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Pakistan faces refugee crisis

As Pakistan continues its press on the Taliban, thousands are fleeing the Swat Valley. A brief lull in the violence over the weekend saw many people loading their families and possessions into anything that moved in order to leave the area.

A "peace" pact with the Taliban broke down 11 days ago when security forces began an assault to push the militants back into their territory. The rebels, well-established in their stronghold, had begun to encroach upon Islamabad in a blatant grab for land and power.

The result when the two forces met was volatile. The government is now preparing for up to 500,000 internal refugees, the largest displacement crisis in Pakistan's history.

Even when the refugees arrive at refugee camps, it's not a guarantee of safety or comfort. Jacob Kramer is with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. He says, "These camps are now full. New places will have to be made in order to help them and have an opportunity to distribute the most essential things to maintain life."

It's hot, overcrowded, and there are inadequate sanitation facilities as well as a lack of electricity. Add to that: diseases and a lack of medical help, and the situation deteriorates quickly. Kramer says their teams are mobilizing. "We've been in contact with our partners, and they are trying to get a more detailed picture so that we can start with food and non-food responses to help the people."

CRWRC reaches out in God's name to people who are struggling with poverty, hunger, disaster, and injustice to help them find lasting ways to improve their lives.

The teams are the hands and feet of Christ in this horrific situation. Kramer urges people to "pray for the people, that God's grace may abide with them and peace may return as soon as possible. This is a population which has been tormented from so many sides, so often, that they are highly-affected by trauma."

Pakistan's 'displaced deluge'

Hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing fighting in Pakistan's north-west as the army continues its operation to eliminate Taleban militants. Aftab Ahmad, a programme development manager for the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) in northern Pakistan, describes how it is coping with the exodus.

While I was used to working with people who became victims of war and were forced to leave their homes over the past few months, I was not prepared for what I saw on 10 May.

We had put up transition centres in five locations to receive people who were likely to move out of Swat as a result of the military action against Taleban insurgents.

I was at the Jalala Centre set up near the Jalala Camp on the main Malakand road with my team. But then came the deluge, there was a sea of humanity. They came in all kinds of vehicles. Some rode on the roof tops of buses and trucks, many on rickshaws, some on bicycles and many just walked.

A curfew had been lifted from 0900 to 1300 in Malakand and Swat. The law enforcers could not re-impose the curfew until late at night because it was impossible to keep the people inside who were fleeing to safety.

The road down from the Malakand Pass usually carries little traffic and it seemed normal till 1600. Some carried bundles of spinach, a child carried his family's only hen, some had their goat and sheep with them. Most had nothing.

I saw an entire family riding in three small auto rickshaws, nine in each. It normally carries three people. They rarely ply outside a city but today rickshaws were crossing the Malakand pass. One old man had blisters all over his hand driving a rickshaw. Another individual had paid 18,000 rupees (\$224) to hire a truck from Mingora to Shergarh, which in normal days would cost him 3,000 rupees (\$37).

The double-lane road had been converted into a four-lane road with all traffic moving in one direction. At the transition centre we provided energy drinks and information regarding the registration of displaced people. The centres also provided a space where weary people could rest and re-energise themselves before they move to the next destination.

We had arranged vehicles to transport them because the rented vehicles wanted to go back from where they came to continue their business.

It was at 0230 that we finally sent the last family to the camps and our staff were able to return their hostel. It was a story repeated endlessly over the next few days.

‘Shrieks and howls’

Many of those forced to move have colourful stories. Liaqat was a barber in the small town of Barikot. He was doing well for his family until recently.

But a few months back his business closed down as shaving was declared an unacceptable business. He had no intention of leaving Barikot. But as the military action started and the firing of guns grew louder - along with the shrieks and howls of terrified people - it became impossible for him and his family to live there any longer.

Children had become hysterical - crying endlessly - and everyone was in a trauma not knowing when the shells would hit them.

Like many others, he decided on the spur of the moment to leave as he could not take it anymore. He did not have a penny in his pocket. His neighbour helped him move out with his family in his old car. After a seven-hour gruelling journey he ended up in our transit centre at Jalala.

He was informed where he needed to go to get his registration, which camp would have a place for him and where the distribution point was for food and medical supplies. For these small mercies, Liaqat was relieved. He said he had no idea where he was heading once he decided to flee for and his journey had been in deep apprehension over the future.

Pakistan: Simple questions answered

As Pakistan's military steps up an offensive against the Taleban, Shoaib Hasan answers key questions about the conflict.

Where is the fighting taking place?

The fighting started in Pakistan's tribal areas located between the country's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the border with Afghanistan.

It has since spread south and east across the NWFP into what is known as the settled areas. The tribal areas are directly administered by the central government, while the administration of the settled areas falls to the province in question.

The tribal areas have a separate system of justice, while the settled areas follow regular Pakistan law derived from colonial British law. Currently, the fighting is taking place in the Swat valley, which is part of regular Pakistan territory.

Who is fighting whom?

Pakistani security forces are battling Taleban militants and their al-Qaeda allies. In a few cases, the militants have also fought amongst each other, one group alongside the Pakistani army, another on the side of the foreign al-Qaeda elements. There have also been reports of minor clashes between the al-Qaeda cadre, although these are very rare.

What about the drone strikes?

The missile attacks by unmanned US aircraft known as drones have added another facet to the conflict in northern Pakistan. The missile attacks are principally targeted at high-profile Taleban and al-Qaeda leaders, as well as training camps and hideouts.

The attacks have risen since 2008 and have led to a public outcry in Pakistan. Many see them as a breach of the country's sovereignty. But Pakistan's government has not lodged any serious protests against the attacks, and they are believed to be carried out with its tacit approval.

Why is the fighting taking place?

When the fighting first started, the Taleban were principally a sub-division of those fighting in Afghanistan. Pakistani security forces were sent into the tribal areas to kill and capture senior al-Qaeda leaders, who were suspected to have taken refuge there.

These included Osama Bin Laden and Dr. Ayman Al Zawahri. They were also given the task of preventing cross border attacks by the militants against Nato forces in Afghanistan.

They had some success in the former goal, but failed completely in the latter objective. But the operations have given rise to more militancy and the spectre of the Pakistani Taleban. These are

now a separate entity from their Afghan brethren. They seek to convert Pakistan into their version of a state based on Sharia law.

Is the Pakistan army serious in its objectives?

There have been a lot of questions raised about the commitment of the Pakistan's security establishment. In particular, the role of the country's powerful but shadowy Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency has been the subject of much debate.

Most of it is focused on the agency's relationship with the Taleban. The Taleban were very much a creation of the ISI as part of the army's doctrine of 'strategic depth'.

This doctrine saw Afghanistan as a friendly satellite that would give Pakistani forces geographic strategic depth in case of war with its perennial rival India and its much more powerful military. The army also saw the Taleban as an instrument in Pakistan becoming a player in the new great game for energy resources in Central Asia. While post 9/11, the country ostensibly threw in its lot with the US, many believe the army and the ISI continue to secretly support the Taleban.

While all Pakistani authorities deny this on the record, many senior security personnel have admitted some support to the Taleban. They point to the growing influence of India in Afghanistan, and say Pakistan cannot allow this 'encirclement' as it directly imparts on its national security.

What does the US want in all of this?

The United States stated aim is to eliminate Al Qaeda from the region, kill or arrest its senior leadership, defeat the Taleban and help establish sustainable democracies in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It also wants to ensure that Islamic extremists do not take control of Pakistan and its stock pile of nuclear weapons. But its policies since 9/11 have done little to promote these aims. Most Pakistani analysts see the US as a fickle ally. They point out that its policies in the region have been myopic and based on vengeance.

The analysts maintain that waging a war in Iraq diverted precious resources away from what was the real conflict, in Afghanistan. They say this allowed the Taleban and Al Qaeda to reassemble and strengthen their ranks.

The current US administration admits some of these 'mistakes' and has now put Pakistan-Afghanistan on the top of its agenda. But the analysts fear this maybe a case of too little too late, and that the situation may already be lost.

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THE DEEP GROANINGS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

By Carter Conlon

Most people have little understanding about the deep groanings the righteous experience in their walk with God.

Some of you may have experienced this inner groaning when you became a Christian, or perhaps shortly thereafter. Now, you may wonder why this deep groaning is even in you.

David wrote Psalm 6 at a time when he was surrounded by his enemies, consumed by an inner groaning and a deep grief. He felt weak and powerless to do anything about these enemies, and in some measure he began to feel God was displeased with him. This is one of Satan's most potent tactics against the righteous.

As a child of God, you may be going through life with this inner groaning. This does not mean you are necessarily walking around with a long face; in fact, you can actually be smiling and meeting people on the job while having this deep inner groaning, which never seems to go away. During such times the enemy loves to whisper that God is angry with you, that you somehow have failed God and you have fallen out of favor with Him. The reality, however, is that a much deeper work is taking place inside of you. I want to show you something in the Scriptures I believe will help you understand these times of deep inner groanings.

A five page message containing words of clarification and strengthening. . .

To be obtained on request. . .

Tell us if you want to receive this item as text in an ordinary e-mail or as a MS WORD file via e-mail.

Intercessors.Network@Comhem.se

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BLOGS

Blogs to be used to present vital prayer items within the primary target area of the Network:

ENGLISH BLOG:

<http://intercessors.wordpress.com/>

SWEDISH BLOGS:

<http://bonehuset.wordpress.com/>

<http://stilla.wordpress.com/>

BLOGS aiming at the recovering of the Testimony of the Lord:

<http://propheticcollege.wordpress.com/>

<http://austinsparks.wordpress.com/>

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TALK DIRECTLY WITH US AT THE NETWORK HQ VIA YOUR COMPUTER

SKYPE COMPUTER TO COMPUTER CALLING SYSTEM

A very dear friend, intercessor and computer specialist in southern France has recommended a free computer to computer calling system named SKYPE.

All you need add to you computer equipment to be able to talk to friends for free is a microphone and earphones or a headset. The setup of the software is indeed simple.
You may even be able to call to regular and mobile phones all over the world from your computer – rates are very low. There are other interesting features like conference calls and FTP.

<http://www.skype.com>

To find a direct link to the Intercessors Network HQ, use Intercessors Network or Lars Widerberg as contact name.

I would really like to hear from you. . .

Lars W.

MS WORD files

We offer an option as to the format of our articles.

If you want to receive the material as handy MS WORD files – please let us know.

We will keep a solid profile as to virus protection.

Intercessors.Network@COMHEM.SE

Intercessors engage in this prayer operation in more than 10 000 prayer groups and churches in 130 nations.

The networking factor increases and multiplies the number to a degree beyond estimation.

Please, take part as watchmen reporting events in need of prayer cover – send articles found on the web and elsewhere or your own writings.

The articles sent to the Network may be freely circulated via e-mail; display on web sites not allowed.

Encourage your friends to partake in intercession and tell them about the possibility of linking up to Intercessors Network.

Give the king knowledge of Your way of judging, O God
and the spirit of your righteousness to the king's son to control his actions.
Psalms 72:1 Amplified version.

PRIORITY NUMBER ONE:
PRAY FOR MEN IN AUTHORITY, 1 TIM 2:1-4

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