

Advent Prayer - Libya

Project(s): 30-973

Country/Region: Middle East and North Africa, Libya

“I have come into the world as a light, so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” John 12:46



A large proportion of Tripoli's Christians have fled the city during this year's civil war (Source: Bryn Jones, Wikimedia Commons)

Libya has been much in the news during 2011. The uprising against its long-time leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, was initially hailed by some commentators as another triumph of the so-called “Arab Spring”, heralding the advent of religious freedom. But these hopes are threatened by the powerful influence of Islamists upon the new regime. Supporters of Al-Qaeda, held in check by Gaddafi's regime, are already assuming prominent roles.

A draft constitution, published recently, makes Islam the religion of the state and sharia the principal source of legislation. Although it also offers a measure of religious freedom for non-Muslims, this amounts to no more than freedom to worship; the right to share one's Christian faith with a non-Muslim, already denied under Gaddafi, is not included, nor any guarantees against discrimination or other restrictions. The churches of Libya are composed almost entirely of expatriates, many from sub-Saharan Africa. They had been free to worship largely without harassment, but when the violence erupted, thousands of Christians tried to flee the country; some churches in Tripoli lost more than 95% of their members. Some were left stranded at the coast, in danger from rebel gunmen who assumed they were supporters of

Gaddafi, while some of those who remained became virtual prisoners in their own homes. The churches may lack the capacity as well as the freedom to grow under the new regime.

The small number of converts from Islam to Christianity were already vulnerable and isolated, under great pressure from families and communities. They will be in even greater peril if the country is given a more Islamic character.

Pray for the restoration of peace and stability to Libya, and that the tumultuous political changes of 2011 will bring greater freedom to all its citizens. Pray for the churches as they seek to worship and witness with much reduced numbers, that the Lord will make His power perfect in their weakness. Pray too for the protection of Christians who have fled their homes and are trapped inside Libya or living as refugees in other countries. Ask the Lord to bless and strengthen Christian converts from Islam, that they may stand firm in Him in the face of danger and insecurity.

Barnabas Fund projects in Libya include:

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