

PRAYER ALERT...

'If my people....will humble themselves and pray' 2 Chr 7:14

Informing and equipping Christians - Online and to Inbox

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EUROPE

❑ Andorra: On the brink of Europe's next crisis

The tiny principality of Andorra nestling in the foothills of the Pyrenees between France and Spain has been rocked by allegations of money-laundering in its oversized banking sector. Andorra conjures up images of medieval churches and duty-free shopping. However, in the last three weeks the state has been gripped by a banking crisis that threatens to take it to the brink. Bankers have been thrown in jail, savers' deposits have been restricted, and the country's government is scrambling to convince powerful regulators thousands of miles away that the country is not a haven for tax evasion. In March the US Treasury Department's financial crime body, FinCEN, accused the country's fourth-largest bank of money-laundering. The authority said 'corrupt high-level managers and weak anti-money-laundering controls have made BPA an easy vehicle for third-party money-launderers'. The bank accepted bribes from criminals in Russia, Venezuela and China to funnel money through the Andorran system. Banking is Andorra's second biggest industry after tourism.

Pray: for all that is dishonestly hidden within banking and other pillars of society in Andorra to be revealed. (Ps 51:6)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/11500130/Andorra-on-the-brink-of-Europes-next-banking-crisis.html>

❑ Austria: Discrimination against Christians

In a new report, the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination expressed 'serious concerns' regarding the human rights situation in Austria for Christians. They found a 'very high' incidence of vandalism and burglary at Christian sites and denounced widespread anti-Christian discrimination and abuses against freedom of expression, assembly and conscientious objection. Dr Gudrun Kugler, the director of the Observatory, told Breitbart News that in recent years there has been a shift both in public policy and the reigning popular mentality that has made life for Christians increasingly difficult. 'Ever more restrictive laws are squeezing religious freedom, while society itself is growing more and more intolerant of biblical Christianity,' she said. The many instances of desecration include destroying crucifixes, candle holders, paintings and statues; plus arson and burglary and graffiti such as 'death

to priests' scrawled on walls. The Observatory criticised the use of Austria's stalking laws to prevent prayer in front of abortion clinics, a move upheld by the state court of Graz, Styria.

Pray: that God would protect the Church and strengthen her to proclaim the Gospel boldly . (Ps.138:8)

More: http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Submission_of_OIDAC_to_UN_UPR_on_Austria_March_19_2015.pdf

■ **Belgium: Christian outreach**

There are a variety of mission agencies working in Belgium who need our prayers. OMF has nine Chinese churches and the AoG has one couple working among the Chinese. BEM has a Japanese couple working within the Japanese community and have planted a Japanese church. A number of other Asian communities (Korean, Vietnamese, Sri Lankan, Iranian, Filipino) have at least one church each. The Eastern European population is rapidly growing – Poles, Russians, Bulgarians, Kosovars, Romanians and others. Only the Romanians have a significant number of evangelical congregations; the Polish and Kosovars have none. There is little or no outreach to these peoples. There is a student population of over 250,000 in 17 universities and numerous colleges. Outreach to the student community is a major challenge. IFES has a ministry in seven Flemish universities (Ichthus with 150 students involved) and in several French universities. The small work grows very slowly. (Source: Operation World 2015)

Pray: for God to ignite evangelistic operations across Belgium; pray for Christian coffee houses, Bible studies and conferences. (2Cor.6:2)

More: <http://www.ywambrussels.be/nl/>

■ **Bosnia: The cradle of modern jihadism?**

In the 1990s something happened in central Bosnia-Herzegovina that inspired people to this day and helps explain why that country now has more men fighting in Syria and Iraq (over 300), as a proportion of its population, than most in Europe. The formation of a 'Mujahideen Battalion' in 1992, composed mainly of Arab volunteers in central Bosnia, was a landmark. Today the dynamic of jihad has been reversed and Bosnians travel to Arab lands. 'There is a war between the West and Islam,' says Aimen Dean, who, as a young Saudi Arabian volunteer, travelled to fight in central Bosnia in 1994. 'Bosnia gave the modern jihadist movement that narrative. It is the cradle.'

Pray: against IS now trying to start a 'new front for the Caliphate' in the Balkans; ask God to protect vulnerable Bosnia because it remains weak and fragmented even 20 years after war ended. (Mt.5:3)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-33345618>

■ **Bulgaria: Unreached people, Islam and terrorism**

There are sixteen language groups in Bulgaria - the three main ones are Romani, Turkish, and Bulgarian. Gypsies are one of the major ethnic groups who, under the communist regime, were sent to ghettos to live without electricity or running water. Today, because of their isolation and poor living conditions many Gypsies are not educated and unable to find jobs. Islam in Bulgaria dates to the Ottoman era and is practised today with folk magic. Muslims are largely unaware of Islamic teachings, and Muslim missionaries (who outnumber Christian missionaries) are funded to teach Bulgarian Muslims a "purer Islam" and to push for greater Islamic influence. 24% of Bulgarians have never heard of Jesus. Meanwhile the English Government's foreign travel advice warns, 'There is an underlying threat from terrorism in Bulgaria'. See: Tourist <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bulgaria/terrorism> and <http://www.operationworld.org/country/bulg/owtext.html>

Pray: for God to protect those without jobs or hope from becoming another statistic of enrolments for IS and pray that Bulgaria's 900,000 Muslims would discover Jesus as the true light and Lamb of God. (Eph 6:5-9)

More: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Terrorism_in_Bulgaria

■ **Estonia: The least religious country in the world?**

Not so long ago Estonians were asked whether religion played an important part in their life - only 20% said yes. It suggests that the Baltic country is, statistically, the least religious country in the world. At Tallinn's large Lutheran Dome Church one Sunday 70 congregants were tourists and 15 were regular Estonian church-goers. Although the Lutheran Church is the largest in Estonia, it accounts for only 13% of the population. Fewer than one in five Estonians say any religion plays any part in their lives. In schools religion is not on the curriculum. This does not mean Estonians do not believe in anything at all. Many are nature worshippers, pagans, who define their religion as Maausk - a form of Estonian nature spirituality - in which the trees and earth are cherished objects that possess power. There are eight unreached people groups in Estonia and three of the main religions are Islam, Ethnic and Hinduism.

See also <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14635021>

Pray: for the Church trying to define its role where Christianity is bottom on the list of priorities. (1Pe.2:2)

More: <http://eurasianorthwest.org/estonia-unreached-people-groups/>

■ **Finland: Europe's other sick man**

Erkki Liikanen, Finland's central bank governor, says the country will need stamina if it is to dig its way out of its 'grave' situation. At 64, the governor of Finland's central bank has faced a few challenges in his lifetime: first as finance minister in the years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of Finland's key export markets, and in his current job, where he has seen the economy go from leader to laggard in a decade. Finland is in trouble, and in the words of the central bank, the situation is grave. While France has often been branded Europe's sick man and Greece's problems are well known, Finland's economy is still 5% smaller than before the financial crisis. The country will barely crawl out of a three-year recession this year, while unemployment is forecast by the OECD to grow in 2015. Faced with a bloated state, below-par growth, and prices and costs that have risen at a much faster pace than the rest of the eurozone, the medicine is a familiar one.

Pray: for God to direct Mr Liikanen through financial structural reforms and economic consolidation. (Pr.1:5)

More: http://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=4673:finland-europe-s-other-sick-man&Itemid=167

■ France: UK and France agree new migrant measures

The UK and France have agreed new measures that they hope will help alleviate a migrant crisis at Calais. It's a 'control and command centre' which will be jointly run by British and French police to 'relentlessly pursue' people-smuggling gangs. There is a risk this security measure will push illegal migrants elsewhere. Meanwhile, a demonstration by migrants chanting, 'we are not animals' brought cars to a halt on a motorway. Riot police were sent to disperse them. About 3,000 migrants are thought to be camped in Calais in the hope of crossing the Channel to the United Kingdom. Aid agencies say the problem of migrants camping in Calais has risen to a level of crisis not seen before. Calais has a history of similar refugee camps. In 1999, the controversial Sangatte refugee camp attracted thousands of would-be asylum seekers and people traffickers. Its closure led to riots. Since then, migrants have continued to arrive in Calais and build makeshift camps near the port.

Pray: for governments to work together to provide the best possible care and provision for those currently fleeing, who are mostly from war-torn Syria, Eritrea, Somalia and Afghanistan. (Pr.9:9)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33992952>

■ Germany: Prayer needs

Pray for the networks of relationships developing all over Germany which are leading to many conversations about a personal relationship with God. There is unrest with demonstrations being held by groups in several main cities over the perceived lack of 'voice' in political and economic decisions. Pray for godly responses to these activities and that a 'soft or gentle answer turns away wrath' as it says in Proverbs 15:1. Pray also for Campus für Christus as the need is high for additional staff to work in ministry. Every summer individuals, young and old, travel to Germany on short-term mission trips. Pray that God will grant divine appointments and that the spiritual impact will be felt by both the visitors and the locals. Continue to pray for Angela Merkel and other German leaders who are trying to work toward a peaceful resolution to the Russia/Ukraine conflict.

Pray: that God will bless the country's leaders - President Joachim Gauck and Chancellor Angela Merkel. (1Tim.2:1,2)

More: <http://prayeurope.com/countries/germany/>

■ Iceland: Icelanders have started worshipping Norse gods again

Icelanders will soon be able to publicly worship publicly at a shrine to Thor, Odin and Frigg. Construction has already started in February on the island's first major temple to the Norse gods since the Viking age. Worship of the gods in Scandinavia gave way to Christianity around 1,000 years ago but a modern version of Norse paganism has been gaining popularity in Iceland. 'I don't think anyone believes in a one-eyed man who is riding about on a horse with eight feet,' said Hilmar Orn Hilmarsson, the high priest of 'Asatruarfelagid', an association that promotes faith in the Norse gods. 'We see the stories as poetic metaphors and a manifestation of the forces of nature and human psychology'. There are approximately 2,400 members, out of a total population of 330,000. The temple will be circular and 13 feet down into a hill overlooking the Icelandic capital Reykjavik.

Pray: against this temple's spiritual influence over Reykjavik; ask God to strengthen His Church and encourage them in their stand against powers and principalities. (Rom 1:22-23)

More: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/02/03/uk-iceland-religion-pagans-idUKKBN0L70FN20150203>

■ Ireland: Concerns about 'lone wolf' terrorist attacks

A Draft White Paper on defence policy outlines main security threats over the next ten years. Authorities in Ireland are concerned about the threat of 'lone wolf' terrorists. The document details security concerns to which the country is or could be exposed, including cyber-attacks, the re-emergence of domestic terrorism and the risks of organised crime. The paper which went before Cabinet on Tuesday says the emergence of extremist groups in Syria, Iraq and Libya is playing a major part in the evolution of terrorist threats. There is also concern regarding the process of radicalisation through a range of influences, including the internet. In addition, Ireland has a responsibility to seek to prevent transnational terrorist groups from using the State as a refuge or as a base from which to direct their activities against targets in other countries.

Pray: that the paper, when processed past the draft format, will enable the Irish Government to enlarge its current limited control over the possibility of attacks. (Pr.12:20)

More: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/state-concerned-about-lone-wolf-terrorist-attacks-1.2267396>

■ Luxembourg: Stronger stance on modern slavery practices

Building sites could be partially or totally closed if modern slavery practices are found under new powers to be given to Luxembourg's 'Inspection du travail et des mines'. This body is responsible for checking that employers obey the law when it comes to workplace practices. The new EU directive aims to end criminal exploitation in the workplace where people are paid below minimum wage. Responding to a parliamentary question, employment minister Nicolas Schmit said that in addition to increasing powers to close down sites which illegally exploit workers, the new law will define who is responsible when work is subcontracted. A report claimed that Portuguese construction workers were being routinely exploited. One worker said he worked ten hours per day for 7.50 euros per hour.

Pray: for speedy implementation of fundamental rights and an end to modern slavery employment practices. (Pr.18:5)

More: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/site-closure-powers-luxembourg-to-take-stronger-stance-on-modern-slavery-practices-559be1230c88b46a8ce5c5b1>

■ Montenegro: A European harvest field

The nation's government, a parliamentary democracy, has many political parties. Its recent independence has brought a renewed sense of hope and optimism, giving this small nation a greater sense of potential. Joining the European Union and adopting the Euro will hopefully open up many economic opportunities for Montenegrins. But, in the midst of progress, the economy still faces many obstacles. Despite a difficult history of ethnic division, Montenegro desires to step into the future with a strong national identity. Deep divisions remain between the Serbian and Montenegrin Orthodox Churches, and the Christian population remains predominantly nominal. Additionally, Bosniak Muslims residing in the nation harbour bitterness towards Christians for the way they historically treated the Muslim population. Prayer is needed for sensitive and effective outreach to Muslim Bosniaks. Evangelicals claim .03% of the population. Portions of the country remain largely un-evangelised.

Pray: for those who practise cultural Christianity to focus on pleasing God rather than men. Pray also for genuine forgiveness between ethnic groups that have been at war for decades. (1Th.4:1)

More: <http://www.prayercast.com/montenegro.html>

■ Poland: Cool spiritual temperature

It was the Catholic Church that kept Polish culture from crumbling under the Communist regime. Now in 2015, Saudi Arabia, one of the most hostile nations towards Christianity and boasting to have a 100 percent Muslim population, has more evangelical Christians than Poland. The Catholic Church still holds sway over Polish culture, but personal faith is nominal and morality is being chipped away from the foundations of Polish society. There is a desperate need for evangelical witnesses (90% of municipalities have no church). Pagan, Wiccan, and New Age religions are gaining followers and there are two Jehovah's Witnesses for every evangelical Christian. Poland has the potential to change the spiritual well-being of Europe, but it is in need of guidance to be redirected toward Christ's glory. God has carried Poland through the years of tragedy and poverty, and He will lead them into the light He shines for them.

Pray: for Catholics to focus on the redemptive work of Christ on the cross and the personal relationship that He desires. Pray for hearts to be open to the message of salvation among the materialistic youth. (1Cor.1:17)

More: <http://prayercast.com/poland.html>

■ UK: decline of Christianity

Christianity is increasingly marginalised by a hostile media and public mood. Christian morality and belief in the uniqueness of Jesus are labelled 'intolerant'. Government regulations make it increasingly difficult to minister in the public arena. Many believe serious persecution is not far off. Pray that believers may recognise and address the decline of Christianity in the public sphere. Pray that they may recover confidence in the gospel and boldness and passion to share it - lovingly and unapologetically - with the majority who have little concept of its content. See also THE MILL STATEMENT at http://www.prayer-alert.net/index.php?view=download&alias=572-statement-from-the-mill-gathering-1&category_slug=insight-articles-1&option=com_docman&Itemid=216

Pray: for God's people to unite so that the world may see Jesus in His Church. (James 5:19-20)

More: <http://www.operationworld.org/unki>

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