Prayer for the Persecuted Church: Our Best Practices

- Our focus in this hour is on prayer for the global church, not ourselves or our local issues. We can talk and even pray for those other things after prayer meeting is over at 1:00 p.m.
- We strive to start our prayers by 12:10.
- We are blessed to have a growing number of praying people join us. Let’s all offer short prayers throughout our prayer time, allowing time for everyone to pray out loud if they wish. We are blessed by prayers when we can hear them, but silent prayers from our people are as valued as spoken ones.
- Thank you for praying for the persecuted church. Encourage friends to pray, too!

Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

CHRISTIANS IN PRISON: This list is only a sample: ALGERIA: Hamid Soudad; CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Li Jie, Hang Xiaodong, Wang Qiang; John Cao, Yan Hwa, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi and Qin Derfu, Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Lian Xu Liang; ERITREA: Meron Gebreselasie, Mussia Ezas, Dr. Kifly Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzgi; INDIA: Pastor Sawan; IRAN: Joseph Shahbazian; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; NORTH KOREA: Zhang Wen Shi; PAKISTAN: Zafar Bhatti; VIETNAM: Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton

KIDNAPPED VICTIMS: Raymond Koh, Gilbart Biswas, Leah Sharibu, Sarah Atef, Joshua Hilmya & wife Ruth Sitepu, Hormoz Diril (in Turkey)

From International Christian Concern

14 Female Hostages Rescued from ADF

07/21/2023 DRC (ICC)

Ugandan and DRC security forces rescued 14 female hostages from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Elements of the Uganda People’s Defence Forces and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo executed the rescue in North Kivu province as part of a joint operation targeting the ADF in eastern DRC.

- HOW TO PRAY: Pray for the return of any who may remain in captivity.
- Praise God for the rescue of these 14 women.
- Pray for this mission to be effective in curbing ADF violence.

Iran’s Morality Police Resurface, Reigniting Protests

07/20/2023 Iran (ICC)

On July 16, Iran’s infamous morality police resurfaced for the first time since December 2022, reigniting the firestorm of protests from Iranian women and human rights and religious freedom activists. The morality police, or the Gasht-e-Ershad, is a branch of the Iranian police tasked with enforcing Islamic dress code, particularly the wearing of the hijab.

- HOW TO PRAY: Pray for protection for all those involved in the protests.
- Pray for equal rights for minorities throughout Iran.
- Pray for government leaders in Iran to come to know Christ.
Chinese Government Rewrites Portions of the Bible

07/21/2023 China (ICC)

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government is rewriting portions of the Bible in an effort to increase its control over religion in the country, according to U.S. Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI). In a meeting of the House Select Committee on the CCP, Rep. Gallagher stated that Chairman Xi Jinping is on a “quest to make the faithful serve the party rather than God.”

- HOW TO PRAY: Pray for the true gospel to spread throughout China.
- Praise God for the many faithful believers in China who are preaching truth.
- Pray for protection for China’s underground church.

Ten Civilians Killed in Jihadist Attacks in Burkina Faso

07/19/2023 Burkina Faso (ICC)

Six civilians were killed, and four others wounded by jihadists on Monday in an attack on Nouna, a town of refuge for thousands of people fleeing violence in Burkina Faso, according to the Agency French Press. A second jihadist attack occurred near the border of the Ivory Coast the same evening, killing four more people.

- HOW TO PRAY: Pray for comfort for those grieving in the aftermath of this attack.
- Pray for jihadist attacks in this region to cease.
- Pray for growth and protection for Burkina Faso’s church.

Protests Threaten Christians Across the Country

After a June 28 incident in Sweden in which pages from the Quran were publicly burned, protests have swept across Pakistan. The prime minister urged the organization of large rallies and convened a joint parliamentary session on July 7 to protest the burning. During these rallies, angry protesters desecrated crosses and insulted Christianity. Christians across the country are bracing for attacks. Haroon Shahzad, a Christian, fled after being charged with blasphemy on June 30 for posting a Bible verse online. Christians in and near Sargodha have been unable to leave their homes because of dangerous protests over an anonymous anti-Islam message left on a local mosque. Christian street-sweepers in Hasilpur have been pulled from duty.

- Front-line workers ask for prayers of protection for believers and for peace across the country.

Pastor Murdered by Islamist Extremists

Hamidou felt the call of God to spread the gospel. So he left the safety of his home in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, to take the gospel to the northern part of his nation. Though radical Islamists are active in that region, he moved there with his family and planted a church. On May 15, 2023, Islamic extremists appeared at his home, located next to the church. When Pastor Hamidou saw the men, he fled into the church. The militants followed and shot him and two other men, killing them.

- Front-line workers ask for prayer for the families of Pastor Hamidou and the
other men as they grieve. They also ask for prayer that the extremists will come to know Christ and that these attacks will cease.

Jul. 27, 2023 | Laos

Teacher’s Faithful Witness Leads to Job Loss

Nyok has taught for 14 years, serving the last six years as director of her village’s elementary school. A jealous coworker cursed Nyok, and she began to experience pain. When she prayed to accept Christ, the pain disappeared. Word spread at school that she was a Christian, and Nyok was warned by her administrators, the district education director and the Ministry of Education that, because her job is a government position, she could not follow a “western” religion. Nyok shared her testimony and refused to renounce her faith in Christ. She said, “It is okay to remove me from the director position, but I will not stop believing God. I have seen God’s grace on my life. He did many miraculous things in my life.” In May, Nyok was removed from her post as school director, but she continues to teach and look for ways to bless her students.

Voice of the Martyrs
Global Prayer Guide

MALAYSIA
CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN MALAYSIA

OVERVIEW:
Malaysia has three major ethnicities: Malay (60 percent), Chinese (30 percent) and native tribes. The Malays are the most powerful group in the country, and being Muslim is considered an important part of their identity. Most Christians are from the tribal and Chinese people groups, and most churches experience relative freedom as long as they do not evangelize the Malays.

MAJOR RELIGION:
56 percent of Malaysians are Sunni Muslims, but there is also a significant Buddhist population. 9 percent are Christians, including 4 percent evangelicals.

PERSECUTOR:
The government severely punishes Christian converts and strictly opposes outreach and evangelism among the Malay people.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN MALAYSIA:
While Christianity is not illegal, Christians are marginalized by the ruling Muslim ethnic group and have difficulty acquiring building permits for new churches. Many churches work in the languages of Mandarin, Tamil and English, but not in the Malay language. No Malay churches meet openly, and it is illegal for Malays to convert to Christianity. Christian converts who are caught are confined to so-called reeducation camps that use torture and propaganda to force them to return to Islam. Many indigenous people have come to Christ in eastern Malaysia.

ACCESS TO BIBLES:
It is illegal for Malay people to own a Bible, and Malay-language Bibles are largely unavailable outside Christian-majority areas.

VOM WORK:
VOM supports front-line workers and persecuted Malay Christians.

PRAYER REQUESTS:
- Pray for Christian workers trying to return to the country.
- Pray that locals and foreigners will work together to engage the unreached.
- Pray for a media project that will make the gospel available to nearly everyone in the country.
- Pray that new churches will be established and filled with Malay people.
- Pray for church leaders who are forming strategies to engage unreached people.
FRIDAY 28
A church in Pakistan’s capital Islamabad was subjected to a terrifying attack by a mob of around 40 extremists during a Sunday evening service. The church was pelted with bricks and shots were fired, leaving bullet marks on the church walls – thankfully nobody was hurt. Pray for around 60 Christian families who live in this area of Islamabad, calling out for the Lord’s protection.

- Give thanks for the swift response of the authorities who quickly made arrests and increased security around the church.

SATURDAY 29
Two Christians are among several people in Pakistan who were accused of “blasphemy” in separate incidents in April and May. Musarrat Bibi, an assistant at a school in the Pakpattan District of Punjab, and her Muslim colleague were arrested and charged with “blasphemy” after it emerged that waste paper they were burning contained Arabic verses from the Quran. Both Musarrat and her colleague are illiterate. In the same district Khurram Yousaf, a Christian wedding photographer, was accused of “blasphemy” along with a Muslim newlywed couple after he was asked to take their pictures at an Islamic shrine.

- Pray for the safety of all those accused, especially our sister and brother as Christians are especially vulnerable to such allegations.

SUNDAY 30
- Lord Jesus, we give thanks for those among Your people whom You have gifted as healers of our bodies. We pray that You will anoint and guide Christian doctors, nurses and other clinicians around the world who administer healing skillfully and compassionately in Your Name. We ask that You will grant energy and resilience especially for those who work in lands of persecution and serve their suffering brothers and sisters, sacrificially imitating the physician of our souls, in whose Name we pray. (Psalm 103:3; Mark 2:17)

MONDAY 31
A 21-year-old Islamist terrorist from Brighton, United Kingdom, has confessed to planning to kill a Christian open-air preacher. Edward Little admitted that he had arranged to purchase a gun with which he intended to shoot the preacher and others at Speakers’ Corner in Hyde Park, London, in September 2022. Give thanks that Little was arrested on his way to buy the firearm and that the planned jihadi attack never took place.

- Pray that this stark reminder that believers in the Western world are not immune to violent persecution will cause us to depend all the more upon our Lord.

August TUESDAY 1
At the time of writing, presidential and legislative elections are due to be held in Zimbabwe in early August, though the precise date has yet to be confirmed. Once regarded as the breadbasket of southern Africa, this Christian-majority nation has endured desperate hunger, with an estimated 60% of the population believed to be in “acute food insecurity.”

- Whoever takes power in this month’s elections, pray that they will receive discernment and knowledge (Proverbs 28:2) from God in ruling well and working to meet the urgent needs of the Zimbabwean people.

WEDNESDAY 2
More than 11,700 Christians living in poor and hunger- afflicted areas of Zimbabwe were reached through our latest ePap rollout. Our food.gives project delivered 105,000 lbs of
the nutritious porridge to 131 churches in April 2023 – providing more than one million servings. Our distribution partners said the relief and joy of the congregations receiving the ePap was overwhelming.

- **Give thanks to God that the ePap arrived safely at each church, and pray that He will continue to meet the needs of His people. Ask that the long drought affecting Zimbabwe and other African countries will be broken soon.**

### THURSDAY 3

At least 133 Christians were killed in March and April 2023 as anti-Christian violence raged across northern and Middle Belt Nigeria – the total figure could be even higher. Among the dead were 33 killed in a night-time attack in the Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State on April 15. Many of the victims were asleep and died when the attackers set fire to more than 40 homes. Nine others had been killed just three days earlier in the Christian-majority Atyap Kingdom, also in Zangon Kataf.

- **Pray for all who mourn and ask that they will be assured that their loved ones have received the Crown of Life (James 1:12). Ask that the men of violence will have a life-changing encounter with the Prince of Peace.**

### From Open Doors

**Farah from Iraq is thrilled to return home – but fear remains**

It was a bittersweet feeling when Farah returned to her home in the Nineveh Plains in Iraq in 2017. “On one hand, there was the thrill,” she recalls. “On the other hand, there was heartache when we compared the village we knew with the village it had become.”

“We found our house looted with almost nothing remaining, everything wrecked and useless,” continues Farah, who fled the region with her family in 2014 because of the onslaught by so-called Islamic State (IS). “The windows broken; even walls were demolished. Everywhere it was dirty, everything was dirty. IS put paintings and slogans on the walls.”

Now back home, and having reopened her salon with support from Open Doors partners, she’s determined to stay. But life for her family, and many others like them, remains tough – making your continued support invaluable. “All this suffering and persecution is frightening for us Christians to remain in Iraq,” she adds. “Despite it all, we remain here. All we need is safety, nothing more.”

### Please pray

- **For Farah, her husband and two children, that God will provide for them and help them to flourish**
- **That God will continue to give wisdom and strength to Open Doors partners serving Christians in Iraq**
- **That God will grant courage to His people in Iraq, so that the light of Christ will continue to shine in the darkness.**

### From Voice of the Martyrs

**A Prayer for Christians**

Driven from Their Homes

The Central African Republic, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Laos, Nepal and southern Mexico are a few of the many countries where Christians are driven from their homes because of their faith in Christ. Some are kicked out of their homes and villages by their own families and communities, while others are driven out by Islamists trying to eradicate any Christian influence.

We encourage you to take a minute right now to pray for them.

- **Dear heavenly Father,**
  Our hearts break for our Christian brothers and sisters who experience the pain of persecution because of their faith. We ask that their every need be met according to your riches in mercy.
We pray that those who have lost their homes will find safe refuge and that those fleeing their persecutors will be welcomed by other members of your body.

We pray that those who have lost loved ones will experience your comfort as they mourn.

May you direct them to others who will weep with them and pray with them, encouraging their faith so that they will trust you more each day.

We pray that they will experience physical and emotional healing as well as continued spiritual growth.

We pray, too, that those responsible for persecuting our brothers and sisters in Christ will repent of their sins and turn to God through faith in Christ Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

From Mission Eurasia Global Prayer Initiative

Our national leaders in Azerbaijan ask for your prayers. Please pray for the expansion of our School Without Walls program in the nation, where our colleagues are seeking to train new ministry leaders, organize sessions, and establish new churches throughout the country.

Ukrainian refugees continue to find comfort and help at Mission Eurasia’s refugee center in Moldova. Our national leaders here ask you to please pray for their health and safety as they work daily to serve and evangelize Ukrainian refugees who have come to Moldova for peace and refuge.

Mission Eurasia is sharing the gospel with children in Tajikistan. Our colleagues in this Muslim, Central Asian country ask you to pray for their efforts as they minister to hundreds of Tajik children this summer. Please pray for the success of their summer Bible camp program, and for the geo-political stability of Tajikistan in this volatile region.

Praise God for the week-long Christian English Camp for Ukrainian refugee children that was recently held in Warsaw, Poland. The effect of trauma on the children was very noticeable, but as the week went on, the workers and volunteers were able to see the Spirit of God working in them. Several of these children gave their lives to Jesus during the final camp meeting. Please pray that local leaders and volunteers will be able to continue to disciple these youngest victims of the war in Ukraine.

From Help The Persecuted

NABILA, ALGERIA

Because of her faith in Christ, Nabila’s husband divorced her, and her family disowned her. She now lives alone and is in desperate need of spiritual and tangible support.

Pray that Nabila continues to lean on Christ during this season of loneliness, persecution, and darkness. Ask that God comforts her with His overwhelming peace, providing her with a community of believers and resources in her time of need.

AMINA, SYRIA

Amina is persecuted and pressured by her neighbors after converting to Christianity. She wants to relocate but cannot afford it.

Pray for Amina to put her trust in the Lord to protect and provide for her. Ask that God miraculously provides Amina with the financial resources to be able to relocate safely.
**OUMAYMA, EGYPT**

Oumayma publicly declared her faith in Christ by getting baptized in Egypt. Her family is now persecuting her, leaving her no choice but to run. She is now staying in one of our Safe Houses as she discerns the next steps.

- Pray that Oumayma would be protected from all physical harm, finding a way to rebuild her life away from her family and persecutors. Ask that God allows our Field Ministry Team to care for this dear sister in the best possible ways during her time of need.

**SADAF, IRAQ**

After Sadaf’s mother caught her reading the Bible and watching the Jesus Film on her phone, she forced her into an engagement with a Muslim man. Sadaf is devastated, unsure where to turn.

- Pray that the Lord would grant Sadaf favor in the eyes of her mother, protecting her from this arranged marriage. Ask that God would ultimately use Sadaf to bring her mother to salvation in Jesus Christ.

**WASSIM, SYRIA**

Wassim recently lost his job because of his faith in Christ. He is currently looking for a new job, but the word of his conversion has spread throughout his community.

- Pray that Wassim continues to remain steadfast in his faith, trusting that the Lord will guide him every step of the way. Ask that God grants Wassim favor and provides him with work and a stable income.

**KAMEL, ALGERIA**

After Kamel placed his faith in Christ, his father publicly disowned him in front of his entire village, making him an outcast to everyone he knows. Despite feeling utterly alone, he is determined not to forsake his faith.

- Pray that Kamel would be strengthened and protected, trusting that the Lord has ordained his steps from the beginning of time. Ask that God would give this brother comfort in the depths of his loneliness, providing him with a community of believers, a safe place to live, and a stable income.

**AMIR, MOROCCO**

Amir declared his faith in Christ and has now gone missing...our team has been unable to reach him.

- Ask that God would protect Amir wherever he is, guiding him to safety and giving him the strength to remain steadfast in his faith. Pray that He leads our team as they continue searching.

**HEBA, SUDAN**

Heba lost her mother and husband to the war, forcing her to flee to Egypt for safety. Her sister is still trapped in Sudan, and she is afraid of what will happen to her.

- Pray that God would protect Heba’s sister in the face of danger and uncertainty. Ask that the Lord would provide her a way out of Sudan and reunite her with Heba.

**YAHYA, IRAQ**

Yahya and his family fled to Baghdad after receiving multiple threats from close family members due to their faith in Christ.

- Pray that Yahya and his family would be protected from all physical harm, giving them a way to safely rebuild their lives in a new country. Ask that...
God would continue to give them opportunities to share the Gospel and bring lasting fruit from the seeds they have already sown.

ANSWERED PRAYERS

SUDANESE REFUGEES

Thank you for praying with us. Over 450 Sudanese refugees attended the medical and spiritual day prepared by our team in Egypt. More than 30 of the attendees declared their faith and several obeyed Him through baptism! They all received food and clothes as they left.

We couldn’t do what we do without your continued prayers and support. Join us in praising God for His intentional care of these refugees, providing for their physical and spiritual needs!

From Open Doors UK

North Korea

How many Christians are there in North Korea?

Open Doors estimates there to be some 400,000 Christians in North Korea, which is less than two per cent of the country’s total population of 26 million people.

How are Christians persecuted in North Korea?

North Korea is once more the hardest place in the world to follow Jesus, and a brutally hostile place for Christians to live. If discovered by the authorities, believers are either sent to labour camps as political prisoners where the conditions are atrocious, or killed on the spot – and their families will share their fate as well. Christians have absolutely no freedom. It is almost impossible for believers to gather or meet to worship. Those who dare to meet must do so in utmost secrecy – and at enormous risk. Even owning a Bible is a serious crime and will be severely punished.

A report issued in 2022 by The International Bar Association and The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea said that Christians are particularly targeted and exposed to torture in North Korean prisons. “Detention periods have been documented as being longer for Christians than other groups, and witnesses have reported that ‘identified Christians are interrogated for longer periods, usually under torture’, and subjected to some of the worst forms of torture to force them to incriminate others during interrogation,” it said.

The patriarchal society of North Korea means that control over the population is especially focused on men. All men must attend workplaces allocated by the government. They must confirm their attendance and cannot stop working for any private reason, making it harder for them to flee the country than women. Those exposed as Christians will likely be publicly shamed, or much worse.

The mandatory ten-year military conscription (starting at 17 for young men) can expose any familial connection to Christianity. If a connection is found, men are denied party membership and given the lowest positions in universities and workplaces. Christian men held in labour camps suffer maltreatment and physical abuse.

Most North Korean refugees are women and are greatly at risk of forced repatriation, severe interrogation (including torture) and trafficking. The sexual abuse of women at one of the country’s notorious labour camps is believed to be endemic. The authorities even target Christian women and girls for sexual abuse in a deliberate attempt to undermine the biblical approach to sexual purity. Repatriated Christian women made pregnant by a Chinese father (often by being a victim of human trafficking) can also face forced abortions by the authorities who want to prevent the North Korean bloodline from being ‘defiled’.
Meet ‘Yong-Gi’

“Step by step, I realise how the Holy Spirit leads my life. I decide to put all things into God’s hands.”

YONG-GI, A NORTH KOREAN CHRISTIAN HELPED THROUGH A SAFEHOUSE MINISTRY RUN BY OPEN DOORS

What’s life like for Christians in North Korea?

In North Korea, Christianity is presented as an enemy of the country’s leadership and society. This means that many North Koreans greet any talk of Jesus with fear and deep suspicion. This is a huge barrier for fieldworkers as they seek to help those who’ve bravely fled the country and even been caught in trafficking across the border.

Amazingly, many of their hearts soften and they give their lives to Jesus. But it’s an enormously risky step to make, given how Christianity is regarded in their homeland. Escaping North Korea already made these North Koreans an enemy of the state – becoming a Christian entrenches this.

One person who encountered Jesus at a safe house in China is Yong-Gi (name changed). “I would like to thank God’s grace that He made my dream come true,” she says. “This morning, God spoke to me through Bible verses, and now all I can do is to follow His commands. Thank you always for your prayers and sacrifice for the sake of us.”

Is it getting harder to be a Christian in North Korea?

It seemed impossible that it could get any worse for Christians in North Korea, but it has, aided by a rise in reported incidents of violence.

In one horrifying incident that Open Doors heard about from reliable sources, several dozen North Korean believers from different underground churches were discovered and executed. More than 100 members of their families were said to have been rounded up and sent to labour camps.

Another contributory factor is the recently introduced ‘anti-reactionary thought law’, which makes it clear that being a Christian and/or possessing a Bible is a serious crime and will be severely punished.

How can I help Christians in North Korea?

Please keep praying for your brothers and sisters in North Korea. Your prayers make an enormous difference to those following Jesus no matter the cost.

Open Doors secret workers are keeping 80,000 North Korean believers alive with vital food and aid through secret networks in China, as well as providing shelter and discipleship training for North Korean refugees at safe houses in China.

PLEASE PRAY

- Father God, we thank You for the remarkable bravery of our brothers and sisters in North Korea. Continue to encourage, equip and empower them as they follow You amid such extreme persecution.
- Protect secret gatherings of believers – may their meetings be places of divine encounter. Give wisdom, boldness and discernment to Your children to know how to express their faith in society without drawing the attention of the authorities.
- We cry out to You for this nation, Lord, asking That You will build Your church and soften the hardened hearts of Kim Jong-un and his regime. Amen.