

## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

August 8, 2017

Okay, what's your first thought when reading this box?



**Blessed  
are the . . .  
Lawyers**

Most of us—lawyers, especially, I suspect—are aware of the low esteem in which they and their profession are often held. Many people can rattle off a “lawyer joke” or two, and according to the pollsters, only 1 in 5 Americans think lawyers are “highly ethical” or “contribute a lot” to the well-being of society.

For some, this is a result of personal experience with lawyers. For others—and I include myself here—we credit particular lawyers with having had a transformational effect on our families, and I, for one, am deeply grateful.

You may remember that Jill and I are regular supporters of *International Justice Mission*—the world's largest organization fighting human trafficking, and a Christian legal group. (The Ladies of L.O.V.E. help to support this group, as well.)

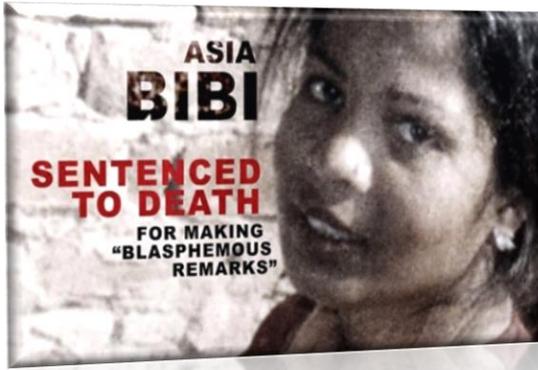


Before founding *International Justice Mission* in 1997, Gary Haugen was a human rights attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, where he focused on crimes of police misconduct. In 1994, he served as the Director of the United Nations' investigation into the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. In this role, he led an international team of lawyers, criminal prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and forensics experts to gather evidence that would eventually be used to bring the perpetrators of the genocide to justice.

IJM has been instrumental in the release of more than 34,000 people around the world from human trafficking, and this work is frequently dangerous work. Human rights lawyers around the world face beatings, arrest, detention without trial, torture, and death. Just last year, Willie Kimani, an IJM attorney in Kenya, was kidnapped and killed as he left a courtroom where he was arguing a case against police abuse of power.

Some of these lawyers are not even Christians. Asia Bibi is a Christian mother of five who has been on death row in Pakistan for eight years as a result of a blasphemy charge. Her Muslim attorney, Saif ul Malook,





has noted that “to defend blasphemy cases in Pakistan is dangerous to life. I am just waiting for the day when someone comes in front of me and shoots me dead.”<sup>1</sup>

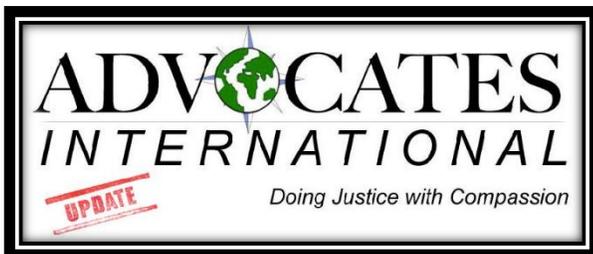
Such death threats are not at all imaginary. The Governor of Punjab was assassinated for supporting Bibi, and the judge who convicted the assassin had to flee the country. The federal Minister for Minorities was also assassinated for supporting her case.<sup>2</sup>

Behind every Asia Bibi are near-invisible lawyers who defend persecuted believers, pastors, and churches around the globe. Mike Chibita, the top prosecutor in Uganda, is very open about his Christian faith: “Being a lawyer is a very Christian thing to do, because doing justice is at the root and the heart of the mission of Jesus Christ. There are great parallels between law and order in our Christian ministry, because our God is a God of law and order lawlessness breeds evil and poverty.”

Another Christian lawyers’ organization is *Advocates International*, which bills itself as “The largest, oldest, most efficient, legal aid organization you’ve never heard of before.”



Over the past 25 years, 30,000 Christian legal advocates and judges in 156 nations have worked with *Advocates International* to organize international networks that work together across countries to release imprisoned pastors or harassed missionaries. AI’s Christian lawyers have aided 1,000 missionaries with visa problems, 8,000 refugees with legal issues, and have helped 3,500 Russian churches successfully register with the government or reclaim confiscated properties.



Brent McBurney, the president of AI, notes that “our work helps the gospel. *If you don’t have lawyers who are following Christ to fight to keep the doors open for the gospel, then the doors close.*”

In the more repressive countries, these lawyers are really heroic figures whose perseverance and creativity prevail in a way that

<sup>1</sup> Timothy C. Morgan, “Blessed are the Lawyers: The Forgotten Front Line of the Persecuted Church,” *Christianity Today*, June 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The dreadful blasphemy laws in Pakistan’s Penal Code stipulates life imprisonment for blasphemy against the Qur’an and death penalty for blasphemy against Prophet Mohammed. Rights groups say the laws are increasingly exploited by religious extremists as well as ordinary Pakistanis to settle personal scores, not just against members of minority communities but also against Muslims. The law do not clearly define blasphemy and evidence might not be reproduced in court for fear of committing a fresh offence. There are no penalties for false accusations. Those accused are sometimes lynched on the spot. If they are arrested, police and the courts often allow trials to drag on for years, afraid of being attacked if they release anyone accused of blasphemy.  
[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/05/01/pakistan\\_sc\\_declines\\_early\\_hearing\\_of\\_asia\\_bibi\\_case/1309349](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/05/01/pakistan_sc_declines_early_hearing_of_asia_bibi_case/1309349)

makes a real difference. For example, a number of Christian Congolese lawyers have set up cells all over the eastern DRC to assist each other in addressing critical issues in one of the most dangerous countries in the world. And hundreds of Christian human rights attorneys have been arrested in China. (There are only a few Christian lawyers currently in prison or under house arrest outside of China.)

What experts say is needed now is for concerned Christians around the world to add their support for these human rights lawyers to their current prayers and to their advocacy on behalf of the persecuted church.

Will you join the battle? If so, head for your “War Room.”

Dave

P.S. On another subject, here’s a word of encouragement for those moments when you feel discouraged about our ability to affect our neighborhood:

Forty years ago, a Philadelphia congregation watched as three 9-year-old boys were baptized and joined the church. Not long after, unable to continue with its dwindling membership, the church sold the building and disbanded.

One of those boys was Dr. Tony Campolo, popular author and transformational Christian sociologist at Eastern College, Pennsylvania. Dr. Campolo remembers:

“Years later when I was doing research in the archives of our denomination, I decided to look up the church report for the year of my baptism. There was my name, and Dick White’s. He’s now a missionary. Bert Newman, now a professor of theology at an African seminary, was also there. Then I read the church report for ‘my’ year: ‘It has not been a good year for our church. We have lost 27 members. Three joined, and they were only children.’”

Let’s keep “our hands on the plows” and let God handle the results!

