



Prayer for the Persecuted Church for May 10, 2024

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: CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Li Jie, Hang Xiaodong, Wang Qiang; John Cao, Yan Hwa, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi; Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Lian Xu Liang; ERITREA: Meron Gebreselasie, Mussia Ezas, Dr. Kifly Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzgi; INDIA: Pastor Sawan; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; NORTH KOREA: Zhang Wen Shi PAKISTAN: Zafar Bhatti; VIETNAM: Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton

KIDNAPPED VICTIMS: Raymond Koh, Gilbert Biswas, Leah Sharibu, Sarah Atef, Joshua Hilmya & wife Ruth Sitepu, Hormoz Diril.

From International Christian Concern

Pastor Murdered on Way to Church Conference

05/03/2024 Nigeria (ICC)

Armed bandits shot and killed Reverend Manasseh Ibrahim on April 23, in Kaduna state as he traveled to a church conference. The reverend served under the Evangelical Church Winning All Kaduna Central District Church. Violence in Kaduna state, often directed toward Christians, has left thousands of believers in a state of fear.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for peace for Reverend Ibrahim's family as they grieve.*
- *Pray for anti-Christian violence in this region to end.*
- *Pray for the reverend's attackers to come to know Christ.*

Algerian Pastor's 'Unauthorized Worship' Conviction Upheld

05/03/2024 Algeria (ICC)

Pastor Youssef Ourahmane of Algeria is facing a year of imprisonment after the Tizi Ouzou Court of Appeals upheld his conviction. Authorities charged Ourahmane with practicing "unauthorized worship" in his role as vice president of the Evangelical Protestant Association of Algeria and his service as senior pastor and overseer of several churches and Bible schools in Algeria.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for greater religious freedom in Algeria.*
- *Pray for this pastor's prison sentence to be overturned.*
- *Pray for godly leaders to rise to power across northern Africa.*

Iranian Authorities Again Charge House Church Member

05/03/2024 Iran (ICC)

On March 11, Iranian authorities charged house church member Shabeddin “Shahab” Shahi with “propaganda against the Islamic regime.” Shahi recently appeared at a Revolutionary Court in Karaj and is awaiting a second and final hearing at the sixth branch of the court. Shahi served four months in prison in 2019 on the same charge.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for all unjust charges against Shahi to be dropped.*
- *Pray for the ability for Iranians to practice their faith more freely.*
- *Pray for the gospel to spread throughout Iran.*

Islamists Attempt to Block Church Construction in Egypt

05/03/2024 Egypt (ICC)

A group of Islamists gathered on April 26, in Minya to protest the construction of a church building. After the protests, a local Christian stated that the Evangelical church had applied for a permit to build a church building on land purchased in 2000, finally receiving approval in October 2023. However, opposition arose from the community, citing an Orthodox church already in the village.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for equal rights for this congregation to build.*
- *Pray for them to shine the light of Christ in their neighborhood.*
- *Pray for people to turn to Christ throughout Egypt.*

Voice of the Martyrs

Global Prayer Guide

BENIN

OVERVIEW:

Benin is a small country bordering western Nigeria. It is the birthplace of voodoo, and Christianity is viewed by many in the north as a threat to their traditional beliefs. Every village and many homes in the north have a designated place for animal sacrifice (and sometimes human sacrifice). Voodoo is an official religion, and Voodoo Day is a public holiday. Witchcraft is deeply ingrained in the local culture and is openly practiced. Christianity is considered a foreign religion that steals a community’s youth and prevents them from being properly initiated into the local tribes. Every village chief serves as both a political leader and a voodoo priest.

MAJOR RELIGION:

About 30 percent of the people in Benin are Christians. Nearly 40 percent practice ethnic religions, and another 30 percent are Muslims.

PERSECUTOR:

Believers are persecuted by their family and community.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN BENIN:

Persecution is prevalent in the north. New converts to Christianity are beaten and sometimes killed, while church buildings are routinely destroyed. Villages keep evangelists out and prevent construction of new churches.

ACCESS TO BIBLES:

Bibles are available, but they are hard to find in rural areas.

VOM WORK:

Most of VOM’s work involves urgent persecution response, providing food, shelter and personal items for individuals who have been driven from their homes. We are also providing Bibles in a region

where most people practice voodoo. Give to VOM's Global Ministry

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- *Pray for Yobiri to continue growing in his faith after receiving an audio Bible in his own language.*
- *Pray for Lea, whose husband was killed by his father because of his Christian faith.*
- *Pray for Benoit, whose family tried to have him cursed by a witch doctor because of his Christian faith.*
- *Pray for those receiving Bibles in a region where most people practice voodoo.*
- *Pray for front-line workers who are helping Christians who have been driven from their homes.*

From Voice of the Martyrs

icommittoprayer.com

May. 09, 2024 | Middle East

Iranian Refugees Bear Witness in Hospital

Monir and her Iranian Christian family were living in a neighboring country when she suddenly fell into a coma. An ER doctor said she had died from a massive stroke, so her family rushed her to a second hospital where a doctor said she was “as good as dead.” He gave her only a 3% chance of survival even with surgery. The family convinced him to try, but before he began, Monir’s family gathered around her to pray. A Muslim woman nearby asked what they were doing and then requested prayer for her mother who was about to undergo dangerous surgery. Afterward, the woman returned to say, “Your Jesus Christ healed my mother! Even the doctor said it was miraculous!” Monir’s family gathered outside the ICU daily to pray for Monir’s recovery. After three months, Monir woke up and began to write and speak. She has since fully recovered.

Several Muslim nurses secretly requested Bibles to learn about “your God who brought miracles to our hospital.”

Prayer Calendar from Open Doors USA

India

May 10

- *Pray with 50,000 Manipur Christians forced to flee their homes when the attacks began. Many remain displaced. Pray they would sense us praying for and with them.*

May 11

- *Pray for Christian house church leaders who face beatings, false accusations and destruction of their homes. Ask God to strengthen their faith.*

May 12

- *This Mother’s Day, pray for mothers in India and throughout the world who are often targeted for their faith—and the critical role they play in the family and community.*

May 13

- *Pray for strength for families of house church leaders who are arrested on false charges because of their faith. When these leaders suffer, their families do too.*

May 14

- *Pray for churches closed down by Hindu extremists. Pray these congregations can one day gather again and in the meantime, that God*

would lead these believers to new faith communities.

Arabian Peninsula

May 15

- *Pray for one of our partners who desires to grow more discipleship leaders in different provinces of Yemen. Ask God to give him wisdom as he chooses potential leaders.*

May 16

- *Pray for unity among Yemeni Christian leaders. Our partners tell us the different Christian networks lack trust and cooperation, and ministering feels like a competition sometimes.*

From Barnabas Aid UK

Daily Prayer Requests

FRIDAY 10

Nearly 120,000 Armenian Christians from Nagorno-Karabakh fled to Armenia seven months ago when Azerbaijan seized control of Nagorno-Karabakh.

- *Pray for them as they re-start their lives, trying to find new ways to earn a living and permanent homes instead of church halls or spare rooms of distant relatives. Barnabas is sending help. Ask that the Lord will comfort them in the sudden loss of their beloved homeland, which is full of ancient Armenian churches and khachkars (intricately carved stone crosses).*

SATURDAY 11

Azerbaijan is systematically destroying the Armenian Christian history of Nagorno-Karabakh. Some Christian buildings have been knocked down and the stones removed, so it appears that nothing has ever stood there. Others have been converted for non-

Christian uses. In still other cases, Azerbaijan writes a new history for the buildings or the khachkars (cross-stones), claiming that the Armenian inscriptions are “forgeries” added to the original work of a vanished tribe of “Caucasian Albanians.” All this is continuing despite a prohibition from the International Court of Justice. In effect, Azerbaijan is ethnically cleansing not only the land but also the historical record. It is as if they are trying to persuade the world that Armenians, who became the first Christian nation in 301, never existed.

- *Pray that Azerbaijan will cease this destruction.*

Armenian Christian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh.

SUNDAY 12

- *Thank You, Lord Jesus, for the courage and perseverance of Your followers in North Korea. Protect them as they meet together to worship You, knowing that they will be terribly persecuted if they are caught doing this. Be with them as they read Your Word in a country where Christians have been executed just for owning a Bible. Strengthen those in labor camps, where they are starved, tortured and worked almost to death. Although North Korea is cut off from the rest of the world, may its Christians rejoice to know that, through persecution, they are part of a great company of prophets and martyrs who have gone before (Matthew 5:12).*

MONDAY 13

Since January 1, 2024, a new Patriotic Education Law has been in force in China. The law applies not just to schools but also to religious groups and all sectors of Chinese society. Guidelines on how religious groups should follow the law have been issued by the Chinese Communist Party. The main gist is that the thoughts of Xi Jinping, the

president of China, must be learnt, thought and practiced by religious groups.

- *Pray for all Christians in China, especially church leaders, that the Holy Spirit will give them wisdom and courage to continue faithful to Christ in this increasingly difficult environment.*

TUESDAY 14

Today is the 21st birthday of Leah Sharibu, a Nigerian Christian who has been held captive by Boko Haram terrorists since she was 14 years old. She was kidnapped with other students from her school, but all the others were soon released. Leah was kept because she refused to deny Christ and convert to Islam. While in captivity she has been forced into marriage with a Boko Haram commander and had at least two children.

- *Lift up Leah in prayer to the God who rescues (Daniel 3:29), asking Him to keep her Christian faith strong and to restore her soon to her loving parents who long to see her again.*

WEDNESDAY 15

Christian girls or women who have been held captive by Boko Haram and then released/escaped are not always accepted back by their local community. Sometimes they are labelled as “annoba” (a Hausa word meaning “plagues”) and “Boko Haram wives.” This is because the community fears that the girls were turned into radical Muslims during their years of captivity. Even their children can be viewed with suspicion as possible future terrorists.

- *Pray for a loving, trusting, welcoming attitude to these young women who have endured so much for so many years.*

THURSDAY 16

Christianity in Hindu-majority Nepal has grown fast since the 1950s, mainly by the

evangelistic efforts of the early converts. However, it is still seen as an “alien faith” not belonging in Nepal. Those who leave Hinduism to follow Christ are viewed as having abandoned not just their religion but also their family, culture and community. They may face persecution, especially if they were high-caste. Christians may find themselves facing discrimination, for example being barred from public jobs. The media tend to be negative towards Christians.

- *Pray that Nepali Christians will “consider it pure joy”, whenever they face trials of many kinds, because they know that the testing of their faith produces perseverance which will make them mature believers (James 1:2-4).*

From Mission Eurasia Prayer Update

Sunday, May 5th, many **Christians throughout Eastern Europe and Eurasia celebrated Orthodox Easter**—a season of rejoicing and light! Please pray that Christians would be strengthened in their faith during this time, and that our colleagues would continue to share the light of Christ with families and young people. Please pray that the Lord would give believers a sense of joy and love this Easter season, despite any difficulties they may be facing.

Approximately 10,000-15,000 Afghan refugees live in the city of Vakhdat, **Tajikistan**. Here our School Without Walls (SWW) leadership and staff are working to develop the new “Center of Hope” to foster the holistic growth and development of children. Our colleagues ask you to please pray for wisdom and strength as they construct the center. Vakhdat is a very strategic place for future regional development. Pray the Lord would grow His church in this otherwise spiritually barren land.

Our colleagues in the country of **Georgia** are encouraged by some positive developments with two new churches in the cities of Gori and Zestafoni. They ask you to please pray that God would grant them wisdom and

courage in all their decisions, and for the continued growth of these churches. Please pray for the Lord to strengthen the believers here amid socially and politically trying times.

As the SWW academic year comes to a close, many upcoming graduates of the program in **Azerbaijan** are asking for your prayers. They ask you to please pray that they would find their calling in ministry and service to the Lord, and for the continued work of their SWW teachers and peers. Please pray that their participation in the ministry of the church in Azerbaijan would be fruitful and faithful.

From Help the Persecuted

PRAYER REQUESTS

ANAS, MOROCCO

Anas comes from a wealthy and strong political family. When they found out about his faith in Christ, they disowned him...and are now plotting to murder him. Anas reached out to one of the local churches to help him escape.

- *Dear Lord, we praise You for Anas' conversion, that You drew him to Yourself. You are truly more beautiful than wealth and political power! Please rescue him from his family, saving him from his persecutors who conspire to end his life.*

LEEN, TURKEY

Leen and her husband, Syrian refugees who fled ISIS after their home was destroyed, came to know Jesus from Leen's cousin. They began attending church and were moved by their love and care. Leen's health has suddenly deteriorated, and she needs an operation to amputate her feet due to gangrene.

- *Dear Lord, please bring comfort and encouragement to Leen as she undergoes this difficult and life-altering surgery. Please help her recover quickly and get access to the prosthetics and*

anything else that she needs. Help her feel Your nearness.

DIMA, LEBANON

Dima fled from Syria when her father threatened to murder her for leaving Islam and becoming a Christian. Her father tracked her down...and tortured her for her faith. She escaped, but now she has to return to Syria for an important surgery, and she is afraid her family might find her.

- *Dear Lord, please give Dima courage and strength as she returns to Syria. Shield her from her persecutors, covering her with Your protection. Please change her family, drawing them to You so that they will relent and discover the love of Jesus for themselves.*

HAMID, PAKISTAN

Hamid and his wife fled from Afghanistan to Pakistan. The Taliban kidnapped their son as they left and tortured and burned him because of his faith...but he made it out alive. They have asked for prayer to reunite as a family, even as they remain in hiding.

- *Dear Lord, please help this family reunite! Thank you for rescuing their son from the hands of the Taliban, and please help them all as they remain in hiding and plan for their next steps. Please draw close to them, reminding them of Your deep love for them.*

SAFA, MOROCCO

Safa's family found out about her faith...and her brothers threatened to murder her. Her husband immediately divorced her, and she fled to a remote city far away from her family.

- *Dear Lord, please be with Safa as she faces the loss of everything for the sake of Your Name. Please provide for her*

every need, drawing close to her and reminding her that she is never alone.

ASMA, LIBYA

Asma just found out that her husband was kidnapped and killed by Islamic extremists in Libya because of his Christian faith. They had been following him and monitoring his shop. She fled to Egypt and is overwhelmed with grief and the prospect of rebuilding her life.

- *Dear Lord, please bring comfort and peace to Asma. Thank you for the hope of heaven, where she will see her husband again. Please provide for her, supplying her every need and covering her with Your grace and mercy as she walks the difficult road of grief and rebuilds her life in Egypt.*

HANA, IRAQ

When Hana's husband found out that she was attending church online and studying the Bible with other believers, he tortured her, trying to get her to revert to Islam. She refuses...and he threatens to murder her for apostasy.

- *Dear Lord, please make a miraculous way of escape for Hana, drawing her out of her husband's clutches. Please change his heart, Lord, so that he comes to saving faith in You and stops persecuting Hana. Be with Hana and rescue her.*

KAMIR, ALGERIA

The police took Kamir from the church in Algeria because he was encouraging people to meet and study the Bible. Now, he is being investigated and is unsure of what will happen. Wesslem, our Field Minister in Algeria, is following up with him.

- *Dear Lord, please end the investigation without incident so that Kamir*

can continue his evangelistic work without the dread of facing even more persecution. Please give him strength, courage, and fortitude in the days ahead.

KHALID, MOROCCO

When Khalid shared the Bible with others, his family was furious. They disowned him and kicked him out of the house. When his friends found out, they threatened to murder him. He fled to a remote area where he remains in hiding.

- *Dear Lord, please be with Khalid, comforting his heart and directing each of his steps. Please shield him from his persecutors, protecting him from anything they would do to him.*

NABEEL, OUR FIELD MINISTER IN IRAQ

Nabeel is hosting a weekly online Bible study. Last week, a new believer who is a former Muslim joined the group. Nabeel has asked for prayer for the group to grow so that it can reach out to more persecuted Iraqi believers who come from Muslim backgrounds.

- *Dear Lord, thank you for drawing Muslims to Yourself, opening their eyes to see the truth and beauty of the gospel! Please give Nabeel wisdom and strength as he leads, and please make the group continue to grow so that more believers can receive discipleship and ultimately spread the gospel throughout Iraq.*

ANSWERED PRAYERS

MARIA, LEBANON

"I will put my trust in the Lord. He loves me, and He sent you to support me. He is my refuge." —Maria, Lebanon

Maria's husband left her when he discovered that she had become a Christian, but she was

determined to follow Jesus anyway. Then, she was diagnosed with cancer. Her brother used to work as a painter to support their family, but he had to quit his job to care for Maria.

When we learned about Maria, we helped her with Lightning Funds, providing her with essential living expenses and covering the cost of some of her treatments. Our Field Ministers encouraged her in the Lord, and she was quick to express her gratitude.

- *Dear Lord, please give Maria the strength to press on as she suffers through persecution, the loss of her marriage, and cancer. Thank You for the opportunity to minister to her and provide for her needs as she clings to You in this time. Help our team to know how to minister to her as she walks through sickness and begins to rebuild her life.*

From Barnabas Aid UK

When Hatred Is In Fashion

Jesus gave us four commands to love. The first two are from the Old Testament, the second two are uniquely His own. We are to love the Lord our God (Mark 12:30; Deuteronomy 6:5), our neighbours (Mark 12:31; Leviticus 19:18), our fellow-Christians (John 13:34-35) and our enemies (Matthew 5:44). It is easy to write, in one short sentence, but very hard to do in our own strength. We do have, however, the Holy Spirit at work in us (Galatians 5:22) and the example of our Lord Jesus Himself.

What does this love look like? Our love for God is to be a passionate, all-consuming love. We must love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. Our love for others must be as great as our love for ourselves. Our love for those in the family of Christian believers must match Jesus' love for us, a love that is willing to lay down one's life for the other

(John 13:1,34b; 15:12-13,17). Our love for our enemies must be a love that is shown in actions – doing good to them, praying for them, blessing them even if they curse us. In Jesus' words:

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.” (Luke 6:27-28)

This strong and active love can be shown in anger. There is only one place in the New Testament where we are told that Jesus felt anger (Mark 3:5). It was anger created by His love for an unnamed man with a withered hand in a synagogue on a Sabbath. Jesus was both angered and grieved by the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees who did not want the man to be healed, because they saw this as working on the Sabbath. No doubt Jesus was also angry when He threw out the merchants and moneychangers in the Temple, this time an anger created by His love for God the Father (John 2:13-16). Anger can be wrong and it can lead to sin (Ephesians 4:26) but it can also be the right and loving reaction to injustice or cruelty. How much more loving to react with anger than with apathy in such situations.

Love must also show itself in tenderness and empathy. Empathy feels the pain of the other, enters into their emotions and experiences their feelings. This is the love that weeps with those who weep (Romans 12:15). Jesus Himself wept with Mary and Martha as they mourned the death of Lazarus, their brother and Jesus' friend (John 11:35). His heart was broken. He felt the pain of their loss and bereavement. He was just about to raise Lazarus from the dead, but nevertheless He wept.

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of loving one's neighbour (Luke 10:29-30), a love born out of empathy. But it is also an example of loving one's enemy, for Jews had nothing but contempt for Samaritans. The Samaritan who showed practical love to the wounded Jewish stranger, a love that cost him both time and money, was loving someone who hated and

despised him.

But where is love like this to be found today? Hatred is being stirred up in headlines, social media, by politicians and by religious leaders. Peacemaking is despised, warmongering admired. Whole nations are hated for the actions of a handful of their leaders. Refusing to forgive the murderers of a loved one is now seen as the praiseworthy last great service which the bereaved can do for the one they have lost.

As Christians, disciples of our Master, Jesus, we must always seek to emulate His life, His empathy, His righteous anger when necessary, and above all else His supreme self-sacrificial and self-giving love.

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo

International Director, Barnabas Aid