

Is the New UN 'Hub' in D.C. a Step Toward World Government?

Amid growing concerns that the United Nations is taking steps to create the global state predicted by the biblical prophets, the U.N. is opening a "regional hub" in Washington, D.C., *FoxNews.com* [reports](#).

With the apparent blessing of the Obama administration, the chief U.N. human rights agency plans to use the "hub" as a center for "organizing against the death penalty" and for "affecting the legal frameworks, policies, and strategies of American counterterrorism."

Known as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the "hub" also has a number of more "nebulous 'thematic' objectives for the U.S., which include, according to an OHCHR information document, 'the establishment of national participatory bodies for reporting and implementing recommendations of human rights mechanisms' and the aim of 'widening the democratic space' with the aid of undefined 'National Human Rights Institutions,'" George Russell wrote in his *FoxNews.com* [story](#).

"All of those themes, along with OHCHR's view of itself as 'the principle advocate for human rights within the U.N. system,' seem likely to bring the U.S. into closer proximity to the U.N.'s tangled, proliferating and often sweepingly contradictory notions of international human rights law—and also, perhaps, to the notoriously dictatorship-riddled, 47-member U.N. Human Rights Council," Russell wrote.

The announcement of the new office in D.C. follows the U.N. summit in New York City in late September when the nations of the world approved a 15-year U.N. plan titled, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

“The UN continues to grow in power and stature,” Michael Snyder, founder of The Economic Collapse Blog, told *Charisma News*. “The launch of the 2030 Agenda that includes 17 new ‘global goals’ was a major step toward the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, and yet very few people in the evangelical world are talking about this. I am absolutely astounded by this. If something like this had happened 20 years ago, preachers all over America would have been screaming bloody murder.

“Many Christians have been sitting back and waiting for one giant ‘event’ to happen, but the truth is that small steps toward a one world government, a one world economy and a one world religion are happening almost constantly now. The apostle John warned that these things would happen nearly 2,000 years ago, and now they are playing out right in front of our eyes. When will people finally start to wake up?”

In their Heartland Institute [article](#), “Behind the Scenes: UN Agenda 2030’s Funders, Promoters,” Nancy Thorner and Bonnie O’Neil wrote the “2030 Agenda” is designed to “take away freedoms and liberties granted us from the inception of our country.”

“If its founders and promoters succeed, America will look very different within a surprisingly short period of time,” Thorner and O’Neil wrote. “Both U.N. Agendas involve a massive plan that requires a fortune to fund. How do hard core [sic] socialists convince freedom-loving people who have worked hard all their lives to willingly give the government more money than seems reasonable to support a plan that will destroy their way of life? ... The United Nations has been pondering such a plan for decades and now they think they have the answer.”

U.N. documents reveal the plan includes 17 goals, to be achieved over the next 15 years, that represent a “new universal agenda” for humanity.

“Virtually every nation on the planet has willingly signed on to this new agenda, and you are expected to participate whether you like it or not,” Snyder [wrote](#).

Patrick Wood, author of *Technocracy Rising: The Trojan Horse of Global Transformation*, [says](#) the “sustainable development” meme is a ruse to replace capitalism with a global socialist system.

“Any honest economist would instantly balk at such Pollyannaish promises of utopia, and the American public should do so as well,” Wood [said](#). “The fact is that these wild promises of prosperity for all are merely the candy coating to deceive the world into going along with its own economic destruction.”

Some of the biggest celebrities in the world have been recruited to promote these “global goals.”

During the summit, about 60,000 people attended the “[Global Citizen Festival](#)” in Central Park in New York City, where celebrities such as Beyoncé, Pearl Jam, Ed Sheeran and Coldplay promoted the U.N.’s “global goals.”

“Through a controlled media the mass populations will be told that this is all about saving the environment and ‘ending poverty,’” Paul McGuire, a *Fox News* and *History Channel* commentator and a Bible prophecy expert, [says](#).

Meanwhile, experts are concerned that the [U.N. Climate Change Conference](#), taking place Nov. 30 through Dec. 11 in Paris, France, will involve yet another step in creating the interlocking treaties and agreements to bring about this new international system.

“This is the largest diplomatic conference ever to take place in Paris, with over 40,000 participants, and it is supposed to produce a binding agreement obligating every nation on planet Earth to agree to climate goals in order to hold ‘global warming’ to less than two degrees Celsius,” McGuire [wrote](#).

“But this is the world’s most serious attempt to install through covert means a permanent world government, something like Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. What appears to be a somewhat benevolent and soft totalitarian state with a bright happy face on it is in fact the most ruthless elimination of national sovereignty and the independent nation state the world has ever seen.”

Jews: ‘Anyone but Him’

In my last two articles, we have considered various historical events which have led to widespread Jewish unbelief in Yeshua today. Now we will take a brief look at one more period of history that has greatly hindered the furtherance of the gospel among the Jewish people: the last 2,000 years of anti-Semitic persecution, much sadly perpetrated by those who would call themselves followers of Jesus.

To most believers today, it seems unfair, if not completely unreasonable, for Jewish people to dismiss Yeshua just because of what some ‘Medieval skinheads’ did in His name. But, as strange as it may seem to us today, the historical leaders of anti-Semitism were not peripheral Christians: they were leaders in the church!

A Tragic History

After the apostles left the scene, many of the leaders who stepped in to fill their shoes held a view of the Jewish people which was far from biblical. As early as the 2nd century A.D., the groundwork was laid for a course of history which would eventually lead governments and the church to declare the Jewish people as ‘fair game’ to any who would seek their harm. Here are a few excerpts from this downward

historical spiral:

One of the earliest church fathers, Justin Martyr, wrote in *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew* that misfortunes facing the Jewish people were divine punishment from God: "*Tribulations were justly imposed on you [Jews] for you have murdered the Just One.*"

In the third century, the theologian Origen authorized the practice of allegorical, rather than literal, interpretation of the Bible, moving the authority from the text to the teacher. As a result, teachers began to read into the text whatever they wanted. This opened the door to much error, including the teaching that each biblical reference to Israel now refers to the church.

In the fourth century, under the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, the so-called "Christian faith" that Constantine embraced was legalized and proclaimed to be the state religion. With the legalization of 'Christianity' throughout the empire, hostility toward the Jewish people became widespread.

Concerning the Jews, Aphrahat (bishop at Mar Mattai, near Nineveh) wrote in A.D. 344, "*He [God] has truly abandoned them,*" while misquoting Old Testament portions such as Isaiah 1:4 to substantiate his claim.

The greatly revered Augustine, in his *Reply to Faustus the Manichean*, wrote of the Jews as "*being guilty of Christ's blood*" and as "*cursed from the earth*" and therefore, "*cursed by the church.*" He continued that their subjugated and miserable state was to be preserved as "*proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who in the pride of their kingdom put the Lord to death.*"

From A.D. 386-387, John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, delivered eight sermons which degraded Jews in their religion and customs. In these he stated, "*God always*

hated the Jews,” and *“It is incumbent on all Christians to hate the Jews.”* The year following these sermons marked the destruction of the synagogue of Calinicon.

During the Crusades of the Middle Ages, Jews were routinely murdered by Crusaders en route to the Holy Land. Upon arriving in Jerusalem in 1099, these misguided men rounded up all Jews, herded them into the Great Synagogue, and set it ablaze. While the building burned to the ground, the triumphant Crusaders marched around it singing, “Christ We Adore Thee.”

Impactful Writings

Anti-Semitic writings from the church fathers were not accepted as merely theoretical, but were applied with deadly effectiveness. Charges resulting in the executions of countless European Jewish included *Blood Libel*, *Desecrating the Host*, and *Die Judensav* (The Jewish Sow). Many were also put to death for alleged Jewish rape of Christian women.

From century to century, the Jewish people were expelled from one country after another as leaders declared them not fit to live among their people. During the Spanish Inquisition beginning in 1478, thousands of Jews found themselves faced with death at the foot of a cross or expelled from Catholic Spain.

Luther’s Errors lead to ‘Final Solution’

Anti-Semitism continued even during the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation who impacted history as he proclaimed justification by faith, sadly became anti-Semitic in his later life. Out of frustration that the Jewish people had not yet embraced his message, he wrote an anti-Jewish treatise entitled “On the Jews and their Lies.” His writings expressed the following ideas:

1. Jewish synagogues should be burned.

2. Jewish homes should be destroyed;
3. Jewish workers should be given menial tasks.
4. Jewish money should be confiscated.
5. Jewish people should be forced out of their communities.

These words set the stage for the events which would occur 400 years later as Hitler determined to turn Lutheran Germany against the Jewish people.

In light of this tragic history, is it any wonder that a modern Jewish writer, Jules Isaac, author of *Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?* writes, "Hitler's genocide was a final offshoot of the church's perennial 'teaching of contempt' and 'system of degradation of Jews'" (pp. 17,18). He goes on to say, "Christian anti-Semitism, the powerful, and strongly rooted trunk upon which [in the Christian world] all other varieties of anti-Semitism are grafted, even those of a most anti-Christian nature" (ibid., p. 40).

How can we as believers today counter this sad history and share Messiah in ways that will effectively reach Jewish people?

Stay tuned for the final part of this series, Part 3.5! For part one, click [here](#). For part two, click [here](#).

Dr. Sam Nadler is a Jewish believer in Jesus and has been in Messianic Jewish ministry for over 40 years. Sam is the president of Word of Messiah Ministries, which is bringing the Good News to the Jew first but not to the Jew only, and planting Messianic Congregations in Jewish communities worldwide. To encourage and equip the body of Messiah in our shared calling, Sam is invited to speak in churches across the country, and has written multiple books on Jewish evangelism, discipleship, and the Feasts of Israel. For more information and resources, or to invite Sam to speak at your church,

visit www.wordofmessiah.org.

Russell Moore Takes on Donald Trump Over Muslim Comments

[Donald Trump reportedly wants Muslims to have to register in the United States](#), but that's a major warning sign for Southern Baptist President Russell Moore.

"Donald Trump is saber-rattling about shutting down mosques in this country, which, as somebody who works every day on religious liberty, I'm astounded that we could have a presidential candidate of either party speaking in such a way," Moore told [Buzzfeed](#). "Evangelicals should recognize that any president who would call for shutting down houses of worship ... is the sort of political power that can ultimately shut down evangelical churches."

With refugees showing up on American soil, Moore's heart breaks for the outreach the church is ignoring.

"Our Muslim neighbors are not people we want to scream and rail at—we don't want to demonize our mission field," Moore told [Buzzfeed](#). "I think that the evangelistic missionary impulse of Christianity that sometimes seculars present as nefarious actually is what grounds evangelicals to see individuals not as issues but as persons."

He isn't the only popular evangelical sounding off on the events shaping the political and cultural landscape of the church.

Some, like Southern Evangelical Seminary President Richard

Land, demand the United States focus internally.

“Just so, as Christians, we need to have compassion for Syrian refugees who are fleeing the horrible violence of their civil war,” Land [writes](#). “Does that compassion compel us to grant them access to our country as refugees? I think not. Especially when ISIS has declared they are going to use the refugee flood as a Trojan horse to infiltrate terrorists into the U.S., duplicating the dastardly deeds they perpetrated in Paris. Being passionate does not compel us to expose our jugular veins to our enemies.

Meanwhile, leaders like John Piper see the refugee influx as an enormous possibility to spread the gospel.

In a blog post titled [“Building His Church in a Refugee Crisis,”](#) Piper delves into the complexities facing society.

“So, as Christians, we may disagree about what’s best for America to do in this situation. But as Christians, we also recognize that this is not ultimately as important as the gospel opportunity represented in the refugee crisis,” Piper writes.

But after the Paris attacks, politicians and state leaders are not so sure acceptance is the best answer. According to [CNN](#), more than half the nation’s governors say Syrian Refugees are not welcome in their states.

This position stirs the pot of controversy as many jump to defend or disparage leaders’ decisions on [social media](#).

But for SBC’s Moore, it boils down Christlike compassion, despite a refugee’s chosen religion.

Slain Pastor's Wife Amanda Blackburn's Sister Says She Talked to Her in Heaven

Pastor's wife [Amanda Blackburn](#) was found shot after a break-in and died a few days later.

Her memorial service attracted [thousands of mourners](#). But one person who was rejoicing in the midst of her mourning? Amanda's sister, Amber Byars Wilkenson, who had a vision of her baby sister reaching the arms of Jesus.

In a [Facebook post](#), Wilkenson poured out her heart and described how she believes Blackburn spoke to her, even after death.

"I have always looked up to my baby sister," Wilkenson writes. "I always thought it was ironic that my younger sister would be the person I respected most. I loved her more than she would ever be able to understand. She helped me through this life in every way. She encouraged me, challenged me, held me in my most difficult times, prayed for me, laughed with me, endured every phase of life with me. She never stopped loving me. Her life meant more to me than words will ever be able to express."

As for her vision, Wilkenson writes: "I talked to her yesterday in heaven. Through the tears and sobs, I could hear her sweet voice saying 'Aaaaaaamber! My sister! Please don't cry. It's going to be OK. I know you're sad, but I'm in the presence of my Savior. The one place in this entire world I feel most safe. Most loved. Most fulfilled. Most perfected. My Jesus is here with me and Evie. He's squeezing our hands. He loves me, Amber, more than anyone else on the earth combined. I know it's hard, but I'm in the very place I've always desired to be. I'm home. My true home.'"

Courts Make Bold Pro-Life Move

The District of Nevada has officially dismissed the lawsuit brought against the Clark County School District (the "District") by Thomas More Society on behalf of student Angelique Clark after the parties reached a settlement agreement.

The settlement includes the official approval of Miss Clark's club, agreeing that her school will treat the club the same as all other non-curriculum related clubs, and also reflects the school board's revision of District policies on clubs to bring them in line with the law.

"We're pleased that District officials worked so diligently with us to protect the First Amendment rights of Angelique, her pro-life club, and all their students," said Jocelyn Floyd, Associate Counsel of Thomas More Society. "This settlement is a victory not only for Angelique and her pro-life club, but for all students who wish to speak out or form clubs to address issues that they're facing."

In mid-August, the Thomas More Society filed a lawsuit against West Career and Technical Academy (WCTA) and the District after WCTA student Angelique Clark's application to form a pro-life club was denied for reasons the Society claimed violated her free speech rights. A week later, counsel for the District reached out to discuss settlement, and the pro-life club was approved. The District's counsel worked with the Society and the school board through the fall to revise its policies on clubs, further ensuring that no student would face a situation like Angelique's in the future.

The Society and the District filed together to dismiss the case and the judge granted the dismissal last week.

Students Forced to Sing Islamic 'Fight Song' Promoting Allah ... and Explosions

One teacher thought it would be a good idea to rewrite "This Is My Fight Song" to teach her seventh-grade students about Islam, sparking outrage across the country.

According to a report by [KCAL 9](#), some of the lyrics are as follows:

"Like a sandstorm in the desert, sending camels into motion,
"Like how a single faith can make a heart open,
"They might only have one god,
"But they can make an explosion."

But parents and grandparents aren't the only ones upset at the teacher's song.

"Especially with the recent attacks ISIS has been doing, knowing that this potentially Islamophobic backlash might come about, what was the teacher's intention?" asked Ojaala Ahmed with the Council for American Islamic Relations.

Watch the video to see the full story.

At Least 27 Killed When Soldiers Stormed Mali Hotel

At least 27 people were reported dead on Friday after Malian commandos stormed a hotel seized by Islamist gunmen to rescue 170 people, many of them foreigners, trapped in the building.

The jihadi group Al Mourabitoun, allied to al-Qaida and based in the desert north of the former French colony, claimed responsibility for the attack. The former French colony has been battling Islamist rebels for years.

More than seven hours after the initial assault, a security source declared the drama over, along with the deaths of two militants. But the security ministry said gunmen continued to hold out against special forces on the top floors of the seven-floor building.

“The attackers no longer have hostages. They are dug in in the upper floors. They are alone with the Malian special forces who are trying to dislodge them,” spokesman Amadou Sangho said.

A U.N. official said U.N. peacekeepers searching the hotel had made a preliminary count of 27 bodies.

State television showed troops brandishing AK47s in the lobby of the Radisson Blu, one of the capital Bamako’s smartest hotels and beloved of foreigners. A body lay under a brown blanket at the bottom of a flight of stairs.

Peacekeepers saw 12 dead bodies in the basement of the hotel and another 15 on the second floor, the U.N. official told *Reuters* on condition of anonymity. He added that the U.N.

troops were still helping Malian authorities search the hotel.

A man who worked for a Belgian regional parliament was among the dead, the assembly said.

Minister of Internal Security Colonel Salif Traoré said the gunmen had burst through a security barrier at 7 a.m. (0200 ET), spraying the area with gunfire and shouting “Allahu Akbar”, or “God is great” in Arabic.

The attacks are a slap in the face for France, which has stationed 3,500 troops in northern Malito to try to restore stability after a 2012 Tuareg rebellion, which was later hijacked by al-Qaida-linked jihadis.

Bursts of Gunfire

Bursts of gunfire were heard as the assailants went through the hotel room by room and floor by floor, one senior security source and a witness told *Reuters*.

Some people were freed by the attackers after showing they could recite verses from the Koran, while others managed to escape or were brought out by security forces.

One of the rescued hostages, celebrated Guinean singer Sékouba “Bambino” Diabate, said he had overheard two of the assailants speaking English as they searched an adjacent room.

“We heard shots coming from the reception area. I didn’t dare go out of my room because it felt like this wasn’t just simple pistols—these were shots from military weapons,” Diabate told *Reuters* by phone.

“The attackers went into the room next to mine. I stayed still, hidden under the bed, not making a noise,” he said. “I heard them say in English ‘Did you load it?’, ‘Let’s go’.”

The raid on the hotel, which lies just west of the city center near government ministries and diplomatic offices, came a week

after Islamic State militants killed 130 people in Paris, raising fears that French nationals were being specifically targeted.

Twelve Air France <[AIRF.PA](#)> flight crew were in the hotel but all were brought out safely, the French national carrier said.

A Turkish official said five of seven Turkish Airlines staff had also managed to flee. The Chinese state news agency Xinhua said three of 10 Chinese tourists caught inside had been rescued.

President Returns

Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita cut short a trip to a regional summit in Chad, his office said.

Northern Mali was occupied by Islamist fighters, some with links to al Qaeda, for most of 2012. They were driven out by a French-led military operation, but sporadic violence has continued in Mali's central belt on the southern reaches of the Sahara, and in Bamako.

One security source said as many as 10 gunmen had stormed the building, although the company that runs the hotel, Rezidor Group, said it understood that there were only two attackers.

Al Mourabitoun has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks, including an assault on a hotel in the town of Sevare, 600 km (375 miles) northeast of Bamako, in August in which 17 people including five U.N. staff were killed.

One of its leaders is Mokhtar Belmokhtar, blamed for a large-scale assault on an Algerian gas field in 2013 and a major figure in insurgencies across North Africa.

In the wake of last week's Paris attacks, an Islamic State militant in Syria told Reuters the organization viewed France's military intervention in Mali as another reason to attack France and French interests.

“This is just the beginning. We also haven’t forgotten what happened in Mali,” said the non-Syrian fighter, who was contacted online by Reuters. “The bitterness from Mali, the arrogance of the French, will not be forgotten at all.” {eoa}

© 2015 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.

University Group Hosts “White Privilege” Retreat

The University of Vermont recently held a retreat exclusively for Caucasian students so they could explore white privilege.

[“Examining White Privilege: A Retreat for Undergraduate Students Who Self-Identify as White,”](#) was the name of the three-day conference, as first reported by the website Campus Reform.

It’s a bit wordy for a T-shirt, in my humble opinion. They should’ve just called it “Blame the White Guy 2015.”

The retreat was sponsored by the university’s African, Latino, Asian, Native American and Bi/Multiracial Student Center—ALANA for short.

“It’s a new retreat specifically for white students to engage in building a stronger and inclusive campus community,” ALANA stated on its website.

The taxpayer-funded university would not tell me how the “free” retreat was financed. Typically, when you see the word “free” it means “courtesy of the American taxpayer.”

ALANA said the purpose of the getaway was for white students

to “recognize and understand white privilege from an individual experience as well as the impact of white privilege on the UVM community and beyond.”

They also felt it was necessary for the university’s white students to “conceptualize and articulate whiteness from a personal and systematic lens.”

I have no idea what that means.

I’m also having a difficult time understanding what it means to self-identify as white. Is that someone who belongs to a country club, cuts the crust off his bread and doesn’t have any discernable rhythm?

ALANA provided testimonials from white privilege alumni who gave the retreat a thumbs-up.

It was a “great opportunity to talk about an identity that I had not previously felt equipped to comfortably discuss,” said one person.

I can only imagine the fun they must’ve had at-noshing on salmon and arugula in the mess hall, sitting around a campfire crooning Barry Manilow songs and sharing scary stories about how their pigmentation oppressed people of color.

As we all know—the only way to build a stronger and inclusive university campus is to shame the white children into acknowledging they are personally responsible for every imaginable evil that has befallen the world—from global warming to that episode of *Happy Days* when Fonzie jumped over the shark.

I was particularly intrigued by a series of questions they asked the campers: what does it mean to be white and how does whiteness impact you?

The other day I contemplated my whiteness while I was watching a “Dukes of Hazzard” marathon.

Truth be told—I do enjoy Hank Williams Junior and NASCAR and mayonnaise. But I also enjoy Tyler Perry movies.

Some folks might self-identify as black. Others might self-identify as white. But as for me—I self-identify as an American—a free man.

And I think that's a privilege no matter what color you are.

The Truth About Refugees' Lives

WWM has an occasional diary from a church leader still in Aleppo, the Syrian city that's now a key battleground between rebels and President Assad's forces. Recently, however, Pastor Samuel* visited Beirut in neighboring Lebanon to meet some of that country's 1 million Syrian refugees. This is his edited account:

Beirut is one of the most expensive cities in the world; whenever I visit, I make it one of my duties to meet with Syrian refugees, especially families who left Aleppo. It is not easy meeting them when I know they've had to leave behind a decent life where they had jobs, owned their own apartments, and were serving in the church and their communities.

Now, most of them say things like "Pastor, look at us. See where we are now and how we lived before. Will we ever live again in golden days?" Many have shared sentiments such as "the best solution is to leave the region. Leave and forget these countries; leave the Middle East and live a decent life in Europe." They feel they have had enough suffering.

During my time with the refugees in Beirut, I heard stories of how poorly they're being treated.

Beirut Rents Doubled for Syrian Refugees

Unfortunately, many Lebanese view Syrians as second-class citizens and have not welcomed them. The refugees I met rent small one- or two-bedroom apartments, for which they pay almost double the rent paid by locals. They're being taken advantage of.

Syrians who've been fortunate enough to find work often work long hours for little pay. I've heard that even some Lebanese Christians seem to be encouraging this injustice.

I met a young university accountancy graduate. He told me: "For days and days I searched for work. Most employers said they had nothing for me, but I kept on searching and finally found a job in a shop selling metal. One day I was ill and had to stay at home in bed. When I called my boss to say I could not come, he just said that I should try to find another job." He's now depressed because of the humiliation. Plus, he worked a 10-hour day for half a normal Lebanese salary.

Integration problems

More than a million Syrians live in Lebanon as refugees; some there for almost four years. Integration is a big problem, according to several I spoke to, even though they share the same language and there are historical and family ties.

Some Lebanese accuse Syrians of many things: "Your Syrian government ruled our country for more than 25 years, now it's your turn to feel what that's like."

"We in Lebanon were jobless. Now, you have come here and are taking our jobs. You're doing every kind of work for at least half the salary."

"Every item in the market is very expensive because of you

Syrians.”

A 15-year-old student told me: “During one of my Geography classes, the teacher talked about the water issue in Lebanon. He showed us the rivers of Lebanon on the map, and told us about the richness of the country because of the mineral water. But then he said that because of the Syrian refugees the country now has a shortage of drinking water. The students turned their heads towards us Syrians, and looked at me as if I was the one causing the shortage.”

Lebanese Law Bans Casual Work for Refugees

The Lebanese government issued a law earlier this year that prevents Syrians entering Lebanon as refugees unless they have special status, are officially invited by a Lebanese organization, or by a Lebanese citizen prepared to pay their taxes. Syrians are no longer allowed to have an official job in Lebanon, which means they can't hold a work permit.

Syrians need to keep renewing their visa to stay in Lebanon, which means paying a lot of money. When they renew their rental contract every couple of months they usually find their landlord has put the costs up.

These challenges and complicated laws make Syrians want to leave the country, which many try to do legally by getting a visa. They are not easy to get, so many try to leave Lebanon illegally by paying human traffickers to reach Europe.

According to the U.N., the number of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon has started to diminish from official figures of more than 1.1 million.

Many Syrians face problems when they need medical care in Lebanon. Medicine and hospitalization are expensive. The government subsidizes these costs for Lebanese citizens, but Syrians have to buy costly health insurance or pay cash.

Many Syrians who fled the war lost almost everything and are unable to pay for health insurance. I met several people willing to risk travelling back into Syria, to places like Latakia, where medical treatment is cheaper than in Lebanon.

One lady told me with tears in her eyes how, on the road back to Syria to receive treatment, she was wounded by a bomb blast. "What a life we have now," she said "as if we were born to suffer. What kind of life is this? Sometimes I think dying is much better than living. The ones who've died have rest now, and no suffering and pain."

Barriers to Education

The school system in Lebanon is different from Syria, not only because of the curriculum but also the language, and students need to work hard to fit in. However the biggest problem is fees. I met several families whose children were not going to school because they can't pay the fees or even buy books. Many children now work to help bring their family an income.

"What can we do?" a mother asked me. "The first year, some organizations helped us, but now, in our fourth year, people are tired of helping us. It is better for my children to find a job and start work at an early age." I worry about these children—what will happen to them after missing several years of education? What will happen to them in the future?

Facing an Exodus

When I met refugees in Lebanon some years ago, most of them said that they were expecting the war to end within a couple of weeks or months and that they would be able to return to their homes and jobs. But the war has continued for 4 1/2 years now, and there's still no end in sight. Because of the challenges they face in Lebanon, most of them are now doing their best to find a way to leave the country with no plans to return.

Families wait for some kind of miracle from Western embassies that will get them into Europe. Because Christian families will not live in refugee camps, their chances of getting to Europe with the help of the U.N. are very small, and their only option is to use smugglers.

I met a widow who's been living for two years with her son and two other families in two small bedrooms. Imagine 11 people living in two bedrooms. When I asked about her son, tears came to her eyes: "Both of us worked for three years and we lived with two families in a small apartment. We found out that living in Beirut had no meaning and that the war is only continuing. We tried to find a way to reach Europe, but we couldn't get a visa. Then we collected all that we had and gave it to the smugglers. My son went from Beirut to Izmir in Turkey and then from Turkey on a boat to Greece and then, after several weeks, he managed to reach Germany. Thank God he survived. Now he is in Germany and arranging all the papers; I hope that I will be able to join him at some point."

I asked why she didn't go with him. "The money we collected didn't cover the cost of two people so we decided just to send him. I can wait and suffer for another year in order to join him."

*not his real name, changed for his protection

**Kong Hee's City Harvest
Megachurch Leaders Heading to**

Jail

The co-founder of a Singapore church and five other leaders were sentenced to jail terms of up to eight years on Friday, for fraudulently diverting millions of dollars to support his wife's pop singing career.

The mix of faith and fraud has fascinated tightly-regulated Singapore, where such cases are rare in an affluent city-state with little tolerance for corruption.

Senior Pastor Kong Hee heads City Harvest Church, one of a growing number of Singapore's megachurches preaching a "prosperity gospel" that blends spiritual and material aspirations.

Six church officials were convicted last month of diverting nearly S\$51 million (\$36 million) in funds to advance the career of Kong's wife, Ho Yeow Sun.

They were sentenced on Friday to jail terms of between 21 months and eight years, depending on how involved they were in the fraud. The jail terms were delayed to January next year, giving the defendants time to appeal.

Kong was arrested in 2012 and charged with criminal breach of trust and falsifying accounts. His wife, the co-founder and executive director of the church, was not charged in the case.

Ho has focused on the Mandarin pop market and has released albums, including "Embrace," through Warner Music Taiwan.

A video from her English-language single, "China Wine," shows her dancing intimately with rapper Wyclef Jean, sparking criticism that she had betrayed her calling as a Christian pastor.

The promotion of Ho's secular singing career was aimed at

evangelizing to non-Christians.

Judge See Kee Oon said a deterrent was needed after the embezzlement but acknowledged the defendants thought they were helping the church and there was no evidence of personal gain.

The church, which had 17,500 members last year and branches in eight other countries from Japan to India and the United States, has stuck by its leader.

A letter appealing for leniency, signed by 173 executive members of the church, was submitted to the court and church members sobbed in the public gallery as the sentences were read out. {eoa}

© 2015 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.