



barnabasprayer

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

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

MAY/JUNE 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.

May

FRIDAY 1 “If Christians are more afraid of death than the world during a disaster, then the suffering they have endured would be in vain. God wants us to overcome difficulties through Him. The epidemic provides an opportunity for us to introspect our faith, reflect on ourselves, strengthen our spiritual life and to depend on God.” These were the words of Senior Pastor Huang Lei of the Root and Fruit Church in Wuhan, China, where the coronavirus pandemic began. Pray that Christians across the world will grow in their faith as we learn to depend more and more on the Lord,



Pastor Huang Lei

through this crisis, and that our attitude to danger and suffering will cause others to turn to Him too.

SATURDAY 2 An American missionary doctor in Kenya described the strong spirituality that is sustaining many East African Christians in the midst of the coronavirus causing such fear around the world: “There is a remarkable, steadfast faith in God’s goodness, even in the midst of the shaking. People who’ve learned to trust God in the uncertainty of tropical disease, civil war, and hunger, develop an unshakeable awareness of the Lord’s trustworthiness.” Praise God for such an example to us, and pray that our brothers and sisters in Africa will continue to stand firm, letting nothing move them, giving themselves fully to the work of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

SUNDAY 3 **O Lord, who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds, who determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name, we rejoice that nothing is too big for you to handle or too small for you to be interested in. Protect our bodies from the Covid-19 virus and keep our hearts from fear. We ask, in Jesus’ Name, especially for our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters, who have already endured so much suffering because of their love for Him, that You will strengthen them with grace upon grace to cope with this new danger. (Psalm 147:3-4)**

MONDAY 4 Coinciding with coronavirus, another devastating natural disaster has been afflicting East Africa, parts of the Middle East, Iran and Pakistan – a plague of locusts. By March the

ravenous swarms had already caused catastrophic loss to crops and pasture. But the eggs which that generation laid were due to hatch in late April/early May in East Africa, potentially magnifying the disaster enormously. In many of the locust-affected areas, Christians are discriminated against, poor and persecuted. Pray to the LORD who answered Moses' prayers and blew away the locusts in Egypt long ago, asking that He will again cause a locust plague to disappear. (Exodus 10:18-19)

TUESDAY 5 In many countries, where church services are not presently allowed because of coronavirus, Christians are quickly learning the skills necessary to provide their Sunday worship online in some form. But, in some countries, poverty or other reasons make this impossible, for example Namibia where only 10% of the population have access to the internet. Pray for Christians who are cut off from all spiritual nourishment, just at the time when they must face new danger (from coronavirus) and new hardship (from lockdown and loss of income). Ask that the Counsellor and Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will teach them in their hearts and remind them of everything that Jesus has said, so that they will be filled with His peace. (John 14:25-26)

WEDNESDAY 6 Sri Lankan Christian converts from Buddhism and Hinduism are greatly disadvantaged in their country's response to coronavirus. A Sri Lankan pastor, giving an update to Barnabas on 27 March, explained that the government had announced it would distribute food through the majority places of worship. But converts cannot show themselves either at a temple or at

a mainstream church, so they would not be able to get the food. Please pray that our heavenly Father will provide for His children at this time.

THURSDAY 7 "This will be a pea in an elephant's mouth," said a Nepalese church leader to Barnabas Fund as he described the near-futility of his church's efforts to raise funds to help coronavirus crisis lockdown victims in his country. Christians in Nepal are restricted and harassed in many ways. Pray that their efforts to help will be appreciated in this strongly Hindu country. An estimated 50,000 Nepali labourers, who had been working in Covid-infected India, hastily crossed back into Nepal just before India closed the border, and scattered themselves across the country as each went to their own family home. Pray that the virus will be contained in this poor and underdeveloped land.

FRIDAY 8 The people of north-east India have facial features rather like Chinese people, and they include many Christians. They are encountering discrimination and harassment in other parts of India, because the coronavirus outbreak began in China. They are being "teased, abused and humiliated by the people, who are calling them as 'Coronavirus'. Some shops are refusing to sell them groceries. Landlords are asking them to vacate the houses," wrote an Indian Christian leader to Barnabas Fund. Pray that the Christians affected may react with Christ-like forgiveness, and thus be a powerful witness for Him. Pray that all hostility to Chinese people and those who look Chinese will cease, in every country of the world.

SATURDAY 9 In their fear about the effects of coronavirus, some Indians have reacted strongly against foreigners, including Westerners. There are examples of verbal abuse, harassment and even stoning of foreigners. This spells trouble for Indian Christians who are always struggling to convince the Hindu majority that they are loyal Indian citizens, not agents of the West. Pray that such intolerance and violence may cease and that Christians may be able to bring peace and hope to their fellow Indians.

SUNDAY 10 **O LORD, You are our refuge and our fortress, our God in Whom we trust. Surely You will save us from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. You will cover us with Your feathers, and under Your wings we will find refuge. Thank you for the promises in Your Word that bring hope and comfort to all in danger, whether from violence or from virus, from persecution or from pain. Keep and protect all Christians who suffer oppression and discrimination, and all who are suffering from coronavirus or from its effects on jobs, income and daily life. We pray in Jesus' Name. (Psalm 91:2-4)**

MONDAY 11 President Nana Akufo-Addo of Christian-majority Ghana, responding to the coronavirus, called his country to “seek the face of the Almighty ... [and] pray to God to protect our nation and save us from this pandemic”. A National Day of Fasting and Prayer was held on 25 March, which included prayer for “forgiveness of sins on behalf of the nation and the world at large”. Pray that other nations will also turn to God in humility and repentance in

the face of this unprecedented danger. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

TUESDAY 12 In response to coronavirus, churches and mosques in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, were asked to ensure a maximum of 50 worshippers at a time. When about 30 Christians with medical expertise met at their church to discuss how to address the Covid-19 challenge, the meeting was disrupted and brutally harassed by state officials. However, when multitudes gathered at a mosque for Friday prayers, far exceeding the supposed maximum of 50, the state authorities took no action and did not even issue a reprimand. Pray for grace and strength for our brothers and sisters in Jos as they deal with this kind of injustice and harassment on top of other coronavirus challenges.

WEDNESDAY 13 Many churches in drought-ridden Namibia are distributing food parcels and making their water taps available for use by the community, because people in the shanty towns do not have access to water. The country has been put under a martial-law style of lockdown. “We hope that our Lockdown Theologies will bring some comfort,” said a Namibian church leader to Barnabas Fund, explaining how they were seeking to show, in word and deed, God’s love and presence in the midst of the lockdown suffering. Pray that the ordeal of the coronavirus may strengthen the faith of many in Namibia, where 90% of the population identify as Christian.

THURSDAY 14 Gurgun (81) and Lida are survivors of the 1988 pogrom against Armenian Christians that took place in Sumgait in Muslim-majority

Azerbaijan. They fled to Armenia where they now live in great poverty on Gurgen's pension of £62 (\$76; €70) a month. With the coming of coronavirus, they are in even greater need of help than before. By God's grace, Barnabas is currently providing for the practical needs of Gurgen, Lida and many other elderly Christians in Armenia; ask the Lord to comfort their anxious hearts and fill them with His perfect peace.



Gurgen and Lida

FRIDAY 15 Iran was one of the countries worst affected by coronavirus in the early days of the pandemic. One of the government's responses was to temporarily release more than 80,000 prisoners from its crowded jails, where the virus was expected to spread rapidly. Praise God that several Christians were amongst those released, including Fatemeh Bakhteri and at least three others who were given a few weeks of "leave" from prison. But at least ten Christians were excluded from the temporary releases. Pray that that all those imprisoned for their faith in Christ may be permanently released.

SATURDAY 16 Pastor Nazir Nasir and his wife, who minister amongst poor Christians in Pakistan, depend for their livelihood totally on the offerings given by their church members at church

services and family visits. But most of their church members work in brick kilns and factories, which have been closed to stop the spread of coronavirus. The pastor and his congregation are without income and cannot even meet together to encourage one other. This situation is replicated all over Pakistan and is similar in many other countries where pastors are supported only by the giving of their congregation. Barnabas Fund is sending help as we are able, but the need is overwhelming. Ask the Lord who owns the cattle on a thousand hills to provide for His faithful servants at this time. (Psalm 50:10)

SUNDAY 17 Lord Jesus, as many Christians around the world are prevented from meeting together to worship You because of coronavirus, we remember Christians for whom this isolation is their normal situation - those who have never been able to worship You with others because of persecution. We think especially of secret believers in Saudi Arabia, converts from Islam and thus potentially liable to execution by the Saudi authorities. We know that You are the bread of life; whoever comes to You will never go hungry, and whoever believes in You will never be thirsty. Please satisfy the spiritual longings of our Saudi brothers and sisters, enabling them to grow up strong in their faith. (John 6:35)

MONDAY 18 Myanmar military fighter jets opened fire on four villages in the western part of Chin State in mid-March, killing 21 people, injuring more and causing 2,000 people to flee their homes. The Chin people are about 90% Christian and Chin State is very poor. Ask the Lord to comfort those who

mourn and to change the hearts of the Myanmar government so they will stop attacking their own non-Buddhist, non-Burman citizens.

TUESDAY 19 Montagnard Christians in Vietnam face numerous instances of local authorities trying to force them to deny Christ, sometimes by threatening physical assault or banishment. A 2019 report estimated that 10,000 Montagnards were stateless because local authorities refused to issue ID cards, household registration or birth certificates, often because the Christians refused to renounce Christ. Pray that they will stand firm in the faith, even counting their trials “pure joy” because the testing of their faith helps them to be mature believers. (James 1:2-4)

WEDNESDAY 20 Vietnamese Christian Y Ngun Khul, was released in March after almost 16 years in prison. His offence had been to call for religious freedom for his Christian Montagnard community and to protest when the authorities closed his church. His intestinal health has been badly affected, he has trouble walking, and he still bears scars from the beatings by the guards. During his absence, Y Ngun’s family lost their home and land. Lift our faithful brother to the LORD who heals (Exodus 15:26), praying for full restoration of body, mind and spirit.

THURSDAY 21 Aceh is the furthest west and the most Islamic province of Indonesia. The Church there is growing, but under persecution. Many church buildings have been destroyed or demolished by Muslim mobs, and Aceh law says that applications for licences to construct new church

buildings must be supported by Muslims as well as Christians. This makes it almost impossible to replace the destroyed buildings and some congregations in the Aceh Singkil regency have therefore been worshipping in tents for years, sometimes having to move from one location to another. Ask the Lord to be their rock, their fortress and their deliverer in the midst of uncertainty, danger and change.

FRIDAY 22 The Islamic Defenders Alliance (ABI) has been demanding the demolition of a church building in a shopping complex in Ampana Kota, on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. The congregation removed the cross and noticeboard from the outside, as they tried in vain to pacify the ABI. They are seeking an alternative site where they can build a replacement church but, wherever they have tried, the local residents object to a church building being constructed. Praise God that the local authorities are trying to mediate and maintain good relationships. Pray that the peacemakers, both Christian and in the local government, will be blessed (Matthew 5:9) and that their efforts will succeed.

SATURDAY 23 Today is the last day of Islamic month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast between dawn and dusk, abstaining even from water. Many do so not only to keep the rules of their religion but also because they hope to draw near to Allah. Pray that those who long for a loving relationship with their Creator and the assurance of sins forgiven may come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

SUNDAY 24 O Lord our God, we ask You to look in Your mercy on our brothers and sisters in Syria, struggling to resume their lives after war and persecution and now afflicted with coronavirus too. May their faith burn brightly, may they be a source of peace, hope and stability in their troubled country. We ask for a lasting and just peace to be established in Syria and that the previously good relations between all the different communities in society may be restored. We pray in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

MONDAY 25 Algerian courts ordered two more church buildings to be sealed in January, under the Muslim-majority country's controversial 2006 ordinance about church licensing. Churches must have permits, but none have yet been granted, despite repeated requests from Christian leaders; as a result the churches are operating illegally and can be closed down at any time. Christianity was strong in Algeria in the early Christian centuries, but was wiped out by the advance of the Muslim armies until re-established by Western missionaries. Pray that believers will be allowed to meet and worship together freely.

TUESDAY 26 Compared to other countries in the region, Tunisia (98% Muslim) is relatively open, and even the Islamists are considered more "reasonable" than those of other North African countries. The 2014 post-Arab Spring constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but at the same time sharia has a significant place within family law. Civil society is strong in Tunisia with trade unions, academics, media, journalists, lawyers'

groups, and human rights groups. A coalition government, established at the end of February, includes Ennahda (Tunisia's Islamist political party). About a fifth of Tunisian Muslims dress in a conservative Islamic way, but many others are questioning Islam. The Christian community is mainly expatriates, especially from Africa, but also includes some Tunisian converts from Islam and their children. Pray that all will have opportunity and courage to meet with others and build up their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY 27 The Tunisian Ministry of Religion has a Muslim section, headed by an imam, and a Jewish section, headed by a rabbi, but nothing for Christians (even though they are more numerous than Jews in Tunisia). Historic churches with foreign links are in a relatively strong position legally. Local Tunisian churches are not prevented from functioning but have no legal status so cannot own property. Pray that the position of Tunisian believers may be properly recognised and their freedom of religion affirmed in reality as well as in the constitution.

THURSDAY 28 Licences were granted to another 82 church and church-affiliated buildings in Egypt on 11 February by the committee that has been overseeing the process since 2017. This means that Christian activities are now legal. Pray that the 2,236 remaining applications will soon be approved also and that Egyptian society at large will accept the right of Christians to have sufficient places of worship for their community of around ten million people.

FRIDAY 29 Gunmen on motorbikes roared into the small town of Silgadji in northern Burkina Faso on 25 January and threatened to kill anyone who would not convert to Islam. They rounded up those in the market place, separating the men from the women. They shot dead at least ten men and told the women to leave Silgadji. The same town was the site of the Islamist terrorist attack in April 2019 that began a whole spate of anti-Christian violence in Burkina Faso. Pray that the Lord will be a refuge and a stronghold for His people in Silgadji (Psalm 9:9), and that there will be no further attacks.

SATURDAY 30 Islamist militants in Burkina Faso killed at least 29 Christians in a series of murderous attacks in February. Twenty-four people from a single congregation were killed in one incident, some during the attack, which took place in the middle of a Sunday service, while others were abducted and killed later. In another church attack, a deacon was shot dead and his car used to abduct the pastor and five of the pastor's relatives. His daughters were released unharmed but the pastor, his son and two



Pastor Tindano Omar (above) and three of his male relatives were martyred

nephews were killed a few days later. Pray for those who mourn that they will be comforted by knowing their loved ones and their spiritual leaders died for Christ.

SUNDAY 31 O God, we thank You for giving us Your Holy Spirit, who is not a spirit of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. We pray that, through Your Spirit's power and guidance, all who suffer or are in danger at this time will be bold and courageous, thinking clearly and wisely. We ask this for our persecuted brothers and sisters, especially those suffering also from the coronavirus and the effects of lockdowns. We ask it for ourselves in whatever situation we are. We ask it in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV)

June

MONDAY 1 Pakistani Christian Saleem Masih (22) died on 28 February, three days after he was tortured on the instructions of a Muslim farmer for having washed himself at the farmer's well. After unloading chaff from a vehicle, Saleem rinsed himself with water pumped from the well, but the enraged farmer accused him of polluting the water-supply by his "unclean" Christian touch. He ordered his men to tie Saleem's hands and feet, and then beat him with sticks and heated iron rods, which caused multiple fractures and internal injuries. Ask the God of all comfort to abide with Saleem's family (2 Corinthians 1:3). Christian and Muslim religious leaders met after this incident to call for an end to such intolerance of

Christians and to condemn the police for failing to intervene. Pray that their words will be heeded.

TUESDAY 2 Aasia Bibi, the Pakistani Christian mother who spent nearly eight years on death row after being falsely accused of “blasphemy”, declared in an interview that she had forgiven her tormentors. “I am not angry at all, I’ve forgiven everyone from my heart,” she said. “There is patience in me because I learned how to be patient after having to leave my children behind.” Thank the Lord for such a testimony of growth through suffering for Him. Her arrest had followed a dispute with Muslim co-workers in June 2009 which began when she drank water from a cup they also used, thus making it “unclean” in their eyes. Aasia said that while in prison she had been offered her freedom if she would convert to Islam, but she refused.

WEDNESDAY 3 A new law in Pakistan, approved earlier this year, could make Christians even more vulnerable to false accusation of “blasphemy” which can lead to a death sentence. The law requires social media companies to remove promptly any “unwanted and slanderous” online content. No one has yet been executed for blasphemy in Pakistan, but two Muslims have been awarded death sentences for “blasphemy” on social media, and Christians and other non-Muslims are particularly at risk of this type of false accusation. Pray that this law will not be misused to stifle free speech or settle personal grudges.

THURSDAY 4 Two Pakistani Christians were shot and one was injured with

an axe in a dispute with some Muslim neighbours about the construction of a church building in a village near Sahiwal, Punjab province. They had rushed to the construction site when they heard that local Muslims were demolishing the boundary wall. The village of about 150 houses has around 40 Christian families but no building in which they can gather for worship. All three of the injured, who are related to each other, spent time in the intensive care unit of a hospital in Sahiwal. Pray in particular for Azeem Masih (32) who was shot in the head. When released from hospital, he was paralysed from the right shoulder down and unable to speak. Ask the Lord Jesus to heal him.

FRIDAY 5 The persecution of Christians in Turkey has fluctuated up and down in nearly a century since the secular Republic of Turkey was established. But under Islamist President Erdogan, things have tended to get worse. Erdogan has made no secret of his desire to re-establish the Ottoman Empire, under which Christians and other non-Muslims suffered discrimination and had to live as minority communities called *millet*s,



A church service in Turkey

rather than as full citizens. Humanly speaking, it looks as if Christians in Turkey (whether historic Christian ethnic groups, Turkish converts from Islam, or refugees from further east) will now face steadily growing persecution. Pray that they may rejoice and be glad, remembering that their reward is in heaven (Matthew 5:10-12).

SATURDAY 6 A small but much loved church building on the Greek island of Lesbos (Lesvos) was vandalized yet again on 2 March causing great distress to local people. The situation at the time was tense on Lesbos, where clashes were taking place almost daily between police and asylum-seekers protesting about overcrowding in their camp. The asylum-seekers, mainly from Afghanistan and Syria, arrive by boat from nearby Turkey. Pray that they will not take out their frustration on Christian targets. Thank the Lord that some of the Muslim refugees have come to know the Lord while in Lesbos. They have been persecuted; pray for their protection.

SUNDAY 7 O Triune God, we pray today for isolated Christians who have no opportunity of fellowship, whether they are secret believers converted from another religion, converts whose families will not let them meet with other Christians, those punished by the authorities by a ban on meeting others, or those in lockdown because of coronavirus. We ask that your presence will be very real to them, and that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with them all to encourage, comfort, console, teach and guide.

MONDAY 8 Iran's National Census Bureau has revised the application form for a national ID card; now applicants must choose one of four named religions and there is no longer an option to put "other religion". The four religions are Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. This means that former Muslims who have become Christians have to reveal their new faith, bringing with it the risk of persecution as an apostate from Islam. The new application forms also marginalize Hindu, Bahai and Yaresan (Ahl-i-Haq) people. An ID card is compulsory for every citizen aged 15+ and must be shown for many everyday activities. Pray that converts who have hitherto been reluctant to declare their allegiance to Christ will find that when they do it is a means to draw others to know and love Him too.

TUESDAY 9 At the time of writing, Afghanistan is inching slowly towards peace talks between the government and the Taliban after nearly two decades of war. America is in the process of withdrawing its troops over a 14-month period. Pray that peace will truly come in Afghanistan, not just between the warring Muslims of different tribes and different theologies, but also that Afghan Christians may be accepted and free to worship the Lord Jesus Christ without fear. At present, both sides in the peace talks would want to execute Afghan Christians as apostates from Islam.

WEDNESDAY 10 Several Christian villages in Cameroon's Far North have come under the control of Boko Haram Islamist militants, after a series of violent night-time attacks in January.

“Everyone is confused, we don’t know what to do and we don’t understand what is happening. We are asking: is it because 98% of the villages are Christian? Pray for us Christians in this area,” came one message to Barnabas Fund. A local pastor also pleaded for prayer: “We don’t know what to do. Pray for those who lost their beloved. Pray also for little children left without even clothes.”

THURSDAY 11 Nineteen Christians died when Fulani militants attacked the village of Kwatas, in Plateau State, Nigeria, on 26 January. Villagers were taking part in a social gathering when the militants struck at around 7 p.m. in a relentless assault that continued into the early hours of the following day. This followed several attacks on other villages in the area. Pray that the Lord will deliver His people, and the day will soon come when “they will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid.” (Ezekiel 34:28)

FRIDAY 12 Five million people took part in peaceful demonstrations in 28 of Nigeria’s 36 states on Sunday 2 February. Organised by the Christian Association of Nigeria, the demonstrations, which followed three days of fasting, called on President Buhari to act to end the attacks on Christians. Add your prayers to those of Nigerian Christians that their government and armed forces will exert themselves to ensure peace and protection for all Nigerian citizens.

SATURDAY 13 On 21 February Boko Haram militants set fire to a church building at Garkida, Adamawa State, Nigeria. The attack took place during a

Women’s Fellowship meeting, and some of the women were kidnapped by the militants, who also burnt down several houses and other property, and killed “many people” said reports. Within days, four of the church elders met for worship in the burnt-out remains of their building. Praise God for their determined and persevering witness.



Four Nigerian church elders meet for worship in the burnt out remains of their church

SUNDAY 14 We pray, O Lord Jesus, for Christians in Tajikistan, facing increasingly restrictive laws. We ask that the authorities will relent from their harassment of Your followers, and we pray especially for Christian children, who have been banned by law for the last nine years from attending any public religious activities, or even being on church premises. We rejoice that no earthly law can stop Your Holy Spirit from moving where He pleases and ask that He will help these growing youngsters to grow in their faith too.

MONDAY 15 Turkmenistan is a very closed country. Its citizens have little access to the internet, their movements are controlled by the authorities, their spending monitored and they must not be out after 11 pm. It is thought most Turkmens would leave the country if

they could. For Christians the pressures are even greater. For example there are just five registered churches in the whole country, which are the only places where it is legal for Christians to meet. Christians are not only isolated from believers outside the country but the various Christian groups inside Turkmenistan have little contact with each other. However, despite serious persecution, the Turkmen Christians (converts from Islam) are energetic, full of joy and have a great thirst for the Word of God. Pray that they will be a blessing to the society in which God has placed them, by their prayers, their witness and their Christ-like lives.

TUESDAY 16 It seemed like a miracle to a congregation in Uzbekistan when the authorities gave them permission to construct an officially registered church building. Such a thing had not occurred for any congregation in the country for the last 20 years, let alone a church of Muslim converts like their own. Astonishingly, the head of the local city administration even visited the church to show his support for the project. The new building, partly financed by Barnabas, together with the older smaller building they already had, now enables twelve unregistered congregations to worship legally in registered church premises, rather than



Nearly finished: the new church already enables hundreds of Uzbek Christians to worship without fear of arrest

illegally in their homes for which they could be arrested and imprisoned. Praise the Lord that hundreds of our brothers and sisters have been rescued from the hands of their enemies and are now free to serve Him without fear (Luke 1:74).

WEDNESDAY 17 “James” grew up in a Muslim family where drunkenness and quarrelling were the norm, yet he yearned for something better. His sister told him about some people who did not drink, smoke, lie or swear. James doubted such people could exist but, when his sister took him to church, he found it was true and gave his life to Christ. Persecution began when his mother fell sick and died, because James had nursed her and she had become a Christian. Her relatives threatened to kill James. Matters escalated, and James and his wife were summoned by the police, only to find the mayor, imam and a lot of journalists waiting for them, threatening to show the couple on TV as traitors to Islam. His wife’s relatives forced her to divorce James. All this happened in the strictest part of Uzbekistan, where James got dismissed from jobs because of his faith. He moved to another area but one day the police raided a worship meeting at his house and he was jailed. Praise God that James never denied Christ, that his wife is now back with him, and they support themselves with a small business set up with help from Barnabas.

THURSDAY 18 Three Sri Lankan Christians had to be hospitalised after they were ambushed and attacked by a mob of about 50 people, led by three Buddhist monks. The three were part of a group of Christians driving away from a village where Buddhist extremists had threatened the worship meeting at a house church that morning. The Buddhists claimed it was a Buddhist village and no Christian worship was

allowed. The cars of the Christians were forced to stop because felled trees lay across the road. Pray that Sri Lankan Buddhists will accept, even welcome, the presence of Christianity in their land.

FRIDAY 19 Eight Indian Christians have been acquitted of charges of forced conversion and abduction of 60 children. The six men and two women had been arrested in May 2017 while accompanying the children, who were mostly under the age of 14, by train to a Bible camp near Nagpur. The children were the children of Christian parents, but the charge of forced conversion to Christianity arose because their parents had not completed the necessary paperwork when they themselves had converted to Christianity and therefore their children were still officially Hindus. Praise God that justice was done in the end.

SATURDAY 20 India's BJP (Hindu nationalist) government is in the final stages of creating a database that will track every aspect of the life of every Indian citizen. It will record religion, caste, income, property, education, marital status, family tree, house-moves, job-changes etc. for 1.2 billion people. "We are dangerously close to an Orwellian state and China-like clampdown. Muslims are suffering but major damage will be to the freedom and rights of Christians and Dalits more than anyone else," commented an Indian pastor who is also an expert on cybersecurity. Pray that Indian Christians may "live such good lives" that those monitoring them to try to find fault may see their good deeds and glorify God. (1 Peter 2:12)

SUNDAY 21 We praise you, heavenly Father, for the courage and steadfastness of Christians in North Korea, standing firm in the faith despite the severe punishment it can bring

on them and their loved ones if the authorities discover that they follow Your Son. Give them grace day by day, hour by hour, especially those who are right now in harsh labour camps, starved and tortured. We pray also for those who persecute them, that You will soften their hearts, cause them to question what motivates the endurance of those they are so cruelly ill-treating, and let them hear Your voice calling them. We ask in the Name of Jesus.

MONDAY 22 Mauritania is strongly Islamic. Conversion from Islam is illegal (punishable by death) and evangelism is also illegal. Nevertheless, there are Mauritanian converts from Islam, who meet discreetly in homes and are gradually growing in numbers and in confidence. Society in general is beginning to resist the Islamic discourse that dominates media and politics. Recently there was a major controversy over apostasy laws, with people arrested for being politically challenging and for atheism. Some protesters demonstrated in front of the main court chanting that they were ready to die under Article 306 (which mandate the death penalty for leaving Islam) in order to claim religious freedom. Christians were not much involved in this although some were arrested in February. Christians ask prayer for the release of jailed believers from prison and that the Islamic Republic of Mauritania should become the Democratic Republic of Mauritania with equality and justice for all.

TUESDAY 23 Jihadists have occupied the northern part of Mali since 2013, and are popular with local people, who find them more honest than the government and better able to provide law and order (through sharia courts which impose punishments such as lashings and amputations). They also provide Quranic

schools, which are welcomed in an area where there is very little education available. Christians are about 2% of this mainly Muslim country. Pray that they will not be fearful or dismayed, knowing the God's presence with them and His strength to help them. (Isaiah 41:10)

WEDNESDAY 24 In Nigeria's Kaduna State, Christians are being marginalized by forcible changes to the traditional chieftdom system. The state government has been re-naming some of the chieftdoms in predominantly Christian southern Kaduna as emirates, an Islamic term. The Adara are a large tribe, about two-thirds Christian. In 2017 the title *Agom Adara* (Chief of the Adara people) was changed to *Agom Kachia* (Chief of Kachia town) thus reducing his domain from the whole tribe to just one town. Christian protests were ignored and there were violent clashes between the Adara and the mainly Muslim Hausa-Fulani. Then in October 2018 the *Agom* was kidnapped on his way home from a Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, and a few days later killed. After a violent incident in February 2019, reportedly started by the Fulanis, when many from both sides were killed, nine Adara tribal elders were arrested and imprisoned for over three months, but no Fulanis were arrested. Pray for justice and protection for the Adara people. At least 166 were killed in eight attacks in 2019, and the pattern has continued into 2020.

THURSDAY 25 Ngulongo Year Batsemire (aged 60), a church leader in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), was walking with his wife to his fields when they were surrounded by members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an Islamist militant group that repeatedly targets Christians. They demanded that Ngulongo tell them where they could find other pastors and then tried to force him to convert to Islam. He refused and

they killed him. Thank the Lord for His faithful child, who refused to deny Christ. Around the same time at least 30 other people in four villages were killed in night-time attacks by the ADF. Another eleven Christians were killed on 18 February. Pray for the protection of all in north-east DRC, especially Christians and in particular pastors, who seem to be a special target of the ADF.

FRIDAY 26 A militant Islamist organisation called Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama and known locally as Al-Shabaab (not the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab) has effectively gained control of a very poor area of Cabo Delgado, the northernmost province of Mozambique. They burn villages and behead, maim or kidnap the inhabitants. Al-Shabaab started operating in Cabo Delgado in 2015, at the same time as radical Muslims from the Gulf, Kenya and Tanzania established a presence there and began marrying local people and teaching violent and extremist ideology. In 2017 Al-Shabaab carried out their first attack (on a police station) in October 2017, and to date have launched around 370 attacks, killing at least 909 people. In the areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, sharia is imposed and people who try to escape are killed. Locals are encouraged to join their jihad and train for military operations; fighting for Al-Shabaab is one of the few ways of earning an income in Cabo Delgado. Another is to get involved Al-Shabaab's smuggling of timber, coal, rubies, ivory and heroin. Pray that Mozambican Muslims will resist the violent extremist teaching, and that God will protect the Christian minority.

SATURDAY 27 Another jihadi militant group, who have been active in Mozambique since June 2019, is called Islamic State Central African Province (ISCAP). They are believed to be the forces who captured the port city of Mocimboa da Praia in a pre-dawn raid by land and sea

on 23 March. This city, in Cabo Delgado province, is large, strategic and symbolic. Many of the local people welcomed the insurgents, who were handing out money they had looted from bank vaults. ISCAP fighters were reported to have ordered Muslim residents to go to the mosque, while they themselves roamed the streets hunting for Christians. Pray that our brothers and sisters will find refuge under the wings of the Lord, who will be their shield and rampart. (Psalm 91:4)

SUNDAY 28 Lord Jesus Christ, we lift to you the Christians of Somalia, rejoicing that You know each one by Name. You know the dangers they face, the abuse, rejection and contempt, the real threat to their lives. Thank you for their courage in obeying Your call, in the full knowledge that they might have to lay down their lives for You. Please protect and keep them. Although we may never meet our Somali brothers and sisters in this life, help us to learn from their example to gladly take up our cross and follow You.

MONDAY 29 Continue to pray for Eritrean Christians who suffer great persecution by their government. Many are arrested, after which beatings and torture follow. Some have spent months in solitary confinement in complete darkness, taken out only for interrogation to try to force them to recant their faith. They can spend years in jail without trial. Praise God for their faithfulness and pray that they will be given the patient endurance they need (Revelation 13:10).

TUESDAY 30 Pray for Christian women in places of pressure and persecution, where they are doubly despised - for being female and for being Christians. Ask that our loving Lord will be specially close to Christian girls and young women in Egypt and Pakistan who have been abducted by Muslims and forced or tricked into converting to Islam (a legal formality, not a heart belief) and marrying a Muslim. Pray that they may know His presence with them to comfort and sustain them and, if it is His will, be enabled to escape and return to their own Christian families.



Pakistani Christian women at prayer

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

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

Email bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org

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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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Account Number: 140-901-654-0

South Africa

Office 301, 3rd Floor, Eikestad Mall,
43 Andringa Street,
Stellenbosch 7599

Telephone +27 21 808 1668

Email bfsa@barnabasfund.org

USA

80 Abbeyville Road, Lancaster
PA 17603

Telephone (703) 288-1681 or
toll-free 1-866-936-2525

Email usa@barnabasaid.org

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

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