

Prayer for the Persecuted Church September 8, 2017

Catholic Priest Kidnapped and Killed in Southern Nigeria

9/6/17 Nigeria (*Morning Star News*)

As a priest was driving through Imo State in Nigeria, he was taken from his car by gunmen and killed. His body was found the next day "in the wilds" of a nearby town. No evidence of why the gunmen did this has been given as they have contacted no one for a ransom and left no clues as to their reason for doing this. However, authorities have promised to investigate until they find the priest's attackers. This incident is part of "an increasing trend in Christians being attacked in Southern Nigeria."

Pray for the family, friends, and church members who have been affected by this priest's death.

Pray that the gunmen would be found.

Pray for Christians living in this area as they have become targets for persecution over the years.

Sudanese Refugees Forced to Recite Islamic Prayer to Receive Food

9/6/17 Sudan (*ICN*)

Although "forced conversion" is not legal in many areas of the world, it often does not protect Christians as is the case in Sudan. Those who do not adhere to Sunni Islam are often treated poorly, denied work, refused basic aid, and churches have even been torn down. Now, "Christian children in Sudan's refugee camps are not receiving food unless they say Islamic prayers." There are an estimated 700,000 Christian refugees in Sudan, and many are contained in camps where they cannot leave to go anywhere else.

Pray that those in refugee camps would have their basic needs met.

Pray for opportunities for refugees to leave these camps and build new homes.

Pray that those working in the refugee camps would have compassion on all who live there.

Baghdad's Churches Close Due to Low Attendance

9/6/17 Iraq (*Al Arabiya*)

Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, recently saw the closure of eight churches. Although ISIS never occupied Baghdad, the capital has still experienced targeted attacks over the years, resulting in many Christians leaving for safer places. Due to low attendance, the regional authority of the Catholic Church decided to permanently shut down eight churches. "While such decision [sic] seemed to have made a lot of sense, it leaves little space for optimism as far as Iraq's Christian community is involved."

Pray for Iraq as so many Christians have fled their homes and the country altogether.

Pray for Christian witnesses to remain even after the devastating events of ISIS occupation.

Pray for those who are left to be able to rebuild their homes and lives.

Damaged Churches in Syria Show the Destruction of War

9/6/17 Syria (The Jerusalem Post)

Deir Ez-Zor, a Syrian city situated on the Euphrates River, has been through a lot in the recent years. Between civil war and ISIS occupation, people have fled and churches have been blown up. On September 5, the president of Syria announced victory of breaking the siege Deir Ez-Zor has been under since May 2015. The Syrian regime was able to hold out against the siege, but "most of the city's Christian population have fled in the recent years...leaving behind a city filled with the memories of a once strong Christian community."

Pray for the country of Syria as it has gone through many years of war on different fronts.

Pray for the healing of the residents of Deir Ez-Zor as the siege has recently been broken.

Pray that those who had to flee will be able to return to their city and rebuild their homes.

Christian Villages in Pakistan Under Threat of Attack

9/6/17 Pakistan (Christians in Pak.)

Three mostly Christian villages in the Khushab district of Pakistan are on alert for expected attacks by Muslims. Recently, a Muslim woman ran away with a Christian man and eloped, which is believed to be the source of these anticipated attacks. After news of the incident began to spread, "local Muslims started demanding the return of the girl" and "threatened to torch all the churches in the locality" as well as abduct Christian girls. Relationships that span different faiths often cause great tension among families and villages in Pakistan.

Pray for the safety of the couple that ran away.

Pray for the calming of tensions between the Muslims and Christians involved in this situation.

Pray that they would be able to work things out without escalating to violence.

Malaysia Arrests 19 in Anti-Terror Raids

9/5/17 Malaysia (Straits Times)

Malaysian authorities are fighting the threat of terrorism by adding to the number of those they have put behind bars since 2013. Between July 4 and August 30 of 2017, they "arrested 19 suspected terrorists," which brings the total number to over 260. One of the newly arrested suspects was accused of the beheading of a Christian hostage several years ago in the Philippines. Others who have been arrested over the years have included women wanting to go to Syria to fight for ISIS, army personnel, and immigration officers.

Pray that those in authority who are able to interfere with terrorist attacks would continue to do so successfully.

Pray for leaders to continue to take the threat of terrorism seriously and do what they can to protect their citizens.

Pray that those who are often the target of attacks would be protected.

Kenya election: Date set for Kenyatta-Odinga re-run

4 September 2017 | BBC NEWS: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41146213>

Kenya's presidential election will be re-run on 17 October after the original result was annulled, the chair of Kenya's electoral body has announced.

Wafula Chebukati also confirmed that only President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga would be on the new ballot.

Mr Kenyatta had been declared the winner of last month's vote.

But Mr Odinga complained of widespread irregularities and the Supreme Court declared the first poll void.

The decision is the first time in African history that a supreme court has upheld an opposition challenge in a presidential election and ordered a re-run.

In a ruling on Friday, Chief Justice David Maraga said the 8 August election, in which Mr Kenyatta won 54% of the vote, had not been conducted in accordance with the constitution, declaring it "invalid, null and void".

They said that some members of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) had committed "irregularities and illegalities" in the transmission of results.

The court ordered a new poll to be held within 60 days.

The opposition demanded that some IEBC officials be removed to ensure that the problems are not repeated in the second ballot.

In the shock verdict, the court said it would give further details about the decision within 21 days.

IEBC chair Wafula Chebukati said it was "imperative that a detailed judgement... is released in order to allow the commission to identify areas that require improvement".

After the Supreme Court's decision Mr Odinga called the electoral commission "rotten" and called for its members to resign and face prosecution.

He hailed the decision as a "a historic day for the people of Kenya and by extension for the people of the continent of Africa".

It is the third time Mr Odinga has disputed national election results, having also lost against the sitting president in 2007 and 2013.

Mr Kenyatta initially called for calm after the decision in a television address, but later referred to the judges as wakora (meaning crooks in Swahili), saying they had "decided to cancel the election".

The decision to only include Mr Kenyatta and Mr Odinga on the ballot has been controversial, with at least one of the six other candidates threatening legal action over their exclusion.

The poll had raised fears of major violence similar to that following a disputed vote in 2007, when post-election violence left 1,200 people dead.

Although the unrest after this year's vote was not as serious as that in 2007, days of sporadic protests left at least 28 people dead.

New charges against pastor in Turkey jail

by Diana Chandler, posted Tuesday, September 05, 2017 (2 days ago)

Baptist Press <http://bpnews.net/49482/new-charges-against-pastor-in-turkey-jail>

IZMIR, Turkey (BP) -- American pastor Andrew Brunson faces new charges punishable by four consecutive life imprisonments in an Izmir, Turkey, prison.

The Presbyterian pastor formerly of North Carolina is now accused of espionage aimed at overthrowing the Turkish Parliament and government, and undermining the constitutional order of the state, the Wall Street Journal reported shortly after the charges were levied Aug. 24. Previously accused of working with the Fetullah Gulen movement to overthrow Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Brunson has been imprisoned since early October 2016.

The new charges are "just as false and ridiculous as the original charge," the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) said in an Aug. 28 press release. The charges are compounded by Turkish authorities' refusal to open Brunson's file to attorneys who have no idea of which evidence authorities claim to hold against the pastor.

Brunson's family and others advocating for his release continue to request prayers for the Evangelical Presbyterian pastor who has ministered in Turkey 23 years.

"Don't forget about him. Pray for him to return home to his family," his daughter Jacqueline Furnani of North Carolina wrote Aug. 28 on Facebook. "I flew to Turkey to visit my dad this August, and it broke my heart to see him suffering like this. Seeing his face again in this picture brings me to tears," she wrote in response to his photo posted at ACLJ.org.

Turkey has presented no evidence supporting any of the charges against Brunson, who has repeatedly said his only purpose in Turkey has been "to tell about Jesus Christ," the ACLJ said. Brunson had led the Izmir Resurrection Church of about 40 worshippers in Izmir without government interference until he and his wife Norine sought to renew their Visas last year.

The ACLJ has urged Erdogan to free Brunson by using a new law in Turkey to return prisoners to their home countries, as stated in Article 74 of Decree 694, implemented just a day after the new charges were levied.

"Pastor Andrew ... should be released immediately and returned to the United States to be reunited with his family," the ACLJ said in its press release. "Given this new opportunity, it is critical to encourage President Erdogan to execute this new power on behalf of Pastor Andrew and return him to the United States."

The new law allows prisoners or convicts who aren't Turkish citizens to "be returned to another country or exchanged for prisoners or convicts in another country when national security or the country's interests so require, and upon request of the Foreign Minister, with the recommendation of the Justice Minister and the approval of the President," the ACLJ said.

In February, a group of 78 U.S. lawmakers signed a letter calling for Brunson's release, indicating a "close partnership for decades" between the U.S. and Turkey.

In August, when U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson released the International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, he cited Turkey among seven countries that "use discriminatory laws to deny their citizens freedom of religion or belief," along with Iran, Saudi Arabia, China, Pakistan, Sudan and Bahrain.