



# Prayer for the Persecuted Church for December 9, 2022

## Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

**CHRISTIANS IN PRISON:** This list is only a sample: ALGERIA: Hamid Soudad; CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Pastors John Cao, Yan Hwa, Hu Shigen, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi and Qin Derfu, Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Alimujiang Yimiti (Uyghur) Wang Shunping; ERITREA: Meron Gebreselasie, Mussia Ezas, Dr. Kifly Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou Haile Nayzgi; IRAN: Joseph Shahbazian, Naser Navard Goltapeh, Yousef Nadarkhani, Sabehe Fadaee, Homayoun & Sara, Milad Goudarzi, Alireza Nourmohammadi, Yasser Mosayebzadeh; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; NORTH KOREA: Zhang Wen Shi PAKISTAN: Zafar Bhatti; VIETNAM: Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton

**KIDNAPPED VICTIMS:** *Raymond Koh, Gilbert Biswas, Ken Elliot, Jeff Woodke, Leah Sharibu, (and hundreds of children), Sarah Atef, Joshua Hilmya & wife Ruth Sitepu, Hormoz Diril (in Turkey)*

*From International Christian Concern  
<https://bit.ly/3Fa00u9>*

## Christian Man Brutally Injured in Attack by Somali Herders

**12/02/2022 Kenya (ICC)**

On October 20, in Kitui South, a province in western Kenya, a Christian man named David survived a heinous attack at the hands of Somali herders. David managed to run away from his attackers who seem to have also fled after shooting him. He lay in the forest from noon until the following day at noon when other farmers passed by and were able to rescue him.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for continued healing for David following this attack.*
- *Pray for protection for his family.*
- *Pray for tensions to ease between Somali Muslim herders and Kenyan Christian farmers.*

## Algeria Still Forcing Churches to Close

**11/23/2022 Algeria (ICC)**

Over the past few years, Algeria has forced

at least 16 separate churches to close. This is allegedly because of their unregistered status, most of which are affiliated with the EPA (Evangelical Protestant Association). The Algerian government has repeatedly refused to accept their application for registration, forcing Christians into a dangerous spot for practicing their faith.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for protection for congregations in Algeria.*
- *Pray for churches that have been closed to be able to reopen.*
- *Pray for the gospel to spread as a result of these church closures.*

## Turkey Refuses to Give Further Information on Kavala Case

**12/01/2022 Turkey (ICC)**

Osman Kavala is a well-known philanthropist who has been imprisoned in Turkey since October 2017. An Istanbul court sentenced him to aggravated life for financing the anti-government Gezi Park protests. The Turkish Permanent Mission sent a letter on Nov. 10 to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stating that they will not be providing further information on his case.

- **HOW TO PRAY:** *Pray for greater transparency in Osman Kavala's case.*
- *Pray for any unjust charges against him to be dropped. Pray for improved human rights throughout Turkey.*

## 120 Civilians Abducted in Village Raids

**11/22/2022 Nigeria (ICC)**

Unidentified bandits raided four villages in northwestern Nigeria on November 20. According to local sources, around 120 people, including women and children, were abducted in the attack. Kidnapping is common, especially in the violence-ridden northern regions of Nigeria. Gangs of armed men seize people from farms and villages to extract ransom money from their relatives.

- **HOW TO PRAY:** *Pray for the immediate return of those who were abducted.*
- *Pray for the bandits to come to know the love of Christ.*
- *Pray for healing for those who experienced this trauma.*

*From Voice of the Martyrs  
icommittopray.com*

**Dec. 01, 2022 | India**

**Dec. 08, 2022 | Congo, Democratic Republic of the**

## Christians Poisoned, Threatened

Luuando Yombo's husband was an elder in their church in the Ubwari Peninsula in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her mother and brother also served at the church in an area with a large Muslim population. In 2021, Muslim neighbors provided food for church members. After eating the food, the church members grew ill and believed the food had been intentionally poisoned. Luuando's husband, brother, mother and two other members of the church died after eating the food. Then, the people who provided the food burned down Luuanda's

house, saying, "We are going to finish you in this village." Luuando has left the area and fears returning. She is tormented by the memories of what happened but says she has forgiven the poisoners. She is now caring for 16 children, her own and her brother's.

**Dec. 08, 2022 | India**

## Nine Christians Detained for Attending Thanksgiving Service

A group of believers met for a service of thanksgiving after a significant healing, some of them traveling more than 200 kilometers [124 miles] to attend the service in Madhya Pradesh. Local members of a Hindu radical group noticed the assembly. They broke in to videotape it and called police to break it up. Seven pastors and two laymen from three states were taken to the police station and jailed. They were held for four days before being fined 10,000 rupees each and then released. Now they must travel back and forth from their distant homes for court appearances and other legal matters. They have incurred significant legal fees and expenses from this harassment by Hindus who are empowered by anti-conversion laws in the area. These expenses are expected to continue for many months.

**Dec. 08, 2022 | Lebanon**

## Economic Crisis Impacts Ministry Efforts

In August 2020, a massive fertilizer explosion in Lebanon's capital, Beirut, killed more than 200 people, rendered 300,000 homeless, and caused 15 billion dollars in damage. In 2019, the government defaulted on its debt and many banks collapsed; today, utilities are regularly cut off and rents are rising. More than 80 have drowned attempting to leave via boat. The country's economic struggles impact ministry efforts. "This crisis has changed people's attitude," a front-line worker said. "Earlier, people were willing to listen about the Bible over a cup of coffee, even from politeness; now they are more closed." Front-line workers

overcome challenges created by the crisis by meeting practical needs: “For man, the gospel is a box of food or a pack of medicines.”

*From Voice of the Martyrs Global Prayer Guide*  
<https://bit.ly/3VB3kCl>

## **AFGHANISTAN**

### **RESTRICTED**

#### **OVERVIEW:**

The good news of Christ reached Afghanistan by the second century, but today there are no church buildings. Cultural and religious opposition to the gospel as well as significant security issues remain great challenges for all missions efforts in this Central Asian nation. And sadly, most Afghans have never heard the gospel, do not know a Christian and have been indoctrinated to follow Muhammad’s teachings without question. Radical Islam and violent tribal political activity make the nation a difficult and dangerous place for Christians to practice their faith. There is, nevertheless, a special unity among Christians laboring for the gospel in Afghanistan. Indigenous, near-culture and expatriate believers are boldly taking risks and using every possible opportunity to help believers grow in faith and connect with local house churches. While church growth has been slow among the more than 40 unique people groups, significant Christian growth has occurred among the Hazara people, and members of other people groups are also coming to know Christ.

#### **MAJOR RELIGION:**

99.8 percent of Afghans are Muslims, with 90 percent Sunni and 10 percent Shiite.

#### **PERSECUTOR:**

Both local and national governments are highly antagonistic toward Christians. Extremist groups, including the Taliban and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), are active, and believers are also persecuted by their families, friends and communities.

#### **WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN AFGHANISTAN:**

Afghan Christians cannot worship openly. They must worship in homes or other small venues,

and evangelism is forbidden. Christians and seekers are highly secretive about their faith or interest in Christianity, especially since the resurgence of the Taliban. Beatings, torture and kidnappings are routine for Christians in Afghanistan. Although waves of Christians have fled the country to worship openly, some Afghan Christians have stayed to maintain a witness for Christ. A small number of Christians are martyred every year in Afghanistan, but their deaths generally occur without public knowledge. A few are also in prison, but imprisonment is not common. Christian converts from Islam are often killed by family members or other radicalized Muslims before any legal proceedings can begin.

#### **ACCESS TO BIBLES:**

Since there are no churches or Christian bookstores in Afghanistan, Bibles are available only through underground ministry networks or in digital formats. There is little access to printed Bibles, and owning one is extremely dangerous. Most believers do not have their own Bible, but online Bibles and other digital formats are available and extremely helpful to believers and seekers. Bible translation efforts are underway for the languages of some people groups who do not have a Bible in their native language.

#### **VOM WORK:**

VOM equips Afghan Christians by providing Bibles, TV and radio broadcasts, discipleship training, front-line worker support and other forms of practical and spiritual assistance, with a special focus on outreach to persecuted women and widows of martyrs.

#### **PRAYER REQUESTS:**

- *Pray for the peace, protection and provision of believers and their families.*
- *Pray for believers who gather in small groups for prayer, encouragement, training and worship.*
- *Pray for front-line workers involved in evangelism, discipleship and house churches.*
- *Pray that Bible translation, radio, TV and social media ministries will bear much*

*fruit.*

- *Pray that our brothers and sisters will persevere through opposition and persecution.*
- *Pray for greater access to God's Word in every language and for every tribal group.*

## **Barnabas Aid Prayer Calendar**

### **Friday 9 December 2022**

- *Pray earnestly for believers in northern Mozambique, at increasing risk of brutality at the hands of the Islamic State of Mozambique, known locally as Al-Shabaab (no connection with the Somali group of the same name).*

Its militants make about two attacks every week, burning houses, killing people, raping women and kidnapping boys to serve as child soldiers. Their main targets are Christians but they also kill moderate Muslims who refuse to join their ranks. The militants work strategically, launching attacks in one area to draw in security forces and leave other areas defenseless.

- *Ask the Lord to comfort all those grieving, to strengthen His people, to grant wisdom to Christian leaders seeking to continue ministering in the area, and to make the Mozambican government and security forces resolute in protecting innocent people so that the whole population will be able to live in peace.*

### **Saturday 10 December 2022**

"God has remembered us" whispered our brothers and sisters in northern Kenya in their mother tongue as Barnabas-funded supplies of flour, beans and cooking oil were distributed among 2,561 Christian households. The region is afflicted by drought and Christians often suffer attacks from the Muslim majority. Furthermore, they had been excluded from receiving aid

given by the authorities because of their faith in Christ.

- *Pray that the Lord will protect, strengthen and sustain His people in northern Kenya. Ask that supplies of further aid funded by Barnabas will get through as before to Christians even in the least accessible areas.*

### **Sunday 11 December 2022**

- *Sovereign Lord, we bring before You hard-pressed pastors and other Christian leaders around the world as they prepare to lead God's people in the coming Christmas season. Please provide for those experiencing economic hardship, for those oppressed by restrictions imposed by governments favoring the majority religion, and for those encountering hostility from neighbors and even family members because of their trust in You. Give them wisdom in preparing their Christmas messages and enable them to direct their congregations to the Light of the World who provides eternal hope amid the world's spiritual darkness. Send the comfort of Your Spirit to Christian leaders imprisoned for their faith in You and remind them that Your Word is never in chains. We ask in the precious Name of Jesus (John 8:12; 2 Timothy 2:9).*

### **Monday 12 December 2022**

- *Lift up to the Lord three Nigerian Christian women rescued eight years after they were kidnapped with 273 other girls, mostly Christian, from a school in Chibok by Boko Haram Islamist terrorists.*

Ruth Bitrus, 24, Hanatu Musa, 26, and Kauna Luka, 25, were recovered with their children by

the Nigerian army in June and July. Around 165 “Chibok girls” have escaped, been rescued or released since their kidnapping in April 2014. They reported being whipped by their captors to force them into marriage, while a group of girls experienced a mock execution for refusing to convert to Islam. Ask for healing and comfort for Ruth, Hanatu and Kauna that they will recover fully from their ordeal and that their needs, and the needs of their children, will be met. Pray that other Chibok women still held by the terrorists will be freed soon.

### **Tuesday 13 December 2022**

Intercede for Christians in Plateau State, Nigeria, where anti-Christian violence continues. In one attack, for example, on a Christian village earlier this year, seven people – three adults and four children, one as young as five – were shot dead by suspected Fulani Islamists. Pray for the bereaved of this community and others in Plateau State who have suffered anti-Christian violence, that they will know the Lord’s comfort in their loss.

- *Ask the Lord that security in Plateau State and across Nigeria will be improved, and that such attacks will cease.*

### **Wednesday 14 December 2022**

- *Bring before the Lord the Christian minority in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and northern Nigeria, where several jihadi groups affiliated to Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) and al-Qaeda are attacking the Church and seeking to assert Islamism.*
- *Pray for our brothers and sisters who face the possibility of attack any time they meet for worship, who are forced from their homes and off their land, and who seem to be without any earthly protection, that the Lord will sustain them in their joyful Christian faith.*

### **Thursday 15 December 2022**

Lift up in prayer a Libyan Christian convert from Islam, who has been sentenced to death for apostasy by the Court of Appeal in the city of Misrata. The man became a Christian around four years ago, and has been arrested several times since then by Libyan militias who act as law enforcement in the disordered country. The death sentence for apostasy was applied as a result of his refusal to return to Islam.

- *Pray for our brother in Libya, asking that the death sentence will not be carried out and that he will be allowed to practice his Christian faith in peace. Ask that whatever happens, the Lord will strengthen him and remain close to him.*

*From Christianity Today*  
<https://bit.ly/3Bjf2mH>

## **US Commission ‘Outraged’ By Omitted Offenders of Religious Freedom**

**JAYSON CASPER|**

**DECEMBER 5, 2022 12:30 PM**

The United States has expanded its list of the world’s worst violators of religious freedom.

Two new nations—Cuba and Nicaragua—were added on Friday to the State Department’s list of Countries of Particular Concern (CPC). Two others—Vietnam and the Central African Republic (CAR)—were added to its Special Watch List (SWL). And one new organization was added to its list of Entities of Particular Concern (EPC): Russia’s mercenary Wagner group, due to its cited offenses in CAR.

“Around the world, governments and non-state actors harass, threaten, jail, and even kill individuals on account of their beliefs,” stated Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State. “The United States will not stand by in the face of these abuses.”

His own watchdog, however, is unconvinced.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) tweeted its “outrage” over the non-inclusion of Nigeria and India. It is “inexplicable,” the independent bipartisan organization continued, given the State Department’s own reporting.

In June, Blinken released the US government’s annual Report on International Religious Freedom. Mandated by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), the report chronicles violations in every nation of the world, whether by governmental or societal actors, measuring also the local legal frameworks.

The sections on Nigeria and India were particularly lengthy.

“They each clearly meet the legal standards for designation,” stated Nury Turkel, USCIRF chair. “USCIRF is tremendously disappointed that the Secretary of State did not ... recognize the severity of the religious freedom violations.”

**Sidebar: How the State Department’s listed nations rank on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List (WWL) of Christian persecution**

**Countries of Particular Concern:**

**Afghanistan — No. 1 on WWL**

**North Korea — No. 2**

**Eritrea — No. 6**

**Pakistan — No. 8**

**Iran — No. 9**

**Saudi Arabia — No. 11**

**Myanmar — No. 12**

**China — No. 17**

**Turkmenistan — No. 25**

**Cuba — No. 37**

**Tajikistan — No. 45**

**Nicaragua — Not Ranked**

**Special Watch List:**

**Vietnam — No. 19**

**Algeria — No. 22**

**Central African Republic — No. 31**

**Comoros — Not Ranked**

Note: Open Doors ranks Nigeria at No. 7 and India at No. 10 on its WWL

This past year, USCIRF issued two updated reports and held a hearing on Nigeria. Additional scrutiny was also given to India, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Afghanistan.

In its annual report released in April, USCIRF additionally recommended Syria for CPC designation. It also listed Vietnam, which the State Department included on its SWL list, and Afghanistan, semi-included with the designation of the Taliban as an EPC.

USCIRF vice chair Abraham Cooper had mixed reactions. While hoping Vietnam’s designation would spur the Southeast Asian government to take “concrete steps” to address concerns, he said simple redesignation of the Taliban “does not reflect the reality that the group is the de facto government.”

The independent commission, meanwhile, “welcomed” the CPC designations of Cuba and Nicaragua, both of which it labeled as SWL nations in April. The situation in each had worsened since then, it noted.

USCIRF also recommended that Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan be placed on the SWL for “engaging in or tolerating” at least one criterion of “systematic, ongoing, and egregious” violations of religious freedom.

The CPC designation requires two such criteria, and Blinken additionally judged Burma (Myanmar), China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as culpable.

Russia was added to the State Department list last year; Nigeria had been designated by the Trump administration the prior year, before being removed under Biden in 2021.

But USCIRF has also been frequently critical of the US government’s use of waivers to avoid legally mandated “targeted actions” against violating nations. Permitted for national security concerns under section 407 of IRFA, in 2020 exemptions were invoked for 5 of the 10 CPCs then, including Nigeria.

Blinken stated that the US is ready to meet with any government willing to discuss the “pathway” for removal from the State Department’s lists. Sometimes this involves addressing non-state actors, and holding them accountable.

In addition to the Taliban and Wagner Group, designated this year were al-Shabab (Somalia), Boko Haram (Nigeria), Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (Syria), the Houthis (Yemen), Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin in the African Sahel, and ISIS chapters in the Sahara and West Africa.

“Our announcement of these designations is in keeping with our values and interests to protect national security and to advance human rights around the globe,” said Blinken. “Countries that effectively safeguard this and other human rights are more peaceful, stable, [and] prosperous, and more reliable partners of the United States than those that do not.”