



barnabasprayer

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

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

SEPTEMBER/
OCTOBER 2021

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

WEDNESDAY 1 “The IDPs are tired of running,” said an official from a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chin State, as 5,000 people, already

displaced, had to uproot themselves again and flee when the Myanmar army launched artillery strikes on villages and IDP camps in the mainly Christian region. The military government has blocked humanitarian aid from getting there. In Kayah State, which also has a large Christian population, the UN has warned of “mass deaths from starvation, disease and exposure” after “brutal, indiscriminate attacks” against civilians displaced many tens of thousands. Ask that the Lord, who can move the hearts of kings (Ezra 1:1), will cause those in power in Myanmar to stop persecuting their own people.

THURSDAY 2 The highly infectious Delta variant of Covid-19 has been surging through Myanmar’s Chin region, whose population is mainly Christian. In June 48 pastors died, followed by another nine in the first week of July. A church



Injured Christians in Myanmar taking shelter in caves in the jungle

leader appealed for prayers for the end of the pandemic, violence, wars, poverty and hunger. Pray for all the sick and bereaved, especially those who have lost their pastor just at the time when they are in greatest need of spiritual comfort.

FRIDAY 3 Four people died and at least eight were injured in a midnight attack on a church building in Loikaw, Kayah State, Myanmar on Sunday 23 May. The building was full of civilians, mainly women and children and elderly, taking shelter from the ongoing fighting. After the attack many people fled into the jungle. Join with Christians in Myanmar as they ask the Lord for justice and peace in their country, where Christians have been severely persecuted for many decades.

SATURDAY 4 Three pastors from Kachin State, Myanmar, have been arrested for leading prayers for peace in their country, which has been wracked with conflict since a military coup on 1 February. The pastors were detained on 28 June in connection with a prayer service they had organised, and charged with incitement to cause fear and other offences, potentially resulting in three years' imprisonment. The pastors are in their 60s and 70s. One has stomach and kidney problems and another is recovering from a stroke. Pray for strength to survive the rigours of prison and that they will soon be released if that is the Lord's will.

SUNDAY 5 Lord Jesus, who said, "Come to me, all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest", You know that many people are struggling and worn down by the long pandemic. Strengthen them and help them to find rest in

You. Some of us have become weary in well doing, as we have kept giving and caring throughout these difficult times. Refresh us, so that we may continue helping others. Give us new joy in taking every opportunity to do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Matthew 11:28; Galatians 6:9-10)

MONDAY 6 Muslims in Mosiya village, eastern Malawi, have given an ultimatum to a church to vacate what they called "Muslim territory". The church had angered the local Muslim community by not allowing Muslim girls attending the church school to wear a hijab. A letter from the Muslim community said, "We will use whatever means to force the church to move ... especially if it fails to bow down to our command." Mosiya is in a Muslim-majority area, although Malawi as a whole is about 77% Christian. Pray that a Christian presence and witness will continue in Mosiya despite these threats.

TUESDAY 7 In a letter dated 1 June, the Uganda Joint Christian Council called on Janet Museveni, Minister for Education (and wife of the president), to eliminate a bias against Christian doctrine in the Religious Education Curriculum for schools. God the Father and God the Son are never mentioned. Instead God is equated with the Islamic deity Allah, and Jesus with Isa in the Quran. The result, say the UJCC, is that Christian children convert easily to Islam. Pray for wise and righteous decisions amongst those who set the curriculum in this mainly Christian country that children may learn clearly what Christianity and Islam believe and know the difference between them.

WEDNESDAY 8 Abyei, in the north of South Sudan, has been described by a local Christian leader as “the hottest spot ever ... because of Islamic encroachments followed by harassments, intimidations and attacks frequently carried out by Arab militias” loyal to the former Islamic government of (North) Sudan. At 5.30 a.m. on Sunday 16 May, an attack by Arab militiamen on the village of Dungob-Alei resulted in 13 dead villagers and eight wounded. Pray that the Christians of Abyei, who face such frequent violence, will keep their focus on Jesus “who endured such opposition from sinners” so that they will not grow weary or lose heart (Hebrews 12:3).

THURSDAY 9 A tweet was issued earlier this year by the Atheists in Kenya Society, announcing that their Secretary, Mr Seth Mahiga, had resigned: “Seth’s reason for resigning is that he has found Jesus Christ and is no longer interested in promoting atheism in Kenya.” Praise our Lord who met with Saul when he was persecuting 1st century Christians (Acts 9:1-19) and now has met with Seth when he was trying to shake the faith of 21st century Christians. Pray that our brother Seth may go on to be used mightily to extend the Kingdom of his Lord and Saviour.

FRIDAY 10 Amanuel Wondimu (17) was a devout Ethiopian Christian who spent most of his time at his local church, where he served as a deacon. But on 11 May he was arrested, beaten and paraded in public. Then he was shot in the head at a roundabout in Dembi Dollo town, Oromia region, with passing vehicles forcibly stopped by police so that their occupants could

witness the killing. The authorities claimed that he was a member of the Oromo Liberation Army, but his family strenuously deny it. “The accusations against him are absurd,” said one. About 35 mourners at Amanuel’s funeral were detained by the police for some hours, including elderly people and Amanuel’s six-year-old sister. Other mourners were reportedly beaten. Pray for an end to the harassment of this family and for the Lord’s comfort for all who knew and loved Amanuel.

SATURDAY 11 Today is New Year’s Day in Ethiopia, called *enikutatash* (meaning “gift of jewels”). The last year has been a time of horror for Christians in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, with many slaughtered by the army of Ethiopia’s Marxist neighbour, Eritrea. Sexual violence, a scorched earth policy with destruction of health services and livelihoods, deliberate violation of church services, hunger used as a weapon of war – these are some of the things that Christians in Tigray have endured. By June nearly 90% of the population of Tigray were in need of food aid. Pray that the new year will be a happy and blessed one for them, bringing an end to their suffering.

SUNDAY 12 Our Father in heaven, we cry out to You for Christians in Eritrea suffering for their faith. We ask that those imprisoned under the repressive regime will know Your presence powerfully as they draw near to You in prayer. We praise You that many of our brothers and sisters have chosen to sacrifice their liberty, and often health, by refusing to sign a document renouncing their faith. We pray that the

severe limits on religious freedom will be relaxed, and that Christians will no longer feel compelled to seek refuge abroad. We bring our pleas to You in Jesus' Name.

MONDAY 13 Praise God for an initiative by the government of Croatia to provide scholarships for young Christians from contexts of persecution in Asia, Africa and the Middle East to study at Croatian universities. In places where impoverished Christians are too poor to access tertiary education, many are offered scholarships from Islamic sources to study for free in Muslim-majority countries or at Islamic institutions; this can result in conversions to Islam. The Croatian government has been overwhelmed with applications; ask that God will guide as they select which young people will be awarded scholarships.

TUESDAY 14 Today is the annual commemoration of the Greek Genocide, when Ottoman Turks strove to eliminate Greeks, along with other Christian minorities, from Asia Minor in the early 20th century. For Greeks, the worst atrocity was the “Great Fire of Smyrna”, lit by Turkish troops on 13 September 1922, which burned for ten days, leaving the port city in ashes. Many Greek and Armenian Christians died, while hundreds of thousands of newly homeless and terrified people were “surging back and forth on the blistering quay” trying to escape the flames. Pray to the Lord Jesus, the Living One, who told the first believers in Smyrna that they would suffer persecution for ten days but a crown of life awaited those who were faithful

to the point of death (Revelation 2:8-11). Ask that the remembrance of this terrible persecution will prevent future atrocities.

WEDNESDAY 15 There is a very active ministry to the deaf in Kyrgyzstan and many deaf Muslims have turned to the Lord. Typically the converts suffer persecution by relatives and friends. Pray that they will be able to withstand these experiences. The ministry is expanding and new fellowships for deaf believers are being formed in local churches, but more workers are needed, especially sign language interpreters. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers equipped with the specialist skills needed for this particular harvest field (Luke 10:2).



A conference for deaf Christians in Kyrgyzstan. The church premises were provided by Barnabas Fund many years ago

THURSDAY 16 Issyk-kul is a huge saltwater lake, which is a major tourist attraction in Kyrgyzstan. The region is strongly Islamic and one of the worst parts of the country for anti-Christian persecution. A Christian camp site by the lake, used for ministry, is being targeted. In November 2020 some

people tried to take it by force, but the police intervened. Now they are trying to get ownership through the courts. The first two hearings were won by the Christians, but their opponents have now filed a case with the Supreme Court as well as starting a second claim in the lowest court. The local Christian organisation which owns the camp site asks prayer that “God would give wisdom, strength and victory in this matter”.

FRIDAY 17 Nine-year-old “Ivan” attended an 18-day judo training camp in the Issyk-kul region of Kyrgyzstan in June. He was the only Christian and the only ethnic Russian at the camp. For the first two days he was teased by the other boys about his faith and ethnicity. Then on day 3 they began beating him, and repeated the beating every day until the end of the camp. The coach did nothing to intervene, but forced Ivan to continue training despite injuries to his head. When he got home he had a black eye, headaches, was vomiting and reciting Quranic verses. Pray that Ivan will be fully restored from his ordeal and strengthened in his Christian faith.

SATURDAY 18 After about six years of work, a new Religion Law was signed by the president of Uzbekistan on 5 July and came into force the next day. State sources promoted it as bringing an increase in religious liberty to this very strict country, but the difference is only slight and, while some restrictions have been lifted, others have been added. This is a disappointment for Christians because, under the current president, their situation had eased a little. Remembering that Jesus is ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation

1:5), pray that He will guide those in power in Uzbekistan to bring in greater freedoms. (Forum 18)

SUNDAY 19 Heavenly Father, we remember our brothers and sisters facing acute poverty due to discrimination and oppression. We bring before you Christian brick-kiln labourers in Pakistan, many of them burdened with the impossible task of paying back loans taken out in times of dire need. We praise you for those labourers released from poverty and pray that many more will receive financial help to be freed from such bondage. Please intervene for Christians throughout the world denied employment opportunities because of their faith in You. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

MONDAY 20 Shahzad Masih (36), a Christian factory worker in Pakistan, died on 20 June from severe internal injuries resulting from a brutally violent indecent assault, which the dying man said had been perpetrated by two Muslim co-workers. Shahzad had only been working at the factory a few weeks. The two accused were arrested and charged with murder. Pray that justice will be served and for an end to the violent attacks on poor and defenceless Pakistani Christians.

TUESDAY 21 Praise God for answered prayer for Shafqat Emmanuel and his wife Shagufta Kausar. The Pakistani Christian couple had been sentenced to death in April 2014 for “blasphemy” in relation to text messages which it was impossible for them to have sent as they are both illiterate. Now they have been acquitted in an appeal hearing at

the Lahore High Court. Pray for their protection from zealous Muslims who would still seek to harm them, sincerely believing that this would please Allah.

WEDNESDAY 22 Pray for Aasia Bibi and her family, who have settled in a safe country after she spent nearly eight years on death row in Pakistan, falsely accused of “blasphemy”. Every day Aasia thanks God for her freedom. She asks prayer for her disabled daughter Esha, who is now getting treatment that she could not have in Pakistan, for her and her family’s security, and for all suffering in prison in Pakistan that they will be given their freedom too. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Barnabas Fund has contributed towards the cost of a house for the family.

THURSDAY 23 Edwardes College in Peshawar, north-west Pakistan, was founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1900 and has been Christian-run ever since – until Pakistan’s Supreme Court ruled on 3 June 2021 that the management of the school must be handed over to the local government. Pakistani Christians were deeply unhappy. In 1972 most educational institutions in Pakistan were nationalised. In 2004 President Musharraf ordered the conditional re-privatisation of educational institutions that had belonged to the minorities, although fewer than half the Christian ones have actually been returned to them. Edwardes College continued to be Christian-run throughout. Although there is no earthly power higher than the Supreme Court to appeal to, pray to the God of justice that the decision will be reversed. “Blessed are all who wait for him!” (Isaiah 30:18)

FRIDAY 24 Kinnari is a Pakistani Christian widow with two children to support. Her brother used to help the family financially, but then he lost his factory job because of Covid-19. She has a brain tumour which has already made her blind in one eye and now she is losing the sight in her other eye. Kinnari is one of many hundreds of Pakistani Christian families that Barnabas is helping with food aid. “I do not know what the future holds for me and my family,” said Kinnari, “but I am so thankful to Barnabas Fund for their generosity in sending the help from thousands of miles away. I believe that I am not alone and people of God are standing with me.” Praise God for Kinnari’s example of trusting in God, and the peace it brings her as she views her circumstances with the eye of faith. Pray that her words will inspire believers around the world.



Kinnari and her children with food from Barnabas Fund

SATURDAY 25 After two decades, the US has withdrawn the last of its troops from Afghanistan. As the US troops left, Taliban fighters expanded their area of control in rural areas, re-imposing their ultra-strict form of sharia as they went. By mid-July the Taliban already claimed to control 85% of the country. As converts from Islam, Afghan Christians will be even more vulnerable under Taliban rule than under the Afghan government. If they are discovered they will be given the choice: convert, leave or be killed. Pray that the Lord will be their shield and their fortress, and that, in the midst of danger, they may affirm like David, “My heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.” (Psalm 28:7-8)

SUNDAY 26 We cry out to You, Lord, for the troubled land of Mozambique. We lift up to you the far north of the country, labelled the “land of fear” because of the terror and instability caused by Islamist violence. We pray for those whose loved ones have been killed and for three-quarters of a million people who have fled the violence and are now facing severe hunger as a consequence. Please provide for the physical and spiritual needs of Christians and others severely affected by the trauma and enable Your people to bring their fears to You. We ask this in Jesus’ Name.

MONDAY 27 Two women were injured when a bomb exploded inside a church in Beni, in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), on Sunday 27 June, one of three blasts that took place in the city over the weekend. The makeshift device exploded just before a service attended

by many children and their parents was due to begin. This area of the DRC was placed under a “state of siege” on 6 May by President Felix Tshisekedi because of rising violence from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an extremist Islamist group which has been launching attacks in the area for two decades. Although earthly powers seem helpless to stop the violence, pray to our heavenly King that He may “defend the afflicted among the people” (Psalm 72:4).

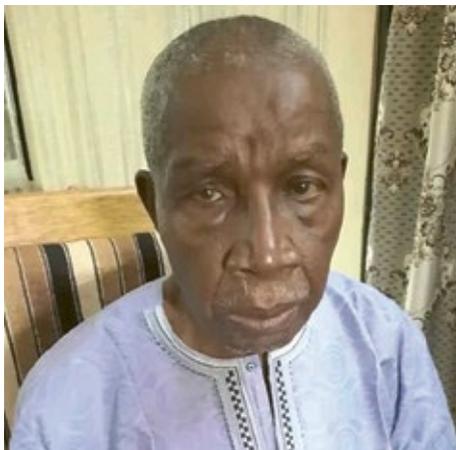
TUESDAY 28 In the midst of a celebration of new spiritual life and resurrection came physical death and destruction. Fifteen Christians were killed when armed men attacked a baptism ceremony in the village of Adjarara, northern Burkina Faso, on 18 May. It occurred in an area where international and regional armed forces are actively trying to stop jihadi violence. Recalling that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, pray that He will bring good out of this tragedy (Romans 8:28).

WEDNESDAY 29 The majority of Niger’s small Christian population live in the Tillabéri region, near the border with Mali and Burkina Faso. On 12 May “a horde of terrorists who came on motorcycles” attacked the village of Fantio in Tillabéri. They killed five people, wounded two and vandalised a church building. As the centre of global Islamist violence shifts from the Middle East to West Africa, and formerly peaceful countries like Niger become places of conflict, pray that our brothers and sisters will find that the Lord is the stability of their times (Isaiah 33:6 ESV).

THURSDAY 30 With the slaughter of Christians in parts of North and Middle Belt Nigeria unabated and largely unpunished, keep praying about Barnabas Fund's Open Letter calling for action to stop the persecution of Christians in Nigeria. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting at which we hoped it would be raised has been postponed again, because of Covid-19. At the time of writing no new date has been set, but our times are in God's hands, and more waiting means more opportunity to pray. Pray that when the Heads of Government finally meet they will act with wise diplomatic pressure and effective policies to bring about change.

October

FRIDAY 1 The kidnappings of Nigerian Christians also continue. On 20 May two more church ministers were abducted in Katsina State – Joe Keke (aged 75) and Alphonsus Bello (aged 33). The body of Alphonsus was found the next day, but



Joe Keke, a retired church minister, survived kidnapping

Joe was set free after two weeks. On 22 May eight Christians in Ondo State were abducted from their church bus by Fulani bandits and marched into the forest. At about 2 a.m. on 5 July gunmen kidnapped around 120 pupils from a Christian boarding school in Kaduna State. One was released because of ill health, five escaped and a group of 28 students was released almost three weeks later. Remembering the many promises in His Word about setting captives free, pray that the remaining pupils and many others who have been kidnapped will be released unharmed.

SATURDAY 2 Eight Christians were killed by armed bandits at Ungwan Gaida village, Kaduna State, Nigeria. A church building and several homes were burnt to the ground in the same attack, which occurred on 19 May. Pray for those who mourn for Bawa, Bitrus, Gideon, Samaila, Sambo, Samuila, Solomon and Umaru, asking also that the bereaved and those who have lost their homes will have Christ-like grace to forgive their enemies and persecutors.

SUNDAY 3 Lord Jesus, we lift before You those who have been bereaved through their loved ones' martyrdom. We thank You that You are the resurrection and the life and for Your assurance that whoever lives and believes in You will never die. Please grant that those who mourn will be comforted by the certain knowledge that their loved ones have been faithful and that the death of Your saints is precious in Your sight. Please inspire and encourage those who remain behind to stay faithful to their calling and to draw strength from the One who comforts those who mourn. (John 11:25)

MONDAY 4 In Campina Grande, Brazil, is a “Memorial to the Bible” building, constructed in 2011. Inside visitors can read the Scriptures in various languages, including Portuguese, Greek and Hebrew. On 19 June a bomb attack destroyed the door and one of the walls. It was an unusual event for Brazil, but a Brazilian Christian leader explained to Barnabas Fund that it is a symptom of growing hostility in the country to Christian values and principles. Pray that Christians in Brazil will be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves in this changing situation (Matthew 10:16 ESV).

TUESDAY 5 Three church buildings in Oran, Algeria, have been forced once more to close. The order was issued on 4 July and the churches were sealed on 7 July. This is the latest development in a legal battle that began in 2017 and has seen the churches closed, re-opened and now re-closed. Pray them open again, remembering the words about Jesus given to the persecuted congregation in another Mediterranean city long ago: “What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.” (Revelation 3:7)

WEDNESDAY 6 Praise God for a ruling by Israel’s Supreme Court to grant tax-deductible status to a non-profit organisation run by Messianic Jews (Jewish followers of Jesus). The organisation, called Yachad, which runs a messianic congregation called Tiferet Yeshua (Hebrew for “Glory of Jesus”), first applied several years ago but kept being refused, apparently on the grounds of its outreach activities. Pray that this ruling will set a precedent for the same status to be granted to other messianic organisations.

THURSDAY 7 At the time of writing, Lebanon continues in political deadlock. There are shortages of food, medicines, electricity and petrol/diesel. A lot of the damage caused by last year’s massive explosion in the port of Beirut is still not repaired. The Lebanese pound continues to tumble and salaries are all but worthless. In any case, many people have lost their jobs because of Covid-19. The middle classes are as helpless as the poor. “I can do without food myself, but I cannot let my children go hungry,” said a weeping Christian mother. Barnabas Fund is continuing to assist our brothers and sisters in Lebanon. Pray for Lebanon and for daily strength for our partners on the ground as they distribute the aid, trying also to bring encouragement and hope.



Sako was seriously injured in the explosion in Beirut last year, and his small shop was badly damaged. But he is much better now and Barnabas paid for a new door and windows for his shop

FRIDAY 8 “Operation Claw” is the name of a Turkish military campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan this year, which has destroyed acres of farmland and at least 800 beehives, making it impossible for many families to support themselves. Most of those affected are either Assyrian Christians, Kurdish Muslims or Yazidis. Chalke is a Christian village in the area, to which some people fled in early May when other villages were bombed by the Turkish forces. But then the villagers of Chalke decided to leave and, by 9 May, Chalke itself was empty except for one young man who stayed to tend his small flock of sheep. Pray that the Lord our Shepherd will bring peace and will lead His faithful people in Iraq beside quiet waters and green pastures to a place of rest, security and plenty (Psalm 23:2).

SATURDAY 9 Tomorrow elections will be held for the 325 parliamentary seats in Iraq. There are at least 34 Christians standing for election, amongst some 3,500 candidates representing 267 political parties grouped into 44 coalitions. The Iraqi electoral system reserves a minimum quota of five seats for Christians in the five provinces of Baghdad, Kirkuk, Erbil, Dohuk and Nineveh. Ask that the Lord’s hand will be over the elections, that those of His choice will be elected and will govern with justice and righteousness. Pray that Christians elected may use their earthly powers for the glory of their heavenly Father.

SUNDAY 10 Sovereign Lord, we ask for protection for Your people in Saudi Arabia. We stand with them in prayer as they are forced to follow You in

secrecy in a country where it is a capital offence to leave Islam. Thank You for recent signs of a slightly more lenient interpretation of Islam. We ask that there will be further moves towards freedom of religion. We ask that the vast wealth in Saudi Arabia will be channelled towards godly purposes and that You will awaken both government and people to the true riches of Your grace that are found in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray.

MONDAY 11 “Please pray for Nepali Christians ... We are losing many pastors and leaders. Even this morning we lost two pastors. Situation is very bad right now. More than 150 pastors and leaders are in hospitals, isolation and C19 positive. Many poor Christians have no food to eat.” This message came to Barnabas Fund from a Nepali Christian on 26 May, describing the pressures that the pandemic was bringing, on top of the poverty and harassment that they faced already. Our heavenly Father knows their situation today – ask Him to grant our brothers and sisters in Nepal strength, courage, health and hope. Barnabas Fund has sent food aid.

TUESDAY 12 Sikapai village, Odisha state, India, is a remote community of 40 families. About a decade ago, eight of the families became Christians and have suffered for this decision. Sometimes, for example, the women went to the well, about a kilometre away, but had to come back without water because of the intimidation they encountered. Earlier this year the houses of the eight families were destroyed by a mob, who did not even

allow the Christians to retrieve any possessions. “They can destroy our homes but not our faith in Jesus,” said Nori, one of the victims. The homeless believers took refuge in the forest. Pray that the Lord will protect and provide for them. Ask that, like other Christians before them, the eight families will joyfully accept the confiscation of their property, remembering that they have “better and lasting possessions” in Christ (Hebrews 10:34).

WEDNESDAY 13 In the village of Bodoguda, in Odisha state, India, twelve Christian families (about 17% of the village’s population) were building themselves a church when a crowd of around 150 armed extremists destroyed the half-constructed building. This was the third violent attack on the Bodoguda Christians and their buildings in about a year. Pray that they may have grace to count their trials pure joy and that their faith will grow as it is repeatedly tested (James 1:2-4).

THURSDAY 14 By the middle of June, over 2,000 pastors in India had died of Covid, leaving their congregations bereft just at the time they most needed pastoral care, for almost every church and every family had deaths. In addition to a devastating second wave of the coronavirus, there was an outbreak of the previously rare “black fungus” (mucormycosis) which posed an additional deadly threat to bodies weakened by the virus. Some Christian ministries were expected to close because there was no one left with the ability to lead them. Pray that, in the face of such danger, Indian Christians

will rely on Christ our cornerstone and sure foundation.

FRIDAY 15 On 1 June a new law came into effect in Gujarat state, India, stipulating that teachers and head teachers of secondary schools (high schools) will no longer be appointed by the schools but by a new Central Recruitment Committee. Church leaders fear that the law will dilute the Christian character of church schools and that it may be a first step in bringing them under full state control. Christians and other non-Hindu minorities in Gujarat have launched a legal challenge against the law. Pray that the law will be amended or repealed.

SATURDAY 16 Two weeks after the law on appointing teachers (see above), a new anti-conversion law came into force in Gujarat state, increasing the maximum sentence from four years to ten years in prison for trying to convert people by fraud, force or allurement. The definition of allurement was extended from cash or other material gifts to include the promise of “divine blessings”. If applied rigorously this could make it illegal even to tell a non-Christian that repenting and believing in Christ will bring forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Pray that Christians in Gujarat will take courage from the example of the apostles in a very similar situation and will obey God rather than human beings (Acts 5:27-29).

SUNDAY 17 Heavenly Father, help us to grieve with the Body of Christ around the world as so many have been lost to the coronavirus pandemic. We especially stand with Christians in India and Nepal, where over 2,000

pastors and Christian leaders have died of Covid. We ask that vital Christian ministries will not have to be closed down through lack of leadership, and pray that You will raise up new leaders full of faith and the Holy Spirit who will trust in You to supply strength and wisdom in embracing new responsibilities. We make our requests in Jesus' Name. (Acts 11:24)

MONDAY 18 The Koya tribal group in Odisha state, India, mostly follow a traditional animistic religion, but some have become Christians. Pray for a Koya Christian woman, whose husband, also a believer, died recently. Before his death, other Koya people, angered by his decision to follow Christ, had confiscated parts of his farmland and tried to obstruct his work on what remained to him. After his death, they buried him according to their own religion (having told his widow they would not bury him at all unless she re-converted to her former religion). They took money from her and even tried to beat her. "Today I have no other way," she explained to her pastor, "but I will not leave the Lord Jesus. I will come back again." Pray for our sister that she will continue strong in the Lord and ask that she will soon be able to join with other Christians to worship Him once more.

TUESDAY 19 Sri Lankan Christians have been caught up in several serious problems afflicting their country. There are many Christians amongst the western coastal fishing communities, whose livelihoods were affected when the *X-Press Pearl* container ship caught fire and eventually sank, spilling nitric acid and other chemicals

into the sea. Some have also been affected by floods and landslides and Covid-19 has caused many to lose their jobs and income, so that they are struggling to find their daily meals. Even some Christian leaders are suffering depression. Pray that our heavenly Father will provide for their needs, and that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will strengthen them, as they fix their eyes on Jesus who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

WEDNESDAY 20 An online report in July stated that customs officials in the Maldives Islands have intercepted envelopes addressed to government bodies, businesses and private homes which were found to contain "information about Christianity" in Dhivehi (the Maldivian language). The envelopes had been sent from a variety of countries. The Maldives is one of the strictest Islamic countries in the world. Maldivian law bans any literature which promotes values that are contrary to Islam. Pray that, despite the efforts of the customs officials, the Gospel will be made known in the Maldives and many will put their trust in the Lord Jesus as their personal Saviour.

THURSDAY 21 Please pray for our new Barnabas Food Box programme (see [food.gives](#) for more details). Praise God for those who have already donated dry goods (or money for shipping costs) and pray for all involved in the logistics of collection, packing, shipping and distribution. Ask the Lord to make smooth the way through customs and thank Him for opening up this opportunity to get help to our brothers and sisters in such need.

FRIDAY 22 “Is the fellowship of a few Christian brothers and sisters in someone’s house singing worship songs, reading the Bible and worshipping God acting against national security?” asked Nasser Navard Gol-Tapeh from prison in Iran in an open letter. A convert from Islam, he had been given a ten-year sentence because of his membership of a house church. Before beginning his sentence in January 2018, Nasser (now 60) had been the primary carer for his elderly mother. He is desperate to get out and resume his caring duties. Although eligible for parole, his requests keep being rejected. In June, after yet another rejection, he asked people to pray for him, saying that he needed “comfort from the Lord”. Ask the God of all comfort to be close to our brother and guard his heart and mind with a peace that transcends understanding (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Philippians 4:7).

SATURDAY 23 New amendments to the Religion Law and Administrative Code of Azerbaijan mean that churches have to get approval from the state for any leaders they want to appoint. The rule applies to all non-Islamic religious leaders in the Muslim-majority country. For the appointment of foreign-born leaders there are even more hurdles to overcome. Pray that the King of kings and Lord of lords will overrule the Azerbaijani decision-makers, so that the people of His choice will lead His Church there.

SUNDAY 24 **Lord Jesus Christ, we pray for our brothers and sisters in North Korea. We ask You to enable them to see clearly in the thick darkness of a**

country where owning a Bible can lead to imprisonment or even execution. Please enable them to grow in faith. We intercede for those suffering harsh treatment in labour camps and ask You to sustain them through the light of Your presence. We pray that these faithful disciples will feel the unity of Your Body around the world supporting them. Help us to suffer with our family in North Korea and bear their burdens in Your Name.

MONDAY 25 China is continuing its crackdown on Christians, with more churches and Christian ministries being removed from WeChat, China’s main social media platform. Those affected even include some officially registered churches. Christian search terms such as “Christ”, “Bible” and “Gospel” have been blocked. Pray that all the obstacles being thrown in the path of Christians by the Chinese authorities will only serve to strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters and help them to grow in perseverance.

TUESDAY 26 A group of schoolchildren from a madrasa (Islamic school) in Indonesia desecrated a Christian graveyard in Solo, Central Java, in June, breaking the crosses off twelve graves. The children were thought to be aged from 5 to 12, causing a shocked reaction across Indonesia because the perpetrators were so young. Many commentators, including the Muslim mayor of Solo, blamed the school for radicalising the children and teaching them to be intolerant. Thank the Lord for the outcry on behalf of Christians and pray that these youngsters will be taught to be compassionate, just and loving to all.

WEDNESDAY 27 Give thanks to God that Indonesian police discovered an anti-Christian terrorist plot before any attacks were launched. Several churches in Papua province were to have been targeted by suicide bombers. Another part of the plan was to assassinate one of Papua's most senior church leaders, which would have been the third attempt on his life. Thankfully, he was out of town when the previous two attempts were to be staged. Pray for the Lord's continued protection of His people in this very poor part of Indonesia.

TUESDAY 28 Several pastors in Java, Indonesia, have applied for permission to construct simple church buildings for their growing congregations of converts from Islam. In the meantime they rent premises for worship, but this is fraught with problems as rented properties are usually near residential areas, so the sound of the worship could cause complaints. Massive rent rises are not uncommon and sometimes congregations are evicted without warning. Applications for permits to build churches are dealt with extremely slowly in some places, and often refused. Ask God to intervene and cause permits to be granted and promptly.

FRIDAY 29 After Jewish leaders in Australia had called on the Australian government to recognise the Armenian Genocide, the Arab Council of Australia also added its voice, saying a formal act of recognition would give dignity to the victims and help "the healing of a community [including] many generations living with inherited trauma". Thank the

Lord for these developments and pray for the success of Barnabas Fund's petition to the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the UK for recognition of the Armenian, Assyrian, Syriac and Greek Genocide a century ago in which 3.75 million Christians died under Ottoman Turkish rule.

SATURDAY 30 Please bring before the Lord the tensions that Christians face daily in being faithful to their calling in countries with strict Islamic "blasphemy" laws. Pray that our brothers and sisters will remain firm under trial. Ask that they may have the courage to be visible disciples of Christ, despite the constant possibility of arrest for "blasphemy" if they say what they believe. Pray that they will know God's wisdom in communicating His love sensitively yet faithfully.

SUNDAY 31 **God our rock, be with us in this time of trouble. Be with our brothers and sisters who are marginalised and despised. God our comforter, be with us in this time of suffering. Be with our brothers and sisters who endure injustice and violence. God our protector, be with us in this time of evil. Be with our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for the sake of Christ. God our healer, be with us in this time of sickness. Be with our brothers and sisters wherever death stalks the land. God our hope, hear us, as we cry to You. Come to us and come to them. For You alone are the Hope of Your people. Restore us all, that we may sing Your praises in the house of the Lord. In the Name of Christ, Amen.**

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