



BBC reporter Mike Thomson landing in Darfur. Photo Ed Prendeville

Shocking voices from an unreported world

By Neil McNaughton

A hushed audience at East Finchley Methodist Church heard some of the personal stories behind the headlines from some of the world's most troubled spots when award-winning BBC journalist Mike Thomson, a local resident, presented a talk on his recent experiences.

His BBC executive wife, Jane Ray, also helped place the stories into the context of our own lives and beliefs in a talk called *Despatches from an unreported world*, as stories like these so rarely make the news agenda.

Personal stories

Mike began with a shocking and moving account of what happened to Zawadi Morgane, who lost 25 members of her family in a massacre in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A taped recording of her voice moved everyone who heard it; the story of the killings, the death of most of her children and her own experience of multiple rape were deeply shocking.

Mike also described the increasing incidence of kidnapping of Eritrean refugees in Sinai. The audience listened to the terrified voice of a victim, pleading for his ransom to be paid.

Modern holocausts

The talk was to commemorate Holocaust Day on 27 February. Mike reported that the Holocaust was not just a single historical phenomenon; such horrors continue to occur

all over the world and many of them still go largely unreported.

In Burma, for example, a systematic campaign is under way to eliminate the minority Rohingya people. They have had their land confiscated and are suffering systematic persecution. Such examples of ethnic cleansing are indeed modern holocausts, but how many of us have heard about them, Mike and Jane asked.

Despite these horrific stories

there is a message of hope. Mike, who often keeps in touch with the people he meets on his journeys, told us that Zawadi was now looking after her one remaining daughter, Reponse, and that she had received enough aid for Reponse to attend school and for her to set up a small dress-making business.

The Eritrean kidnap victim was ultimately released, though he still lives in fear. But, for many, hope is all they have.

Support for carers

By Daphne Chamberlain

Here's what's available to carers at Barnet Carers Centre, Global House, 303 Ballards Lane, N12 8NP.

Mental Health Carers Peer Support Group

6.00-8.00pm. First Monday of every month. Free.

Carers Peer Support Group

1.30-3.00pm. Every Friday. Free.

Cherry Lodge Cancer Carers Peer Support Group

Second Monday of each month. Free.

Arts and Crafts

Noon-3pm. Every Tuesday. Free.

Carers Get Together

10.30-12.30pm. Every Thursday. Free.

Legal Advice Drop In Surgery

10.00-12.00 noon. Second Monday of each month. Free.

Welfare Benefits Surgery

10.00-12.00 noon. Thursday fortnightly. Call to book appointment. Free.

Film Night

6.00-8.30pm. First Wednesday of each month. £1.50. Call to book.

Relaxation Evening

6.30-8.30pm. Third Wednesday of each month. Call to book. £5.50 for treatment and buffet.

Relaxation Evening with Spiritual Healing

6.30-8.30pm. Third Wednesday of each month. Call to book. £5.50 for treatment and buffet.

Relaxation Day

10.00am-3.00pm. First Friday of each month. Call to book. £8.50 for treatment and lunch.

Gentle Yoga and Relaxation

10.00-11.30am. Second Friday of each month. Call to book. £2.00 per session.

Telephone help lines

020 8343 9698 for Adult Carers.

020 8432 2092 for Young Carers and Siblings

020 8432 2091 for Community Home and Support Services

Daily Drop In

Talk through problems and concerns confidentially. 9.00am-8.15pm, Monday to Thursday. 9.00am-4.30pm, Friday.

Carers' Breaks Fund

Funds for breaks or help towards cost of essential equipment. Contact to check eligibility.

Counselling

Available in non-judgemental, confidential setting. £12.00 per session for 12 sessions.

Fresher air

A project is to be launched to improve air quality in North Finchley, one of Barnet's busiest town centres. A package of different measures will be introduced including a bicycle hire scheme, electric vehicle charging points and cycle stands.

The project comes after Barnet Council won a share in £300,000 worth of grants from the Mayor of London's Air

Quality Fund. The aim will also be to encourage more parents and pupils to leave their cars at home when travelling to school.

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