

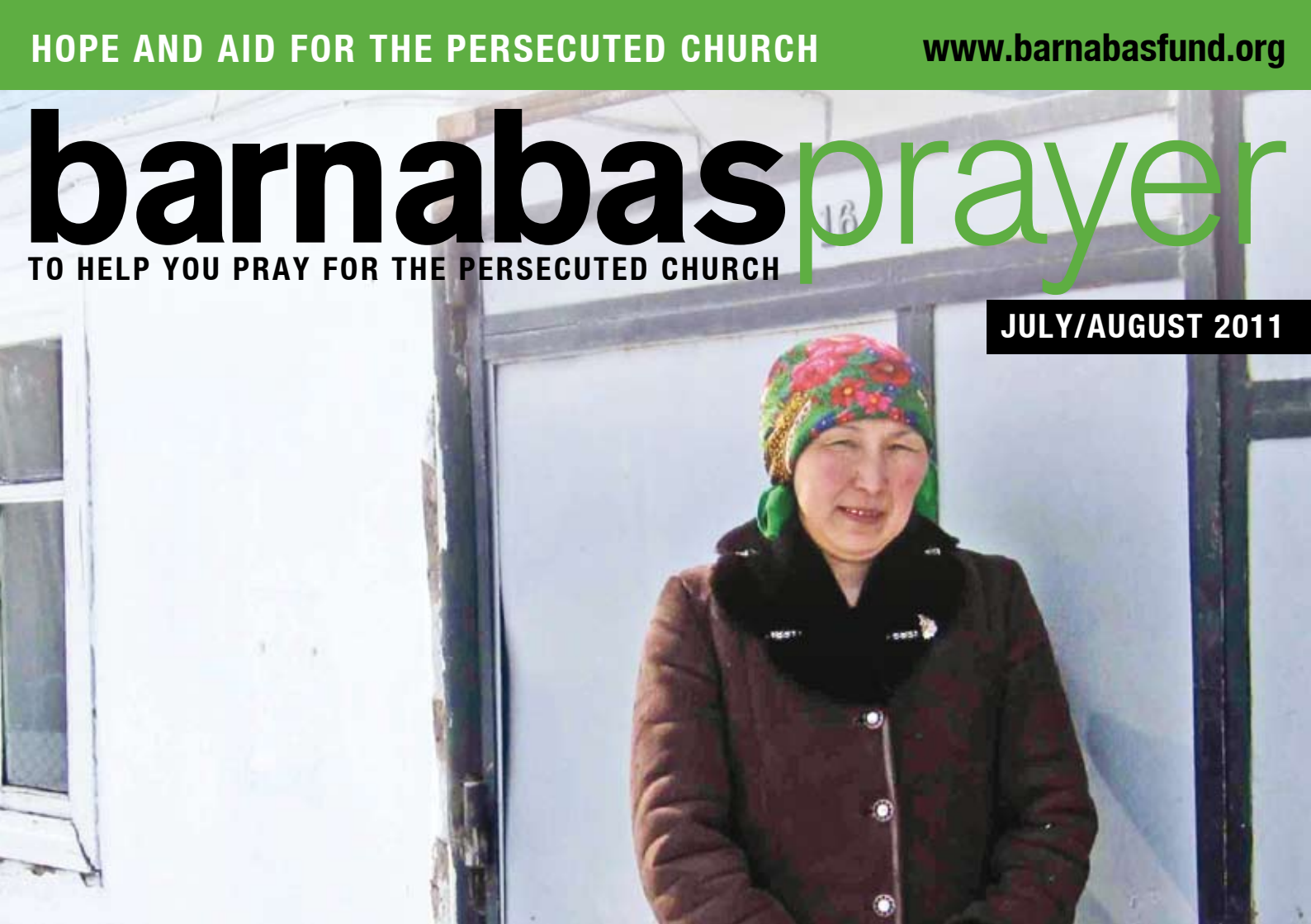
HOPE AND AID FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

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TO HELP YOU PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

JULY/AUGUST 2011



July 1 – 4

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.

July

Friday 1 Give grateful thanks to the Lord for the release of three Christians who were held in prison in Iran for 239 days. Sonia Keshish-Avanesian, Arash Kermanjani and his wife Arezo Teymouri were set free from Hamadan state prison on 30 April. Sonia's husband, Pastor Vahik Abrahamian, who was arrested with them on 4 September 2010, was kept in detention. They were accused of a variety of offences, including propagating Christianity in Iran, opposing the Islamic Republic and being connected with exiled opposition sources, allegations dismissed as absurd by their family and friends. Pray for Pastor Vahik's swift release and that all four will be able to recover from their terrible ordeal and resume their lives in peace.



Arash and Arezo

Saturday 2 Mustafa Shokrollahi and Khalil Yarali, two converts to Christianity in Iran, were temporarily freed from prison on 25 March after making bail payments of \$50,000 each. They had been locked up for more than two months without any official charge. Mustafa was arrested at the Islamic Intelligence Ministry in Amaniye district of Ahwaz after being repeatedly summoned there for interrogation about house churches and their activities. Khalil was also arrested at the Intelligence Ministry. Exorbitant bail payments are often demanded of Christians who are detained. Pray that our brothers will be cleared of all accusations against them and be able to live in freedom from fear of further persecution.

Sunday 3 **The Iranian government's aggressive crackdown on Christians, in particular the growing house church movement of converts from Islam, continues. Since June 2010, the arrests of 254 Christians in 33 Iranian cities have been confirmed; the real number is thought to be much higher. At the time of writing, 11 Christians were awaiting the verdict of their trial on 1 May for "activities against the [Islamic] Order", a charge relating to their involvement in a house church gathering. And six Christians who were previously sentenced to a year in prison for crimes against the Islamic Order were due to stand trial on a further charge of blasphemy. Pray that the Iranian authorities will have a change of heart towards Christians and allow them greater freedom to practise their faith.**

Monday 4 The head of the largest Christian denomination in Algeria received a notice, dated 22 May, from a High Police Commissioner telling him that a decision had been made "to close down throughout

the country all the Christian worship places, which are not designated for religious purposes, once and for all". The Commissioner threatened "severe consequences and punishments" for any violations. Most church buildings in Algeria have not been officially designated for worship because the churches have been unable to register with the authorities following stringent regulations introduced in 2006. The denomination addressed in the notice is Protestant and made up of converts from Islam and their children. Pray that this order will not be carried out, and that Christians will be allowed the freedom to meet and worship freely.

Tuesday 5 When Shouwang Church – one of the largest unregistered churches ("house churches") in Beijing – tried to meet outdoors for worship in April and May, many of its 1,000 members were detained by the police, were placed under house arrest or lost their homes and jobs. The Chinese authorities have repeatedly thwarted the congregation's efforts to buy or rent property, and it was recently turned out of its latest indoor meeting place. Pray that the authorities will grant them the freedom to worship in peace and not punish them any further.

Wednesday 6 Pastors in China have sent a petition to the Chinese government, the first of its kind in 60 years of Communist rule, calling for religious freedom and a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict involving Shouwang Church. The petition to the National People's Congress asks for a special commission to be set up to investigate events surrounding the church's clash with the authorities, and a review of China's current rules on religious affairs. It says, "We believe that the Shouwang Church incident is not an individual,

isolated episode that happens to a single church, but rather a typical phenomenon in respect of the conflict between state and church." Pray that the Lord will protect His people in China and that there will be an easing of the restrictions placed upon them.

Thursday 7 Persecution of Christians in China has worsened for the fifth consecutive year. New trends in anti-Christian persecution include full-scale suppression of Christian human rights lawyers; violent abuse, torture and "mafia-style" tactics; and severe crackdowns on official state churches. These were the findings of a report issued recently by *ChinaAid*, which also revealed that the number of people detained has risen by nearly 43%. Please pray that Christians will stand firm in their faith and that they will continue to proclaim Christ. Ask the Lord to turn the hearts of China's leaders, so that they will grant full religious freedom to all Christians.

Friday 8 Pray for Chinese Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who was taken into custody more than a year ago. According to *ChinaAid*, the Chinese authorities are refusing to disclose where he is being held or what his condition is; they will not even tell his family whether he is still alive. During a previous period of detention he was severely beaten and hideously tortured; "for 48 hours my life hung by a thread," he said. Pray for his safe release, and for his wife and two children, who are reported to be devastated emotionally and spiritually by what has happened to him.

Saturday 9 Pray for the Christians of Sudan as the South of the country gains its independence today. Sharia is in force in the mainly Muslim North, and the president has threatened to change the constitution to make Islam the country's only religion, sharia its only

law and Arabic its only official language. Pray that the Lord will protect His people in the North from even more severe repression. Pray too for the Christian majority in the South, that independence will bring them lasting peace and the opportunity to rebuild their land, which was shattered by decades of civil war. Pray for unity among the churches there.

Sunday 10 Praise God that in a period of seven months 60 Ethiopian evangelists, supported by Barnabas Fund, brought more than 2,200 people to Christ amongst 35 unreached people groups in remote areas of Ethiopia. They share the Gospel through friendship and one-to-one evangelism and spend much of their time teaching the newborn believers the basics of the Christian faith. Pray that their opportunities to share the Gospel will increase and that God will prepare the hearts of those who hear them. Pray for protection for the evangelists and converts as Islamic violence grows in Ethiopia.

Monday 11 Abraham Abera, a church worker in Ethiopia, died in a machete attack on 20 April. Abraham, his wife Bertukan and a third person were on their way to visit a sick friend when they were ambushed by six Muslims. Their companion managed to escape and alert the police, and the couple were taken to hospital, where Abraham was



Bertukan Abera

pronounced dead that evening. Abraham and Bertukan had been married for less than a year, and Bertukan was six months pregnant at the time of the attack. Give thanks that the unborn baby survived the ordeal and pray for a safe delivery. Pray also that Bertukan will find comfort in the Lord Jesus as she grieves for her murdered husband.

Tuesday 12 Pray for Christians in Ivory Coast, which has been torn apart by fighting following the disputed result of last November's presidential election. Atrocities were committed by both sides. Christians, who mainly live in the south of the country, have been particularly targeted by new president Alassane Ouattara's predominantly Muslim forces from the north, because they are associated with ousted president Laurent Gbagbo, a Christian from the south. Churches have been torched and Christians kidnapped, tortured and killed. The conflict created great humanitarian need, and Barnabas Fund has been supporting Christians affected by the crisis. Pray for those who have lost loved ones and/or property, that they will know the Lord's comfort and provision.

Wednesday 13 "We expect now Dr Ouattara to very rapidly put in place his plans to change the demographic and spiritual status of this country by a massive naturalisation of at least 5 to 10 millions of immigrants, which will end in turning this country into a Muslim state." This was the assessment of a senior Christian leader in Ivory Coast about the country's future under President Ouattara, a Muslim. The north has a large Muslim migrant community, and naturalising them would immediately create a Muslim majority in the electorate. It is feared that the country will become increasingly Islamic under his leadership. Pray that Ivory Coast's sizeable Christian community, 34

per cent of the population, will not become marginalised and will be allowed to practise their faith in peace.

Thursday 14 A UK parliamentary group has warned that there is a serious problem of radicalisation in British universities and has urged the government to tackle it as a matter of “utmost urgency”. A separate study has cited a list of 15 leading universities that have hosted extremist preachers, even including supporters of terrorist groups. Radical Islam of this kind is very hostile to Christianity and poses a lethal danger to Christians in many parts of the world. Pray that its foothold in the British educational system will quickly be removed.

Friday 15 Please pray for Barnabas Fund’s Operation Nehemiah, as we campaign for the maintaining of Christian values of freedom of conscience, speech and religion for the next generation in church and society. Pray especially for the impact of ACTS (Assisting Christianity Teaching in Schools), a school pack about Christianity provided for use in UK primary schools. Aimed at children aged 7 to 11, this is designed to assist schools in their presentation of Christianity and introduce Christian reference materials and reading books into school libraries. Pray that many churches will donate packs to their local schools. “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Saturday 16 Muslim radicalism is flexing its muscles in Denmark. The media are reporting that certain neighbourhoods and schools are no longer safe for Christians because of Muslim violence. An Iranian pastor living in the country has seen many Muslims become

Christians, but he has now had to go into hiding owing to Muslim intimidation. A famous Christian author has been attacked four times in the last six years and has even had to talk a young man out of murdering him. On the other hand, a commentator on Islam was charged with racism under Denmark’s “hate speech” law just for quoting statistics about the high level of violence against Muslim girls. Pray that the Danish government will take firm action to control anti-Christian activity and not give Islam a favoured status.

Sunday 17 **New Zealand is the leading global exporter of Islamic *halal* meat in the world. (*Halal* meat comes from animals that have been killed in accordance with Islamic sharia law and using a Muslim blessing.) The Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) charges the meat suppliers for *halal* certificates, and the suppliers then pass on some of the costs to customers all over the world. But it is also reported that over the past 20 years FIANZ has been providing grants for Islamic mission and has helped to finance the construction of mosques and Islamic centres in eight cities across New Zealand. Pray for the clear labelling of this *halal* meat in the shops and for the provision of alternatives, so that Christians will not buy it without knowing and so contribute indirectly to Muslim mission.**

Monday 18 Praise God that an evangelist who was jailed on 21 January for allegedly causing a disturbance by selling and distributing Christian literature near a major Muslim gathering in Bangladesh has been cleared on appeal. On 28 February Biplob Marandi, a seminary graduate, was sentenced to a year in prison

after a group of Muslims, incensed by his selling Christian books near to their meeting, harassed him and handed him over to the authorities. But at the end of March the judge who was hearing his appeal cleared Biplob and ordered that he be released. Give thanks that the judge honoured the country's constitution, which guarantees religious freedom, and for Biplob's courage and faithfulness to the Lord. Pray for greater justice for Christians in Bangladesh.

Tuesday 19 The killer of two Christian brothers has been convicted in a rare case of justice for Pakistan's beleaguered Christian community. Maqsood Ahmed was found guilty on 18 April of the murders of Pastor Rashid Emmanuel (30) and Sajid Emmanuel (27) and sentenced accordingly. The brothers were gunned down on 19 July 2010 as they were escorted from court in Faisalabad following their first appearance on false accusations of blasphemy. Pakistan's "blasphemy laws" are often used to settle personal scores with Christians and other non-Muslims, who are especially vulnerable to false accusations. Give thanks that justice has been done in this case. Pray for the Lord's protection for the numerous others who have been accused of blasphemy as their safety and even their lives hang in the balance.

Wednesday 20 Early on Saturday morning, 30 April, an angry Muslim mob, armed with sticks, iron rods and stones, descended on Christian property in Aziz Colony and Gulzar Colony, Gujranwala, Pakistan. They attacked a newly-built Christian seminary and ransacked a Christian school run by a pastor who was accused of burning the Quran. At least two people were injured, and around

3,000 Christians were forced to flee their homes. "Lives and properties of thousands of Christians in Gujranwala are in grave danger," commented a local Christian. Pray for healing for those who were injured in the attacks, and for peace to be restored in the area. Ask the Lord to grant protection to Mushtaq Gill and his son Farrukh, who were accused of blasphemy in an earlier incident.

Thursday 21 Sarfraz Ashraf, the son of Pakistani pastor Ashraf Paul, was severely injured in a drive-by shooting in Lahore. The pastor, his wife and 23-year-old Sarfraz were travelling by van on 7 April when two youths on a motorbike started chasing their vehicle. The attackers, whose faces were covered with black cloth, opened fire, and Sarfraz, who was driving the van, was shot through the windscreen in the face and hip. He was rushed to hospital, where he underwent surgery. The attack followed threats against the life of Pastor Ashraf by a Pakistani Islamic organisation that wants to intimidate him into stopping his Christian activities. He is well known for his Christian poetry and books, which he writes to encourage young believers in their faith. Pray that the whole family will be kept safe and that Pastor Ashraf will be able to continue his ministry, which is such an encouragement to young Christians in Pakistan.



Sarfraz Ashraf

Friday 22 Unrest broke out in the Gulf State of Bahrain earlier this year, and forces from Saudi Arabia and the UAE entered the country to help the government repress the dissent. As the revolt threatens to mushroom into a regional conflict, the position of the local Christians may become very precarious. Bahrain has a sizeable expatriate Christian community, which enjoys freedom of worship, but the indigenous Christian community is very small. Pray for their protection, and that the current instability will produce changes that will benefit them.

Saturday 23 Pray for the crucial election that is due to be held in Tunisia tomorrow. At least 44 parties have registered at the time of writing, but the main Islamist party, al-Nahda, which was banned under the previous regime, is one of the most likely to succeed. Observers predict that there may be constitutional battles once the elections are over and that al-Nahda will press for a more rigorous imposition of Islamic law. The future for the small number of Christians in Tunisia remains very uncertain following the revolution earlier this year, and a more fervently Islamic regime could turn violently against them. Pray that the election will lead to positive political change, and to greater safety and liberty for the churches.

Sunday 24 **“Fundamentalist groups are threatening citizens and wanting to create ‘Islamic Emirates’... Christians will be the first victims of these revolutions, especially in Syria. A new wave of emigration will follow immediately.” This was the assessment of a senior church leader in Syria about the ominous post-revolution prospects for Christians. They are fearful about a return to Sunni majority rule that could lead to their violent suppression, and in**

the worst case even to an anti-Christian bloodbath similar to that in Iraq, where hundreds of thousands of Christians have been forced to flee since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Pray that the peace and stability that Christians have enjoyed in Syria will be restored, and not be threatened by any future regime.

Monday 25 Muslim protestors in Syria have been exerting intense pressure on Christians either to join the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad’s regime or to leave. In one Christian village outside the southern city of Deraa, a home even came under fire by a group of masked men on motorbikes. These demands have been making life extremely difficult for the Christians, who have closed their shops in some places. Christians have largely stayed away from the protests, having generally been safe and well-treated by the secular, Baathist government. Pray that the Lord will give them great wisdom and discernment as they consider their future, and that they will know His peace in the midst of this turmoil.

Tuesday 26 Please pray for Christian refugees from Iraq living in Syria, many of whom are in desperate circumstances. Even though Syria has shown remarkable hospitality by opening up its borders to them, Iraqi refugees are not allowed to work, and the Christians therefore look to the churches for practical help. Many are living in overcrowded and unsuitable conditions. Because of the present instability in Syria, many of the refugees are now returning to Iraq, placing an extra burden on the Iraqi churches to feed them. Barnabas Fund is helping thousands of Iraqi Christians with food parcels distributed by local churches. “God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish” (Psalm 9:18).

Wednesday 27 As Egypt moves towards democratic elections, pray that Christians will not be sidelined in politics, and that the country will not become an Islamic state under sharia. It seems increasingly likely that the new political order will look more Islamic than secular. Statements by leading figures from the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood have revealed their intention to implement sharia law, while the results of an opinion poll indicated wide support for this agenda. A Christian provincial governor was also suspended following Muslim protests at his appointment. Pray that the Lord will uphold His people in their growing danger.

Thursday 28 An even more extreme Islamic sect than the Muslim Brotherhood has also begun forming political parties and raising its public profile in Egypt. The Salafists were mostly non-political prior to the revolution but now appear to be exploiting the chaos to promote their repressive version of Islam. Christians are their main target, and they have been at the forefront of numerous violent attacks against Christians. Pray that the Salafists will not be able to gain a foothold in Egypt, and that Christians will be protected from their assaults.

Friday 29 Salafists were the driving force behind a violent attack on Christians in Imbaba district, north-west Cairo, that left 12 people dead and more than 200 injured on 7 May. The attackers torched two churches as well as Christian homes and shops. The violence was triggered by false but long-running allegations that the Egyptian church is holding captive women whom Muslims claim have converted to Islam, despite one of the women, a church leader's wife, denying the rumours publicly. This was also the motive for the deadly

siege at a Baghdad church last October by an al-Qaeda front group. Pray that the truth about the women will become known and accepted, and that they will not be used as a pretext to attack Christians.

Saturday 30 It is estimated that between 40,000 and 60,000 Christians in North Korea are currently in the country's brutal labour camps. A recent report from a major human rights organisation states that according to former detainees, prisoners are forced to work in conditions close to slavery and are frequently subjected to torture and other cruelties. All the prisoners from one of the camps who were interviewed said that they had witnessed public executions. Food is scarce, and the report refers to people eating rats or picking corn kernels out of animal waste in order to survive. Pray for all Christians incarcerated in the camps, that the Lord will strengthen them to endure their intense suffering. Pray too for a more lenient government in North Korea.

Sunday 31 **In many countries where Christians are persecuted, some congregations are too poor to buy or build a church. Others have seen their buildings destroyed in violent attacks; while still others face disabling restrictions on the use or maintenance of their property. Praise God that Barnabas Fund is able to help so many churches around the world to obtain, renovate or extend their own meeting-places so that they are able to gather for worship and fellowship with other believers and to learn more about Christ. In 2010, we provided the resources for the construction or repair of 21 church buildings in 12 countries across Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Pray for those isolated and vulnerable Christians who are unable to meet together**

to worship and proclaim their faith because of government restrictions or lack of meeting space.



This Tanzanian congregation meets in a church building constructed with help from Barnabas Fund

August

Monday 1 Pray for the family of 29-year-old Iraqi Christian Ashur Yacob Issa, who was kidnapped and brutally murdered in Kirkuk. The husband and father was abducted late on the night of 20 May and extensively tortured; his decapitated body was found dumped three days later. A \$100,000 ransom was demanded of Ashur's family, but they could not pay the hefty sum. Sadly, many Iraqi Christians have lost loved ones in such distressing ways. Pray that the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort will comfort them in all their troubles (2 Corinthians 1:3b-4a).

Tuesday 2 Last year many converts from Islam to Christianity in Afghanistan were arrested and imprisoned. Most Afghan Muslims believe (in line with Islamic teaching) that those who leave Islam should be punished by death, and leading political figures called for the execution of the converts. Praise the Lord that some of those detained have since been released and managed to leave the country. Others are out of prison but still in Afghanistan; pray for their safety in a hostile and unstable society. Pray too for any who are still in jail, that they may know God's peace and protection in their ordeal (Hebrews 13:3).

Wednesday 3 "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants" (Psalm 116:15). In April Barnabas Fund received a video showing the recent beheading of an Afghan Christian, Abdul Latif, in Herat Province. One of the killers says, "All praise be to our creator almighty god that he helped and blessed the holy warriors ... so that we can implement the commandment of god on this infidel ... so that he is punished according to his wrong deed, he is punished according to the commandment of god so that it is a warning to other infidels." They shout "Allahu Akbar" ("god is great") over and over again, and they bring an execution notice to hang on the wall. Pray for Abdul's family and friends who mourn his passing and pray that his martyrdom will be fruitful for the Kingdom.

Thursday 4 Thousands of Christians in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have lost their homes through violence, persecution and discrimination and have been living in squalid conditions for years. Forgotten and ignored by the world, they are stuck in a hopeless spiral of homelessness and joblessness. Because they lost

everything or were already extremely poor, they do not have the means to start their lives afresh. Barnabas Fund is helping to build homes and churches for them. Pray that these Christians will experience God's nearness amidst their desperate circumstances. Pray that they will find sustenance for their daily needs and that God will provide homes and job opportunities so that they can start their lives afresh.

Friday 5 In September 2010, in a village of the Ak-Suu region of Kyrgyzstan, a family was preparing for the funeral of a 45-year-old Christian man when Muslim leaders came to the house and forbade them to bury him at the village cemetery because of his Christian faith. The family took the body away from the village to avoid conflict, but although the local government twice gave them permission to bury their loved one in Christian cemeteries in other villages, threats from local Muslims again prevented them. In the end the body was buried more than a hundred miles away from the family's home village. This Muslim opposition to the burial of Christians in local cemeteries is common in Kyrgyzstan. Pray for a solution to this issue, and for the man's family in their grief and distress.

Saturday 6 "I was pressured to renounce Christ, but brothers and sisters prayed for us and God gave me strength to stand strong in faith." When "Alima", a Christian convert from Islam in Kyrgyzstan, lost her husband, her Muslim relatives forced her to take a terrible decision: either renounce her Christian faith or be turned out of her home with her five children. But Alima refused to deny her Lord. Barnabas funded the purchase of a new home for her, but her life

as a Christian widow in Kyrgyzstan is still very tough. Please pray that God will protect this vulnerable family and provide for their daily needs.



"Alima" and her children in her new home

Sunday 7 Recent reports from Uzbekistan have spoken of a new wave of repressive raids and confiscations against religious organisations. For example, in April the secret police and other officials raided an officially registered Baptist church in the capital, Tashkent, and confiscated over 50,000 Christian books, a large amount of equipment and some money. Three of the church leaders and the caretaker were fined large sums of money. A local Christian said that the government wanted to have "pocket-sized churches" that would stay quiet. Pray that the authorities will stop harassing Christians in Uzbekistan, and

that God will supply all their needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

Monday 8 Uzbekistan may call itself a secular state, but in practice the government places severe restrictions on all religious activities. Registration is required for churches; it is difficult to obtain and does not guarantee freedom from harassment. Christians are not allowed to share their faith with Muslims or to teach Christianity privately, and in one region it is even illegal to own a Bible. In an unusual and disturbing development, the authorities have recently demanded that an official representative of the state be included in the ruling body of a Baptist church in Tashkent that was raided in April (see 7 August) and take part in its committee meetings. Pray that these crippling limitations on Christian worship and witness will be relieved, and praise the Lord that some churches are growing.

Tuesday 9 Islamic militants threatened revenge attacks after the killing of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by US special forces on 2 May. On 13 May twin bomb blasts at an academy in north-west Pakistan killed more than 80 people. Christians in Muslim countries are particularly vulnerable to retaliatory attacks by anti-Western militants who see all Christians as linked to the “Christian” West. A senior Christian leader in Pakistan said, “We are a soft target as they cannot attack America.” Pray that efforts by Islamic militants to avenge bin Laden’s death with violence will be thwarted.

Wednesday 10 Earlier this year a Colombia pastor, his nine-year-old daughter and a woman from their church were shot dead by two armed men who came to the door of the pastor’s home while

a meeting was in progress. He had refused demands to provide money to support a revolutionary group. Many Christians in Colombia suffer direct persecution because of their faith, mainly in rural areas controlled by illegal armed groups and drug lords. Both Marxist and far-right paramilitary groups kill, kidnap and extort money from Christians and restrict the free expression of their faith. Pray that the Lord will comfort those who mourn, including the pastor’s widow and their three other children. Pray too for peace in this troubled country.

Thursday 11 Many Christians, including pastors, are caught up in the brutal civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rebel militias are operating in the east of the country, and in the Fizi region pastors have had their houses burned and have lost their possessions. Some have been beaten and injured, or seen their wives and daughters savagely raped in front of them. Christians have been displaced from their homes, and a project partner told Barnabas that they return home “very deprived, weary and tired of life”, with insufficient resources to reconstruct their destroyed houses. Pray for our brothers and sisters as they endure these harsh conditions, and for our partners as they seek to assist them with practical and spiritual aid.

Friday 12 Muslim leaders in Kenya are calling for the government to clamp down on Christian schools that have banned their students from wearing the *hijab*, the head covering traditionally worn by Muslim girls and women. Their demands are based on a new national constitution, adopted in 2010, that grants all children the right to education; they have accused the schools of discrimination against Muslim children. Many church schools are glad to admit

pupils from all backgrounds, but church leaders argue that head teachers have the right to set the dress code according to the Christian traditions of the school. Pray that the Kenyan authorities will have strength and courage to resist unreasonable Muslim demands, and that the constitution will not be exploited to further the Islamisation of the country.

Saturday 13 When Christians in Glen Norah, Harare, Zimbabwe met to pray for peace in their country on 9 April, the original venue for the meeting was barricaded by police. The Christians gathered at another church, but they were then violently attacked. Armed police threw teargas canisters indiscriminately and beat up worshippers, including women, children and the elderly; they also fired teargas into other churches in the vicinity. Two pastors and several other people were arrested. Pray that the authorities in Zimbabwe will respect Christians' constitutional right to freedom of religion, and that wise and just government will be established there.

Sunday 14 Mobs armed with machetes and poison-tipped arrows wreaked havoc in the Muslim-majority Northern states of Nigeria following the re-election of Christian president Goodluck



A Nigerian church destroyed in anti-Christian violence

Jonathan on 16 April, leaving a trail of devastation and killing or injuring scores of people. At least 194 churches and over 1,200 houses were burned or destroyed and thousands of people were displaced. Pray for all those who lost loved ones and/or property in the post-election violence; pray that they will be comforted and provided with all they need to rebuild their lives. Pray for peace between Nigeria's Muslim and Christian communities. Barnabas Fund sent aid to the victims.

Monday 15 "Hold on to your faith in Jesus, and we shall meet and never part again." With these words Nigerian Pastor James Musa Rike comforted his wife as she lay dying from gunshot and machete wounds. Three of their five children were also killed in the same attack by Muslim extremists on Kurum village, Bauchi State, on 4 May. "See how your Jesus will save you!" taunted the attackers to the couple's 13-year-old daughter Sum. With a severe machete wound to her abdomen, she told them that Jesus had already saved her and by killing her they were enabling her to be with Him. Pray for Pastor James and others bereaved in this incident. Pray also for their attackers that they will recall the testimony of Sum and seek to know her Saviour for themselves.

Tuesday 16 When the leader of the opposition in Burma (Myanmar), Aung San Suu Kyi, was released from her long house arrest in November 2010, there were some hopes of democratic reform and a better future for the country's oppressed Christians. But now these hopes are in danger of being dashed. The

elections held that same month were condemned by Western observers as neither free nor fair, and have brought to power a party backed by the former military dictatorship. No autonomy or protection has been offered to the non-Burmese ethnic minorities, to which most Christians belong. Our brothers and sisters remain at risk from the army and the Buddhist majority. Pray that the process of change that has begun in Burma will eventually bring justice and freedom to Christians throughout the country.

Wednesday 17 Praise the Lord that in April the police succeeded in thwarting an attempted bomb attack by an Islamist group on a large church 12 miles from the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. This was scheduled to happen during the Easter celebrations and would have caused hundreds of casualties. The group has been recruiting university students, radicalising them and training them to carry out bombings against Christian targets. Islamists in Indonesia campaign for the imposition of sharia law and have launched attacks on many Christian churches, homes and individuals in recent years. The UN has written to the Indonesian government expressing concern about the number of reports of violence against religious minorities in the country. Pray for the authorities to take determined action to prevent anti-Christian attacks.

Thursday 18 Expulsion of Christians from their villages, forced relocation, pressure to renounce their faith, arrest and detention, destruction of livestock and crops, closure of churches: these are common experiences for our brothers and sisters in Laos. In

April the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission issued an analysis of religious freedom in the country. It reported that the persecution of Christians, especially those from ethnic minority groups, is routine in provincial areas. The authorities regard some forms of Christianity as an American or “imperialist” import and a threat to their authority. Pray for Christians in Laos that the Lord will give them endurance in their trials (Hebrews 10:36).

Friday 19 The Vietnamese government has been “steadily tightening the screws” on Christians from the Montagnard minority, by imprisoning members, closing churches and forcing believers to renounce their faith publicly. This is the verdict of a report about the treatment of Montagnards published in March 2011 by Human Rights Watch. The group disclosed that more than 350 Montagnards, accused of worshipping in unauthorised churches or violating vague national security laws, have been sentenced to long prison terms since 2001 and at least 250 remain in prison or are awaiting trial. Pray for the government of Vietnam, that it will relax its control over the oppressed and suffering Montagnard Christians, and ask the Lord to encourage and empower all those in prison for their faith.

Saturday 20 In March a referendum was held in Egypt on the country’s constitution following the revolution that toppled President Hosni Mubarak. To the dismay of the country’s Christians, amendments backed by the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood were passed with a 77 per cent share of the vote. The outcome paved the way for quick parliamentary elections,

perhaps as early as September, which are widely seen as helping the Muslim Brotherhood. Pray that other parties, particularly those that would be more favourable to equality and religious liberty for all citizens, will have sufficient time to organise themselves, and that the result of the elections will benefit the churches and the country as a whole.

Sunday 21 A Muslim gang leader in the Egyptian villages of Badraman and Nazlet Badraman is alleged to have “set himself up as governor of the two villages ... practising injustice and tyranny” against the Christians, attacking homes, extorting money, raping women and kidnapping children for ransom. The Christians are living in fear and have complained repeatedly to the Attorney General in Cairo. The accused, along with most of his gang, managed to evade arrest on 3 April. Pray for justice, peace and protection for the Christian villagers.

Monday 22 At the time of writing, Colonel Gaddafi is continuing to fight the rebellion against his rule in Libya. The rebels’ political leadership has said that it seeks a civilian democracy in which religion will have only a limited role in government, but it seems likely that, if Gaddafi is finally removed, Islamist militants will gain prominent positions in the country’s new military and security services. Some Western observers have raised fears about al-Qaeda’s involvement on the rebel side of the conflict. Pray for peace in Libya and that the outcome of this crisis will not result in Islamists gaining destructive political influence.

Tuesday 23 The fighting in Libya has driven tens of thousands of foreign Christians out of the country, leaving the churches, which are composed almost entirely of expatriates, severely depleted and weakened. Some of those who have stayed, especially African migrant workers who often lack proper papers, have effectively been in hiding to avoid harassment by Gaddafi’s security forces. Foreigners, especially Christians, are particularly vulnerable because of their perceived association with the West; Gaddafi has called “all Islamic armies” to defend him against attack by the “Christian” West. Pray for protection for Christians in Libya, that they will find the Lord to be their defence, and that the churches will survive and be able to rebuild after the conflict.

Wednesday 24 On Easter Day an explosive device was detonated near a church in Baghdad, and gunfire erupted outside another church while the congregation huddled inside. Praise the Lord that no-one was killed and none of the Christians was injured. Major Christian festivals often see an upsurge in anti-Christian violence in Muslim-majority countries. Pray for protection for the Christians who remain in Baghdad, who remain acutely vulnerable to the ongoing violence that racks their country. May they find the Lord to be their strength and refuge (Psalm 46:1).

Thursday 25 “May the purpose of God be done in my life... I’m trusting in the grace of God, which is enabling me to stand bold in a very traumatic situation.” This was the courageous testimony of Eritrean Christian Mussie Eyob, who is in prison and has been threatened with the death penalty in Saudi Arabia after being arrested for sharing his faith with Muslims. He was detained by

the authorities on 12 February at a mosque where he had gone to meet and talk with local Muslims about Christianity. Eyob felt compelled to share his faith with them, despite the danger. Give thanks for his boldness and pray for his protection and swift release from prison.



Mussie Eyob

Friday 26 It is probably easier to be a Christian in Syria than anywhere else in the Arab world, which is often so inhospitable to God's people. The Syrian churches receive many benefits from their government, and Christians are shown respect and even warmth by the Muslim majority. Even so, however, they are subject to various restrictions; evangelism among Muslims is strongly discouraged; and conversion from Islam to Christianity is forbidden. Give thanks for the good measure of freedom enjoyed by Syrian Christians, but pray that any future political changes will give them more freedom to share the Gospel.

Saturday 27 "It was like a dream for us many years ago, but now it has become a reality. This work has become a historical event in the life of our ... church in this town." This uplifting message to Barnabas Fund came from Christians in Syria, after the completion of a Christian high school with help from Barnabas. Praise the Lord that Christian children from the town can now be educated in a Christian environment up until they leave school. The school also runs a summer teaching programme for Iraqi

refugee children. Please pray that the school will continue to flourish amidst the political turmoil in the country and that the teachers will have wisdom, strength and endurance to run it with integrity.

Sunday 28 Pray for Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa State in India who are still awaiting justice after they were bereaved, injured or made homeless in the anti-Christian attacks in 2008. Nearly three years after dozens were killed and thousands wounded by Hindu militants, just one person has been found guilty of murder, and numerous complaints have been casually disregarded by the authorities. Relatively few cases have even reached the courts, and most of the convictions have been for fairly minor offences. Pray that justice may eventually be done for the Christian victims, and that the Lord will sustain them as they seek to rebuild their lives. Barnabas Fund is helping to provide simple homes for those whose houses were destroyed.

Monday 29 Hindu extremists in Karnataka State, India attacked two Good Friday services on 22 April. In one distressing incident, about 50 armed people entered the meeting and tried to force and bribe the pastor and another Christian to convert to Hinduism. The two men replied boldly that they believed only in Jesus Christ and would not convert, and the attackers proceeded to beat them up and to tear up Bibles and hymn books. The pastor, who is disabled, had to be admitted to hospital. Another church was stormed by some 15 extremists, who chased away most of the

congregation, while a few others locked themselves in the building for safety. Pray for protection for Christians in Karnataka, and that the example of the crucified Christ will inspire them to forgive their enemies (Luke 23:34).

Tuesday 30 Father of four Yunis Ilyas (47) and newly-wed Jameel Masih (21) were shot dead in an attack by Muslim youths on a church in Hoor Camp, Hyderabad, Pakistan, on Monday 21 March. Pray that the families of both men will experience the Lord's presence and comfort in their time of mourning and sorrow. Pray too for wisdom and strength for their church's minister as he seeks to lead his congregation in a godly response to this tragedy. Give thanks that the police have registered a case against the suspected culprits and are pursuing them.

Wednesday 31 Please continue to uphold in your prayers Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian and mother of five who is currently on death row in Pakistan. Aasia, a Christian farm worker from Punjab, was falsely accused in 2010 of insulting Muhammad, which is a criminal offence in Pakistan and carries a mandatory death penalty. She was prosecuted and convicted. If her appeal before the Lahore High Court fails, she faces execution in November 2011. Please pray that the Lord will protect this vulnerable and faithful Christian sister from harm and that she will soon be released. Pray for her family, who are in hiding for fear of their lives, and pray that Western governments will speak out in support of Aasia and campaign for her release.



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Cover: A widow in Kyrgyzstan stands in front of her new home, bought with help from Barnabas Fund