



Prayer for the Persecuted Church for April 18, 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! NOTE: Prisoner prayer list moved to the last page.

from Voice of the Martyrs

Global Prayer Guide: PHILIPPINES (MINDANAO)

OVERVIEW:

On the island of Mindanao, where Muslim-majority communities dominate the western and southern regions of the island, Islamist groups and the government have engaged in a long-standing conflict over the Islamists' desire to form an independent Muslim state. Groups such as Abu Sayyaf and Maute have pledged allegiance to the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) to gain financial help and recruit foreign fighters. Islamic extremists routinely threaten Christians and have driven many out of Muslim-majority areas. Many pastors and other believers have been killed. However, a significant number of Christians remain in these areas as a bold witness for Christ.

MAJOR RELIGION:

Most people in the greater Philippines are Christians, but the Mindanao region includes areas with a significant Muslim majority and where Islamic extremism has a strong influence.

PERSECUTOR:

In the Mindanao region, Christians are attacked by both Sunni Muslims and communist rebels.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

In the western and southern Mindanao region, attacks on Christians are sporadic and unpredictable, creating an environment of

constant tension for Christians. Government forces usually respond when conflicts occur, but Christians' rights are not protected in areas where the government has ceded control to Islamists. Churches are legal, and graduates of Bible schools in the Mindanao region boldly share the gospel in Muslim communities.

ACCESS TO BIBLES:

Bibles are available in cities but are much harder to obtain in remote rural areas.

VOM WORK:

VOM responds to attacks on Christians and provides tools and training for front-line workers when they go into hostile areas of Mindanao.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- *Pray for God's peace among Christians living under threat of attack from Islamist rebels.*
- *Praise God that many Christians have remained in Muslim-dominated Mindanao as bold witnesses for Christ.*
- *Pray for Bible schools that continue to equip courageous Christians for ministry in Muslim-majority areas.*
- *Pray that members of Islamist groups like Abu Sayyaf will come to faith in Christ. Pray for the families of pastors and other believers who have been killed for the activity of their faith.*

From International Christian Concern

Church Receives Building Permit After 23-Year Wait

04/11/2025 Indonesia — After more than two decades, the HKBP Bincarung Church in West Java, Indonesia, was finally able to lay the first stone for its own building. Since 2002, various challenges hindered the church's efforts to obtain a building permit. Representing the church's leadership at the groundbreaking, the Rev. Aprianto Simanungkalit thanked government officials who helped make the church's vision a reality.

- *How to Pray: Pray for similar steps forward for churches that are still waiting.*
- *Praise God for this victory for religious freedom.*
- *Pray for this church to share the gospel well in its community.*

Nicaragua Cancels Holy Week Festivities Again

04/11/2025 Nicaragua — Authorities in Nicaragua have halted numerous church-led Lent and Easter celebrations, replacing them in some cases with government-run events designed to give the impression of religious activity during one of the global church's most important holidays. In 2024, the government deployed roughly 4,000 police officers to prevent Holy Week processions, and similar enforcement is likely this year.

- *How to Pray: Pray for encouragement for churches across Nicaragua.*
- *Pray for the gospel to go out throughout Nicaragua this Easter.*
- *Pray for revival within the Nicaraguan government.*

U.S. Missionary Abducted at Gunpoint in South Africa*

04/11/2025 South Africa — Josh Sullivan, a U.S. Baptist missionary, was kidnapped at gunpoint as he preached Thursday evening at Fellowship Baptist Church in Motherwell,

South Africa. According to police, four masked gunmen entered the church late at night during a prayer meeting. The assailants robbed two cell phones before abducting the 45-year-old pastor and taking him in his own vehicle.

- *How to Pray: Pray for the immediate safe return of Josh Sullivan.*
- *Pray for peace for the pastor's wife and children.*
- *Pray for his abductors to come to know the love of Christ.*

***See longer update later in this report.**

Man Found Guilty of Hate Crime for Threatening Churches

04/08/2025 USA — Zimnako Salah, a 45-year-old man from Arizona, was found guilty of attempting to intimidate and obstruct Christian church services due to the attendees' faith in Jesus. On several occasions, Salah attempted to leave backpacks at churches to induce a fake bomb scare and stop services. Whether or not Salah was exercising trial runs with the hoax backpacks is unknown at this time.

- *How to Pray: Pray for protection for these churches from future harassment.*
- *Pray for Zimnako Salah to come to know Christ.*
- *Praise God that these threats were only a hoax.*

From Mission Eurasia's Prayer Initiative

Dear Prayer Partners,

For this week, please pray for the following:

Please pray for the School Without Walls (SWW) students in Cricova, Moldova.

These young leaders were inspired to organize an Easter-themed interactive program for children and their parents. They describe this as a story you can walk into and experience

firsthand. Visitors will be able to talk to Roman soldiers and hear their stories, as well as meet the disciples, and hear their stories. Please pray that this event will make a significant spiritual impact on the lives of those who take part.

Please pray for Brother Vasyl, a member of the volunteer ministry team in

Mukachevo, Ukraine who suffered a head injury from a fall at a construction site. Vasyl and his wife Nataliya have eight children, and their entire family is actively involved in our team's ministry. Please pray for Vasyl's complete healing and for God's comfort as he recovers.

Please pray for the successful completion of the SWW academic year in Armenia.

Please pray for God's guidance for the SWW students and graduates and that many would serve in summer Bible camps for children and youth this summer.

Please pray for peace in the Muslim-majority country of Azerbaijan.

Please also pray for regions of the country, such as Lankaran, Masally, and Lerik where evangelistic ministry has not yet been established.

Please continue to pray about the law on religious freedom in the Central Asian country of Kyrgyzstan

where 0.3 percent of the population are evangelical Christians. Although believers face many obstacles here as they live out their faith, more and more young people are becoming interested in enrolling in theological education.

Open Doors Canada Prayer Calendar

Friday 18 | Worldwide

Today on Good Friday, as we remember Christ's sacrifice on the cross, pray that our persecuted family who risks so much to follow Jesus would know how much they are loved by their Savior.

Saturday 19 | Worldwide

On Holy Saturday, as we prepare to celebrate the resurrection, pray for protection from attacks as believers gather in their local churches. Ask God to place His hand over their celebrations and guide their leaders.

Sunday 20 | Worldwide

"He is not here, for He has risen..." Praise God! Today on Easter Sunday, pray that our persecuted family would grasp the hope and peace that Christ's resurrection brings to our hurting world.

Monday 21 | Malaysia

In East Malaysia, believers were secretly baptized. Where they live, Christians are harassed by the government and rejected by villagers because they left Islam. Remember these believers today—their decision comes with great risk and sacrifice.

Tuesday 22 | Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, Jorina* and her family face ongoing threats from their community for their faith. She prays and longs for her community to know Jesus. Pray with her that God would soften the hearts of her persecutors by her loving attitude towards them.

Wednesday 23 | Kyrgyzstan

Pray for the Christian community and churches in Kyrgyzstan. A new religion law came into effect in February 2025, and this new law bans all unregistered exercise of freedom of religion or belief and makes it impossible for communities with fewer than 500 adult citizen members to gain legal status.

Thursday 24 | North Korea

Recently, a few hundred North Koreans, most of them women, were sent back from China and repatriated to North Korea where they are imprisoned. Please pray that God would draw them close to Him. Barnabas Aid Prayer Diary for this month

Barnabas Aid UK Prayer Diary

FRIDAY 18

Anti-Christian violence persists in many lands, confirming Jesus's words that His followers will be persecuted as He was. As we reflect on the anguish of His suffering, pray that those who have lost loved ones or themselves suffered physical harm will know His comfort. As Christians are killed at the hands of Islamists, military regimes and in other atrocities elsewhere hidden from view, ask the

Lord to sustain His people by assuring them that He has experienced their desolation. Pray that the reality that the debt of sin has been fully paid will cause faith to rise in the whole Church, but especially where she is suffering violence. (Matthew 27:46; John 19:30)

SATURDAY 19

By the age of two, malnutrition had left Minenhle unable to walk, talk or play. Minenhle had also been born with a hole in her heart. She is among 600,000 Zimbabwean children enduring severe food shortages. Thank the Lord that Barnabas was able to provide 33 tons of ePap – a special maize-based porridge (like oatmeal) fortified with vitamins, minerals and protein – to 32,000 Zimbabwean Christians. Praise Him that, since the introduction of ePap into Minenhle's diet, she has gained strength, and is developing physically and mentally. Her last hospital review showed that the hole in her heart has started to heal.

SUNDAY 20

Our Father in Heaven, thank You that Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. We praise You for Your triumph over the grave through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and that anyone who trusts in Him will know living hope by a relationship with Him. We thank You that Christ in us is that hope of glory. We pray that the Church worldwide, particularly those suffering and persecuted believers, will draw strength and encouragement from His victory and abound in hope, for we ask in the wonderful and triumphant Name of Jesus. 2 Timothy 1:10; Colossians 1:27)

MONDAY 21

Praise God for the escape of a Nigerian Christian nurse, Alice Loksha, after more than six years of being held captive by Boko Haram terrorists. Alice was forced into two marriages during her captivity, and gave birth to a son, who escaped with her. "The same God that gave me that courage will be the same God that will lead me further," she said shortly after regaining her freedom. Pray that Alice and her son will receive the practical and emotional help that they need. Ask the Lord to restore her life, March/April 2025 14 increase her honor, and comfort her once more (Psalm 71:20-21). "The same God that gave me that

courage will be the same God that will lead me further," said Alice Loksha. [Image credit: The Cable Nigeria]

TUESDAY 22

Two young Christians were killed in a Boko Haram attack in Borno State, Nigeria, in January. A woman was also injured, and the terrorists burned down homes, shops and a church building in the area. "These attacks have been able to occur with alarming frequency," said a resident. "More needs to be done to ensure the safety and security of our community." Pray for the families who lost loved ones in the Bazir attack and ask for healing for our injured sister. Ask that the attacks by Boko Haram will cease and no more families will know the pain of loss through terrorism.

WEDNESDAY 23

Islamic State West Africa Province has also carried out attacks in Borno State, Nigeria, against both civilian and military targets. After one machine gun raid in January, the terrorists boasted of killing an "infidel Christian" as well as burning down seven homes and a church building. Ask the Lord to bring an end to this wave of violence and make His people secure (Psalm 7:9). Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict those who carry out such attacks of their need of the Savior.

THURSDAY 24

Emergency aid has been given by Barnabas Aid to 1,000 Christian households (more than 9,000 people) in flood-affected areas of South Sudan. The aid included food and cooking utensils, blankets and mosquito nets, as well as trauma counseling. Thousands of people had been displaced by the unprecedented devastation. "We thank God for you," said a South Sudanese pastor, "for saving the lives of many." Give all thanks to God for His provision in times of trouble.

From ICC

54 Christians Killed Following Palm Sunday Service

4/16/2025 Nigeria (International Christian Concern) – Following Palm Sunday celebrations on April 13, Islamic Fulani extremists slaughtered at

least 54 Christians in the village of Zikke near Jos, Plateau state. Local leaders are calling the attack “a targeted act of genocide against the Christian community.”

Eyewitnesses said the attack lasted more than an hour, leaving 103 households destroyed and the entire village displaced. Frustration mounted as residents reported a delayed military response and accused security forces of bias, disarming local Christian youth but not Fulani attackers.

The Rev. Hezekiah Mukan officiated the mass burial of 51 Christians on April 14. Mukan, also chair of the Christian Association of Nigeria, consoled locals reading from 1 Thessalonians 4:13, calling on everyone to remember their hope in Christ as they mourned the dead. The three other known victims received separate Christian burials.

Pastor Ishaku Mathew Kure, a local Baptist pastor, lost 10 members of his congregation and described seeing the attackers, some speaking both English and Fulani, using phrases like “Kill” and “Let’s go.” The pastor, who narrowly escaped with his family, called the violence “genocide” and questioned the government’s failure to disarm Fulani militias while locals remain defenseless.

Amnesty International condemned the massacre, which left elderly people and children butchered in their homes. “The inexcusable security lapses must be investigated,” Amnesty stated, adding that mere statements of condemnation are insufficient without justice and accountability.

From December 2023 to February 2024, more than 1,300 people were killed in Plateau state alone, including more than 500 women and 260 children. Nearly 30,000 people have been displaced. The frequency and pattern of the attacks have led to growing fears of an orchestrated campaign to forcibly displace Christian communities and seize their ancestral lands.

Eli Bako, a state lawmaker representing the affected area, called the attack “evil” and pleaded with the international community for urgent intervention. “One day, we will have no people left in our constituency,” he warned, criticizing the selective disarmament of vulnerable villagers.

Plateau State Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang condemned the attacks as “coordinated acts of terror” aimed at ethnic cleansing. In a state broadcast on April 14, he stated, “What we are witnessing is not mere herder-farmer clashes, but a calculated campaign of genocide.”

He pledged full support for the victims, announcing free medical treatment for the wounded, deployment of more troops, and provision of emergency relief supplies. The governor also met with top federal security officials, including Nigeria’s president and the chief of defense staff, to demand urgent intervention.

Despite these measures, confidence in Nigeria’s ability to protect its Christian communities continues to erode. As international organizations monitor the situation, urgent calls for justice, protection, and humanitarian aid are rising.

U.S. Missionary Rescued in South Africa Following Shootout with Kidnappers

4/16/2025 South Africa (International Christian Concern) — Following an intense gun battle, South African police have rescued U.S. missionary and pastor Josh Sullivan from his kidnappers.

His rescue comes less than a week after masked armed men took him hostage at gunpoint as he preached a sermon last Thursday at Fellowship Baptist Church in Motherwell, a township in Gqeberha, located in South Africa’s Eastern Cape province.

According to a statement from the South African Police Service, officers pursued the pastor after receiving intelligence on his whereabouts in another local township. Three suspects died in the ensuing shootout.

Sullivan, a 45-year-old church-planting missionary from Tennessee, was with the gunmen when the shootout began.

“The victim was found inside the same vehicle from which the suspects had launched their attack,” the police statement said. “Miraculously unharmed, he was

immediately assessed by medical personnel and is currently in an excellent condition.”

According to police, four masked gunmen entered the church late last Thursday night during a prayer meeting with about 30 attendees. The assailants robbed two cell phones before abducting the 45-year-old pastor and taking him in his own vehicle, a silver Toyota Fortuner. The car was later found abandoned about a mile from the church.

Sullivan, a husband and father of six, has been a missionary in South Africa since 2018. Sullivan and his family are members of Fellowship Baptist Church, an independent Baptist church in Maryville, Tennessee, where Sullivan has been on staff. His wife and children are among those who witnessed the kidnapping.

While some reports suggested the kidnapping may have been financially motivated, the attackers targeted the preacher and were well aware of his vocation. The gunmen reportedly knew Sullivan by name. The church also faced threats of being burned down at the end of 2024.

Sullivan and his wife planted Fellowship Baptist Church on Aug. 1, 2021, to provide a church for the Xhosa-speaking people of South Africa.

From Voice of the Martyrs

Smuggling God’s Word in Their Hearts

Owning a Bible or even portions of Scripture is extremely risky in Iran. Nevertheless, Iranian Christians hunger for God’s Word.

As Pastor Houmayoun led a prayer meeting at his home in Iran, secret police stormed in and arrested the pastor, members of his family, and four other church leaders. After days of interrogation, they were moved to a public prison. To prevent the spread of Christianity in the prison, the guards ordered them to be quiet about why they had been arrested.

But Houmayoun and the other believers felt

compelled to obey a higher authority. As they shared their testimonies and the gospel with their Muslim inmates, some responded with threats; some showed no apparent response; and some showed sincere interest. One thing became very clear: They were going to need Bibles.

The Christians began writing every Bible verse they had memorized on any paper they could find. They encouraged one another by sharing the verses they remembered. “During the times when we were under pressure,” Houmayoun recalled, “God was reminding us of these verses and strengthening us through the parts that we memorized.”

When the believers were allowed a phone call, they asked family and friends to write down and send chapters from the Bible in English, which the guards could not read. The Christians who could read English then translated the scriptures into Farsi so other inmates could read the Bible. After several months, the believers had complete handwritten copies of some books of the Bible to read and share. When Christian prisoners were transferred, they would sometimes take a copy to spread to other prisons. While Bibles were highly restricted outside prison, God’s word was multiplying inside the high walls.

After three and a half years behind bars, Houmayoun and the others were released. He still treasures a copy of the Bible made in prison.

You can help send copies of God’s Word to Christians living in the world’s most difficult and dangerous places to follow Christ, like Iran. You can be a part of ensuring every Christian in a hostile area or restricted nation has his or her own Bible.

From the Irish Times

Prime Minister pays tribute to persecuted Christians in Easter message

Story by Claudia Savage and Caitlin Doherty, PA

The Prime Minister has paid tribute to Christians “facing hardship, persecution or conflict around the world who cannot celebrate freely” in an Easter message.

Sir Keir Starmer also called on the nation to “work together for the flourishing and renewal of our country”.

According to the 2024 World Watch list, an annual report published by Open Doors, around 365 million Christians are subject to “high levels of persecution and discrimination”, and in 2023 4,998 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons.

In his Easter statement Sir Keir said: “As Lent comes to an end and we move into the Easter weekend, I want to wish Christians everywhere remembering the death and

celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ a very happy Easter.

“The story of Easter is central to the Christian faith: it is a story of hope, redemption and renewal.

“This Easter, as churches hold special services across the UK, and gather to celebrate with friends and family, we remember those Christians facing hardship, persecution or conflict around the world who cannot celebrate freely.

“I also want to thank you for the ways in which you follow Christ’s example of love and compassion in serving your communities.

“Whether through night shelters, youth clubs, toddler groups, family support, care for the elderly or chaplaincy support, and in a multitude of other ways, you demonstrate steadfast commitment and care.

“We can all take inspiration from the message of Easter and continue to work together for the flourishing and renewal of our country.”

Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

CHRISTIANS IN PRISON: This list is only a sample: CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Wan Changchun, 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; IRAN: See list at end of prayer sheet; 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.

Imprisoned Christians in Iran from last week: Amirali Minaei, Nasser Navard Gol-Tapeh, Nerges Nasri, Somayeh Rajabi, Joseph Shahbazian, Ghazal Marzban, Javad Amini, Tumaj Aryankia, Mehdi (Yasser) Akbari, Anooshavan Avedian--released; Jahangir Alikhani, Hamed Malamiri, Gholam Eshaghi, Mozhdeh (Mojdeh) Fallahi, Nasrollah Mousavi, Bijan Gholizadeh, Hamid Afzali, Iman Salehi, Zohrab Shahbazi, Yasin Mousavi, Esmail Narimanpour, Farrokh Kakai, Abdolrsa (Matthias) Ali-Haghnejad, Mina Khajavi Ghomi, Lalh Sa'ari.