

# Newsletter

2020



HUNGARY HELPS



Dear Reader,

After a long break – due to the coronavirus pandemic which caused unprecedented difficulties for the entire world – we are back again with our newsletter. Overcoming the virus is, of course, a priority, but at the same time we must not forget our fellow human beings who are persecuted for their faith and who are the victims of murderous violence. The last couple of years, the number of Christians exposed to persecution in the world increased, bringing the total number to a staggering 260 million.

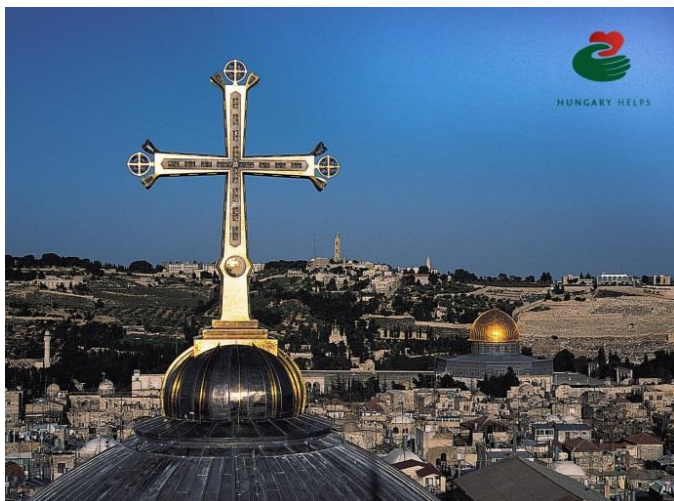
Aware of our responsibility, we remain ready to take action on the challenges ahead. While we are doing our best to help to protect the wellbeing of the citizens of Hungary, the Government of Hungary continues the journey it started in 2016 to support persecuted Christians and all persecuted people in need.

At home we have mobilized humanitarian experts and expertise gained at the crises zones, but we haven't forgotten our sisters and brothers who are in constant and dire need in the Middle East and Africa. We donated disinfectants, masks and other protective equipment to many of those communities.

Despite the pandemic, we have also continued our core mission because the security and - in many cases - the mere existence of Christian communities, not only in the Middle East but Africa have become even more jeopardized. Migration brings not only security and social threats but epidemiological threats as well. The pandemic and the growing persecution call for co-operation, and the Hungary Helps Program continues to be committed to help. Let's take care of each other here at home and in the world!

Tristan Azbej  
*State Secretary  
for the Aid of Persecuted Christians  
and for the Hungary Helps Program*

## Hungarian government supports schools in the Holy Land



The Hungarian government decided to provide help for Jordanian and Palestinian educational institutions operated by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem which have in recent months found themselves in a hopeless situation. Due to the loss of revenues caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the Patriarchate was compelled to stop some of its projects, and to reduce the communal support activities and the employment of local workforce.

In this dire situation the Hungary Helps Program have provided 1 million USD to help the continuation of education. By supporting vocational training, we can offer a chance to young people living there to choose to stay in their native land.

## Hungary sent fast relief to Beirut after the explosion



A huge explosion shocked Lebanon's capital, Beirut on August 4, 2020, claiming 200 lives and more than 6500 people were injured. Upon having been informed of the blast Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Hungarian government decided to send 1.175 million USD (1 million euros) in humanitarian aid to

Lebanon to help victims of the explosion and to contribute to the reconstruction efforts that followed. Hungary's donation was sent under the arrangements of the Hungary Helps Program to Lebanon's Syriac Maronite Church of Antioch. The response from the Hungary Helps Program's took less than 24 hours, thus the help reached the victims in need at the most critical moments of the rescue operation. Since then a few dozen homes have already been restored. Hungarian MEP György Hölvényi played an important role in keeping in touch with our local church partners.



## Prime Minister Viktor Orbán received Archbishop Anthony Muheria of Kenya

The persecution of Christians, the migration situation in Africa, and Hungary's humanitarian aid were also on the agenda of the meeting between Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and Archbishop Anthony Muheria of Kenya, who visited Hungary at the end of February. The meeting attendees included Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén, Tristan Azbej, the State Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office responsible for the Aid



for the Aid

of Persecuted Christians and for the Hungary Helps Program, and György Hölvényi, Member of the European Parliament, Goodwill Ambassador of the Hungary Helps Program. It was stated at the meeting that Hungary intends to play its part in supporting church missions in Kenya to help young people threatened by Islamic radicalization and poverty which results in emigration.

To this end, the Government of Hungary is providing support through the Hungary Helps Program for the development of health and social programs of the Catholic Archdiocese of Nyeri, which includes the establishment of a youth center, a psychological counseling center and an office for small businesses in an effort to provide relief from food scarcity and hunger. The Hungary Helps Program also contributes to the capacity enhancement of a rehabilitation program for people with drug and alcohol problems. By supporting humanitarian projects to help vulnerable communities exposed to Islamist religious radicalization, we are contributing to the Northern Rangelands Trust's youth support program in northern Kenya and the Agricultural Science Faculty at Tangaza University in Nairobi. The Hungary Helps Program also supports the program of the St. Joseph Worker Development Office to help socially marginalized people (for example, those living with HIV).



At the traditional testimony event of the Prime Minister's Office, Tristan Azbej drew attention to the strategic role of churches in humanitarian aid. The Archbishop of Kenya reported on the situation of Christian communities in Africa and met Christian scholarship students studying in Hungary. As a guest of the Hungarian national news channel Hír TV, Tristan Azbej and Anthony Muheria discussed the situation of African Christians.

## Negotiations in Washington DC for persecuted Christians

The Museum of the Bible in Washington, home to nearly one million visitors a year was also the home to our temporary exhibition called „Cross in Fire”, which was opened by State Secretary Tristan Azbej during his visit to Washington in February. The exhibition presents the gruesome reality of the persecution of Christians through the fate of today’s martyrs.

During his official visit Tristan Azbej gave a presentation about the Hungary Helps Program at a side event of the 68th National Prayer Breakfast organized by the Save the Persecuted Christians Alliance. The State Secretary also gave an interview to Raymond Arroyo, one of EWTN’s best-known hosts, on the results of our program, which aired on the show *The World Over*.



The State Secretary had several bilateral meetings with governmental and civil partners discussing the situation of Christians, who are increasingly being persecuted in Africa, and the possibility of a joint Hungarian-American cooperation in order to help these communities.

Simultaneously during the State Secretary’s visit, Hungary was the first EU country to join the International Religious Freedom Alliance, initiated by US President Donald Trump.



Watch *World Over* with Tristan Azbej [here](#).

## Development of European partnerships

The Hungary Helps Program has reached a new level in the development of ever-expanding international cooperation. In February, forward-looking discussions were held with our German federal government partners at a conference on the objectives and results of Hungarian-German development policy cooperation so far, during which the opportunity for joint action in West Africa emerged.



The Hungary Helps Program is also looking to cooperate with French partners: during his visit to Paris, Tristan Azbej had a meeting with Christophe Peaucelle, Ambassador of Religious Affairs of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the consultation, the State Secretary presented the Hungary Helps Program to his French partner. The meeting also discussed the need for global protection of religious freedom and the possibility of a joint education program in the Middle East. In addition to the government meeting, Tristan Azbej also met various leaders of Christian aid organizations to discuss joint humanitarian and volunteer programs to help communities in distress.



A memorandum of understanding to advance stabilization, recovery and reconciliation through humanitarian and development cooperation in response to humanitarian crises and the persecution of religious minorities worldwide was signed between the Hungarian and Polish governments on August 17, 2020 in Budapest. At a

press conference held after the signing of the document, Tristan Azbej highlighted that both countries are committed to specific and swift action. The primary duty of both governments is to take care of their own citizens; however, following from their Christian cultural roots, providing assistance for the needy living in other regions of the world is a moral duty, and they would like to fulfil this duty together, he pointed out.

## Expelled families were able to return to their homes in Qaraqosh

In Iraq's largest Christian-majority city, Qaraqosh, during the Islamic State's reign of terror, more than 3,000 residential buildings were destroyed to the ground, set on fire or damaged by terrorist gunmen. In order to return the locals expelled by jihadists, Hungary has supported the reconstruction of dozens of residential buildings through the



Hungary Helps Program in cooperation with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). A significant part of the reconstructions has already been completed, allowing families to return in February. Thanks to the Hungarian-American investments made so far, almost 900 people have already been able to return to Qaraqosh.

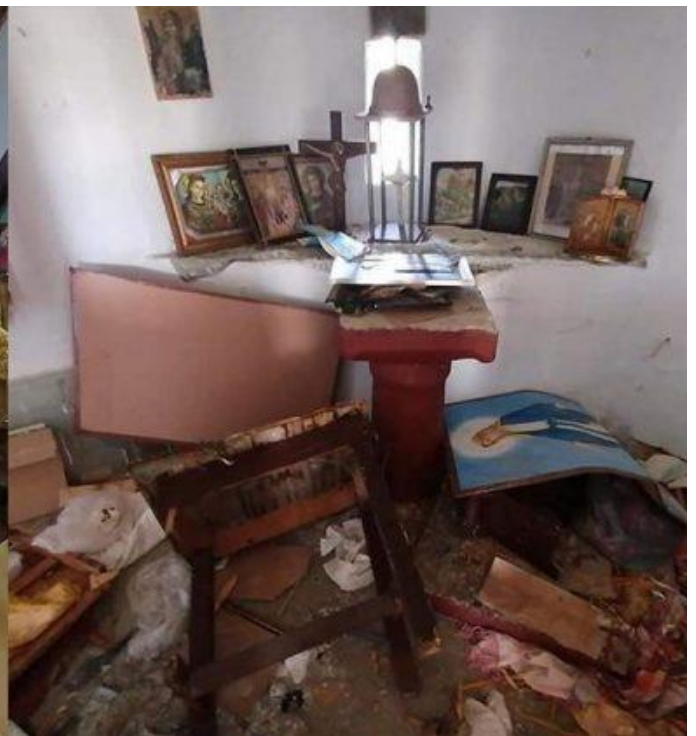


## The Hungary Helps Program supports the restoration of Greek churches damaged by illegal immigrants



Through the Hungary Helps Program, the Government of Hungary has contributed 34 500 USD to the [restoration of churches](#) damaged by illegal immigrants on the Greek island of Lesbos. Several Christian sites have been attacked by migrants there, as a response to Greek authorities preventing them from illegally entering European countries.

As a result of vandalism, many liturgical objects, as well as church furniture were seriously damaged. The donation for the restoration of churches in Lesbos was handed over by Tristan Azbej, State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians and for the Hungary Helps Program, and Miklós Sol-tész, State Secretary for Church and National Minority Relations through the Hungary Helps Program and the National Council of Greeks in Hungary.



## FOCUS COUNTRY: Burkina Faso



Just days after the Islamist anti-Christian terrorist attack that claimed 14 lives, State Secretary Tristan Azbej visited Burkina Faso in West Africa, to assure the local persecuted Christian community of the solidarity of the Hungarian people and also to identify first hand the best possible ways to provide help. The State Secretary visited refugee camps providing temporary protection for the local

internally displaced persons and held talks with survivors of terrorist attacks targeting Christians, who testified to the atrocities they experienced.

During the visit, Tristan Azbej met Cardinal Philippe Ouedraogo, who, together with the Episcopacy of Burkina Faso, reported on the situation of the Christian communities in the country. Following the meeting, Alpha Barry, Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, welcomed Tristan Azbej in his office who also met Ms. Ioli Kimyaci, UNHCR Representative in Burkina Faso. The Hungary Helps Program is currently evaluating the possibility of a donation.



### The situation of Christians in Burkina Faso

*Regular jihadist attacks hit the country's population, 30% of which are Christian. The number of IDPs grew to a staggering 600 000 at the early days of 2020.*

**29th April 2019** – Islamist gunmen started a shooting in a Protestant church in the town of Silgadji, killing 5 people

**12th May 2019** – In Dablo, jihadist militants surrounded believers leaving the Catholic temple and opened fire on them. Six people were killed in the attack followed by the church being set on fire by the jihadists.

**1st December 2019** – Islamist terrorists killed at least 14 innocently praying Christians, including several teenagers, during a Sunday morning service in eastern Burkina Faso.

**23rd January 2020** – During an Islamist terrorist attack, armed jihadists massacred 36 innocent civilians in a market, which was then set on fire.

**18th February 2020** – At least 24 people, including a pastor, have been killed by jihadists in an attack on a Protestant temple in northern Burkina Faso.





# HUNGARY HELPS

Follow us on:



PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE  
HUNGARY

*THIS NEWSLETTER WAS PUBLISHED BY THE STATE SECRETARIAT FOR THE AID OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS AND FOR THE HUNGARY HELPS PROGRAM OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE OF HUNGARY*