

# PRAYER ALERT...

‘If my people....will humble themselves and pray’ <sup>2 Chr 7:14</sup>

Informing and equipping Christians - Online and to Inbox

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## PRaise REPORTS

### ■ British hostage David Bolam freed in Libya

British teacher David Bolam has been released after being held hostage by militants in Libya since May. The Foreign Office said Mr Bolam, who taught at the now-closed International School in Benghazi, was ‘safe and well’ and had been reunited with his family. Mr Bolam's MP in Craven Arms in Shropshire said he was ‘delighted’ that the 63-year-old was back home safely. It is thought the teacher's release was secured by local political factions and that money changed hands. Mr Bolam's kidnapping had not been reported at the request of the Foreign Office and his family. BBC world affairs correspondent Caroline Hawley said she understood demands for a ransom had been made to the school and that money was handed over to secure his release. She said it was ‘unclear’ how much money was paid and who paid it, but the Foreign Office was not involved in the negotiations. (Ps.105:1)

**Praise:** God for the release of David Bolam and pray that others kidnapped may also be released quickly.

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29494784>

### ■ Wonga to write off £220m of customer debts

Payday lender Wonga says it is writing off £220m of debts for 330,000 customers after putting in place new affordability checks. The company, which has faced criticism for its high interest rates and debt collection tactics, made the changes after discussions with regulators. Customers in arrears whose loans would not have been made under the new checks will have their debts written off. A further 45,000 customers in arrears will not have to pay interest on loans. Affected Wonga customers will be notified by 10 October. Wonga's chairman Andy Haste, who joined the company in July, said a review of lending practices had shown that the need for change at Wonga was ‘real and urgent’, and new stricter lending criteria would mean ‘accepting far fewer applications from new and existing customers’. (See also Prayer Alert 31-2013)

**Praise:** God for the changes to lending criteria and debt write-off by Wonga. Pray that this will lead to a reform of this lending practices. (Ro.13:8)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-29457044>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Christian group concerned over human rights changes

The Christian Legal Centre says proposals by the Conservatives to stop British laws being over-ruled by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg could cause problems for Christians. The Tories have said if they win the election they will change the law to say British courts wouldn't have to listen to the European Court of Human Rights. But the Christian Legal Centre says it could mean that believers who feel they've been discriminated against won't get a fair deal. Andrea Williams said, 'What we have seen coming out of Europe when we've taken our Christian interest cases there is that the European Court gives the Christians more rights than we've been seeing in our national courts. It was the European Court of Human Rights that actually recognised the cross as a Christian symbol.'

**Pray:** that any proposed changes will be carefully thought through with wide ranging, in-depth consultation. (Mic.6:8)

**More:** <http://www.premierchristianradio.com/News/UK/Christian-group-concerned-over-possible-human-rights-changes>

#### ❑ Witchcraft and ritual child abuse cases rise in London

The number of ritual child abuse cases linked to witchcraft being investigated in London is increasing. A total of 24 cases were passed to the Metropolitan Police in 2013, 19 in 2012 and nine in 2011. There have been 27 allegations in the past year, including two claims of rape. Allegations included a child being swung around and smacked on the head 'to drive out the devil' and youngsters being dunked in water. A number of child killings have been linked to these beliefs, including the murder of Kristy Bamu, 15, who was tortured and drowned by his sister and her boyfriend in 2010; and the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. Since 2004, 148 cases have been referred to the Met.

**Pray:** that the authorities will be able to find ways of stopping this evil. (Dt.18:10)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-29530936>

#### ❑ More than 2,000 care homes have no manager

More than 2,000 care homes looking after elderly or disabled adults have no registered manager, according to figures to be published this week. 12 per cent of all care homes in England lack the leadership required to ensure that vulnerable people, including frail pensioners with dementia, are cared for properly. According to a study presented at the Liberal Democrat conference on Tuesday this meant that Paul Burstow, the Lib Dem MP and former health minister who obtained the figures, said they showed that 'a revolution' in care homes was needed. 'It is hardly surprising that people fear 'going into a home', he said, 'We would never accept this in a healthcare setting and there is no reason why we should be prepared to accept it for people living in residential care.' He called for 'a lot more' care home places to be created to meet demand from Britain's ageing population.

**Pray:** that these new data will prompt a review and new initiatives in care provision for the future. (Lev.19:32)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/11141427/More-than-2000-care-homes-have-no-manager.html>

#### ❑ Domestic violence victims are being forced to face abusers in court ordeal

Growing numbers of domestic violence victims are being quizzed by their former partners in court due to cuts in legal aid which have led to a rise in litigation-in-person cases, family law specialists are warning. Emma Pearmaine, a family law specialist at Simpson Millar and director of the Leeds Law Society, said: 'The number of women being cross-examined by abusive ex-partners in court has doubled in my experience since 2013. Judges do their best to step in and control cross-examination situations where it is a case for an injunction, or non-molestation order, for example, but they should be there to adjudicate on the case – not manage behaviour as a priority. These women are some of the most vulnerable in society and they now have no real protection. They are let down from start to finish. They suffer abuse at home then, torment from their abuser in court. For them there is no sense of justice.'

**Pray:** for changes to be made to allow women free legal protection in such cases. (Am.5:24)

**More:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/victims-of-domestic-violence-forced-to-face-abusers-in-court-ordeal-9774958.html>

#### ❑ Leading scientists warn against 3-parent baby plan

This week leading international scientists will warn a Parliamentary inquiry that the Government's 3-parent baby plan raises serious public safety concerns and should not be permitted to go ahead. Currently, the proposed technique - known as 'mitochondria replacement therapy' - can only be used for research purposes, and involves transferring both parents' DNA into a donor egg. Ministers say the procedure will help prevent mothers from passing mitochondrial disorders to their children. But in a letter to the Commons science and technology committee, the group of scientists will warn: 'The safety of mitochondrial replacement therapy is not yet established sufficiently to proceed to clinical trials.' An editorial in the New Scientist magazine warned that 'we may have seriously underestimated the influence that mitochondria have' in light of new research which 'suggests that they play a key role in some of the most important features of human life.'

**Pray:** for restraint in proceeding too rapidly with these techniques that may contain serious inherent problems. (Dt.22:9)

**More:** <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/bioethics/leading-scientists-warn-parliamentary-inquiry-against-3-parent-baby-plan>

#### ❑ Cracks found at reactor at Hunterston B nuclear power station

New cracks have been found in one of the reactors at Hunterston B nuclear power station in North Ayrshire. Two of about 3,000 graphite bricks in the core of reactor four are affected. Plant operator, EDF Energy, said the cracking had been predicted to occur as the station aged and it would not affect the safe operation of the reactor. Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said the issue was 'hugely concerning' to the public and that the Scottish government was seeking reassurances. 'The Scottish government is seeking the information we need to assure the public about safety, because safety is absolutely paramount and cannot be compromised,' she said. The cracks were found during a routine inspection which began in August. They have appeared since the last inspection in 2011.

**Pray:** that the inspectors will have found all possible problems and those responsible will be successful in making repairs if required. (Pr.3:23)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-29502329>

### ▣ Schools 'could be sued' under new regulations – senior QC warns

New education standards which may politicise the curriculum pave the way for schools being sued over what they teach, according to a senior QC. In a legal opinion for The Christian Institute, John Bowers QC said the regulations break the 'seal' that prevents schools facing legal action over what is taught. The standards, which came into force last month, require academies, free schools and independent schools in England to 'actively promote' the rights defined in the Equality Act 2010, including sexual orientation and transsexual rights. Bowers said the regulations provide 'mechanisms in the law for disgruntled pupils, parents and campaigners' to sue individual schools. He warned that teachers may face legal action if their attempts to simplify complex religious or philosophical topics are 'deemed to undermine respect for some people's beliefs. The standards could result in religious and political discussion being curtailed,' Bowers said.

**Pray:** that the new regulations will not cause confusion but be clearly understood. (Ne.8:8)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/schools-could-be-sued-under-new-regulations-senior-qc/>

## EUROPE

### ▣ Britain warned, as euthanasia rate in the Netherlands soars

Euthanasia deaths in the Netherlands have risen by 151 per cent over the last seven years, prompting fears about 'steady extension' if Britain legalises assisted suicide. According to Dutch media reports, the number of euthanasia deaths last year increased by 15 per cent to 4,829, compared to 4,188 in 2012. Last year 3,600 people in the Netherlands were euthanised because they had cancer, and there were 42 reports of euthanasia due to severe psychiatric problems, compared with 14 in 2012 and 13 in 2011. In 97 euthanasia cases, dementia was the reason given. These patients were mainly in the early stage of the condition, when they were able to communicate properly their wish to die. Dr Peter Saunders, Campaign Director of Care Not Killing, highlighted statistics from Switzerland and Belgium, which show similar steep increases in cases of assisted suicide since the practice was legalised. (See also Prayer Alert 33-2014)

**Pray:** that the authorities in the UK will learn from the results of the Dutch and other EU statistics. (Pr.1:5)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/britain-warned-as-euthanasia-rate-in-the-netherlands-soars/>

### ▣ Ukraine: 'What truce? say residents of Donetsk where battles continue

A ceasefire may still be officially in place in eastern Ukraine, but try telling that to the owners of burning homes in Donetsk. Battles are raging unabated between Ukrainian forces and separatist fighters, mainly around the city's airport and nearby neighbourhoods are often caught in the crossfire. Resident Valentina Kovaleva told reporters: 'All the balconies were damaged by shrapnel, everything burning. Can you imagine, if we hadn't sent away the children, they would be dead now. Every day there is shooting. More than 3,500 people have been killed since fighting began between pro-Russian separatists and government troops'. Raisa Kozlova, a 75-year-old Donetsk resident injured by shelling, said: 'What truce? You call that a truce? They might make agreements and talks, but it changes nothing. We're still being bombed.'

**Pray:** for the situation around Donetsk that God will stamp His authority over the warring parties. (Ps.60:12)

**More:** <http://www.euronews.com/2014/10/07/what-truce-say-residents-of-donetsk-where-battles-continue-to-rage/>

## WORLDWIDE

### ▣ Turkey: Deaths in Kurdish protests across Turkey

People were killed in demonstrations across Turkey as Kurds demanded that the government do more to protect the town of Kobane from terrorist fighters. On Tuesday night police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters who burnt cars and tyres as they took to the streets mainly in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish eastern and south-eastern provinces. Clashes also erupted in Ankara and Istanbul where almost one hundred people were detained and thirty were injured. Five died in Diyarbakir. A 25-year-old man died in Varto and at least half a dozen people were wounded there in clashes between police and protesters. Two people died in Siirt province and another died in neighbouring Batman. A curfew exists in Kurdish populated districts of Diyarbakir, Siirt and Van where thousands of protesters rallied against IS's advance on Kobane.

**Pray:** that President Erdogan would honour the Turkish Parliament's agreement to send forces into both Syria and Iraq. Pray also for the three million refugees who have lost so much including loved ones. (Ps.4:6-8)

**More:** <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/10/deaths-kurdish-protests-turkey-201410722504757570.html>

### ▣ Syria: Jihadist rebels abduct Franciscan friar

Father Hanna Jallouf and about twenty of his parishioners were taken from the convent in the village of Knayeh by the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front on Sunday. Nuns at the convent have taken refuge in nearby homes. Many nuns, monks and priests have been kidnapped or killed in Syria since 2011. A senior Franciscan official said Fr Hanna and the other Christians had been accused of being 'collaborators' with the government. 'We don't know what to do. We don't know with whom to talk, we're totally unable to get in touch with anyone,' he said. Christians have tried to avoid taking sides. However, they are gradually being drawn into the conflict. Many fear that if the secular government is overthrown they will be targeted by groups calling for an Islamic state and Christian communities will be destroyed

**Pray:** for safe negotiations for the release of these and other hostages. (Ps.3:3-4)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29519109>

### ▣ Iran: Answered prayers, further arrests and hunger strike

In September believers from Muslim backgrounds were arrested. In October, Moluk Ruhani, Hamidreza Borhani and Zainab Akbari were released though Mohammad Taslimi and Parsa Dadkhah remain in Dastgerd prison. Sepideh Morshedi's

whereabouts is unknown. On 27 September security officers entered the house of Shahram Ghaedi and arrested him, Heshmat Shafiei, and Emad Haghi. Shahram Ghaedi is the actor portraying Jesus in the Iranian version of the Jesus Film. Meanwhile a British Law student, Ghoncheh Ghavami, currently in Evin Prison for 'propaganda against the regime' has gone on hunger strike. She was visiting family and working for a charity in June when she was arrested for attempting to attend a men-only volleyball match. Her brother has over 500,000 signatures on a petition urging the British government to help bring Ghavami home. The government said they are unable to do much because of limited diplomatic relationship with Iran. See also: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/10/07/british-iranian-woman-goes-on-hunger-strike-after-unjust-jailing-at-brutal-evin/>

**Pray:** for the families of prisoners to know God's grace, strengthening and support. Pray also for prisoners to be treated with respect and dignity and for their speedy release. (Ex.23:6)

**More:** <http://www.meconcern.org/index.php/en/prayer-requests/822-iran-arrests-releases-and-charges-dropped>

#### ■ West Africa: Companies fill gaps in Ebola response

When the US Ambassador to Liberia needed help to support the arrival of international health workers she turned to a private-sector group that had inventoried their resources for a response to Ebola. She said teams from the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization needed to reach an undeveloped region of Liberia far from most basic services. Finding safe accommodation posed a problem, while communications, transportation and logistics could also be difficult. Within hours a company dealing in palm oil offered clean but rudimentary housing in Sinoe and Grand Kru. A gold-mining company offered housing in a guest house with electricity and running water – rare amenities in that remote region. London Mining, with heavy equipment came to the rescue in Sierra Leone for construction processes. Many companies had produced a common spreadsheet showing who has buildings, vehicles, communications infrastructure machinery and health facilities and where they are located.

**Pray:** for more leaders of international companies with operations in West Africa to join this scheme or develop their own volunteer structures of resources to be available to serve where needed. (Ps.37:31)

**More:** <http://allafrica.com/stories/201410072010.html>

#### ■ Uzbekistan: Police raid Christian homes

It can be costly to own religious literature in Uzbekistan. On 5 September, Artur Alpayev was fined 50 times the minimum monthly wage for storing religious literature at his home. The literature was seized when his home was raided during a prayer meeting. When sentencing Artur the judge said, 'We will continue fining you unless you stop storing religious literature in your home.' Local Christians complained that Artur's right to 'search, receive and spread any information, except that which is aimed against the Constitutional order' under Uzbekistan's constitution, is not being respected. Police also recently raided the homes of two other Christian couples in search of religious literature. In Uzbekistan all religious literature is subject to compulsory censorship before it can be owned. However, there is no law banning individuals from owning religious literature unless it encourages people to change their beliefs.

**Pray:** that distorted laws against Christianity will not be employed: pray also for the protection of the Uzbekistan Church so that it will grow and prosper. (Ps.56:3-5)

**More:** <http://www.barnabasfund.org/UK/News/News-analysis/Uzbek-police-raid-Christians-homes-in-search-of-religious-literature.html>

#### ■ USA: 'Non-discrimination' Bill and Christians

Bishop James Johnston says Missouri State's non-discrimination bill discriminates against people of faith and forcing believers to recognise same-sex relationships violates their religious freedoms and essentially makes Christians criminals. The leader in the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Catholic Diocese issued a letter opposing the measure. 'Does the government have a compelling interest in forcing every member of our society to participate in the celebration of same-sex relationships?' Meanwhile a new study revealed that 1/3 of American workers say they have seen or experienced religious discrimination at their workplace according to a new study that asked more than 2,000 Americans about religious freedom at work. 32% of white evangelicals said others look down on them because of their beliefs, while 31% of non-religious workers said the same. See <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2013/September/One-Third-See-Religious-Discrimination-at-Work/>

**Pray:** against unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, in Missouri and across America. (Ps.36:2) Pray also for God to comfort those who are victims of religious discrimination. (Ps.36:7)

**More:** <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2014/October/Bishop-Nondiscrimination-Bill-Targets-Christians/>

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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