

THE AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

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barnabas prayer

TO HELP YOU PRAY FOR
THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2011



November 1 – 3

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. Thank you for your understanding.

November

Tuesday 1 Many Pakistani Christians found themselves in grievous distress for the second time in little more than a year as surging floods devastated large swathes of Sindh province in September. Millions of people were affected and hundreds of thousands of homes swept away, along with crops and livestock. Thousands were left in emergency camps or in appalling conditions by roadsides. Some affected areas were only just recovering after the disastrous



Some Christian families in Pakistan have seen their homes destroyed by floods a second time

floods of 2010. Christians suffer all the more in this chaos, as they are very poor and are left with no means of support or survival and are often overlooked in the distribution of aid. A local church leader

said, “I have noticed and seen that Christians are being deprived of the help, relief and support that other people are getting.” Pray that help will reach them quickly and that they may be supplied with the resources to rebuild their shattered lives. Barnabas has been sending aid to many Christian families.

Wednesday 2 Pray for Ashfaq Munawar, a Pakistani Christian, who was beaten unconscious by a gang of Muslim extremists for joining in the celebrations on the country’s Independence Day. He was severely injured in the attack by six Muslim men, who hit him with iron rods, on 14 August; his jaw was fractured and he lost five teeth. Before beating him, they had asked Ashfaq if he was a Muslim or a Christian, and when he said that he was a Christian, they chided him for joining in the celebrations and told him to become a Muslim if he wanted to be included. Pakistani Christians are denied many opportunities and privileges that the Muslim majority enjoy. Pray that the authorities may do more to protect them from attacks of this kind.

Thursday 3 Every week in India, two or three violent attacks are committed against Christians. Over 60 were recorded during the first half of 2011, and Hindu extremists are continuing to target churches, pastors and Christian families. There have also been numerous cases of Christians being falsely accused and arrested on charges of “forcible conversions”. The Evangelical Fellowship of India, which recorded the incidents, said the Christian community had been left “vulnerable and helpless in the onslaught of violence” because of the “blatant disregard for the law” by Hindu extremists, coupled with the inaction and bias of the police. Pray that the authorities will take

decisive action against this disturbing trend and that all Hindus will allow their Christian neighbours to live in peace.

Friday 4 The southern state of Karnataka, which is governed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has been worst hit by this year's anti-Christian violence in India. The incidents include pastors and Christians being threatened and beaten, and Christian property being seized or destroyed. Christians in Karnataka are concerned that Hindu extremists are gearing up for a major campaign of large-scale violence in light of increased police interference with the churches. Pastors have been told that unless their churches have been registered at the nearest police station, police will not be able to protect their buildings; they are also supposed to obtain official permission before holding gatherings. Pray that the Christians' fears will not be realised and that the police will carry out their statutory duties without imposing unreasonable and restrictive conditions on the churches.

Saturday 5 Nine-year-old "Simon" was forced to run from his home into the jungle in great haste when savage anti-Christian violence broke out in August 2008 in Orissa State, India, leaving thousands of Christians homeless. During Christian counselling sessions funded by Barnabas, Simon opened up about the traumatising events he endured. Now his fear is slowly fading and he is enjoying going to school. Barnabas is enabling the running of a Christian trauma counselling centre and school for one year in Orissa. Pray that the 800 Christian children receiving help will be healed from the effects of their painful past and that the schooling will open doors for their future.

Sunday 6 Pray for a parliamentary enquiry that has been launched in the UK by "Christians in Parliament", an all-party group. Its goal is to seek clarity on what Christians may or may not do under British law, after various high-profile court cases involving believers who were penalised for trying to express or live out their faith publicly. The initiative comes after the Equality and Human Rights Commission abandoned plans to give Christians greater freedom to follow their beliefs in the workplace. Pray that the enquiry will reverse the increasing discrimination and marginalisation experienced by Christians in the UK. Please also continue to pray for Barnabas Fund's Operation Nehemiah, which promotes the Christian values of freedom of conscience, speech and religion in Britain and elsewhere.

Monday 7 In an ominous development, a radical Muslim group called Sharia4Belgium has established a sharia court in Antwerp. They say that its purpose is to create a parallel legal system in Belgium and to challenge the state's authority. The court is already mediating family law disputes for Muslim immigrants in Belgium, and the group says that it will eventually expand its remit to include criminal cases. Critics believe that the court will undermine the rights of Muslim women in marriage and education and make it harder to investigate "honour crimes" against women. Sharia4Belgium are committed to bringing everyone in the country under the authority of sharia. Pray that the reach of sharia will not be extended within European countries, and that it will not be incorporated into national law.

Tuesday 8 On 25 July the Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called for religious tolerance in Europe, following the brutal massacre of over 90 people in Norway by Anders Breivik two days earlier. Yet many countries that belong to the OIC do not extend this tolerance to their own Christian minorities, who often suffer harsh discrimination and violent persecution. Freedom of religion is usually very limited: Christians are not allowed to share their faith, and Muslims are forbidden to become Christians. Pray that the hostility and intolerance shown towards Christians in Muslim-majority countries will diminish, and that the OIC's own efforts to restrict religious freedom throughout the world will not succeed.

Wednesday 9 An Armenian rights' group described a recent announcement by the Turkish government as a "smokescreen" to avoid the consequences of Turkey's "brutal acts" against Christians in the past. The authorities said at the end of August that assets seized from the country's Christian and Jewish minorities since 1936 will be returned. The draft law also allows the payment of compensation for any confiscated property that has since been sold on. Various denominations are affected by the decree, but the Armenian National Committee of America criticised it for not restoring all the property confiscated during the Armenian genocide of 1894 to 1923, when nearly all the Armenian property was taken. Pray that the measures will improve the precarious position of the churches in Turkey, and that the government will take further steps to right past wrongs against Christians.

Thursday 10 Give thanks for good news from Turkey, where a house church has finally been granted legal status after a long battle with

the authorities. The Protestant group in the eastern province of Van had been meeting in a two-storey house for seven years, during which time the group made frequent attempts to obtain a licence for the building to be recognised as a place of worship. Praise God for this step forward for the congregation, who simply desire to worship freely, and pray for greater tolerance for Turkish Christians generally.

Friday 11 "I cannot believe that we have been remembered. Some people outside there heard that we are in need and sent help to us. God truly sees our plight!" A Kenyan Christian, one of the millions affected by the drought in East Africa, spoke these words of amazement and gratitude when she received help from Barnabas. Give praise that Barnabas has been able to help over 77,000 Christians, often just in time, owing to the overwhelming generosity of our supporters. A Christian family in Uganda, for example, had completely run out of food and had been eating nothing but leaves for four days when they received a parcel containing beans, flour and salt to cover their food needs for a month. Pray that God will sustain suffering East Africans through this crisis and that next harvest's crops will be plentiful.



Barnabas has funded borewells for Christians affected by the drought in East Africa

Saturday 12 In a remote area of Kenya a Christian Rescue Home helps Christian girls escape from abuse under traditional African religions and provides them with a safe and secure Christian environment. Barnabas Fund is supporting the costs of the home, which is currently caring for 71 girls and young women, aged 13 to 24. The pastor and his wife who run the Home encourage the girls to study hard at school and college. They have also helped provide food aid to over 12,000 Christians in their region suffering from hunger due to the current famine. Give praise that these Christian girls are safe from harm. Pray that God will strengthen and bless the pastor and his wife in their work of love, and will send plentiful rain for a good harvest in the region.

Sunday 13 Dozens of Christians, including entire families, were shot or hacked to death in a fresh wave of sectarian violence in September in predominantly Christian villages across Nigeria’s volatile Plateau State. On 12 September, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan ordered the military to “take all necessary actions” to stop the ethnic and religious unrest in Plateau State, but eyewitnesses have reported that the army have been involved in much of the violence. Please pray that the deadly violence (in which some Muslims have also died) will cease and that peace will be established in this troubled nation. Pray that the Lord will equip His suffering people to withstand the persecution and that those who mourn will find peace and comfort in Him. Pray especially for President Jonathan, that he will govern with justice and righteousness as he seeks to control the unrest.

Monday 14 Talking Bibles, which look like a printed book and play a recording of the New Testament, are a wonderful way to bring the Gospel to Sierra Leone, where most adults cannot read. An elderly Muslim man was struck by the sentence “You shall love you neighbour as yourself”, which he heard playing on a Talking Bible belonging to an evangelist who was passing by. He asked the evangelist what it meant and a discussion ensued. The man said, “It is not possible for me to come to your church but I will send my children.” Soon after that his four children started attending services. Pray that all of the 40 Talking Bibles that Barnabas has provided to pastors and evangelists will be greatly used by the Lord.

Tuesday 15 The seizure of 6,500 Bibles by the Iranian authorities was announced by a parliamentary advisor in August. He said that Christian missionaries were trying to deceive people, especially Iranian youth, adding, “They have begun a huge campaign by spending huge sums and false propaganda for deviating the public.” As part of their ongoing efforts to stamp out Christianity in Iran, the authorities have been waging a propaganda campaign through Iranian state media to attack and discredit Christianity. This has included offensive caricatures depicting Christ and Christians, and false and insulting stories about Christians. Thank God that the Church in Iran is growing, and pray that the light and truth of the Gospel will continue to shine though these deceitful attempts to block it.

Wednesday 16 Pray for Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, who has been in prison since October 2009 on charges of apostasy and at the time of writing is facing the death sentence. His appeal to Iran’s

Supreme Court was denied in June unless he recants his faith, and local judges were deciding his case in late September after examining some procedural flaws. The indictment against him stated, “He has proven his apostasy by organizing evangelistic meetings and inviting others to Christianity, establishing a house church, baptizing people, expressing his faith to others and denying Islamic values.” Pray that Youcef will remain firm in his faith and know the presence and peace of Christ each day. Pray that God will overrule and that all charges against Youcef will be dropped.

Thursday 17 “If you kill me, I still will never stop. If you don’t like it, I am ready to go back to jail. Do not think I will leave my faith, because Christianity is my life.” Kurdish Pastor Jamal spoke these bold words on one of the many occasions when Iraqi authorities arrested him and threatened him with punishment if he did not return to Islam. After becoming a Christian, Jamal was active in sharing his faith with Muslims and started a Kurdish church. On 14 July this year armed men broke into his house in Dehouk, Northern Iraq, claiming to be police and told him to come with them. At the time of writing nothing has been heard of him since. Pray that his kidnappers will repent and return Jamal to his family unharmed.

Friday 18 “Our lives are under threat. Rather than staying here, I would rather risk my life at sea in one of these old boats with a chance of getting out.” These are the words of an African Christian pastor in a makeshift refugee camp in Janzour, on the coast of Libya. A thousand African men, women and children, some of them Christians, are stranded there, trying to escape from the chaos that

has overwhelmed Libya this year and the hostility of rebels who see them as supporters of Libya’s ousted leader, Colonel Gaddafi. Gunmen have been prowling the camp, raping women and robbing the men at knifepoint. Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters, who are especially vulnerable because of their faith, that the Lord will keep them safe and that they will soon find a secure place to live.

Saturday 19 Mob violence against Christians in Egypt continues. On 30 June thousands of Muslims looted and torched Christian homes and businesses in Kolosna, Minya province after a Christian woman was sexually harassed by Muslims at a bus terminal. The violence erupted after the woman’s husband tried to defend his wife. Muslims also stopped cars on the city’s main road, and if any car was found to belong to Christians, it was damaged and its passengers were beaten. The army and military police were called, but they did not arrive for three hours and took no action when properties were attacked. Pray that Egypt’s leaders and security forces will protect Christians properly, and that the Muslims responsible for these attacks will come to know the God of peace and love.

Sunday 20 **In a further disturbing development for Christians in Egypt, the ruling military council has refused to allow international observers to monitor the forthcoming parliamentary elections, which are due to begin tomorrow 21 November. Some commentators believe that the lack of impartial control will make fair elections impossible, and that the main Islamist group in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, will benefit as a result. If an Islamist government comes to**

power in Egypt, the churches will probably suffer even more intense harassment and persecution than they do now. Pray that despite this discouraging decision the elections will be properly conducted, and that parties committed to freedom, equality and justice for all Egypt's citizens will be victorious. Pray that the Christians will be salt and light at this difficult time.



Sumaira successfully completed beautician training funded by Barnabas

Monday 21 Twenty-one-year-old Sumaira was working as a domestic maid in Pakistan, a down-trodden role in which Christian women often suffer abuse and even rape from their Muslim employers. Then she started a literacy course and beautician training funded by Barnabas. After finishing the six-month beautician course, she could earn enough with her new

skills that she was able to leave her cleaning job. Give praise that Sumaira and scores of other Christian women in Pakistan are being released from oppression through self-sufficiency courses provided by Barnabas, and pray that they will prosper in their new professions. Pray also that more Christians in Pakistan can break free from poverty and persecution.

Tuesday 22 Lift up to the Lord in prayer Chinese Pastor Shi Enhao, who was sentenced to two years imprisonment in a labour camp this summer. Police charged him with “illegal organising of venues for religious meetings” relating to his work as a pastor of a large

“house church” (unregistered church) of several thousand members in Suqian City, Jiangsu. Pastor Shi is also deputy chairman of the Chinese House Church Alliance, a large umbrella organisation for many thousands of house churches across China. Pray that the Chinese government will stop persecuting house churches. Pray also that Pastor Shi will be empowered to continue to be Christ’s witness even during his confinement.

Wednesday 23 At least 100 members of various local authority departments, including the Religious Affairs Bureau and the police, descended on a house-church summer camp for children in Anhui province, China, at 6am on 11 August. The names of all the children were recorded, and officials arrested Pastor Lu Jingxiang and three other church leaders for holding “an unregistered, illegal meeting”, although they were later released. Please pray for the children who were present at the time of the raid, and for Pastor Lu and the other church leaders who were arrested. Pray that all those involved will know the peace of the Lord and that they will continue to rely on Him as the one who watches over them and will neither slumber nor sleep (Psalm 121:4).

Thursday 24 Lift up to the Lord a group of house church leaders from remote regions of China who were arrested on 26 July and held in detention while the authorities tried to extort money from their families to secure their release. The police raided a meeting in Inner Mongolia where church leaders were planning summer church activities; 21 people were detained but six were later released on health grounds. The families of the remaining 15 were told that tens of thousands of

yan were required for the release of their loved ones. At the time of writing, they were still in custody. Pray for their speedy release and that the Lord will give them comfort and strength in the face of persecution.

Friday 25 Christians in Chin state, Burma (Myanmar), endure relentless brutality at the hands of the ruling military junta. Many have fled to India but find little relief from their suffering there. A recent survey has shown that over 25 per cent of the Christian Chin refugees in Delhi had been victims of assault, rape, sexual harassment, forcible eviction and other crimes. Because they also have no legal identity, the police take little action against those who attack them. Fewer than 20 per cent of them have jobs. Pray for our brothers and sisters, persecuted and far from home, that God will be for them a refuge for the oppressed and a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9).

Saturday 26 Around 1,000 delegates had already arrived in Fiji for the Methodist Church's annual conference when, at the last minute, the country's military-led government ordered its cancellation, despite the church having permission to hold the meeting. The government also issued a directive on 26 August banning all church activities except Sunday worship. The Methodist Church is the largest Christian denomination in Fiji, where about 52% of the population are Christian. Please pray for Christians in Fiji in these difficult circumstances. Pray that the authorities will retract the ban and allow our brothers and sisters to continue their ministry without hindrance.

Sunday 27 **An Indonesian mayor is refusing to allow an embattled church in his city to open, saying that churches should not be**

built on a street with an Islamic name. The mayor of Bogor, Diani Budiarto, is defying rulings from the Indonesian Supreme Court and Ombudsman Commission that GKI Yasmin Church should be allowed to reopen. The congregation has been holding services on the street, which is named "Jalan Abdullah bin Nuh" after an Islamic leader from West Java, in front of its half-constructed church since its building permit was revoked in 2008. Muslims have protested against the church's outdoor services. Pray that the mayor will relent in his campaign against the church and uphold its right to reopen.

Monday 28 Christians living in Sudan's border region with South Sudan are enduring a targeted campaign of ethnic cleansing from the Islamist regime in the northern country, which has declared that it aims to make Sudan 100 per cent Arab and Muslim. Its forces are conducting daily air strikes, attacks on churches and homes, house-to-house raids, arbitrary arrests and executions in the region. Pastors in particular are singled out and tortured. A local church leader has described it as a "war of horror". Pray that President Omar al-Bashir and his government will stop committing these atrocious crimes. Pray that the promised election for determining the political future of this region will take place, and ask the Lord to give strength to the Christians in their ordeal.

Tuesday 29 Pray that the Lord will bless the new, mainly Christian, country of Southern Sudan as it starts on the daunting task of nation-building following its independence from Sudan on 9 July. The 21-year-long civil war, which ended only in 2005, has left the

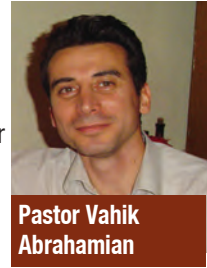
country ravaged, and it is still not at peace; rebel violence has led to the deaths of some 1,500 people this year. Yet despite the enormous challenges there is a great sense of hope and optimism among the new country's citizens, who are looking forward to greater freedom and peace. Pray for an end to the current fighting and that the new leaders will govern the country with integrity, wisdom and fairness.

Wednesday 30 For Christians in Tunisia the turmoil unleashed by the revolution in early 2011 may threaten their freedom – already limited – to practise their faith. On 16 September a group of Muslims took over a church in the town of Kef with the intention of turning it into a mosque. They entered the building and began to prepare it for Muslim prayers, arguing that it had been a place of Muslim worship before 1966 (though it was a Christian building originally). The group were dispersed by police, but their action shows what could happen to the churches if Islamist groups gain greater power in the parliamentary elections scheduled for next year. Pray that this will not happen, and that the current political changes will bring greater freedom for the country's Christians. Pray that the Lord will guard them from further attacks by radical Muslims. There are only a few hundred indigenous Christians in Tunisia, many of them isolated or secret believers.

December

Thursday 1 Praise God that Pastor Vahik Abrahamian has finally been freed from prison in Iran. With his wife Sonia and another couple, he was arrested in September 2010. They

were accused of various offences, including propagating Christianity in Iran and opposing the Islamic Republic. All four were held in solitary confinement and subjected to intense interrogation and psychological torture. The other three were set free at the end of April, but Vahik was held for another four months despite having been cleared of all charges. Pray that Vahik and Sonia will recover from their ordeal.



**Pastor Vahik
Abrahamian**

Friday 2 Please pray for “Ali”, an Afghan convert from Islam to Christianity, who was fearful for his life after being attacked by Muslims at a centre for asylum seekers in Norway. One of them held Ali while another struck him on the back of the head with a pot of boiling water, which scalded his neck and upper back, stripping the skin away in places. When he returned from hospital, Ali found that his door handle had been covered with an acidic substance that causes burns on contact. Pray that Ali will be protected at the centre and will quickly be granted asylum; it would be very unsafe for him to be returned to Afghanistan, where Christian converts face jail or even death.

Saturday 3 Every year over 700 Christian girls in Pakistan are kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam and married to their Muslim kidnapers. According to a senior church leader, this number is growing “at an alarming rate”. The Pakistani authorities often refuse to intervene because many of these crimes are carried out by powerful and influential Muslim families. The girls are often severely beaten, raped and held as virtual prisoners. Those who manage to escape back

to their families are considered apostates from Islam and accordingly are at risk of being killed. Pray that the attitude of Muslims towards Christian women in Pakistan will change and that authorities will start protecting them. Pray for the women and girls enduring these horrific ordeals, that they may experience the Lord's presence with them.

Sunday 4 “**Christian Dalits are crushed by double discrimination, purely on the basis of their faith,” said a senior church leader in India this July, when thousands of people took part in a three-day hunger strike and march on parliament. They appealed to the government to grant Christian and Muslim Dalits equal rights with their Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh counterparts, as guaranteed in India’s constitution. Pray that the Indian authorities will be moved by their protests and start giving fair treatment to all minorities, instead of discriminating in favour of religions that originated in India. Pray too that Christian Dalits may bear up under the pain of their unjust suffering (1 Peter 2:19).**

Monday 5 On 19 July five Christian families in Sri Lanka were attacked by a mob of around 50 people, who damaged their houses, demolished a grocery shop belonging to one of the families and badly beat up the owner. On 10 July a pastor was assaulted by a Buddhist monk and required hospital treatment for his injuries. On 5 June a church was desecrated with human waste, and then a 200-strong mob forced their way into the Sunday morning service. Police arrived, but instead of dealing with the aggressors, they asked the pastor to stop the service. Christians in Sri Lanka frequently experience such attacks and

harassment from Buddhist extremists. Pray for their protection, and for the spread of the Gospel in Sri Lanka.

Tuesday 6 “We are afraid the Burmese soldiers will be attacking our village at any time. We had to leave everything behind. Our cows, our oxen, our farmland. Everything. We don’t know when it will be safe to go back.” Thousands of Christians have been forced to flee their homes in Kachin State, Burma (Myanmar), since fighting erupted in June between the Burmese military and rebel troops. The army has cleared whole villages by threatening violence against the inhabitants, and in August they seized control of a church in the village of Katsu and turned it into a military outpost. Most Christians in Burma are members of ethnic minority peoples, and they can be targeted both for their ethnicity and for their faith. Pray for an end to the hostilities, and for the current process of political change to benefit the country’s Christians.

Wednesday 7 Laos is hard ground for the Gospel of Christ. The churches are acutely mistrusted by the Communist authorities, who weigh them down with various kinds of intolerance, repression and harassment. They suffer legal penalties, stifling restrictions, and localised persecution, and their families and communities sometimes join in attacking them. Yet praise God that despite all these difficulties the churches are growing; pray that this growth will continue, and that believers will remain faithful under pressure. Pray that they may be given greater freedom to practise their faith, and that the Lord will protect them from their persecutors.

Thursday 8 Pray for the Lord's people in Indonesia in the face of hostility from the Muslim majority. On 1 August, a mob of around 100 people arrived at a house that was being used for worship by an unregistered church in Logas Tanah Darat, Riau, Sumatra. They threatened church members with knives before dousing the building with petrol and setting it alight. The night before, a nearby house that was also used as a church had been burned to the ground. Pray for the believers who have lost their meeting spaces; pray that they will still be able to meet together. Give thanks that there were no casualties in these attacks.

Friday 9 "There is no way that we can stop ourselves from falling from the cliff of despair if we look only at the reality," says one Christian from North Korea. "Jesus saves us from it. We try to be positive always, whatever situation we face." Give thanks for the faithfulness of God's people in this stricken country, where anti-Christian persecution is perhaps more fierce than anywhere else in the world. Pray that He may uphold the tens of thousands toiling in brutal labour camps, enduring torture or risking execution for their Christian activities. Pray too for Christians struggling to survive in the midst of grinding poverty. Pray for a bakery supported by Barnabas that provides jobs for Christians and gives away food to hungry children.

Saturday 10 "The pain is like thousands of arrows piercing my heart and I often am unable to eat or sleep." The wife of missing Chinese Christian lawyer Gao Zhisheng (45) fears that he may have been killed by the authorities. They have had no news of his whereabouts since his probationary sentence expired on 14 August. Gao was arrested and

convicted of subversion in 2006 after taking on a series of cases in which he defended the rights of China's unregistered churches ("house churches"). During his five-year sentence, Gao has disappeared six times; on each occasion, he has reportedly been detained and tortured. He has been missing since April 2010, and repeated enquiries to the Chinese authorities have met with no response. Pray for his safe release, and for his family in their distress.



Christian lawyer Gao Zhisheng has not been seen since April 2010 (Source: www.voanews.com)

Sunday 11 Adnan al Aroor, an influential Syrian sheikh who has helped to encourage the uprising against the country's president Bashar al-Assad, has said that all opponents of the revolution will be "torn apart, chopped up and fed to the dogs". His comments have fuelled fears about what the future may hold for Syrian Christians as Islamists gain increasing influence over the demonstrations. Christians are assumed to be supporting the government, having been well-treated and given a good measure of religious freedom under Assad. They have mostly stayed away from the protests, despite pressure to join in. Some have already been killed, and a senior church leader in one area told Barnabas Fund that gunfire had been preventing worshippers from going to church there. Pray for peace in Syria and that Christians there will find refuge in the God who does not change amid the tumult around them.

Monday 12 The government of Kazakhstan is renewing its persistent efforts to restrict religious freedom in the country. A proposed new religion law has been approved by parliament and, if approved by the president, will require all religious groups to re-register with the state and supply detailed information about their beliefs and original leaders. Any new place of worship will require the approval of national and local authorities. Christians and other religious minority groups are concerned that the move is a further attempt to restrict their activities. The government previously tried to amend the religion law, in 2008, increasing the harshness of penalties for unregistered religious activities, but was blocked by the Constitutional Council. Pray that this law too will not be implemented and that everyone in Kazakhstan will enjoy full religious freedom.

Tuesday 13 Pray for the churches of Kyrgyzstan as they serve Christ in the face of large-scale emigration. In the last few years more than 16,000 people have left the churches for Russia, Europe and the USA. Many of these were leaders, so there is a shortage of trained people to carry forward the work of the Gospel. A Christian leader in Kyrgyzstan, who shared this need with Barnabas, asks for prayer that the Lord will raise up new leaders to proclaim His Word and build up His people. Pray too that the government will uphold the country's constitutional commitment to freedom of religion, and that Christians will be set free from the stifling restrictions that impede their worship and witness. Pray that they may grow in numbers, maturity and unity, and ask for God's blessing on a Bible school supported by Barnabas, that it may equip its students for effective ministry.

Wednesday 14 Life in the villages of Kyrgyzstan can be very hard for Christians. Since the violent uprising in the capital, Bishkek, in 2010 the country has lacked strong leadership, and some Muslims have been exploiting the power vacuum to make trouble for the churches. In some places the Muslims join with the village elders to put pressure on Christians over issues such as the burial of converts from Islam in local cemeteries. The authorities seem powerless to enforce the law and protect the Christians. Pray for the establishing of effective government throughout the country, and that the Lord will protect His people from harassment. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Thursday 15 Christians in Iraq continue to face acute insecurity. In August, five churches in Kirkuk, in the north of the country, were targeted with bombs in the space of three weeks. On 2 August, a car bomb exploded near one church, severely damaging the building and surrounding homes; 23 people were injured. On the same day, police discovered vehicles packed with explosives outside two other churches in Kirkuk and defused the bombs. Two weeks later, another church was badly damaged when a bomb was detonated outside. Then on 21 August, police foiled an attempted bomb attack on a fifth church. The attacks followed the opening of a new church in Kirkuk in July, the first to be built in Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion. Pray that Christians in Kirkuk will be allowed to worship in peace and without fear of attack.

Friday 16 Pray for the vulnerable Christians of Libya as the country begins to rebuild after the ousting of its long-term leader, Muammar Gaddafi. Only the Lord knows the number of converts from Islam to Christianity,

but they are few and often isolated, and they suffer intense pressure from family and community. Pray that the current political changes will not produce a more strongly Islamic government that will persecute them even more severely, but that they will be given greater freedom to practise their faith. Pray too for protection for the expatriate Christian community in Libya at this uncertain and perilous time.

Saturday 17 Many Christian women in Northern Sudan, some of them young mothers with their babies, are in jail for not following the version of sharia law prescribed by the government. This includes being fully covered and having a male escort when in public. Barnabas Fund is supporting a women's prison ministry in Khartoum, providing relief



Imprisoned Christian women in Northern Sudan at a service in the prison

aid and medical treatment as well as a spiritual programme inside the prison. Pray that the pastor and his volunteers will be able to continue to serve Christian women through their hard times. The Islamic government of Sudan has threatened to put an end to Christian ministry in the country following the independence of the South.

Sunday 18 Pray for the Lord's protection for Christian girls in Egypt, who often live in terrible danger of being tricked or

forced into Islam. A recent investigation by an Egyptian human rights group exposed an organised Muslim ring that has been systematically encouraging young Muslim males to approach Christian girls aged 9 to 15 and to manipulate them through sexual exploitation and blackmail. The plan aims to compromise Christian girls so that they feel defiled and humiliated and flee their homes. Conversion to Islam is then used as a "solution" to their problems. Christians say that they are receiving no help from the government or the police to overcome this strategy. Pray that these cruel attempts to further the creeping Islamisation of Egyptian society will be suppressed.

Monday 19 Thank God that Eritrean Christian Eyob Mussie has been spared execution in Saudi Arabia. He was threatened with the death penalty after sharing his faith with Muslims in the country earlier this year. But he is far from out of danger. The Saudi authorities have decided to deport him to Eritrea, which is widely regarded as one of the worst places in the world to be a Christian. Eyob may face prison, torture and even death in Eritrea, where thousands of Christians are imprisoned without trial in horrendous conditions. The latest news was that he was being held in a deportation centre while arrangements were made for his return. Pray that Eyob will know God's peace and will be kept safe wherever he goes.

Tuesday 20 "We thank God for Barnabas Fund who has a particular burden for Christian families who are often overlooked in relief efforts and would not have been helped throughout this crisis." These words from a Christian leader in East Africa illustrate the grave difficulties often

faced by Christians at times of natural disaster: in the minority and treated as second-class citizens, they may easily be overlooked or ignored when local people distribute government and international aid. Pray for Christians in Muslim-majority contexts in East Africa, that help from their Christian brothers and sisters will reach them in their urgent need. Ask the Lord to renew their hope as they trust in Him (Romans 15:13).

Wednesday 21 Juma Nuradin Kamil became another Christian victim of militant Islamists in Somalia when he was beheaded in the south-west of the country. He was found on 2 September, his head severed from his body and put on his chest. Juma was killed by al-Shabaab, a terrorist group linked to al-Qaeda that controls most of southern Somalia. It wages war against “enemies of Islam”; many Somali Christians have been murdered by Muslim radicals in recent years. Pray for all those who mourn his loss. And pray for the small and endangered churches in Somalia, that the Lord will protect and encourage His people there.

Thursday 22 The popular holiday destination of the Maldives is far from an island paradise for its beleaguered Christians. The country is overwhelmingly Muslim, and Islam is the only recognised religion. The small number of Christians suffer surveillance, ostracism and discrimination. Earlier this year new regulations were issued that include a penalty of up to five years in prison for anyone who spreads Christianity (or any other religion than Islam). Pray for courage for our brothers and sisters, and that despite the restrictions on their activities they may find opportunities to grow in their faith and to spread the Good News. Pray too for greater tolerance of non-Muslims in the Maldives.

Friday 23 “We will never accept any system of governance apart from the one described by Islam because that is the only way Muslims can be liberated.” This statement from the Islamist militant group Boko Haram earlier this year was a prelude to a spate of deadly attacks on Christians in Northern Nigeria. In June and July three churches were bombed, leaving 14 people dead, while two church leaders were murdered by gunmen. Boko Haram, known as “the Nigerian Taliban”, are fighting to establish an Islamic state in the mainly Muslim North of Nigeria. Pray that the authorities will succeed in ending the rampant lawlessness there, and that God will be a shield around His people and vindicate them against their enemies (Psalm 3:3).

Saturday 24 Rejoice with Christians in Algeria, where the Protestant Church Association (EPA) has received a licence from the Minister of Interior which grants all of its affiliated churches the right to meet and worship freely. The licence, received on 18 July, cancels out a police notice issued in May that threatened the permanent closure of all Christian places of worship throughout the country that had not been designated for religious purposes. Give thanks for this good news, and pray that the process of registration for individual churches in Algeria may go smoothly and that applications will be met with a positive response from the authorities.

Sunday 25 **As we celebrate today the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, pray for all those who suffer discrimination, harassment and injustice for His sake. Remember especially those persecuted brothers and sisters**

who will not have enough to eat today, those languishing in prison and separated from their loved ones, and those who can attend a Christmas service only at risk of their liberty or even their lives. Pray that the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) will give them His peace in their distress. Pray too for the suffering churches in the land of His birth, that they may be able to worship Him in peace this Christmas.

Monday 26 Give thanks today for the courage and faithfulness of those who have given their lives for Christ in the past year, and pray that He may comfort their families and friends. Pray too for those Christians who face the possibility of death for their Lord even today, that He will give them strength to stand firm in the face of pressure and persecution, like Stephen, the first recorded Christian martyr (Acts 7:54 – 8:1). Pray too for those who threaten and attack them, that the endurance and graciousness of the Christians will speak powerfully to them of the love and mercy of God.

Tuesday 27 Aslam Masih, a 30-year-old Christian man imprisoned on a false charge of blasphemy in Pakistan, died on 9 September.



Aslam Masih

He had fallen ill with various diseases, and was denied proper medical care. He was kept in solitary confinement without access to a toilet, water or electricity. He was receiving basic treatment in the prison hospital but required more specialised care; however, the prison authorities initially refused to allow him to go to a regular hospital in case he was assassinated.

Aslam had been in prison in Lahore since his arrest in February 2010, having been falsely accused under Pakistan's harsh "blasphemy law". His family did not visit him during his time in prison, probably for fear of reprisals, and were not even there to collect his body. Pray for all Christians unjustly imprisoned for blasphemy in Pakistan.

Wednesday 28 Continue to uphold Aasia Bibi, a Christian mother who is on death row in Pakistan falsely accused of blasphemy. An appeal has been lodged at the Lahore High Court, and Aasia was expected to be executed in November if it failed. But it now seems likely that she will be remain in jail for years awaiting a hearing. There is a five-year backlog of cases and, given the controversy surrounding her case, the court may be reluctant to bring it forward until the furore over it has died down. However, a Barnabas contact reports that she is strong in the Lord, and that she is well protected in prison from possible assassination. Pray that justice will be done for Aasia and that the Lord will keep her and her family in perfect peace as they trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3).

Thursday 29 Pastor Seng Aroun and three other Christians were holding a meeting in a home in Sounya village in Luang Namtha province, Laos, on 10 July when the home was raided. They were arrested and charged with assembling for worship without approval. All but Pastor Aroun were released after three days. Christians in Sounya village have been meeting in homes since the authorities destroyed their church building two years ago, but now they have been forbidden to worship in private homes. Other Christians have also been arrested in Laos in the past year. Please lift our brothers and sisters to the Lord and

pray that they will continue to stand firm in Him through their times of trial. Pray too for increased freedom for Christian to meet together.

Friday 30 Please continue to pray for the homeless and persecuted Christians from Katin village in the Saravan province of Laos. They were hounded out of their homes in 2010 and have had to survive for months in temporary shelters at the edge of the jungle. They are mainly living off roots from the jungle, until their rice is ready to harvest, as they are mostly farmers and unable to hunt, and they have only dirty water to drink. Village officials threatened to shoot them if the government tried to move them back. At the time of writing they are still in the jungle, very vulnerable to being driven away. Pray that they may be provided with a permanent place to settle in peace. Ask that they may find God to be for them “a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat” (Isaiah 25:4).

Saturday 31 Many people in the non-Western world believe that the Western New Year is a Christian festival. So it can often be a time of increased violence against Christian minorities, particularly in Muslim-majority contexts. Last New Year’s Day a suicide bomber detonated explosives outside a church in Alexandria, Egypt, just as worshippers were coming out of a service, leaving the street strewn with bodies and blood. Pray for the congregation as they commemorate the 21 Christians who perished that day. Pray too for protection for our brothers and sisters throughout the world at this time. “May your unfailing love rest upon us, O LORD, even as we put our hope in you” (Psalm 33:22).



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Cover: A Christian woman weeps in the aftermath of anti-Christian violence in Jos, Nigeria