



barnabasprayer

Barnabas Aid - bringing hope to suffering Christians

To help you
pray for suffering
Christians

**September/
October 2022**

barnabasaid.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

THURSDAY 1 “I ran to my mum and held her by the hands and [was] screaming ‘Keep your head down!’ The gunshots just would not stop. It just kept going and going.” These were the words of a Nigerian Christian who survived a massacre by suspected Islamist terrorists at a church service in Ondo State, south-western Nigeria. At least 40 worshippers were killed. Pray that the Lord will bring healing and will comfort the traumatised survivors and all who lost loved ones. Give thanks for the Lord’s promise, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28).

FRIDAY 2 More than 400 terrorists launched a deadly assault against a Christian community in Kaduna State, Nigeria, on Sunday 5 June, destroying houses and murdering 32

people. Houses and a church building in the Kajuru Local Government Area were destroyed. The following day a mass burial for the victims had to be interrupted because terrorists were sighted in the vicinity – even in mourning there is no earthly rest for Nigeria’s Christians. Give thanks for the promise of Jesus Christ that in Him the weary and burdened find eternal rest. Ask that the bereaved will know God’s comfort and guidance as they seek to rebuild their lives (Matthew 11:28).

SATURDAY 3 Give thanks that more than 22,000 Christians who have fled from a recent wave of deadly attacks by Islamist militants on their homes in Nigeria’s Plateau and Kaduna states have been supported practically, physically and emotionally by Barnabas Aid. Thanks to your generous support we have provided food (rice and maize), blankets and mats to sleep on, educational materials for children and roofing sheets to rebuild their damaged homes, as well as paying for the medical bills of the injured. “The support from Barnabas Aid says to the victims of attacks, ‘We love you, we are stranding with you and sharing your pain and we are continuously praying for you,’” said a church leader. Please do continuously pray for them (1 Thessalonians 5:17).



Aid is distributed to Nigerian victims of violence

SUNDAY 4 Heavenly Father, on this Lord's Day we think of those who meet for worship knowing that they may face imminent violent attack. We consider those who cannot meet, because their faith must remain hidden, or because their churches have been closed down. We think also of those who meet in secret, not knowing whether this will be the last Sunday before they are discovered. For all such we pray that You will send blessings, comfort and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, causing them to place their hope and their confidence in the One who has overcome the world, because we ask it in His Name. (John 16:33)

MONDAY 5 A recent report by human rights experts exposes the horrifying conditions endured by prisoners in North Korean detention centres. Christians make up a large proportion of those imprisoned, and believers are generally treated more harshly than other detainees. "Suspected Christians are also interrogated for longer periods," states the report, "usually under torture and subjected to more intense torture, including to force them to incriminate others during interrogation." Pray for believers in North Korean prisons, that the Son of God will be with them in their suffering as He was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25, AV).

TUESDAY 6 The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the official Protestant church of China, was among seven religious groups – four of them Christian – to sign a statement committing to implement religious directives from the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These include increased state oversight of churches' finances, restrictions to online Christian

content and the further Sinicisation (that is, making Chinese, according to CCP teaching) of religious activity. Ask that the Lord will give wisdom to TSPM pastors and church leaders, enabling them to navigate tricky regulations and requirements. Ask that, by their example, more people will come to know the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY 7 "Bingwen" is just one of the Chinese church leaders studying with the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL), the academic branch of Barnabas Aid. He has served the church for four years as an itinerant preacher, but like other church leaders in China and other Christian-minority parts of the world, has struggled to find opportunities for training and development. Now, thanks to OCRPL, Bingwen is able to pursue his Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree, gaining knowledge and developing skills that will greatly bless the Church in China. Give thanks for this opportunity. Ask that the Lord will raise up pastors, teachers and leaders for His people in China, and pray especially for His blessing on Bingwen, his family, and the people to whom he ministers.

THURSDAY 8 "Mei" has served the Church in China for more than 20 years, supporting and leading the activities of her congregation and reaching non-Christians with the Gospel. She is another of the Chinese church leaders studying with the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL). Mei's experience of a difficult marriage, before she and her husband became Christians, has led her to train as a marriage counsellor,

supporting couples in rebuilding their relationship with each other and with God. Thanks to OCRPL, she now has the opportunity to undertake further study in a specifically Christian context. Pray for Mei's important ministry, and for the 70 Christian students that she in turn is training.

FRIDAY 9 "Through the disaster relief aid, many witnessed the love and light of Christ through the good works of His followers." These were the words of one of our partners in the Philippines after your generous donations provided desperately needed aid to Christian communities that were devastated by Typhoon Rai. Barnabas Aid provided 1,500 Christian families with ten kilos of rice and a five gallon container of water, as well as 50 shelter repair kits, containing lumber, sheeting and nails – enough to sustain them in the weeks and months that have followed. Give thanks that needs are being met and that all can see the love of Christ being demonstrated by His Church.

SATURDAY 10 Residents of Chan Thar, a Christian village in Sagaing Region, Myanmar, were left in tears as homes were destroyed in an attack by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw). The village came under artillery fire, after which soldiers went from house to house setting them alight. More than 300 houses in the village were bombed or burned down. Around 20 homes had already been destroyed in an earlier attack on Chan Thar, while nearly all the 350 houses in Chaung Yoe – another Christian village in Sagaing – were also destroyed. Pray for our brothers and sisters, now

homeless, that the Lord will provide abundantly for all their needs and strengthen their faith in Him.

SUNDAY 11 **Father God, we pray for Your people in many parts of the world who have been forced from their homes and their lands by violence and the threat of violence, becoming displaced within their own countries or seeking refuge in other lands. Often they no longer have the means to provide for themselves or their families. In most cases they cannot return. We ask that our Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself had "no place to lay His head", will comfort them. Please continue to supply all their needs, according to Your "riches in glory by Christ Jesus", for we pray in His Name. (Luke 9:58; Philippians 4:19, AV)**

MONDAY 12 "I thank God that He kept me safe on my journey here, and that I can serve my people in this camp." This is the testimony of "Khin", a church leader in Kayah State, Myanmar, now pastoring Christians in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs). "We saw the spiritual need of the people here," he explains, "so we decided to build a church where the people can come to be ministered to, having Bible studies and church services." Khin reports that more shelters are needed as more people arrive, and that the temporary huts that house the people need constant repair, especially during rainy season. Soldiers have planted landmines around the camp, resulting in injuries to many civilians. Yet he is thankful that Barnabas-funded food supplies are still reaching the people. Pray for the physical and spiritual needs of our desperately needy brothers and sisters.

TUESDAY 13 Pray for Chin Christians in Buddhist-majority Myanmar who are being denied internationally funded humanitarian aid because of their faith in Christ. Nearly 100,000 Chin are displaced from their homes in western Myanmar owing to continued military attacks against civilian areas. The Association of South-East Asian Nations has agreed to send desperately needed aid to struggling people across the country, but this can only be delivered in conjunction with Myanmar's military government who appear to be deliberately excluding Chin State, which is more than 90% Christian. Intercede for our brothers and sisters before the throne of the righteous judge, asking that He uphold their right and their cause (Psalm 9:4). Ask for the success of Barnabas Aid partners and others bringing aid to Chin State.

WEDNESDAY 14 Christians around the world, especially those enduring painful persecution, are comforted and strengthened by reflecting on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In enduring crucifixion, the Lord shared in our suffering and carries our sorrows (Isaiah 53:3-4). Even more than this, He made atonement for our sins so that all who trust in Him will be eternally reconciled to God. Give thanks to our Saviour, who still bears the marks of His crucifixion as He makes intercession for us (Revelation 5:6; Hebrews 7:25), for this blessed hope and expectation.

THURSDAY 15 Four Vietnamese Christian families (32 people) were forced out of their village because they refused to re-convert to the animist religion of the other villagers. When their plight gained publicity, the families

were allowed back to the village, where they now face the opposite kind of persecution: they are not allowed to leave. Nor can they have visitors. They are under close surveillance by the secret police, who listen to their phone calls. They have no crops because the rice-planting season passed while they were away from their homes and fields. Ask the Lord to sustain their faith and praise Him that our project partners managed to deliver sacks of rice to the families, despite everything.

FRIDAY 16 Villagers in Serukele, Puttalam District, Sri Lanka gathered to prevent the burial of a Christian at a public cemetery. The pastor and other Christians made a complaint to police, but the Officer-in-Charge denied their request for protection in order to carry out the funeral, saying that police would only become involved if the situation escalated. Instead the family were forced to carry out a cremation in another town around 12 miles away. Lift up in prayer the family of the deceased and the members of the church, asking that they find comfort in the knowledge that their loved one is at Home with the Lord.

SATURDAY 17 On 9 July the then President of Sri Lanka was forced to flee as protesters stormed his official residence in Colombo, the capital city. Several days of unrest followed, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets to demonstrate against rising inflation, food and fuel shortages, power blackouts and alleged economic mismanagement by the government. On 20 July the Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, won a parliamentary vote to become

the new president. Pray that the new government and the international community will find ways to alleviate the suffering of the Sri Lankan people. Intercede particularly for our brothers and sisters, who are so often among the first to go hungry and the last to receive help.

SUNDAY 18 Our Father, we pray for the land of Afghanistan, where so many people are hungry and suffering greatly. We ask that some way will be found to resolve the growing Afghan humanitarian crisis. We lift up to You those of our brothers and sisters who remain in Afghanistan, who not only share in the general suffering but who also live under the threat of death for their faith in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In His Name we ask that You will “deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted that have no one to help” and “rescue them from oppression and violence”. (Psalm 72:12,14)

MONDAY 19 Give thanks for a legal opinion given by a judge of the Delhi High Court that conversion from one religion to another is legal in India. “Every person has a right to choose and profess any religion of his/her choice,” he said, adding, “It is a constitutional right.” At the time of writing there are ten Indian states with laws that criminalise seeking to make converts through force, fraud or allurement. However, many extremists interpret any sharing of the Gospel, or even Christian worship, as being an illegal attempt to gain converts. Pray that the judge’s opinion will be taken seriously, and that Indians’ constitutional right to freedom of religion will be upheld across the country.

TUESDAY 20 A Christian couple in the Indian state of Karnataka were arrested after allegations of illegally securing conversions to Christianity. Pastor V Kuriyachan, 62, and his wife Selenamma, 57, were accused of forcing more than 1,000 tribal people to convert. The couple were accosted by extremists prior to their arrest. Extremists within Indian society often interpret any evangelism as an unlawful attempt to gain converts through underhand means, and take advantage of anti-conversion legislation to have Christians arrested. Intercede for Pastor Kuriyachan and his wife in their time of difficulty, and ask the Lord who “gives wisdom” and “guards the course of the just” (Proverbs 2:6, 8) to do both for His people in Karnataka.

WEDNESDAY 21 A church in the state of Odisha, India, has been barred from meeting for worship after accusations that Christians were seeking converts through force, fraud or allurement. A lawyer representing the church said that these allegations are unfounded. He added that extremists have disrupted services but that the police have not responded to complaints from the church. The church plans to appeal against the decision. Pray for the success of that appeal, asking that the Lord will make a way for His people to meet freely and safely to worship Him.

THURSDAY 22 Thank the Lord for answered prayer in Pakistan where the Lahore High Court has released on bail a mentally disabled Christian man who has been imprisoned for more than three years on charges of “blasphemy”. Stephen Masih was accused of “blasphemy” against Muhammad, the

prophet of Islam, following a dispute with a Muslim neighbour in March 2019. “We welcome the court’s decision to grant bail,” said a Pakistani church leader, “but at the same time we are concerned about the man’s safety. Once a person is accused of blasphemy in Pakistan, his life is always at risk and in danger.” Pray for the safety of Stephen, his family and his legal team. Ask that the charges against him, which have not yet been dismissed, will be dropped.

FRIDAY 23 Intercede for three Pakistani Christian men convicted of “blasphemy” who are facing the death penalty. Ashfaq Masih, who was arrested for alleged “blasphemy” in 2017, was convicted and sentenced to death in July 2022 for “defiling the name” of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. In a separate case the previous month, brothers Qasir and Amoon Ayub, who were sentenced to death for alleged “blasphemy” against Muhammad in 2018, had their convictions and death sentences upheld by an appeal court. Pray that these decisions will be overturned, and that Ashfaq, Qasir and Amoon will find comfort in knowing that they share in the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Ashfaq Masih [Image credit: Naila Inayat]

SATURDAY 24 Praise God for steps taken in Pakistan to protect the rights of Christians and other religious minorities. The government of this Muslim-majority country has appointed a Hindu, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, to oversee a task force dedicated to implementing the rights of Pakistan’s minority communities. “I am pleased the government has taken this initiative,” a Pakistani pastor told Barnabas Aid. “Let us pray it will bring positive results for Christians and other religious minorities in Pakistan.”

SUNDAY 25 Father God, we give You thanks for the provision through Barnabas Aid of Christian schools in Pakistan. Many parents there are unable to afford schooling for their children. Those young Christians who attend free schools provided by the government face often face harassment and blatant discrimination for their faith in Your Son. Thank You that more than 11,000 children are able to attend affordable schools with a commitment to the Christian faith. We pray that these schools will be used mightily to sustain the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ in Pakistan, for we ask it in His precious Name.

MONDAY 26 “What do you hope to achieve with this?” asked Deborah Samuel as an angry mob of Muslim extremists dragged her to her death. Deborah, a Christian student in Sokoto State, Nigeria, had been accused of making “derogatory comments” about Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, by her fellow students. The mob of Muslim students and local men stoned and clubbed her to death, then set her body on fire. The arrest of two suspects led to riots

in Sokoto, in which Muslims looted shops and attacked church buildings. Pray that God will restrain the hand of those who seek the death of His people in Nigeria, and give thanks that they can never achieve their aim of defeating Christ and His Church.

TUESDAY 27 Give thanks for the release of three church leaders in Nigeria who were abducted by gunmen in Abia State. Dr Samuel Kanu Uche, head of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, was travelling after leading Sunday worship when he was kidnapped. His chaplain, Abidemi Jeremiah Shittu, and the Bishop of Owerri, Dennis Mark, were also taken. All three men were released the following day. Praise the Lord, our strength and shield, for hearing the voice of our supplications (Psalm 28:6-7). Ask for wisdom and guidance for the authorities that they will find a way to thwart the kidnap gangs who frequently target our brothers and sisters.

WEDNESDAY 28 The terrorist group Islamic State (IS – also known as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) have released a video showing the murder of 20 Nigerian Christians in an unknown location. The victims were shown kneeling with their hands tied before each one was killed. Pray that the Lord will thwart the deadly plans of IS and other Islamists in Nigeria, across Africa and throughout the world. Ask that the relatives and friends of the victims will be comforted, and that persecution and distress endured for the sake of Christ will serve only to strengthen His servants (2 Corinthians 12:10).

THURSDAY 29 Praise the Lord that two women, Hauwa Joseph and Mary Dauda, who were among hundreds of schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram terrorists from the Nigerian town of Chibok eight years ago, have been found within days of each other. Each woman was carrying a baby in her arms. Mary, who was 18 when she was abducted, managed to escape from her husband, a Boko Haram fighter whom she was forced to marry. Hauwa, who was only nine when taken captive, had recently been forced to marry, but had nobody to look after her after her husband was killed in a military raid. Ask the Lord to heal both women from the physical, spiritual and emotional trauma of their ordeal. Pray that they will be reunited with their loved ones and that their needs, and the needs of their children, will be met. Intercede for more than 100 Chibok girls still unaccounted for, their whereabouts unknown.

FRIDAY 30 “I thank the Lord who brought me out of darkness and Barnabas who brought me out of ignorance and rehabilitated me,” said Abdoulaye, a Senegalese Christian convert, who became disabled after contracting polio as a child. “Now I see myself as a man and not as a sub-human.” In Muslim-majority Senegal, having a disabled child is seen as shameful, a “curse” caused by “evil spirits”. Disabled children have no opportunity to go to school or find work. Barnabas enabled six disabled converts to escape from begging by helping them to become self-sufficient. They received training in shoemaking and equipment to start up in business. Give thanks that this work has been such an encouragement to Abdoulaye and others

October

SATURDAY 1 “None of this would be possible without the grace, the goodness and the blessings of our Lord, nor without your involvement, your prayers.” These were the words of Barnabas Aid International Director Dr Patrick Sookhdeo to supporters at the official opening of our food.gives warehouse in Swindon, UK on 11 June. At the time of writing we have sent more than 1,000 tonnes of food and other donated items from seven countries to needy Christians in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, southern and eastern Africa and South Asia, reaching a million households. Thank the Lord for all we have been able to do so far to help His people. Pray that He will continue to guide and keep the work of Barnabas Aid in ministering to the suffering Church around the world.

SUNDAY 2 **Lord God and Heavenly Father, we are deeply saddened to see how the ongoing global food crisis is affecting people around our world. More than 2.3 billion people face hunger, with millions at risk of starvation and death. All of these are people created in Your image, and many are Your believing children. Please bless the work of all the relief organisations and aid agencies seeking to alleviate hunger and food poverty. Please provide for the followers of Your Son in lands where they are the last to receive help. May He who provided sustenance for thousands from a few loaves and fish – and who remains the same yesterday, today and forever – graciously provide again for all those in urgent need, because we ask it in His Name. (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 14:13-21; Hebrews 13:8)**

MONDAY 3 “We have no food in our area,” said one church leader in Matabeleland, a desperately poor region of Zimbabwe. He was speaking after low rainfall had resulted in yet another poor harvest. Another church leader explained, “In my village, out of 47 households, only 6 harvested enough grain [to last] until August.” Working through local churches and Christian organisations, Barnabas is providing a special maize-based porridge called ePap. Fortified with vitamins, minerals and protein, a small daily amount quickly brings health to malnourished children and adults. Pray for the success of these efforts on behalf of our brothers and sisters, and for the Lord’s provision in Zimbabwe.

TUESDAY 4 “This confirms that our hope in Christ is still alive and will be alive forevermore.” These were the joyful words of Vohitane, a Christian mother in southern Madagascar, after receiving desperately needed help from Barnabas. Vohitane and her family were among 6,831 poor Christian families given seeds provided by Barnabas to grow food to help them avoid famine in a region where rains have fallen recently. Families are reporting crop yields of 80% after planting the seeds of maize, antaka (local beans) and pumpkin, which they could not afford to buy themselves. They now have food to eat and enough to sell to earn an income. Our church partners say the project has encouraged and strengthened Christians in their faith and saved lives. Praise the Lord that the physical and spiritual needs of His people are being met.

WEDNESDAY 5 “Jesus Christ had compassion when He visited [this] church and used Barnabas Aid to feed those hundred families who have been starving,” said Charles, a Kenyan missionary. “God bless you for remembering this people.” Charles was speaking after a Barnabas-funded food distribution at a church in northern Kenya, an area in which Christians have been excluded when aid from other sources is distributed. The famine here shows no sign of abating, with the drought in northern Kenya declared a national emergency and half a million people at risk of starvation. Ask the Lord, in whom we hope, to send rain for northern Kenya and everywhere affected by drought (Jeremiah 14:22).

THURSDAY 6 In a recent edition of its official publication *al-Naba*, Islamic State (IS – also known as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) praised its fighters across Africa and called for Muslims to migrate to African countries as part of a campaign to Islamicise the continent. There are seven IS provinces (*wilayat*) in Africa, where the Islamist group is thought to have carried out nearly half of all its terrorist attacks in 2022 so far. Pray that our sovereign Lord will not allow the plans of the men of violence to prosper, and that the faith of Africa’s many Christians will continue to be a powerful witness of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY 7 Islamist violence is worsening in beleaguered northern Mozambique, often referred to as “the Land of Fear” owing to the brutality of Islamist extremists. In June 2022 fighters linked to Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) claimed responsibility for beheading several Christians. Many

Christians, along with Muslims who refuse to embrace the Islamists’ radical views, have been killed or forced from their homes. Cry out to the Lord for the terrorised population of northern Mozambique, especially our brothers and sisters. Pray that “the Land of Fear” will become a land of faith.

SATURDAY 8 “When we arrived it was already too late ... they had already killed more than a dozen of our fellow citizens.” This was the report of an army spokesman in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) after Islamists killed at least 24 villagers in a Christian-majority region of the country. The attack was carried out by terrorists linked to Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) armed with machetes. Violence in north-eastern DRC shows no sign of abating. Pray for our brothers and sisters, that they will remain firm in their faith. Ask the Lord to bring peace to this troubled land.

SUNDAY 9 **Lord God and Heavenly Father, we lift up to You our brothers and sisters in Eritrea, who suffer greatly from government persecution. Many of Your children are imprisoned for their faith in Your Son. Others have their freedom to worship and to share the Gospel curtailed by government restrictions. We pray for all such, that You will strengthen them and keep them from despair. We give thanks for the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray, that all those who suffer loss for the Gospel will be greatly blessed in the age to come. (Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 19:29)**

MONDAY 10 Give thanks that the government of Tunisia is amending its constitution, apparently as a means of discouraging Islamist extremism. Following a referendum on 25 July, the

Tunisian constitution no longer names Islam as the North African country's state religion. "Eighty percent of Tunisians are against extremism and against the use of religion for political ends," said a legal expert who worked on the new draft. "If you use religion to engage in political extremism, we will not allow that." Pray that the amendment will have the intended effect, and will also improve the situation of Tunisia's small Christian community, especially Tunisian converts from Islam.

TUESDAY 11 Pray for a congregation in Luxor, southern Egypt, whose church suffered an attack by a mob of Muslim extremists after nearly 20 years without a violent incident. The church was among 239 to be granted a licence by the Egyptian authorities in April 2022. Like other churches officially recognised in this way, it was then protected by guards from Egypt's Interior Ministry. Both the licensing and the stationing of guards appears to have angered some local Muslims, who attacked the building, threw stones at the homes of Christians, and set vehicles owned by the Christians on fire. Give thanks that nobody was hurt during this rampage, and ask the Lord to again grant peace to the believers in Luxor.



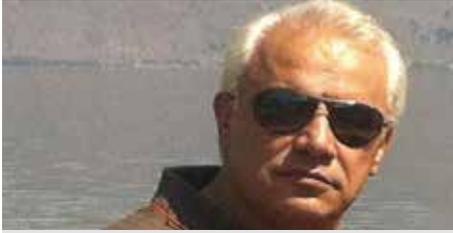
Kyrillos Megally [Image credit: Wataninet]

WEDNESDAY 12 Kyrillos Megally, an Egyptian Christian, had returned to his home village in Sohag, Upper Egypt, for a holiday when he was attacked and killed by a Muslim with an alleged history of harassing and insulting Christians. Abdullah Hosni, who has confessed to the killing, is reported to have pushed Kyrillos from the motorcycle he was riding before striking him repeatedly with a cleaver, inflicting fatal injuries. Pray for the family of Kyrillos and ask the Lord to draw close to them and give them comfort. Pray for guidance for the authorities investigating the killing and that a just verdict is reached in the case.

THURSDAY 13 Continue to pray for Rahmat Rostamipour, an Iranian convert from Islam who has now received a £155 (\$185; €184) fine for his role in setting up unlawful "house churches". The fine is approximately one month's wages in Iran. As well as this, Rahmat will face five years' deprivation of social rights (these may include being sent to live in another part of the country, restrictions on being able to work, or a ban on meeting other believers) and a suspended fine of £465 (\$555; €552) that will be imposed if he is deemed to re-offend within the next two years. Intercede for Rahmat and his family as they adapt to the increased scrutiny they face, asking that they will draw comfort from the Lord's presence even if they are denied fellowship with other believers.

FRIDAY 14 An Iranian pastor has been given a ten-year prison sentence for his role in running an unlawful "house church" in Tehran. Joseph Shahbazian is an Iranian-Armenian, and therefore permitted to worship as part of Iran's historic Armenian Christian

community. However, he pastored a church that included Iranian converts from Islam. Ask the Lord to sustain Joseph and his family throughout this difficult time. Pray also for a change of heart from the Iranian authorities, that they will allow Muslim-background believers to worship freely.



Joseph Shahbazian [Article 18]

SATURDAY 15 Give thanks that the government of Iraq has once again demonstrated its commitment to restoring buildings and property stolen from Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities. A committee working to inspect documents, determine ownership, and restore property has been expanded with three new members. This committee has already overseen the return of more than 120 houses, factories, shops and parcels of land to Christians and to Sabians, a religious minority native to Iraq. These properties were stolen as Christians and others fled the 2014-17 occupation of the region by Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh). Ask for guidance for the committee members, and pray that all stolen properties will be returned to their rightful owners.

SUNDAY 16 Our Father, we lift up to You our brothers and sisters in Saudi Arabia, where no non-Muslim worship is permitted and where Christian converts from Islam

face violence and even death for the Name of Christ. We can only guess how many of Your people are in Saudi Arabia, but each one is known individually and personally to You. Please turn and be gracious to these lonely and afflicted believers, guarding them from harm as they take refuge in You, for we ask in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Psalm 25:16,20)

MONDAY 17 “They are caught between a hammer and a piece of iron,” said a church leader from north-east Syria to Barnabas Aid. He was describing the plight of Christians, who face danger from several sources as well as a blighted economy that makes daily life a huge struggle. Add your prayers to his for all who are suffering in this terrible situation. Ask the Lord for courage for all the Christians in north-east Syria and wisdom from above for their leaders seeking to be channels of God’s blessing in very difficult circumstances.

TUESDAY 18 The cost of bread in Lebanon is reported to have increased by 550% and at the time of writing is becoming scarce in the shops. Long bread queues form and some people can no longer afford to buy this basic food at all. Cooking oil is virtually unavailable. Medicines and medical tests are so expensive that many have to go without and simply endure their sickness or die. Pray that the aid provided by Barnabas for some of the neediest Christians in Lebanon will bring hope and encouragement. Pray also for wisdom for its government and the international community in attending to this crisis.

WEDNESDAY 19 Lift up before the Lord a Christian family in Mardin province, Turkey, who were subjected to an

unprovoked attack on the day Sunday worship was conducted in a newly refurbished church building in their village. The Yilmaz family are the only Assyrians in their village, and were hosting visiting church ministers who were leading worship in the church for the first time in nearly a century. Around 500 Muslim extremists, led by a local Muslim family, attacked the family home with stones, sticks and other weapons, as well as setting fire to crops. Thankfully there were no injuries, and the service went ahead as planned. Give thanks for the re-opening of the historic church and pray for the safety of the Yilmaz family.



The church service in Mardin, Turkey [Image credit: Süryaniler]

THURSDAY 20 An ancient Christian cemetery in Mardin province, Turkey, has been vandalised, with bones and Christian objects scattered. The damage was discovered when Christians visited the site for the first time in three years, a postponement caused by Covid-19 restrictions. The incident demonstrates the opposition that still faces Turkey's Christian minority. "They do not leave our dead alone even in the grave," said a Christian resident. "This brutal behaviour is a great insult to our religion and culture." Ask that the unfailing love of the Lord will comfort

His people in Mardin and across Turkey, giving them spiritual strength (Psalm 119:76).

FRIDAY 21 There are several cases when ministers or pastors of small churches in villages, like other men in Uzbekistan, are leaving the country to seek work to support their families. This is because of the desperate economic situation that has seen prices for flour and sunflower oil rise by 100% or more. Pastors often face a heart-breaking choice between staying to serve their flock and leaving in order to provide for their families. Pray that the Lord will provide for His impoverished people in Uzbekistan with both spiritual and physical food.

SATURDAY 22 Give thanks that the process of church registration in Uzbekistan is being restarted, having been suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is not a simple matter for churches to gain registration. It is required that registered churches are led by pastors with university diplomas, while the churches must also own their own buildings. Many congregations share the few registered church buildings that there are, while others meet illegally in homes. Thankfully at present the government is not actively persecuting house meetings for converts from Islam, and has not been for several years. Many churches have also started Uzbek-language services for converts. Pray that the Lord will continue to sustain His Church in Uzbekistan.

SUNDAY 23 Lord God and Heavenly Father, we are mindful that our Lord Jesus Christ warned us against both false hope and hopeless despair, for neither of these reactions to the events and the

circumstances around us comes from faith. Rather, help us by Your Holy Spirit to have a realistic acceptance of the circumstances and a lasting hope based on the promises of Your Holy Word. Thank You that even in darkness and trouble, even amidst suffering and persecution, hope and peace are found in Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray. (Luke 21:8-9; John 14:27)

MONDAY 24 The government of Tajikistan has said that it will not register any more churches, although it has not announced any reason behind its decision. The announcement confirms what has been the practice in the Muslim-majority Central Asian country, where no new church has been registered in the last ten years. “We are sad that we are not allowed to open new churches and are banned from sharing our faith,” said one church leader. The government also reiterated that children under the age of 18 are not permitted to attend church services. Pray that the Lord will sustain and encourage Christians and others in Tajikistan facing oppressive laws. Ask that children of Christian parents will still be able to be built up in their faith despite the restrictions on public worship.

TUESDAY 25 “If your children’s lives are precious to you, leave the area, leave. This area belongs to Azerbaijan.” Armenian Christians in parts of Nagorno-Karabakh have been receiving threatening voicemails such as this in an effort to chase them from their ancestral lands. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh – an Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan – in September-November 2020 devastated the traditional farming industry on which many families are dependent. Thank the Lord for the courage of the Christian

families who have chosen to remain and pray for the success of Barnabas Aid’s provision of sheep, pigs and beehives to Christian families trying to rebuild their lives in this war-torn land.

WEDNESDAY 26 “In our country, death has become a daily meal.” This was the lament of Archbishop Matthew Man-Oso Ndagosu in Kaduna State, Nigeria, after Vitus Borogo, a church minister, was killed while working on his farm. The words proved sadly accurate, as the very next day in Edo State another church minister, Christopher Odia, was shot and killed by gunmen as he prepared to lead Sunday worship. Lift up in prayer Nigerian believers for whom death has become their daily meal, asking the Lord will prepare for them a table of blessings in the midst of their enemies (Psalm 23:5).

THURSDAY 27 Three Christians were killed and two injured in Kaduna State, Nigeria, as Islamist extremists on motorcycles attacked two Sunday morning church services in Rubu village. The dead were named as Peter Madaki, Elisha Ezekiel, and Ali Zamani. As many as 36 people were abducted. “I spoke to a man whose wife, mother and daughter were taken,” said an advisor to the Governor of Kaduna. “The anguish in his voice is something none of us should experience.” Pray that the Lord will wipe the tears from the eyes of the bereaved and that our abducted brothers and sisters will be freed safely and swiftly. Ask that beleaguered Christians have the patience to endure these difficult and testing times.

FRIDAY 28 Abductions of Christians and especially church leaders are becoming increasingly common in Nigeria. On 10 June three evangelists – Peter Adigidzi, Pastor Sunday Abah and Pastor Mike Baba – were kidnapped by gunmen in Kogi State. Two days later, on Sunday 12 June, the Bishop of Jebba Diocese, the Rt Rev Oluwaseun Aderogba, was abducted with his wife and driver in Oyo State. The next day an assistant pastor, Oluwaseun Ajose, and a Sunday school teacher, Dangunro Ayobami were taken from a church in Ogun State – thankfully these two men have since been released. Intercede for those of our brothers and sisters who remain in captivity, asking for their safe and swift release. Ask that a solution is found to the wave of abductions and violence that has wracked Nigeria. Pray that the Lord will break the power of those who threaten His people.

SATURDAY 29 “We thank you for your prayers, support, encouragement and show of love. May the name of the Lord be praised, now and forever. Amen! Thank you!” These were the words of Reverend Christopher Omotosho, a senior church leader in Katsina State, Nigeria, after four Christians were released by their kidnappers. Stephen Ojapa and Oliver Okpara, both church ministers, and a Christian couple, Mr Hassan Hassan and Mrs Ummie Hassan, had been abducted a month previously. Join with Reverend Omotosho in giving thanks and praising “the name of the LORD, for his name is alone exalted; his splendour is above the earth and the heavens” (Psalm 148:13).

SUNDAY 30 Father God, we are mindful that Your Word tells us that those who persevere to the end will be saved.

We recognise that we are living in a time of persecution when Christians are falling away from the faith and betraying one another, false prophets are leading people astray, and wickedness is increasing – a time prophesied by Your Son. Yet, He also promised that nobody will snatch us out of His hand or Yours. Preserve us we pray, as You promise in Your Word, for we ask it in His Name. (Luke 21:19; Matthew 24:13; John 10:28-29)



Left to right: Kefrey, Mrs Umarau, Ijagla, Pastor Umaru, Fanye

MONDAY 31 “I have forgiven those behind these killings and abduction. Also, I have accepted the will of God.” This was the wonderful statement of a Nigerian mother of three, whose daughter was kidnapped, whose husband was wounded, and whose two sons were shot and killed by gunmen who broke into her house. The two young men – Fanye Umaru, 23, and his brother Kefrey, 19 – were killed as they and their father tried to stop the bandits from entering the family home. Mrs Umaru spoke on the occasion of her sons’ funeral, at which point her husband Pastor Daniel Umaru was still in hospital and her 13-year-old daughter Ijagla still being held by her kidnappers. Give thanks that Ijagla has since been released, pray for healing for Pastor Umaru, and ask that Mrs Umaru’s grace will be an example to us all.

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