

Time for International Transparency

June 17

People have noted that most of the abuse disclosures this year have been about North American overseers, workers and friends, but they have mentioned their hope that the growing transparency and engagement will spread to other continents. It is well-known that abuse is a global problem and no area is immune.

Unfortunately, this slow growth in transparency only occurred because brave people provided details of their abuse (sometimes anonymously, and sometimes with their names). This has given strength to others to also disclose their abuse, and to open the secrecy that was previously imposed on victims.

It has also been recognised that the secrecy of past cases allowed some perpetrators to continue their abuse, perhaps in a new area of unsuspecting people when they were silently shifted to a new field.

That secrecy may have been common in general society many years ago, but is no longer acceptable. Victims, perhaps from many years ago, are still living with the trauma. Their healing requires open acknowledgement of all historic cases so they can see that their hurt is recognised. In some cases, they can realise that they were not the only victim of their perpetrator.

WINGS has received reports of abuse in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Australasia and Africa.

Now is the time for those areas to provide reports that can be published by WINGS, so overseers and workers can face up to the need for radical change in treatment of abuse cases:

- Sincere, individual apologies to all known victims
- Arrangements to fund therapy where required
- Past cases where perpetrators were protected and shifted are revisited
- Perpetrator attendance at meetings is reconsidered
- Zero-tolerance policies issued to all friends and workers

- Training, and regular updates, undertaken by all workers (male and female)

WINGS notes that many people have recognised that the strict hierarchy of regional overseers expected to be guided by God has allowed dreadful actions, that could have been prevented or minimised if there was more involvement of elders, friends and females. WINGS advocates for past child victims, and protection of current/future children, but does not lobby for general change in the fellowship. That is the prerogative of the friends and workers.

Note: This post has consistently used the term 'abuse'. It is intended to refer to both Child Sexual Abuse, and adult abuse, of all types.