



barnabasprayer

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

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

SEPTEMBER/
OCTOBER 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.

September

TUESDAY 1 Rejoice with Sudanese Christians at the dramatic change that happened in their country earlier this year when the death sentence for apostasy from Islam was abolished by the passing of the Miscellaneous Amendments Act. Sudan was one of the few modern countries that implemented this part of classical Islamic sharia, but now this threat no longer hangs over converts from Islam to Christianity. Praise God, who is able to overturn and reverse any situation (Luke 1: 51-53), and pray that many more Sudanese Muslims will now feel able to take the step of deciding to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

WEDNESDAY 2 There has been an angry backlash by Islamists in Sudan against the Miscellaneous Amendments Act (see above) which includes many changes to move Sudan away from a very strict form of Islam. One Islamist cleric, in a series of tweets, described the government as waging “a war against virtues, and an

aggression against the nation’s religion and identity.” He said that “uprooting this obscene government is a mandatory duty and obligation of every capable person”. Another condemned the government in the strongest possible Islamic terms when he said that the government “came to fight Allah and his messenger [i.e. Muhammad]”. Pray that calls for a violent return to the stricter Islam that dominated Sudan for three decades will not be heeded. Pray for the protection of the Sudanese Minister of Justice, Mr Nasr al-Din Abdel Bari, who was the prime mover behind the increased liberties provided by the new law. As a moderate Muslim, keen to ensure religious liberty and equality of all citizens, he will be a target of the Islamists, just as Christians are.

THURSDAY 3 The period 15 July to 15 September was predicted to be critical for locusts in Pakistan, based on the monsoon and the fact that the government’s resources were mainly committed to anti-coronavirus measures. An earlier surge from 22 June to 10 July had seen lower numbers of the voracious insects than expected in Pakistan; a variety of weather-related reasons were suggested for this pleasant surprise, but could it have been an answer to the prayers of God’s people? Keep praying that He will disperse the locusts safely from Pakistan and all other countries at risk.

FRIDAY 4 Praise God with us for the generosity of Barnabas Fund supporters, which has enabled us to send practical help to over 600,000 Christians affected by the covid crisis, locusts or both. For many Christians, these natural disasters came on top of anti-Christian

harassment and persecution that were a normal part of daily life. When Nigerian mother “Rebecca” was given her Barnabas Covid food aid, she began to cry. Pointing to one of her children, she said, “Feeding these ones has been a challenge since their father was killed by the Fulani. The Lord who sent you, may He bless you too for this work of love.” Pray for this Christian family and many others afflicted by multiple hardships.



This Nigerian child’s father was killed by Fulani militants. His mother wept with joy to receive food from Barnabas in the midst of Covid lockdown

SATURDAY 5 Praise God for a Fulani Muslim who came to the rescue of two Nigerian Christian missionaries dumped in the bush in Zamfara state by their kidnapppers on 15 July, after two months in captivity. Pastor Zakka Ibrahim and Samuel Mabas had spent two days trekking around in heavy rain without food before their rescuer found them. The Fulani man cared for them for two days and then took them to church leaders. Praise God for this brave and compassionate action by the unnamed Muslim. Pray for the safe release of a third Christian who had been kidnapped with the two missionaries in May but was not released with them; he is a convert from Islam.

SUNDAY 6 O God, our refuge and our strength, our very present help in time of

trouble, have mercy on our brothers and sisters around the world who live with the reality of anti-Christian violence. We pray for the countless thousands who have been injured or bereaved, who have had to flee their homes and livelihoods. Comfort them with the reality of Your presence, protect them like a mighty fortress, and make the escalating violence cease. May the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ be glorified as Christian victims of violence forgive and love their persecutors, just as He did. (Psalm 46)

MONDAY 7 Heavily armed jihadists on motorcycles killed 27 people in three attacks on mainly Christian villages in central Mali around 26 May. Some of the victims were burnt alive. Last year, 2019, was the worst for extremist violence in Mali for the last seven years. Pray that 2020 will not outstrip 2019 in Islamist violence. Ask the Lord Jesus that our brothers and sisters in Mali will not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul (Matthew 10:28).

TUESDAY 8 Christians were amongst those targeted and killed when jihadists launched three attacks within 48 hours in Burkina Faso at the end of May. At least 58 people died. A survivor described how he was travelling in an ambulance in a convoy when it was attacked. The ambulance driver shouted out, “Forgive, forgive, we are followers of the prophet Muhammad.” This apparently caused the Muslim gunmen to halt their attack on that particular vehicle. Pray for all bereaved through this violence and especially for the bereaved Christians that, with God’s help, they may set an example of true forgiveness, as they forgive their persecutors. (Matthew 6:14)

WEDNESDAY 9 Armed with machetes, Islamist militants of the Allied Democratic Forces attacked Samboko village in the mainly Christian north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo on 26 May, killing more than 40. The previous day, 17 people had died when a nearby village was attacked. Pray for the bereaved families that the Lord will wipe every tear from their eyes and that they will be comforted by the knowledge that one day they will join their loved ones in the Lord's presence, where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4).

THURSDAY 10 Shafqat and his wife Shagufta were sentenced to death six years ago after being found guilty of "blasphemy" in regard to a text message that a Muslim received on his phone while praying at the mosque. The Pakistani Christian couple are illiterate and cannot even write Urdu, let alone English, the language used in the text message. They believe this accusation was concocted by a Muslim neighbour who had become hostile to them after his children had a minor quarrel with their own children. Pray that their legal appeal against the conviction and death sentences will be successful; the next hearing is due to take place tomorrow. Pray also for their protection and that of their brave Muslim lawyer, Saif-ul-Mulook, who also defended Aasia Bibi when she was in the same position.

FRIDAY 11 Vulnerable Christians across China are being denied government welfare payments because their homes display their faith. An 80-year-old woman was forced to cover up her cross, otherwise her pension would have been stopped. A widow in her 60s, who

refused when she was ordered to take down her Christian pictures and believe in the communist party instead of God, found that her pension subsidy stopped two months later. A paralysed patient in a nursing home was threatened with losing the government support that paid his housing, food and medical care, as officials tore down the pictures of Jesus in his room. Pray for our elderly and infirm brothers and sisters facing such situations that Christ's grace will be sufficient for them, and His power be made perfect in their weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

SATURDAY 12 Chinese Christians at a church in Linfen, Shanxi province, voted to elect members for the church management committee. But officials of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) overturned the vote and forced them to accept two CCP-approved candidates on to the committee. At a church in Yuzhou city, Henan province, a CCP-supporting preacher was put in charge by government officials. In ways like this, the communist party controls the state-registered churches in China. Praise God that His Spirit moves where He pleases and cannot be excluded by any human decision (John 3:8).

SUNDAY 13 Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for the faithfulness of Christians in China in the midst of growing persecution, when worship services are attacked, church buildings are demolished, digital surveillance tracks their every move, and elderly believers are deprived of their pensions. Please give them strength and grace to bear their suffering. May Your people show Your character in their lives. May they bring peace, love, joy and harmony to

their society, and show to the communist authorities of China the reality of Your presence and power.

MONDAY 14 Two church buildings were demolished by the Chinese authorities in Henan province in late May. Both were state-registered (“three-self”) churches. One was demolished late at night to make room for a new road, the other early in the morning to make room for a new canal. The congregations had been looking forward to their buildings being re-opened soon for worship, after coronavirus lockdown had been lifted. “It feels worse than seeing my house being demolished,” said one church member, in tears. Many people believe the road and canal were only pretexts and the aim was to persecute the Christians. Pray that Chinese Christians will not be afraid when they see their earthly buildings destroyed, remembering that their heavenly Father has given them the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32)

TUESDAY 15 At least three Turkish church buildings were attacked in a period of one month. In one incident someone set fire to the door of a church in Istanbul because he blamed Armenians for coronavirus. In another a man wrenched off the cross from the gates of a different Armenian church in Istanbul. After the third attack, Turkish president Erdogan pledged to do everything possible to protect “peace and harmony” between Turkish Muslims who form at least 99% of the population, and the religious minorities. Pray that this peace and harmony will be that of respectful equals, not the peace and harmony of a classical Islamic state, in which non-Muslims are fought unless they submit to demeaning regulations.

WEDNESDAY 16 On 10 July President Erdogan of Turkey signed a decree that Hagia Sophia in Istanbul should re-open as a mosque two weeks later. The world-famous building is almost 1,500 years old. Originally a Christian cathedral, it was changed to a mosque (and the four minarets added) after the capture of Istanbul (then called Constantinople) by the Muslim Ottoman armies in 1453. In 1935 it was converted into a museum on the orders of Kemal Ataturk, who founded Turkey’s secular republic almost 100 years ago. This provocative action by Erdogan seems to indicate that he now feels strong enough to bring an end to the secularism of Turkey and push onwards even more publicly with his long process of Islamisation and Ottomanisation. It is more than likely that part of this process is intended to be the subjugation of Christians as *dhimmi*. Pray that Christians in Turkey will not forsake the Lord, even if their liberty and security are increasingly eroded.

THURSDAY 17 The Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation issued a public appeal to the Turkish government on 19 June asking for tight new residency restrictions imposed on foreign pastors to be lifted. Many churches in Turkey have long looked overseas to fulfil church leadership roles because opportunities for appropriate training in Turkey have been severely limited. Ask the Good Shepherd to provide shepherds from wherever He chooses for God’s flock in Turkey, who greatly need good leadership and good examples to follow in this time of increasing pressure. (1 Peter 5:3)

FRIDAY 18 Around the beginning of 2020 the government of Myanmar (Burma) closed access by road and water to

parts of Chin state, thus cutting off food supplies. They also blocked internet and mobile phone services. The government was apparently targeting the fighters of the Arakan Army, a rebel group of Buddhists from the Rakhine ethnic group, but did not seem to care that innocent Chin civilians were affected. The Chin ethnic group are about 90% Christian. Chin charities tried to deliver rice (the staple food) to the blockaded villages but as of late June had not yet been able to get permission from the army to do so. Pray for our hungry brothers and sisters that Jehovah Jireh (The LORD will provide) will meet their needs. (Genesis 22:14)

SATURDAY 19 Fitri, a young mother, used to live in Aceh, the most Islamic part of Indonesia. She had a dream about Jesus, began attending church and decided to leave Islam, become a Christian and be baptised. Because of her conversion, her Muslim husband divorced her. She took her daughters, now aged 6 and 3, to live in another part of Indonesia and repeatedly refused her family's demands to return to Islam and to Aceh. "Jesus is my path," she kept saying and assured the family that she had converted of her own free will and had not been brainwashed. But relatives managed to snatch the children away from Fitri, and they are probably now in an Islamic boarding school in Aceh. Please pray that the little girls will be restored to their mother, who has re-married to a Christian man.

SUNDAY 20 We praise You, our Lord and our God, for Your Church in India, which continues to grow even as violence and persecution grow. We ask Your special blessing on the many Christians from the lowest strata of the caste system, who

are despised and discriminated against partly because they love and follow the Lord Jesus and partly because of their hereditary position in society; they have suffered terribly during Covid lockdown. May they know themselves to be chosen and loved by You, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to the living God. We pray this in the Name of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

MONDAY 21 A Christian father and son were beaten to death by Indian police and Hindu extremists in Tamil Nadu state in June. Jeyaraj (59) and his son Emmanuel (31) were arrested on a charge of breaking Covid-19 regulations by keeping their mobile phone shop open outside permitted hours. But CCTV footage showed that all the shops in the area were open at the time of their arrest. The CCTV also showed no sign of the pair having any injuries prior to their arrest, as claimed by the police. Pray that the doubly bereaved family, who have lost their beloved Emmanuel, will know the presence of Immanuel (God with us) whom no one can take away from them. (Matthew 1:23)

TUESDAY 22 Indian martyrs Jeyaraj and Emmanuel (see above) belonged to the Nadar people, who were originally one of the lower strata of the Hindu caste system in Tamil Nadu but are now well educated and some have important positions in government and business. There was a mass movement of conversions to Christianity amongst the Nadars in the 19th century and now there are thought to be nearly two million Nadar Christians. They are peaceable and active in sharing their Christian faith, sending out thousands of missionaries across India. They are

also active in protesting against injustice. Many Christians believe that the killing of the Nadar Christian father and son was intended as a warning to other Nadar Christians to teach them who is in control (i.e. the Hindu extremists). Pray that Nadar Christians will take courage from remembering that not one sparrow can fall to the ground apart from the will of their Father, and that they are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)



Christian shopkeeper Emmanuel (left) died of his internal injuries on 21 June; his father lasted a few hours longer, only to die the following morning

WEDNESDAY 23 A prominent Hindu spiritual leader has recommended that all non-Muslims in India should identify as Hindus. The Shankaracharya of Puri in Odisha state called for amendments to Article 25 of the Indian constitution, which currently grants citizens freedom to profess, practise and propagate their religion. Reportedly, he did not mention Christians in his speech, but logically they would have been included in those he thought should now consider themselves Hindus. Pray that Hindu and other voices will speak up for religious liberty and freedom of conscience in India.

THURSDAY 24 A partially-sighted Indian pastor spoke publicly of how he and his congregation forgave whoever had set fire to their thatched church building

in June and reduced it to a roofless burnt-out shell. It was impossible that the fire had started due to an electrical fault as the building, in a rural area of Tamil Nadu state, has no mains power. Although rechargeable batteries would be brought to the church for use during worship services, they were always taken away again afterwards and no services had been held for three months due to Covid lockdown. Thank the Lord for this testimony by Pastor Ramesh Jebaraj and pray that it may speak powerfully to non-Christians.

FRIDAY 25 Rural pastors of small independent churches in India are often very poor, and when lockdown prevented Christians gathering they no longer received the donations on which they used to live. While pastors in many other parts of the world were rejoicing in large congregations following their services or sermons online during lockdown, many Indian pastors could not do this. Either they did not have enough money both to feed their family and to pay for data on the internet, or they did not even have a smart phone in the first place. In some states, rural pastors were not issued with the government ration card that enables poor households to purchase subsidised food. The trauma of all this is taking its toll on them. Please pray that the Lord will sustain His servants, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

SATURDAY 26 Samaru Madkami (14) and his family converted to Christianity a few years ago. In due course, his father became a church elder and Samaru was very active in sharing his faith with other children and young people. On 4 June, a group of people persuaded Samaru to meet them in the jungle, near

his village in Odisha state, India. They tortured him, killed him and buried his body. Anti-Christian violence was already an ever-present possibility in the village. Samaru's father had received death threats and Samaru himself had anticipated that their pastor might be targeted, boldly promising to take his place: "If anything happens to my pastor, I will not fear. I will take charge of Pastor's work and serve the Lord." As all who loved Samaru walk through the valley of the shadow of his death, pray that they will fear no evil, remembering that the LORD, their Shepherd, is with them to comfort them. (Psalm 23:4)

SUNDAY 27 O Lord God, we praise and thank You for our fellow Christians, who have laid down their lives for the sake of Christ, and have joined the great multitude in white robes who worship the Lamb on the throne. Please grant that, if we are brought to the time of trial, we too may be faithful unto death. We pray that their grieving families may find great comfort in knowing that their loved ones did not die a meaningless death, but had the honour of being martyred for Christ. (Revelation 7:9-17)

MONDAY 28 On the night of 18 July, when Pastor John Mutthu was away from home for a funeral service, a mob gathered outside his church and threw a petrol bomb on to the roof. His wife and child were sleeping inside but, thankfully, were not hurt. The church, which is in Uva province, Sri Lanka, has suffered frequent persecution. Pray that the police will act to protect this small group of believers.

TUESDAY 29 Islamist terrorist violence, mainly perpetrated by ASWJ (Ahlu

Sunnah Wa-Jama), continues in northern Mozambique. A Kenyan missionary, who had been sharing the Gospel with Muslims in the area, reported on 29 June, listing all the church properties and homes of Christian workers which had been burnt in the previous couple of days. Many people had already fled, so the death/kidnapping toll was relatively low. When ASWJ do kill, it is typically in a grotesquely savage way with bodies hacked to pieces, leaving heads and limbs strewn everywhere. The Mozambican government seems unable to stop the terrorism, partly because the army and the police are fierce rivals and do not cooperate. ASWJ has warned South Africa that if she sends her armed forces to support the Mozambican authorities, ASWJ will "open a fighting front" in South Africa. Ask the Lord God almighty to bring deliverance, peace and stability.

WEDNESDAY 30 The US Supreme Court voted on 30 June to quash an 1889 legal clause that had prevented public funding from going to religious schools. The case was brought by three mothers after they were prevented from using a \$150 (£120; €130) tax credit towards tuition at a Christian school in Montana state. Earlier the same month campaigners claimed a victory for religious liberty when Ohio state passed a law that restored the right of students at public schools (i.e. government-funded schools) to express their faith in their homework. The Ohio law also ensured that pupils could pray together on school premises, and express their faith in school, as long as they were not disruptive. Although about 70% of Americans describe themselves as Christians and freedom of religion is

guaranteed in the First Amendment to the US constitution, there are many restrictions against the expression of religion in public schools. Thank the Lord for these changes, which will make life easier for Christian schoolchildren.

October

THURSDAY 1 The UN International Day of Older Persons is observed on 1 October each year. Pray today for the particular needs of older Christians in places of persecution. It is hard for them to run and escape violence, or to earn their living if the younger breadwinner they depended on has been killed. When persecution leads to poverty, they are more likely than younger people to suffer for lack of medical treatment they cannot afford. Remembering how Jesus arranged for the care of his mother, as He hung on the cross, pray that He will care for older Christians suffering for His Name's sake. (John 19:26-27)

FRIDAY 2 At the age of 60, Nawab does not have the strength to earn her living. She has no children and her husband Zafar has been in prison for the last eight years, falsely accused under Pakistan's notorious "blasphemy law". Nawab lives on her own and depends on Barnabas Fund's food parcels and help from other Pakistani Christians. With only herself to feed at home, Nawab takes some of the food to jail for Zafar. She prays constantly for his release, her hopes raised every time a date is set for his appeal hearing and then dashed when the hearing is adjourned (which has happened more than 20 times). Please add your prayers to Nawab's that her husband may be set free.

SATURDAY 3 Kyrgyzstan will hold elections for its single-chamber parliament tomorrow. The method is proportional representation with a single nationwide constituency. Seats are allocated to every party that wins at least 9% of the vote and has candidate lists that meet the complex requirements regarding gender, ethnicity and disability but with no requirements for religious minorities to be represented. Pray that the Lord's hand will guide these elections and that the new parliament will work to reverse the deterioration in religious liberty that has made life so much harder for Kyrgyz Christians in recent years.

SUNDAY 4 **O Everlasting Father, for whom a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day, we praise You that You are on Your throne, reigning in majesty. Thank you that through all the turmoil of coronavirus, and the devastating toll it has taken across the world, You are faithful and unchanging. We pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters, for whom Covid-19 came as yet one more way they might die. Thank you for their faith that keeps them trusting in You no matter what afflictions and hardships they endure. Please meet their needs and enable them to survive. We ask in Jesus' Name.**

MONDAY 5 When a second wave of Covid began in Kyrgyzstan, the government did not re-impose a full lockdown, for fear of a social revolt. The lesser measures they introduced do not seem to have been effective and the Covid-19 situation became very serious again in early July, with many deaths among medical staff and the general population. Hospitals were unable to cope and the government's main response was to try to

suppress reports of how bad the situation had become. They began arresting bloggers who reported accurately on coronavirus-related events, and set to work to create a new Manipulation of Information law to enable censorship of media such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Instagram. Christians have been very active in trying to help the needy with food, transport and medical equipment, but they are concerned that the Manipulation of Information law could be applied against churches in the future. Thank the Lord that churches have been so active in showing the love of Christ and pray that the proposed new law will not be passed.

TUESDAY 6 A pastor in Kazakhstan sent a prayer request to Barnabas Fund on 8 July about the sudden outbreak of Covid-19 in his country after two months of lockdown. The hospitals were unable to cope and many people were dying, including doctors and also Christians known to the pastor. There was fear and panic in society at large. The pastor asked for prayer for wisdom for the Kazakh government and an end to the corruption that had resulted in the misuse of a lot of the money intended to combat the virus. He also asked prayer that the Church would be preserved and would be effective in preaching the Gospel at this time. Barnabas has sent funds through the churches (not the government) to help with the medical needs of Christians sick with Covid-19 or pneumonia. Most people are ill at home as the hospitals only accept the very worst cases.

WEDNESDAY 7 For a long time, the authorities of Turkmenistan did not acknowledge that there was any Covid-19 crisis in their closed and secretive

country. But by mid-July rumours were surging about the numbers infected, and church leaders contacted Barnabas Fund to ask for prayer. Thank the Lord with us that Barnabas had already been able to provide rice, flour, potatoes, tinned meat and tea for very poor Christian families affected by the Covid situation. “Your assistance was not just food. For some it was like a medicine to cure their despair,” wrote Zarif from Turkmenistan. Pray that Turkmen Christians (mostly converts from Islam) will be strong and take heart as they continue to hope in the LORD (Psalm 31:24).



Food aid funded by Barnabas delivered to needy Christians in Turkmenistan. It renewed their hope as well as meeting their physical needs

THURSDAY 8 Pakistani Christians were greatly encouraged by the discovery of a huge stone cross, at least a thousand years old, in the foothills of the Karakoram mountain range, in the Himalayas. The cross, which is more than 2 metres in length, is evidence of the early presence of Christianity in Pakistan, brought by Christians from the Middle East. Pakistani Christians are often accused by the Muslim majority of following a newly introduced, Western religion. Pray that the fact of the ancient presence of followers of Jesus may become common knowledge in Pakistan, giving His modern followers more acceptability and less harassment.

FRIDAY 9 Barnabas Fund supports 33 simple Christian schools for 1,986 children of Pakistani Christian brick-kiln workers. Most of these children have no other opportunity for education. A few have studied at government schools, where they usually suffer because of being Christians. Danish (9) compares his new Christian school with his old government school: “The teachers over here treat us politely and educate us nicely. We are also taught Bible studies over here which is very important for our spiritual growth. We are all Christian students here and we discuss about different characters of the Bible. My parents also do not get worried while sending me here ...” Pray that each child will be happy and fulfilled at school, and, on leaving, will be able to get skilled work so that they can set their families free from the cycle of illiteracy and grinding poverty.

SATURDAY 10 Covid lockdown caused believers in Bangladesh to seek the Lord more fervently. “Pastor, before that time, I did not read the Bible, but in this situation I am reading the Bible every day,” said a Bangladeshi Baptist. Aid provided by Barnabas Fund has also increased their faith, as believers see their prayers answered. Some also decided to give away a tenth of what they received from Barnabas to others in need. Pray that Christians in Bangladesh will continue with the same zeal even if life returns to some kind of normality.

SUNDAY 11 **Loving Lord, we lift to You the Middle East, where You Yourself were born and lived Your earthly life, and where Your followers today experience increasing pressures. As You wept over Jerusalem two thousand years**

ago, we believe You must weep now at the seething regional conflicts, always ready to boil over into violence, and at the injustice and the terrible sufferings of the poor. We pray that Your people in the Middle East will be salt and light, bringing wisdom and discernment, patience and love. We ask too that they may have grace to bear patiently, even joyfully, the suffering they endure for Your Name's sake.

MONDAY 12 Iraqi Christians who fled their homes in the plains of Nineveh when Islamic State (IS) militants seized power in 2014 are trying to return, now that a few years have passed since IS was ousted. There are huge challenges for all returning, whatever their religion, e.g. in restoring buildings and livelihoods. But for Christians there are extra challenges, including the lasting damage done by IS's brief presence to social cohesion, for non-Muslims no longer trust their Muslim compatriots. Islam is becoming more dominant both in legislation and in practice. There appears to be a programmed demographic change occurring in which Muslims are settling in particular towns and districts that used to be mainly Christian. Whether in local politics, academia, security or business, Christians are being gradually edged out. Pray that the Muslim majority in Iraq will embrace, affirm and protect Christians.

TUESDAY 13 A Christian ministry in one strongly Muslim country of the Middle East report that the Covid-19 lockdown has resulted in far more people attending their internet worship services, many questions about Christianity being emailed in from viewers, hundreds of requests for

New Testaments, and several people turning to Christ. Muslims who would have been fearful to be seen entering a church building can participate in worship and discuss with Christians safely online. Praise God for this positive outcome from Covid lockdown and pray that those who have made commitments to follow Christ in the last months will grow in their new faith.

WEDNESDAY 14 Although Saudi Arabia is gradually liberalising in certain ways, nothing has yet happened to ease the situation of Christians, who are still forbidden by law to show publicly in any way that they love and follow the Lord Jesus. Ask the Lord to open a way for them to meet with each other, that they may know the encouragement of fellowship with other believers and have opportunity to learn and grow in their faith. Pray that He will keep them from fear and protect them from danger. Many are working in harsh conditions to earn money for families left behind in their homeland. Ask that God's presence will comfort them in their loneliness and strengthen them to endure.

THURSDAY 15 For many months Lebanon has been tumbling inexorably into economic catastrophe, creating terrible suffering for the general population. Hyperinflation has caused people to abandon money and barter their spare clothes for food, baby milk or nappies. Even bread became unaffordable for some when the government cut its bread subsidies and prices shot up overnight. Pray for all affected by this disaster, especially our Christian brothers and sisters, such as Tony, a disabled teenager who needs regular medicine and therapy. Tony's father has lost his job

and now the family do not know how to pay for food or rent, let alone the extra needs of their beloved son.



Tony - in desperate need

FRIDAY 16 The desperation and hunger in Lebanon (see above) caused social unrest and crime to increase. This deteriorating security situation has caused sectarian parties to begin to take law and order into their own hands, an ominous reminder of the terrible days of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). Christians were a majority in Lebanon a few generations ago, but now may be only about a third of the population. (No official census has been conducted since 1932, because the relative percentages of the different religions is such a delicate and dangerous subject.) Pray that the country will not descend into civil war again and that Christians will be peacemakers in their society.

SATURDAY 17 Remembering that God is all-knowing, all-present and all-powerful, pray for North Korea, a country that is closed and mysterious to us but fully open to Him. Pray for all its hungry and oppressed people but especially for the Christians, who are greatly persecuted, with three generations of a family often punished for the Christian activities of a single family member. Praise God for the patient endurance of

North Korean Christians and ask Him to strengthen them day by day and moment by moment.

SUNDAY 18 O Lord Jesus, whom even the winds and waves obey, have mercy on those whose lives are wrecked by storms or floods, by cyclones or earthquakes, and this year especially by virus or locusts. We pray especially for Christians who suffer discrimination and persecution after such events, who do not receive the relief aid that is handed out to non-Christians. Please provide for Your faithful people, who choose hunger and possible death rather than deny You to receive food for their bodies. Help us to learn from their wonderful example of perseverance, courage, and love for You. (Mark 4: 41)

MONDAY 19 Coronavirus fears have created a growing nationalism, racism, xenophobia and general intolerance and incivility in many societies. Even before coronavirus, Christian minorities were often seen as strangers, outsiders or aliens in their own countries; it seems likely that the heightened intolerance of “the other” will result in greater persecution for Christians across the globe, probably including more anti-Christian violence. Pray that Christians may be well equipped spiritually to face this, so that “when the day of evil comes” they may be able to stand firm (Ephesians 6:13-14).

TUESDAY 20 In some parts of the world, the surveillance technology that has been rolled out to trace those who may be infected with coronavirus is not likely to be rolled up again and put away when Covid-19 is at last under control. Those tools will be there to be used to monitor

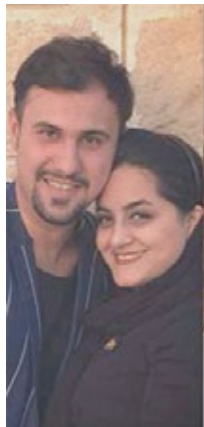
anyone and anything. It is not hard to imagine that when the technology is no longer needed in relation to Covid-19, some governments keen to suppress Christians could use it to monitor and control Christians. Pray for wisdom for believers if new levels of surveillance are part of the post-covid “new normal”.

WEDNESDAY 21 “Please find attached my 19th assignment. From tomorrow I will go to prison. I am in need of your prayers but I go there with a deep joy ... unfortunately, this means I will have to take the course exam in a year’s time, once I am released. I am sorry.” A theological student in Iran called Shahrokh sent this email to his tutor in the middle of June. Of course, it was his Christian faith that was the reason for his prison sentence. Praise God that Shahrokh was able to consider his persecution such a joy (James 1:2) and pray that the Lord will use him in a wonderful way during his time behind bars.

THURSDAY 22 The Iranian parliament has approved changes to Article 500 of the country’s Islamic Penal Code that will make it even easier for the government to repress and punish converts from Islam to Christianity and Christians seeking to share their faith. The amendments mean that anyone found guilty of using “mind control methods” or “psychological manipulation” in the “real or virtual sphere” for “deviant educational and or propaganda activities that contradict or interfere with Islamic teachings” can be punished with imprisonment, flogging, fines or even the death penalty. Thus anything that a convert says about why they chose to leave Islam, and most statements about what

Christianity teaches, could be considered infringements of the revised Article 500. Pray for believers in Iran, as life becomes still more dangerous for them, that they will take courage from remembering that their Teacher and Master also was falsely accused (Matthew 20:25).

FRIDAY 23 On 21 June the revolutionary court of Bushehr, a city in south-west Iran, awarded sentences to seven Christians convicted of “propaganda against the state”, a conviction based on their possession of Christian literature and other materials suggesting they had been evangelising. All the Christians are from a Muslim background, and charges of acting against the state or against national security are commonly made against converts, especially those who are active in sharing their Christian faith. The varied sentences included prison (for all the men), fines, exile from Bushehr, and bans from practising their professions. Please pray for Pooriya and his wife Fatemeh, Sam and his wife Maryam, Sasan and his wife Marjan, and a fourth man, Habib. They have lodged a legal appeal, which is likely to be reviewed by the court in late September or October; pray that it will be successful.



Pooriya (28) was sentenced to 91 days in prison and Fatemeh (also 28) was fined 4 million tomans (approximately £160; \$200; €175 – two months salary for an average Iranian). This couple were the youngest of the seven Iranians convicted in Bushehr and got the lightest sentences (Photo: Article 18)

SATURDAY 24 At least 13 Iranian Christians, mainly converts from Islam, were arrested by Revolutionary Guards in a coordinated operation across three cities in Iran. In Tehran it is believed that Guards were led to the home of a recent convert, where about 30 Christians were gathered, by a spy who had infiltrated the Christians’ meetings and gained their trust. Pray that those who were betrayed, arrested and imprisoned may be comforted by the knowledge that the Lord Jesus Himself experienced just the same.

SUNDAY 25 O Son of God, our crucified and risen Saviour, we praise You for the growing number of Muslims who are making decisions to leave Islam and follow You. Keep them faithful to You despite the hostility they will probably face, the pain of rejection by their nearest and dearest, the physical suffering due to loss of home and livelihood, perhaps harsh prison sentences, and the constant danger of death because of Islam’s apostasy law. Thank you for the freedom that has come this year to converts in Sudan, where new legislation has removed the death sentence for apostasy from Islam. We pray that this freedom will be applied right across the Islamic world.

MONDAY 26 Thank the Lord with us that Aisha, a Ugandan Christian convert from Islam, has been enabled by a kind gift to re-establish her hair salon and buy replacements for some of the items destroyed when her one-room home and one-room salon were set on fire by Muslim relatives. Pray for God’s protection over Aisha, her husband and baby, their home and business. Pray that Aisha’s Muslim relatives will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY 27 Elections are due to be held in Tanzania tomorrow to elect the president and national assembly. Like many Christian-majority countries in Africa, Muslims have gained a strong hold on many political posts (as well as in business), despite being a minority. Pray that the Lord will guide the elections, that they will be fair and peaceful, and that those elected will govern the country wisely and justly, ensuring that followers of all religions can live peaceably together.

WEDNESDAY 28 At least 22 Christians were killed and more than 2,000 displaced during three days of attacks by Fulani militants on villages in the predominantly-Christian Gora ward of Kaduna state, Nigeria, from 10 to 12 July. In one village ten women, a baby and an elderly man were burnt to death in a house where they had taken refuge. Widowed Christian, Bilkisu James, survived being shot during an attack on another village in which seven people from her household died. Two of her own children were shot dead, while two other mothers and three of their children were hacked to death with machetes. “Before I was shot, I saw the Fulani man who is my neighbour, he even identified me. I surrendered to him on my knees,” Bilkisu explained. Her assailants then shot at her chest and back. Ask that the men of violence will have a personal and life-changing encounter with the Prince of Peace.

THURSDAY 29 Leah Sharibu, a Nigerian Christian, was only 14 when Boko Haram militants abducted her in February 2018. Because she steadfastly refuses to convert to Islam she is still held by them. It is reported that she has

had a baby, the result of being raped by the militants. Many other Christians are in the same position. Pray to the Lord who was sent “to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives” that He will cause Leah and all the others to be set free. (Isaiah 61:1)

FRIDAY 30 “We really need prayers in Kgoro. There have been series of attacks killing people since last week up to two nights ago. A total of about 38 people killed from last week to now... the government is not helping matters because of religious biases. We are in serious tension now but pray for our safety and God’s grace to sustain us... Pray for us to be calm tonight and to be able to sleep well and better than last night.” This message from a believer in a Christian-dominated town in Kaduna State, Nigeria, was sent on 26 July. Such situations are replicated over and over again in many parts of Nigeria. We may not know where the attacks are happening today, as you read this, but our heavenly Father does know. Pray for our Nigerian brothers and sisters that He will protect and keep them.

SATURDAY 31 “It is as if the lives of Christians no longer matter in the areas under attack,” said Pastor Stephen Baba Panya, president of the Nigerian denomination, ECWA, after another 32 Christians had been killed in Kaduna by Fulani militants. He lamented that neither the Kaduna state government nor the federal Nigerian government showed concern for the defenceless Christians. Pray that the Nigerian authorities will exert themselves to protect Christians from the violence that has become the norm in parts of the country.

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Front Cover: A South Sudanese Christian refugee in Uganda. Barnabas enabled her and many others to train in vegetable growing and nutrition