

# 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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Issue 32-2017

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Friday 11 August 2017

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## PRaise REPORTS

### ■ Christian poetry reaching out in Arabic culture

Poetry is significant in Arabic culture, and Christians in the Arabian Gulf are using it to communicate with Arabs about Jesus. Through a series of short films, local believers from a Muslim background are writing and filming poems to communicate the life-changing power of Jesus in their lives, using a medium that their audience respects and understands. 'Historically, when Arabs lived among other lands, they didn't know if someone was a true Arab,' says Basma, a local believer and poet who is one of the producers of the series. 'When in doubt, they would often test someone by asking him to recite poetry. If his poetry was good, they knew he was a true Arab' Many Arab Muslims perceive Christians representing a 'Western' culture. By speaking about their newfound faith through poetry, Christian converts are removing the stereotype and showing it is possible to be a Christian without abandoning their cultural heritage.

**Praise:** God for those reaching their own people through the beauty of poetic language (Is. 52:7)

**More:** <http://www.inspiremagazine.org.uk/stories/view?articleid=2545>

### ■ Iranian Christian released from prison

Mission Network News reports that Maryam Nagash Zargarani, a Christian convert from Islam, was charged with being a danger to national security and imprisoned four years ago. She was kept in Iran's Evin Prison, which is known for its harsh conditions. Maryam was in poor health before being imprisoned, but now that she has been released, her physical ailments are even worse. She was reportedly beaten in the prison - once until her leg was broken. She also has suffered mentally. In addition to these hardships she engaged in hunger strikes to protest her unjust imprisonment in conditions lacking suitable food and having poor sanitation.

**Praise:** God that she is finally released, and pray for mental, physical and spiritual recovery. (Genesis 28:15a)

**More:** <http://www.christianheadlines.com/blog/christian-convert-released-from-prison-in-iran-after-4-years.html>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Friday Focus: Hope for older people

Statistics show that a third of older people don't speak to another person in a week, and half cite TV as their main company. Loneliness and isolation are the cause of devastating physical and mental health problems. How can we as the Church intentionally address this need by tackling loneliness and isolation in older people?

**Pray:** Almighty God, we thank you for the older generation of our country, and think particularly of those who are lonely and isolated. We ask for your comfort and companionship to envelop them, through both the presence of your Holy Spirit and the mobilisation of your Church. Give us the wisdom and opportunities to display your love to them in practical ways. (Philippians 2:3-4) Tim Lucas, Saltbox Christian Centre

**More:** [http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/283989/Friday\\_Focus.aspx](http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/283989/Friday_Focus.aspx)

#### ■ **Brexit and Agriculture**

Brexit could injure food and farming or reform it; depending on whether we adopt, amend, or abolish about 4,500 EU regulations. If Michael Gove can highlight the future of our food and farming in negotiation and not reduce it to a bargaining chip, he could make interventions to change our food system for the better. Using government procurement for schools, hospitals, the military and prisons to favour healthy British food. He could adopt a joined-up policy and target subsidies to increase production of the sort we need for health – more fruit and vegetables, less sugar and intensive meat production. He could ensure new trade deals are built on maintaining welfare and environmental standards, not lowering them to compete in new markets. He could insist that continued access to foreign labour is tied to the industry, improving what are often appalling working conditions and pay so that British workers are drawn back to jobs they now shun. See also the Bishop of St Albans comments on 'Food Security' at [https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/09/food-security-has-to-be-a-brexit-priority?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/09/food-security-has-to-be-a-brexit-priority?CMP=tw_t_gu)

**Pray:** for God to use Michael Gove, the Bishop of St. Albans and other leaders to speak out and act to give British food, farming and the environment priority and respect in Brexit negotiations. (Proverbs 22:21)

**More:** <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/26/brexit-watershed-farming-food-industry-michael-gove>

#### ■ **August forced marriages season**

Statistics from the Home and Foreign Offices show that forced marriages have jumped from 1,220 cases in 2015 to 1,428 in 2016. Most were under the age of 15 and 140 had learning disabilities. August is the 'critical' month. Parents take their teenage daughters abroad on holiday then trick them into forced marriages. The government's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) says it has received 770 calls for help this year from victims. Since 2009 schools have been helped to identify signs of forced marriages. However the numbers are still rising which indicates that some schools, communities and councils are failing to act on suspicions or evidence of abuse. Pray for schools and communities to play a greater preventative role. The UK's Forced Marriage Unit said that because of the nature of forced marriage a number of them are not reported so the true scale of the problem remains unclear. See also: <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/child-bride-speaks-out-forced-13429971>

**Pray:** for those working in outreach programmes and delivering training and awareness to professionals in education, NHS, police and social services. (Proverbs 11:8)

**More:** [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/597869/Forced\\_Marriage\\_Unit\\_statistics\\_-\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597869/Forced_Marriage_Unit_statistics_-_2016.pdf)

#### ■ **Gypsy church rejects criticism of festival**

'I got saved behind the glue factory at an open-air meeting, around a fire.' said a softly-spoken Romany gypsy from the Gypsy Light and Life, evangelical Pentecostal church that has been spreading Christianity among UK gypsies since the 1980s. They are facing criticism after setting up their annual conference at Thame Showground in Oxfordshire. Local residents are complaining that their town has been 'taken over' while the showground owners are now claiming the booking was deceitfully made. It has claimed that lawyers and police are now involved. A festival organiser said they have done nothing wrong. 'We've paid for it, signed a contract, we have insurance we have everything covered. As far as I know we have no problems.' Festival organisers say many people without faith will attend the event and they hope many will come to know Jesus. A Town Councillor said, 'it's difficult to separate fact from fiction. Local opinions expressed outright support and outright indignation.' See also <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38016090>

**Pray:** for this growing 'gypsy awakening' with tens of thousands of followers to continue to grow in spite of discrimination and fear from those who do not understand the culture. (Philippians 4:4-9)

**More:** <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Gypsy-church-rejects-criticism-of-festival>

#### ■ **Damian Green urges Trump to use UN in current crisis**

Damian Green, the UK's first secretary of state, urged the Trump administration to use the UN processes to resolve the crisis between the United States of America and North Korea. He said, 'It's obviously in all our interests to make sure that nothing escalates,' and, 'we are very strongly in support of the UN process, which has put, and continues to put, pressure on North Korea to stop acting in an irresponsible way.'

**Pray:** for the UK to continue to speak up for the need of a UN network of communication between the US and North Korea that will diminish a dangerous miscalculation by either side. (1Timothy 2:8)

**More:** <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/10/north-korea-details-guam-strike-trump-load-of-nonsense>

#### ■ **Law enforcement response to modern slavery**

Modern slavery and human trafficking are more prevalent than previously thought. A growing body of evidence points to growing numbers of victims. There are currently over 300 live policing operations targeting slavery in the UK. More than a dozen of the highest risk operations targeting organised crime groups are being led by the National Crime Agency. One recent result was the arrest of three men in North England with links to a Romanian group using the internet to advertise the services of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation, then forcing victims to launder the proceeds through criminally controlled bank accounts. Ten women were safeguarded. The group and its wider network are suspected to have made around €5 million in criminal profits. A surge in operational activity focusing on labour and sexual exploitation through May and June led to 111 arrests in the UK and 130 victims being rescued.

**Pray:** for the continuing success of ongoing investigations in the UK and mainland Europe, for funding and manpower to be available to deliver suitable aftercare and counselling to slavery victims. (Proverbs 29:7)

**More:** <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/1171-law-enforcement-steps-up-response-to-modern-slavery>

## EUROPE

### ■ France: Migrants still in Calais

The closure of the 'Jungle' failed to remove migrants from Calais. Since January 17,000+ have attempted to board UK-bound trucks and trains. Migrants haven't gone, they have moved into the woods where they live like animals. There are not as many as a year ago, but there are more than the French government would wish. The French interior minister said there were 'about 350'. He is wrong. It is clear from spending four days there that the number is much closer to the estimate by volunteers, who say 1,000 are playing a constant game of cat-and-mouse with the police. A recent Human Rights Watch report said that riot police are using brutal methods to disperse new arrivals. Regular attempts are made to remove migrants to processing centres. Some go and some hide. Many who go will return later.

**Pray:** for those fleeing persecution and war to be shown compassion at the point of entry to Europe, and for an end to the current suffering in and around Calais. (Job 29:12)

**More:** <http://news.sky.com/story/migrants-in-calais-make-17000-attempts-to-reach-uk-in-2017-10978474>

### ■ Priest urges people to pray for Paris

Fr Aidan Troy, of St Joseph's, Paris, has called for prayer following a suspected Paris terror attack on 9 August. A car drove into a group of six soldiers from the 35th infantry regiment in Levallois-Perret. The soldiers served in Operation Sentinelle, created to guard prominent French sites after Islamic extremist attacks in 2015. The terrorist was arrested on the A16 highway in northern France. A counter-terrorism investigation was launched. Fr. Aidan said people should pray for Paris, saying that all who care about our world have to keep praying ourselves, and also saying to others 'will you pray with me and we will offer up a prayer for peace' and 'I'm convinced that it will happen.'

**Pray:** for Parisians living in heightened security, pray that they do not react negatively towards foreigners out of fear, but rather continue life as normal in communities and market places. (Psalm 4:8)

**More:** <https://www.premierchristianradio.com/News/World/Priest-urges-people-to-pray-for-Paris>

### ■ Russia: 'Anti-missionary' punishments

Over 180 individuals and communities have been taken to court since 'anti-missionary' punishments came into force on 20 July 2016. Forum 18's list of known cases documents the wide range of people and communities across Russia subjected to such punishments. The 180+ cases were punished for 'issuing or distribution, within the framework of missionary activity, of literature and printed, audio, and video material without a label bearing this name, or with an incomplete or deliberately false label.' Both Russians and foreigners were punished under this law, some were fined, some were deported. Vladimir Putin approved this law in a package of anti-terrorism laws and despite prayers and protests from religious leaders and human rights advocates, the Kremlin passed laws against sharing faith in homes, online, or anywhere that is not a recognised church building.

**Pray:** for the opponents to the measures, may they have the law amend; pray also for Christian life under the restrictive rules. (Proverbs 2:8)

**More:** [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2306](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2306)

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ Guam: North Korea/USA sabre-rattling

Guam is a 210-square-mile sovereign US territory and military base in the western Pacific Ocean. 92% of the population are professing Christians. On 10 August North Korea defied threats of 'fire and fury' from Donald Trump, deriding his warning as a 'load of nonsense' while announcing a detailed plan to launch missiles aimed at the waters off the coast of Guam. This comment caused Trump's deputy assistant, Sebastian Gorka, warn Pyongyang, 'Do not challenge the United States because you will pay a cost if you do so.' Meanwhile Hawaii has started preparing for a nuclear strike, starting with a new educational campaign to help residents and visitors know what to do in the event of a nuclear missile attack and they will start testing a new 'wailing' emergency siren on the first workday of each month. Pray for the Guam church to rise up, speaking the hope and faith into their communities that overcomes fear.

**Pray:** for an end to dangerous rhetoric, for both administrations to have sound judgment that is aligned with God's purposes for this situation. May they be led to find diplomatic solutions. (Proverbs 14:3)

**More:** <http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/36092282/amid-rising-tensions-north-korea-threatens-preemptive-strike-against-guam>

### ■ Global: Helping the persecuted Church

Christians are being killed and imprisoned in Iran, Tajikistan, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, and Nigeria, to name but a few and persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Asia is forcing tens of thousands of families to flee for their lives. In India, for example, violent persecution against Christians in 2016 was over 800 and there have been hundreds of attacks so far this year. It is time to pray for charities and organisations that are working in dangerous conditions to provide corridors of escape to safe havens, for those providing aid and support to those living in camps, for those training and educating families for a new life, for those giving medical and counselling services for those who have been tortured and imprisoned for their Christian beliefs. We can pray also for those speaking out on behalf of the persecuted church in the media, at the UN and in government circles. See also articles 3 and 4 below.

**Pray:** for more volunteers, willing to give their time and resources to those in need and for the anointing and protection for those already on the front line in unsafe or unstable situations. (Is.58:7)

**More:** [http://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/central\\_asia\\_170809.php?ref=lnstorylnk](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/central_asia_170809.php?ref=lnstorylnk)

#### ■ Iran: What made you hate me?

Eight days after receiving a 15-year prison sentence and nearly a year after he was first detained, Muslim convert to Christianity Amin Afshar Naderi wrote an open letter to Iranian authorities. 'What have I done against you and our country that made you hate me this much? I have learned from the Bible to love my enemies and to pray for those who hate me,' his letter began. In July Amin was sentenced to 15 years in prison: 10 years for 'acting against national security by organising and conducting house churches' and an additional five years for blasphemy. Two other believers received 10-year sentences at the same time. In his letter, Amin said during his interrogations, he had been spoken to abusively, mocked and insulted, but he prays for the health of his interrogators. He also said his fellow prisoners were forced to sign a false statement against him, and that officials wrongly reported that Amin had insulted their religious beliefs.

**Pray:** for Amin and fellow Christian prisoners to know the hope God gives, pray for them and their families to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 3:16).

**More:** [https://www.persecution.com/public/newsroom.aspx?story\\_ID=%3d383632&featuredstory\\_ID=%3d353938](https://www.persecution.com/public/newsroom.aspx?story_ID=%3d383632&featuredstory_ID=%3d353938)

#### ■ Tajikistan: Pastor sentenced to 3 years in prison

Tajikistan's Sughd Oblast court sentenced Bahram Khalmatov, a 42-year-old Protestant pastor of the San-Maine-san-Bugim evangelical church in Khujand, to three years in prison on an unproven excuse of extremism, according to Mohabat News. The Tajik priest has expressed concern about the situation he faces in jail and called on believers and members of the church to pray for the priest Khalmatov. Officials of the Tajik Religious Affairs Committee state that the followers of this evangelical church were unlicensed and had registration documents, and therefore the churches and centres of this group were closed. Tajik authorities say the website of the Korean Christian Church said that the Christian centre was officially registered in the Tajik Religious Committee in 2009. This is the first time that a non-Muslim country is arrested and imprisoned on charges of extremism. Pray for the pastor's safety, Tajikistan has been consistently criticised for violating human rights and religious beliefs in recent years.

**Pray:** for this Christian centre which has been legally and publicly operating in Tajikistan since 1993 as a Christian organisation. May they continue to tell others about Jesus without fear (Ephesians 6:20).

**More:** <https://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=fa&u=http://www.mohabatnews.com/&prev=search>

#### ■ Kenya: Election

A top Kenyan electoral official said the election commission's database was unsuccessfully targeted by a hacking attempt. Wafula Chebukati, the commission chairman's comments came on the 10 August after allegations by opposition leader Raila Odinga that hackers infiltrated the database and manipulated results in favour of President Uhuru Kenyatta in the election on 8 August. At the time of writing the tallying of the final results is continuing with Kenyatta holding a strong lead. Clashes between police and opposition supporters have erupted in several areas with people being shot and killed, following Odinga's allegations. In the port city of Kisumu, the hometown of Odinga, police used tear gas and shot at supporters of the opposition leader, said demonstrator Sebastian Omolo. Kisumu shopkeeper Festus Odhiambo said he was praying for peace even as protesters blocked roads into city slums with bonfires and boulders. Everyone is keeping an eye on what the opposition leaders will do if Kenyatta is declared the winner. See:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/kenya-police-protesters-clash-poll-fraud-claim-170809081850902.html>

**Pray:** for a peaceful aftermath to the election regardless of who has the majority vote. (Psalm 41:2)

**More:** <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/election-observers-urge-calm-kenyas-disputed-vote-49130300>

#### ■ Australia: Euthanasia in Victoria

In a few weeks Victorian MPs will vote on a Government bill to legalise assisted suicide and euthanasia in Victoria. The vote will put society's most vulnerable at risk and distort the relationship between doctors and patients. If the bill passes, Victoria would need to re-train doctors from being healers to life-takers. The Andrews Government said during the election campaign that they wouldn't introduce this legislation. However, MPs will be given a conscience vote when this matter next comes up in parliament. The numbers are looking very close, but there are a handful of key government MPs who are likely to vote 'no' if they can see that enough people, in their electorates, do not support this radical change in law. The Australian Christian Lobby has prepared an email for people to use to voice their objection to assisted suicide and euthanasia.

**Pray:** for thousands of people to hear about and use the online form to email their MP, asking them to vote against assisted suicide and euthanasia. (Job 33:4)

**More:** [http://www.acl.org.au/stopeuthanasia\\_victoria](http://www.acl.org.au/stopeuthanasia_victoria)

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD PRAYER CENTRE, BIRMINGHAM, UK

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Prayer Alert is produced in association with The World Prayer Centre: Cornerstone House, 5 Ethel Street, Birmingham, B2 4BG