

told journalists that the attacker said he murdered the minister because “I sensed Allah telling me to go kill him.”

Members of Samaan’s congregation were upset by a later report on an Egyptian news site, citing the Interior Ministry, which claimed the attacker had mental health problems, casting doubt on what appeared to be a religiously motivated attack.

Many Egyptian Christian congregations still worship in unlicensed buildings, as church permits have often been all but impossible to obtain from local authorities.

However, earlier in October, a government committee set up to examine the issue met for the first time. In May 2017, the Egyptian Parliament amended draconian Ottoman-era restrictions on church construction, but thousands of churches are still officially unlicensed.

Join hands in prayer with our Egyptian brothers and sisters to lift up before God the family of Samaan Shehata, especially his two young girls. **Pray** that in the midst of grief they will come to know their Abba as the father of the fatherless and the protector of widows (Psalm 68:5). **Ask** also that the government committee will look favourably on the more than 2,000 requests it has received from churches to receive legal status for their buildings.

Democratic Republic of Congo – Christians face potential new threat as Islamist group calls for jihad

An Islamist group in the DRC released a video in October calling for volunteers to wage jihad. In the video, which has been publicised on Islamic State media outlets, a jihadist with three child soldiers also calls for the DRC to become an Islamic state in Central Africa.

Christians in the conflict-ravaged north-eastern regions of the DRC have endured years of sporadic attacks from Islamic militants of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has been fighting to make Uganda an Islamic state since the late 1990s.

Fifty Christians were hacked to death in the village of Rwangoma in August 2016, in one of the deadliest ADF attacks in the DRC. The call for jihad comes from a little-known group (called The City of Monotheism and Monotheists). Christians now face a new threat from this militant organisation.

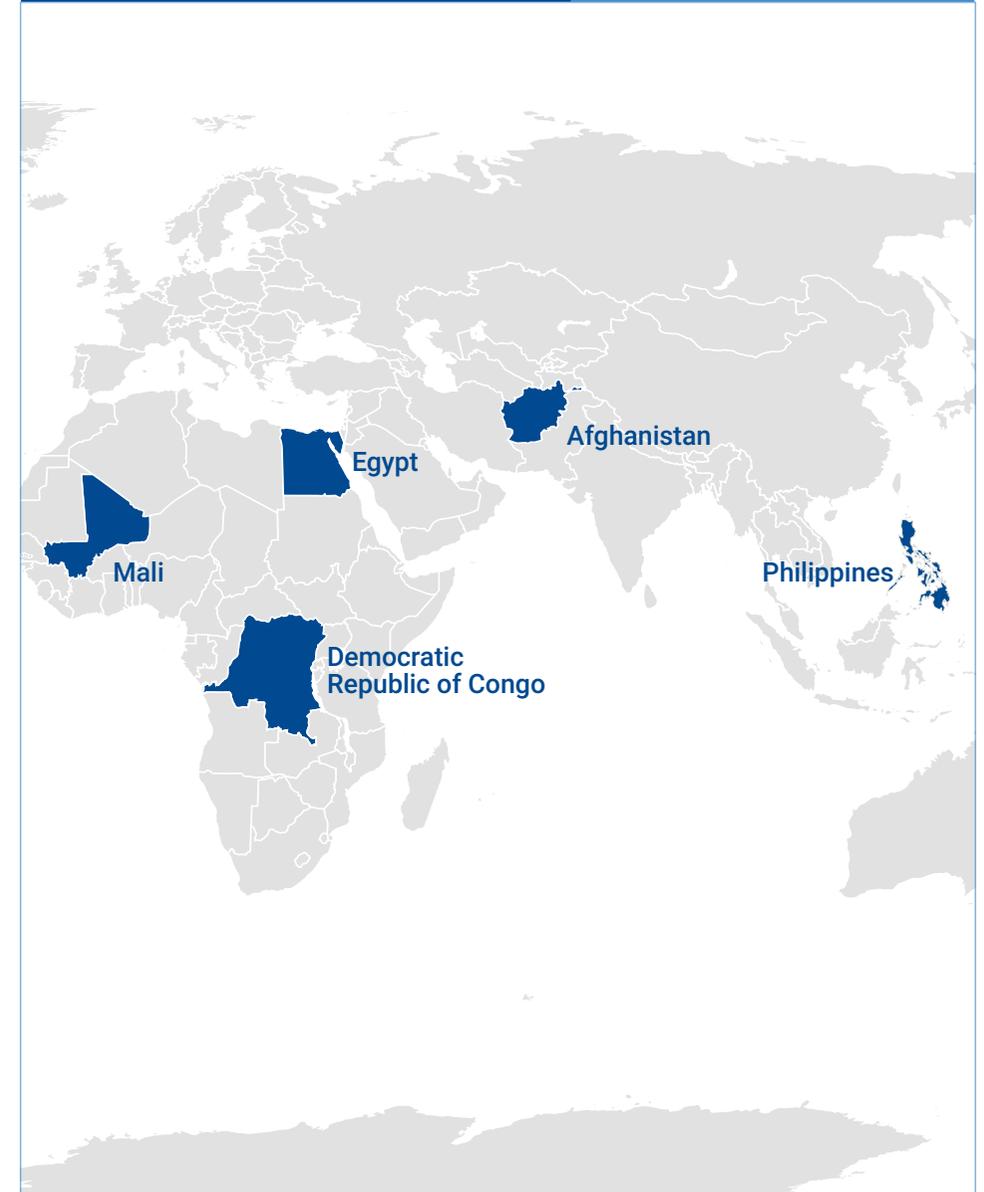
Lift up in prayer Christians in the DRC, especially those in the north-east of the country, who live with the spectre of violence. **Pray** that the orchestrators of attacks will encounter the Living God and turn from evil to seek and pursue peace (Psalm 34:14).

Barnabas Prayer Focus

For more information visit: www.barnabasfund.org

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Mali – Churches attacked and torched by Islamists who threatened to kill Christians seen praying

“Our churches and chapels are now being targeted by extremists, who’ve told Christians not to gather to pray,” reports a church leader in Mali.

In September and October, extremists ransacked and burned several churches in Mali’s central Mopti region. The congregation in one church were driven out of the building and told they would be killed if they were “seen praying.”

In 2012, Tuareg separatists and Islamist groups linked to Al Qaeda seized control of northern Mali and declared the region an Islamic state. The new regime imposed sharia law in Timbuktu, including punishments such as amputations for theft.

In 2013, France deployed soldiers to Mali to assist the government when Islamist fighters began advancing towards the capital, Bamako. A UN force of over 13,000 military personnel is now stationed in the country.

Violence continues despite the government agreeing a peace deal with rebel groups in 2015. In the first half of 2017, more than 42,000 civilians joined many others already internally displaced in Mali.

Call out to the Lord on behalf of believers in Mali, who are enduring increasing attacks from Islamists. **Pray** that the Lord will be their strength and shield (Psalm 28:7) and that the

government and the UN will take decisive steps to protect the Christian community in central Mali.

Philippines – Christians forced to build improvised bombs for Islamist militants

Hostages escaping jihadists in Marawi say they were forced to make bombs for Islamist militants, some even press-ganged into fighting for Islamist rebels.

Militants captured more than 200 hostages, many of them Christians, and forced them to build improvised explosive devices and scavenge for food and weapons.

The Philippines’ government later announced that the army had retaken Marawi, after five months of fighting. One escaped hostage recalled how the jihadists – excited by their “success” in Marawi – openly discussed other possible targets, including Manila, the Philippines’ capital.

The Philippines is a Christian majority country, but the south has a significant Muslim population. Islamist groups, fighting for independence and sharia law, have engaged in a decades-long conflict with the government.

Give thanks that the immediate threat from Islamists in Marawi has ended. **Pray** for the families of believers who have been murdered, and for those who were held captive, that they will be comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit (2

Corinthians 1:4). **Pray** that the five-month siege of Marawi will mark the end of the Islamists’ violent attempts to impose sharia law and that the Muslim minority will live in peace and harmony with their Christian neighbours.

Afghanistan – Christian asylum seekers deported from Europe live in fear

Amnesty International has highlighted the plight of Afghan Christian converts deported to Afghanistan, who now live in fear of their lives.

Farid was deported to Kabul from Norway in May 2017. After nine years in Norway, during which time the 32-year-old convert was baptised and learned Norwegian, his claim for asylum was rejected.

Norwegian authorities told him he would be safe in Kabul, but his own family have rejected him and he cannot live in the province his family come from. “I am scared ... I don’t have funds to live alone and I can’t live with [Muslim] relatives because they will see that I don’t pray [Islamic prayers].”

More than 9,000 asylum seekers, some of them Christians, have been returned to Afghanistan from European countries since 2015. Afghan Christian converts from Islam can legally face the death penalty for apostasy. The last time a case reached the courts was in 2006. The man charged with apostasy was pronounced

“insane” after an international outcry, saving him from execution.

Amnesty has accused European governments of being “wilfully blind to the evidence that violence is at a record high and that no part of Afghanistan is safe.” In their efforts to increase deportations, they are putting Afghan converts at the “risk of torture, kidnapping, death,” Amnesty observes.

Intercede for Farid and other Afghan converts, deported back to Afghanistan where they potentially face the death penalty and are at risk of being murdered by Muslim relatives or the Taliban. **Ask** that the Holy Spirit will be their comfort and joy and that their perseverance through persecution will be an inspiration to other believers (2 Thessalonians 1:4).

Egypt – Church minister and father of three stabbed to death. Authorities consider requests to legalise thousands of churches

Samaan Shehata, a 45-year-old church minister from the village of Beni Sweif, south of Cairo, was stabbed to death in a Cairo suburb on Thursday 12 October.

Samaan was married with three children, including two young girls. Egyptian police have arrested the attacker, who local residents say was known for verbally abusing and throwing stones at Christians.

A lawyer, who was present when police later questioned the attacker,

Listen to my words, Lord, consider my lament. Hear my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.

Psalm 5:1-2