

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
[www.prayer-alert.net](http://www.prayer-alert.net) [editor@prayer-alert.net](mailto:editor@prayer-alert.net)

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## PRAISE REPORTS

### ■ As persecution increases, so does the distribution of Scripture

The United Bible Society has reported a sharp increase in the number of Christian Scriptures distributed in some of the countries where believers suffer the highest levels of persecution. Statistics suggest that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world and Baroness Warsi made headlines recently when she warned that Christianity could be wiped out in the Middle East. (See Prayer Alert 47-2013) However, recent figures released from Bible Societies around the world indicate that more Christian Scriptures were distributed than ever before in 2012. Global Scripture distribution rose from just over 381 million in 2011 to more than 405 million in 2012; an increase of 6%. Of the 405 million distributed, 32.1 million were whole Bibles, which matched 2011's record-breaking year of Bible distribution. Surprisingly, the highest increase was in Syria, with over eight times more Scriptures distributed by the Bible Society, through a network of church volunteers, in 2012 than 2011; 163,000 in total last year.

**Praise:** [God that His Word still speaks and brings life. \(Dt.32:2\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/as.persecution.increases.so.does.the.distribution.of.scripture/34814.htm>

### ■ Children & the next generation

Hoda is a gypsy girl living in the South of Lebanon participating in a literacy programme at a centre being managed by believers. Talking about their families Hoda explained that her eldest sister living with them is pregnant, but does not want the baby and continually says that she wants to kill the baby. Her teacher explained to the class that God is the Creator, that He made this little baby and He loves children. She also explained that if the mother continues to reject and hate the baby that the baby will be born with a sense of abandonment and rejection. Hoda went home that afternoon and explained to her sister that they should talk to the baby, love the baby and accept this baby as a gift from God. The next day Hoda returned to class, excited to tell everyone that her sister had changed her mind! She decided to keep and love the baby and no longer reject this gift.

**Praise:** [God and pray that He will continue to reveal Himself to children and to the next generation that will shape the future of Lebanon. \(Mat 11:25\)](#)

**More:** <http://www.cryoutnow.org/>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Bishops support White Ribbon Campaign

More than 60 bishops around the country wore a white ribbon last Monday to support the campaign dedicated to stamping out gender-based violence. Many visited local projects and used Twitter to raise awareness. The Bishop of Aston, the Rt Revd Andrew Watson, chair of the Panel for World Mission and the Anglican Communion, said he was delighted that so many bishops had taken up the challenge. He spoke about the White Ribbon Campaign and explained how he had been

approached by colleagues from the worldwide Anglican Communion who are concerned about gender violence. He visited the Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid, meeting and talking with victims of abuse and those who support them. The White Ribbon campaign, originally started by a group of men, is being supported by a number of Christian organisations in this field. The Mothers' Union has produced an action pack and the organisation 'Restored' has developed its 'First Man Standing' campaign.

**Pray:** for all victims of gender violence and that the White Ribbon Campaign will make significant strides towards overcoming such abuse. (Ps.11:5)

**More:** <http://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2013/11/bishops-support-white-ribbon-campaign.aspx>

#### ■ Couples fear 'faith barrier' in adoption system

Most people who seriously consider adoption are 'actively religious', a Government survey shows, yet many fear being rejected for their faith. The survey was carried out on behalf of the Department for Education by adoption group First4Adoption. The group has joined with church-based organisation Home for Good to encourage religiously-active people to put themselves forward to adopt children. The survey showed 55 per cent of people in England who said they were 'certain' or 'very likely' to adopt described themselves as 'actively practising a religion'. There are more than 4,600 children in England currently waiting to be adopted and First4Adoption say 'many more adopters are needed'. The groups have now set up a phone line to 'encourage more people from faith communities to consider adopting'. First4Adoption and Home for Good are concerned that many religiously-active people are held back from adopting because they mistakenly believe that they are not able to adopt.

**Pray:** for more people to consider adopting children and that more and more of them will be people of faith. (Pr.14:26)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/religious-people-are-afraid-to-adopt-children/>

#### ■ Lichfield delighted with first Messy Church confirmation

October 2013 marked the first confirmation service in a Messy Church congregation in the Diocese of Lichfield. Messy Church originated out of the Fresh Expression movement, which was established by the Church of England and the Methodist Church to pioneer new congregations that appeal to those who might not normally attend a 'regular' or traditional church. Now, however, Messy Church is a movement in its own right, though still under the umbrella of Fresh Expressions. It aims to provide a space for families to experience and take part in worship in a new way, incorporating creativity, celebration and hospitality. Messy Churches have become extremely popular in recent years. Some people have expressed reservations about the movement, however, asking whether it is really just a craft club, rather than a church. Bishop Mark of Shrewsbury, who led the confirmation service, has rebutted these claims.

**Pray:** for all initiatives that spread the Gospel message and especially for the Messy Church movement. (Mk.16:15)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/lichfield.delighted.with.first.messy.church.confirmation/34790.htm>

#### ■ Bereavement: Workers 'should get paid leave'

Campaigners are urging the Government to give workers the legal right to paid leave if they have been affected by a family bereavement amid growing public support for the move. Two thirds of people said it was unfair that bereavement leave was unpaid, a survey of more than 1,500 adults showed. TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: 'Most people will be surprised to learn that unless they have an understanding employer, they may not be able to take much time off work following a death in the family, and if they are, any compassionate leave will almost certainly be unpaid. Coping with the sudden loss of a loved one is traumatic enough without having to worry about work, too. The Government should do the right thing and give people a legal right to paid time away from their jobs after someone close to them has died.'

**Pray:** for care for all those who are bereaved and appropriate support for those who are temporarily unable to work following bereavement. (2Co.1:3-4)

**More:** <http://news.sky.com/story/1173159/bereavement-workers-should-get-paid-leave>

#### ■ Free friendship phone service for older people launched

A free 24-hour dedicated helpline for older people across the UK has been launched by Esther Rantzen. 'The Silver Line' aims to combat loneliness in the over-65s by providing friendship, information and advice through calls to trained volunteers. Ms Rantzen said she hoped the phone line number, 0800 4 70 80 90, would be remembered by all older people when they needed friendship or advice. The phone line is funded by a £5m grant from the Big Lottery Fund. The Department of Health has said that loneliness causes serious physical and mental damage. More than half of the UK's over-75s live alone. 'We will signpost them to the services in their community and, by showing them we value them and care about them, we will restore their confidence and feelings of self-worth,' said Ms Rantzen.

**Pray:** for the success of this initiative that it will meet the needs of those in this sector. (Is.58:10)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-25056351>

#### ■ Knives found hidden under prison mats following Muslim gang war

Home-made knives were found hidden under prison prayer mats after an inmate was stabbed in a jail war. Officers discovered 13 razor-sharp weapons following a brawl between Muslim gangs. A young man was knifed in the back in what is believed to have been revenge for another stabbing at Swaleside Prison in Kent. A source said: 'There is a battle for power going on between Muslim gangs at the prison. There could easily have been serious injuries or deaths and the level of violence is terrifying.' The category B jail on the Isle of Sheppey holds 1,112 inmates, including a large population of Muslim prisoners. Staff have to hold two sets of Friday Prayers - at the chapel and an overflow in the Multi Faith Room where the attack took place. Glyn Travis, of the Prison Officers' Association, said: 'This is a worrying escalation. The number of weapons recovered is unprecedented and shows a determination to cause violence.'

**Pray:** for the safety of all the staff and prisoners alike. Pray against violence and gang culture. (Ps.122:7)

**More:** <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/thirteen-home-made-knives-found-hidden-2844154>

### ■ Nine million in 'serious' debt across the UK

Nearly nine million people across the UK are living with serious debt problems, according to a new report. The Money Advice Service (MAS) also said very few people were making any attempt to get professional help. The problem is particularly acute in five English cities, (Manchester, Hull, Nottingham, Knowsley and Liverpool), where more than 40% of the population is struggling to pay their debts. According to the survey, 18% of Britons, 8.8 million people, consider they have 'serious' financial issues. MAS, which is backed with public money, said that for the first time, the survey had provided a detailed understanding of the lives of those who are in debt. The report found that 74% of those struggling with debt were 'unhappy'. There is particular concern that very few people ask for help. 'millions of people could escape their spiral of debt by accessing free advice,' said Caroline Rookes, the chief executive of MAS.

**Pray:** for the many thousands trapped in debt and that ways will be found to offer advice. (Ro.13:8)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25108891>

## EUROPE

### ■ Pope Francis: All believers are called to share the Gospel

Pope Francis has officially presented his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (the Joy of the Gospel), at a press conference in Rome. The Exhortation marks the end of the Year of Faith celebrated by Catholics around the world, and was presented by the Pope on Sunday. It aims to encourage believers to embark upon a new chapter of evangelisation marked by joy, and presents a vision for the life of the Church in the future. In the document, Pope Francis declares that all Catholics are called to proclaim the Gospel and to see the responsibility to evangelise as their own. He reminds the faithful that 'the word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in Him to go forth'. He names God as 'the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelisation', and says that in order to lead 'a dignifying and fulfilling life', we must reach out to others.

**Pray:** that the Church will take up the responsibility of evangelisation as encouraged by the Pope. (Col.2:2)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/pope.francis.first.apostolic.exhortation.all.believers.are.called.to.share.the.gospel/34829.htm>

### ■ Denmark: 80 Danes have joined Syria fight

Denmark's security service said Sunday it thinks around 80 people have travelled from Denmark to Syria to join the civil war since mid-2012. In a report, the service known as PET said those who travel to Syria are mainly Sunni Muslim men aged between 16 and 25. At least seven were killed in Syria and around 40 have returned to Denmark again, PET said. The Syria conflict has attracted hundreds of foreign fighters from European countries, many of whom have joined Islamic militant groups. The Norwegian intelligence service PST has said an estimated 30 to 40 people - and possibly more - have left from Norway, including two teenage sisters aged 16 and 19 who made headlines last month.

**Pray:** that the authorities will find ways of halting the recruitment of fighters in Syria. (Pr.10:12)

**More:** <http://europenews.dk/en/node/74540>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ China: 20 lawyers to defend pastor

Last week we asked you to pray for a Church pastor and 25 of his congregation who were forcibly detained on November 16th. See: <http://site.prayer-alert.net/images/read%20pa%20now.pdf> This week there are signs of Christians speaking out against persecution. Rights defenders ChinaAid have now assembled more than 20 lawyers to defend Pastor Zhang Shaojie and his congregation members. The US-based rights group took this action after the original defence team encountered little cooperation from authorities in Henan province. On November 18 CSW reported 100+ supporters of the pastor joined a protest calling for his release from prison. Zhang, 48, is a Protestant pastor of the Nanle County Christian Church, which is part of the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Earlier this month, ChinaAid reported another protest in Henan involving thousands of Christians over a land dispute between a church in Anyang city and the local authority.

**Pray:** for the much talked about reorganization of the penal system to be acted upon and for the immediate release of unjustly held victims of the current system. (Ps.120:1)

**More:** <http://www.persecution.org/2013/11/26/20-human-rights-lawyers-called-upon-to-defend-arrested-pastor-congregation/>

### ■ Australia: Conference hears 'Australia at war with radical Islam'

A hardline Islamic group Hizb at-Tahrir, said the Australian government was trying to 'brainwash' their children and that they should resist any attempts to water down their strict view of Islam. 'The government is playing a dirty game,' Wassim Doureihy told a 600-strong audience in Sydney. The group launched a 124-page report on what it sees as Australian government attempts to divide the Muslim community into extremists and moderates. 'The fundamental objective of these policies is to change Islam, to secularise Islam, to produce a so-called 'moderate Islam' - a state-sanctioned version of Islam that is secular, politically impotent and localised.' Mr Doureihy warned the audience of 'a war that is being waged on Islam in Australia as it is in the rest of the world.' A Fellow speaker said the Australian government had arrogantly assumed that because Muslim youth went to their schools and watch their TV shows they would adopt Australian values. See also: <http://globalmbreport.org/?p=363>

**Pray:** against Hizb ut-Tahrir and their attempts with other groups to instil global sharia law. (Is.17:13)

**More:** <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/hizb-uttahrir-australia-conference-hears-this-country-at-war-with-radical-islam/story-fni0cx12-1226762077040>

#### ■ Iran: Construction at nuclear reactor site

On Wednesday, possibly referring to a loophole in the deal with the West, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said that no new nuclear fuel will be produced, no new components will be installed, but the Islamic Republic will press on with building at a heavy-water reactor despite an agreement with Western powers to halt activity. The uncompleted heavy-water research reactor emerged as one of several crucial issues in negotiations in Geneva when Iran agreed with six world powers to curb Tehran's nuclear programme for six months in return for limited sanctions relief. Experts have said an apparent gap in the text could allow Tehran to build components off-site to install later in the nuclear reactor. It was not immediately clear if Zarif was referring to this or other construction activity. The West believes the reactor would produce plutonium, one of two materials, along with enriched uranium, that make the fissile core of a nuclear bomb.

**Pray:** that the Lord would reign over Iran's leaders causing them to move forward with honest and honourable communication and action. (Ps.83:18)

**More:** <http://www.jpost.com/Iranian-Threat/News/Iran-Construction-will-continue-at-Arak-nuclear-site-333166>

#### ■ America: Kerry delivers video on Iran deal to Congress

US Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a video message to Congress in an attempt to stop the body from collapsing last weekend's nuclear deal with Iran. He urged them not to introduce new economic measures against Iran as the US and fellow world powers withdraw some sanctions in exchange for Iran curtailing their nuclear programme. Kerry was reaching out to key senators but Democrats and Republicans appeared determined to increase the pressure on Tehran with senators already working on legislation to reinstate the full force of sanctions and impose new ones if Iran doesn't make good on its pledge to roll back its nuclear programme. 'The American people need an insurance policy to prevent a rerun of North Korea,' said one of the Republican Senators drafting the bill. Meanwhile Israel sees any let-up on the economic pressure as a dangerous concession, allowing Iran to move even closer to nuclear weapons capability.

**Pray:** for American lawmakers and policymakers to be graced with God's wisdom as they consider the impact of present agreements, information they already have and any fresh proposals.

**More:** <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2013/11/kerry-delivers-video-iran-deal-congress-2013112623142282948.html>

#### ■ Egypt: Terrorisation of Egyptian Christians Intensifies

There is a perception that Christians can be attacked with impunity. 'If you hurt a Christian no one is going to do anything to you. No one is ever brought to justice in sectarian violence against Christians,' said Mina Thabet, the founding member of a youth movement. Three months after the Army liberated Delga from militant Islamists; criminals are now terrorizing Christians in other towns and charging Jizya (a Koranic fine on non-Muslims known as 'submission' or 'humiliation' tax). They have set up a cottage industry persecuting Christians for profit. Extortionists use the threat of kidnapping, torture and murder to seize money, land and other property from Christians throughout Minya and Assiut governorates. Kidnap victims are tortured so severely that when they return to their families they are completely broken, unable to talk about their ordeals, much less report the crimes to police.

**Pray:** against the concept that persecuting Christians is 'a religious duty.' Pray for renewed initiatives by police and an improvement to the justice system. (Ps.59:1)

**More:** [http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=12873](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=12873)

#### ■ Pakistan: Refugees from blasphemy laws

Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws have led to a mass migration of Christians out of Pakistan's Punjab province after mobs attacked their lives and property in Gojra, Korian and Bahimwali villages. Nazir Bhatti, the president of the Pakistan Christian Congress expressed concerns about delays in processing hundreds of Pakistani Christian refugees in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong who have been waiting years for decisions on their asylum applications while living under deplorable conditions. 'Christian families are starving as they await their fate while international relief agencies refuse to get involved on their behalf'. Bhatti also claimed there's a double standard in the West's treatment of Pakistan's Christians. When Malala Yousafzai was targeted by the Taliban, her case was heard by Buckingham Palace. When Christian girls are targeted by the same Taliban in its attack on Peshawar Church, no medical treatment was offered them in the EU.

**Pray:** for refugees to be treated justly in Pakistan and in the countries they have been forced to flee to. Pray against religious persecution.(Ps.31:1)

**More:** <http://www.christianpersecution.info/index.php?view=12661>

#### ■ Indonesia: Volcano causing highest alert

A volcano in the northern part of Indonesia's Sumatra Island erupted six times Monday, sending volcanic ash 2,000 metres in the air after days of heightened activity. Indonesia has raised the alert status to the highest level, forcing the total evacuation of 11,000 people. The volcano is 50 kilometres from Medan, a city of more than two million people and is one of several volcanoes that have shown increased activity in recent months. Four other major volcanoes are under observation due to the high potential for eruption.

**Pray:** for the thousands who had red hot ash and rocks rain down on them and who are now homeless. (Ps.9:18)

**More:** <http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2013/11/25/indonesian-volcano-keeps-erupting-after-put-on-highest-alert/>

## PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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C/O World Prayer Centre, Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG, England