: violent conflict, an economic blockade, currency collapse, flooding and the COVID-19. An estimated 73 per cent of the over 4 million people displaced in Yemen are women and children, while approximately 30 per cent of displaced households are now led by women .More than 6 million women require urgent access to protection services, while 5 million women and adolescent girls of child bearing age have restricted or no access to reproductive health services. One woman dies every two hours during childbirth, an almost entirely preventable tragedy. More than a million pregnant and breastfeeding women are already acutely malnourished, a number that could double with the growing food insecurity Yemen is facing .According to the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT), The Saudi coalition's bombing campaign would not be possible without arms supplies from abroad, in particular the UK and the US, who between them provide all the aircraft used for air strikes, along with bombs, missiles, and the crucial support and maintenance needed to keep the aircraft flying. Based on information from the UK government and from BAE Systems – who supplied and now support Saudi Arabia's Tornado and Typhoon aircraft for use in the war – the total value of UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the war is around £23billion

The war in Syria

In June 2022, the UN rights office (OHCHR) published a report which claimed that between 1 March 2011 and 31 March 2021, 306,887 civilians were killed in the on-going war in Syria. The UN also estimates that at least 6.2 million people have had

to leave their homes inside Syria, while another 5.6 million have left to go abroad. The Syrian regime now controls most of the country, but the country is destitute, the collapse of the currency, sanctions, Covid-19, dilapidated or destroyed infrastructure, and an incompetent, corrupt government are all factors that make reconstruction difficult. With nine of ten Syrians living in poverty and job opportunities sparse, more young men are being forced, out of pure desperation, to enlist in regime militias, which perpetuates the endless cycle of violence, lawlessness, and division. In the area to the north not controlled by the regime, authority remains divided between US-backed Kurdish forces, Turkey, and the Syrian regime with pockets of Islamic State group militancy. Tensions between the four sides have seen conflict and bloodshed, with the northeast's fiefdoms creating disruptions to trade and cooperation on security issues. No side now seems capable of winning the war and the stalemate looks set to continue.

John Dowling

10. African lives in Northern England calendar

This calendar focuses on those of African descent, one segment of the historical and current diversity in Northern England. Starting with the first recorded African community in the United Kingdom, in Burgh-by Sands in Cumbria, it encompasses subjects from the breadth of the North East. Some are aristocratic, like the Roman Emperor, Septimius Severus, other professionals, like the actor Ira Aldridge and others, free and working class like Elizabeth Hunter from Gateshead. The calendar also showcases amazing women such as Ida B. Wells, Dr Irene Ighodaro and Connie Yabantu.

Calendars are £6 each, with £2.50 for postage and packing of up to 2 calendars. This is a limited edition. Copies will be sent out on a first come, first-serve basis as payments come in.

How to order

You can pay by bank transfer, PayPal or cheque. Please e-mail Caroline Afolabi-Deleu of Success 4All at caroline@s4a.org.uk stating the number you wish to order, and how you will pay. However, you pay, please make sure we have your name, full postal address and a phone number for queries. Allow up to 10 days for delivery once payment has been received.

- Bank transfer to Success4All CIO, Santander Bank Account no: 22365303, sort code: 09-01-29. Please use reference 'Calendar'

- Paypal, via website <https://www.s4a.org.uk/donate/>, reference 'Calendar'

- Cheque: Made payable to Success4All CIO, with your name, address and reference 'Calendar' on the back, post to: Carnegie Building, Atkinson Road, Benwell,

Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 8XS

11. Christmas Cards for prisoners 2022

An appeal from Veronica Whitty

Can you let prisoners know they have not been forgotten this Christmas?

Veronica asking for readers to send Christmas cards to prisoners via her at

Veronica Whitty
care of St Columba`s church,
Carville Road,
Wallsend,
NE28 6RJ

Also Veronica says the chaplain has a list of prisoners "as long as my arm" asking for rosary beads. If readers have spare rosaries, they would be gratefully received. Please use same address.