



Prayer for the Persecuted Church for February 21, 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. Kify 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: MOZAMBIQUE

OVERVIEW:

Mozambique is located along the southeastern coast of Africa. It was colonized by the Portuguese in the 1500s and retains Portuguese as its official language. After gaining independence in 1975, Mozambique became a Communist one-party state backed by the Soviet Union. It suffered a protracted and devastating civil war from 1977 to 1992 that resulted in a governing presidential democracy, but the war decimated the country's economy and infrastructure. Today, Mozambique is among the poorest and most dangerous countries in the world. While the country is majority Christian, the northern provinces are predominantly Muslim. One of these provinces, Cabo Delgado, has endured an

Islamic insurgency that began five years ago with attacks on police stations and government buildings. In 2019, when the insurgents pledged allegiance to the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) in Africa, the attacks intensified. The Islamists targeted villages and overran entire towns, eventually controlling most of Cabo Delgado. In 2021, Rwanda and other countries in southern Africa deployed thousands of troops to the province. They have retaken many large cities, but small-scale attacks still occur. More than 700,000 people are still displaced from their homes in Cabo Delgado province.

MAJOR RELIGION:

The country is majority Christian. About 25 percent hold to traditional ethnic beliefs, and 17 percent are Muslim.

PERSECUTOR:

Islamic extremists persecute Christians in the north, while believers face social and

community-wide persecution in other Muslim-majority areas.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN MOZAMBIQUE

Christians in the northern part of Cabo Delgado, especially pastors, have suffered greatly, and the insurgency has also affected many nominal Muslims. In smaller attacks on rural villages, extremists often separate Christians from other villagers, persecuting the Christians and their children through extremely inhumane and violent methods. Churches and Christians' homes are typically destroyed. The believers who flee these attacks are dispersed throughout Mozambique, and many know nothing about the welfare of their family members. Christian converts in other Muslim-majority regions face intense communal persecution and are ostracized from their families after they convert to Christianity.

ACCESS TO BIBLES:

Bibles are available but are hard to find in some areas and in some dialects. Since members of many tribal groups are unable to read, audio Bibles in their dialects are highly valued.

VOM WORK:

VOM supports Christians who have been targeted in the Cabo Delgado insurgency, providing general relief as well as rebuilding homes and churches for pastors in the region. Working with local Christians, VOM also helps provide audio Bibles to Christians, churches and ministries working in the area.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- *Pray for Christians who have lost family members in attacks by Islamist groups in northern Mozambique.*
- *Pray for the encouragement of pastors working in areas where Islamist groups regularly attack Christians.*
- *Pray that the physical and spiritual needs of the more than 100,000 displaced Mozambicans will be met.*
- *Pray for a change of heart among the many young Muslim men who join Islamist groups.*

- *Pray for front-line workers serving in dangerous parts of Mozambique. Use Psalm 32:7 as a guide.*

From International Christian Concern

India's Modi Visits D.C. as Anti-Christian Hate Soars Back Home

02/13/2025 India — After a trip earlier this week to France, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is now in Washington, D.C., visiting with President Trump, Elon Musk, and other key figures in the new administration. Meanwhile, a report released Monday by the Center for the Study of Organized Hate found a 74% rise in hate speech incidents last year as compared to 2023.

- *How to Pray: Pray for a decline in religiously motivated harassment in India.*
- *Pray for PM Modi to come to know Christ.*
- *Pray for protection for India's Christian community.*

Military Junta in Myanmar Bombs New Catholic Cathedral

02/12/2025 Myanmar — The ruling military regime in Myanmar bombed a newly designated Catholic cathedral earlier this month. The Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, located in Mindat, Chin state, was designated as a cathedral by Pope Francis on Jan. 25 — just two weeks before it was bombed on Feb. 6. Fortunately, the area had been evacuated in anticipation of the attack, and no deaths were reported.

- *How to Pray: Pray for protection for this congregation.*
- *Praise God that no one was killed or injured.*
- *Pray for peace for the many believers caught in the crossfire of this conflict.*

5 Muslim Men Sentenced to Life in Prison for Rape of Christian Girl

02/12/2025 Nigeria — Five Muslim men were sentenced in December 2024 to life imprisonment for the rape of a 10-year-old girl from a Christian family in Nigeria. The men attacked the girl child in September 2024 in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna. In many parts of the world, rape and violence against women and girls are used to persecute Christians and as a form of punishment.

- *How to Pray: Pray for physical and emotional healing for this young girl.*
- *Pray for justice for her attackers.*
- *Pray for her attackers to come to know the love of Jesus.*

Genocidal Militia Continues to Persecute Christians Across Sudan

02/05/2025 India — In the last weeks of the Biden administration, the US declared that Sudan's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were guilty of committing an ongoing genocide in Sudan. Citing the systematic murder of men and boys and widespread sexual violence against women and girls of the Masalit ethnic group, the US levied a raft of sanctions against the RSF, its leaders, and companies in the UAE that supported the group.

- *How to Pray: Pray for the ongoing violence in Sudan to cease.*
- *Pray for healing for all those affected by the RSF.*
- *Pray for the many families who have lost loved ones due to this violence.*

From Mission Eurasia's Prayer Initiative

On February 22, Mission Eurasia will hold an evening of praise, worship, and prayer for Ukraine called ZHAGA (which means "yearning.") Around 1,000 young

men and women from across Ukraine are expected to attend. The event's message is: "Spiritual revival begins with you." This event is designed to motivate youth to seek a deeper relationship with God, pursue Him wholeheartedly, and participate in genuine worship.

- *Please pray for our ministry team as they prepare for this event, for the youth who will attend, for the worship group to be used by God in a special way, and for safety and protection from the ongoing war.*

In the Central Asian country of Tajikistan, School Without Walls (SWW) students and graduates from the city of Rumi are developing a soccer ministry for Tajik youth.

- *Please pray that these leaders won't face any obstacles, and that God would draw more unbelieving youth to faith in Christ through this ministry.*

Please pray for preparations for the "Time of Professionals" Central Asian Forum which will take place in Kazakhstan in May 2025. This event, which is part of our Next Generation Professional Leaders Initiative (NGPLI), is designed to train, equip, and mobilize at least 400 Christian professionals from various countries in Central Asia.

- *Pray for the successful completion of all necessary permits, and that special publications and resources will be available to distribute to participants at the forum.*

Please pray for Victoria, the wife of Vadim, our regional SWW coordinator in Grodno, Belarus. Victoria and Vadim have two daughters, ages five and three. Victoria suffers from chronic migraines, which greatly affect her ability to live and work normally.

- *Please pray for Victoria's healing and strength.*

The Ukrainian Baptist Church in Poland has prayerfully dedicated this year as the Year of Mission.

- *Please pray for Mission Eurasia as we partner with the church to plant new churches, share the gospel, and equip the church to reach the unreached.*

Open Doors UK Prayer Calendar

Friday 21 February - Eritrea

Pray for Eritrean believers who are forced into military service against their will. Ask God to protect them as they live out their faith, and pray that they will cling to Him as their refuge.

Saturday 22 February - Venezuela

When Pastor Manuel shared Psalm 119:114 with the leader of a prison gang who opposed his work, the leader cried and said his mother used to read the verse to him. He now supports the pastor, with prisoners coming to know Jesus.

- *Pray for more salvation.*

Sunday 23 February - Uzbekistan

- *Pray for several house church leaders whose activities are being watched by the authorities.*
- *Ask God to strengthen and protect them and give them courage to keep meeting.*

Monday 24 February - Malaysia

Pastor Tiang*, who works among an undocumented people group, is being watched by the authorities. They know his vehicle, where he parks, even where he goes for breakfast.

- *Pray for protection and well-being for him and his family, and ask God to make seeing eyes blind.*

Tuesday 25 February - Mexico

Father Marcelo Pérez, a well-known priest and activist, was shot dead in October, a month

after saying there was 'a price on my head' for speaking out against organised crime.

- *Pray for the protection of church leaders who are bravely seeking to counter crime.*

Wednesday 26 February - Vietnam

"I've learned how to lead a small group in prayer ministry," says Mai*, who attends a leadership programme run by Open Doors partners.

- *Pray that students will 'set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity' (1 Timothy 4:12).*

**Name changed for security reasons*

Thursday 27 February - Bhutan

Power and water have been cut off from Pastor Rajen's home after he used it to host church meetings. He had sought permission but it was denied, and there's nowhere else for his church to gather.

- *Pray for breakthrough and favour.*

Barnabas Aid Prayer Focus Update February 2025

Nigeria - Islamist Groups Kill at least 13 Christians in Benue and Borno States

Communities in Christian-majority Benue State are reeling after at least 11 Christians were killed in attacks by gunmen on Christmas Day, 2024.

The attacks took place in several towns across Nyiev-ya, Kwande Local Government Area (LGA).

Suspected Islamist militants launched the attacks in which an unknown number of Christians were injured, and many more were forced to evacuate. Homes were damaged, and attacks continued into December 26.

Further north, two Christian youths were killed by Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram on January 12 in an attack on a community in Chibok LGA, Borno State.

A woman was also injured as armed gang members burned to the ground a church, shops and homes in Bazir village.

Boko Haram raided the village of Njiland on January 2, and went on to assault Shikarkir community, razing a church and homes.

Founded in 2002 in Borno State, Boko Haram acquired worldwide notoriety in April 2014 when it kidnapped 276 girls, mostly Christian, from a school in Chibok. Around 170 girls have subsequently escaped, been rescued or freed.

They are one of the armed Islamist groups that collectively have murdered at least 45,000 Christians in northern and Middle Belt Nigeria in the last 15 years.

- *Intercede for families bereaved in the attacks in Benue and Borno states. Pray that as they consider lives lost, damage or theft of property and destruction of places of worship, they will know the comfort of the great high priest whose life in them is indestructible (Hebrews 7:16).*
- *Ask for healing of those injured and protection of those who remain.*

Syria – Church Leaders Meet with Transitional Government Amid Concerns for Christians’ Safety

Concerns for the safety of Syria’s small Christian community remain, even after Syrian church leaders met with Ahmad al-Sharaa, the head of Syria’s transitional government, in early January 2025.

The meeting enabled representatives of Syria’s Christian population to raise questions and concerns with the new administration following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad the previous month.

Many Christians have welcomed the fall of Assad’s brutal government, which was notorious for human rights abuses. Believers are apprehensive, however, about the possibility of an Islamist government that will persecute them and other religious minorities.

Sharaa, also known as Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, has emerged as Syria’s leader. He previously worked closely with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who later became the caliph of Islamic State (IS – also known as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh). Sharaa’s group, the HTS, remained affiliated to Al Qaeda when IS and Al Qaeda split in 2014.

In recent years the HTS has disaffiliated from Al Qaeda, and Sharaa has spoken of respecting religious diversity and religious freedom.

In the days following the fall of Assad, Al Qaeda issued a statement urging the victorious rebels to turn against “Jews and Crusaders,” a pejorative term for Christians.

On December 18, unidentified armed groups attacked a church building and desecrated a Christian cemetery in the western city of Hama. According to Nicolas Baalbaki, a senior church leader, they attempted to remove a cross from the building before parishioners intervened, forcing the assailants to retreat.

In a separate incident on December 23, a group of eight men burned a Christmas tree in the Christian-majority town of Suqaylabiyah, near Hama.

These incidents reflect growing violence against religious minorities, heightening security concerns in the region.

- *Give thanks for the dialogue that Christian leaders have enjoyed with Syria’s transitional government. Pray that God will use His people to help steer the country in a peaceful and prosperous direction after years of hardship and brutality.*
- *Pray that Christians will be channels of His peace (2 Thessalonians 3:16) and radiate Christ’s presence in these uncertain days of laying new foundations.*
- *Ask that those intent on harming Christians will be silenced and that the government’s declared aims to protect religious freedom will be carried out.*

Turkey – Pastor Faces Deportation to Iran

Iranian pastor Mojtaba Ahmadi, 57, who has been detained in Turkey on contested immigration charges, faces the imminent threat of deportation to Iran.

There are concerns that Pastor Mojtaba could be subjected to further imprisonment or even death.

His arrest underscores the growing persecution of Christians in Turkey.

On January 29, 2024, he was arrested in western Turkey on unclear immigration charges. His identification was confiscated, and he has since been held in an immigration detention center with little information provided regarding the official charges against him.

Pastor Mojtaba, a convert from Islam, fled persecution in Iran in 2013 to escape impending imprisonment after an arrest warrant had been issued.

He was originally arrested in Iran in 2010 after participating in a private Bible study with other Christians. During his detention, he endured 170 days of solitary confinement and was subjected to physical and psychological torture. After his family provided bail for his temporary release, he was convicted of “spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran” and sentenced to prison.

Since 2019, Turkey has deported foreign pastors, denied residence permits and barred expatriate Christians from re-entering the country.

- *Pray that the Turkish authorities will grant Pastor Mojtaba official refugee status and allow him to stay in the country. Ask that the threat of deportation will be lifted and that he will be able to pursue his full calling in the Body of Christ in Turkey. Pray that, despite attempts to deprive the Church of leadership, God will raise up leaders to strengthen to His people and spread the light of the Word of God amid the darkness of Islam (Micah 7:8).*

D.R. Congo – More than 100 Christians Slaughtered since Christmas Day

More than 100 Christians have been killed by Islamists in north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo since Christmas Day, 2024.

Fifty-three were slaughtered between Christmas Day and New Year’s Eve by the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP, also known as the Allied Democratic Forces).

This includes 31 killed in several attacks across Lubero Territory, North Kivu province, and 17 captured and killed in the village of Ofaye Otto Maber, Ituri province. Five others died in machine gun fire at another Ituri village, where the Islamists also burned down five houses.

At least 53 Christians were killed on January 15 in two further attacks in Lubero.

ISCAP announced the Lubero killings in two social media posts. One of the posts declared, “By the grace of God Almighty, the soldiers of the Caliphate attacked the village of Makoko in the Lubero region and killed 41 Christians [who] were stabbed with knives.”

The other post confirmed killing of 12 others in the village of Masakuki.

The terrorist group also abducted 16 Christians, as well as burning houses and motorcycles.

The scale and frequency of ISCAP’s attacks have increased in recent months, including the deaths of 90 Christians in July and August 2024 (See Prayer Focus Update, September 2024).

A TRAC (Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium) analysis concludes that the brutality of these attacks underscore “the group’s relentless targeting of the Christian population in the region” in exploiting the lack of a security presence to undertake repeated attacks on the same location.

- *Pray for the traumatized Christian communities of north-eastern DRC, especially those who have suffered multiple attacks. Ask the Lord, for*

whom nothing is impossible (Matthew 19:26), to strengthen the security network and bring an end to the violence. Pray that our brothers and sisters will know that their Savior has gone before them and received multiple blows on our behalf but has conquered death (1 Corinthians

- *15:57). Ask the Lord to empower them with faith to build their lives anew.*

Pakistan - Two Christians Killed in Separate Shootings in Gujranwala, Punjab

Christians in Gujranwala, Punjab, need our prayer support after two believers were shot dead in separate incidents around the turn of the year.

Suleman Iqbal, 25, was ambushed by five men on motorcycles on Sunday, December 29, and shot in the stomach. His younger brother Dawood was also shot at but narrowly escaped injury.

Suleman was rushed to hospital after the attack but succumbed to his injuries on January 1, 2025.

A local church leader said that Suleman's success in farming had made him a target. For six months prior to the shooting Suleman had endured threats, harassment and attacks, including the destruction of crops, because of a dispute over land he had leased from the government.

“He had got married some months ago,” said his father Iqbal Masih, “but the cruel criminals have turned his young wife into a widow and created a void in our life that will never be filled.”

Four of the five attackers have been arrested.

In another incident on January 6, also in Gujranwala, Shabana Bibi and her teenage daughter Misbah were shot in an unprovoked attack.

They were returning home from work when two men on a motorcycle approached them and opened fire.

Shabana was killed instantly. Misbah was shot in the back and at the time of writing was in a critical condition in hospital.

Police have launched an investigation to apprehend the assailants.

- *Cry out to the Lord for the families of Suleman and Shabana to be comforted in their grief. Pray that He will heal Misbah and restore her to her family safe and well. Pray that no climate of fear will arise in Gujranwala but instead that faith, hope and love will grow and abide together (1 Corinthians 13:13) and make the community stronger. Pray for the Lord's shield of protection around Christians in Pakistan at risk of persecution from Islamists.*