The Challenge of Radical Islam
An evangelical response

Diasporas from Cape Town 2010 to Manila 2015 and Beyond

Micah Challenge International: A voice of evangelical advocacy

Europe’s Crisis: God’s opportunity
Welcome to the March 2015 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.

Whether you are planning to read the full articles or just the executive summaries, we hope that you find this issue stimulating and useful. Our aim is to deliver strategic and credible analysis, information, and insight so that as an influencer you will be better equipped for the task of global mission. It’s our desire that the analysis of current and future trends and developments will help you and your team make better decisions about the stewardship of all that God has entrusted to your care.

In this issue we feature an evangelical response to the challenge of radical Islam; we address diaspora mission in the run-up to the 24–28 March Global Diaspora Forum; we assess the impact of the Micah Challenge initiative; and we follow-up our article from two issues ago on Europe as a strategic mission field by examining how Europe’s current crisis is God’s opportunity.

‘For many evangelicals, jihadi groups are obscurantist, primitive, and ferocious, embodying all the prejudices associated with the supposed ‘essence’ of Islam’, writes John Azumah (Associate Professor of World Christianity and Islam at Columbia Theological Seminary, Georgia, USA). However, the truth about religious lives is not so simple. Christians have to engage with Muslims in frank and open dialogue on issues such as the tacit support for jihadi groups in the mainstream Muslim world and the blind eye turned to the largely contemptuous and belligerent teaching about non-Muslims in authoritative Islamic texts and popular consciousness. Is it not time for Islamic scholars and leaders to reexamine doctrines that are so easily abused by extremists? However, ‘we must remain watchful and prayerful about the danger of radical Islam radicalizing evangelicals into re-defining our witness and values. The battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers’, he concludes.

‘The current global phenomenon of diaspora is a God-initiated and God-orchestrated missional moment in contemporary history’, notes Sadiri Joy Tira (Vice President for Diaspora Missions for Advancing Indigenous Missions). The mass redistribution of people has profound implications for missions strategy and has caught the attention of missiologists. Global diasporas and missions were a highlighted topic at the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010. The Global Diaspora Network was organized to broaden the diaspora network and project the diaspora agenda beyond Cape Town. It will convene the Global Diaspora Forum from 24–28 March 2015 in Manila. ‘Diaspora mission is a kairos opportunity. I am thankful that the Lausanne Movement’s embrace of diaspora missiology is stimulating the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world, particularly to the diasporas—the scattered peoples’, he concludes.
In 2000, 189 nations agreed to halve extreme poverty by 2015. The UN formulated eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to achieve this. ‘Micah Challenge’, birthed by the World Evangelical Alliance and Micah Network, recognized that this was a moment in history of unique potential, when the stated intentions of world leaders echoed something of the mind of the biblical prophets and the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor’, write Joel Edwards (International Director for Micah Challenge) and Geoff Tunnicliffe (Secretary General for World Evangelical Alliance, 2005–2014). What was really new about the Micah experiment was the emphasis on advocacy—calling decision-makers to account to fulfil their promise to achieve the MDGs. The brief story of Micah Challenge suggests that there is a lot to celebrate. For example, extreme poverty has been halved in the last 25 years and millions have been lifted from poverty. ‘However, in seeing the kind of justice, mercy, and love the Bible describes, we still have a long way to go’, they conclude.

Europe faces crises on many different levels—economic, political, social, environmental, and religious. ‘However, today most Europeans hope not for the return of the Lord Jesus, but for the return of economic growth’, writes Jim Memory (lecturer in European Mission at Redcliffe College, Gloucester, UK). Even if it were possible, is economic growth really the hope for Europe? For most of Europe’s history, crisis has been the normal context for the church’s life and mission. If Christians have to adapt to a new context of long-term crisis in Europe, we can do so in the confidence that previous generations of European believers have done so. For the first time in a generation, Europeans are questioning the hope and security that this world offers. It is the moment for churches to regain their confidence in the gospel as the hope for Europe. ‘Europe’s crisis is God’s opportunity’, he concludes.

Please send any questions and comments about this issue to analysis@lausanne.org. The next issue of Lausanne Global Analysis will be released in May.
Evangelical views on Islam understandably hardened after the 9/11 attacks. For example: *Ted Haggard*, the past President of the US National Association of Evangelicals, said: ‘The Christian God encourages freedom, love, forgiveness, prosperity and health. The Muslim god appears to value the opposite. The personalities of each god are evident in the cultures, civilizations and dispositions of the peoples that serve them.’

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Australian Mark Durie claims that Islamic State (IS) ‘battle tactics are regulated by sheikhs who implement the sharia’s rules of war. Many of the abuses committed by IS . . . are taken straight from the pages of Islamic legal textbooks.’ Thus, ‘attempting to persuade non-Muslim Westerners that Islam is not the problem actually makes it much harder to formulate an effective strategy for countering jihadi insurgencies’. ²

For many evangelicals, jihadi groups encapsulate all the stereotypes that have daily currency in Islamophobic discourses: at once obscurantist, primitive, and ferocious, these groups embody all the prejudices associated with the supposed ‘essence’ of Islam.

**Essence of Islam?**

There is no doubt, contrary to repeated Muslim denials, that aspects of the ideology of radical Islamic groups such as IS are rooted in Islamic texts and that they draw inspiration from Islamic history. The jihadists quote mainstream Islamic texts to justify their actions. However, quoting Islamic texts in itself does not necessarily make one’s views and actions Islamic. The Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, the Branch Davidians of David Koresh, and many other eccentric Christian cults have quoted the Bible. Furthermore, it does not matter how learned or high-ranking such claimants are. Leading Christian clergy and theologians have in the past misused Scripture to justify acts that many Christians are ashamed of today!

**Sola scriptura**

Those who argue that jihadi groups represent the essence of Islam actually reflect a Western way of thinking. Wittingly or unwittingly, they assume a scripturalist interpretation of Islam, imagining that we can explain Islamic terrorism by drawing a straight line between authoritative texts and the actions of jihadists. To prove their point, they tend to link specific acts of jihadi groups to a string of references from Islamic scripture, traditions, legal texts, and Muslim scholarly opinions. Perversely, this *sola scriptura* approach is no different from the jihadists’ own ‘Qur’an and Sunna alone’ approach.

**Complex causes**

The truth about religious lives is not so simple. The vast majority of Christians and Muslims do not live by *sola scriptura* or Qur’an and Sunna alone—even when they claim to do so! A complex, shifting web of socio-political, geopolitical, racial, ethnic, cultural, sectarian, economic, historical, and existential realities inform the way all of us live out our faith.

My own view is that there are seeds of violence in some Islamic teaching. However, these seeds need fertile ground to sprout and to flourish. The oppressive governments, weak and corrupt state institutions, illiteracy, blind imitation, and poverty that plague many Muslim
societies are fertile ground for Islamic extremism. So are historical memories, conspiracy theories, foreign policy missteps by Western governments, disillusionment with mainstream society, and a sense of alienation among Muslim youth in Western societies. We cannot make sense of the jihadi mindset, let alone work out a credible and sustainable response, without taking these factors seriously.

Islamic law violations

While some of the legal and doctrinal edicts the jihadists cite to justify their acts are integral parts of Islamic law, the jihadists violate that law by taking it into their own hands. The conditions necessary for the declaration of *jihad*, as well as its proper conduct, provide an obvious instance. Questions of which groups can be targeted, how and toward what end, are enormously complicated and sharply qualified in authoritative Islamic texts.

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The oppressive governments, weak and corrupt state institutions, illiteracy, blind imitation, and poverty that plague many Muslim societies are fertile ground for Islamic extremism.

For example, as is the case in Christian just war theory which carefully limits to governments the power to declare war, in Islamic law only legitimate Islamic governments can declare a jihad, not individuals or non-state actors. The exception is when a Muslim land comes under attack or occupation by an enemy force, which renders jihad or resistance an individual responsibility. However, even then, jihad has to have been formally declared by the legitimate authority properly representing people of the occupied nation. By declaring and conducting jihad on their own, groups like al-Qaeda, IS, and Boko Haram are heretical usurpers.  

When it comes to the conduct of jihad, contrary to claims that the battle tactics of Islamic terrorist groups are taken from Islamic legal textbooks, many of their atrocities are at odds with all four orthodox schools of law in Sunni Islam.

All four declare that women, children, the elderly, the disabled, priests, traders, farmers, and all non-combatant civilians should not be targeted and killed in a jihad.

Things of economic value such as farms, businesses, markets, and places of worship (including non-Muslim ones) are not to be targeted for attack. Islamic law allows that these may be taken as war booty, but they are not to be destroyed.

Deliberate assaults on civilians, blowing up or hijacking of planes, indiscriminate bombings in markets, attacks on churches and mosques, murders of religious figures—all carried out by jihadi groups—violate the clear limits set in Islamic law for the conduct of a jihad.
Rebellion

Another key feature of the jihadists’ ideology is their rejection of, and often rebellion against, established governments of Islamic countries. They have declared Muslim governments around the world un-Islamic and illegitimate, vowing to replace these with a Caliphate.

To achieve their aim, the groups target and kill Muslim opponents, justifying their actions with a doctrine known as *takfir* that specifies conditions under which fellow Muslims can be declared unbelievers and killed. The doctrine dates back to the 7th century. A splinter group known as the Kharijites taught that it was acceptable to excommunicate and conduct jihad against fellow Muslims, including a Muslim ruler, if they were judged guilty of the commission of certain sins.

This idea was uniformly repudiated by the rest of the Muslim community at the time, and all the four schools of law continue to reject it. Indeed, the legal tradition of Islam includes explicit rulings against Kharijites, classifying them as unbelievers who should be fought and killed.

Denunciations

Given the clear consensus of the Islamic tradition, it is not surprising that Muslim leaders around the world, including the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, have repeatedly and publicly denounced al-Qaida, IS, and Boko Haram.

Leading Pakistani Muslim scholars Javed Ahmad Ghamidi and Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri, both with considerable followings and influence, have respectively written a book and issued a *fatwa* on the meaning and conduct of jihad. Both rule against terrorism and violent rebellion, citing extensively from the Qur’an, prophetic traditions, and legal and theological luminaries over the centuries and across sectarian divides. They declare IS as Kharijites, terrorists, rebels, and heretics.

On September 19, 2014, 126 leading Islamic figures around the world signed and published an ‘Open Letter to Al-Baghdadi’, challenging the Islamic basis of the ideology of IS (http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/).

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*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds,
Peace and Blessings be upon the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers

By the declining day, Lo! man is a state of loss, Save those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance.

(Al-‘Asr, 103: 1-3)

OPEN LETTER

To Dr. Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, alias ‘Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi,

To the fighters and followers of the self-declared ‘Islamic State’,

Peace and the mercy of God be upon you.
While these public denunciations may have little impact on the leadership of the jihadi groups, they play a significant role in delegitimizing jihadi ideology and therefore undermine their appeal to young Muslims. We should therefore take them seriously and do what we can to amplify their influence.

Unfortunately, Western critics of jihadi groups overlook these voices and sometimes even discredit them. Too often I’ve heard people say: ‘Islam reformed is no Islam!’ Not only is that a patronizing claim about what Muslims can and cannot achieve within their own tradition, it is a dead-end position. When a Muslim tells a Christian: ‘The Qur’an teaches me to love you’, why should the Christian then tell the Muslim: ‘No, the Qur’an actually teaches you to kill me’?

**Issues for discussion**

While Islam is not, in my view, the problem, Muslim societies clearly have problems (some of which were mentioned above as providing fertile ground for seeds of violence) and Christians have to engage with Muslims in frank and open dialogue. As a Christian scholar of Islam, here is my list of topics that require frank discussions with Muslims:

- **Tacit support**
  During the formative stages of nearly all jihadi groups, local Muslim religious and political leaders have either turned a blind eye to, or actively supported, their activities. Islamic governments, organizations, and businessmen have funded them and used them for their political ends. How is it that groups so widely condemned as heretical by Islamic authorities receive so much tacit support in the mainstream Muslim world, especially when their attacks are aimed at non-Muslims and Western interests?
Contemptuous teaching

For fear of being labeled bad Muslims or outright unbelievers by radical preachers, Muslim leaders around the world have turned a blind eye to the largely contemptuous and belligerent teaching about non-Muslims in authoritative Islamic texts and popular consciousness. The same goes for the teaching on jihad, apostasy, blasphemy laws, and the place of non-Muslim citizens in an Islamic society. While jihadi groups are heretical in their claim to have the authority to interpret and impose these laws, the existence of the teaching alone is an invitation to rebellion and extremism. Is it not time for Islamic scholars and leaders to reexamine doctrines that are so easily abused by extremists? Is not the orgy of blood, the overwhelming majority of victims being Muslims, a clear sign of the need for thoroughgoing reforms?6

Key trends

My questions and others are not being ignored. There is a wind blowing in the house of Islam, and a battle for the soul of Islam is earnestly underway. There are disillusioned young Iranians, Egyptians, and Iraqis leaving Islam in huge numbers and giving up on religion altogether. Ordinary Muslims are turning away from Islam to other religions, including Christianity (where there is a friendly Christian presence).7

We see also a growing progressive trend in Islam that is engaged in a critical re-reading of Islamic texts and history. These are signs that serious introspection is taking place across the Muslim world. After 9/11, progressive Muslim scholars openly declared their stance against ‘those whose God is a vengeful monster in the sky issuing death decrees against the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike . . . those whose God is too small, too mean, too tribal, and too male’. To all of these, they declared: ‘Not in my name, not in the name of my God will you commit this hatred, this violence!'8

Suggested responses

As someone who grew up in the Muslim world, I want to conclude by saying that evangelicals too need to reform our ways.

In recent decades, evangelicals have contributed to the invisibility of Christian presence and witness in Muslim lands. We have caved in to real and imagined threats from radical groups. Instead of openly challenging the criminalization of Christian missions and evangelism in Muslim contexts, we have engaged in undercover and underhanded missions.

We must remain watchful and prayerful about the danger of radical Islam radicalizing evangelicals into re-defining our witness and values. The battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. We cannot win by resorting to the weapons our opponents wield, such as paranoia, conspiracy theories, propaganda, lies, and hatred. We are compelled to use superior arms: to put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph 6:14–17).

A longer version of this article has been published in First Things: http://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/01/challenging-radical-islam.
Endnotes


*Editor’s Note*: Image on the cover and page 4 is a derivative of ‘Iraqi insurgents with guns’ by Menendj (CC BY-SA 2.5). ‘Saudikoran’ image on page 5 by Abubakker is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.
According to the United Nations Development Programme, there are over 214 million international migrants—people living outside their country of birth. On International Migrants Day 2013, UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon in his message said that ‘there are 232 million people living outside their country of birth’. Undoubtedly, this figure has risen since then. Caused by multiple factors, both voluntary and involuntary, diaspora is a complex issue that is changing world demography, economies, policies, cultures, and societies.
Grant McClung, President of Missions Resource Group, believes that ‘the current global phenomenon of diaspora is a God-initiated and God-orchestrated missional moment in contemporary history’. In an email to me, he said:

‘The sovereign God of history is sending and superintending one of the most massive evangelistic opportunities in world mission history. Through intentional global scattering, the Holy Spirit is not only creating an unprecedented receptivity among peoples living beyond their borders, but also dispersing evangelistic workers through creative, unexpected means.’

The mass redistribution of people has profound implications for missions strategy. Recently, global diaspora movements have caught the attention not only of government policy makers and social scientists, but also of missiologists. Global diasporas, particularly diasporas and missions, were a highlighted topic at the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in 2010.

**Diasporas and Cape Town**

One of the many issues discussed in multiplexes and plenary sessions at Cape Town 2010 was how to minister to, minister through, and minister beyond diasporas or scattered peoples. The 90 minutes in multiplexes and 5 minutes in a plenary session proved to be brief given the magnitude of the diaspora issue. Nevertheless, the goal was to catalyze the global church and encourage participants to embrace global diaspora missions. This, I believe, was achieved.

The allotted time brought attention to the issue, and the diaspora multiplex presentation was the only multiplex session that was repeated based on public demand. The plenary session on 20 October 2010 was a galvanizing moment for Lausanne and diasporas. Global diaspora missions were embraced and integrated into *The Cape Town Commitment.*

Lausanne III highlighted ministering to and mobilising the diaspora people. However, this push came primarily from practitioners. Therefore, there arose a need for a collaboration of academics and practitioners in the study of diaspora and missions. Furthermore, informed and ongoing discussion of diaspora and missions was also needed through a growing body of literature. In anticipation of the challenges and opportunities presented by this need, the Lausanne Movement leadership tasked the Senior Associate for Diasporas to form a wider organization.

**Road to Manila**

The *Global Diaspora Network* (GDN) was organized during the conclusion of Lausanne III in order to broaden the diaspora network and project the diaspora agenda beyond the event. It officially replaced the former Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team (LDLT) which was a date-specific initiative devoted to preparation for Lausanne III. An International Board of Advisors composed of respected diaspora scholars and practitioners was formed.

The GDN headquarters/secretariat office was established in Manila and was officially registered under the Securities & Exchange Commission of the Philippines, providing the GDN with a legal identity. Its Advisory Board inaugural session took place in France in...
February 2011. In June 2011, the Lausanne leadership officially announced that a Global Diaspora Forum would take place in March 2015 in Manila.

Under the umbrella of the Lausanne Movement, the GDN is committed to ‘bear[ing] witness to Jesus Christ and all his teachings’, in ‘every sphere of society’ and ‘in the realm of ideas’.

New diaspora institutes

The GDN has been instrumental in the formation of Diaspora Institutes at theological training institutions.

In 2011, the Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives at Ambrose University College (Calgary, Canada) introduced its own diaspora missiology specialist and a series of diaspora courses offered at the college and seminary level.

Later in 2011, Alliance Graduate School (AGS) in Manila unveiled its Institute of Diaspora Missiology (IDM).

This was followed by the 2012 launch of the Eurasian Diaspora Study Centre at the Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kiev, Ukraine.

In 2014, IDM transferred to Asian Theological Seminary (ATS, Manila, Philippines) from AGS.

Finally, there are increasing numbers of evangelical students in doctoral programs of various seminaries who are writing diaspora-related dissertations. Their research and writing will be major contributions to the growing body of diaspora missiology literature.

Global Diaspora Forum 2015

As previously mentioned, the GDN will convene the Global Diaspora Forum (GDF) from 24–28 March 2015 in Manila. The purpose of this global gathering of diaspora missiology scholars and practitioners is to assess and advance diaspora missiology five years after Cape Town 2010. Greenhills Christian Fellowship in Ortigas Centre,Metro Manila, will be hosting this
The vision of the GDF 2015 is: to gather the key evangelical leaders to engage, discuss, and mobilize the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world, specifically to the people on the move. The Lausanne Movement and GDN are hoping that more than half of the key evangelical seminaries around the world will offer a course on diaspora missiology as a result of the GDF 2015, thus catalyzing the global church to embrace diaspora missions. More information about the forum may be found on the Global Diaspora Network website, www.globaldiaspora.net.

A compendium for the future

In particular, after GDF 2015, the GDN will be publishing a comprehensive compendium on diaspora missiology. The compendium will have these parts: Phenomenological; Biblical Theological; Strategy; Ecclesiastical; Regional Case Studies; Issue Case Studies; and Definition of Terms, Bibliographies, and Appendices (e.g., diaspora course syllabi).

Tereso Casiño, Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies at Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity, and Chair of the GDF compendium section Definition of Terms, Bibliographies, and Appendices, believes that the ‘GDN compendium [will] promote Diaspora Missiology as a respectable field, alongside other existing [academic] disciplines.’ Further, he is enthusiastic about the GDN compendium’s impact ‘on the overall curriculum of theological institutions around the world’.

‘The compendium could’, he says, ‘situate Diaspora Missiology at the cutting-edge of missions instruction and practice—a viable nexus of integrating various disciplines in theological education.’ At a practical level, ‘the way Kingdom workers are trained could change as the compendium introduces new realities, challenges, and opportunities in evangelizing and discipling people on the move. The depth and breadth of the GDN compendium could accelerate and upgrade the quality of training that Kingdom workers receive in various settings.’

Diaspora missions—a kairos opportunity

In ‘Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge’, the late Ralph D Winter and Bruce A Koch write: ‘As history unfolds and global migration increases, more and more people groups are being dispersed throughout the entire globe . . . Not many agencies take note of the strategic value of reaching the more accessible fragments of these “global peoples”.’
Dr John Baxter, Director of Diaspora Ministries for Converge Worldwide states:

‘Diaspora missions uniquely maps on to the most important shift in global missions in the twenty-first century—the rise of the Majority World missions force. Mobilizing mission personnel and resources from the Global South and East is the great challenge of our day, and diaspora missions strategy provides an essential tool for mobilizing, training and caring for the vast majority of this potential missions force—the millions of Majority World Christians working secular jobs in the 10/40 Window countries, as well as in Europe and North America where they are in close contact with other diasporic un reached people groups. If we ignore missions to and from people on the move, we leave untapped this great well of missions resource that God has put in place.’

While many agencies are responding slowly to the realities of diaspora, there is a gradual realization of the strategic value of diaspora missiology for reaching the ‘global peoples’. The diaspora mission initiative at Cape Town is evidence of this growing awareness.

Diaspora mission is likely to accelerate as academics and practitioners implement diaspora missiology following Cape Town and the Manila Global Diaspora Forum in 2015. Diaspora mission is a kairos opportunity. I am thankful that the Lausanne Movement’s embrace of diaspora missiology is stimulating the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world, particularly to the diasporas—the scattered people.

Sadiri Joy Tira serves as the Lausanne Senior Associate for Diasporas and the Global Diaspora Network (GDN) Chairperson. He is also Vice President for Diaspora Missions for Advancing Indigenous Missions (AIM) and Diaspora Missiology Specialist at the Jaffray Centre for Global Initiatives at Ambrose University College and Seminary (AUCS) in Canada. Joy received his theological and ministry training from Western Seminary (DMiss) and Reformed Theological Seminary (DMin).

Endnotes

2. This UN statistic does not include ‘tourists’, but we would include them in the diaspora missions agenda.
3. Voluntary factors include education, employment, financial advancement, family reunification, etc.
4. Involuntary factors include natural disasters, war, human trafficking, etc.
5. Editor’s Note: See article entitled ‘People and Their Religions on the Move’ by Gina Bellofatto in the November 2012 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.
6. Editor’s Note: See article entitled ‘European Immigration Policy’ by Darrell Jackson in the January 2013 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.
7. Editor’s Note: See Section II C-5 of The Cape Town Commitment, ‘Love reaches out to scattered peoples’.
8. Editor’s Note: See Foreword to The Cape Town Commitment.
Micah Challenge International

A voice of evangelical advocacy

Joel Edwards, Geoff Tunnicliffe

In 2000 a small miracle occurred. Some 189 nations agreed to halve extreme poverty by the year 2015.
It was the dawn of a new millennium with fresh hope for ‘a more peaceful, prosperous and just world’. The UN declared: ‘We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected.’ An inspiring promise!

From this declaration they formulated eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to achieve this audacious plan, each one with measurable targets.

**Micah Challenge**

*Micah Challenge*, birthed by the *World Evangelical Alliance* and *Micah Network*, encapsulated this hope, recognizing that this was a moment in history of unique potential, when the stated intentions of world leaders echoed something of the mind of the biblical prophets and the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor. We also recognised that we had the means and capacity to reduce poverty dramatically.

When we stepped into the United Nations building to launch the campaign on 15 October 2004, it was like walking into a dream. Between 2001 and 2003, a small group had imagined a Christian movement that mobilized people behind these eight promises to reduce poverty which the UN initiated at the dawn of the Third Millennium.

The event, which took place in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium, featured key spokespersons from the two founding bodies, Micah Network and the World Evangelical Alliance, along with representatives from Africa and Latin America, directors of the Millennium Campaign and a Manhattan Gospel choir.

The Rt Revd Njongonkulu Ndungane, Archbishop of Cape Town, who presented the main address, reminded us that: ‘The Micah Challenge presents a significant new movement in global civil society to address the evils of poverty. It is God’s challenge to us to be his agents of hope in this hurting world.’

In the words of the *Micah Call*, we committed ourselves, ‘as followers of Jesus, to work together for the holistic transformation of our communities.’

**New beginnings in evangelical advocacy**

What was really new about the Micah experiment was the emphasis on engaging with political powers—doing advocacy. We called international and national decision-makers—whether they were rich nations or poor or somewhere in-between—to account, to fulfil their promise to achieve the MDGs. We wanted to be agents of God’s hope and to put justice at the heart of the church.

Historically, the primary work by evangelicals among the poor was in building schools, hospitals, and agricultural and feeding programmes. Micah Challenge helped more evangelical Christians understand that bad policies or corruption negatively impact every day the grassroots work of many of our churches and agencies. Today, many more evangelicals believe that if we are to help raise the poor out of poverty we must do both types of work.

**Justice, mercy, and humility in action**

From the very outset, Micah Challenge (like *Micah Network*) built its identity on *Micah 6:8* with its emphasis on *justice, mercy, and humility*. Its mission was to prompt evangelical
communities around the world to respond to the challenges set by the goals, in order to reduce extreme poverty. As a global evangelical movement, we were clear from the outset that, while the focus of our work was political advocacy, our mandate was entirely **biblical**. We presented biblical concerns which demanded political responses.

**Follow-up work**

In the earliest stages many people assumed that within a few years both the aspirations and commitments of the MDGs would have been forgotten. However, this has been far from the case:

In more recent years, NGOs like World Vision have developed advocacy around **MDG 4**—child survival.

Charismatic individuals have galvanized support. Nicta Lubaale from the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (which covers over 1,000 denominations) has led the work on **MDG 1**—fighting poverty across eastern Africa.

Paz y Esperanza’s Alfonso Wieland has led work with hundreds of churches in Latin America to show how advocacy against gender inequality—**MDG 3**—can work.

Christian Aid in the UK has published valuable reports on poverty’s structural causes.

Compassion International launched its Live 58 video in 2012, reminding us about the progress the world has made in fighting extreme poverty, and in December 2014, Bread for the World published an extensive response to hunger in the USA.³

Tearfund and TEAR Australia have linked their advocacy to Micah Challenge priorities and encouraged their supporters to speak to the government about the level of overseas aid and corruption’s corrosive impact.

Christians of all shapes have partnered with Micah—Baptist World Alliance, Salvation Army, World Pentecostal Fellowship, World Council of Churches, Hillsong—and developed initiatives to focus attention on fighting extreme poverty.

In addition, a growing number of evangelical business leaders as well as TV, film, and other media professionals are using their vocation not only to bring attention to the calamity of extreme poverty but also to create enterprises that bring hope and help to millions of people.
Advocacy works

Together we are also discovering that advocacy works.

Over the past ten years, Micah Challenge campaigns in places as diverse as Nepal, Germany, Australia, Portugal, Malaysia, Philippines, Zimbabwe, Benin, Zambia, India, Haiti, France, Peru, and Malawi have all embarked on advocating to power, going from the holy ground of church to ‘worldly’ seats of power.

In addition to action on the ground, the small international team has provided the catalyst for advocacy through capacity building and resource provision, telling stories, and cajoling and encouraging evangelical communities to have an impact on extreme poverty.

The brief story of Micah Challenge suggests that there is a lot to celebrate . . . extreme poverty has been halved in the last 25 years, millions have been lifted from poverty, and child mortality and primary education have improved considerably

Moments in the movements

The result has been a range of activities, partnerships, and events with global movements in our campaign drawing together high-profile partnerships across the Christian communities and civil society.

In 2007, for example, Blow the Half-time Whistle on Poverty saw the first of three global campaigns and woke us up to the fact that we had already reached the halfway mark in fulfilling our promises to the poor. Micah Challenge and WEA hosted a prestigious gathering in 2008 with the UN Secretary General in Washington. In the same year, an amazing Walk of Witness hosted by Micah Challenge UK took place in London in conjunction with the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. The walk from Whitehall to Lambeth Palace ended with addresses by then Archbishop Rowan Williams and Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Our second global campaign, 10. 10. 10., involved 60 million people in 70 nations in global prayer and messy painted handprints and saw 410 politicians in 17 nations lobbied by ‘ordinary’ prophets.

In November 2014, EXPOSED completed the first-ever global Christian response to corruption. This historic campaign ended its journey at the G20 meeting in Brisbane, delivering 147,700 signatures from 188 nations, and an Open Letter from 95 global Christian leaders representing a community of a billion people, calling for reforms to the financial system to make tax dodging and multinational secrecy much harder. Even more amazingly, all of the policy demands we identified at the outset of the campaign were firmly on the table when world leaders met in Brisbane in November.

Crucially, the focus on corruption and good governance was all underpinned by fresh theological reflection⁴ and prayer with 1,000 vigils taking place in 100 nations.
Celebration and sorrow

The brief story of Micah Challenge suggests that there is a lot to celebrate. If nothing else, extreme poverty has been halved in the last 25 years, millions have been lifted from poverty, and child mortality and primary education have improved considerably. However, in seeing the kind of justice, mercy, and love the Bible describes, we still have a long way to go.

A society which has the power to place a rocket on a shooting star 600 billion miles from earth, yet still has over 1 billion people going to bed hungry each day and a billion without a proper toilet, still has a lot to answer for. Forty million babies are born each year without any skilled help and 300,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth.

In December 2014, the Micah Summit rallied 150 friends, supporters, and field coordinators to evaluate our response as civil society and religious groups in order to celebrate progress, lament for our failures, and re-commit ourselves for the world God wants.

Micah Challenge exists to challenge governments to deliver our promises to the poor.

The challenge to us

Micah Challenge exists to challenge governments to deliver our promises to the poor. However, we also lament, recognizing that we have so much more to do. We are painfully aware that the church—with all its amazing work—still has a long way to go to shape the world God wants, a world in which Jesus Christ is lifted to full view and where justice is at home with politics and our economic systems.

Such a world sounds utopian, but such a world is possible. Christians who live in that reality between the now and the not-yet are called to yearn for a world which brings future shalom into the present.

In our last act of worship, the final words of commissioning came from Mercy Justice Hildebrand, a 14-year-old member of Millennium Kids:

‘On behalf of your sons, daughters, and grandchildren around the world, I want to sincerely thank you for your tenacity and determination to work steadily and whole-heartedly at the Millennium Development Goals for 14 years. We believe you can accomplish what you set out to do. The world we will inherit depends on your efforts now. Please, refuse to give up. For nothing will be impossible with God.’

The Micah Summit marked the close of an important chapter in this new expression of evangelical ministry on the world stage. However, this experiment in advocacy has merely been a prelude in our long–term commitment to the poorest of the poor. In 2015, Micah Global will take up the challenge to work across our churches and NGOs to promote justice, mercy, and humility.
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Geoff Tunnicliffe is a global strategist, peace builder, and author, residing in Vancouver, Canada. From 2005 through 2014, he served as Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance. He is an advisor to faith and value-based TV, film, and digital media projects as well as companies that work for society’s common good.

Endnotes


2. The 8 Millennium Development Goals are as follows: Goal 1: eradicate extreme poverty; Goal 2: achieve universal primary education; Goal 3: promote gender equality and empower women; Goal 4: reduce child mortality; Goal 5: improve maternal health; Goal 6: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; Goal 7: ensure environmental sustainability; Goal 8: develop a global partnership for development.

3. Editor’s Note: For another example, see the article entitled ‘Food Security and Its Role in Transformational Development’ by Ravi Jayakaran in the May 2014 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.


* Editor’s Note: Image on the cover and page 16 is modified from ‘Begging’ by Nicolò Paternoster (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0). “United nations headquarter” image on page 18 by photos_mweber is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.
In Europe, over the last five to six years, the word ‘crisis’ has been applied most frequently to the economic situation. However, Europe faces crises on many different levels. There is an economic crisis, but there is also a political crisis, a social crisis, an environmental crisis, and a religious crisis. Only a multi-dimensional analysis can do justice to the complex situation and give meaningful insights into the implications of the crisis for the future of mission in Europe.
This article will briefly describe the challenges that Europe currently faces within each of these five dimensions (economic, political, social, environmental, and religious) before considering the implications for Christian mission in Europe today. As the only continent where the church has not seen growth over the last 100 years, perhaps today’s crisis in Europe will turn out to be God’s opportunity.  

1. Economic crisis

Despite the best efforts of the European Central Bank, the state of Europe’s economy remains perilous. Many southern European countries continue to struggle with high levels of public and private debt. Unemployment remains stubbornly high—26% in Greece and 24% in Spain, and 50% and 54% respectively among the under 25s.

In the Eurozone, individual countries are no longer able to devalue their currencies to regain competitiveness; so the only alternative is savage public sector cuts. Countries of Central and Eastern Europe are suffering from the collapsed export markets of Western Europe. The recent fall in the price of oil and the economic sanctions due to the conflict in Ukraine are impacting not only Russia but also the other neighbouring European states.

German dependence on exports leaves them vulnerable to the slowdown in Asia and sanctions on Russia. The British economy, unburdened by the restrictions of the euro, is growing but is still very dependent on the financial sector. French industry, the motor of the second biggest economy in Europe, is haemorrhaging money due to poor competitiveness. With Eurozone inflation having turned negative, the risk of a deflationary spiral and a return to recession across Europe is real.

The imbalances within the Eurozone continue unresolved, meaning the solution for some countries would make things worse in others. Economically it might be better for there to be a breakup of the single currency, but politically this is unthinkable; so Europe may well be condemned to 10–20 years of very low economic growth.

2. Political crisis

Pressure within the EU

The strict economic measures applied by the European Central Bank on some Eurozone countries have generated significant political and, in some countries, social unrest as well as a significant change in attitudes to the EU. Euroscepticism can now be found in many places across Europe, and in Britain the pressure for a referendum on Britain’s withdrawal from the EU is building in the run-up to this year’s general election.

The victory of anti-austerity party Syriza, the Coalition of the Radical Left, in Greece’s recent general election and the dramatic rise of sister party Podemos in Spain reflect this change in attitudes.

Pressure from extremist parties

Nationalist, populist, and xenophobic movements are on the increase in many parts of Europe. Extreme right-wing politicians are able to tap into popular malcontent at soaring
unemployment and point the finger at migrants as the ones to blame. The protests of xenophobic groups are only likely to be fuelled by the January terrorist attacks in Paris.

**Pressure from the regions**

During 2014, the EU faced unprecedented attempts by two regions to form new independent states. Scotland held a referendum on independence from the UK in September resulting in a narrow rejection of independence, but only at the cost of measures which may require fundamental constitutional reforms. In Spain, the Catalan nationalists held an unofficial referendum in November which saw 80% of voters back independence. It is likely that pro-independence movements across Europe will only get stronger in the years to come.

### 3. Social crisis

**Migration**

Until quite recently, migration from outside the EU has been twice that from within. The EU-27 foreign population (people residing in an EU-27 member state with citizenship of a non-member country) on 1 January 2013 was 20.4 million, representing 4.1% of the EU-27 population. Yet perhaps a more representative figure for the migrant population is the 33.5 million people (6.7%) who were born outside of the EU-27. Integration of these migrants has and is proving to be a real challenge. Added to this are new migration flows within the EU due to the accession of new countries and the economic crisis which has led to significant internal migration from Mediterranean countries to Northern Europe and particularly Germany and Britain.

**Demography**

Europe is in the early stages of another social crisis that is entirely of its own making: the ageing of its population due to Europeans’ reticence to procreate. Fertility rates in every state of the EU are below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. The impact of these demographic changes on the future of Europe is sobering. In broad terms the current generation of adults is being replaced by one that is less than two-thirds its size. In 1960, 11.5% of Germany’s population was over 65. By 2060, it will be 33%. The average age in Italy in 1960 was 31.2 years. By 2060 it will be over 50.

### 4. Environmental crisis

The economic crisis has left environmental concerns way down the political agenda. However, the recent report by the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* made clear that every continent would suffer the consequences of climate change in the decades to come. Extreme weather is occurring ever more frequently across the globe.

### 5. Religious crisis

Christians face two clear challenges: secularism, which predominates in the public sphere and relegates religion to the private domain, and Islam, which is ever more evident in parts of Europe that have not previously had a Muslim community.
At the same time, sociologists of religion have observed the resilience of religious belief in many places around Europe. Some are even talking about a re-sacralisation of Europe.

**Mission in a Europe where crisis is the new normal**

1. **Mission in the midst of economic crisis**

   Europe almost certainly faces a long period of economic stagnation. This will cause significant problems for resource-dependent churches and mission agencies. Chronic unemployment will mean that ‘business as mission’ becomes a primary means of communicating hope and demonstrating love to tomorrow’s Europeans. Social justice, simplicity, and sustainability will become key values of Christian community.

2. **Mission in the midst of political crisis**

   The possibility that the EU might fracture into economic or political ‘zones’ may threaten existing international mission arrangements. Conflicts within and between countries may make mission to European refugees a necessity. As independence movements benefit from widespread Euroscepticism, the Christian voice in the public square will be vital to speak for peace, justice, and solidarity.

3. **Mission in the midst of social crisis**

   Intergenerational tensions will increase as an indebted younger generation rails against the wealth of the elderly and the costs of pensions and healthcare. This will make the church one of the few intergenerational communities in Europe and a powerful demonstration of the truth of the gospel. Care for the elderly will become another of the principal activities of Christian mission.

   Mission to migrants and by migrants will accelerate—migrant churches will become increasingly contextualised; native churches will become increasingly internationalised.

4. **Mission in the midst of environmental crisis**

   The increased prevalence of extreme weather and the higher CO2 levels in the atmosphere which will move fertile latitudes northwards, will lead to further migration. As this begins to occur, environmental initiatives and engagement will move from the margins to the mainstream of mission. At the same time, mission will become increasingly virtualised—both because of technological innovations and because of cost/environmental factors.

5. **Mission in the midst of religious crisis**

   Continued migration from the Global South and higher fertility rates amongst migrants will cause resurgence in religious adherence—both Christian and Muslim. As liberal secularism proves incapable of providing the existential security it once promised, Islam and Christianity will compete in offering hope to a re-sacralised Europe.

   However, for the foreseeable future, the dual processes of secularisation and re-sacralisation will continue simultaneously—many churches will continue to disappear, many
more new churches will be planted, and new forms of Christian community will emerge to engage with this new reality.

**Implications and responses**

**False security**

In Europe, there is one continually repeated message, whether in the mouths of politicians, economists, or the media: if only we can return to economic growth then we can get back on the road to peace, progress, and prosperity. That is the dominant ideology of today’s Europe: an ideology of economic growth as our guarantee of existential security in the present and eschatological hope for the future.

Today most Europeans hope not for the return of the Lord Jesus but for the return of economic growth. All will be well if we can see a return to a nice steady growth in GDP. Of course that hope is built on the fallacy that perpetual economic growth is possible.

Even if it were possible, is economic growth really the hope for Europe? Surely only Christ can truly satisfy the hopes and aspirations of Europe’s peoples. To believe otherwise is to deny the gospel.

We have become so accustomed to the peace and prosperity of the last 60 years since the end of the Second World War, that peace and prosperity are seen as Europe’s normal setting. The truth is that the last 60 years are an extraordinary historical anomaly.

For most of Europe’s history, crisis has been the normal context for the church’s life and mission. In crisis after crisis, the churches of Europe have survived and in many cases thrived. If Christians have to adapt to a new context of long-term crisis in Europe, we can do so in the confidence that previous generations of European believers have done so.

**The hope for Europe**

To do this we need to reject the secular eschatology of economic progress. Christians have an extraordinary message of extraordinary hope at times of crisis. So the churches of Europe have a tremendous opportunity. For the first time in a generation, Europeans are questioning the hope and security that this world offers. It is the moment for churches to regain their confidence in the gospel as the hope for Europe, especially in times of crisis.

Lesslie Newbigin was once interviewed on the radio and was asked the question: ‘Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the church?’ Newbigin was silent. He said nothing for 10 or 15 seconds, which of course is an eternity on the radio, until finally responding: ‘I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.’

Europe faces a multi-dimensional crisis with huge implications for European states and for Christian mission. Yet the Christian message of hope is the same one that has sustained generations of Europeans through all the crises of history: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Europe’s crisis is God’s opportunity.
Jim Memory is lecturer in European Mission at Redcliffe College, Gloucester, UK, and co-editor of Vista, Redcliffe’s quarterly bulletin of research-based information on mission in Europe. From 1994–2008, he was a church planter in Spain with the European Christian Mission and is currently a member of the International Leadership Team of ECM.

Endnotes

1. Editor’s Note: See article entitled ‘Europe: A most strategic mission field’ by Jeff Fountain in the November 2014 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.


4. Editor’s Note: See article entitled ‘European Immigration Policy’ by Darrell Jackson in the January 2013 issue of Lausanne Global Analysis.


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