

Children of Courage

Raising tomorrow's Church

Prayer Guide

For Barnabas Fund's Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, Friday 1 November

Thank you for praying for persecuted Christian children around the world. Our intercession is so important to the children of suffering Christian families, who need to be courageous in the face of persecution. The prayer requests in this booklet came directly from Barnabas Fund's partners on the ground, who responded with urgency and enthusiasm when we asked them how we could pray for the Christian children in their communities. For security reasons, names may have been changed or omitted.

For more detailed information on the condition of Christians in the countries where they most commonly face persecution, please see the accompanying booklet, *Praying for the Persecuted Church 2013*. Please do not feel restricted by the specific prayer requests in this prayer guide, but pray as you feel led.

If you are holding a prayer event, please share it on our online map.

childrenofcourage.org



Suffering Church
Action Week 2013


barnabasfund
hope and aid for the persecuted church

Syria

The lives of Christians in Syria have been torn apart by the violent civil conflict, in which they are particularly targeted by rebel forces. When asked about the impact of the conflict on Christian children, a Barnabas Fund partner in the country responded with this heartfelt description of their desperate plight. Please pray as you read.

Tina is seven years old and the daughter of a Christian family from Jaramana. Tina's father Ara shared with me the effect the war has had on his daughter and her friends. He said:

"I was just entering my flat and found more than eleven little girls, friends of my little Tina, who had just arrived from their schools. They were all holding onto each other's school uniform and playing at being a train, moving like one and making a train noise. Suddenly their enjoyment was interrupted by the loud sound of an explosive shell or mortar rocket hitting the building. All of them dropped to the floor, trying to hide from the danger. After a few minutes, while they were still frightened on the floor, another explosion hit the same building, but there were no injuries. All the girls were in a state of panic and severe shock and started weeping and crying."

Tina asked her father, "What's going on, Daddy? Why are they frightening us? We were just playing together!" Her father did not know how to explain the facts to the little ones. "Oh, my little girl," he replied, "they are the rebels and enemies of our society, who are trying to hit us and damage everything we have, even our lives." The next day, the father of Karen, one of the other little girls present, was shot in the head by the rebels on his bus journey home. He underwent hours of surgery to remove the bullet but died a few days later. When Ara visited Karen's family, she also questioned him, asking, "Why my father? Aren't we Christians who love Jesus?"

More than three million children in Syria are suffering from the consequences of the conflict, which has entered its third year without relief or a sustained cease-fire. Hundreds of thousands of children lack access to food, education or even a safe haven. Thousands have been killed, and many more injured, in their homes and schools or as they tried to reach shelter. Children have been used as shields during combat. Others have been tortured, raped and interrogated.

The smell of death is spreading everywhere. Our children are the victims of the war. They are helpless, without hope and unable to protect themselves or face the reality of their lives. This

is the daily situation here in Aleppo and all over Syria. Our children are becoming malnourished, growing up illiterate, and being disabled or even martyred. The iniquity and injustice created by war affects our children, who are losing their innocence and loving spirit.

Recently the government of Syria introduced a law forbidding the recruitment and use of children under eighteen. But some armed opposition groups are still using children as combatants and in auxiliary roles. Children continue to be mistreated by opposition groups and tortured, or detained in degrading conditions. Their families hear no news about them.

The conflict has also seen a spike in sexual violence, including rape and forced marriage. This mainly occurs in areas under rebel control and in refugee camps, especially in Jordan. It is difficult to discern the exact figures owing to a lack of documentation, but reports and stories from the friends, families and colleagues of victims reveal the prevalence of rape by rebel fighters against girls. Often, girls will be abducted, raped and returned the next day by those exploiting the current state of instability.

Hundreds of schools in Syria have come under attack. Rather than serving as safe havens, schools come to represent terror and trauma to these children, many of whom refuse to return to them. Armed forces in Syria are accused of attacking schools or using them for military purposes. They have been bombed, used as military barracks or shelters for the displaced, or simply closed because of the insecurity. Thousands of children have been out of school for months, or even for the last two years.



Please pray:

For Christian children who are in such danger of being caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted. Ask the Lord to protect them at these times.

For the Lord's peace for these vulnerable little ones when they are frightened, and for their families and communities as they try to explain to them what is happening.

That the Lord will draw near to children of Christian families who have lost relatives and comfort them in their grief.

That all the needs of Christian families will be met and that no child will have to go hungry.

That ways will be found for children to continue their education in peace and safety.

Uganda

Although Uganda is 75% Christian, Christians in predominantly Muslim areas live in a hostile context. Our partner wrote to us about Yumbe District, where the population is over 75% Muslim and Christians live in a small minority. They asked us to pray for the following:



For children who are living under harassment, who are looked on as being dirty because they are not circumcised and denied what otherwise would be their right, i.e. to play with other children. Children can be pushed away or at times beaten because they are Christians.

For families who are being forced off church land because Muslims want to take the lands from Christians. The children do not understand what the Muslims are doing. They may develop bitterness towards Muslims or they may choose to leave Christianity and embrace Islam.

For all children in Uganda. The desire to get rich quickly has made many people turn to witchcraft and they are told to sacrifice children. It is common now for children to be reported missing or abducted for ritual killing.

For children who have witnessed brutal killings during rebel wars. For many, the memories have never gone away.

For the Church's efforts to introduce children to Jesus Christ and programmes to help them grow in their faith in Christ.

For street children and others abandoned by their parents. This used to be a city problem, but now in small towns the number of street children and child prostitutes is increasing.

Kenya

Although Kenya's population is more than 80% Christian, Christians who live in Muslim-majority areas may suffer discrimination, and Islamic terrorism is an ever-increasing threat in the country. A Barnabas Fund partner in Kenya asked us to pray:



For peace among neighbouring communities and all people of the world.

For peace in families where children are born and raised.

For children who are the victims of rape.

For God's intervention in the problem of alcohol and drug use among the youth and children.

That the problems of Female Genital Mutilation and child marriages will be effectively countered.

For good relations with people of other religions.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan Christians, many of whom are still living in poverty following the bloody civil war that ended in 2009, face discrimination and violence from the proponents of radical Buddhism. Our partner in Sri Lanka requests prayer:



For children who are facing persecution, ridicule and harassment in school and in their neighbourhoods because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

For the children of pastors, who often face opposition in school from their teachers. Pray for children who endure unfair punishment and discrimination in school because of their faith. Pastors' children also often go through silent agony, fearing that their father will be killed because of his ministry. Pray for God's special comfort for such children.

For Christian children, who are discriminated against by some state-run schools, which refuse to take them because of their faith. Pray for children who are suffering without access to education for this reason, and pray that God will also guide and comfort their parents, who feel helpless in this situation.

For children who have experienced violent attacks on their churches. Many of these children suffer from trauma and fear. They refuse to go to school, display various physical symptoms of illness or are afraid of the dark. Pray that God will heal their little hearts and take away their fear.

For Christian education. Even though religion is a compulsory subject in schools, many state-run schools do not have teachers to teach Christianity. Christian children, who are a small minority in such schools, are compelled to study Buddhism or Hinduism. Pray for the large number of Christian children who are deprived of the opportunity to study Christianity through the school system.

For the many poor rural churches in Sri Lanka that do not have the facilities to run well-equipped Sunday Schools in their churches. Some meet in sheds in the churchyard and some meet under trees and sit on the ground to listen to God's Word. Thank God for their zeal for the Lord, and pray that God will bless them and nurture them to become mighty oaks of faith in this land.

For all children who are abused, neglected and destitute.

For all parents, particularly pastors and others engaged in ministry, who face great demands on their time. Pray that God will bless them and give them wisdom to balance their many roles so as to give quality time to their children and be good parents.

For a generation that will be sensitive to God's call upon their lives, so that they will stand strong amidst persecution and worldly distractions and follow the Lord.

Egypt

Christian children in Egypt are born into centuries-old discrimination. Many families are desperately poor and have long faced stifling restrictions that prevent them from lifting themselves out of poverty. Ongoing political instability has heightened religious tensions since the Arab Spring, making our brothers and sisters even more vulnerable.

A Barnabas contact from Egypt requested prayer for Christian children who are afraid to play outside now because of the fear of being kidnapped. When some Christian children are not at school because the schools are closed for

the vacation, there is nowhere else for them to go where they will be safe. As a result they are like prisoners in their homes.

Barnabas Fund helps needy Christian children in Egypt by providing their families with food parcels and other essentials, as well as by supporting them spiritually with Christian children's clubs. One project partner shared with us the needs they are meeting and the challenges they are facing.



Give thanks that the clubs are having a huge impact in the children's lives and are empowering the local churches in their children's work.

Give thanks that the programme has expanded because of high demand for the clubs.

Pray that adequate space will be found in which to hold the clubs. Some clubs are meeting outside in fields; pray that they will be able to meet in comfort and safety.

Pray for Christian children in remote areas where Christian communities are very isolated, and ask that their material and spiritual needs will be met despite their inaccessible locations.

India

Christians in India are at risk of harassment and violence by Hindu extremists, and some states have "anti-conversion laws" that prohibit legitimate Christian evangelism. "Anti-conversion laws" are currently in force in five states; the one in Madhya Pradesh is currently being strengthened and a fourth attempt to table a bill in Maharashtra state is underway. In some areas, Christians are also under threat from radical Muslims.

Barnabas partners in several places asked us to pray for Christian children where they live.



Orissa state
Please pray for Christian children who, along with their whole communities, are vulnerable to frequent attack by Hindu extremists in this state.

Pray for children who are still traumatised by violence that they have experienced or witnessed in the past, especially the major anti-Christian attacks in December 2007 and August 2008.

Pray for the Christian Trauma and Learning Centre, supported by Barnabas Fund, that is helping Christian children to recover from the effects of these experiences.

Give thanks that the work of the centre is enabling traumatised children to reconnect with their families and engage in church activities once again.

Pray that the Lord will continue to bless this ministry and that He will continue to heal the hearts and minds of young victims of persecution.



Assam state

Please pray:

For the children of our churches. The majority of the children are from villages where they are deprived of adequate access to health and hygiene facilities.

For children in some places of persecution, who are isolated and mistreated by their fellow students and teachers.



Maharashtra state

Please pray:

For "Pastor Raj" in Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh, who was beaten, arrested by the local police and put in custody on false charges. He has a daughter, Grace, who is just four months old.

For "Pastor Chand", who was also beaten brutally in the same incident and who has become bedridden with severe lower back pain. He has a nine-month-old daughter, Sharon.



New Delhi

Please pray:

For the education of believers' children, which is affected by opposition to the Gospel.

For the safety of children during persecution in remote areas where they are subjected to various forms of harassment.

For the children of hundreds of landless labourers in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, who are being abused and exploited through child labour and human trafficking.

For children of extremely poor tribal families, who have no option but to get involved in extremely dangerous labour such as coal, mica and bauxite mining.

For the victims of child trafficking. Owing to prevailing poverty and the lack of any other source of income, many women, especially young girls, are trafficked by many well-organised crime networks.



Gujarat state

Please pray:

That children will take part in Sunday school regularly.

For Sunday school teachers to be supported and equipped for their ministry.

That school dropouts and the migration of believers will stop.

For physical and spiritual protection for missionaries' children who live away from their parents in hostels for their schooling.

That more English-language schools for tribal children will be started in the mission fields.

Central Africa

Although Muslims are in only a slight majority in a particular Central African country, they are politically and economically dominant, and Christians are marginalised. Membership of Islamist organisations in the country is growing. A Barnabas Fund partner wrote to us about one courageous Christian child who is standing firm in his faith despite pressure from Muslim relatives.

Adamu is an orphan. His mother raised him as a Muslim. When he was taken in by his father's parents he became a Christian. One day his maternal uncle invited him to stay in his house. Then on Friday his uncle asked Adamu to do the (Islamic) ablutions. He kept quiet and his uncle asked him why. Adamu told him he does not like to be a Muslim.

Another Friday his uncle came with a white cloth and asked Adamu to take his bath and dress for the mosque. Adamu went inside his room, collected all his belongings, took his backpack and left the house while his uncle was taking his own bath. Adamu escaped to his aunt, his father's sister. When she asked why he had come back, he told her he was running away from Islam and did not want to go back to his uncle's house again. Adamu started doing petty business by the roadside to take care of himself. His uncle found him and rebuked him for bringing shame on the family because they were able to provide for him, but Adamu stayed with his aunt.



I was amazed at the courage of this young boy. I advised him and gave him a Bible. Pray for the many Adamus in our area.

Indonesia

A Barnabas Fund partner in Indonesia wrote of the problems faced by Christians in the country.

Our nation of Indonesia has a population of more than 240 million. The majority religion is Islam: 75% of people are Muslim, 15% are Christian, and 10% are of other religions. The population is spread over 13,000 islands. The situation of the Christian population in my nation is very difficult. Persecution of Christians often happens. Many church buildings are closed and burned. There are many prohibitions to worship.

Our partner asked us to pray for the children supported by the following projects.

In some villages that are Christian-majority, we gather Christian children, and give them basic education, providing for their needs according to our ability. For example, we give them shoes for school, clothing, books and equipment.

We gathered about 80 young men and women and brought them from their villages to educate them. For four years they will stay at our hostel and be supported. Our goal is to develop the Christian population who live in poor areas. They learn, eat, and live at the hostel and pay nothing.

A second partner in Indonesia wrote about the situation of two Christian children and a struggling Christian teacher.

Pastor Marlon's eldest son, Matthew, is now eight years old and in second grade. He is a clever and lively boy, and always has good grades. Matthew is the only Christian in his school, and often the teachers and other children bully him. But because he is so clever, he was still made captain of the class. At the beginning and end of each school day, he has to pray the Muslim prayers out loud in front of the class, and he is very reluctant to do this. Even at his age he is determined to follow Jesus. He asked his parents to look for a Christian school instead, but unfortunately there is no Christian school in this area. His parents, together with other pastors, are planning to start a Christian day-care centre and later on a school, but it will take time to collect the necessary documents and funding. Please pray for children like Matthew, who are the only Christians in their schools.

Teo (Teofilus – "friend of God") is also a pastor's son. He is a smart boy; he plays the keyboard in church and is one of the best pupils in his class. Sadly, Teo is the only Christian boy at his entire public school. He first went to a different campus of the same school, where they at least had seven

other Christians. Fortunately, the school staff are now treating him well, whereas at the other location they were reluctant to allow Christian religion lessons. What happens often nowadays is that for primary and middle schools they just pick some verses from the Quran and make all students study them every single day, no matter what their religion is. Many schools don't even allow Christian religion lessons after the normal study hours.

Simon is one of the many pastors Barnabas Fund supports who teaches Christian religion at a primary or secondary school. He has been faithfully travelling all the way to a big city to teach children the Christian faith for more than ten years now. A one-way trip takes between three and four hours. Simon considers it part of his calling to help the Christian students to stand firm in an ocean of Muslim doctrine and a hostile atmosphere. Please pray for pastors such as Simon who reach out to Christian school children. Some of them are forced to get a higher degree or lose their teaching licence (just another form of persecution), and obviously new studies are costly and time-consuming for a pastor who already has a flock and a family to attend to. Please pray that Christian lessons will remain available at government schools as stated in the Indonesian constitution, despite growing animosity to them.

What also happens sometimes is that Christian children are given lower grades than they deserve. This can have grave consequences when they would be entitled to receive a scholarship for further studies based upon their actual results. A scholarship is often the only access to further studies for children of poor rural church-planters.

Sudan

Christians are not welcome in Sudan, where the Islamist government routinely deports believers, Christian leaders are threatened, and churches are destroyed. A Barnabas Fund partner in Sudan asked us to pray for "Hassen" and "Ashia's" children, who are suffering for their faith.

This family, including their children, are living with fear of public persecution because of their faith in Christ in Sudan. The children's courage makes them unafraid to share their faith in Christ with other children.

Hassen became a Christian after he met his wife Ashia when they were students at university, and after their marriage Hassen's family discovered that their son had become a Christian, and they asked him to come back to Islam or face death according to Islamic sharia law.

Hassen has been baptised with his two children. They are living in Khartoum with their three children: Jamal (9 years old), Farah (7 years old) and James (3 years old). A relative of the family told me how this family have been threatened by Muslims, including the government in Khartoum, to make them change their faith to Islam and they were forced to practise their faith in Christ secretly.

More danger arose when the children started going to school. When other children asked if they are Christian or Muslim the courageous children always replied, "We are Christians," and this caused their parents Hassen and Ashia to decide to flee from Sudan. They were looking for help to escape from Khartoum, but they are still there.

The family are still looking to live outside Sudan, so that their children can live in freedom of faith and worship their Lord instead of their lives being threatened and fearing that they will be killed any time by Muslims.



Pray for this family, and all Christian families who face pressure from the authorities and their local community in Sudan. Pray that a way will be made for them to live in freedom and safety, and ask that the children will know the Lord's peace despite their traumatic circumstances.

North Korea

It is illegal to be a follower of Jesus Christ in North Korea. Christians face being imprisoned in labour camps, where they may be tortured and worked to death because of their faith. The children of Christian families in this isolated, oppressed and starving country suffer terribly. Barnabas Fund supports a bakery project in North Korea that provides employment for needy Christians and free bread to hungry children.



Our partner has requested prayer for:

The smooth running of our five bakeries.

The 15 staff at each bakery (75 staff in total).

All of the children who have received our bread – a total of 20,000 children.

For the people who are receiving the Good News through the bakeries.

Pakistan

Christians are a despised minority in predominantly-Muslim Pakistan. Many Christian families are very poor because of discrimination, so their children frequently go hungry. Many Christian parents cannot afford to send their children to school and even if they can, their children face discrimination in the classroom. Christian children are also vulnerable to being falsely accused of blasphemy and arrested. Many Christian children have to go out to work, often in dangerous situations, to help support their families.

One of Barnabas Fund's many partners in Pakistan shared the following prayer requests.



Please pray:

For the spiritual and social growth of Christian children and teenagers in Pakistan.

That God will provide qualified and committed teachers for Christian schools and Sunday schools.

For church leaders, that God will enable them to make effective plans for ministering to the children in their churches.

For Christian children who are in a very small minority at school and who face discrimination and are under great pressure.

For Christian children who have recently passed their final school examinations and could face difficulties in accessing further education.

For poor children who have to work to help support their families.

For good health, a quality education and a healthy environment for all children.

For healing for children who are suffering from diarrhoea and dengue fever.

For our Bible study programmes, as these are now taking place in new areas.

For safety for children who are travelling, because the general security situation in Pakistan makes travel dangerous.


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