

Prayers For Pakistan, Prayers For Us All



BISHOP JUAN CARLOS MENDEZ

Pastor, Centro Cristiano

Recently, I read a very disturbing article in the British publication *The Independent*, titled: “Where are the hashtags for the Pakistan hospital attack?” After reading this, I realized the same channels of universal compassion can also present something that is very disturbing and worrisome.

On Monday, August 8, a crowd of mourners, mostly lawyers and journalists, gathered at a hospital in Quetta, to accompany the body of a prominent legal figure that had been murdered earlier that same day. The group of mourners was attacked by a suicide bomber, who took the lives of 70 innocent people, and injured well over 100 more. The terrorist chose to detonate at a hospital, a place people turn to in trust, often at their most vulnerable moments in life.

With that in mind, I turn to our communities, to all of us that have changed our profile picture to the flag of nations and communities that have been victimized by hatred; to those that have hash-tagged prayers for Paris, Nice, Orlando, Brussels, and unfortunately others. I urge everyone to consider why Pakistan has not received this same show of support, especially in light of the tremendous loss of innocent life that took place there, only weeks ago.

In contemplating this issue, I reflect of my recent travel to a small, majority-Muslim nation in the South Caucasus, that is also known as the international model for interfaith and multicultural harmony. Azerbaijan is a secular democracy, where Muslims, Jews and Christians thrive in diversity and live as indistinguishably equal.

During my visit, I took in the rich history of my Christian heritage in this interfaith oasis. Azerbaijan is in fact one of the earliest nations to accept Christianity as a state religion (313 AD). I met with leaders representing the variety of Christians living peacefully in Azerbaijan, as well as Jewish and Muslim leaders throughout the country. I met with the esteemed Sheikh ul-Islam, the elected Grand Mufti of the entire Caucasus region and most impressively – the world’s only Sunni-Shia Sheikh.

There was another important moment; when I visited the beautiful Armenian Apostolic Cathedral in Baku, renovated a few years ago by the Azerbaijani government, and today, under Presidential protection. The Cathedral houses over 5,000 ancient Armenian books, including a 300 year-old Bible.

I also visited the Baku International Center for Multiculturalism and met the renowned scholar and Presidential Advisor on Multiculturalism and Inter-Religious Affairs, Professor Kamal Abdulla, to discuss Azerbaijan’s many centuries of success, serving as the safe home to people of diverse faiths and ethnicity. We both agreed that nothing in the world could be more important than building peaceful bridges between people of every faith. Because those values are held so strong in Azerbaijan, they have survived invasions, ethnic cleansings and even 100 years of Soviet control.

These memories come to mind today, as I continue to pray for the victims and families in Pakistan, and for their recovery from terror. I think of the relatively silent world, and I can’t help but wonder: If more people knew about places like Azerbaijan, would it change the patterns of our collective compassion and outcry? If we knew better, would our communities offer that same

powerful demonstration of support, and show our pictures and hashtags in honor of the Muslim victims in Pakistan, just as we have done for the many other victims around the world?

The Rev. Dr. Juan Carlos Mendez is an American pastor and educator. He is the founding pastor of Centro Cristiano in Los Angeles.

Read more: <http://dailycaller.com/2016/08/30/prayers-for-pakistan-prayers-for-us-all/#ixzz4LX5dit44>