



barnabasprayer

BARNABAS FUND - AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH
BRINGING HOPE TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

MAY/JUNE 2021

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Thank you for your prayers for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, which make such a difference to them. We sometimes have to change or omit their names for security reasons, and we have only limited space to share their stories. But the Lord knows the people and places we are praying about. Please do not feel limited by the specific prayer requests, but pray as you feel led. On each Sunday we have provided a set prayer; please feel free to use these in their current form, to adapt them as you prefer, or to use the information they contain to frame your own prayers.

May

SATURDAY 1 Today new laws come into effect in China to establish a database listing all those authorised by the communist state to engage in religious activities, whether leading worship, teaching or studying religion. The law, which applies to all religions, states that religious organisations must conduct formal assessments of their leaders and apply “rewards and punishments” which will also be recorded in the database. The authorities can insist that a religious organisation cancels the religious qualifications of an individual, thus depriving that person of the right to engage in religious activities. Pray that Chinese Christians will have wisdom from above as they learn to live with these new regulations and that the message of the Gospel will continue to be proclaimed.

SUNDAY 2 Heavenly Father, we praise You for the growing Church in China and rejoice to know that we have so many new brothers and sisters, even though

we may never meet them until we are in heaven. Thank you for their courage and faith, as they made their decision to follow Your Son knowing that it was likely to bring down persecution on them from the authorities, whether local or national. May they be encouraged and strengthened to stand firm by knowing that He Himself was hated and persecuted by the authorities of His day. We ask it in Jesus’ mighty Name.

MONDAY 3 Thousands of Christian villagers fled military bombardment in Karen state, Myanmar (Burma), on 1 February, the same day that the country’s leader Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted in a military coup. This incident followed many similar ones from December 2020 onwards, as the army tried to clear land for new roads and military installations. Pray for our brothers and sisters, trying to survive in the mountainous jungle after the army shelled their homes in Papun and Nyaunglebin districts, that they will not be downcast or disturbed but will put their hope in God their Saviour and praise Him. (Psalm 42:11)

TUESDAY 4 The military government ruling Myanmar (Burma) from 1962 to 2011 frequently attacked the villages of ethnic minorities, including the mainly Christian Chin and Kachin as well as the Karen. Those who did not escape were killed or captured. At least 100,000 displaced Kachin still live in camps. Even during Myanmar’s ten years of “democracy”, the military retained 25% of parliamentary seats and some key government positions. Their ruthless and deadly response to popular protests after the February coup suggests that anti-Christian violence (which never completely stopped under Aung San Suu

Ki) will probably rise again. Ask King Jesus, who came gentle and riding on a donkey, to proclaim peace to Myanmar (Zechariah 9:9-10)

WEDNESDAY 5 On Sunday 7 March the OLF Shene, a fringe group of the Oromo Liberation Front, attacked a church service in Horo Guduru Welega zone, western Ethiopia. Armed men surrounded the church building, gathered the worshippers together and removed their mobile phones so they could not call the authorities for help. They killed two church ministers on the spot, then took the 22 members of the congregation to a nearby forest and killed them. “Christians are living in utter fear day in and day out,” said a Barnabas Fund contact. Pray that the God of all comfort will console and strengthen the grieving loved ones of these martyrs.

THURSDAY 6 Since November 2020, hundreds of Christian civilians have been killed in Tigray region, northern Ethiopia, by troops from the massive army of Marxist Eritrea, a country with a long track record of persecuting Christians. “Torture, killing, atrocities and overall deteriorating situation in Tigray region became day-to-day events. Forced removals and displacements, rape, human rights violations and abuses are another face of the situation,” emailed a church leader from Tigray to Barnabas Fund, after four months of the Eritrean violence. According to Amnesty International, it could amount to a crime against humanity. The survivors of the slaughter and scorched-earth policy were in desperate need of food. Pray for an end to the terrible violence and for practical aid to reach all those in need.



Barnabas sent funds for food, water, bedding, medicines and trauma counselling for displaced Christians in Tigray

FRIDAY 7 Praise God! Seventy Christians (43 men and 27 women) were released from three prisons in Eritrea in late January and early February. Some had been in prison a few months, others for up to twelve years. Several hundred more believers remain in prison, mostly without trial or sentencing. Pray to the Lord Jesus, sent to proclaim freedom to the prisoners, that those released will recover from their ordeal and those still held will be released at the time He chooses (Luke 4:18-21).

SATURDAY 8 A Christian couple with their new-born baby and two other Christian women (one from Ethiopia) were arrested in Somaliland on suspicion of “spreading Christianity”. The arrests came four months after another Christian couple were arrested in Somaliland for being “apostates and evangelists spreading Christianity”; they were later released and deported. Local Christians requested prayers for those arrested that they will experience God’s closeness and strength and will soon be released, for the whole of the tiny Christian community in Somaliland, who are feeling very vulnerable, and for the church leadership to have wisdom to know how to respond.

SUNDAY 9 O Lord Jesus, we pray for Christians in Somalia, one of the most dangerous places in the world to follow You. Give courage and endurance to Somali Christians, who face the real possibility of being murdered for their decision to commit their lives to You. Help them to live by faith, not by sight, as they fix their eyes on the eternal. Keep them from fear and fill them with Your peace and with an unwavering faith and hope. Remind them that, although they will have trouble in this world, You have already overcome the world. (John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; 5:7)

MONDAY 10 Many Muslims stood for election to be mayors or members of parliament at Uganda's elections earlier this year. Although Muslims are only about 15% of the population, they won five of the ten constituencies in the capital, Kampala, as well as Lord Mayor of Kampala and three of the five Division Mayors of Kampala. They did not do so well, however, in other cities, even though there were many Muslim candidates standing. Pray that Uganda's Christian majority will be active and alert in governing their country and will guide it according to Biblical principles.

TUESDAY 11 The Rwandan government has ordered that every religious leader in the country must have a bachelor's degree in theology. This applies not only to pastors of local congregations but also to leaders of faith-based organisations. At present many Christian leaders in Rwanda do not have theological qualifications. Many church leaders have now started to study for degrees. Pray that this rule, emanating from a secular government, will result in blessing for the Rwandan Church as its

leaders become better equipped for their spiritual tasks.

WEDNESDAY 12 At the time of writing, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is scheduled to take place in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, in the week commencing 21 June. The biennial meeting should have been in June 2020 but was postponed due to the pandemic, so it is three years since the last CHOGM. The theme will be "Delivering a Common Future". Please pray that Barnabas Fund's campaign to end the killing of Christians in northern Nigeria will gain attention at CHOGM and action to bring the slaughter to an end, for unless things change they have no future at all.

THURSDAY 13 Praise God for answered prayer and the safe release of Pastor Bulus Yakuru, who had been abducted by Boko Haram militants from a Christian village in Nigeria on Christmas Eve 2020. Pastor Bulus was freed on 3 March, the day on which Boko Haram had said they would kill him if their demands were not met. Pray for the protection of many Christians and other innocent civilians still held by Boko Haram; the Lord knows each by name, though we do not.

FRIDAY 14 Today is the 18th birthday of Leah Sharibu, who has been held captive by Boko Haram militants in Nigeria since he was kidnapped at the age of 14. Many other girls at her school in Dapchi were seized in the same raid but have been released. It is believed that Leah's ordeal continues because she refuses to convert to Islam. Leah has had two babies, after being forcibly married to a Boko Haram commander. Pray that she will continue strong in the Lord and be comforted by

the love of her children. Pray also for many other Christians and innocent civilians held by Boko Haram; the Lord knows each by name, though we do not.



Leah Sharibu is now 18 and still held captive by Boko Haram

SATURDAY 15 Nigerian pastor Michael Samson was beaten unconscious by a group of around 20 youths who burst into his home in Kogi State on 1 March as he was sleeping. Earlier that day he had refused to allow them to use his church building to hold a traditional Nigerian animist ceremony called a “Masquerade”. The “Masquerade” rituals can include sexual acts and animal sacrifice or even human sacrifice. Pray for the full recovery of Pastor Michael; at the time of writing he is in hospital in a critical condition.

SUNDAY 16 Heavenly Father, we pray for Tunisia, a country in turmoil as its people protest that the Arab Spring, which began in their country ten years ago, has not brought the good governance they hoped for. We lift to you the small and vulnerable Christian community, remembering especially expatriates from African countries and indigenous Tunisian converts from Islam. As Tunisian Muslims call for more justice and freedom for society in general, we

ask that Your children, also, may be given greater rights to follow Your Son freely, that convert churches will be given legal status and that individual converts will no longer be stigmatised and rejected. We pray this in Jesus' Name.

MONDAY 17 A 43-year-old Algerian Christian, father of four young children, was sentenced in January to five years in prison for sharing a caricature of Muhammad on social media. It was the maximum sentence possible for blasphemy under Algerian law. Not long before that, two other Algerian Christians were convicted of blasphemy but received shorter prison sentences. All are appealing against the verdicts. Pray that their appeals will be successful and that the Lord Jesus will bless them with peace, joy and hope, for however long He wills that they remain in jail.

TUESDAY 18 Three Middle Eastern Patriarchs and the Middle East Council of Churches have sent a joint letter to US President Joe Biden urging him to lift America’s economic sanctions on Syria, so as to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. The letter, dated 21 January (the day after President Biden’s inauguration), pointed out that ten years ago Syria had been “a breadbasket of the region” but now half the Syrian population were in a situation of hunger. Pray that this Christian intervention on behalf of the whole population of a desperately suffering country will result in change for good. Pray also that Christians will be recognised as bringers of peace, health and wholeness in this fragile and fractured region.

WEDNESDAY 19 Iraqi Christians and Iraqi Muslims are working together to rebuild

two churches and a mosque in Mosul, the city occupied by Islamic State (IS) militants from 2014-2017, parts of which still lie in ruins. Their time in power was a reign of terror for Christians, who fled their homes and mostly have not dared to return because of the anti-Christian hostility which IS created amongst local Mosul Muslims. Pray that this project will help re-build the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Mosul at the same time as the places of worship are re-built.

THURSDAY 20 Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the foremost leader of Shia Islam in Iraq, issued a statement in March, affirming that Christians should “live like all Iraqis, in security and peace and with full constitutional rights”. The statement also referred to the “role that the religious authority plays in protecting them, and others who have also suffered injustice and harm in the events of past years”. Pray that Iraqi Christians will be treated as equals with the Muslim majority in Iraq, and not relegated to the status of what Islamic law calls *dhimmi*, that is, protected but subjugated.

FRIDAY 21 Pray for “A”, an Arab convert from Islam to Christianity who has lived all his life in Saudi Arabia. At the time of writing he was facing court hearings on two charges (1) trying to convert Muslims, and (2) alleged financial misconduct. The first related to a conversation in a restaurant when he allegedly talked about his own conversion. The second related to help he gave his sister, also a convert from Islam to Christianity, to enable her and her children to leave Saudi Arabia. He has already spent time in prison and suffered flogging. If he is imprisoned

again, his wife and son will be vulnerable to attack by his sister’s husband, who has threatened them. Pray that the Saudi authorities will lose interest in “A” and allow him to live out his Christian faith without further harassment. Praise God there has been no attempt to have him executed for apostasy, which is possible as sharia (Islamic law) is the primary source of law in Saudi Arabia.

SATURDAY 22 A church building in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), used to be shared by 67 different Christian congregations, as migrant workers from many countries worshipped the Lord Jesus in their own languages and their own ways. Then the UAE authorities introduced a rule that leaders must have appropriate theological qualifications. The result was that 63 of the congregations are no longer able to meet. Pray that these Christian migrant workers, most of them very poor and vulnerable, living and working in terrible conditions, will be sustained spiritually.

SUNDAY 23 **O God, we thank You for giving us Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, to guide us into all truth, to be our Counsellor and Comforter making us strong, steadfast and bold. Help us to hear His voice and respond to His promptings. We ask this for ourselves and for our persecuted brothers and sisters, especially those who may have no access to Christian teaching or even to Your Word, or who may face enemies deliberately trying to destroy their faith in your Son. May Your Spirit give them all that they need. We pray in the Name of Christ. (John 15:26; 16:13)**

MONDAY 24 Nurgas is one of 400 Pakistani Christian widows whom



Nurgas and her daughter Arooj (9). Nurgas hopes that Arooj will not have to be a sweeper like her mother but become a doctor

Barnabas Fund assists with monthly food parcels. She works as a sweeper, a despised and low-paid job, and used to worry greatly how she could pay for the family's basic needs. Then she heard the Bible verse "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7) and stopped worrying. Once, while cleaning the road, she trod on a nail. Nurgas has diabetes and the wound failed to heal – until her pastor prayed. "I am thankful to God for this miracle in my life," says Nurgas. Praise God for the shining faith of Nurgas despite so many afflictions. Pray that all the widows in the feeding programme will be filled with the peace of God that transcends understanding (Philippians 4:7).

TUESDAY 25 Last year Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan appointed a Special Assistant on Religious Harmony and Middle East. The holder of the new role is Tahir Ashrafi, a respected Muslim scholar who chairs the council of Pakistan's *ulema* (Islamic religious teachers). Given his position, it was very significant when Ashrafi affirmed that the non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan are "not second-class citizens". According to sharia, non-Muslims living under Islam should not have the same rights and freedoms as the Muslim population and are of less

value. Pray that a statement from such a respected person will change the attitudes of many Muslims in Pakistan so that they view Christians as equals instead of despising them.

WEDNESDAY 26 A Muslim has complained to the police in Lahore, Pakistan, that two Christians approached him and some Muslim friends of his in a park, gave them a Christian booklet called "Water of Life" and talked to them about the Christian faith. He claimed that the Christians made derogatory remarks about the Quran and Muhammad, which are offences under Section 295 of the Pakistan Penal Code, punishable respectively with life in prison and death by hanging. Pray for the accused Christians, Haroon Ayub Masih and Salamat Mansha Masih, that no charges will be pressed against them and no violence inflicted on them.

THURSDAY 27 Praise God that Pakistani Muslims spoke out in defence of Tabitha Nazir Gill, a Christian nurse who was accused of "blasphemy" and assaulted at the maternity hospital where she has worked for nine years. Tabitha, who is also a Gospel singer, was slapped and then reportedly tied up with ropes, forced to submit a written apology and left in a locked room until police arrived. One of the Muslims condemning the attack was a staff nurse who said Tabitha was a good, kind girl and "We [Muslims] are the majority and should work with others. We leave religion behind in nursing, The Hippocratic Oath is to serve humanity. Christian nurses are witnesses of love." The police initially dismissed the "blasphemy" accusation as a misunderstanding, but later registered a case against Tabitha under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code. Tabitha is

now in hiding, fearing that she will be murdered by zealous Muslims – pray that the Lord will protect her and her family.

FRIDAY 28 On 27 February, Iranian convert to Christianity Ebrahim Firouzi (34) was released from prison on bail but the charges against him were not dropped. He had been jailed on 8 February, accused of “propaganda against the Islamic Republic in favour of hostile groups” and “insulting the sacred” in relation to his claims of harassment by the Iranian intelligence service. He had started a hunger strike in protest against the new charges and the new imprisonment, which followed years in prison and internal exile on other charges related to his Christian faith. The day before appearing in court, Ebrahim had sent a message: “I ask Christians to pray not for my acquittal but for the great name of God to be glorified, for which I will be in the court tomorrow.” Please pray with Ebrahim that the Lord Jesus will be glorified in his situation.

SATURDAY 29 Three Iranian Christian men, who had been found guilty of “organisation of house churches and promotion of Christianity, which are clear examples of propaganda against the state” in June 2020, appealed against the one-year prison sentences they were awarded. These sentences were harsher than those awarded to four other Christians who had been arrested with them in Bushehr in 2019. Earlier this year their appeal was rejected and at the time of writing the men were waiting to be summoned to prison to begin their sentences. One of them is Sam Khosravi, whose adopted toddler Lydia was removed from him and his wife Maryam after they were

found guilty by the courts in June 2020 of various “crimes” related to sharing their Christian faith. Pray that Lydia, who has serious health problems, will be restored to Maryam’s loving care and that Sam, Sasan and Habib will be given grace to endure their period in prison.

SUNDAY 30 We lift to You today, O Triune God, all isolated believers who have no opportunity for fellowship, whether they are secret believers who have left another religion to follow Christ, converts whose unbelieving families will not let them meet with other Christians, those punished by the authorities with a ban on meeting other Christians, those in prison for their faith, or those too poor to have the resources to meet digitally with other Christians during coronavirus lockdown. We ask that Your loving presence will be very real to them. In the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we pray.

MONDAY 31 “The land of fear.” This is the name given nowadays to the far north of Mozambique, a Muslim-majority area in a Christian-majority country. One of the most savage Islamist terrorist groups in the world is the cause of this



Mozambican Christians fleeing from Islamist violence in the far north

fear, targeting Christians, moderate Muslims, the government and anyone else who disagrees with them. Their hallmark is cutting their victims into pieces and their aim is to impose sharia across the whole nation. Pray that our brothers and sisters will rest in God's perfect love that casts out fear (1 John 4:18) and that the God of love will melt the hearts of the men of violence.

June

TUESDAY 1 Praise God the Church is growing in Central Asia, as Muslims turn to Christ. But they often face severe persecution from their Muslim relatives. A young woman who decided to follow Jesus started going to church. When her husband discovered, he began to beat her severely. Then he threw her out of the home with their two small children, not even letting her take spare clothes. She went to her parents, but her father threw her out and sent her back to her husband. The husband kept the children and threw his wife out again. Pray that the Son of Man, who had nowhere to lay His head, will protect and keep our sister. (Matthew 8:20)

WEDNESDAY 2 Lift up in prayer the Christians of Kazakhstan, where a law passed a decade ago – apparently intended to prevent religious extremism – has made life very difficult for Christians but does not seem to have stopped radical Muslims from taking control of most businesses and a process of “soft Islamisation” from developing. Pray that Christians will not be discouraged even though evangelism is illegal, meeting for worship is illegal (except in large churches who have been

able to get registration) and Christian literature is censored.

THURSDAY 3 During Uzbekistan's strict Covid-19 lockdown last year, four pastors organized the Christians into 24 groups for a round-the-clock prayer chain, everyone praying for an hour in their own home. Through these prayers God revealed to the pastors who was in greatest need. When a grant from Barnabas for food aid arrived, the pastors were able to ensure that it went to the neediest Christians. Many people who did not even have bread in the house prayed and soon afterwards fellow-Christians brought them food parcels. In one family, only the wife was a Christian. Her Muslim husband asked her to pray to her God for bread, and food arrived that very day. As a result, the husband and all the rest of family believed in Christ. Praise God for the way in which He has glorified Himself.

FRIDAY 4 An elderly Uzbek Christian woman died during lockdown last year. After a few days, the pastor and his wife tried to visit the bereaved family, who were all Muslims except for one Christian daughter. The roads were blocked, and no one was allowed out, but the pastor knew he had to go. They prayed and drove off. God miraculously enabled them to travel without being stopped anywhere. They drank tea with the relatives and spoke of Christ our Saviour. All her children and grandchildren gave their lives to Christ. When lockdown was lifted, there were three or four new home churches and 21 converts to be baptised. The pastor continues to be invited every day to Muslim families where one or two family members have become Christians. By the end of each visit, several more have

come to the Lord. Pray for continued fruitfulness of the pastor's ministry and for the new believers to grow in faith.

SATURDAY 5 According to its constitution, Kyrgyzstan is a secular state, but the authorities have announced plans for Islam to have a more influential role. They want to introduce the study of both Islam and Orthodox Christianity in schools with an emphasis on teaching children "Islamic values" as this is considered the national tradition. The new president is keen to tackle what he calls "sects" particularly Baptist Christians and the extreme Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir. Pray that the new constitution being prepared will retain the secular status of the nation, and that the peaceful teachings of Christ will not be linked with the violent views of Hizb ut-Tahrir.



Baptism of a convert from Islam in Uzbekistan

SUNDAY 6 Dear Lord Jesus, be with our brothers and sisters in Turkmenistan today, where registered churches are so few that most Christians are breaking the

law when they gather for worship, even in a private home, and Bibles are hardly ever allowed to be imported. We praise and thank You for the great joy of the Christians, for their burning desire for Your Word and their deep longing to grow in faith. Comfort those who have been rejected by their family or lost their job because they decided to follow You, and guide them by Your Holy Spirit.

MONDAY 7 Since early this year, Christians in China have noticed that it has become almost impossible to buy Bibles and Christian books via Taobao.com, China's largest online retailer. Most had already been removed from sale on Amazon and JD.com since the Chinese authorities first began blocking online sales of Bibles in April 2018. Now independent merchants using Taobao are being forced to withdraw Christian books from sale. In those physical bookshops that are still selling Bibles, customers are now required to give their names and contact details. Anyone buying more than one Bible is considered to be acting very suspiciously. Praise God that His Word will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it, no matter what earthly powers may try to do (Isaiah 55:11).

TUESDAY 8 Pastor Alimujiang Yimiti, a Uyghur convert from Islam, has now served exactly twelve years of his 15-year prison sentence in China, which began on 8 June 2009. He is being held in Xinjiang No. 3 prison, where inmates are reported to be made to wear headphones playing communist propaganda all day every day, which they must memorise and repeat. But Alimujiang is thankful to God for sending him to that prison, so he can share the Gospel and live it out. Pray for

physical, mental and spiritual strength and that Alimujiang's life and words will impact prisoners and prison guards alike.

WEDNESDAY 9 Xinjiang No. 3 prison in China (see previous) is known for frequently preventing relatives visiting the prisoners. A time came when Alimujiang's wife Gulinuer and their two sons, Nijat and Ynam, were forbidden to visit Alimujiang because they were "uncooperative", meaning they refused to deny Christ. Gulinuer discovered that she herself was being followed and monitored by security officials. Meanwhile, during her husband's long imprisonment, she has been encouraged by her mother committing her life to Christ and in her older son doing well in his studies. Pray for this bereft family that the joy of the LORD will be their strength and He will grant them a faith that does not fail.

THURSDAY 10 Many of our brothers and sisters are suffering terribly in North Korea, which remains the worst place in the world to be a Christian. We do not know their names, but God does. Pray for them, especially those enduring beatings, grotesque torture or the brutal prison labour camps in which prisoners often die from the combination of desperately meagre food and heavy physical work. Ask that He will be their rest, their hope, their rock, their salvation, their fortress and their refuge as they depend on Him and pour out their hearts to Him (Psalm 62:5-8).

FRIDAY 11 Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world, has appointed a Christian as its new National Police Chief. It is the first time a non-Muslim has held the post for nearly 50

years, and Indonesian Christians have been greatly encouraged by the news. Pray that Listyo Sigit Prabowo will know the Lord's enabling in his new responsibilities and that Christ will be glorified. Listyo has said that he wants to bring in a "more humane approach" to law enforcement.

SATURDAY 12 The Indonesian government has disbanded the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) by a decree issued in December 2020. The hardline Islamist group began in 1998 as a vigilante group to enforce Islamic moral codes. They opposed the growth of Christianity in Indonesia and forced a number of churches to close. Join Christians in Indonesia in thanking the Lord for this development and pray for a restoration of the harmonious and respectful relations which used to exist between the various religions.

SUNDAY 13 **O Lord, we thank You that the Church in Egypt has survived for 2,000 years despite much persecution and many martyrdoms. We thank You, too, for the attitude of senior people in the current Egyptian government and all that they are doing to affirm and help Christians and enable them to worship freely and live their lives in safety. Please cause their example to spread from the top of society down to the grassroots so that all hostility and violence towards Christians will cease. Pray that Christians will be a blessing to Egyptian society as their lives reflect the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray.**

MONDAY 14 The Old Testament in Moroccan Arabic (Darija), is due to be completed by the middle of this year. (The New Testament was published in

2012.) Pray that Moroccan Christians will soon be able to read the whole of God's Word in a familiar and easy language. As converts from Islam, their existence is not officially recognised, but if they keep their gatherings discreet the authorities do not harass them. Give thanks for this measure of freedom in a country which is almost 100% Muslim, and pray that the government will recognise their existence and grant them full religious liberty.

TUESDAY 15 Today is the annual day of commemoration by Syriac Christians of the genocide of Christian minorities under the Ottoman Empire. They call it the Sayfo (meaning "sword"). An estimated quarter of a million Syriac Christians died in the genocide, which peaked in 1915, alongside Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, making a total of 3.75 Christians who perished



Sayfo Memorial in Straight Street, Damascus

for their faith. Pray that Barnabas Fund's campaign for the wider official recognition by governments of this terrible incident as genocide will help to safeguard Christian minorities in the 21st century.

WEDNESDAY 16 "I would cut off the heads of 20 Armenians. Yes, and I wouldn't feel bad about it." This was the answer given by an Azerbaijani woman in Turkey, in a random street interview conducted by a Turkish YouTube channel. The question had been: "What would you do if you knew you would not be punished for doing it?" Pray that the Lord will take away the hatred of so many Azerbaijani Muslims towards the Armenian Christian people. Azerbaijan won a short war against Armenia last year, by which they gained substantial territory in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, whose inhabitants were Armenian. After this a number of threats were made towards Armenia itself. Pray that Azerbaijani desires and plans to conquer Armenia may not succeed (Psalm 140:8).

THURSDAY 17 Michael Feulner from Germany has been ordered to leave Turkey on the grounds that he is a "threat to national security". Michael first went to Turkey in 1999 as a relief worker after a devastating earthquake in the north-west, but since 2003 he has been pastoring a church in Yalova. In the last two years approximately 70 foreign Christians have been expelled for the same reason, even a church leader who is married to a Turkish citizen. Praise God that He is in control and pray that those He wants to serve Him in Turkey in 2021 will be allowed to remain.

FRIDAY 18 The Dutch parliament has passed a motion (146 in favour, 3 against) calling on its government to recognise the Armenian Genocide of a century ago. In another motion they called for the release and repatriation of Armenian prisoners of war still being held by Azerbaijan after a short war in September-October last year. Pray that the Netherlands will officially recognise the Armenian Genocide, and that Barnabas Fund's petition to the governments of UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand to do the same will be effective.

SATURDAY 19 A proposed new law in Denmark would require religious organisations to submit translations of sermons and talks to be given in languages other than Danish so that they can be approved by the government. Apparently aimed at curbing extremist Islamic preaching in Arabic, the law will also apply to churches, including those worshipping in Faroese and Greenlandic, even though the Faroe Islands and Greenland are part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Pray that the Folketing (Danish parliament) will have wisdom to know how to preserve religious liberty while preventing violent extremism.

SUNDAY 20 **O God our Saviour, we intercede today for all those in authority in every country of Your world, especially those in power where Your people suffer injustice or violence. We know that, like Pilate, they only have their power because You have allowed it, and we pray that You will move their hearts, whether they know You or not, as you moved the heart of King Cyrus of Persia long ago, so that our persecuted brothers and sisters may live peaceful and quiet**

lives in all godliness and holiness. We ask in Jesus' Name. (Ezra 1:1 John 19:11; 1 Timothy 2:1-3)

MONDAY 21 On 11 March the Scottish Parliament passed into law the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, making it a crime to intentionally stir up hatred of certain categories of people. Many Scottish Christians had expressed great concern that the bill threatened free speech (e.g. the freedom to disagree with those who disagree with the Bible) and evangelism (e.g. calling to repentance). They are thankful for last-minute amendments to protect religious debate and the freedom to proclaim Christ as the only Way to salvation. A section that could have criminalised the Bible as "inflammatory material" has been removed. However, private conversations in the home could still be counted as criminal. Pray that the Lord will preserve in Scotland the freedom for Christians to practise and share their faith.

TUESDAY 22 Christians in Bangladesh are only 1% of the population and many are very poor and needy. Those in rural areas are at risk of violent attack, but probably the most vulnerable of all are the few hundred Rohingya Christians, converts from Islam, who live amongst three-quarters of a million Rohingya Muslims, all of them refugees from Myanmar (Burma). Pray that Bangladeshi Christians will dwell in the shelter of the Most High and find refuge under His wings (Psalm 91:1,4).

WEDNESDAY 23 Article 14 (1) e of the Sri Lankan constitution states that every citizen is entitled to "the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to

manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching". This important aspect of religious liberty is now at risk, as there are calls by Buddhist leaders for Article 14 to be amended "in a way so as to stop unethical conversions". The phrase "unethical conversions" is often used by Sri Lankan non-Christians who cannot believe that anyone would become a Christian unless they had been coerced or given money, educational opportunities, or other advantages. Pray that this part of Article 14 will not be altered in the new constitution, which is currently being drafted, and that there will be a recognition at all levels of Sri Lankan society that people from any background might choose to follow Christ of their own free will.

THURSDAY 24 A church building in Nepalgunj, Nepal, was demolished by the government after it took mandatory possession of the church's land and the surrounding area, including a Hindu temple, in order to build a school. The congregation had requested that their church building be saved from destruction, but the demolition went ahead, while the Hindu temple was left intact. The church's congregation of around 20 families is now holding services in the open air and the pastor requests prayer that they will be able to construct a new building. The church was established in 2006 to minister to a slum area of the city.

FRIDAY 25 The Indian state of Madhya Pradesh has made its temporary anti-conversion regulations into a permanent part of its state law. Nine of India's 29 states have some kind of legislation banning conversion by fraud, force or allurement in place.

Laws of this kind are easily misused to make false accusations against Christians engaged in valid evangelism. Thank the Lord that the federal Indian government stated in February that it had no plans for a national anti-conversion law. Pray for full religious liberty in every state of India, so that all Indian citizens will have freedom to choose and change their religion, according to their conscience.

SATURDAY 26 Telangana is one of the Indian states that does *not* have an anti-conversion law. Yet Pastor Chandra Mouli was accused of carrying out religious conversions and violently attacked while visiting a church member near Hyderabad who had requested prayer for a sick relative. The assault was carried out by two workers for the Hindu nationalist BJP party, which governs Telangana. Rather unusually, the police rescued the pastor and arrested his attackers. This resulted in hundreds of BJP members gathering outside the police station to protest that the police were favouring the pastor. Pray that Indian Christians will not be fearful, as increasingly any kind of visible Christian activity is being seen as suspicious in BJP-ruled states.

SUNDAY 27 **O Lord, we thank You for brave Indian evangelists and church-planters, taking the Gospel to remote and hostile parts of the sub-continent, despite much opposition. We ask that they will not be fearful or dismayed, and will know Your presence with them to strengthen and help them as You uphold them with Your righteous right hand. We thank You, too, for all those who hear their message and put their**

faith in Your Son Jesus as Lord and Saviour. May those who have chosen to follow Christ be strong in Him and able to face any persecution that may come. We ask this in His Name. (Isaiah 41:10)

MONDAY 28 An Indian pastor and his congregation, including women and children, were severely beaten by a mob of Hindu extremists during the Sunday worship service on 31 January. About eight of the extremists burst into the church meeting room at Harohalli, Karnataka state, while around 30 waited outside to prevent any Christians from escaping. Pastor Subhash Hanok, a convert from Hinduism, was so badly injured that he could not walk, but he said afterwards, “I have dedicated my life to die for the Lord. This doesn’t affect me.” Pray that his words of faith and courage may give strength to his congregation and other Indian Christians suffering similar attacks.

TUESDAY 29 Barnabas has provided packs of Christian books and booklets in Hindi for 250 grassroots pastors, evangelists, church elders and “Bible women” who are ministering in rural and tribal regions of India, in hostile environments, with few resources and little training. “I am very thankful to God who has provided these spiritual books,” said Anil. “I will study them properly and teach my congregations. I believe that these books are the treasures of my life. I could not buy such expensive books but God made this provision for us so that I could receive these books free. These books will be very fruitful for my personal spiritual life as well as to my churches.” Pray for him and all the other

recipients that the books will help them and their congregations to grow in knowledge of God and please the Lord in every way (Colossians 1:10).



Anil receiving his pack of books and booklets

WEDNESDAY 30 Recent statistics show that there are over two million untrained church leaders in the global South. Especially in places where the Church is a persecuted minority but growing, many new Christians find themselves in leadership roles as soon as six months after their own salvation. The Shepherd’s Academy has been developed by Barnabas Fund to provide quality, relevant training for grass-roots ministry by distance education. The first students started this month, linked to a variety of Christian institutions in nine countries. Please pray that their studies will equip them to be more effective in the Christian service in which they are already engaged.

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