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

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

NOVEMBER/
DECEMBER 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.

November

MONDAY 1 At the time of writing, many Afghan Christians are fleeing their homeland, trying to escape to a safe location. Pray that the Lord will soften the hearts of Western governments to give them a secure and permanent home, out of reach of the Taliban. Pray also that they will be kept safe as they enter countries neighbouring Afghanistan which themselves could be difficult and dangerous for the Christians, given that they are all converts from Islam, along with their children.

TUESDAY 2 Since 10 August 1950, Indian Dalits (the lowest level of the Hindu caste system) have been helped to rise from their poverty by affirmative action such as quotas in education and jobs. Originally these advantages were only available to Hindu Dalits but later the order was amended to include Sikh and Buddhist Dalits. However, Christian and Muslim Dalits are still not eligible for such help, despite their frequent calls to be included and a series of legal petitions.

In January 2020 the Supreme Court agreed to examine a petition filed by the National Council of Christian Dalits requesting that Dalit quotas should be made “religion neutral”. Pray that they will agree to this suggestion, which would help both Christians and Muslims.

WEDNESDAY 3 “At this moment, our ‘Hope is Built on Nothing Less’: Jesus is the only answer for Sri Lanka,” said a senior pastor in the tea plantations where many poor Christians work. He referred to economic uncertainties, unemployment causing “inexpressible burdens”, Covid deaths in most churches, rising Covid infections, hunger and trauma. Lockdown has taken a severe toll on the nation, especially day labourers. New agricultural laws are resulting in lower yields for farmers, exacerbating the food crisis. A Sri Lankan Christian doctor wrote of middle-income families coming to her hospital pleading for just one meal. Pray that in the midst of this terrible crisis, Sri Lankan Christians will find hope and strength in Jesus and will be a channel of blessing to all around them.

THURSDAY 4 The inhabitants of a Christian village in Bangladesh’s Chittagong Hill Tracts were forced to flee after suffering threats and two violent attacks from Buddhist radicals in July. The villagers, who converted from Buddhism 16 years ago, were attacked after they refused to return to Buddhism and demolish the church building they had constructed in January 2021. When Christians did not comply, the radicals attacked the church building themselves as well as some of the church members. “The radicals told us to destroy the church, but we will not,” said Tubel, assistant pastor of the group of about 50

Christians. “If we have to sacrifice our lives, we will. They threaten us to return to our old religion, but we will not return. Jesus Christ is our Saviour. We will die for Him.” Thank the LORD for the faith of these Christians and pray that he will lead them to green pastures and quiet waters where they can live in peace and safety (Psalm 23:2).

FRIDAY 5 Pastor Bharat was praying with three other Christians in a private home in the village of Tichkiya, Madhya Pradesh state, India, when a group of extremists broke in. They accused Bharat of trying to convert tribal people to Christianity by unlawful means, attacked him and vandalised the house. Madhya Pradesh is one of the Indian states that forbids conversion by fraud, force or allurements. Pray for Pastor Bharat as he recovers from his injuries that he will be strengthened in both body and spirit, and ready to continue sharing the Gospel freely.



Pastor Bharat [Image: AsiaNews]

SATURDAY 6 Muqadas (16) and her younger sister were at home in Shorkot, Pakistan helping their grandmother do the household chores on Monday morning 9 August when three Muslim men with pistols kicked the door open, grabbed Muqadas and dragged her away as she struggled and screamed. Three days later papers were dropped into the family’s yard showing that, on the very day of her abduction, Muqadas had converted to Islam and married Muhammad Azeem Malik, her abductor. (Clearly this had happened against her will.) Such cases are all too common for Christian families in Pakistan, the only unusual thing in this one being that there were many witnesses who saw the abduction happen. Pray that Muqadas, described as a “God-fearing” Christian, may be sustained by her faith while in captivity and that the police will exert themselves to rescue her.

SUNDAY 7 Heavenly Father, we thank You for the faithful witness of Christians persecuted for their faith in You around the world. Please grant them perseverance in the face of trial and strengthen them to stand firm, in the full armour of God, against all attacks. Enable them to shine brightly, giving light to all, whatever oppression and dangers they face, whether official government policy, ostracism within the community or terrorist violence. Protect them as they seek to serve You. We make our requests in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 6:10-17, Matthew 5:14-16)

MONDAY 8 Four Christian businessmen from the Tree of Life Technology Co. Ltd in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, China have been sent to prison for

selling audio Bibles. They were arrested in July 2020, their trial was held in December 2020 and their convictions were announced on 16 July 2021. The sentences range from 15 months to six years, and the men have also been fined amounts up to 200,000 yuan (£22,200; \$30,900; €26,300). The audio Bibles are popular amongst elderly rural Christians with poor eyesight. Pray for our brothers Fu, Deng, Feng and Han that they will know the Lord's presence with them in prison today and continue to be used by Him for His purposes.

TUESDAY 9 On 9 August the Chinese city of Qiqihar, Heilongjiang province joined the increasing number of cities, districts and counties in China which are offering cash rewards to anyone who reports to the authorities on “illegal religious activities”. Rewards are available for informing on religious gatherings in private homes, preaching, distribution of printed religious material or audio-visual products outside of church premises, unqualified people taking on religious roles and foreign involvement. Although the authorities cited Covid-19 as the reason, the move appears really to be part of the ongoing crackdown against Christians in China. Pray that Christians will not be fearful, but will be encouraged by remembering that Jesus, who was Himself betrayed to the authorities, understands their situation.

WEDNESDAY 10 Maizi Christian Music High School in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, China aims to equip young people with musical skills, especially piano, so they can serve in church worship teams. On 4 September the school's principal, Mr Xu, was arrested

early in the morning. Then at 8.30 a.m. over 30 officials raided the school, detaining the students (who are all under the age of 18) and confiscating pianos, computers and documents. The students were released after 24 hours, but at the time of writing no one had seen or heard from Mr Xu and teachers were to be interrogated one by one. The school staff asked prayer for the safety of Mr Xu and all the teachers, for a good lawyer to represent the school, for the return of the school's property, that it will be able to re-open and that “the Holy Spirit comforts, strengthens and helps the students to be strong and courageous; that He helps them live for God”.



Vietnamese Christians

THURSDAY 11 “We are heavy with the pain, mourning and lack of food of our brothers and sisters,” wrote a Vietnamese church leader in September, which at that point was five months into its fourth Covid-19 wave. Lockdowns had prevented people from cultivating their fields, jobs in the cities had disappeared, and people were desperately short of necessities, even rice. In one denomination alone, at least 200 congregations had members who were sick with Covid or had died, and 33 pastors were infected. These figures are significant in a country where

Christians are poor and, in some areas, persecuted. Pray that the joy of the Lord will be the strength of Vietnamese Christians in their time of trial.

FRIDAY 12 Aceh is the most Islamic province of Indonesia, and the only one ruled by sharia. In 2015 the local authorities demolished nine of the ten church buildings in Singkil District of Aceh. Thousands of Christians have been worshipping in makeshift shelters ever since. Christian protests to the local authorities have had no results, so, about three months ago, Aceh Christians protested to the central government in the capital Jakarta. The issue is now being considered by Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, the Religious Affairs Minister. Pray that he will decide to intervene and help the Christians of Aceh.

SATURDAY 13 Muhammad Kace is an Indonesian Christian from a Muslim background, who was arrested in August in Bali on blasphemy and disinformation charges. The accusations related to a sermon video he had posted on YouTube in which he made statements about Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. While in custody, he was severely beaten all over his body, and human faeces were smeared on his face. His lawyers have prepared a case against the police but Muslim public opinion supports his abusers. Pray that the case against him will be dropped and he will be released.

SUNDAY 14 Our Lord Jesus, we call on You to further Your Kingdom in Indonesia. We thank You for the government's resolve to maintain peace in a religiously divided country, and for the police's successes in combating

Islamic extremism. Thank You that, even in the midst of adversity, many from Muslim backgrounds are choosing to follow Christ, and we ask for more to trust in You for salvation. We pray that Christians will experience Your strength in the struggle to be granted permits to build churches, or even to have their rental agreements renewed. May they be encouraged that no one can shut a door that You have opened. (Revelation 3:8)

MONDAY 15 Southern Madagascar has had two droughts back-to-back, plus locusts, sandstorms and an outbreak of fall armyworm that have caused terrible damage to the crops. The number of people living in famine-like conditions was predicted to be at least 28,000 by last month, when the annual "lean season" starts and crops are planted. Many have sold everything they own, including pots and pans, so now they cannot cook even if they have food. The price of clean water has increased tenfold and people are therefore drinking unsafe water, exposing them to disease. Ask the LORD, who sent rain when Samaria had a severe famine (1 Kings 18:1-2,45), to send rain on southern Madagascar. Pray that the many Christians there will bring hope and comfort to the whole population.

TUESDAY 16 Christian leaders in Uganda are encouraged by the response of the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament when they explained to him that having Islamic courts (kadhi courts) written into the Ugandan constitution alongside secular courts makes Islam in effect the state religion of this mainly Christian country. Pray that the Ugandan authorities will have wisdom and courage to return

Uganda to the “level playing field” for all faiths evidently intended by Article 7 of the constitution, which says: “Uganda shall not adopt a State religion.”

WEDNESDAY 17 Praise God that one more of the “Chibok girls” has been reunited with her parents. Ruth Ngladar Pogu made contact with the authorities in late July, seven years after being abducted from her school in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria by Boko Haram Islamist militants along with more than 270 other girls, most of them Christians. About 160 of them have escaped, been rescued or released. Pray for all those who remain in captivity as well as many other kidnap victims held by Boko Haram and similar Nigerian organisations, that the flame of Christian faith in their hearts will not be extinguished no matter what the Islamists do to them.

THURSDAY 18 “My advice to Christians in Nigeria is that we should know the world has reached the point that Christians are being hunted and killed because they say we are infidels. We should unite and call on God. He will answer us.” These were the words of Pastor Adamu Musa after an attack by Fulani extremists on small villages in a Christian area of the Irigwe chiefdom in Nigeria’s Plateau State during the night of 31 July-1 August. Seven people were killed and 275 houses burned down. Pastor Adamu himself was shot during the attack but not fatally. Join your prayers with those of Nigerian believers for an end to the anti-Christian violence.

FRIDAY 19 Please pray for protection for Afghan Christians, in huge danger now that the Taliban controls virtually every part of their homeland. Many have been

unable to leave the country and are in hiding, not living in their own homes, or staying in any place for long, as the Taliban are searching for them and will probably execute any they find. Pray also for God’s guidance for Barnabas Fund and our partners on the ground as we channel aid of various kinds to our Afghan brothers and sisters.



An Afghan Christian family in hiding in Afghanistan. Barnabas Fund has helped with their basic needs

SATURDAY 20 The rapid victory of the Taliban, which astonished onlookers, has given a huge boost to radical Islamists worldwide. Their confidence has greatly increased and, humanly speaking, it can be expected that they will redouble their efforts to establish emirates and other forms of Islamic state wherever they can across the world. This will heighten the risk to Christians in those areas. But our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords is in ultimate control. Pray that His heavenly horses and chariots of fire will defend His people (2 Kings 6:17).

SUNDAY 21 Sovereign Lord, we lift up our Christian brothers and sisters in Afghanistan remaining in the country after the Taliban takeover. We ask for Your Divine guidance for them to live under a government which believes it is

right to impose a death sentence on any Muslim-background convert. Please grant them protection and wisdom to know how to live as children of light under such oppression. We pray that if any are called to give their lives for Christ they will be filled with the peace, joy and presence of their Lord and our Lord, in whose Name we pray.

MONDAY 22 Praise God for answered prayer in strongly Islamic Somaliland. A group of six Christians were released from detention on 5 August after charges against them were dropped. Those released included Mohamed, Hamdi and their baby, arrested in January, and others arrested in February. They had been charged with a variety of offences including apostasy from Islam and spreading Christianity as well as inciting others to commit public-order offences. Pray that there will be no backlash from society against the tiny Christian community of Somaliland.

TUESDAY 23 Islam is the official religion of Somaliland, and its constitution prohibits conversion from Islam to another religion and bans the propagation of any religion except Islam. All laws must comply with the general principles of sharia. A committee of the Somaliland Senate recently called for the application of sharia in cases of apostasy from Islam. The Shaff'i school of sharia, which traditionally predominated in this region, specifies death for any sane adult who leaves Islam. Most of the Christians of Somaliland are converts from Islam, so the Senate committee's recommendation would put their lives in severe danger. Pray that it will not be implemented.

WEDNESDAY 24 Fifteen Eritrean Christians have been re-arrested in their homes and taken to the Mai Serwa maximum security prison in Asmara. All had spent years in prison already until released in September 2020. Their age range is from late 20s to 60s and the majority are men. The arrests followed the detention in July of two pastors in their 70s, who are being held at a police station. It is thought that about 160 Eritrean Christians are now in prison. Pray that their faith will keep them from fearing the anger of earthly authorities, and that they will persevere, because they see Him who is invisible (Hebrews 11:27).

THURSDAY 25 Because of her Christian faith, Twen Theodros spent 16 years in prison in Eritrea where she had a tremendous ministry to other women prisoners. Now she is out of prison but finds herself at the age of 38 without her own family, home and job, which she would have normally had by this age. She is described as “full of faith and grace” but unsure what to do now with her life. Pray that the Lord will make clear to our brave sister what His plans and purposes are for her now.

FRIDAY 26 Tunisia's Ministry of Religion has a Muslim section, headed by an imam, and a Jewish section, headed by a rabbi, but nothing for Christians, even though they are more numerous than Jews in this 98% Muslim nation. The Christian community is mainly expatriates, especially from Africa, but there are some Tunisian converts from Islam and their children. The converts are stigmatised by the majority society and they are often rejected by their relatives. Pray that lonely and marginalised converts will be comforted

by the words of their Saviour: “Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (Mark 13:13)

SATURDAY 27 The Islamist political party that had led Morocco for a decade was crushingly defeated in a parliamentary election on 8 September, losing all but 12 of its 125 seats. The party with the largest number of seats in parliament is now the National Rally of Independents and King Mohammed VI has appointed its leader Aziz Akhannouch as Prime Minister. Pray that the new government will work for greater religious liberty in Morocco so that Moroccan Christians can meet openly to worship the Lord. Pray also that the king’s heart will be inclined in this direction, for the Moroccan parliament has limited powers and he makes many of the key decisions.

SUNDAY 28 Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your church in Algeria that stands firm amidst persecution and injustice. We ask for church buildings that have been closed and physically sealed on spurious administrative grounds to be reopened. Please grant success and wisdom to Your people lodging appeals against closures. May they conduct themselves with grace and honour You with their testimony. We thank You that Your Word is never restricted and pray that You will enable Your people to meet, despite the restrictions, and know the joy of seeing adverse circumstances turn out for good to those who love You. (2 Timothy 2:9, Romans 8:28)

MONDAY 29 More than 35 residents of Yelwan Zangam, a Christian community in Nigeria’s Plateau State, died in an

attack by gunmen that began on the evening of 24 August. Many houses and vehicles were set on fire and some people died in the house where they had taken cover from the shooting. A bridge leading to the neighbouring community was destroyed so that the residents of Yelwan Zangam could not escape and law enforcement personnel could not arrive. The Christians saw this as a religiously motivated attack and suspected that ethnic Fulani militants were the perpetrators. Pray that the survivors of this terrible attack will stand firm in the faith, be courageous and strong, doing everything in love (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).



One of 28 Christian schoolchildren released on 25 July after 20 days in captivity [Image: Ripples Nigeria]

TUESDAY 30 Praise God for answered prayer in Nigeria as 85 children kidnapped from a Christian boarding school in Kaduna State have been released in four groups in July, August and September. A few others have managed to escape. Some of them “came back home very sick and weak”, said Pastor John Hayab of the

Christian Association of Nigeria. He expressed concern for the health of the children still held, especially given that it was the rainy season. He called on Christians to continue to pray for the release of the 21 in captivity, and to pray for peace in Kaduna State and Nigeria as a whole, saying that God's intervention is needed regarding the security challenges facing the country. Pray also for the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of all the children – those freed and those still held.

December

WEDNESDAY 1 When local authorities in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria, began demolishing a church building on 5 August the church members gathered to protest. One of the protesters, 29-year-old Ezekiel Bitrus, son of the pastor, died, reportedly at the hands of the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF), which opened fire on the crowd. Five others were injured. It is also alleged that the CJTF confiscated the phones of the church members so that they could not film the demolition and shooting. The following Sunday the church members gathered as usual and held their Sunday worship service in the demolished church, singing, dancing and praising God. Thank the Lord for the courage of our brothers and sisters who are determined that a Christian presence will continue even if the building has gone. Pray that their bold witness will bear fruit.

THURSDAY 2 Twelve people were killed in a raid on a village in the mainly Christian Atypap Chiefdom of Kaduna State, Nigeria on 12 September. Please ask the Lord to comfort those who mourn for Philbia,

Suzanna, Rahib, Ishaku, Deborah, Tinat, Zichat, Sunday, Hauwa, Fidelia, Sadia and Goodness. The previous day, in another attack in the Atypap Chiefdom, Pastor Silas Ali was hacked to death by machete; his community and his church had been attacked twice in the weeks before his murder. Pray for their protection from further attack.

FRIDAY 3 Lebanon is still struggling to recover, more than a year after the devastating Beirut Port explosion in August 2020, said to be one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history. Many Christians lived close to the explosion. The aftermath of the explosion, the country's economic crisis and hyperinflation, together with Covid-19 and a severe shortage of medicines, mean that Lebanon is still ravaged by hunger and sickness. Many people cannot pay their rent and would be homeless were it not for Law 194, passed in October 2020, banning evictions from properties in the three neighbourhoods worst affected by the blast. Pray that Lebanese Christians will be comforted by the knowledge that God knows what they are experiencing and pray that they will come forth as gold from this time of testing (Job 23:10).

SATURDAY 4 "History is repeating itself," said a Syrian Christian leader when the Turkish air force bombed the Christian village of Tel Hawil in north-east Syria on 30 August. Many of its houses are now uninhabitable but, praise God, the villagers were unharmed as they escaped just before the attack. The bombing raid was ostensibly part of a Turkish campaign against Kurdish militants, but the local Christians are Assyrians, not Kurds. Syrian Christians are being horribly reminded of the Ottoman-

era genocide of 1915 and the attacks of Islamic State militants a century later. Pray that the Lord will be their shield and fortress at this time (Psalm 18:2).

SUNDAY 5 Lord Jesus, we remember the rich Christian heritage of Turkey and recall the spread of Your Word in that country as the early Church was established there, after which came so much terrible persecution. We cry out to You for our brothers and sisters in Turkey today, a tiny minority now, as they adjust to growing pressures and abuses. We ask You to protect them in a climate of increasing repression and hostility. We pray that Your living and active Word will leave its mark and fortify Your people as they seek to serve You. (Hebrews 4:12)

MONDAY 6 An Armenian Christian cemetery in Kalecik, eastern Turkey was destroyed by bulldozers in August, leaving bones scattered across the ground. The area (then called Lezk) had been an Armenian neighbourhood until its inhabitants were forced out in 1915 at the height of the Ottoman genocide. The old cemetery was often visited by the modern-day descendants of those buried there. Pray that the Lord will comfort Armenians in their distress over this latest outrage.

TUESDAY 7 God willing, by the time you read this, Barnabas Fund's petition calling for recognition of the Armenian Genocide will have been delivered to the governments of the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Please pray that it will have impact in all three countries and that their governments will formally recognise as genocide the atrocities of a century ago, in which

3.75 million Armenian, Assyrian, Greek and Syriac Christians were killed within Ottoman territories. Pray also that such recognition will help prevent any future repetition.

WEDNESDAY 8 The cultural heritage of Armenian Christians is being systematically erased by Muslim-majority Azerbaijan wherever Armenians are living within Azerbaijan's boundaries, for example in the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh). This process has continued for decades whether the two countries are at war or at peace. Not content with mere demolition, the Azerbaijanis removed every stone, so there is no trace that a church building ever existed. They have also destroyed thousands of tombstones and traditional Armenian cross-stones (khachkars). Recently they "flattened to dust" the Museum of History, which was one of twelve museums in the parts of Artsakh seized by Azerbaijan in the 44-day war last year. It is as if they want to destroy all evidence of Armenian history and presence in a "cultural genocide". Pray that the international authorities will not stand by and let this happen.

THURSDAY 9 Eighteen Christian books are banned in the Luhansk (Lugansk) People's Republic, a Russian-speaking region in eastern Ukraine, which declared itself independent in 2014. The latest four to be added (in July) included works by C.H. Spurgeon and Billy Graham. One that had already been banned was the Gospel of John in Russian, published by the Council of Baptist Churches. The Luhansk Prosecutor's Office has ruled that the books "incite religious discord" and that the ban was necessary for "defending

the interests of the younger generation and securing the safety of the Republic”. Pray that God will soften the hearts of those who make such decisions and cause them to allow these Christian books to circulate and be read in Luhansk.

FRIDAY 10 A survey by the Pew Research Center in 2018 found that Romania was the most religious country in Europe. Last year the Romanian government initiated an annual “National Day of Remembrance of the Brâncoveanu Martyrs** and Awareness of Violence Against Christians”. The second such day was held this year on 16 August, with buildings illuminated in red. The day is intended to advocate for religious freedom and raise awareness of contemporary violence against Christians. Pray that the day will succeed in its aim. Pray also that other European governments will give greater priority to persecuted Christians around the world.

SATURDAY 11 A federal appeals court in the USA ruled in July that the University of Iowa had violated the free-speech rights of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). The Christian organisation had been de-registered by the university because the IVCF required its leaders to be professing Christians. The judge ruled that the university had discriminated against IVCF because they allowed several other (non-Christian) student societies to require their members to hold particular views or opinions. Praise God for the ruling. A similar one was given at a university in Detroit in

*The Brâncoveanu Martyrs were members of the Romanian royal family killed in 1714 for refusing to convert to Islam.

April. Pray that the two rulings will set a precedent for other universities.

SUNDAY 12 Our loving Lord, we cry out to You for Christians in Myanmar who have experienced an escalation in persecution since the military coup in February. Please protect those forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in the jungle. We pray that You will direct those providing aid to locate our brothers and sisters in need. We pray for those in authority in Myanmar that they will govern with justice and righteousness, enabling refugees to return to their homes and lead peaceful lives. We ask in the Name of the Prince of Peace, our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

MONDAY 13 The entire population (160 people) of Taal village in Chin State, Myanmar were forced to flee into the forests and mountains after Myanmar army ransacked homes, killed livestock and destroyed valuables in a series of raids. The soldiers also occupied a church in Taal, and threw away Bibles and hymn books, leaving the building full of their rubbish when they departed. In Chathat village they attacked two church buildings destroying Bibles and damaging equipment including a generator. The Chin population of Myanmar is at least 90% Christian and Chin State is one of the poorest in the nation. Pray that our brothers and sisters, who have lost so much, may be strengthened by remembering that “here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14).

TUESDAY 14 Pastor Cung Biak Hum (31) was shot dead by the Myanmar

armed forces in Chin State, Myanmar on 18 September. The pastor was on his way to help put out a fire caused by an artillery attack, which destroyed at least 19 houses. Soldiers cut off one of his fingers in order to steal his wedding ring. Chin believers were “deeply hurt and frightened” by news of the pastor’s death. Ten Chin children are amongst those who have been killed by the Myanmar armed forces since the military coup on 1 February. Pray that Chin Christians will not give way to fear but will remember that nothing can separate them from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39).



Pastor Cung Biak Hum [Image: Irrawaddy]

WEDNESDAY 15 When Gulzar Masih, a Christian rickshaw driver in Faisalabad, Pakistan, went to collect his 14-year-old daughter Chashman from school on 28 July, he found she had disappeared. A few days later her kidnappers sent a video and documents claiming that she had converted of her own free will to Islam and married a Muslim man. This is one of many cases in Pakistan in which a non-Muslim girl or young woman is abducted, forced to sign conversion papers and then

forced into marriage, even if she is legally too young. Pray that the police will exert themselves to find Chashman and restore her to her family.

THURSDAY 16 Please continue to pray for Shafqat Emmanuel and his wife Shagufta, who spent seven years on death row in Pakistan accused of “blasphemy” even though they are illiterate so could not have sent the text messages they were blamed for. After being acquitted earlier this year, they have been given asylum in a European country, along with their four children. In Pakistan they would have been in permanent danger from zealous Muslims. Pray for the family as they adjust to a different culture, language and climate, as well as being together again after so long apart.

FRIDAY 17 Five Christian women (one of them pregnant) and a Christian man were injured when Muslims opened fire on their homes in Shera Kot district of Lahore, Pakistan, on 6 September. A church building was also shot at. Three of the injured Christians were left in a critical condition; pray for their full recovery. Pray also that the trend of growing anti-Christian violence in Pakistan will be reversed.

SATURDAY 18 Many Muslims in Iran are coming to Christ, but the typical lifespan of a house church in Iran – a group of Muslim-background believers – is only six months to a year. New converts are quickly put under pressure by the authorities, often being arrested and imprisoned, whether for days, months or even years. Sometimes they are released only if they sign a document promising not to meet with other Christians. Worn down by all this, many converts leave

Iran, which may indeed be the aim of the harassment applied to them. Humanly speaking the situation of Christians is likely to deteriorate still further, given that President Ibrahim Raisi, who assumed office on 3 August, is an extremist. Pray that each new believer subjected to this pressure will be strong in the Lord and will hear His voice of guidance clearly.

SUNDAY 19 Gracious Lord, we thank You for the measure of freedom we have to worship You. We ask You to encourage our brothers and sisters living in countries where following You publicly is discouraged, even forbidden. Please enable them to testify faithfully by word and life to those who feel trapped in a religious culture that they have inherited and is not of their choosing. May the light of the Gospel draw many to You despite harsh laws against conversion and apostasy in many countries. Cause Your people to respond not to external compulsion, but only to the wonderful inner conviction that Jesus Christ died for all, in whose Name we pray. (2 Corinthians 5:14)

MONDAY 20 There is much controversy and debate in Egypt about the national ID cards which, since 1956, have shown the religion of the individual. Some public figures are calling for this information to be removed from the cards but the suggestion is opposed by certain hardline Muslims. Removing the information on religion would be a great help to Egyptian Christians, reducing the amount of discrimination they face, and would also make life much easier for converts from Islam to Christianity. Pray that the calls for its removal will be heeded and acted on.

TUESDAY 21 Another 76 church licences were issued in Egypt on 25 July. This twentieth batch of licences means that 1,958 licences have been granted out of the 3,730 applications sent in after Ottoman-era restrictions on church buildings were repealed in 2016. It is a legal requirement for churches to have these licences but until the law changed it was very difficult to obtain them, so churches were forced to operate illegally. Thank the Lord for the progress to date and continue to pray that the remaining 1,772 applications will be processed quickly and licences given. Pray also that the general feeling among some sections of general Egyptian society that the Christian minority should not have places of worship will vanish.

WEDNESDAY 22 Egypt's President al-Sisi launched a National Human Rights Strategy on 11 September, and said that freedom of belief is a God-given right. Pray that this commitment will be followed through, allowing people to choose and change their religion freely and without punishment. The president has already greatly improved the situation of the historic Christian minority in Egypt. But Christians from a Muslim background are still in grave danger from zealous Muslims and from the authorities. (The same dangers face the growing number of atheists in Egypt.) Praise God for President al-Sisi's pledge and pray that his courageous words will bear fruit.

THURSDAY 23 Tomorrow is the day scheduled (at the time of writing) for landmark presidential and parliamentary elections in Libya. After nine years of internal conflict, with rival authorities ruling different parts of the country,

a ceasefire agreement was reached in October 2020 and a transitional Government of National Unity was established earlier this year. Pray that the twice-postponed elections will go ahead peacefully and that the newly elected leaders of Libya will usher in an age of stability, justice and freedom including religious liberty for the small Christian minority – mainly foreign migrant workers but also some Libyan converts from Islam.



Contractors erasing the word “Emmanuel” from the boat of a Chinese Christian fisherman [Image: ChinaAid]

FRIDAY 24 Local officials in Qushan island, Zhejiang province, China have removed crosses from the masts of fishing boats in a targeted attack on Christians. They also erased the word “Emmanuel” where it had been painted on some of the boats, and warned the Christian fishermen that their fishing permits were in jeopardy if they did

not allow the removal of the Christian symbols. The boats are the personal property of the fishermen. About a third of the population of Qushan are Christians. Praise God that although their persecutors may remove the Chinese characters spelling “Emmanuel” from the boats, they cannot remove Emmanuel (“God with us”) from the hearts of these faithful followers of Christ, fishermen like the first disciples He called.

SATURDAY 25 As we remember and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh and made His dwelling among us, pray that His presence will be very real to Christians suffering today because they bear His Name. Pray also for their protection from violent attack, which often comes at this season of the year. Ask that the good news of great joy, which the angels brought to the shepherds at the first Christmas, will sustain and strengthen them, whatever their situation (Luke 2:10; John 1:14).

SUNDAY 26 Almighty God, we know that many of our brothers and sisters around the world face violence and there are those who want to kill them. Thank You for the example of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. We thank You for the grace he received to explain Your working in history in a gentle yet powerful manner, and for the vision of Your heavenly glory and Your Son our Saviour Jesus that sustained him as he was stoned to death. We ask You, as You did for Stephen, to sustain our brothers and sisters facing persecution and possible martyrdom for their faith in the Lord Jesus, in whose Name we pray. (Acts 7:55-56)

MONDAY 27 At a time of year when many people are feasting and have food in abundance, pray for those who are going hungry in places where weather has wrecked crops or conflict has forced people to flee or Covid has prevented them from earning a living. Pray particularly for Christians who face hunger on top of daily discrimination and persecution. Pray that they will be filled with peace, love and joy in the Lord and that our heavenly Father, who knows their needs before they ask, will provide for them.

TUESDAY 28 Chhattisgarh has one of the highest concentrations of Hindus (93%) among Indian states. Christians in Chhattisgarh are less than 2%, but they suffered more than 200 violent attacks in the two years to August 2021. Earlier this year there were six incidents of anti-Christian violence in a single week, ending with an attack on Pastor Kawalsingh Paraste at 11.00 on Sunday morning 29 August, as he was leading morning worship for a congregation that meets in his home in Polmi village. A mob of about 100 extremists stormed the house, beat him up and tore Bibles. Pray that God will enable the Christians of Chhattisgarh to persevere in doing His will, despite the constant attacks, and that they will find hope in His promises (Hebrews 10:36).

WEDNESDAY 29 On 2 September, 25 Christian leaders from various denominations in India's Chhattisgarh state met with Bhupesh Baghel, chief minister of the state, and presented him with a memorandum about the persecution suffered by Christians. Mr Baghel assured them that their rights would be protected. Pray that this promise

will be put into effect. Chhattisgarh is one of the nine Indian states with laws banning conversion by force, fraud or allurement; Christians are often falsely accused of using these unlawful methods in their evangelism. Police in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh were instructed in July to keep a "consistent watch" on the activities of Christians. Pray for an end to the misuse of this law.

THURSDAY 30 A 16-year-old Christian suffered burns over at least 60% of his body when acid was thrown on him while he was on his way to sell vegetables at a village market in Bihar state, India. He and his family converted to Christianity two years ago and hold daily prayer meetings in their home, which he leads. The family believe that the attack was carried out by radical Hindutva nationalists, who had earlier warned him to stop conducting the prayer meetings. Praise God that nothing will deter our brother from praying to the Lord Jesus and add your prayers to those of our Indian brothers and sisters that he will be completely healed from this horrendous attack.

FRIDAY 31 Many people of other religions believe that the Western New Year is a Christian festival. Therefore it is often a time of increased violence against Christian minorities, often by people who sincerely believe that their religion requires them to attack Christians. Pray that vulnerable believers in such situations will hold unswervingly to the Christian hope, remembering that He who promised is faithful, and will continue to spur one another on to love and good deeds, in the knowledge that the Day of the Lord is approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25).

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Front Cover: An Afghan Christian woman who has managed to reach a
neighbouring country. Barnabas Fund is assisting her and her family.