



Prayer for the Persecuted Church for January 14, 2022

Pray for imprisoned or kidnapped Christians

CHRISTIANS IN PRISON: *This list is only a sample: ALGERIA: Hamid Soudad; CHINA: Pastors John Cao, Yan Hwa, Hu Shigen, Goa Zhisheng, Wang Yi and Qin Derfu, Hao Zhiwei, Zhang Shaojie, Li Juncai, Alimujiang Yimiti (Uyghur); IRAN: Yousef Nadarkhani, Sabeh Fadaee, Ibrahim Firouzi (in exile?), Homayoun & Sara, Milad Goudarzi, Alireza Nourmohammadi; KAZAKHSTAN: Pastor Maximov; PAKISTAN: Zafar Bhatti (see update below); VIETNAM: Nguyen Nang Tinh, Nguyen Trung Ton*

KIDNAPPED VICTIMS: *Raymond Koh, Gilbert Biswas, Ken Elliot, Jeff Woodke, Leah Sharibu, (and hundreds of children), Sarah Atef, Joshua Hilmya & wife Ruth Sitepu, Hormoz Diril (in Turkey)*

*From International Christian Concern:
<https://bit.ly/3KbQwNg>*

Christian in Pakistan Receives Death Sentence for Decade Old Blasphemy Accusation

01/07/2022 Pakistan (International Christian Concern) – According to Christian Today, a Christian man in Pakistan has been sentenced to death for allegedly committing blasphemy almost a decade after he was accused. Advocates for the man claim the charges against their client are false and another example of how Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws are abused.

Zafar Bhatti, age 58, was accused of sending blasphemous text messages from his phone and arrested in July 2012. Bhatti was reportedly tortured by police into a confession.

Multiple reports prove another person, Ghazala Khan, owned the number that sent the text messages. Despite these reports, Bhatti was sentenced to life imprisonment under Section 295-C of Pakistan's Penal Code in May 2017.

In October 2021, Bhatti's case was sent back to the trial court by the Lahore High Court. Recently, Bhatti's sentence was revised by the Session Court of Rawalpindi from a life sentence to a death sentence, the mandatory punishment for those convicted of blasphemy under Section 295-C.

Nasir Saeed, Director of the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, claims Bhatti is another victim of Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws.

“Since the promulgation of the blasphemy law in Pakistan, the law is oppressive and frequently misused,” Saeed told Christian Today. “The situation continues to deteriorate, and minorities are living under constant threat as the government has failed to protect religious minorities in the last years.”

“Provisions have been used as tools of revenge in personal conflicts, to target religious minorities and to oppress political opponents or critical voices,” Saeed continued. “In the recent year several blasphemy cases have been registered against Hindu, Christians, and even against Muslims, on mere suspicion.”

<https://bit.ly/3qyNPxT>

Press Freedom Collapsing in Afghanistan

01/10/22 Afghanistan (ICC)

During the last two decades of conflict in Afghanistan, most Afghan media outlets have enjoyed relative freedom to broadcast news throughout the country. Now, journalists have been restricted in their reporting and many news channels have been shut down. Broadcasts in Afghanistan have been limited to religious programming and most, if not all, female journalists have been forced to go underground.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for greater press freedom in Afghanistan.*
- *Pray for protection for female journalists in Afghanistan.*
- *Pray for the truth about the situation on the ground to come to light.*

30 Students Freed After Seven Months in Captivity

01/09/21 Nigeria (ICC)

Thirty more students have been released from captivity seven months after their abduction from Nigeria's Federal Government College in Kebbi state. Roughly 100 gunmen attacked the college back in June, killing a police officer and injuring two students. One student was also killed days later during an attempted rescue mission.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for the release of those who remain in captivity.*
- *Praise God for the release of these 30 students.*
- *Pray for healing for the students following this traumatic experience.*

Coptic Advocate Ramy Kamel Finally Released from Prison

01/10/22 Egypt (ICC)

Egyptian authorities released Coptic Christian activist Ramy Kamel on January 8 after he was detained for two years. Kamel was originally detained in November 2019 because of his journalism and activism on behalf of Egypt's Coptic Christian community. Coptic Christians are often subjected to blasphemy charges, mob attacks, kidnapping, extortion, sexual assault, and other forms of violence simply because of their faith.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for better treatment of Egypt Coptic Christian community.*
- *Praise God for the release of Ramy Kamel.*
- *Pray for greater freedom for activists and journalists in Egypt.*

Christmas Service in India Attacked by Hindu Extremists

01/06/21 India (ICC)

On December 25, a house church in Siwanka village, located in the Sonapat District of Haryana, was attacked by a mob of radical Hindu nationalists. The mob of 80 to 100 nationalists pelted the house church with stones as the small congregation was attempting to celebrate Christmas. Several members of the mob then violently attacked the house church's pastor and the pastor's son.

- *HOW TO PRAY: Pray for the attackers to be held accountable.*
- *Pray for healing for those who were injured.*
- *Pray for the attackers to come to know the love of Christ.*

From Voice of the Martyrs

<https://www.icommittoprayer.com>

Jan. 13, 2022 | Ethiopia

“God Intervened and Rescued Me”

After visits to traditional healers and prayers from local sheikhs failed to heal her daughter from a mental illness, Makda decided to take her daughter to a Christian church for prayer. As the Christian leaders ministered to the girl and prayed for her, she gradually experienced full healing from her illness. Because of her daughter's miraculous healing, Makda placed her faith in Jesus Christ. When her husband learned about her newfound faith, he warned her to stop going to church. After she refused, he assaulted and repeatedly beat her. He then took her before the elders of the community, who commanded her to obey her husband and stop attending church. But Makda remained firm in her commitment to Christ. Her husband then kicked her and their children out of the home for refusing to abandon their Christian faith. She sought help from her relatives, but they too rejected her. Through the support Makda has received from VOM, she has been able to give glory to God and

provide a witness for Him to the community who rejected her. “People were waiting for me to return to Islam when I could no longer bear the trials. But God intervened and rescued me and my children,” Makda said. “God honored me in the eyes of those who despised me and discriminated against me.”

- *Pray for her and her children as they faithfully follow the Lord.*
- *Pray that her testimony of God’s faithfulness will bring others to faith in Christ.*

Jan. 13, 2022 | Iran

Nine Christians Released from Prison Pending Review

Nine believers who have spent nearly three years in prison have been released while their sentences are under review. The believers were arrested in Jan. and Feb. 2019 and later sentenced to five years’ imprisonment for “acting against national security.” But in Nov. 2021, the Iranian Supreme Court ordered a review of their sentences and stated that participating in house churches is not a crime against national security. Pray that these believers will be acquitted following the review. Pray that the court’s decision will lead to freedom for other Christians in Iran who remain in prison.

Jan. 13, 2022 | Laos

Police Threaten to Nail Hands and Feet of Christians Who Gather for Worship

In late Oct. 2021, police announced to six villages that Christians are not allowed to share about Jesus Christ and that children younger than 17 are not allowed to believe in Jesus. The officers took pictures of every known believer in each village and examined their homes, taking down any crosses hanging on the walls. The police also warned villagers that Christians are not to worship or even gather in groups of more than five people. If they do so, they could be “nailed on their hands and feet” or shot to death. In one village, a 14-year-old boy named Kanoa was

detained and threatened with prison if he continued to go to church and worship Jesus.

- *Pray that Kanoa and the other Christian villagers grow in their faith despite the fear they experience.*
- *Pray that others in the village hear the gospel and are inspired by the faithfulness of these believers as they endure persecution.*
- *Pray for the protection of the Christians as they continue to follow Christ.*

GLOBAL PRAYER GUIDE: EGYPT

From Voice of the Martyrs Global Prayer Guide
<https://bit.ly/3GuRZfq>

OVERVIEW:

Egypt has the fastest-growing population in the Middle East and also the largest Christian population among majority-Arab nations. It remains a base for Christian activity throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Many well-established evangelical churches and parachurch ministries in Egypt are working to reach both cultural Christians and Muslims with the gospel. Several of these groups also send their own Egyptian missionaries throughout the region. While overt Christian activity results in persecution, church growth and the establishment of Egypt as a regional base of missionary activity are encouraging developments.

MAJOR RELIGIONS:

87 percent of Egyptians are Sunni Muslims. 13 percent are Christians, including 4 percent who are evangelical Christians.

PERSECUTOR:

Various Islamic extremist groups operate in Egypt, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS).

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN EGYPT:

Christians who are outspoken about their faith are often beaten or imprisoned. When Christians are attacked or kidnapped by

Muslims, the government rarely provides protection or assistance. Christian converts from Islam face the most problems, including being expelled from their families, being divorced by their Muslim spouses, losing their children and losing their jobs. Additionally, because their government-issued identity cards identify them as Muslim, it is difficult for them to attend church, to marry, to register their children in school, to get a job or to emigrate elsewhere. Christians charged with apostasy or proselytizing Muslims are generally imprisoned for a week or two, with a few notable exceptions.

ACCESS TO BIBLES:

Bibles are readily available at Bible societies, churches and bookstores in a variety of formats, translations and languages. However, not all Egyptian Christians can afford a Bible, and persecution and high illiteracy rates make Bible distribution an ongoing challenge.

VOM WORK:

VOM responds to widespread persecution needs, provides Bibles and Christian literature, distributes assistance, and trains pastors and other leaders.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- *Pray for the encouragement and growth of those who receive Bibles throughout the country.*
- *Pray that Egyptian believers will forgive and bless their persecutors.*
- *Pray for Ali, whose father tried to kill him when he became a believer through a satellite TV program.*
- *Pray for Kadisha, whose family tortured her for her faith. She escaped and is now in hiding.*
- *Pray for Wadia and her son, who are in hiding after suffering persecution from family members.*

Prayer Calendar from Barnabas Aid

<https://bit.ly/3qoFgFt>

Friday 14 January 2022

Church leaders in Kyrgyzstan notice a declining interest in the Word of God, except among the deaf, who are still eager to “hear” the Gospel. Many deaf people and those with a speech impairment are turning to Christ and being baptised. Ministry leaders have organised seminars in local churches to train many volunteers in sign language. Praise God that in our day “the deaf hear the words of the book” (Isaiah 29:18 AV) and that when they hear they believe and call on the Name of the Lord and are saved (Romans 10:13-14).

- *Pray that they will grow in their new faith, and not be dismayed by the persecution that they are likely to face in Kyrgyzstan and the ongoing suffering of their disabilities.*

Saturday 15 January 2022

The economic situation in Kyrgyzstan continues to deteriorate. Many businesses have closed and people cannot find work. It is even harder for those who have left Islam to follow Christ, as the Muslim majority often refuse to employ them. To make things worse, 2021 was a very dry year, and many crops failed in the extreme heat. The price of hay rose so high that families had to sell their livestock because they could not feed them.

- *Please pray for better rains in 2022 and for livelihoods for our brothers and sisters, most of whom live in rural parts of the country. Pray also that Christians in the region will have a thankful and trusting attitude that draws non-Christians to our heavenly Father.*

Sunday 16 January 2022

- *Sovereign Lord, we ask You to guide*

Your people in Uzbekistan in view of the restrictions with which they live daily, restrictions that make many ordinary Christian activities illegal. Be with those who share the Good News with others, and protect them from prosecution for this forbidden action. Watch over those who gather in private homes for group Bible study, and protect them from raids by the police as such meetings are banned. Give Christian leaders great wisdom in organising special Christian events, for which the authorities require full details. We ask for Your direction in Jesus' Name.

Monday 17 January 2022

Church leaders from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan met together in September for a leadership conference on the theme of “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). Thank the Lord that those serving Him in the hostile context of Central Asia could meet and be encouraged and built up. Many church members are emigrating from these countries because life is so hard, but the Lord is adding new believers, including from the Muslim majorities, so that many churches find that their numbers remain stable.

- *Praise God for this and pray that pastors will have wisdom to care for their ever-changing flocks.*

Tuesday 18 January 2022

At the time of writing, Barnabas Fund is working with the governments of three countries in three different continents, seeking a safe place for permanent settlement for hundreds of Afghan Christians who fled their country when the Taliban gained power five months ago.

- *Pray that the Lord will open the way in His perfect timing for these faithful and courageous believers. Pray also for their*

protection and for peace in their hearts as they wait in neighbouring countries, which are also fairly dangerous for them as converts from Islam and their children.

Wednesday 19 January 2022

While the eyes of the world were focused on events in Afghanistan last year, Turkey escalated its airstrikes in Syria and Iraq, the targets being mainly Christians and other minorities (Kurds and Yazidis). Turkey's military campaign, which is supposedly against terrorists, has continued in Syria despite signing a ceasefire agreement in October 2019. Indeed, in the first year after signing the agreement the Christian region of Tel Tamer was targeted every month.

- *Pray that 2022 will be a time of respite for the long-suffering Christians of Syria and Iraq. The Turkish attacks of 2021 reminded them of the genocide a century ago under the Turkish Ottomans and of the 21st century attacks by Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh).*

Thursday 20 January 2022

January is usually the coldest month in Lebanon and there can be snow on Mount Lebanon, where many Christians live. The ongoing fuel crisis was bad enough in the summer, but now with short hours of daylight and the cold weather, people are suffering greatly. Both food and medicine are in very short supply. As politicians blame each other, the country is collapsing economically and socially. Some expect a new civil war to break out.

- *Pray that the Christians of Lebanon will be peacemakers and hopebringers at every level of society. Ask that our merciful Lord will restore and rebuild Lebanon, that it may resume its role as a place of safety and freedom for Christians in the Middle East.*