



Prayer for the Persecuted Church for May 1, 2026

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

Jordan

Overview:

Jordan has experienced an influx of refugees from neighboring countries since the 1950s, with nearly half the current population composed of refugees. The refugee situation became especially severe in recent years as Syrians began arriving in large numbers during their country's civil war, which continued for more than two decades. Most of the Christian activity among Jordanian Christians has been focused on serving these refugees, and as God works powerfully among Arab Muslim refugees, Jordanian Christians are emboldened as never before to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.

Major Religion:

96 percent of Jordanians are Sunni Muslims. 2 percent are Christians.

Persecutor:

Christian converts from Islam are persecuted, sometimes violently, by their families, tribes and communities. The Jordanian government restricts open evangelism and sometimes also Bible distribution activities.

What It Means To Follow Christ In Jordan

Christians are free to meet openly, but they have difficulty getting government approval to open

new churches or church facilities. Gatherings of believers are monitored, and Muslims who convert to Christianity often meet privately in homes to avoid drawing extra attention. Family members often create severe hardships for these believers by taking their homes, children, jobs and inheritances.

Access To Bibles

Bibles are available through Bible societies and bookstores.

VOM Work

VOM helps respond to persecution attacks and the needs of Christian refugees. We also provide training for Christian leaders.

Prayer Requests:

- *Pray for the protection of Christian converts from Islam who are threatened by their Muslim families.*
- *Thousands of Syrian refugees live in Jordan. Pray that they will see the love of Christ in Jordanian Christians.*
- *Pray for Muhammad, who was fired from his job after his boss discovered that he had left Islam to follow Christ.*
- *Pray for Syrian refugees who have become Christians and now fear being returned to Syria.*
- *Only 2% of Jordanians are Christians.*

Pray that they will make the most of opportunities to witness and plant churches.

Prayer Requests from Mission Eurasia

Please pray for preparations for the School Without Walls graduation events that will take place in Moldova on May 9. Pray for the training session that will take place that day, for safe travel for all students coming to the event, and for the future ministry and lives of the graduates—nearly 50 this year.

As part of our School Without Walls (SWW) vision, an interregional **Empower Transcaucasia conference is planned for May 10–12 in Georgia**. More than 150 young leaders from Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia are expected to gather for training focused on summer ministry outreach. Please pray for the preparations which are underway this month, for the program content, and for all the leaders who will be leading workshops and training sessions.

Please pray for young **Christian university graduates in Kyrgyzstan** who are preparing for their final exams. Ask the Lord to give them clarity of mind, diligence, and the ability to absorb and retain what they study. Pray that anxiety would not overwhelm them but that they would go through this season with peace and confidence. Also pray for God's guidance in their next steps—in further education, work, and life direction. May the Lord guide their paths, open the right doors, give them wisdom to make mature decisions, and strengthen their faith as they enter adulthood.

Please pray for Yaroslav (“Yarik”), who is currently serving on the frontline of the war in Ukraine. He was previously involved in children's ministry at the Reimer Center in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, investing his heart, time, and care into young lives. Now he is in a place where he especially needs God's protection, strength, and peace. Pray that the Lord would preserve his life, strengthen his spirit, and give him hope even in these most difficult circumstances.

Please begin praying now for **outreach activities for children and youth** that will take place throughout Eurasia and Israel this summer. Please ask the Lord to grant peace to regions where there is still war, to prepare and guide the leaders, and to prepare the hearts of the children we will be serving.

Open Doors Canada Prayer Calendar

Friday 1 | Venezuela – Pray that God may bring peace and guidance amid the profound instability facing Venezuela following the capture of Nicolás Maduro on January 3, 2026.

- *Pray that the church will be a beacon of hope amidst chaos.*

Saturday 2 | Syria – The new president of Syria, Ahmed al-Sharaa, has promised reforms that would offer greater inclusivity and reconciliation.

- *Pray for him for both wisdom and strength to deliver on this promise.*

Sunday 3 | Vietnam – Pray for the initiatives that our local partners will conduct this month. Through these trainings, participants will be equipped to stand in their faith and serve others effectively.

- *Pray that the Lord will grant them wisdom in planning and preparation, and no obstacles will hinder the successful execution of these programs.*

Monday 4 | Philippines – Pray for the children's storytelling programs that our local partner leads in the southern region.

- *Ask God to instill these Bible stories into the minds and hearts of these children.*

Tuesday 5 | Mexico – This day commemorates Mexico's victory at the Battle of Puebla and is a symbol of resilience and perseverance.

- *Pray for the persecuted Church in*

Mexico to remain steadfast in faith amid opposition.

Wednesday 6 | Central Asia – Praise God for recent discipleship training courses. At one conference focusing on the calling of the church, 283 believers from several Christian countries participated. Your prayers and support make this possible!

Thursday 7 | Laos – Pray with us for the Houang* family whose home was destroyed by villagers angered by the family's decision to attend a nearby church.

- *Pray for Open Doors local partners as they work to find a longterm solution for the family.*

Friday 8 | Bangladesh – Saiful*, a local church pastor, asks, “Please pray for us, that we may remain faithful to Christ until the last drop of our blood.”

- *Pray for courage and blessing for Saiful and his family.*

From Barnabas Aid UK Prayer Diary

Friday 1 May 2026

“The extremists are against the Gospel,” says Pastor “Gabriel” in Mozambique. “If they find that you are a Christian, they will kill you.” The pastor and his family are among the tens of thousands who escaped the brutal insurgency being waged by Islamic State terrorists in the north. The church Pastor Gabriel planted in a settlement camp for displaced people further south reverberates with singing and dancing, as the congregation gives thanks to God for their survival (Psalm 18:48). They have little food, little income, but are rich in their trust in the Lord. Give thanks for their steadfast faith and pray that their needs will be met (Philippians 4:19).

Saturday 2 May 2026

Two Christians were captured and killed by Islamists in Cabo Delgado, northern

Mozambique in late February. The pair were taken as they travelled along the road towards Congresso in Cabo Delgado's Macomia District. The execution-style killings were claimed by Islamic State Mozambique (IS-M) in a social media post. In the months leading up to this attack, IS-M activity in Macomia District had forced many residents to flee their homes. Ask the Lord to bring peace to northern Mozambique. Pray that the Church in this troubled region will be comforted with the knowledge that the Lord's people share in His victory over all evil.

Sunday 3 May 2026

Father God, thank You that through the finished, saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have become “the Rock of our salvation”. We pray that even as we experience hardship and sorrow, we will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to “sing for joy to the LORD”. We ask this grace also for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world, that the joy of the Lord will be their strength as they are counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ, in which we pray. (Psalm 95:1; Nehemiah 8:10; Acts 5:41)

Monday 4 May 2026

At the time of writing, Iran remains at the centre of an armed conflict that is spreading across the Middle East. Our brothers and sisters in Iran are cautiously optimistic that the country may move to a place where there is greater freedom for them to live out their faith, worship without fear, and share the Gospel with their neighbours – yet there is also concern that the instability resulting from the war and the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei may lead to an even more extreme and repressive system of government. Pray that the Lord will draw near to His people in Iran, and across the wider region, at this time. Praise Him that no matter the events of this world, His Word “is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (Psalm 119:89).

Tuesday 5 May 2026

Many Iranian believers were among the dead and wounded after a government crackdown on the protests that took place in January. One sister in Christ, a paramedic, went to help the injured in Tehran and was left in

critical condition after being shot in the head. Doctors gave her “no chance” of survival, but praise God, just a few weeks later, Barnabas Aid contacts shared that she had woken, was responsive, and was beginning her recovery. Please pray for our sister’s continued recovery from her injuries, as well as four other Iranian believers left wounded and injured.

Wednesday 6 May 2026

Pray for the Church in Iraq, where believers have grown from an estimated 250 in 2010 to 3,500 today, yet Christians remain less than 1% of the population. Ask God to break through hearts hardened by longstanding divisions and intense rivalries. Pray for the successful registration of evangelical churches in Federal Iraq. Pray for growth, maturity and unity among Kurdish and Yazidi believers in the north, and that local churches will continue to shine for the Gospel.

Thursday 7 May 2026

Praise God for His sustaining presence over the Church in Syria amid ongoing conflict and social instability. Many believers continue to face displacement, economic hardship and insecurity. Give thanks that local churches remain a place of refuge, fellowship and hope. Pray for protection, provision and encouragement for families and leaders, especially in areas still affected by violence. Ask God to strengthen their faith, provide opportunities for witness, and bring healing to communities scarred by years of conflict. Pray for unity among believers and for the Church to shine as a light of Christ’s peace and compassion.

Prayer Requests from Help the Persecuted

Christians Targeted by Their Own Families

Burhan, Algeria

Please pray for Burhan, whose father and brothers destroyed part of his home and demanded that he leave, despite the property being in his name. He now faces ongoing tension and threats after standing firm.

Awad, Iraq

Awad was forced to flee after his family discovered his faith, threatened him, and seized his business. He is now separated from his wife and daughters and living in uncertainty. Pray for his strength, for the protection of his family, and for a clear path forward.

Asim, Egypt

Asim came to faith in Christ after searching for truth, but is now being targeted and threatened by his family because of his belief. He has been forced to flee, lives in instability, and remains separated from his wife.

IMTITHAL, ALGERIA

Our Sister Imtithal lost her job after her husband and his family stirred up conflict with her employer because of her faith in Christ. Please pray for the Lord to provide her a new job and for her family, instead of persecuting her, to come to faith in Christ

Christians Struggling Under Oppression

Ridhwan, Algeria

Ridhwan, who is disabled, and his family are facing ongoing hardship as his wife has been unable to find work because they are known as Christians in their community.

Pastor Mansour, Türkiye

Churches in Türkiye are facing increasing pressure from authorities, with restrictions on gatherings, visibility, and public expression of faith. Pastor Mansour shared the growing challenges, including limits on attendance and directives affecting church activity.

Aida, Morocco

Aida, a believer, is raising her son alone after being abandoned by her husband and facing persecution from both families. She is now being forced to leave her home and is struggling to find stable housing and work amid rising costs. Pray for provision, stability, and a secure place for her and her son.

New Christians Immediately Under Attack Dalia, Jordan

Dalia, a new believer, is under immediate pressure after her brother learned she had been meeting with Christians and has now forbidden her from any contact. She reached out in fear, asking for prayer for herself and her sister, and a planned meeting for discipleship has been cut off.

Qays, Iraq

Qays, a new believer who once studied Islamic sciences, has come to faith in Christ after years of searching the Scriptures. Since his faith became known, he has already received threats from a relative and is now living in fear of what may come.

Mutasim, Iraq

Mutasim has begun openly declaring his faith in Jesus Christ and has been cut off by his parents, who are demanding that he renounce his faith to restore the relationship. He is carrying deep grief, especially over the loss of connection with his mother.

Zuhayr, Lebanon

Zuhayr, a new believer, is facing severe opposition from his own son, who has threatened to kill him and has shown deep hostility toward both him and his wife because of their faith. Zuhayr is grieving this painful rejection within his family

From ICC

Gunmen Abduct Christian Schoolgirls, Kill 1 in Nigeria

April 28, 2026

Armed attackers abducted several Christian school girls traveling to school in Kachia Local Government Area on Sunday, according to field reporting by TruthNigeria, which has documented a series of ambushes along the Akwando-Kachia corridor since early 2026.

The victims were traveling from Akwando village to Kachia town on April 26 when gunmen intercepted their vehicle less than 10 minutes into the journey. The children had

resumed travel after schools reopened in the area.

Local sources said the driver attempted to flee the ambush, but the attackers opened fire, forcing the vehicle to stop. Several passengers were taken into the surrounding bush.

Those reported abducted include:

- Augustina Muntari, student at GSS Gumel
- Happy Muntari, student at GSS Gumel
- Favour Tanimu, student at GSS Kachia
- Patience Joseph, student at GSS Kachia
- Peace Irimiya, student at St. John's School, Kachia
- Bishara Irimiya, student at St. John's School, Kachia
- Irimiya Galadima, the driver
- Fatu Danladi
- Laraba Caleb

One of the students, Purity Babangida, was killed while attempting to escape during the attack. Witnesses said at least 15 other students managed to flee by jumping from the vehicle and later reached nearby communities, including Awon village, after trekking for several hours through the bush.

TruthNigeria field data indicated that this incident is part of a pattern of ambushes along the Akwando-Kachia road. Since January, at least seven separate attacks have been recorded on this route, targeting commercial vehicles, private transport, and motorcycles.

The latest attack is the first documented case in 2026 in which schoolchildren traveling this route were specifically targeted. However, attacks involving students and schools have been reported in other parts of Southern Kaduna in recent years. In 2021, more than 100 students were abducted from a secondary school in Chikun Local Government Area.

Residents in Kachia and surrounding communities claim the road has become a high-risk route, especially for students commuting between villages and schools in the town. Many families rely on shared transport due to long

distances and limited access to boarding facilities.

Education officials and community leaders have previously raised concerns about the impact of insecurity on school attendance, especially for girls. Local advocacy groups report that repeated attacks and kidnappings have contributed to disruptions in schooling, with some families withdrawing children from school due to safety concerns.

In affected communities, families of the abducted students are awaiting further information as local volunteers and security actors continue search efforts.

India Uncovers Foreign Network Funding Christian Ministry

April 29, 2026 | India

Last week, India's Enforcement Directorate (ED) found a foreign network using U.S.-based debit cards to fund religious activities in the country's tribal areas.

ED investigators claimed that nearly INR 950 million (\$10 million) entered India through ATM withdrawals made with foreign debit cards during the six months from November 2025 to April 2026. Part of the funds were allegedly used for Christian missionary-linked operations in tribal dominated states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

The probe has focused on two districts in Chhattisgarh, Bastar and Dhamtari, where the agency said nearly INR 65 million (\$685,000) was spent on religious outreach and associated activities by people linked to The Timothy Initiative (TTI), with extensive digital financial trails and suspected regulatory violations.

TTI is a global evangelical ministry focused on multiplying churches and developing leaders through a disciple-making model based on 2 Timothy 2:2.

According to ED officials, TTI is not registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act

(FCRA), yet foreign funds were allegedly used to support on-the-ground operations. Officials are now examining whether this constituted a direct violation of India's foreign funding and anti-money laundering laws, media reports have said.

Truist Bank, based in the U.S., allegedly issued the debit cards. They were found in the possession of a foreign national who was detained after entering the country via Bangalore International Airport in southern India.

The foreign national, "Jose Bell," was intercepted by immigration authorities and searched following a lookout circular issued by ED after money laundering investigations into unusual cash transactions using foreign debit cards in India traced them to him.

During the search, the immigration authorities recovered 24 foreign debit cards from Bell's possession.

ED investigators suspect these cards were used to withdraw large amounts of cash from ATMs across India in a structured manner to avoid scrutiny and bypass formal financial reporting systems. The money was channeled to local organizations and people associated with TTI operations.

The ED has now linked the funding of the missionary activities to India's national security because the money was spent in the states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand — areas where the government is trying to curb armed militancy perpetrated by left-wing extremists.

In a statement, the ED has categorically said, "Such emergence of a parallel cash-based economy in left-wing extremism-affected areas poses a serious threat to security and financial integrity of India and can facilitate the movement of illicit funds for unlawful activities."

The ED is a premier economic intelligence and law enforcement agency in India, functioning under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance. It investigates money laundering and violations of foreign exchange laws,

including the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, and the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.

The agency has sweeping powers, with a primary mandate to combat money laundering, enforce foreign exchange regulations, and pursue fugitive economic offenders.

ED said its search raids on April 18 and 19 covered six locations across the country. During the raids, officials tracked repeated ATM withdrawals allegedly made using the foreign debit cards.

The agency also found an online billing and accounting platform used to record these cash withdrawals.

During the raids, the ED seized INR 4 million (\$42,000) in cash, electronic devices, and digital records. Investigators also collected documents that may help establish the financial chain, beneficiary network, and end use of funds.

According to media reports, officials indicated that the case may involve a larger, organized money-laundering structure with interstate and international links. The agency is also examining the roles of intermediaries, local facilitators, and financial handlers connected to TTI's network.

Officials are assessing whether the funds were used solely for religious expansion or whether broader local influence operations were attached to them.

The ED probe has also raised questions about the monitoring of foreign-linked religious funding in conflict-prone districts, and the matter is likely to figure in wider government updates and internal security reviews.

*Names have been changed for security purposes

Refusing to Reject Jesus

April 29, 2026 | Africa

Haroji Wado, on Ethiopia's western border with Sudan, is now a place where choosing a new faith means risking everything.

For 18-year-old Zamzam Addaamaa, her only

crime was loving Jesus. The simple act of choosing her faith has transformed her life into a struggle for survival.

"I was born into a devout Muslim family in Haroji Wado," she said. "For 18 years, I lived within the prayers and expectations I was raised with. However, something stirred in my heart, a quite unshakable conviction that Christ is real."

That conviction led her to make a life-altering decision — one she could never take back.

"When I surrendered my life to Jesus," she said, "I never imagined that it would cost me the very same day."

What followed was immediate and harsh rejection. Not just from her family, but from her entire community.

"When my family and community discovered my conversion, my house became a place of danger," she said. "I was not only rejected but also expelled. I was thrown out and left with nothing to sustain me. In many parts of Eastern Ethiopia, leaving Islam is seen as a change of belief; it is seen as a betrayal worthy of punishment, and sometimes death."

Being cast out was only the beginning of Addaamaa's ordeal. Because of her conversion, she became a target.

"I now live hidden in someone else's house," she said. "A hiding place, not a home. I cannot freely step outside. I cannot go out without considering the risk. Every knock on the door could be from a neighbor, a relative, or someone sent to hurt me."

Despite the dangers, Addaamaa survives through the compassion of other Christians. Even that kindness comes with risk.

"I survive on the kindness of strangers," she said. "But they live in fear of being discovered while helping me. This hiding place is a temporary sanctuary, but the threat to my life remains continuous."

Addaamaa's story is not a new incident in Ethiopia. Across the Horn of Ethiopia, Christian converts from Muslim backgrounds face a brutal reality of family rejection, community violence, and state indifference.

Girls are especially vulnerable without anyone to defend them; they become targets for beatings, isolation, or even death. Many flee to cities such as Addis Ababa or attempt dangerous crossings into Sudan or Kenya, only to face trafficking and exploitation. Yet despite everything she has lost, Addaamaa's faith remains unshaken.

"I remain hidden, not because I want to, but because I have no resources to leave," she said. "I have lost my family, home, and my safety, but I cannot renounce Christ."

From Christianity Today

Extremist Attacks Leave Dozens of Christians Dead in Afghanistan

April 30, 2026

Jill Nelson

A Pakistani pastor who baptized several of the victims continues shepherding church members living under Taliban rule.

On a Sunday in late January, pastor Irfan was preaching at a Bible seminar in Quetta, Pakistan, when he received panicked messages from members of an underground church in Afghanistan to which he is connected. Muslim extremists had discovered the location of the church near the city of Bamiyan and had killed around 24 Christian converts from the Hazara ethnic community.

Most died from bullet wounds, but the attackers slit the throat of one young man who was around 20 years old, Irfan said. Then they burned down the house church.

The news broke Irfan, and he struggled to speak at the seminar the next day after weeping the entire night. For a week, he slept only two or three hours a night, he recalled.

Irfan started traveling to Afghanistan in 2009 to build relationships and share the gospel. From his initial converts, the underground church has grown to hundreds of families. Although many have since immigrated to Europe, the United States, and Iran, Irfan now shepherds 85 families—60 Hazara and 25 Sunni Zadran families—who fled to Pakistan in 2021 before facing deportation back to Afghanistan years

later. Due to the danger of Irfan's work, CT is using only his first name.

Afghans are drawn to the Christian faith in part because they confront a religious system that often "blends faith with coercion, fear, and at times violence," Irfan noted. Since the 2021 US military withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Taliban and other extremist groups have sought to punish those who leave Islam.

"When they encounter the gospel, they encounter a radically different revelation: not a system of merit or religious performance but the proclamation of salvation accomplished through the finished work of Christ," Irfan said.

He disciples the underground church by sending voice messages with sermons and discussion questions through virtual private networks. Video calls are unsafe and unreliable, Irfan noted, but voice messages are relatively secure and easy to delete. Occasionally he crosses the border to visit the underground church, although he hasn't been able to enter the country since early 2025 due to increased fighting between Afghanistan and Pakistan along the border.

"They are facing so many challenges, and there are so many hardships," the pastor said of Afghan Christians. On April 16, he heard extremists had killed another 10 Hazara converts in a separate attack. "The families are trying to hide and are seeking support."

One Christian couple missed the January church service in Afghanistan because their young daughter was in the hospital. When they learned of the violent assault, they immediately fled the city and contacted Irfan, saying they feared the Taliban was looking for them.

The attackers abducted two young women from the church, sisters who are about 18 and 21 years old, Irfan said. The women's parents and three younger siblings—including a boy around age 4—all died in the attack.

Irfan recalled baptizing the family nearly four years ago after they fled to Pakistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover. In a photograph of the baptism, Irfan is next to the girls' father, who is standing in a small inflatable swimming pool. The family had since returned to Afghanistan after the Pakistani government began deporting undocumented foreigners.

At least 600,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan since 2021, and Irfan was part of the humanitarian efforts to resettle them. Many arrived with “no clothes, no resources, and no hope,” he noted, so his network in Pakistan sourced housing and helped them start small businesses. Many have hidden themselves among the Pakistani Hazara community—including 35 Christian families whom Irfan pastors.

Some were already Christians, and others converted after encountering Irfan’s preaching. Yet in November 2023, Pakistani authorities began a nationwide operation to deport undocumented Afghan refugees, a trend that has recently intensified due to the ongoing war between the two countries.

During the April 16 attack in the Afghan city of Herat, extremists killed 30 people from the Hazara community, including 10 converts to Christianity who were directly connected to Irfan’s underground ministry network. He said the extremists slit the throats of the Christians, who were in their early 30s, inside their homes.

Irfan knew the men and said one of them had previously worked with local hospitals that operated under international organizations when American troops were in Afghanistan. “He had already been receiving threats, as the Taliban were actively searching for individuals associated with such work,” Irfan said. Another victim had gone back to Afghanistan in 2024—leaving his family behind in Pakistan—during one of the country’s deportation waves.

Hazara are a persecuted minority in Afghanistan, yet Irfan believes the men were likely identified as Christians and targeted because of their faith. The Hazara community makes up 10 to 20 percent of Afghanistan’s 45 million people. The ethnic and religious minority group is predominantly Shiite Muslim and is despised by radicals in a country where Sunni Muslims are the majority.

The Taliban and extremists have persecuted Hazara for decades, said Joel Veldkamp,

director of public advocacy for human rights group Christian Solidarity International (CSI). Yet in recent years the attacks have increased.

“Unfortunately, they have suffered a lot of violence,” Veldkamp said. He added that Hazara are easy to spot because “their facial features are very distinctive.”

Those who convert to Christianity take on increased risk.

Veldkamp said Christians in Afghanistan pretend to be Muslims unless they live in remote regions far from Taliban control: Men must attend prayers at local mosques and grow beards, and women can’t leave their homes unless they are completely covered and are with a male escort. Those who fail to comply risk questioning or various forms of punishment.

In January, the Taliban clarified sharia law codes to permit forms of slavery and to allow husbands to beat their wives, Veldkamp added. Another particularly chilling expansion, article 58, applies to apostates. “A woman who has left Islam for another religion—she is supposed to be imprisoned for life and given ten lashes every three days until she returns to Islam,” Veldkamp said.

It’s difficult to know how many Christians remain in Afghanistan. According to CSI, some estimates suggest around 20,000 lived in Afghanistan at the time of the US troop withdrawal in August 2021.

The withdrawal followed 20 years of bipartisan war fatigue, though critics blamed the Biden administration for its poor execution, which created the conditions for a quick Taliban takeover. Before that, the US-backed Islamic Republic of Afghanistan governed the country. Its collapse led to more than 1,000 civilian deaths, widespread displacement, and a decline in freedoms.

Nina Shea, director of the Center for Religious Freedom at Hudson Institute, helped evacuate Christians after the Taliban takeover and said many were fearful of the growing Islamic extremism.

“There are terror groups that are even more radical than the Taliban that are going through. And when they find out that there is a secret church ... they’ll kill them,” Shea said. “I dealt with a number of Christians during that period in 2021, and they were just terrified.”

Shea said many Christians lived on the roofs of abandoned buildings and came down only for food and water. Even some of those who stayed inside safe houses grew paranoid as Shea—in connection with Glenn Beck’s Nazarene Fund—couldn’t reveal to them their evacuation plans due to security concerns. They feared they wouldn’t be able to leave the country.

Even before the Taliban takeover, Christians in Afghanistan faced persecution, Shea noted. In the years that followed, escape routes out of the country decreased as human rights violations increased.

In 2024, the US Commission on International Freedom recommended the State Department designate Afghanistan as a “country of particular concern,” but US refusal to recognize the Taliban as a legitimate government has complicated the process. The World Watch List

ranks Afghanistan as the 11th-most-dangerous country in the world for Christians, as discovered believers likely face beating, torture, and even death.

Irfan encourages Afghan Christians by preaching about the church in Smyrna—the persecuted but faithful believers in Revelation 2:8-11—and the life of Daniel.

Veldkamp said Christians can support the underground church by advocating within their own countries’ legal systems for asylum pathways for persecuted believers and by supporting underground networks of support and aid. “It’s a very, very tall order, but there are lots of church workers in Pakistan who are willing to help with this, and I think we really need to take them up on that,” he said.

Veldkamp urges Christians to pray for the Afghan church. “God has promised us that he will hear our prayers for our brothers and sisters,” he said. “Prayer...molds our hearts to be passionate about the things that the Lord is passionate about so that our hearts will break when his heart breaks.”

Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

CHRISTIANS IN PRISON: This list is only a sample: CAMBODIA: Theary Seng; CHINA: Gao Quanfu, Tang Bingyi, Wan Changchun, Li Chenhui, Ju Dianhong, Lian Xue Liang, Lian Chang Nian, Fu Juan, Li Jie, Hang Xiaodong, Yan Hwa, Gao Zhisheng, Wang Yi; Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Lian Changnian, Jin “Ezra” Mingri; CUBA: Marcos Antonio Perdomo Silva; ERITREA: Mussia Ezaz, Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzg, Fit Sum-Berhan Gebrenegus, Teklab Menghisteab; INDIA: Sarju Prasad, Pastor Sawan; IRAN: See list at end of prayer sheet; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; MOROCCO: Jamaa Ait Bakrim; NORTH KOREA: Kim Jung-Wook; Kim Kuk-gi; Zhang Wen Shi; VIETNAM: Rah Lan Hip; Y Pum Bya; Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton

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

Imprisoned Christians in Iran: Amirali Minaei, Nasser Navard Gol-Tapeh, Nerges Nasri, Somayeh Rajabi, Joseph Shahbazian, Ghazal Marzban, Javad Amini, Tumaj Aryankia, Mehdi (Yasser) Akbari; 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.