

Barnabas Prayer Focus

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Nigeria – Fulani militants exploit lockdown to launch series of murderous attacks

Fulani militants killed at least eight Christians and injured scores of others on 12 May in one of a series of murderous attacks on villages in Nigeria's Middle Belt launched during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Large numbers of gunmen stormed the villages of Bakin-Kogi, Idanu and Makyali, in the Kajura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, causing families to flee into the bush and to neighbouring communities.

The militants exploited the fact that the authorities refocused scarce security forces on combatting the coronavirus, knowing Christian villagers had no choice but to stay at home where they were left defenceless.

Barely 24 hours earlier, on 11 May, a large gang of heavily armed militants attacked Gonan Rogo village in the same area, killing 17 Christians, including seven children, a six-month-old baby and a 70-year-old.

On 5 May, three Fulani militants broke into Messiah College Mission, a Christian high school in Plateau State, and shot its headmaster, Pastor Bayo Famonure, his wife, and two sons as they took part in evening prayers.

The gunmen demanded money from the pastor and, when he replied there was none, they shot him in the head and leg. His wife, Naomi, was shot in the back, and their sons, Adua and Victor, were shot in the feet. The gang then fled.

The pastor said that the family's escape was a "miracle". "Yes, [I was] shot in the head but bullet didn't enter. [I was] shot in my feet but missed the bones. Just praise God," he wrote.

On 3 May, four members of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) were ambushed and killed as they travelled from Kwell village to Miango Town, in Plateau State.

Three Christian men, all married,

were shot dead in a Fulani attack on 25 April in Kikwari village, also in Kauru local government area. Two days earlier, on 23 April, four others were killed in a Fulani militant attack on the predominantly Christian village of Chawai.

On Sunday 19 April, Fulani militants shot dead three women, and a man died of a suspected cardiac arrest, during a raid on the Christian Nitiriku village in Kaduna State.

"They looted houses, taking away whatever they could including cattle and foodstuff and destroying anything they could not carry," said village leader, Dauda Rogo.

Rogo, also a retired pastor, said Fulani militants first attacked his village in 2016, when they killed 37 people. "Since then they have been coming in from time to time killing people silently, one or two here and there in their farms," he said. "This is specifically targeting Christians."

Bring to the Lord our brothers and sisters in Nigeria. Pray that those who have lost loved ones in the attacks will be comforted (Job 5:11). Ask that the LORD will be a strong tower of protection for Christian villagers (Proverbs 18:10) and that the gunmen will lay down their weapons (Ezekiel 33:11). Praise God for His hand of protection over Bayo and his wife Naomi, who suffered only relatively minor injuries despite being shot in the head and back respectively.

Myanmar (Burma) – Abducted, presumed-dead pastor released alive after 14 months captivity

A pastor in Myanmar (Burma) who was abducted from his home at gunpoint by Buddhist militants on 19 January 2019, and reported killed, has been released alive in Rakhine State.

Pastor Tun N. was released on 7 March by his kidnappers, thought to be members of the Arakan Army (AA), after 14 months held captive.

Now reunited with his wife and three children, the 42-year old described his captivity as "the most hellish time of my life, be it spiritually, mentally, and, in particular, physically".

The kidnap of Pastor Tun N. came weeks before the abduction of Pastor T. Tun (57), a father-of-five, who is thought to still be in captivity.

Thank God for answering the many prayers for the safe return of Pastor Tun N. to his family (Mark 11:24). Ask our healing LORD to comfort the pastor's physical, mental and spiritual wounds (Jeremiah 30:17). Pray also for the release for Pastor T. Tun.

Pakistan – New minorities commission welcomed as "important step" for protection of religious freedom

The long-awaited National Commission for Minorities, inaugurated in Pakistan on 5 May, is an important step towards greater religious liberty and equality.

The terms of reference for the minorities commission include ensuring that non-Muslim communities' places of worship are preserved and kept in a functional condition. The commission will also seek to amend laws that are reported to discriminate against religious minorities.

The new National Commission for Minorities will have twelve "non-official" members including three Christians, three Hindus, two Muslims and two Sikhs, and one representative from each of the Parsi and Kalash communities. The six "official" members comprise five senior civil servants and a senior scholar of Islam.

Praise God for this long awaited development, which has brought much encouragement to Christians and other minorities in Pakistan. Lift up the new members of the minorities commission and pray that the Lord will use them to bring peace and justice for all in

Pakistan. Pray that the three Christian members especially may have wisdom from the Lord (James 1:5). Ask that they will help to end discrimination against religious minorities and help to bring an end to the notorious “blasphemy” law which is so dangerous for non-Muslims.

Pakistan and East Africa – Farmers braced for third devastating wave of locusts

Farmers in Pakistan and East Africa are braced for a third wave of locusts expected to hatch in June and July, with warnings that the swarms could spread across the Sahel and West Africa as well.

Billions of insects devastated crops in the first wave earlier in 2020, then a deadly second wave numbering in the trillions ravaged a precious second planting of crops.

The locust plague, on a scale unknown in at least a generation, represents an “unprecedented threat” to food security and livelihoods, according to the UN. The disaster comes at a time when the region is also economically disabled by the Covid-19 crisis.

East Africa is contending with additional hardship caused by torrential rains that have resulted in flooding and landslides. At least 100,000 people have been displaced in Kenya alone. The waters have washed away 8,000 acres of crops that had escaped locust damage. Barnabas has provided food supplies for Christian families affected by locusts and flooding.

Poorer Pakistanis, including many Christians, have suffered a disastrous loss of income because locusts have devoured their crops and they are struggling to feed their families.

Barnabas has provided food parcels to 700 vulnerable Christian Pakistani farming families in southern Sindh province, which was particularly badly hit by the locust invasion. Thako and his wife, Dannie, said the parcel came as “an answer to their prayers” because they had almost nothing left to feed their four children. “We were praying God to send angels to help,” said Thako. “Our prayers brought results and God sent Barnabas to feed us poor farmers.”

Pray that the LORD will stop the locust plague, just as He did in the time of Moses (Exodus 10:19). Ask for God’s intervention to relieve the suffering of the hungry in these times of food catastrophe (Hebrews 4:16).

Uzbekistan – Christians ask for prayer as new law on freedom of religion is drafted

Uzbekistan was once the harshest Central Asian country for its treatment of Christians. But President Mirziyoyev, elected in December 2016, has shown a more tolerant attitude. On election, he promised to relax religion laws and there have been many positive changes, for example, people are no longer fined for gathering in unregistered churches and storing religious literature. Consideration of a new draft law on freedom of religion was resumed by the Uzbek parliament in late May, following a break during coronavirus lockdown.

Christians have asked for urgent prayer that the new law will remove the present restrictions on church registrations and ministry activities, and officially abolish fines for possessing religious literature. Pray that the law will be written in accordance with international law.

“Everything is possible for God!” wrote an Uzbek pastor to Barnabas Fund, as he requested urgent prayer on this.

Lift up in prayer the parliamentarians of Uzbekistan and ask for the LORD’s hand and guidance over every aspect of their work as they finalise the new law (Isaiah 30:21). Give thanks for the greater tolerance shown by the president for the Church and ask that further progress will be made towards granting Christians the freedom to worship without fear of persecution.

Covid-19 – Pray for those who suffer during global pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic continues to grip the world, with five million cases confirmed globally at the time of writing. The rate of infection continues

to rise in some countries, while other parts of the world are beginning to lift lockdown restrictions.

Amid the anxiety and hardship of the Covid-19 global crisis, and the immense suffering of those who lost all their income when lockdown began, the generosity of our supporters has been a shining light. Thanks to your donations, Barnabas Fund has sent food aid for more than 250,000 Christians, hygiene products for more than 14,000 Christians and support for more than 6,400 church leaders.

A pastor in Bangladesh shared with us this comment from one of his congregation who received food aid from Barnabas: “This morning I was mourning but now I am smiling because I know what life without food is and life with food. Praise God. Thank you so much. May God bless you abundantly.”

Christians are being denied government food aid in some parts of the world where they are routinely discriminated against. In India, Pastor “James” went to collect food that the central government is providing to poor and needy families affected by the Covid-19 lockdown, but the distribution was organised by local Hindu groups, who dominate the government in the state where Pastor James lives. They refused to give him anything unless he renounced his faith in the Lord Jesus. Of course, Pastor James would not deny his beloved Saviour, so he went home empty-handed to his hungry family.

Our project partners in India are now caring for Pastor James and many other Christian families, providing them with rice, flour, cooking oil, potatoes, onions, salt and spices as well as face masks and soap.

Pray for all those who are suffering because of coronavirus lockdowns and ask that they fix their eyes on our Saviour Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2-3). Ask that Christians across the world grow in faith during these uncertain times and learn to trust utterly in the LORD who will make their paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). Give thanks for the generosity of our supporters, whose continued giving makes Barnabas’ work possible.

“Whoever loses their life for me and for the Gospel will save it.” Mark 8:35

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