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The Australian office of *Aid to the Church in Need* has released a Global campaign titled **Modern Martyrs Heroes of the Faith**. The campaign shares six powerful and inspiring stories of modern martyrdom from Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia and China. Four of the six stories of modern martyrdom include moving video testimonies from the friends and community members that these martyrs were forced to leave behind.

Through the campaign *Aid to the Church in Need* aims to raise funds for the persecuted Church supporting projects that will keep the faith alive, in honour of these six modern martyrs. These donations will continue the legacies left by these faithful men and women of God by supporting ACN projects that include: forming seminarians, supporting religious sisters, training catechists, rebuilding churches (to name a few). This will ensure that their ultimate sacrifice can continue to bear fruit despite persecution and oppression.

One of the stories in the campaign is that of Bishop Stefano Li Side - a Chinese Bishop who was oppressed throughout his ministry by the authorities of the People's Republic of China. For never wavering in his loyalty to the Holy See, Bishop Stefano served 17 years in a forced labour camp, eventually, he was exiled to a remote mountain village and placed under house arrest from 1992 until his death on June 8, 2019. His funeral was conducted without a Mass. He was denied his titles as bishop. Underground Catholics and nuns were not allowed to attend any of the services. Therefore, in his memory, ACN is asking for donations to fund ACN projects that sponsor evangelisation through the mass media i.e. radio, television, internet, newspapers. "In this way, Bishop Stefano's legacy will reach thousands with the Gospel of Christ. This was exactly what the authorities in his own country tried to hinder but we will do this in his honour," said National Director of Aid to the Church in Need Australia, Mr Bernard Toutounji.

"I believe this campaign puts before each of us two matters. First, is the invitation to pray that our own faith will be strengthened and made as strong as that of the martyrs, even if we are never tested in that way. Second, is the invitation to consider what we can offer from the fruit of our labours to ensure that in those places where the faith is ripe - where blood has been spilt for Christ – the resources exist to nurture and grow the faith," said Mr Toutounji.

Amidst the six true stories of the Modern Martyrs campaign are some sobering facts, on average 8 Christians are killed each day for their faith. Each week 182 churches or church buildings are attacked. Each month 309 Christians are imprisoned or arrested unjustly and 260 million Christians suffer high to severe levels of persecution. Statistics are courtesy of the 2020 World Watch List.

To view the **Modern Martyrs - Heroes of the Faith** campaign and to read or watch the testimonies visit: www.aidtochurch.org/martyrs

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