



Aid to the  
Church in Need

ACN CANADA

## Press Release — For Immediate Release

*Red Wednesday 2021 in Canada*

### Sharp Rise in Anti-Christian Persecution in Africa

*Montréal, October 21, 2021* – **Burkina Faso has been under attack since 2015 and is seeing its welcoming and tolerant way of life challenged by outside fundamentalist forces. In Nigeria, Catholic bishops are no longer reluctant to speak of a 'slow genocide' of Christians, massacred or driven off their land by Fulani herdsmen, who in fact are no longer really Fulani...**

On Wednesday, November 17, Aid to the Church in Need Canada (ACN) is inviting the country's ecclesial institutions - and why not, civil as well - to illuminate their building or a symbolic site in their region in red.

St. Michael's and Mary Queen of the World Basilicas in Toronto and Montréal respectively, will be illuminated in red. A new player is joining the event: Notre-Dame-Du-Cap Shrine in Trois-Rivières, the largest Marian shrine in Canada, will also light up its façade for the occasion.

All are invited to dress in red on the day to show their solidarity with Christians who are victims of religious persecution throughout the world. The use of the hashtag #RedWednesday across social media channels is also strongly encouraged to help make the day more visible. Finally, Versant-la-Noël, located in the Thetford-Mines region, a shrine founded by the religious singer-songwriter Robert Lebel, has confirmed its participation again this year.

For more information, to register an entry for the illumination of a building or to propose a time of prayer in your parish and to obtain promotional and liturgical material, contact Ms. Valérie Vulcain, person in charge of the event, by calling 1-800-585-6333, ext. 227, or by writing to [vv@acn-canada.org](mailto:vv@acn-canada.org).

### Back to In-Person Learning and Africa in the Spotlight

"In both Montréal and Toronto, we will see the return of in-person activities and this is excellent news," says Marie-Claude Lalonde, National Director of ACN Canada. "We are also very happy to see the lighting of the Basilica of Notre-Dame-du-Cap in Trois-Rivières for the first time in

the history of Red Wednesday. This is a new player, showing its solidarity with persecuted Christians throughout the world. What more can we say other than thank you for this openness," says Ms. Lalonde.

In Toronto, a prayer vigil will mark the day (7 pm), while in Montréal, the Mass (7:30 pm) will have a distinctly African flavour, thanks to the participation of the *Les Anges* choir, made up of people from different parts of that continent.

Ms. Lalonde explains that it is not by chance that we have chosen this choir. "The findings of ACN's Religious Freedom Report 2021, published last April, are distressing for a large part of the continent, which seems to be increasingly invaded by Islamist militias, very often alien to local Islam, thus destroying the social fabric of a large part of the region."



## Nigeria: A "Slow Genocide" Against Christians

On September 29, two bishops and an official of a South African-based civil non-governmental organization presented a video conference at the international headquarters of Aid to the Church in Need in Germany. According to Bishop Wilfred Anagbe of the Makurdi Diocese in Benue State, the escalation of violence is no longer just a conflict between predominantly Muslim Fulani herdsmen and predominantly Christian farmers. "It is not just a question of grazing land. To me, it's a religious war," he said. "They have an agenda to Islamize this country and they are doing it by methodically eliminating all Christians and occupying territories. If it was just grazing land, why kill people? Why burn their houses?" he asked.

Johan Viljoen, Director of the South African Denis Hurley Peace Institute, which works to promote peace, democracy and justice and studies armed attacks by the Fulani in south-eastern Nigeria, calls it a "concerted and well-planned occupation. This is all happening under the umbrella of Miyetti Allah, led by President Buhari," he says, referring to an organization that claims to defend the rights of Fulani herdsmen. This is the first time the Catholic Church in Nigeria has used the term genocide - "slow genocide" - to refer to what is happening in Nigeria." We hope that as many people and institutions as possible respond to the call and participate in Red Wednesday in solidarity with persecuted Christians," concludes Ms. Lalonde.

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Ms. Marie-Claude Lalonde, National Director of ACN Canada  
is available for interviews.

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Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is a Pontifical International Catholic Charity whose mandate is to be of "service of fraternal charity to the local Churches most suffering and needy" through information, prayer and action.

Founded in 1947, it helps spiritually and materially, through 23 national offices including Canada, the Church in need in more than 139 countries.

