



# Prayer for the Persecuted Church for March 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; IRAN: Nasser Navard Gol-Tapeh, Joseph Shahbazian; 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: Nigeria**

### **OVERVIEW:**

Nigeria is almost evenly divided between Muslims, who dominate in the north, and Christians, who dominate in the south. There are more than 80 million professing Christians in Africa's most populous nation, the fruit of both pioneer mission work and freed slaves who returned to the continent from Europe with the gospel following the 1833 abolition of slavery in England. Foreign missionary activity in the north has declined significantly since 2008 as a result of the emergence of the Islamic militant group Boko Haram. Based in the north, Boko Haram is affiliated with al-Qaida and has also aligned itself with the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). Although Boko Haram has weakened somewhat in the northeast, it still carries out devastating attacks in the Christian

communities and on army units in the region. Boko Haram is also reportedly backing ongoing attacks on Christian villages by militant Fulani Muslims, who have concentrated their attacks in the central region of Nigeria. Terrorist groups and other Muslims in the north want to drive Christians out of the region and continue their push to create a separate nation governed by Islamic law.

### **MAJOR RELIGION:**

51 percent of Nigerians are Christians. Again, the nation is divided between Christians and Sunni Muslims, with most Christians in the south and most Muslims in the north.

### **PERSECUTOR:**

The Boko Haram Islamic extremist group and militant Fulani Muslims both attack Christians throughout northern Nigeria.

## **WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN NIGERIA**

Nearly all Christians in northeastern Nigeria have lost family members or friends in attacks by Boko Haram or militant Fulani Muslims. Entire congregations have been displaced, and many pastors have been forced to leave the region. Being active in church looks much different than it did at the beginning of the 21st century. It now takes great courage and faith to openly worship and serve Christ. Thousands of Christians remain in camps designated for internally displaced people. With few schools able to function because of the violence, families are concerned about their children's education. Life is a constant struggle, and in some places it is difficult for Christians to find food. Famine threatens farms in the north as a result of ongoing Islamist violence, and militant Fulani Muslims kill farmers when they attempt to return to their farms. In addition, many villages and farmlands have been taken over by the Islamist militias.

### **ACCESS TO BIBLES:**

While Bibles are plentiful in the south, there is a great need for them in the north. Many Bibles have been lost in attacks and as people have been displaced. Most Christians in the north do not own a Bible, and even if they were available, few in the north could afford them.

### **VOM WORK:**

VOM supports widows who have lost their husbands in Islamist attacks, and trains and equips pastors in the north. We also provide study Bibles, New Testaments and Christian discipleship literature to believers.

### **PRAYER REQUESTS:**

- *Pray for Sade and her children, who were driven from their home by militant Fulani Muslims.*
- *Pray for the boldness of front-line workers in areas where Islamist violence is common.*
- *Pray that displaced congregations in northeastern Nigeria will experience God's provision. SHARE PRAYER*

- *Pray that members of Boko Haram and other Islamic terrorist groups will repent and place their faith in Christ.*
- *Pray that Christians, through God's grace, will be able to forgive their persecutors, some of whom are their neighbors.*
- *Pray that widows and orphans will experience God's comfort, presence and provision in their loss.*

*From International Christian Concern*

## **Construction of Toraja Church Still Hampered After a Decade**

**03/14/2025 INDONESIA**

Plans to build the Toraja Church in Samarinda have been delayed a decade despite all requirements being met. Although the Interfaith Harmony Forum has recommended the church, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Samarinda City has not yet issued a letter of recommendation. This has caused disappointment among members of the church, who feel that their right to worship is being hampered.

- *How to Pray: Pray for construction plans for this church to move forward.*
- *Pray for equal treatment of Christians in Indonesia.*
- *Pray for an end to legal harassment of minorities in Indonesia.*

## **Christians Protest Anti-Conversion Law in India**

03/14/2025 India — On March 6, nearly 200,000 Christians in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh in India peacefully protested a proposal to implement an anti-conversion law that had remained dormant for 45 years. The Arunachal Christian Forum (ACF), the state's largest Christian organization, led the protest. Similar laws exist throughout India and are often used to target minority groups.

- *How to Pray: Pray for any unjust laws in India to be overturned.*
- *Pray for protection for Christian communities in India.*
- *Pray for religious minorities to be treated fairly under the law.*

## Nigerian Priest Killed After Abduction; U.S. Mission Condemns Attack

03/13/2025 NIGERIA

After 9 p.m. on March 4, Muslim extremist abducted the Rev. Father Sylvester Okechukwu from his home in Kaduna state. His body was found the following day. The U.S. Mission In Nigeria condemned the murder, describing it as an act of violence. In a statement, the mission extended condolences to the priest's family, congregation, and community.

- *How to Pray: Pray for peace and comfort for the pastor's family.*
- *Pray for protection for his loved ones.*
- *Pray for an end to religiously motivated violence throughout Nigeria.*

## ADF Rebels Attack Ngite Village, Kill 4

03/11/2025 DRC — On March 8, Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels launched a violent attack on the village of Ngite in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), killing four people. Among those who died was a woman who was burned alive in her house. Three houses were set on fire, animals were taken, and other people were kidnapped, leaving the community in mourning and fear

- *How to Pray: Pray for healing for this grieving community.*
- *Pray for protection from future ADF attacks.*
- *Pray for provision for all of the families whose homes were destroyed.*

## From Mission Eurasia's Prayer Initiative

**Please pray for churches in the Muslim-majority country of Azerbaijan.** Pray that the youth in these churches will build relationships with each other and engage in fellowship, enabling them to organize events together and minister more effectively.

- *Please also pray that new churches will be established in various villages and cities, including Lankaran, Shamakhi, Qusar, Agstafa, Sheki, and Mingachevir.*

**Pray for the School Without Walls (SWW) training sessions taking place this month in Poland.** Topics that will be covered include: how to work well together on ministry leadership teams; and how to get involved in reaching the unreached.

- *Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide the facilitators, teachers, and students as they seek to impact their nation for Christ.*

**Please pray for the provision of resources for the Reimer Center in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine** where Mission Eurasia carries out vital ministries for the displaced, war widows, orphans, and others suffering from the war in their homeland.

- *Please pray that God will open the right doors as grant applications are prepared and as ministry partners and friends consider supporting this important work.*

**Pray for Christians in Kyrgyzstan, especially in light of the new restrictive law on religion.** Although this law has not been fully implemented, the church is already feeling its impact.

- *Please pray for wisdom for believers as they seek to make the most of ministry opportunities despite the challenges*

*they face. Also, please ask the Lord to strengthen the church, give believers endurance, and preserve religious freedom and the ability to serve in this Muslim-majority nation.*

**Please pray for the ministry of our SWW students in the highly repressive country of Turkmenistan**, which ranks 29th on the 2025 Open Doors World Watch List of the 50 worst countries for Christian persecution. Recently, our SWW students have started building relationships with children and teenagers from very poor families. Some of these young people have begun attending youth gatherings at church, and some of them have accepted Jesus Christ! Our SWW students have also helped a widow named Almagul who is raising her 13-year-old grandson alone. Almagul has been very grateful for their assistance, and she and her grandson recently came to church for the first time.

- *Please pray that our SWW students will continue to be a light in their communities, drawing more people closer to God through their example.*

## Open Doors Canada Prayer Calendar

### **FRIDAY 21 | MALI**

Pray for Open Doors local partners in Mali as they seek to help strengthen believers who have lost loved ones and their homes in extremist attacks. God, please give discernment and courage to our partners who risk so much to serve Your people.

### **SATURDAY 22 | MYANMAR**

Pray for Christians like Moe Moe\* caught in the conflict between the ruling military junta and rebel groups. “Every day, we must strive for our survival,” she says. She had to flee from her home and was displaced several times. Pray for peace.

### **SUNDAY 23 | IRAN**

Pray for Fatemeh\*, an Iranian Christian who lives in constant fear due to government persecution and frequent police raids on house

churches. Her husband is imprisoned and her daughter suffers from anxiety. Pray for God’s peace for this family.

### **MONDAY 24 | CENTRAL ASIA**

Rasoul\* was forbidden from attending the funeral of his wife because he is a Christian. He said, “I was very upset, but the other Christian families were there to comfort me. My wife was buried, but I couldn’t be there.” Please pray for Rasoul.

### **TUESDAY 25 | SOMALIA**

Pray for Somali secret believers who are parents and need wisdom as they teach their children about Jesus and to follow Him. Pray for the future of the church in Somalia.

### **WEDNESDAY 26 | KYRGYZSTAN**

Pray for women who are beaten and kicked out of their homes along with their children by their non-believing husbands. Pray for comfort, strength, and safe places for them to live. Pray for their husbands to find Jesus and for their families to experience restoration.

### **THURSDAY 27 | LAOS**

Pray for the protection of Christian communities in Laos, especially those in rural areas. Authorities keep watch over believers’ movements, trying for any reason to interrogate or accuse them while they are gathering or worshiping. Pray for clever ways for them to do activities and fellowship. Pray for encouragement in the hearts of believers to stand firm in the name of the Lord even when difficulty is waiting for them.

## Barnabas Aid Prayer Calendar March

### **FRIDAY 21 MARCH 2025**

Praise the Lord that the church in Kyrgyzstan is growing despite restrictive laws limiting the activities of Christians. The law already imposes tight controls on missionary activity and censors religious literature. A new religion law passed its first reading in parliament in December 2024. Among its restrictions, for a church to be registered, the number of adult founder members proven to be resident in a single region has been increased from 200 to 500.

- *Pray for guidance for church leaders to navigate the demands of the imposing new law and encourage their congregations to be faithful even as government pressure intensifies.*

### **SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2025**

Christians in Laos have, since 2019, the right to conduct services, preach throughout the country and establish contacts with believers abroad, according to the “Law on the Evangelical Church.” The law is not effectively enforced in rural areas, however, as local authorities have sometimes banned house churches, even tearing down buildings in which Christians were meeting. The vague wording of a 2017 decree that prohibits “associations” from disturbing “social order” or “national harmony” is interpreted loosely to target Christians.

- *Pray that the Laos government’s commitment to freedom of worship will become a reality throughout the country and rural authorities will relent from harassment of Christians.*

### **SUNDAY 23 MARCH 2025**

- *Heavenly Father, we pray for those in different countries afflicted by natural disasters. We ask You to draw close to those suffering the effects of floods, drought, tropical storms and earthquakes.*
- *We ask for the provision of food, medicine and shelter to those most in need.*
- *We intercede especially for Christian communities affected and pray that they will know Your presence with them even as they pass through the deepest waters.*
- *We pray that, as they develop trust in You, they will be a comfort and a guiding light to others to point them to*

*the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray. (Isaiah 43:2)*

### **MONDAY 24 MARCH 2025**

The ceasefire between Israel and the Iran-backed terrorist group Hezbollah that brought a halt to hostilities in Lebanon is, at the time of writing, appearing increasingly fragile. Hezbollah is accused of failing to withdraw fully from southern Lebanon, while Israel is accused of continuing to strike targets within Lebanon.

- *Pray for Lebanon’s Christians, caught in the middle of this conflict, asking that whether or not the ceasefire holds, they will find their refuge in the Lord, who is a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9).*

### **TUESDAY 25 MARCH 2025**

Concerns have been raised about the impact in Libya of the introduction of a Public Morality Protection unit, also referred to as the “morality police.” Christians are among those who may be at risk from greater repression and more extensive application of sharia (Islamic law). “Such laws could further isolate Libya’s Christian minority and increase their vulnerability,” said a regional expert.

- *Pray for the safety of Christians in Libya, and all who may be vulnerable to this tightening of restrictions.*

### **WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2025**

The governments of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have joined forces to create a 5,000-strong joint force to combat the Islamist insurgency in the West African Sahel. Terrorist groups affiliated to Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) and Al Qaeda have killed thousands, displaced millions, and seized large portions of territory. Anti-terrorism experts have reported that the Islamic State Sahel Province has begun to establish a “pseudo-state” in parts of Mali, where they have established Islamic courts and schools.

- *Ask that the Lord will scatter the jihadists who have created a stronghold for themselves in this region of Africa (Psalm 68:1).*

#### **THURSDAY 27 MARCH 2025**

Praise God for Mauritania's small Christian community, who are courageous witnesses of His grace in a country of immense hardship for any non-Muslims. Only 40 years ago Mauritania was thought to be the only country on Earth with no indigenous believers. The exact number today cannot be confirmed, but it could be as many as 8,000.

- *Pray that the Lord will bless Mauritania's Christians, and encourage them despite the hostility they so often experience.*

*From Open Doors UK and Ireland*

#### **13 MARCH 2025**

### **Misleading reports about 'slaughter of Christians' could endanger Syrians, says Open Doors expert**

An Open Doors spokesperson warns that misleading reports online of a 'slaughter of Christians' in Syria could leave Syrian believers in danger.

Open Doors supporters are among many around the world who are steadfastly praying for Syria, in the wake of recent violence. More than 1,500 people were killed in recent hostilities in Syria's coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus, which began last Thursday (6 March). Most of those killed are civilians. The church in Syria is asking for urgent prayer as the country faces further turmoil.

There have been reports on social media that Christians are particularly targeted in these attacks, with some influential commentators asking why the 'mainstream media' isn't reporting on this religiously motivated violence. It has even been accused of being a 'cover up'. The truth, according to local Open Doors sources, is rather different.

### ***No evidence of Christians being targeted***

These attacks are indisputably tragic, but only four of those killed are known to be Christians – and they do not appear to have been targeted for their faith. All reports suggest that nearly all the civilians killed were from the Alawite people. The Alawites are an ethnoreligious group which is an offshoot of Shia Islam. The deposed former President Bashar al-Assad had the same background.

Matthew Barnes\*, Communications officer for Open Doors in the Middle East and North Africa, says that he has seen no evidence of any major attack on Christians in the last few days – despite reports of a 'slaughter of Christians' from some online.

"We know that four Christian men have died in the region where the violence took place. We know that one of them was hit by a stray bullet," says Matthew Barnes. "And we have no evidence that any of them were killed because of their faith. This certainly doesn't equate to a 'slaughter of Christians'."

### ***False rumours could endanger Syrian Christians***

There is more at stake, however, than misinformation. Matthew Barnes is concerned that false rumours spreading online could have severe negative repercussions for Syria's Christians.

"I'm terribly worried by it, because something like this can rebound onto the Christians there," he says. "When a Christian NGO recently started a lawsuit against the new president, the Syrian government summoned a bishop from the same denomination as the NGO and asked why Christians are so against the president."

Barnes explains that those with the power to persecute Christians are increasingly aware of what is being said about Syria online: "The lesson is that we must assume that everything that's in the news, or even on social media, will be seen by governments and other armed groups. And that can have terrible repercussions on the Christian population, who likely had nothing to do with the rumours."

### *Increasing concerns*

While this recent violence has not disproportionately impacted Christians, that isn't to say that the situation in the country is safe for believers. "When I visited Christians in Syria last week, they were still cautious but optimistic. Now I think they are more cautious," says Matthew Barnes. "Churches in Tarus and in Batia and the surrounding villages cancelled all their church services, because of the security situation. Christians in the Mediterranean region are very fearful that they will be stuck in the middle of this infighting."

On top of this uncertainty, there are existing persecution issues in the country. Christians in Syria who have converted from Islam are particularly vulnerable to persecution from their families and communities. There is also the legacy of the previous takeover of Syria by so-called Islamic State, in which Christians were brutally targeted.

Barnes continues: "One person I know said that she knows of people now wanting to leave the country. Hundreds of thousands of Christians have fled Syria in recent years. I'm afraid if violence like this becomes commonplace, we will have another big exodus."

### *Calls for prayer*

Matthew Barnes joins the Syrian church in asking for the global church to keep praying. "What people can do in the first place is prayer, of course," he says. "Pray for safety in Syria. Pray that the government will be able to control all those people with bad intentions like those who killed so many civilians, that justice will be done."

Please also pray for Christians in the country to be salt and light in the face of this wave of violence and fear. And, of course, pray for all Syrians affected by the tragic killings. Though the violence is not currently targeting Christians, the country still certainly needs our prayers.

\*Name changed for security reasons

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- *For peace to come to Syria, and for an end to violence and fear*
- *For Syrian Christians to be salt and light to their communities at this time*
- *For God's protection and courage for our brothers and sisters in Syria.*

*From Christian Post*

## **Christian man stabbed in Fulani attack sentenced to death by hanging for killing in self-defense**

**BY CHRISTIAN DAILY INTERNATIONAL/  
MORNING STAR NEWS, MONDAY,  
MARCH 17, 2025**

ABUJA, Nigeria — The Supreme Court of Nigeria has upheld the death sentence for a Christian man who defended himself against an attack by Fulani herdsmen.

Calling the March 7 ruling a "horrendous miscarriage of justice," attorney and international human rights advocate Emmanuel Ogebe said in a press statement that the original trial judge substituted her opinion in place of facts in the 2021 death sentence handed to Sunday Jackson, who at that time had been imprisoned for several years after herdsmen attacked his farm in Adamawa state.

"The judge had confused the facts of the case resulting in a horrendous miscarriage of justice, and as such it must be voided," the U.S.-based Ogebe said. "From appellant's brief of argument, it is patently clear that his constitutional right and protection of self-defense was unjustly and injudiciously denied him by the trial judge."

Justice Fatima Ahmed Tafida, a Muslim, sentenced Jackson to death on Feb. 10, 2021. Religious freedom advocates fear the upholding of the death sentence will result in Jackson being killed in prison and called for a state pardon and clemency.

In the Fulani herdsmen attack on Jackson's farm, one of the assailants stabbed him with a knife, which the Christian managed to seize and admittedly used to kill him, Ogebe said.

"Despite injuries he sustained, Jackson overpowered his attacker, wresting the weapon from him and stabbed him as well, following which his attacker died," Ogebe said.

The trial judge misinterpreted the Nigerian Constitution to mean Jackson had the option of fleeing rather than fighting, though the Constitution clearly empowers citizens to defend themselves, he said.

"Indeed the trial judge contorted and distorted logic on its head by saying the plaintiff should have run away while having admitted into evidence that he was stabbed in the leg and thus was momentarily handicapped," Ogebe said.

The discrepancy between the judge's reasoning and the facts came atop the failure of the conviction and sentence to be delivered within the constitutionally mandated 90 days from the end of trial; the verdict came after 167 days, adding to the "grievous miscarriage of justice," he said.

"This is a sad day for Nigerians, as their ability to protect themselves from violent attackers has been further diminished," Ogebe said.

Also contributing to the "textbook case of miscarriage of justice" was that Jackson awaited trial for several years for just five days in court, he said.

"Instead of a five-day trial, he spent six years in custody in a non-controversial trial in which he did not deny that the death of the deceased occurred as a result of an altercation," Ogebe said. "Having spent all this time, Mr. Jackson was further subjected to 167 days of agonizing wait for judgment as to whether he should be freed or hanged in violation of constitutional protections against such protracted delays."

Jackson had been charged under Section 211 of the Adamawa State Penal Code for intentionally killing the Fulani assailant, identified as Ardo Bawuro.

Leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) expressed concern that the country's highest court could accept a ruling rife with

glaring evidence of discrimination against a Christian who will be hanged to death after being attacked by an armed herdsman without provocation and in self-defense.

CAN Chairman John Joseph Hayab and Bishop Mohammed Naga, the association's secretary general for northern Nigeria, said it was painful that both the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court upheld the sentence of death by hanging. They also cited the trial judge misinterpreting Section 23 of the Adamawa State Penal Code Laws to mean that Jackson should have fled and not fought in self-defense.

"It is a distortion of logic to suggest that the defendant should have run away, despite admitting into evidence that he was stabbed in the leg," they said in a press statement.

The CAN leaders appealed to Adamawa Gov. Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri to "kindly exercise his constitutional duties and 'prerogative of mercy,' and in the spirit of peace building and reconciliation, which both the state and the nation now desperately need, to please pardon Sunday Jackson."

"Mr. Sunday Jackson has truly been subjected to the excruciating pain of waiting for death in the midst of the shadow of death by the grave travesty of the misinterpretation of Section 23 of the Adamawa State Penal Code Laws and the unnecessarily prolonged trial that lasted six-and-a-half years, which ordinarily should not have lasted such a lengthy period," they said.

Nigeria is ranked No. 7 on Open Doors' 2025 World Watch List list of the 50 worst countries for Christians, remaining among the most dangerous places on Earth for followers of Jesus. Of the 4,476 Christians killed for their faith worldwide during the reporting period, 3,100 (69%) were in Nigeria, according to the WWL.

"The measure of anti-Christian violence in the country is already at the maximum possible under World Watch List methodology," the report stated.

In the country's northcentral zone, where Christians are more common than they are in the Northeast and Northwest, Islamic extremist Fulani militia attack farming



communities, killing many hundreds, Christians above all, according to the report.

Jihadist groups such as Boko Haram and the splinter group Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), among others, are also active in the country's northern states, where federal government control is scant and Christians and their communities continue to be the targets of raids, sexual violence, and roadblock killings, according to the report. Abductions for ransom have increased considerably in recent years.

The violence has spread to southern states, and a new jihadist terror group, Lakurawa, has emerged in the northwest, armed with advanced weaponry and a radical Islamist agenda, the WWL noted. Lakurawa is affiliated with the expansionist al-Qaeda insurgency Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, or JNIM, originating in Mali.

*This article was originally published at  
Christian Daily International-Morning Star  
News*