



# Prayer for the Persecuted Church for January 10, 2025

## **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: Lian Xue Liang, Lian Chang Nian, Fu Juan, Li Jie, Hang Xiaodong, Yan Hwa, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi; Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Lian Xu Liang; ERITREA: Mussia Ezas, Dr. Kifly Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzgi; INDIA: Sarju Prasad, 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 Voice of the Martyrs*

## **Global Prayer Guide: Maldives**

### **Overview:**

The Maldives is one of the most restricted nations in the world, with fewer than 30 known indigenous believers. Any Maldivian who follows Christ must remain secret or face imprisonment or expulsion from the country. The Maldivian government seeks to eliminate or greatly minimize outside influences that could affect its citizens' cultural identity, which includes complete commitment to Islam.

### **Major Religion:**

Even though many Maldivians have little knowledge of the Islamic faith, all Maldivians are officially required to be Sunni Muslims, and the government enforces this rule without exception.

### **Persecutor:**

The government is the main persecutor, and

Maldivian society is aligned with the country's commitment to ensuring that every Maldivian remains a Muslim. In addition to government persecution, seekers and converts receive tremendous pressure from their families and communities.

### **What It Means To Follow Christ In The Maldives**

The country's oppressive anti-Christian government and culture make it one of the world's most challenging regions for Christian work. Seekers and new converts experience extreme social pressure. Small, close-knit island communities enable the government to maintain tight control over the population. Christian converts have been imprisoned in attempts to pressure them to renounce Christ and return to Islam, and they are usually forced to leave their homes and perhaps even the country.

### **Access To Bibles:**

It is illegal to import Bibles, but some Maldivians access Scripture through the

internet. Translation of the Bible into Dhivehi, the main language of the Maldives, is ongoing, but the work has been difficult and slow because of the small number of Christian converts who are able and willing to help with translation. Give Bibles

#### **VOM Work:**

VOM uses creative, covert methods to share the gospel inside the Maldives.

Prayer Requests:

- *Pray for Maldivian Christians, who face imprisonment or expulsion if their faith is discovered.*
- *Pray for Bible translation work in Dhivehi, the language of the Maldives.*
- *Pray that front-line workers will find creative, effective approaches to sharing the gospel.*
- *Pray that Maldivians who are led to Christ through the internet or social media will grow in faith.*

From International Christian Concern

## **ICC Releases 2025 Global Persecution Index**

01/03/2025 Global — International Christian Concern (ICC) has released its renamed and revamped annual report for the new year. ICC's 2025 Global Persecution Index, formerly known as the Persecutors of the Year, offers an in-depth analysis of drivers of persecution in 20 countries, complete with stories of Christians enduring persecution for their faith in Christ.

- *How to Pray: Pray for this report to raise greater awareness about persecution.*
- *Pray for protection for all the persecuted communities listed.*
- *Pray for the gospel to spread in these nations.*

## **Official Faces New Allegations of Attempted Religious Conversions**

01/02/2025 Malaysia — Malaysian Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh is facing new allegations that she is attempting to convert Muslims and establish Malaysia as a Christian nation. Seven police reports were recently filed following calls by several NGOs for the Home Ministry to ban her book. Yeoh previously faced accusations of Christian evangelism in July 2024.

- *How to Pray: Pray for encouragement for Hannah Yeoh amid this trial.*
- *Pray for all unjust accusations to be dropped.*
- *Pray for strength and unity within the church in Malaysia.*

## **Hindu Nationalists Disrupt Christmas Services Throughout India**

12/28/2024 India — A spate of violent attacks marred the 2024 Christmas celebrations across India despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi extolling the virtues of love and harmony taught by Jesus Christ in his Christmas speech. Attacks on Christians were reported in several states, allegedly carried out by the Sangh Parivar organizations, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal.

- *How to Pray: Pray for healing for communities that were targeted.*
- *Pray for these extremists to come to know Christ.*
- *Pray for better security measures for churches across India.*

## **11 Christians Killed During Christmas Day Attacks in Nigeria**

12/28/2024 Nigeria — As Christians worldwide celebrated Christ's birth, armed Islamic

militants targeted Christian communities in Kwande County, Benue state, killing 11 people. The largest attack occurred during church services in Turan, a predominantly Catholic Tiv community near the borders of Taraba state and Cameroon.

- *How to Pray: Pray for peace for all those who lost loved ones.*
- *Pray for provision for the many whose homes were destroyed.*
- *Pray for protection for vulnerable Christians across Nigeria.*

## From Mission Eurasia's Prayer Initiative

**Please pray for Yuri and his wife and two children from Bobruisk, Belarus. Yuri is a School Without Walls (SWW) leader in Belarus and is in the final stage of cancer. His condition has worsened recently.**

- *Please pray for healing for Yuri and for comfort and spiritual strength for him and his family during this most difficult time.*

**On January 2-3, we held a youth and teen conference in Haifa, Israel, which was organized by SWW leaders and regional coordinators.**

- *Please pray for the teenagers (ages 12-17) who attended this conference, that they would draw closer to God and renew their relationship with Him.*

**On January 6, a children's Bible Fest took place in Mogilev, Belarus.**

- *Please pray for God's blessing on this event and that the children who attended would open their hearts to God.*

**Please pray for our evangelistic efforts among people who live in different regions of Azerbaijan.** During the Christmas

holiday, many churches are holding celebrations through which the Azeri people will hear the gospel.

- *Please pray that God would help our new leaders and their ministries, as Satan tries to hinder their work.*

**Ukrainian families, displaced by war, continue to live in Poland.** Many of their children faced another Christmas without their fathers who remain in Ukraine. So far, Mission Eurasia has provided 8,000 Gifts of Hope to these children.

- *Please pray for those children who received these gifts, that they would read their children's Bible, get connected with local churches, and come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord.*

## Open Doors UK Prayer Calendar

### Friday 10 January

Pray that Yemeni believers who meet together and serve newcomers will be hidden from those who want to hurt or report them. "God is at work," says church leader Salman\*. "We've seen His protection, and we witness it meeting after meeting."

### Saturday 11 January

"We see new people coming to Christ, continued discipleship and growth," says church leader, Odoi\*. Pray for the 'unlearning and relearning' process that new believers must go through as they follow Jesus out of Islam.

### Sunday 12 January

The economic crisis caused by the civil war is impeding the church's ministry. Pray for Open Doors partners supporting church leaders with transport fees, medical and training costs.

### Monday 13 January

"God has used social media as a revival tool in Yemen," says Salman. Praise God for this ministry and pray that it will continue despite attempts to shut down websites.

### Tuesday 14 January

Open Doors partners with ministry leaders inside Yemen to strengthen Yemeni Christians with relief aid, safe houses, leadership training, social media ministry and trauma care. Pray that these programmes will help the church grow in faith and maturity.

### **Wednesday 15 January**

As the 2025 World Watch List launches in parliament today, pray that many new MPs will attend and be stirred into action on behalf of our persecuted family. Pray also for good media coverage that will raise greater awareness of the persecution of Christians. Above a gathering of secret Christians in Yemen

*\*Names changed for security reasons*

## **From Barnabas Aid Prayer Journal**

### **FRIDAY 10**

Praise the Lord for the release of pastor Anooshavan Avedian in Iran one year into his ten-year prison sentence. Anooshavan was initially arrested in August 2020 for leading an unofficial “house church” in Tehran. This church was started following the forced closure of a Farsi-speaking church in 2013, which left congregants with nowhere to meet for worship.

- *Give thanks to God for Anooshavan’s acquittal.*
- *Pray that the laws of Iran will be changed so that Farsi-speaking Christians, who are converts from Islam, will be free to attend church legally and practise their religion without threat of arrest.*

### **SATURDAY 11**

Give thanks for the safe arrival and distribution of food.gives boxes to more than 800 Christian families in Jordan. The boxes, filled by Barnabas supporters in the UK, were distributed not just among poverty-stricken Jordanian believers, but also to Iraqi and Yemeni refugees who, under Jordan’s laws, are

not allowed to work. Our project partner said believers valued the food.gives boxes especially because the dried food “makes large meals, and is filling with good nutritional value”.

- *Pray for continued provision for our brothers and sisters in Jordan and ask the Lord to move mountains to enable Christian refugees to gain more secure status in the country (Matthew 17:20).*

### **SUNDAY 12**

- *Lord Jesus, we intercede for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are compelled to keep their discipleship secret. We pray for Your protection for Christians in countries where confessing Your Name puts their lives in January/February 2025 5 danger. Thank You for those who daily deny themselves, take up their cross and follow You, all the while having to exercise secrecy in worship. Please protect those who must live as secret believers or face death for apostasy. Enable them by the gentle action of Your Spirit to lead lives that honour You as light and salt in their communities. (Luke 9:23; Matthew 5:13-16)*

### **MONDAY 13**

International experts have noted an “alarming increase” in flogging and other forms of corporal punishment enacted by Afghanistan’s Taliban government. “There are credible reports of courts in several provinces denying defendants, including children, access to their lawyers,” said one human rights official. Christians are among those at particular risk – all are considered converts from Islam, and face death if their faith is discovered.

- *Pray that the Lord will be a hiding place for His people who are surrounded by those who want to destroy them (Psalm 118:8-9).*



## TUESDAY 14

At the time of writing Bangladesh is still facing political instability. The interim government (which was set up after mass protests led to the collapse of the previous government) is under pressure to set a date for new elections. Religious minorities, including Christians, remain concerned about a rise in Islamist extremism.

- *Pray that the interim government will exercise wisdom in making plans for a transition of power and in combating extremism.*
- *Ask that the Lord will enable His people in Bangladesh to be an effective witness of Christ in difficult circumstances.*

## WEDNESDAY 15

“The joy of seeing my children smile again is beyond words. We had lost hope, but the help from Barnabas Aid has shown us that there is still kindness in the world.” These are the words of Khalti, a young mother in Bangladesh. Her family received a month of food and medical supplies funded by Barnabas after her husband’s plot of land was destroyed by floodwater. Barnabas Aid provided emergency relief aid to 1,000 Christian families in the aftermath of these devastating floods that killed more than 70 people and displaced over 500,000 in August 2024.

- *Give thanks that we have been able to help our brothers and sisters in need, and pray that they will continue to trust in the Lord to restore them to strength after their suffering (1 Peter 5:10).*

## THURSDAY 16

The economy of Sri Lanka has stabilised since the end of 2023, say international experts, but some problems remain. As of October 2024 the economy had grown by 5% and inflation had fallen. Poverty, however, remains widespread. Around a quarter of households

are experiencing food insecurity and consuming an inadequate diet. Sri Lanka’s Christians – around 8% of the population – are often among the poorest members of society.

- *Pray that Sri Lanka’s economic situation will begin to improve, and that the Lord will continue to provide for His people.*

*From SAT-7*

## Darkness Can’t Keep You From God

**17th December 2024**

*What our viewers are saying*

“In the past, I didn’t believe in God, but recently I was baptized. My mother-in-law is not a Christian but supported me in becoming a Christian. We were both watching your channel when you invited us for a prayer. And she lifted up her hands and prayed with you. I was very surprised and impressed. You are making really good and effective programs. The Lord works in places you cannot always see.”

— Viewer in Türkiye

People face challenges in life. Some of those challenges bring us down into the darkness that seems too far from God. Fortunately, no matter our circumstances, it is never too dark to keep us away from God.

Hany, a viewer from Egypt, shared his testimony with SAT-7 and how he started as an atheist who struggled with drugs and other sins. He said, “I went on a journey down the road of atheism and then began causing trouble for my family. I disobeyed them. I told my father that I no longer wanted to be associated with or know them any longer, and I walked away.”

This was just the beginning of Hany’s path to self-destruction. “I started hanging out with a bad group of friends and started smoking cigarettes and hookah. I attended weddings to dance with my friends, and I used drugs, but not to the point of addiction. I then

started going online and watching sites and movies that I shouldn't. I was at the farthest point from God. I descended into the depths of depression and sadness because of the loneliness. I felt that no one loved me, and I was unable to love myself," he shared.

Hany's choices unfortunately led him to attempt to take his life. "I tried to commit suicide 3 times, but every time, God miraculously saved me. I asked God to take my life if I could not take it myself," he said.

Thankfully, we serve a mighty God! Hany shared, "God ordained for me to attend some revival meetings. A minister was in my village at the time. He met with me and invited me to go to the revival. In his sermon, he said that God has a message for someone who feels that they are a failure, and no one loves them, nor do they love themselves, yet God loves that person dearly. He said it multiple times. The first and second time, I didn't care about the words. But the third time, I walked out of the church and went home. I locked myself up in my room and lay face down and sobbed as I prayed to God: 'I'm sure now that You love me, but I don't know how to love myself.' I felt a pat on my shoulder saying, 'I don't just love you; I want you to serve me.' I replied, 'It's enough for me to find someone who loves me despite all my illnesses.'"

From that day, Hany's life was changed for the better. "I confessed every sin I had ever done before the Lord. I decided to quit cigarettes and drugs. I am grateful to God for how He changed my life. From then on, I went to college and preached about Christ to the youth. I joined Campus Crusade for five years. The Lord called me to minister full-time and I served in the men's ministry. I am currently in my third year at the Evangelical Seminary and married to my beautiful wife. We have a little girl and we are expecting another daughter soon."

- *Please continue to pray for viewers like Hany. When all hope seems lost and the darkness is closing in, may they be reminded of God's faithfulness.*

*From Help the Persecuted*

## **Critical Crisis in Syria**

An estimated 300,000 persecuted Christians in Syria stand at a crossroads...and we are there to help. While many ministries face closed doors due to visa restrictions, our Syrian ministers serve on-the-ground, on the front lines, bringing Christ's love to the most dangerous corners of their homeland.

### ***A Nation at a Crossroads***

The sudden rebel takeover forcing out President Assad has plunged persecuted Christians into more precarious waters than ever before, one that echoes the haunting days when Jabhat al-Nusra desecrated sacred spaces and imposed strict Sharia law.

Although we celebrate the end of Assad's dictatorship characterized by extreme evil and wickedness, a sobering and complex reality remains for the Christians in the country as new government leaders take power in Syria. While Syrian refugees are returning home and there are promises of freedom, Christians simply do not know what it will be like to profess faith in Christ under this new regime. Joshua Youssef sheds some light on the situation and prevailing uncertainty:

There's a lot of fear about whether or not these rebel groups will rightly judge and rightly govern with Christians and other minorities in country. Is this going to allow for a flourishing of Syria where you have all these different groups, Druze and Christians and Muslims, all working and governing together, or does this turn out like Libya or Iraq where ISIS came in the northern part of that country and wreaked havoc on Christians? That's what we don't know right now.

—Joshua Youssef, CEO and President, Help The Persecuted

### ***The Situation on the Ground for Persecuted Christians***

In the midst of extreme uncertainty, countless Christians remain trapped in Aleppo. Many of them have struggled to find steady jobs and were already living in poverty before the fall

of Assad's regime—and thus had no resources for an emergency evacuation. As our Field Minister Daniel, who is one of our two on-the-ground Field Ministers in Syria, explains, “When rebels took over Aleppo, most Christians lacked resources to flee, leaving them without access to vital essentials.”

This becomes even more dire as we consider the insecurity of the country; simply walking to the store could be a death sentence because of the continued fighting and uncertainty. One persecuted believer shared with us, “The situation is really bad. Gunfire and shells are raining down like rain, and there's no electricity. Please pray for us.”

Even more alarming, persecution is continuing and may even be increasing, leading to physical violence against Christians. A local pastor shared his experience with Daniel:

Today I went to the church to inspect the building... a group attacked me, beat me, and threatened me if I did not leave. Even when police came, they shouted that they would not allow us to pray there. I returned home upset and very worried about my family.

—Ibrahim, local pastor in Syria

### ***Our History in Syria***

For over a decade, Help The Persecuted has walked alongside the persecuted Christians of Syria. By the grace of God, we have seen countless lives Rescued, Restored, and Rebuilt on the solid foundation of Christ in the country!

We've gotten to put on Enduring Faith Conferences, helped believers start small businesses through our Enduring Livelihood Ministry, and provided emergency Safe Housing, Lightning Funds for emergency rescue, and more. We are grateful for all of these opportunities to be the hands and feet of Christ in the nation!

Over the years, countless Syrians have shared the impact of our ministry—made possible by faithful donors like yourself:

“You are God's greatest gift for us.”—Toleen, Syria

“Without you, I would probably be dead. Thank you for your support and the love you

showed me. You are truly God's servants on this earth.”—Badr, Syria

“How sweet is the Lord, and how sweet You all are. He does not forsake His sons and daughters. He comes in the fourth watch and changes and meets the needs. Blessed be His name forever.”— Afina, Syria

Through crisis after crisis, our brave and faithful Field Ministers have ministered to persecuted Christians...rescued them...over and over again:

When the earth itself shook in February 2023 in Syria, we were there.

When ISIS terrorized Syrian Christians, we were there.

When civil war tore Syria apart, we were there.

And now, as a new extremist Islamist regime seizes power, we remain there, on-the-ground, in Syria.

Please help us continue the decade of physical, on-the-ground presence in Syria, in this pivotal hour:

### ***On-The-Ground Ministry: Right Now***

In times of overwhelming crisis, it can feel impossible to know what to do. How do we begin the process to Rescue, Restore, and Rebuild the life of a persecuted believer... when we don't have any idea of what tomorrow will look like? For those of us in the West, we pray, and we give. And for our Field Ministers in Syria, the answer is equally simple: meet their immediate needs, right where they are.

Because of this, Daniel and Farid are organizing Winter Relief Outreaches throughout the country. In partnership with local churches, we will provide for the practical needs of over 7,000 persecuted Christians and other vulnerable people in Syria. At a time when no other ministries are on the ground, God has made it possible for us to be there, reminding these Christians that they are not alone.

At the outreaches, we will provide hot meals, warm coats, and distribute over 3,500 Emergency Relief Kits—which provide a

month's worth of dry food goods for a family of four.

But, most importantly, the outreaches will be done in the name of the Lord. Daniel shared, "We will have a spiritual program to stand with the people in a spiritual way, also to pray with them, to pray for them."

We anticipate that we will have Muslim and Druze populations at these events, and we are so excited to share the gospel message with them. For the believers who will attend, we will encourage them in their faith, reminding them that they are loved and seen by God in the face of uncertainty and fear. Everyone—all 7,000!—who comes will have their practical needs met...and souls nourished in the name of the Lord!