



Above: A young patient at the Rehabilitation Centre, Nagorno Karabakh, receiving treatment

Compassion, Continuity and Commitment

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- Dates for your Diary
- Victims of their Government: An Update on Blue Nile State

This newsletter features my 80th visit to Armenia and the war-torn enclave of Nagorno Karabakh (known to local people by its historic name of Artsakh), together with an account of HART's recent visit to our partners in Nigeria, and an update on Blue Nile State, Sudan.

While we have not visited any other location 80 times, we have returned many times to our partners in Sudan and South Sudan (at least 40 times); and Nigeria and Burma (at least 30 times). We are not mentioning these numbers of visits to boast - but to highlight our commitment to continuity of engagement in fulfilling our mandate of aid and advocacy for people trapped behind closed borders and/or generally 'off the radar screen' of major aid organisations and the international media.

That mandate is founded on compassion.

Compassion is not a soft and sentimental concept: it is tough and challenging. T.S. Eliot referred to: *'The sharp compassion of the healer's art Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.'*

This sentiment is reflected in HART's compassionate, tenacious commitment to visiting our partners with

practical aid and to obtaining evidence of their situation as first-hand witnesses in our advocacy for them.

The visits are often challenging: physically, emotionally and spiritually. But we always return receiving more than we can ever give – blessed, humbled and inspired beyond words by the generosity of people who have nothing, but who give everything; by their courage and miracles of grace.

As you will read in this newsletter, my 80th visit to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh was no exception. The Armenian people have suffered so much. In the late 1980s and early 1990s massacres of Armenians in Azerbaijan's cities of Baku and Sumgait were followed by the Azeri attempted ethnic cleansing of all Armenians from their historic homeland of Karabakh. This began with systematic deportations in a policy known as 'Operation Ring' and developed into a full-scale war. 400 GRAD missiles pounded onto the little capital city of Stepanakert every day, and aerial bombardment by low-flying jets dropped massive 500kg bombs directly on civilian targets. After

Continued on page 2

two-and-a-half years of perhaps the highest intensity conflict of the early 1990s and massive bloodshed, the Armenians managed to save their land and to bring Azerbaijan to a ceasefire, which persists uneasily to the present day.

Now the Armenians are rebuilding their devastated land with inspirational courage and inimitable style. I always say that *“Armenians do not just survive. They create beauty from the ashes of destruction.”*

Anyone who visits Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh immediately agrees.

‘Sharp compassion’ is needed not just to visit people undergoing the anguish of war, but to cope with the challenge of advocacy when the legitimate rights of victims of aggression are denied or dismissed. This is the double agony: the witnessing of the suffering and then the denial of justice and help.

After one visit to Karabakh at the height of the war, I brought back photographs of children shredded by cluster bombs. I asked the then Minister at the Foreign Office if the British Government would make representations to Azerbaijan, concerning the use of cluster bombs on civilians – a violation of international conventions. The Minister’s reply was brief and brusque:

“No country has an interest in other countries; only interests – and we have oil interests in Azerbaijan” – and I was shown out of the room.

Deeply distressed, I raised the British Government’s position in parliament, saying that, for the first time in my life, I was ashamed to be British. I could understand strategic and commercial interests, but I did not think the majority of British people would want oil at the price of cluster bombs on children.

When we come out from the places where our partners are suffering from war, violations of human rights and brutal injustice – whether it be Nagorno Karabakh, Sudan, northern Nigeria, or Burma, we feel sore and raw with the suffering we have witnessed. We are also confronted by the policies of oppressors, who try to intimidate people from visiting the victims of their oppression. For example, Azerbaijan has a policy of issuing threats to people who may wish to visit Karabakh, including parliamentarians on official visits, warning them that they will be put on Azerbaijan’s ‘Black List’, in order to prevent them from seeing the truth.

Of course, my name is on that ‘Black List’. It was recently published and I was delighted to see that I am in excellent company, with many people for whom I have such respect that I call it a ‘Roll of Honour’.

But Azerbaijan is still threatening war with incessant hostile propaganda, and Karabakh is still bereft of aid from any UN organisation. Therefore, HART is committed to continuing to support our hero of the peace, Vardan Tadevosyan and his inspirational Rehabilitation Centre, as well as to advocate for justice and peace for a people who have suffered injustice and war for too long.

We are committed to continuity in our relationship with our partners in many countries in need of aid and advocacy, for as long as they need our support. The ‘sharp compassion’ which hits out against oppression and untruth, and which we must turn towards ourselves to ensure that our advocacy is sharply accurate, must not be blunted, whatever the cost.

Caroline Cox.



Above: Homes devastated during the war in Nagorno-Karabakh



Right: The beautiful church at Shushi, Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan tried to destroy it; then used it to store weapons of death.

Standing firm in the face of adversity: Reflections on our Nigeria visit

By David Thomas, HART staff

In direct contradiction of the Nigerian constitution, 12 of Nigeria's 36 states have adopted Sharia law. This has resulted in discrimination and violence against non-Muslims, particularly Christians, and moderate Muslims. In September, a team from HART visited our partners in northern Nigeria, collecting evidence of a worrying increase in violence and terrorist activity by militant groups, including the self-avowed Islamist group, Boko Haram, which has declared its intention to drive all Christians out of northern Nigeria.

David Thomas, our project logistics coordinator, reflects on the courage of HART's partners, who stand firm in the face of adversity.

One whom we always meet is the Bishop of Bauchi. His is a beautiful face, the face of a man who suffers and who carries the unenviable responsibility of leading a suffering people, who live in perpetual danger. His name is Musa, which is Moses. How appropriate!

After several years of 'truce', the Christians and non-Muslims we meet on our visits to northern Nigeria are living, once again, in permanent threat of violence, destruction and death. Those in the States of Kano and Bauchi, two of the twelve Nigerian states implementing Sharia Law, live under constant discrimination. As one prominent Christian leader said, *"Even if the Law is on our side, even if a judge gave decision in our favour, who in this State will enforce it?"*

Muslims are themselves targeted by stricter Muslims for refusing to support and finance their agenda.

What always strikes us on these visits to our partners in Kano and Bari, Bauchi and Jos, is their vision for the future. If optimism is not a mere wishful thinking that things will improve; if it is rather living and planning for the future, then these people are truly optimistic. Their congregations are being murdered in the fields, burnt alive and scattered, their churches and homes destroyed. Yet, still, they plan and seek funding to expand and not to retreat. They are setting up rural missions; clinics open to all, including Muslims (at one clinic constituting 90% of patients), and schools, also attended by Muslim pupils whose parents want them to receive a wider education than that available in a Muslim school.

The Bishop of Bauchi, mentioned above, said that despite the danger, *"I cannot leave. If I, their bishop, leave, then all my people will panic. Even if it brings my death I must stay."*

From our visits, certain questions inevitably arise.

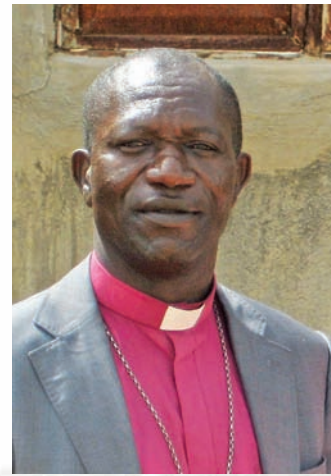
What is the motivation of the aggressors? Economic and political factors are involved, but it is clear from our partners that there is a religious agenda being pursued: a determination to clear out non-Muslims, and to attack Muslims who will not cooperate with (and fund) this agenda.

There is a long history of violence and discrimination. It did not begin with Boko Haram. There does seem a tendency to use Boko Haram as a 'catch-all' and talk only of their threat.

It is sometimes claimed that these attacks represent resentment against newcomers. But many of the Christians and other non-Muslims attacked have lived in the area for generations, 'indigenes' to use the Nigerian term.

There is much attempt to talk the way to reconciliation. As Churchill said, whatever its failures, "it is always better to jaw, jaw than to war, war." However, are the various sides talking the same language? Many doubt it. It is realistic dialogue, that honestly faces uncomfortable divergence in views on law and society, which we need to encourage; dialogue that seeks genuine reconstruction and control of conflict.

To read our visit report visit:
www.hart-uk.org/locations/nigeria



Above: The courageous face of the Bishop of Bauchi, Nigeria

Top: Children at the school HART supports in Bauchi State, Nigeria

"Even if the Law is on our side, even if a judge gave decision in our favour, who in this State will enforce it?"

A prominent Christian leader, northern Nigeria.

HART Highlights

Staff

Caroline Cox, HART CEO

In early September David Thomas and I visited the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Bauchi in northern Nigeria to show our solidarity with the persecuted church there, where there have been so many martyrs already this year. We sometimes feel that our visits are pathetically inadequate in any difference they can make, Therefore, we were deeply encouraged when we received a letter of appreciation from the Bishop with these words:

"I wish to express our profound gratitude for your visitation to our Diocese on the 3rd of September 2013. The gift of cash and other materials you brought indeed brought us great joy and relief."



David Thomas, Project Logistics:

Sasa (Dr. Maung Taing San), who will be familiar to supporters of HART for his wonderful work training Health Workers in Chin State, Burma, has a superbly creative and vivid way with words. During the months of early summer things proved rather difficult for him. HART gave considerable time and effort to supporting him, and helping in the disentangling of certain problems causing him extreme distress. He had been visiting the UK, and as he walked up to the security barrier in terminal 3 of Heathrow on his return to Burma, he turned and said to us, "Thank you for taking away my ugly face and giving me a happy face."



Trevor Currie, Finance Officer:

Highlight No. 1: The team battled against strong tides and unusually large blooms of jelly fish (well they would say that wouldn't they?) but the BraveHART Channel Swim was a great success and our partners in Timor Leste, Sudan and South Sudan have benefited from team members being sponsored by so many generous donors. Now others have taken to the water (a team from Hiscox has just completed the Ardeche 65k Canoe Challenge) whilst some prefer to stay on dry land (Mums&Co and Lucy T). I'd just like to say "Thank you" to everyone who is / has been engaged in fundraising and to all those who sponsor them.



Highlight No.2: I met with someone I can now call 'friend', HART's inspirational Burmese partner, Dr Sasa. I know he will always look me up when he's in the UK as we share a passion for the Chin people and Nando's peri-peri chicken (other peri-peri chicken outlets are available). I feel obliged to have at least two loyalty cards full before his visits... like swimming the Channel, it's a hard task, but someone has to do it.

Megan Rowland, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator:

My highlight was the positive response of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to our Remember Sudan photo petition, which we sent to William Hague, as well as various other MPs.

The aim of the campaign was to draw attention to the atrocities being committed against civilians by the Sudanese Government; to call on the British Government and the international community to act in order to end these atrocities.

We received this response from the Foreign Office:

"We share your serious concern about the conflicts in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States and the unacceptable impact they have on the civilian population there. We strongly condemn the use of indiscriminate tactics by either side during this fighting and in particular the use of aerial bombardment by the Sudanese Armed Forces..."

To read the rest of the letter visit: www.hart-uk.org/news/the-foreign-and-commonwealth-office-responds-to-our-campaign



In September HART bid Lydia Tanner a fond farewell. After three years working with HART Lydia has moved on to other things. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her hard work and dedication.



Summer Interns

We would like to thank our summer interns Freya Dodd, Emma Camp, Gesa Bukowski and Isobelle Darque for all their hard work.

If you are interested in interning with HART please visit: www.hart-uk.org/aboutyou/volunteering/hart-internships

Supporter Highlights

In the last few months many of our supporters have stretched themselves physically in order to raise money for our partners. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all those who have cycled, run, swum and paddled for those being oppressed and persecuted. Without you, our work could not happen.



Lucy Thomas

Lucy Thomas cycled 62 miles round the Isle of Wight, raising just under £1000 for Marol Academy in South Sudan.

Hiscox Ardeche Canoe Race

A team from Hiscox completed an epic 65 km Canoe Race down the Ardeche River. They raised an impressive £6,500+ for HART.

Swim for Change

Thank you to all those who have taken part in our Swim for Change Campaign so far:

Our Channel Swimmers, **Lydia, Luke, John, Alan, Bas, Jamie, Lara** and **Carina**, braved the cold, jellyfish-infested waves of the Channel, not once but twice, in order to raise funds for HART.

Adele Pilkington (right) took part in the Edinburgh Fun Run "this was another water filled event, with vast quantities of it cascading down from the sky! ... but I squelched my way to the end."



Sue Partridge undertook a 90 minute Swimming Challenge raising £100.

Through their efforts, HART's Swim for Change has raised over £10,500 so far for HART partners providing education for children affected by conflict in Sudan and South Sudan, and fighting child malnutrition in Timor Leste.

Will you join us, and Swim for Change? You could do this by holding a sponsored swim with your school, church or workplace, or by taking on your own personal challenge. To find out more, or to register your challenge, visit www.swimforchange.com

Partner Highlights

Updates

- In June HART partner, Dr Sasa of Health and Hope, visited the UK. We held a reception for our supporters to meet him and hear about his work with Primary Health Care workers in Chin State, Burma.
- In August, the updated edition of Baroness Cox's book on modern day slavery, *This Immoral Trade*, was published.
- In September a team from HART visited our partners in northern Nigeria. Turn to page 3 to find out more.
- Caroline Cox made her 80th visit to Nagorno-Karabakh in September. See pages 6-9 for our special feature on the trip, as well as a reflection on previous visits.



Doh Say, Burma:

Doh Say, is our partner working with mobile health teams amongst the Karenni and Karen peoples, Burma. For years he has longed to find a wife. Unfortunately, his active life of reaching out to his people amidst the Burmese jungle, on long dangerous journeys, has left him a bachelor beyond the normal marriageable age in his culture. Now he has sent us the news that he is engaged to a lovely Karenni nurse who dedicates herself to her displaced people in the refugee camps. Please remember and pray for them that all will go well.

News affecting our partners

In July, Burma's President Thein Sein made an official visit to Britain.

Over the summer discrimination and violence in Burma against the Rohingya increased.

In September, riots were sparked in Sudan following the lifting of fuel subsidies.

In September, the UN was allowed to deliver two convoys of aid to Kachin State, Burma; however access for aid is still restricted.

The Fields of Hope: 80 Visits to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh

By Lucy Clements, HART volunteer



Above: Art therapy at The Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre

There is an old story about two farmers who lived side by side in a village ravaged by a severe drought. Both farmers desperately prayed for rain, but while the first farmer waited in his home, the second went out and worked tirelessly to prepare his fields to receive the rain. The story ends with the simple question: which farmer had faith that there would be rain?

A white bus veers down the two lane highway snaking through the soaring brown mountains and valley basins of southern Armenia towards post-conflict Nagorno-Karabakh. It is late September: harvest time. Weary farmers in woollen sweaters stand with hands on their hips beside their roadside stands, weather-beaten faces pleading with us to consider the fruits and vegetables of their year of labour.

Nearly twilight and entering a thick fog, our group is led by Caroline (Baroness) Cox on this, her 80th visit to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Conversations fade into the hazy light at the end of a long day on the road and we cross the border line separating Armenia from the autonomous Republic of mountainous Karabakh (Artsakh in its Armenian name). Once past the military checkpoint we enter a land wholly unofficial and wholly unrecognised by the rest of the world.

Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnically Armenian enclave located in the south-eastern Caucasus region, is still recovering from a devastating war with Azerbaijan in the early 1990's. Historically Armenian land, it was ceded to the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) by Stalin in 1920 as part of his 'divide and rule' agenda. At the collapse of the USSR, the Azeri SSR began the brutal Operation Ring which included deportations of Armenian villages in Karabakh and eventually escalated into full-scale war.

Caroline Cox travelled to Karabakh many times during the war with aid and comfort, sharing those dark days with the Armenians, as they hid in rat-infested basements in the dead of winter while 400 grad missiles a day rained down on the capital Stepanakert. She describes these experiences as one of the great privileges of her life.

When in 1994 the much smaller population of Armenians miraculously emerged as the victors and declared Karabakh independent, most major aid organisations, including the UN, were barred from providing much-needed humanitarian assistance to the now 'illegally occupied' territory. Technically, the war has not ended, but is rather described as a 'frozen conflict'.

On the third day of our visit in Karabakh, we participated in a joyous celebration to mark the 15th anniversary of the HART- funded Rehabilitation Centre for the disabled, located in Stepanakert. Smiling patients walked and wheeled to welcome us as we arrived. It is hard to believe that the centre - now decorated with multi-coloured balloons, festive banners, and sprays of fragrant flowers - was once a bombed out old building not unlike many still seen on the streets of the capital, which serve as all too present reminders of the price paid for freedom.



Above: The opening of a new hospital in Stepanakert

In the years following the war, Caroline Cox, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, HART, and a contingent of international friends helped the local people transform this building into a now state-of-the-art Rehabilitation Centre. Alongside helping those with war injuries, the centre treats those born with disabilities and those disabled through accidents, such as one young man we met who had been paralysed from a fall. It is a beacon for hope and healing across the whole of the Caucasus and a stalwart advocate for inclusion, dignity, and respect for the disabled. HART local partner and Centre Director Vardan Tadevosyan is a true ‘second farmer’—a visionary who plants his fields of hope for the disabled with faith and passion, working tirelessly to drive the centre forward.

Vardan says *“I no longer benchmark our success based on other rehab centres in the region because there simply are none as effective as ours. Our success should be measured against the international standards for rehabilitation because we will never stop fighting to achieve the very best for our patients.”*

The story of the centre’s creation is truly a story of preparing a field onto which no one would believe it would ever rain. This is because, for decades, individuals with physical and mental ailments living in the former USSR countries were widely excluded from society and triply disadvantaged by disability, poverty, and stigma.

The Soviet ideal imagined the individual as only valuable based on their capacity to work, and therefore widely stigmatised those people not deemed capable of regular work. Disabled children were made socially invisible and were either hidden by their parents, or doomed to a miserable existence in ill-funded and ill-equipped institutions. During the 1980 Olympic Games, the Soviet Representative’s famous declaration that *“there are no invalids in the USSR”* quickly came to characterise these tragedies.

Aside from this post-Soviet legacy, the challenges surrounding the lives of the disabled in Karabakh are further complicated by the exacerbating effects of the frozen conflict, geographical isolation and poverty, especially in the villages. When Caroline Cox, Christian Solidarity, and local partners began the work of preparing the centre to help treat the disabled, many residents of Karabakh were uncertain of what kind of

future such an endeavour could have in this post-war, post-Soviet land.

In Karabakh alone in 2012 there were nearly 10,000 registered disabled people, but apart from the centre there are few provisions to assist them with medical and social needs. The pension for the disabled is about £50 per month. In Armenia the situation is not much better: one third of the population lives under the poverty line, over 90% of disabled adults are unemployed, and 30% of disabled children do not attend any form of school.

But there is great hope: in 2012 the Rehabilitation Centre treated 124 in-patients, 371 out-patients, 55 all-day patients and 111 home-patients were visited by Vardan and the therapists. The day nursery continues, mixing disabled and able-bodied children, successfully breaking down the residual taboos. HART’s support is substantial and enables Vardan to offer a wider variety of therapies including sport, painting, pottery, music, and day trips.

From the Rehabilitation Centre, to the opening of the beautiful new hospital in the capital, to the newly restored Tadik yev Papik statue, to the numerous construction projects across the city, we witnessed earnest labour among a people who refuse to be paralysed by the circumstances of the frozen conflict.

We depart with much inspiration, but also a dose of realism about the challenges facing this unrecognised land, especially considering the current aggressive rhetoric of the Azeri government. Planes are *de facto* forbidden over Karabakhi airspace and we return to Armenia by helicopter, admiring from above the forested mountains dusted with the red-orange-yellow and purple-brown hues of autumn splendour.

It is now harvest time in many ways, and there was certainly a lot to celebrate on this 80th anniversary. Owing to the dreams of those who fought for disability rights in Karabakh - some now gone, but many still labouring in the fields of hope such as Vardan and his remarkable team - the lives of many of adults and children have been transformed forever. Together they reap dreams, which were once not unlike the desperate hope for rain two farmers had after years of drought, dreams only made real through the back-breaking work of those who prepared their fields with hope.

“Our success should be measured against the international standards for rehabilitation because we will never stop fighting to achieve the very best for our patients.”

Vardan Tadevosyan,
Director of The Lady Cox
Rehabilitation Centre



Above: Art therapy at The Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre

Below: Then, The Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre in 1995



Left: Caroline Cox, Vardan Tadevosyan and the staff of the Rehabilitation Centre



1991, crossing the border with only a makeshift white flag for protection, picture by The Times



The Basement Hospital in Stepankert during the war



1992, taking life-saving supplies to blockaded, besieged Karabakh



April 1992, survivors of a massacre by Azeris at the village of Maragha



A child victim of Azeri cluster bombs

A home in Stepankert demolished by Azeri bomb, became the tomb of the pregnant wife and two daughters of one of these men, with his brother



Providing cows for "children who had forgotten the taste of milk"



Looking back on 80 TRIPS

A little land reduced to ashes

- After being made aware of the human rights abuses occurring in Nagorno-Karabakh at a congress in Moscow in 1991, Caroline (Baroness) Cox and others went to the region to investigate. Determined to gather balanced evidence, but refused permission to fly into Karabakh by Azerbaijan, Caroline Cox and her companions crossed the border from Armenia to Azerbaijan with only a makeshift white flag (a table cloth tried to a branch) for protection. The evidence they gathered, taking in the views from both sides, overwhelmingly demonstrated that the Azeris were the aggressors.
- In January 1992, Caroline returned to Nagorno-Karabakh, where she was horrified by the outbreak of full scale war and conditions in the Stepankert Basement Hospital.
- Back in the UK, Caroline obtained funding and a licence from the Home Office to take medical drugs into this war-zone. Caroline says jokingly that she then became an "international drugs carrier". Subsequently no-one died from pain induced shock at the Stepankert hospital.
- In 1992, Caroline visited the village of Maraghar, which had recently been attacked by Azeris. 45 people had been decapitated or burnt alive, and 100 women and children taken hostage. Caroline Cox photographed the bodies as evidence.
- Survivors of the Maraghar massacre fled to another devastated village. Having lost everything, they worried that their "children had forgotten the taste of milk". Caroline and colleagues were able to supply cows.
- Azerbaijan used cluster bombs, banned by international convention, against civilians. The main victims were children, attracted by the toy-like silver balls. Caroline took photographs as evidence to request that the international community make representations to stop this practice.

Beauty from the ashes

- In 1994, a ceasefire was agreed. During the war the priority for the local people had been emergency aid, particularly medical supplies. However, with so many people injured, the post-war priority became rehabilitation. Under the Soviet Union there had been no such concept; disabled people were 'warehoused' and often died of pressure sores or infection.
- A bomb damaged building was provided for development as a Rehabilitation Centre. The inspirational director, Vardan Tadevosyan and his team have transformed this into a place of hope and healing, which has obtained international recognition as a centre of excellence. They are now spreading the concept of rehabilitation further afield in the south Caucasus.
- One young man who has benefitted from the centre is Mike. Previously told he would never walk again, Caroline never saw him smile. A few months later she walked past without recognising him, he was standing and smiling!
- On one visit, whilst in Armenia, Caroline met a brilliant young Burmese man, who had been sent by his village for medical training. This was Dr Sasa, now one of HART's partners, providing lifesaving training for community health care workers in Chin state, Burma.
- In 2011 HART held a pilgrimage in Nagorno-Karabakh, with 50 people from several different countries. They walked across the beautiful land, showing solidarity with the people of Karabakh, who have suffered so much. Mike joined the pilgrimage, walking some of the way, and never stopped smiling!
- This 80th visit was an opportunity to celebrate the ways in which the people of Nagorno-Karabakh have developed civil society, democratic institutions, rebuilt their devastated land and created "beauty from the ashes of destruction".



Then and now, The Lady Cox Rehabilitation Centre in 1995 and 2013



Art therapy at the Rehabilitation Centre



Beauty from rubbish. Sun protection for children's play area at the Rehabilitation Centre



Once told he would never walk again, Mike walked much of the HART Pilgrimage in 2011 and never stopped smiling



80th Visit Celebrations at the Rehabilitation Centre.

Dates for your diary...

Scholarship Competition

Are you, or do you know, a young person interested in human rights and international development?



Our 2013-14 Scholarship Competition aims to empower young people to use their voice to influence change by writing essays, creating artwork and designing advocacy campaigns. Art and essay entries will be displayed at an exhibition in London and various UK universities, where young people will have the opportunity to join our campaigns.

As well as monetary prizes, in previous years winners have been invited to join Baroness Cox for tea at the House of Lords and some have been offered HART internships, stoking their enthusiasm for humanitarian work.

We would love for you, your school or university to participate in our 2013-14 competition. Find out more, visit www.hart-uk.org/campaigns/hart-scholarship-competitions or email megan.rowland@hart-uk.org.

This Immoral Trade BOOK LAUNCH

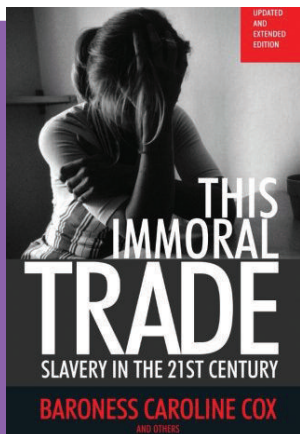
Tuesday 19th November, 6pm
Committee Room G,
Houses of Parliament,
London, SW1A 0AA

"If slavery is to be abolished in the twenty-first century, we must break the bonds of ignorance, silence, interest, ideology, complacency and complicity,"
Baroness (Caroline) Cox

Following the recent publication of the updated edition of Baroness Cox's book, *This Immoral Trade* we will be holding a launch event. The evening will provide an opportunity to find out more about the issue of modern day slavery and will include a short talk by the authors, as well as book signings.

The event is being run in collaboration with Michael Connarty (MP), who is pressing for legislation change in order to eradicate modern slavery.

RVSP to megan.rowland@hart-uk.org to reserve a place.



CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT

with music from around the world

In support of the
Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)

5th December 2013
7pm - 9pm

Admission Free

A collection will be taken at the end of the service to cover costs and to support our work with oppressed and persecuted people around the world.

St Cyprian's
Clarence Gate
Glentworth Street
London
NW1 6AX



www.hart-uk.org
www.stcyprians.org.uk

Volunteer's Reception

13th November, 7pm
Fielden House, 13 Little College Street,
London, SW1P 3SH

Our next volunteers' reception will be a brilliant opportunity for you to meet the team, as well as other HART volunteers, to find out more about our work and how you can get involved.

HART Day of Prayer and Celebration 2014

2nd - 3rd February 2014

HART annually calls for the weekend nearest to the Christian Festival of Candlemas (2nd February) to be a time of prayer and of tribute to our partners. The festival of Candlemas celebrates the Light shining in the Darkness, coinciding with HART's work with partners who are beacons of light to those being oppressed.

Whatever your beliefs, please feel encouraged to celebrate HART's partners at this time of the year by joining us, or hosting your own event for prayer or reflection.

More details will be available at www.hart-uk.org/events by 1st December.

For more information on our upcoming events visit www.hart-uk.org/events

Victims of their Government: The humanitarian crisis in Blue Nile State, Sudan, 2 years on

By Emma Camp, HART Intern

Two years ago, war broke out in Sudan's Blue Nile State, between the Government's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). The Government began to target communities that had not supported it during the second civil war and do not fit the desired Arabic-Islamic profile. The predominantly African peoples living in Blue Nile have been subject to sustained aerial bombardment ever since. Thousands of civilians live under the constant threat of attack, in particular the elderly and young families who are unable to make the long trip to the refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

Civilian Attacks

The Blue Nile offers little cover from the aerial bombardment. Families have deserted their villages and fled into the bush. When the Antonov bombers fly over they hide in the sides of dried out river beds, which offer very little protection.

Aisha* lives in Blue Nile with her 10 children:

"I don't know why he kills us. We are his own people. We don't know exactly the things that make him kill us and chase us. He is our brother and our leader. We don't know why he kills us. Since I was born, I have lived here. When the Antonov comes, we run and hide in the banks of the river. Sometimes the children start crying 'I need food'. We say 'Where will I find food, Bashir is chasing us?'"

Reports suggest SAF conducted 120 air strikes in Blue Nile between January and June 2013, amounting to almost one a day. At least fifteen civilians, mostly women and children, were killed. The aerial bombardment has been accompanied by an increase in the number of ground attacks by the SAF, looting properties and livestock and destroying villages in an effort to force the people to leave.

There have been incidents of rape and violence against minority groups. On February 22nd, 22 members of Ismail Kora's militia, armed by the Sudanese forces, raped 10 women in the Baw locality, killing 9 of them. All were from the Ingessana tribe.

The effect of the war on the civilian population has been devastating. Two years ago, the population living in the affected region was 300,000. Now, just 18,500 remain in their homes. 119,220 are internally displaced and 162,280 have fled to South Sudan and Ethiopia as refugees; 94% of the conflict zone's population has been displaced.

Political Talks and Humanitarian Aid

International aid has been prevented from entering these areas since fighting began. Harvests have failed for the last two years, as aerial bombardment has prevented people from planting or harvesting crops. Outbreaks of disease and a lack of access to emergency food supplies makes it difficult for people to survive.

In July 2012, after months of talks, Khartoum 'accepted' a tripartite proposal presented by the

United Nations, African Union and the Arab League, which would allow food and medical aid to reach people still living in Blue Nile. However, the agreement was reneged on and the emergency aid never arrived. When HART visited Blue Nile, some people suggested that the tripartite proposal has worsened the situation. The agreement gave people a false hope that aid would come and some remained in conflict zones rather than leaving for South Sudan. During this time, with little access to food, their health deteriorated to the point that they were no longer able to make the journey away from Blue Nile.

Over a year later, the talks continue. During recent political negotiations the United Nations proposed a suspension of hostilities for 7 days to allow much needed polio vaccinations access to the SPLM-N areas. This would be followed by a second phase providing routine immunisations by the end of December and a final stage allowing provision of primary care services by the end of March 2014. The programme can only occur alongside a temporary ceasefire. It is hoped that the first phase of immunisation will take place at the beginning of November.

HART's Role in Blue Nile

HART has been working through local partners to provide emergency relief to civilians still living in Blue Nile. During 2012, we provided funds for emergency food aid and for the transport of medical supplies. In one area, 450 people had already died from starvation or hunger-related illnesses. This aid has provided a lifeline.

HART staff have been able to visit Blue Nile and receive on the ground confirmation that the people had received and benefitted from the aid given. Some of the people we met there told us they were grateful for this food as it enabled them to stay in their own country after decades of conflict and displacement. They told us they would prefer to die in their own country from bombs than have to go into exile again.

HART would like to thank all our supporters who make our work in Blue Nile possible. In particular, the Isle of Man Overseas Aid Committee who are providing emergency financial support for desperately needed food aid for the peoples of Sudan's Blue Nile State.



Above: A displaced woman and her child in Blue Nile State, Sudan

"The Antonov is coming from the sky – there is nothing we can do. We are civilians and we don't have any power to stand in front of Bashir to say anything. We just want God to change his bad attitude. Let him not want to kill his own people anymore."

A displaced woman, Blue Nile State, Sudan



Above: Dried up river beds and fox holes offer little protection from the Antonov's bombs

*Aisha's name has been changed to protect her anonymity

Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust



HART works to provide lasting change through aid and advocacy for those suffering oppression and persecution, who are often neglected by other organisations, or are largely out of sight of the world's media. Founded in 2003 by Baroness Cox, a human rights activist, HART makes every endeavour to be a 'Voice for the Voiceless' for those who may be unreachable, unhelped and unheard.

HART relies on first-hand evidence of human rights violations as a basis for powerful twin-track programmes of international advocacy and aid. We believe that advocacy, combined with aid, is vital if we are to achieve sustainable community development, local ownership and empowerment for oppressed peoples.



YES!

I want to make a difference and be a Voice for the Voiceless!

At HART we see all the time how a little goes a long way – both in the way our partners abroad use the funds we provide and the difference our volunteers can make. There are many ways to support the work we do.

If you would like to donate to our work, you can do so in a number of ways:

I would like to make a one off payment towards the work of HART. A cheque is enclosed for £.....

I pledge to help HART's partners and their grassroot organisations on a regular basis with a

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Please send me a standing order mandate.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

**For more information about HART or to make an online donation, go to
www.hart-uk.org**