

Dear members and friends,

## 1. Syria

Mike was able to go to Syria at the beginning of November to work with our contacts there for a week. Here is a short summary:

- The front line has retreated back 13km to the north of the area where Vivere-Syria has its projects. This is an area which the army has taken control of.

Advantages: there has been less shooting and it is easier to get around the town and villages where Vivere is active.

Disadvantages: the regime's police force is operational again and has started a wide campaign of torture similar to the one carried out before the outbreak of the civil war. Large numbers of young men are also being targeted and forcibly recruited into the regime's army which has lost huge numbers of soldiers in the recent war.

- Vivere-Syria's work is continuing, despite all of the difficulties. About twenty Syrian men and women are involved, including lawyers, doctors, and a variety of other professions. All do this voluntarily. One of the most extraordinary things to see, and this is something that is increasingly rare, is that we have Sunnites, Alaouites, Shiites, and Christians all working together, and sharing their intelligence sources. Similarly, the children and families we help come, of course, from these diverse communities.

- We continue to support the projects giving nutritional help to babies and providing legal defense to women and girls who have been unjustly imprisoned. However, due to lack of funds we have had to suspend our support to pregnant women who present risks in childbirth. We would like to extend a big THANK YOU to all of you who feel you may be able to help.



## 2. Campaign against the death penalty and life imprisonment of children (under 18 at the time of the offence)

See below a resumé of four cases whose defense Vivere, in conjunction with our partners and lawyers in Pakistan, has taken up.

ALI\*: From a very poor family and with a previous history of minor crime (petty theft for resale), Ali was arrested in July 2016 and accused of raping a minor when he was 17 (according to a medical examination). He was detained for a year and a half, with no recourse to a lawyer, during which time he received no visits from his family. His case was never referred to the Juvenile Court since he did not have any identity papers. His present lawyer (see above) is endeavouring to obtain a school certificate which would confirm the medical examination to prove his age. The first medical examination could be contested

during the trial. Although the trial process has started, the prosecution has yet to provide any proof or witnesses (raising the question that the charge of rape has been fabricated). However, there is a real danger that this young man will be condemned to life imprisonment if his status as a minor is not recognized by the Court, depending on the age of the victim and the evidence the plaintiff provides.

YUSUF\*: From a very poor, Christian family, Yusuf was 16 when he was accused of blasphemy for posting an image of Kaba of Mecca on Facebook and sentenced to life imprisonment, although he is currently appealing the sentence. This is a very sensitive case; Yusuf is being supported by the Christian community and his case was taken up by the governor of the province, but the governor was assassinated in 2016. Bail has been refused as a result of intense pressure from religious groups. Yusuf's lawyers have been unable to plead his case since they are afraid for their own safety. Yusuf is being held in a high security prison and only has limited visitation rights. Vivere's lawyer contact has volunteered to defend Yusuf and is working with the existing support committee and will make a public appeal, if need be.

NABIL\* : Accused of participating in gang rape at the age of 14, [and intimidating the victim into not reporting the case](#). Accused of rape and extortion in 2015 (for a crime committed in 2011), Nabil has had no previous criminal history and there is no proof that he took part in these acts. The case was then transferred to an Anti- Terrorist Court citing "a collective act of terror". This court has not met or started any hearings from the two plaintiffs since Nabil's arrest. Crimes referred to the Anti-Terrorist Court are not currently subject to the legislation on juvenile justice, although there is still debate on this. This could explain why the process has been so slow, but also hi-lights the real risk of the sentence of the death penalty being handed down.

MUSTAFA\*. Mustafa has been detained in prison since committing a murder in 1999, when he was just 17. The new law on Juvenile Justice which outlaws the death penalty for juveniles at the time when the crime was committed, was only passed in 2000, after Mustafa's trial. The appeal, in 2002, upheld his sentence, on the basis of a summary evaluation of his real age (he didn't have a birth certificate). A second appeal to Pakistan's Supreme Court was thrown out. A first request for a presidential pardon was also refused. In August 2017, Mustafa's lawyer made a second request for a presidential pardon, and was able to provide a school certificate, proving that Mustafa was a minor when he committed the crime. On a humanitarian note, it's worth remembering that Mustafa has now been in prison, awaiting execution, for 18 years.

\* Not his real name, to protect his identity.

Below are the results of a recent study carried out by the 'Asian Human Rights Commission' on the extremely tough conditions faced by children in Pakistan:

40 million Pakistani children live below the poverty line.

One out of six children dies before the age of 5.

44% of young people between the ages of 5 and 16 do not go to school.

264 000 children work as domestic labourers in cruel and dangerous conditions

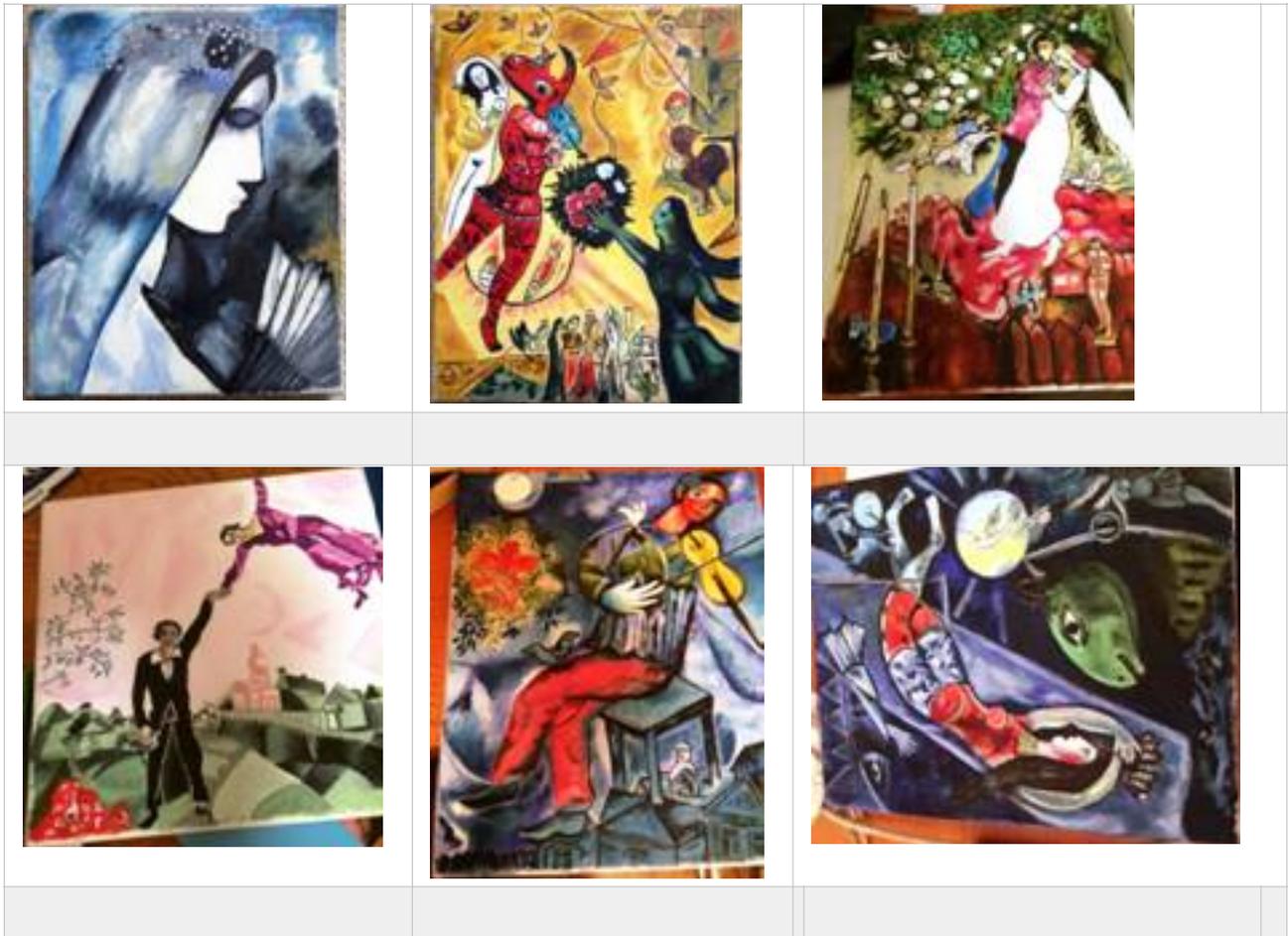
It is not surprising, given this situation, that many vulnerable children find themselves in conflict with the law. This in no way excuses breaking the law (when found guilty) but it does illustrate how important it is to give children proper protection and support in the legal system.

On a larger scale, we have produced our document 'Arguments for abolishing the death penalty and life imprisonment of children' which targets all countries who authorise these cruel and illegal punishments which are in flagrant contradiction of international law. The attached document replaces the one sent out on October 8. To our knowledge, this is the only document of its type which collates all of the arguments and legal references and serves as justification for abolishing these punishments.

Please help us in this campaign by mobilising public opinion, and maximising our resources in human, material and financial terms.

3. CHRISTMAS MARKET IN LAUSANNE/FLON 14,15,16 DECEMBER (please see the attached flyer)

Reminder: Vivere will be running a stand on the 2nd floor of Pôle Sud . You will be able to buy a range of articles/ presents at extremely reasonable prices, including paintings on canvas, and reproductions of Chagall's paintings by one of our very talented members. Please come and support us- it's a great market with a lovely atmosphere!



#### 4. READING TO SUPPORT

Please see below a message from two of our members:

*“Here is the link to a children’s book, which has now become very popular - Boubacar Barry. Yves and I cared for Boubacar when we were working for Terre des Hommes in Guinea and in Lausanne. It is the simple story of a child’s experience of suffering from Polio; after months spent trying to get help, Boubacar’s parents contact Terre des Hommes, and get him the medical help he needs. It’s a good read. If you enjoy it, please tell your friends about it and send them the link. It will be a fantastic way of supporting Boubacar. <https://www.publibook.com/mes-premiers-pas-sur-la-terre-des-hommes.html/>”*

Best wishes,

Vivere