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

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

JANUARY/
FEBRUARY 2020

barnabasfund.org

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.

January

WEDNESDAY 1 At the start of a new year, remembering that the LORD is from all eternity and that He has set eternity in our hearts, ask for His mercy on our troubled world, wracked by conflict, poverty and natural disasters. Pray especially for Christians living under pressure and persecution, for whom the new year, speaking in earthly and human terms, looks set to be another year of hardship and injustice. Ask that they will have God's grace to view their situation from an eternal perspective, and to recognise that our light and momentary troubles in this world will achieve an eternal glory that far outweighs them (Psalm 93:2; Ecclesiastes 3:11, 2 Corinthians 4:17).

THURSDAY 2 A series of frantic WhatsApp messages were received by Barnabas Fund from a Christian leader in Burkina Faso on 12 November, describing a string of recent jihadist attacks on various targets. Scores of people had been killed, including many

Christians. The only remaining key government leader who spoke on behalf of Christians and other communities had been murdered by terrorists. The town to which many Christians had fled was no longer safe. "Please please please continue to pray that they will keep trusting the Lord, their Saviour and Lord" said one message, and the next read: "Note that dying or living is of very little importance now. The most important thing now is keeping faith in the Lord." Pray for our brothers and sisters that their faith will not fail, even when tested to the utmost.

FRIDAY 3 Pastor David Mokoni, and a hearing-impaired Christian boy were killed when Boko Haram militants attacked a church in Moskota, in Cameroon's far north, on 6 November. It was the second attack on Moskota in a week, and part of a spate of attacks on mainly-Christian villages which began on 30 October and left eight people dead. In one village the attackers took food, clothes, every sheep and goat, even the sheets from the villagers' beds. Ask the LORD to shelter His people in northern Cameroon, that they may rest in the shadow of the Almighty, their refuge and their fortress (Psalm 91:1-2).

SATURDAY 4 Protestant missionaries to Senegal focused mainly on the countryside. The result is that most Senegalese Protestants are very poor, whether still living in rural areas or migrated to urban slums. Around 70% cannot afford to buy a Bible. A recent Barnabas project provided 4,000 New Testaments and 320 Bibles in a variety of languages used in Senegal, for Christian families who had no Bible. Praise God for the difference these are

making in the lives of believers. Birame, who had managed to gather a few Bible portions to read, said that the day he was given a complete Bible was the most wonderful of his life. Rebecca, recalling Acts 17:11, said, “I will be able to search the Scriptures myself like the people of Berea. From now on, we will organise Bible studies at our home and we will invite our neighbours to participate.”



Germaine, a widowed mother-of-five in Senegal, says her new Bible will help her teach her children, lead family worship and share her faith with neighbours, as well as enable her to read God’s Word for herself

SUNDAY 5 Lord Jesus, we praise and thank You for the example of the many desperately poor Christians, especially in African nations, who have clung faithfully to You despite offers of material wealth if they would convert to another religion. Though their poverty and suffering continue here on earth, may they be filled with joy and hope, as they store up for themselves treasure in heaven. Help us too to be prepared to make sacrifices for You, whether great or small, with joy and thankfulness, remembering always that You died for us on the cross to take away our sins. (Matthew 6:20-21)

MONDAY 6 The Magi who came from the east to bring gifts to the infant Jesus are usually thought to have been Zoroastrians from Persia (now called

Iran). Praise God that many Iranians are coming to Jesus in our day too. There are estimated to be at least 350,000 Christians from a Muslim background inside Iran and huge numbers more in the Iranian diaspora. The Iranian government seems to have a strategy of getting new converts to leave the country voluntarily, by arresting them and releasing them again soon afterwards. Pray that each new believer will hear the Lord’s voice clearly as to whether they should leave their homeland or stay.

TUESDAY 7 Because so many new Iranian Christians leave the country within months of their conversion, many leaders of convert groups are very young in the Lord. Pray that the Holy Spirit will equip them with all they need to disciple and nurture even newer converts, so that they will become mature believers, firmly grounded in the faith, correctly handling the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

WEDNESDAY 8 The more active or prominent Iranian Christians from a Muslim background may be held in detention for long periods. Naser Navard Gol-Tapeh (48) is serving a ten-year prison sentence for acting against national security. This is the typical kind of charge made against Christian converts in Iran. On 1 November 2019, Naser wrote a letter to the people of Iran: “Today marks more than two years since I have been detained in prison for the fabricated charge of acting against national security by running house churches, even though religious ceremonies are part of our religion. I do not know by what logic or under which crime this heavy sentence has been

imposed upon me. I hope that Christ's love will spread through the voice of imprisoned Christians throughout the world." Pray that Naser will be a channel of God's love, peace, hope and joy to all around him in Evin Prison.



Naser Navard Gol-Tapeh has more than seven years still to serve in prison in Iran. [Image: Article 18]

THURSDAY 9 After a public outcry, authorities in Turkey removed posters displaying a quotation from the Quran (chapter 5, verse 51) which tells Muslims not to be friends with Christians or Jews. The quotation was accompanied by a picture of a Christian cross and a Jewish star of David, both spattered with blood. The posters had been displayed on bus stops in the city of Konya. Thank the Lord that members of the public felt strongly enough to complain that the poster was "hateful" and could incite hatred towards Jews and Christians, who are both tiny minorities in Turkey.

FRIDAY 10 A Turkish Muslim described the character of Turkish people to a BBC journalist as follows: "Whether religious, secular, militaristic, Atatürk-loving, Erdoğan-loving, or even how we party – we do it all 110%." Pray that Turkish Christians will use this passion and energy as they live as salt and light

in their society. Pray too that many more Turks will become "Christ-loving" disciples of the Lord Jesus, giving Him 110% of their lives.

SATURDAY 11 In October the American House of Representatives voted 405-11 in favour of recognising the mass killings of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923. To become official US policy, the resolution needs to be approved by the Senate and then ratified by the president. Over 1.5 million Armenians, up to 1.5 million Greeks and up to 750,000 Assyrians were killed in a 30-year period that peaked in 1915. These were all Christian people-groups and some, saved their lives by converting to Islam, showing that the genocide was religiously motivated. Twenty-eight countries already recognise the genocide. Pray that good may come out of this unspeakable tragedy as it becomes known and recognised, so that savagery on such a scale may never be repeated.

SUNDAY 12 **Father in heaven, we pray today for our Christian brothers and sisters in North Korea, who live daily in extreme danger because of their love for Your Son. Fill them to overflowing with a peace that passes understanding and take away all fear from their hearts. For those in brutal prison labour camps, we ask that You give them grace to endure the heat, the cold, the hunger, the beatings and cruelty. May their patient fortitude be a witness that draws others to put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in Whose Name we pray.**

MONDAY 13 The Indonesian government's Religious Affairs Minister announced in November

that the government might ban from government premises women with veils covering their faces. He also reiterated that men in the civil service must wear trousers that cover their ankles. In Indonesia, traditional *cingkrang* trousers (stopping just above the ankle) are widely believed to be popular with Islamic radicals. In the same month, the government launched a website to allow the public to report radical content posted online by civil servants. A survey in 2017 revealed that a fifth of Indonesian civil servants want the country to become an Islamic state ruled by sharia. Until recent years, Indonesia had had a long history of moderate Islam. Pray that the government's apparent efforts to slow the process of radicalisation will be effective and that the harmonious community relations which used to exist between Muslims and Christians will be restored across the whole of this vast country.

TUESDAY 14 Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country and the Indonesia-based Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), founded in 1926, claims to be the world's largest Muslim organisation with 90 million adherents. NU made the astonishing announcement last year that they were abolishing the Islamic legal category of *kafir* (infidel). This removes the main theological justification that Islamists use for waging jihad against non-Muslims. NU also announced that the modern nation-state, as an institution, was theologically legitimate. This goes right against classical Islamic teaching that only an Islamic state, under sharia, in which Muslims are superior to non-Muslims, is allowed. Praise God for this bold

and visionary move and pray that their ideas may be accepted by other Muslims across the world.

WEDNESDAY 15 When Turkish troops invaded north-east Syria in October 2019, they called their military operation "Fountain of Peace". Christian areas were shelled and Christians were amongst those injured and killed in the first days of "Fountain of Peace". Pray to the One, with Whom is the Fountain of Life, whose Son is the Prince of Peace, that the killing and violence in Syria will come to a permanent end, as the perpetrators are thrown down, unable to rise again, and that His righteousness, justice and love will be established there, through His faithful people (Psalm 36:9,12).

THURSDAY 16 "Let us continue our prayers for Syria, people and country, to have a peaceful end for this ongoing man-made catastrophe where hundreds of thousands of lives are lost, millions displaced, and more are suffering. Let us pray that God may enlighten the minds and hearts of the international community decision-makers to understand that human life is worth much more than any economic profit and political influence." This prayer came from a Middle Eastern church leader, as Turkey began their military operations in north-east Syria in October. Please add your "Amen" and pray further for Syrian people, especially Christians, as the Lord leads you.

FRIDAY 17 Pro-Turkish forces were reported in October to be carrying out a "soft ethnic cleansing" of the Christians in north-east Syria by terrorising them

into fleeing. The Christians were being prevented from accessing their land during the cotton harvest, which is a main source of income for them. On 21 October the Army of Islam group posted a video urging its members “to treat Christians as second-class citizens in areas taken over by the Turkish forces as well as pay *jizya*”. (*Jizya* is the classical Islamic tax on non-Muslim minorities, signifying their subjugation by the Muslim majority.) It is less than a decade since Christians lived peacefully alongside Muslims in Syria and were respected as equals. Pray that these good relations can be restored as rapidly as they have deteriorated.

SATURDAY 18 A Syrian church minister and his father were shot dead on 11 November by unknown motorcyclists as they drove from Qamishli to Deir al-Zor, where they had been travelling regularly to help restore war-damaged Christian shops and homes. Another church leader in the car escaped. A few hours later, three bombs went off in Qamishli at five-minute intervals, the first in a Kurdish district, the second in a busy market, and the third near a Christian school. At least five people were killed and 26 injured. Pray that those who mourn will be comforted and that Christians will be able to bring hope to others.

SUNDAY 19 Lord Jesus Christ, we pray for Christians in India, rejoicing that Your Church there has grown to at least 50 million people. Please strengthen and protect those who face harassment and opposition from radical Hindus. Give them courage and perseverance to keep gathering together to worship You, despite the

knowledge that any meeting could be disrupted by violent extremists. May their lives bring You glory and cause Your Name to be praised, even by those who persecute them, as they show forth the fruit of Your Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

MONDAY 20 Pray for an end to the violent intimidation of Christian worshippers in Sri Lanka. Six Christians on their way to church were beaten with sticks on Sunday 21 September, leaving five of them needing hospital treatment. Just a week earlier, a combined force of 15 police officers, six Buddhist monks and about 100 villagers had descended on a church in Gampaha District demanding that they stop conducting worship services. These are just two examples of many.

TUESDAY 21 Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected president of Sri Lanka in November. He is a hardline Buddhist who helped bring an end to Sri Lanka’s 30-year civil war but in such a brutal way that he is facing a series of international war crimes charges. The minorities in Sri Lanka – Tamils (the losing side in the civil war), Muslims and Christians – are very concerned because of his track record of restricting minority rights and encouraging Buddhist militants to attack the minorities. At the time of writing, it is expected he will call parliamentary elections for February or March 2020. If other hardline Buddhists are elected to Parliament, it is likely that laws will be passed that will further restrict Christian activities and especially evangelism. Pray that

Sri Lankan Christians will not be fearful, remembering that President Rajapaksa only has power over them because their heavenly Father allows it (John 19:10-11). Pray for the Lord's hand over the parliamentary elections.

WEDNESDAY 22 Reports from China speak of a new campaign by the central authorities called "Return to Zero". It is apparently targeted at the "house churches" (unofficial congregations) and aims to "dismantle the scale, dissolve the organisation, and dismiss the church". Remembering the Bible's teaching that "people may make plans in their minds, but the LORD decides what they will do", ask that the LORD will overrule this decision and that the reported campaign will itself be reduced to zero. Pray that the Church in China will continue to grow in numbers and in faith (Proverbs 16:9, NCV).



Chinese Christians

THURSDAY 23 One of the ways in which Chinese Christians caught in raids on city churches are punished is by sending them to their home villages and confiscating their ID cards (thus preventing them from travelling). But these believers take the Gospel with them to their villages. Pray that they will

seize every opportunity to share their faith and that their words will be used by the Holy Spirit to bring more people to know, love and trust the Lord Jesus.

FRIDAY 24 Sometimes members of the Chinese Communist Party are caught attending church worship services. As communists, they are supposed to be atheists. They are usually dismissed from their jobs or else resign. University students are pressured to deny Christ or else be failed in their courses, which would make it difficult for them to get decent employment. Pray that the Lord Jesus will provide jobs for those who lose their livelihoods because of their love for Him. Pray also that friends and family will be challenged to consider what (or who) is so important that someone would sacrifice their education or career.

SATURDAY 25 Today is Chinese New Year, an important celebration for Chinese people around the world. During last year a significant landmark occurred for Chinese Christians, when the number of Bibles printed in China passed 200 million. More than 85 million of these Bibles are circulating within China and the rest have been exported. Praise God that the communist authorities in China permit the distribution of God's Word, a Word that will accomplish what He desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11). Ask that, in the coming twelve months, many more people in this country of nearly 1.4 billion will be called out of darkness into His wonderful light. Christians are thought to number at least 150 million.

SUNDAY 26 Thank you, Lord Jesus, for Your promise that You will build Your

Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We rejoice to know that people all over the world, even in places where Christians suffer much hostility and repression, are putting their trust in You, so that Your Church is growing. We ask that, as they face opposition of many kinds, they will find courage and hope in knowing that the gates of hell will not prevail and that the one who believes that You are the Son of God will overcome the world. (Matthew 16:18; 1 John 5:4)

MONDAY 27 Praise God that more than 80 churches in Kyrgyzstan have been granted registration in the two years to September 2019. Without registration, the congregations are functioning illegally whenever they have religious activities, and are liable to be fined. However, the proposal for new amendments to tighten up the already strict Religion Law of 2009 remains. These would make it even more difficult to gain registration, ban the sharing of beliefs in public and censor all religious literature. Pray that the threat of these changes will be removed.

TUESDAY 28 At the time of writing Eldos, a convert from Islam to Christianity who fled Kyrgyzstan with two convert relatives after suffering terrible violence from local Muslims, is awaiting yet more surgery on his jaw to repair the dreadful injuries he sustained. The safe and distant country they hoped to settle in long-term has changed its visa policy and it may not be possible for them to go there after all. Please pray that the LORD who has helped Eldos thus far (1 Samuel 7:12) will continue to guide and provide for him and his relatives.

WEDNESDAY 29 Thank the Lord for answered prayer in Tajikistan regarding recent concerns that so many Christians, including pastors, were emigrating to seek work that churches would close. Praise God that no churches have closed for this reason, and pray that Tajik Christians will find work close to home, especially those from a Muslim background who often lose their jobs when they decide to follow Christ.

THURSDAY 30 In Tajikistan, only one church has managed to gain registration in the last decade, even though the minimum requirement of ten members is much lower than in many other countries of Central Asia. Christians from Tajikistan request prayer that the authorities will grant registration to the churches, thus enabling them to function legally. Please also continue to pray about the issue of cemeteries for Muslim-background Christians in Tajikistan. The request made in one city recently has been refused by the authorities, and the believers are now asking if they could be allocated some land for a cemetery outside of the city.

FRIDAY 31 Christians in Tajikistan report that their churches are frequently inspected by officials from the Committee on Religious Affairs, who use intimidation, blackmail, illegal searches and seizure of church property, and huge fines to put pressure on the Protestant congregations. Christians believe that the Committee's goal is to eradicate the Protestant Church, which includes many converts from Islam, and ask Barnabas Fund supporters to pray that these activities against them will cease.

February

SATURDAY 1 It is against the law for children under the age of 18 to participate in any church events in Tajikistan. The authorities interpret this as meaning that the mere presence of children on church-owned premises is a violation punishable by fines, restrictions on church activities or even closing the church for an indefinite period. Pray that this harsh regulation will be repealed and that Christian parents will be able to bring their children to Christian meetings again.



Young Christians in Tajikistan. Nowadays it is illegal for under-18s to participate in church events (archive picture)

SUNDAY 2 Dearest Lord Jesus, we pray for Christians in Afghanistan, who follow You with faith and courage, hated and distrusted by society, living always with the possibility that they could be executed for apostasy or murdered by the Taliban. You know each one by name, their fears and hopes, sorrows and joys, and the loneliness of isolated believers. Lead them to other brothers and sisters so that they can have fellowship together and share with each other what Your Spirit has revealed to them. Please re-build Your Church in Afghanistan that she may shine brightly there, as she did many centuries ago.

MONDAY 3 There are thousands of Afghan Christians scattered across northern Europe and North America. Pray for them that the flame of their faith, which was unquenched by persecution and danger in Afghanistan, will not grow dim now that they live in relative safety. Praise God that others in the Afghan diaspora are coming to know Christ for the first time as the Gospel is shared amongst them. Ask the Lord to give great wisdom to those who teach and minister amongst the Afghan Christians, that they will be effective in helping them to deepen their faith and understanding and to live authentic Christian lives in the two cultures that they straddle.

TUESDAY 4 A 14-year-old Christian girl was abducted from her home near Faisalabad in Pakistan on 16 September by a Muslim man who forced her to convert to Islam and marry him. This broke two laws as she was too young to marry and too young to convert to another religion, according to Pakistani law. When her father went to the police to report the kidnapping, they responded with abusive language and refused to do anything until, two days later, other members of the Christian community intervened. Pray that this child, and many other Christian and Hindu girls and young women who suffer similar fates, will be found and returned safely to their parents.

WEDNESDAY 5 In a rare move, Pakistani police stepped in to stop Muslims attacking Amir Masih, a Christian sanitation worker, who had been accused of “blasphemy”. The charges against him were dropped immediately when police discovered that the pages

of the Quran that Amir had in his possession had been found in a rubbish bag collected by him from local homes as part of his sanitation duties. The imam at a local mosque had announced over the mosque's loudspeaker that they had detained a "blasphemous Christian" and urged other imams to punish him and burn local Christians' homes. Praise God that the police were able to persuade the imams to drop their accusations against Amir.

THURSDAY 6 When Alia Razzaq's husband died of kidney failure, she had to take her two young children out of school because she could no longer afford the fees. She works as a domestic maid (a dangerous job for a Christian woman in Pakistan), earning about £30 (\$40; €35) a month. But now she is getting monthly food packages, help with rent for the room the family lives in, and educational expenses of her children from Barnabas Fund. "I cried a lot when I could not afford the school



Alia, pictured here with her daughter Diba and son Dawood, is one of many vulnerable Pakistani Christian widows receiving food and other help from Barnabas

fees of my children. I prayed to God for help. The Lord answered my prayers and my children were readmitted to school," says Alia. Pray for her and many other Pakistani Christian widows in similar situations, whom Barnabas is supporting. They are triply despised in Pakistani society – for being women, Christians and widowed.

FRIDAY 7 Olga Glamozdinova has won a landmark court case in Russia. She had been fined 10,000 rubles (£122; \$155; €140) for "use of land for unintended purposes". This was because she allowed her fellow church-members to meet for four hours every week at her house in the village of Veselyi, Rostov Oblast, a house built on land designated for "private farming". Olga, who had registered the church at the house's address, challenged the fine, arguing that it violated her right to freedom of conscience and religious confession, as well as her right to freely own and dispose of her property. The Russian Constitutional Court in St Petersburg ruled in her favour on 14 November. Its statement that residential buildings can be used for religious worship services and that religious organisations can, if the property owner agrees, be registered at residential properties sets a groundbreaking new precedent for Christians in Russia. Thank Him who is able to immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20) for this stunning news.

SATURDAY 8 Russia's President Putin has expressed his concern for Christians in the Middle East. "Christians are in peril there, facing persecution, being killed, raped and robbed," he said at a meeting in Budapest in October with

the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orban. The two leaders agreed to cooperate in protecting Middle Eastern Christians. Pray that their help and protection will be truly effective. “We are watching what is happening to the Christians in the Middle East with tears in our eyes,” Mr Putin told Middle Eastern Church leaders he also met in Hungary.

SUNDAY 9 O Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, the Son of God, we thank you for the example of those from other religions who decide to follow You, willingly taking up their heavy cross, enduring rejection, loss, poverty or physical violence, sometimes from their nearest and dearest. At the hardest and most difficult times, let them feel your love and presence in a very special way and remind them that their place in Your family can never be taken away from them. Help us to learn from their lives, to love You with a total commitment, and to be willing to suffer for You.

MONDAY 10 It was international news in September when Saudi Arabia launched a new visa to encourage visits by foreign tourists, at the same time relaxing the kingdom’s ultra-strict dress code for female visitors. The aim is apparently to create another source of revenue, in addition to oil. Pray that the Saudi authorities will also relax their attitude to Christianity and will allow Christians to practise their faith freely and Muslims to leave Islam and follow Christ without fear of the death penalty for apostasy, which is currently specified in Saudi law (as in Islamic law).

TUESDAY 11 Please pray that the issuing of licences for church buildings in Egypt

will continue steadily. Small batches of approvals now seem to be processed and announced each month, instead of larger batches less often. In October 64 licences were issued, making a total of 1,235 licences issued and 2,495 requests still awaiting approval, since a new law was introduced in September 2016 to make it much easier for churches to get a licence and thus able to operate legally.

WEDNESDAY 12 Three church buildings were sealed by the Algerian authorities on 15 October, just six days after Algerian Christians had held a peaceful protest outside provincial government offices to ask for the unfair sealing of church buildings to send. The three churches closed had a combined membership of about 1,300 people and the order to close them was issued later on the same day that the protest had been held. At least eleven church buildings have been closed in Algeria over the last two years; their congregations are mainly converts from Islam and their children. The pendulum of persecution in Algeria swings from harsh to lenient and back again every few years. The rate of church closures has been increasing in recent months; pray that the pressure will now be eased off again.

THURSDAY 13 The number of New Zealanders who describe themselves as having “no faith” (48.59%) is now greater than the number who identify as Christians (37.31%). When this data from the 2018 census was released in September 2019, Humanist New Zealand, a secular advocacy group, called for a change to be made in Christianity’s “privileged position in public policy” e.g. Christian prayers

in parliament, facilitating the meeting of Christian groups in schools, government money for Christian chaplains in hospitals, charity status and tax exemptions for religious groups. Humanist New Zealand called for “non-religious people” to be given “more recognition, support, services and representation”. The 2018 census also showed increasing numbers of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in New Zealand. Pray that New Zealand Christians will have wisdom to know how to work for justice and freedom for all.

FRIDAY 14 When Nigerian police raided an Islamic boarding school in Kaduna State on 27 September, they found about 300 severely abused young men and boys, some reportedly as young as five. Visibly malnourished, many boys had their ankles chained together or to car wheel hubs. Some bore scars of canings and beatings. Amongst them was a Christian youth called Yusuf, a convert from Islam, who had been sent there two years earlier when his conversion had been noticed because of his changed lifestyle. Praise God that Yusuf kept his faith in Christ, despite all he endured, and pray for healing of body and mind for him and all the boys who have endured such cruelty.

SATURDAY 15 Nine Christians were abducted in two separate attacks by gunmen on Christian boarding schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria in October. At one school, the vice-principal, matron and six girls were taken. The second attack came four days later on another school and the principal was taken. At the time of writing no one had claimed responsibility for the kidnappings, but the Islamist group Boko Haram has

kidnapped many hundreds of people in the region including 276 girls from a school in Chibok in April 2014 – over 100 of them are still in captivity. Pray that all the captives from all kidnapping incidents will be released unharmed.

SUNDAY 16 **O Lord our God, who sees and knows all things, we lift to You our brothers and sisters in prison today in Eritrea, unknown to us but each one known and precious to You. You know the end from the beginning, but they do not know how long they will be there, simply for loving, following and serving Your Son Jesus. Help them to endure, whether it is hard labour on scanty rations, or the heat, cold and darkness of a shipping container. Remind them that Your counsel will stand and You will accomplish Your purposes. We pray this in the Name of Christ. (Isaiah 46:10)**

MONDAY 17 Christians are suffering as religious and ethnic violence increases in Ethiopia. It began more than a year ago in September 2018, in the area of Enseno town, leaving many Christians dead and thousands more displaced, who are still in temporary accommodation. This is a Muslim-dominated area, but there are Christians in both the main tribes; praise God the Christians from the two tribes have been meeting to worship the Lord together for many years. Anti-Christian violence flared up again in February 2019, when at least twelve church buildings were burnt down in Alaba town, and again in October-November 2019 in Sebeta town. Pray for a stable and lasting peace and that the love of the Christians for each other across tribal divides may help others learn to live in harmony.



Sacks of wheat distributed to persecuted Christians were like “manna that God provided ... through Barnabas Fund” said our project partner in Ethiopia, who also told us, “We did devotion and prayer before the distribution to comfort them in God’s Word.”

TUESDAY 18 “We sincerely prayed that God would intervene and change the situation of the people. We also prayed for our government to get heavenly wisdom to handle the situation before huge damage. We also prayed for the churches to be light and salt in this bad situation. Finally we prayed God to multiply the support like a seed of blessing as they use it.” This was how Barnabas Fund’s partners in Ethiopia prayed with hungry Christians before distributing food aid provided by Barnabas. The beneficiaries were survivors of anti-Christian violence (see above photo). Please add your prayers for these needy widows, children, and elderly with no family to provide for them.

WEDNESDAY 19 Join Christians in Uzbekistan as they thank the Lord for answered prayer. Their country was for a generation the hardest for Christians of all the Central Asian republics,

but under President Mirziyoyev, who has been in power for three years, the pressure of persecution has been considerably lightened. It is now legal to own a Bible in the Uzbek language, so long as it is one of the copies authorised by the government. Court cases against unregistered churches for “illegal assembly” (e.g. gathering for worship or prayer) used to run at about 200 a year, but now it is about 20 a year. The fines imposed on churches for “illegal assembly” are lower and often cancelled altogether by the higher courts when the churches appeal. Pray that this trend towards greater religious liberty will continue in Uzbekistan and that neighbouring countries will be inspired to follow suit.

THURSDAY 20 God is at work in Uzbekistan in a wonderful way. Christians there can hardly believe the change that has happened in recent months regarding registration

of church buildings. This used to be extremely hard to obtain but now registrations are being granted at the rate of about one a week. Each time a building is registered, all the Christian activities within it become legal instead of illegal. Thank the Lord for this and pray in particular for the region of Karakalpakstan, where no churches have yet been granted registration. When anti-Christian persecution was severe in Uzbekistan, Karakalpakstan was the most difficult part of the country.

FRIDAY 21 Christians in rural areas of Uzbekistan are finding themselves under pressure from local Muslim leaders. It is a requirement of the church registration process that the names and personal details of the members must be given. But those individuals are then having pressure put on them, in an effort to make the church withdraw its application for registration. Please pray that the persecuted rural believers may rejoice and be glad, remembering that their reward in heaven will be great as they suffer for the Name of Christ (Matthew 5:12).

SATURDAY 22 The growing religious freedom in Uzbekistan has not extended to making evangelism legal. Yet many foreign missionaries have moved into Uzbekistan in the last three years. Their activities have been noticed by the government's Public Council for Religious Affairs who have announced they will therefore be discussing how to combat missionary work and proselytism. Please pray that any actions made to "combat" such ministry will not have a negative impact on the local churches of Uzbekistan, many of

which are made of Muslim-background believers who have come to the Lord without the help of foreign missionaries.

SUNDAY 23 **O LORD, we pray for Somali Christians, utterly despised and rejected by Somali society for believing in Christ, facing great danger every day because of other Somalis determined to hurt or kill them. May they be filled with peace and confidence as they trust in You, their shield and their deliverer. We remember especially Somali Christian women, the most vulnerable of all. May they know that You bestow glory on them and lift up their heads. We ask this in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Psalm 3:1-3)**

MONDAY 24 When Al-Shabaab Islamist militants tried to hijack a minibus in Mandera, north-east Kenya, on 30 October the driver sped away, not stopping even when the spray of bullets deflated a tyre. The driver was a Muslim but his passengers were Christians, so if he had stopped they would have been killed and he would have been let go. Thank the Lord for the driver's courage in risking his own life to save his Christian passengers and pray that it will challenge the Al-Shabaab extremists to re-think their beliefs.

TUESDAY 25 According to Rt Rev. Idris Zubairu, five groups are working together against Christians in Bauchi State, north-eastern Nigeria: Boko Haram, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Maitatsine (also called Yan Tatsine), the Kala Kato and the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria who support the Fulani. Pray that the Christian minority in Bauchi (10-15%) will not be fearful at such opposition,

but will take courage, remembering that the One who is in them is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4). Bishop Idris also said, “The Church should intensify prayer. Part of the battle against persecution is won on our knees.”

WEDNESDAY 26 After a recent fact-finding visit to Nigeria, Baroness (Caroline) Cox and Rev. David Thomas estimated that at least 7,000 Christians have been killed in northern Nigeria in the last five years, with Christian pastors and community heads specifically targeted when Islamist Fulani militias attack. Despite the catchphrase “Your land or your blood”, religion and ideology appear to play a key part, in addition to the Fulani herdsmen’s stated desire for pasture. The attackers often shout “Allahu Akbar”, “Destroy the infidels” and “Wipe out the infidels”, and they have destroyed hundreds of church buildings. Pray to our God, who makes wars cease, that He will bring an end to this violence against His people (Psalm 46:9) and that they will not give way to the temptation to retaliate.

THURSDAY 27 “I saw my brother-in-law’s body on the ground, hacked to pieces by a machete. Our home was destroyed. The hospital was burnt. They tried to burn the roof of the church by piling up the chairs, like a bonfire,” said Antonia. “We could see bullets whizzing. Everything was destroyed. In our whole village, only two homes were not burnt. Almost 50 people were killed,” said Ta’aziya. Naomi recalled, “We wanted to run but dad was fragile and very old, so I carried him to his bed. They entered our hut and shot him,” said Naomi. It is now a year since Fulani militants

attacked the Christian village of Karamai in Kaduna State, Nigeria, but its former inhabitants remember only too well and shared these memories with Baroness Cox. Pray that they may be comforted by the knowledge that their anguish and their tears are precious to God and never forgotten by Him (Psalm 56:8).

FRIDAY 28 Please pray for Muslim-background Christians in Kazakhstan that the Lord will enable them to earn a livelihood in their home region. The alternative is for husbands to go and work in Russia, but this splits up families and leaves the churches weakened by the absence of so many members. In one town, which is about 98% Muslim and located in a very poor region in the north, the vice-mayor recently instructed local businessmen not to hire Christians. Lift up to the Lord a congregation in that town, made entirely of converts from Islam, asking that He will open a way for them to support themselves.

SATURDAY 29 Christians in northern Kazakhstan do not consider themselves to be persecuted. This is despite the fact they keep getting fined, one congregation alone had 28 legal cases against it in a year, and another lost its building due to manipulation and forgery by the city authorities. In the view of northern Kazakh Christians, this is just part of normal Christian life; they consider that only their brothers and sisters in southern Kazakhstan, where things are even more difficult, are being persecuted. Praise God for this example of humility, courage and perseverance and ask that we might all learn to have the same attitude.

UK

9 Priory Row, Coventry CV1 5EX

Telephone 024 7623 1923

Fax 024 7683 4718

From outside the UK:

Telephone +44 24 7623 1923

Fax +44 24 7683 4718

Email info@barnabasfund.org

Registered charity number

1092935 Company registered in

England number 04029536

For a list of all trustees, please contact
Barnabas Fund UK at the Coventry address.

Australia

PO Box 3527, Loganholme, QLD 4129

Telephone (07) 3806 1076

or 1300 365 799

Fax (07) 3806 4076

Email bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org

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USA

80 Abbeyville Road, Lancaster

PA 17603

Telephone (703) 288-1681 or

toll-free 1-866-936-2525

Email usa@barnabasaid.org

New Zealand

PO Box 276018, Manukau City,

Auckland 2241

Telephone (09) 280 4385

or 0800 008 805

Email office@barnabasfund.org.nz

Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

Office 113, Russell Business Centre,
40-42 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 6AA

Please send post to our UK office
address.

Telephone 07875 539003

Email ireland@barnabasfund.org

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South Africa

Office 301, 3rd Floor, Eikestad Mall,

43 Andringa Street,

Stellenbosch 7599

Telephone +27 21 808 1668

Email bfsa@barnabasfund.org

International Headquarters

The Old Rectory, River Street, Pewsey,
Wiltshire SN9 5DB, UK

Telephone 01672 564938

Fax 01672 565030

From outside UK:

Telephone +44 1672 564938

Fax +44 1672 565030

Email info@barnabasfund.org

Published by Barnabas Aid

1934 Old Gallows Road Suite 350, Vienna, VA 22182, USA