

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, websites, blogs, videos, etc. Standard disclaimers on content apply. Due to the length of many web addresses, we sometimes give just the title of the resource, the main web address, or a suggested search phrase.

Armenian Genocide Recognized

Was this an act of retaliation against Turkey for sending in troops in October against the SDF (the Syrian Kurdish army), US allies against ISIS? After dilly-dallying for decades, the US Congress finally passed a bill December 12, 2019, officially declaring the Armenian massacres of the late 1890s and 1915–1923, a genocide. (See *Christianity Today's* article [“Senate's Genocide Vote Not the Only Good News for Armenian Christians,”](#) December 13, 2019.) For a stark summary of the genocide facts, take a look at this archived *New York Times* article: [“Armenian Genocide of 1915: An Overview.”](#)

Germans and Kurds Ask Forgiveness for Genocide Role

Both Germany and the Kurds are beginning to acknowledge their own roles in the genocide. See the article in *DW (Deutsche Welle)* entitled [“New Report Details Germany's Involvement in Armenian Genocide”](#) (May 2018) and a 2015 *Public Radio International (PRI)* article written at the time of the 100th anniversary of the genocide April 24, 2015 entitled, [“Kurds in Turkey Atone for their Role in the Armenian Genocide.”](#) Abdallah Demirbas, a Kurdish politician and former mayor of the once Armenian city of Diyarbakur in Eastern Turkey, was quoted as saying that

they have an obligation to grant others the right as well to live their identities fully. This includes Armenians and other groups like Assyrians, Arabs, and religious minorities like Alevis and Yezidis. Part of this vision is apologizing for our part in the genocide.

During his tenure as mayor, in 2012 his city erected the only monument commemorating the genocide in Turkey. Not surprisingly, a few months later Demirbas was [arrested](#). For a thought-provoking interview with Demirbas in 2016, see this Open Democracy article: [opendemocracy.net/en/sur-against-state-violence-in-turkey-interview-with-former-mayor-ab/](#).

Martin Accad's Syria Brief on the Kurds

Martin Accad, recent plenary speaker at the September annual meetings of the Evangelical Society of Missiology, makes some perceptive comments about Kurds, Arabs, and Iran in an Institute for Middle East Studies (IMES) December 4th blog called [“Syria Brief: December 2019.”](#) He is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies for the Arab Theological Seminary

in Beirut. As an Arab Christian, he wonders how a people known for their historic genocides against Armenians and other Christians have somehow become the darling of US politicians. A good question. A second IMES blog by another faculty member, Mike Kuhn, at the Arab Theological Seminary in Beirut, addresses [the history of the nation-state](#) and how that has contributed to current geopolitical problems.

For a political understanding of the historical relationship between the Kurds and the governments of Iran, Iraq, Israel, and the US see the excellent article in *Foreign Policy* entitled [“The Secret Origins of the U.S.–Syrian Relationship Explain Today's Disaster.”](#) Also, don't miss the extended article in *The New Yorker*, October 24, 2019, entitled [“Turkey, Syria, the Kurds, and Trump's Abandonment of Foreign Policy.”](#) Last, for a lovely story about a Syrian Christian graduate student in the US who was invited to speak at Harvard University's commencement, see this *Christianity Today* article, also an IMES blog, [“The Road From Damascus: How a Syrian Christian Spoke at Harvard's Commencement.”](#)

Why Are People Protesting All over the World?

Massive civilian protests have erupted in Iran ([“Iran Convulsed by Worst Unrest in 40 Years”](#)), Iraq ([“Our Patience is Over: Why Iraqis are Protesting,”](#)) and Lebanon (see *BBC News'* November 7, 2019, article, [“Lebanon Protests: How WhatsApp Tax Anger Revealed a Much Deeper Crisis”](#)). Some of the causes? Corrupt governments, [exorbitant fuel](#) and food prices, [a ten-day internet blackout](#) (Iran), no working utilities, and (in the case of Iraq and Lebanon), the [presence of Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops](#). Don't miss the *Guardian's* December 5, 2019, article: [“How Street Protests Across Middle East Threaten Iran's Power.”](#) And for how Iraqi Christians have been affected by these huge protests, see the *Express* article, December 25, 2019: [“Iraq Protests: Christians Heartened by Muslims' Solidarity in midst of Bloody Crackdown.”](#) By contrast, Sudan's mass protests last year led to a peaceful transition of power. Just this week, the new government revoked an incendiary law that had restricted and targeted women. (See the *BBC News* article [“Sudan Crisis: Women Praise End of Strict Public Order Law,”](#) November 29, 2019.)

India: A New Dark Age?

[“India Is Entering a New Dark Age,”](#) published November 19, 2019 in *The Week*, contends that

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is going backwards on every front: Its economy is in a free-fall (with growth at a six-year low and unemployment at [a 45-year high](#)); its polity is becoming authoritarian; and its dominant religion, Hinduism, is growing intolerant. But what's even more depressing is that the country seems to have lost its will to fight this descent into darkness.

Don't miss *The New Yorker's* December 2019 cover article about India, [“Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi's India.”](#) Written by Pulitzer-Prize winning veteran war correspondent

Dexter Filkins (who accompanied Indian journalist Rana Ayoub into Kashmir), it gives an excellent historical background to the treatment of Muslims in India since the partition.

Riots Roil India over Anti-Muslim Bill

To add insult to injury, Muslims (immigrants and refugees) are no longer allowed to apply for citizenship. A new citizenship bill just passed the upper house of parliament December 11, 2019, and became law, but will almost certainly be appealed to the country's Supreme Court: "Constitutional lawyers believe that inserting a faith criterion for citizenship contradicts as many as three articles of the country's eloquently secular constitution." (See "[India's New Citizenship Law Outrages Muslims](#)," Dec 12, 2019, *The Economist*.) A December 13, 2019 article in the *Guardian* entitled "[Violent Clashes Continue in Delhi over New Citizenship Bill](#)," gives more details about the nationwide riots and protests. For more on how this citizenship bill might affect the state-less Rohingya refugees already in India, see the December 11, 2019 article in Human Rights Watch: "[India: Citizenship Bill Discriminates Against Muslims](#)."

Is "Panta Ta Ethne" Ethnolinguistic?

You should continue to track with the developing analysis of "unreached people groups" as a strategic way of portraying today's mission. The [recent contribution](#) by Matthew Newkirk in a December 9, 2019 article answers [the critiques](#) in *The Gospel Coalition* by pointing out the Old Testament context of the original Abrahamic covenant ("to be a blessing to all the families of the earth"). Genesis 10 and 11 (the Table of Nations and the Tower of Babel) provide "the strong ethnolinguistic undercurrent that surges throughout the early Abrahamic narrative." (See "[Should Missionaries Focus on the Unreached People Groups? Yes.](#)")

Hong Kong Election Landslide

Hong Kong protests have been ongoing for more than seven months now. But in the November 24th election, pro-democracy candidates won an astonishing seventeen out of eighteen councils. "The turnout, of over 70%, was higher than any recorded in any kind of election in Hong Kong in which the public has a say." (See "[Hong Kong Elections Were a Rebuke to its Government](#)," *The Economist*, November 30, 2019.) And more than [800,000 people](#) came out to demonstrate their support the following weekend. For a Hong Kong Christian's analysis of how the continuing massive Hong Kong protests are impacting believers, check out *China Source's* December 11, 2019 article entitled, "[Recognizing Spiritual Warfare behind Social Unrest](#)," by Ji Yajie.

Leaked Xinjiang Papers Spark Outrage

Two separate explosive leaks of highly classified Chinese government documents have ignited an uproar around the world. The first set, (twenty-four documents or 490 pages now being called the Xinjiang Papers,) was leaked to the *New York Times*

by an anonymous high level Chinese political official and published in its entirety in English and Chinese, November 16, 2019. See "[Absolutely No Mercy: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims](#)." One of the Xinjiang Papers instructs officials how to question and reassure elite Uighur university students who, upon returning for the summer from their universities in other parts of China, discovered their families, relatives, and neighbors completely missing.

A second set of five more documents was leaked anonymously to the *ICIJ*, the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*. Dubbed the China Cables, and published online in an article entitled, "[Exposed: China's Operating Manuals for Mass Internment and Arrest by Algorithm](#)," November 24, 2019, these documents detail the actual prison-like protocols for preventing escapes.

Artificial Intelligence and Chinese Gulags

Quoting the above article, the China Cables expose the role of mass data collection and computer algorithms:

The classified intelligence briefings reveal the scope and ambition of the government's artificial-intelligence-powered policing platform, which purports to predict crimes based on these computer-generated findings alone. Experts say the platform, which is used in both policing and military contexts, demonstrates the power of technology to help drive industrial-scale human rights abuses.

The China Cables reveal how the system is able to amass vast amounts of intimate personal data through warrantless manual searches, facial recognition cameras, and other means to identify candidates for detention, flagging for investigation hundreds of thousands merely for using certain popular mobile phone apps. The documents detail explicit directives to arrest Uighurs with foreign citizenship and to track Xinjiang Uighurs living abroad, some of whom have been deported back to China by authoritarian governments. Among those implicated as taking part in the global dragnet: China's embassies and consulates. ("[Exposed: China's Operating Manuals for Mass Internment and Arrest by Algorithm](#)," *ICIJ*, November 24, 2019)

Over 1000 Uighur Camps Located

Meanwhile, Uighur activists (using Google Earth) have documented the precise location and coordinates of 500 new camps and internment centers. Anders Corr, an analyst who formerly worked in US intelligence and who advised the group, said that around forty percent of the sites had not been previously reported. Rights advocates have generally estimated that China is detaining more than one million Uighurs and members of other predominantly Muslim Turkic ethnicities. But Randall Schriver, the top Pentagon official for Asia, said in May that the figure was "likely closer to three million citizens"—an extraordinary number in a region of some 20 million people (quoted in the *Asia Times* November 13, 2019 article "[Researchers Shed Light on China's Uighur Camps](#)"). **IJFM**