

Persecuted church draws passionate advocates

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WASHINGTON (BP)—One is a former FBI intelligence analyst supervisor, the other a longtime missionary. In their respective ways, they are intent on raising awareness of Christians facing persecution across the world.

Patrick Carberry, who was with the FBI 17 years, worked on intelligence matters in the Middle East war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Nik Ripken has served with his wife Ruth as International Mission Board missionaries for 35 years.

Films highlight plight of the persecuted

And each of the men, through their nonprofit organizations, has produced a film.

Recently in Washington, Carberry premiered [*Christians in the Mirror*](#), focusing on members of persecuted and displaced Christian communities in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Ripken adapted his autobiographical book, [*The Insanity of God—A True Story of Faith Resurrected*](#), into a dramatic movie released in 2016 recounting his family's experiences as they ministered in the Middle East and Africa.



Producer-director Jordan Allott, on

location in Juba, South Sudan, aims for “Christians in the Mirror” to stir the church’s concern for believers in regions of intense persecution. (Photo submitted)

Observing persecution among Christians in Iraq and Afghanistan compelled Carberry to establish [Joshuacord](#), based in Valrico, Fla. The nonprofit’s name refers to the red rope mentioned in the Old Testament book of Joshua, chapter 2. It was a symbol of support—a lifeline—for the family of Rahab, the ancestor of Jesus who helped the Israelite spies escape from Jericho.

While working in Mideast war zones, Carberry said he saw “the travesty that’s been happening to so many minority religions, including Christians” who have been persecuted by ISIS and other anti-Christian factions.

“So, when I got back, I asked, ‘What are we doing as a community—the big ‘C’ church—in helping these Christians?’”

Carberry said he found little being done to raise awareness of what he said was often “basically genocide.”

‘A wakeup call to the churches’

In this “an epiphany of sorts ... I believed I had to do something” as “a wakeup call to the churches,” he said.

Joshuacord encourages prayer for the persecuted, as well as support through donations, volunteerism and participation in the annual Joshua 1:9 Freedom 5K Run, an event established in 2013, which collects entry fees.

Carberry forwards donations and other financial support to four

organizations in Joshuacord's countries of primary focus: Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria. He said he carefully vetted these partners: Good Shepherd Academy in South Sudan; the American Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East; Syriac Orthodox Church for the Little Angels Orphanage; and Coptic Orphans.

To create the documentary, Carberry contacted producer-director Jordan Allott of In Altum Productions, whose work includes documentaries on human rights and religious freedom. The project partnership also includes financier Paul Jallo, a Florida oil distributor.

First-person accounts of persecution

Christians in the Mirror tells the first-person stories of Christians in war-ravaged cities of Aleppo, Syria, and northern Iraq and in rural villages of India, South Sudan and Egypt. The title challenges Christians to look in their "Christian mirror" to see who is reflected back.

Allott said in a phone interview that since the documentary's Washington premiere: "We've gotten a lot of interest in the film for screening it in different venues. ... I think that a lot of people realize there is this crisis of Christian persecution globally that is at a point that people are starting to take notice."

The goal, Allott said, is for every church in the nation to screen the film, as well as getting the film and free study guides to Christian student groups at universities and Christian high schools of all denominations so students "can have their own mini-screenings and start to get educated. This might be the only film or documentary they ever see about this issue or about Syria for example, or Egypt or Sudan.

"And so, for the rest of their life, when they hear about this part of the world, they're going to hopefully think back to the film, and it's going to

guide their view of these issues in a really, really important way. So, for 10, 20 years, I hope that the film is still bearing fruit in that way.”

Lessons learned from persecuted believers

Ripken, in a phone interview from his home in Kentucky, said he experienced persecution firsthand during a 35-year missions career.



Longtime missionary Nik Ripken is focused on stirring Christians to learn from the persecuted church. Those who fail to share their faith, he says, can be like persecutors of those who are perishing without the gospel. (Photo submitted)

“I’ve been shot at. I’ve been held for half a day at a time, just people trying to shake me down for money. And there’s been a lot of dangerous situations,” he said. Also, in 1997, the Ripkins’ son Timothy died in a Nairobi, Kenya, hospital of cardiac arrest from an asthma attack.

The couple plans to retire from IMB service in March 2020 but will continue their work through [Nik Ripken Ministries](#), which produces and distributes materials “to challenge believers to boldly follow Jesus, sharing their faith with others—no matter the cost,” the ministry’s website states.

Its stated mission is “to expand the kingdom of God by sharing truths and practices learned from believers in persecution.”

“We’re booked through 2020,” Ripken said. “We’re speaking at least two to

three times a month.” And for the first time, Ripken said, he is “actively trying to raise support so we can continue doing what we’ve been doing for a long, long time. I’m 66, and we’ll do this as long as we’re healthy, but there’s such a hunger for this message.”

The ministry’s website states: “From the world’s point of view, the cross of Jesus will always be a stumbling block. ... Today, as throughout all of history, a God who ‘so loves the world that he gave his only begotten Son’” is seen as having committed “an act of insanity.”

And “for those of us who know Jesus, we want to model such insanity,” which, Ripken said in the interview, “believers in persecution have modeled for us.”

“The western church has taught that the way we identify with believers in persecution is through prayer and advocacy,” which are “unbelievably important to believers in persecution.”

But, he continued, “the hardest thing we ever say to churches, civic organizations or whoever is that when I keep my faith to myself—I don’t share with my family, my friends, my boss, whoever—not only do I fail to identify with my brothers and sisters in chains, I am absolutely identifying with their persecutors, the ones that chained them.

“So I either identify with the persecuted church or I identify with the persecutors. A failure to witness across the street and across the oceans is to condemn people to eternity without Jesus, and that indeed would make us a persecutor.”

That message is “central to the Bible,” Ripken said. “It’s not western, and it’s not eastern. It’s not Chinese, and it’s not North Korean. It’s just central to the biblical message.”