

Prayer Alert

ISSUE 43-2019 | Friday 25 October 2019
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Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. (1 Samuel 12:23a)

We are pleased to enclose this week's edition of Prayer Alert.

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Thank you again for standing with us in prayer over the nations.

David Fletcher – Editor

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Praise Reports

Safe houses for ex-criminals

Pastor Toby leads Spacnation South London, a faith-based organisation committed to transforming the lives of young people. In a generation where many young people have been dejected, abused and simply overlooked, Spacnation offers an alternative, whilst changing the narrative of this generation one step at a time. They are rescuing people from gangs, from addiction and from fear, with over one hundred baptised each week. They have set up 23 safe houses for gang members who are willing to turn their life around and escape from a life of crime; they say their safe houses are homes full of fun, food and fascinating stories. Shadow home secretary Diane Abbott has backed the initiative, saying the safe houses seem to be working and are part of a solution. See <https://news.sky.com/story/new-start-safe-houses-help-teenagers-flee-gang-violence-11812665>

Praise: God for this church and its focus on tackling violent crime and drug abuse. (Isaiah 61:3)

More: www.spacnation.org/

Kanye West holds open-air Sunday service

Kanye West, a popular American singer, held a Sunday service in Salt Lake City to tell young people about the evils of the media. His event, held across the street from an international Mormon conference, attracted thousands of fans, and many took to the surrounding rooftops to join in. A large gospel choir sang throughout, as they hummed to the tune of 'Jesus walks'. West said: 'There is a spiritual war going on outside, from which no-one is safe. It is no longer a mystery, Jesus has already won the victory! Tell the devil his time is up!' He said that Satan has been trying to control minds through social media: 'No weapon formed against me shall prosper, no false validation, no Grammy, no Oscar. God, this is your nation. This is America.'

Praise: God for this unique, free message about the dangers of the media by a media personality. (Isaiah 8:11)

More: www.christiantoday.com/culture/kanye-west-tells-thousands-at-free-open-air-service-to-flee-the-devil/133389.htm

British Isles

Britain's divine call to support Israel

On 31 October 1917 Britain answered God's call to facilitate Israel's restoration to her ancient homeland, as Cyrus did in the 6th century BC. Britain was then considered a Christian nation, where the idea of restoring the Jewish people to their ancient homeland had been alive for 200 years. The Church understood that God had covenanted the land of Israel to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as an everlasting possession. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration was agreed, and Britain liberated Beersheba from Ottoman Turkish control - the first stage in ensuring that the exiles could freely return. However, in February 2019 the EU and the League of Arab States identified Israel's settlements as 'illegal'. Britain agreed with this stance, even though the Geneva Convention states that 'there is no binding agreement in international law that designates the disputed territories as belonging to the Palestinians'.

Pray: for Britain to return to the 'Cyrus call', and have political policies in line with God's purposes for Israel. (Psalm 105:8-11)

More: www.prophecytoday.uk/comment/society-politics/item/1618-countdown-to-31-october.html

39 dead in lorry tragedy

On 23 October 39 migrants, including one teenager, were found frozen to death in a refrigerated container (temperature -25C) on an Essex industrial estate. The truck carrying the container entered the UK from Dublin four days earlier. The driver, from Northern Ireland, was arrested on suspicion of murder, even though he may have been the one who alerted the authorities. Local MP Jackie Doyle-Price said, 'Putting 39 people into a locked metal container shows a contempt for human life that is evil. The best way to honour their memory is to bring the perpetrators to justice.' The cab was registered in Bulgaria under a company owned by an Irish woman, with possible links to a smuggling route and to Irish Republican gangs. Pray for the victims to be quickly identified and families sensitively alerted, and for those responsible to be brought to justice. See also the next article.

Pray: for Britain's porous borders and unsecure smuggling routes to be blocked by robust interaction between national crime agencies, road haulage associations, border control, and harbourmasters. (Psalm 82:4)

More: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/23/murder-investigation-39-bodies-found-inside-lorry-container/

Bishop of Chelmsford on lorry tragedy

Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell has said, 'We live in a world where there is the most terrible human trafficking. We dread to think what situations those people were in when they climbed into that lorry. There is great desperation - people moving around the world to escape horrors elsewhere. What I've been trying to focus on is that there is a story for each of those 39 people; there is a family, and we don't know what those stories are. We have helped make the world where these things happen, and we must respond by doing all that we can to clamp down on the criminal activity that feeds on the desperation of others.'

Pray: for our hearts and minds to be changed, which is something only God can do to stop these horrors recurring. (Ezekiel 34:16)

More: www.premierchristianradio.com/News/UK/Bishop-of-Chelmsford-horrified-by-lorry-tragedy

Pupils with severe needs

The Bishop of Coventry has asked the Government what funds are available for pupils with severe needs but who are not on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register, citing nine-year-olds threatening suicide due to homelessness and domestic violence. Mainstream schools are under pressure to educate children who do not meet SEN thresholds but have severe needs and require acute support. Sufficient government funding is not available for them. Meanwhile a document has been published with 38 conclusions and recommendations about supporting people with SEN, including finance being released to enable local authorities to discharge their duties sufficiently and not changing the law to fit resources. Pray that the departments for education and health and social care develop mutually beneficial options for cost- and burden-sharing. See

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201920/cmselect/cmeduc/20/2011.htm#_idTextAnchor103

Pray: for sufficient funding for local authorities to pay for SEN education, and for the CQC and Ofsted to design improvements and have annual inspections to which all are subject, not just front-line service providers. (Psalm 82:3)

More: churchinparliament.org/tag/mental-health/

PM aims for snap election

In the latest twist to the Brexit saga, Boris Johnson has said he will give MPs more time to debate his deal with the EU - if they agree to a 12 December election. He expects the EU to grant an extension to the 31 October deadline, even though he said he 'really' did not want one. But Jeremy Corbyn said he would not support an election until a no-deal Brexit is 'off the table'. EU leaders could give their verdict on delaying Brexit for up to three months on 25 October. A motion will be tabled on 28 October calling for a general election; under current legislation, it has to be agreed by two-thirds of MPs. We need to pray for our leaders to work together to find solutions to difficult problems with God's direction. May God guide them to speak respectfully and with humility to one another, and may the Holy Spirit help them to show Christ-like love to those they interact with. May they be wise advocates for their constituents and the nation.

Pray: for God's Spirit to remind our leaders daily why they decided to dedicate their lives to public service, and prompt them to do nothing out of selfish ambition. (Philippians 2:3)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-50174402

Racist incidents in universities

A government equality watchdog reports that universities are failing to address thousands of racist incidents, and that institutions are 'in denial' about the scale of the problem. 25% of minority ethnic students had experienced racial harassment since the start of their course. Black students reported the highest rate of racial harassment, while 9% of white British students experienced anti-English, anti-Welsh, or anti-Scottish sentiments. 180,000 students across the UK experienced racial harassment in the first six months of their academic year. Findings showed universities were 'out of touch with the extent that racism occurs, and some are completely oblivious to the issue'. Two-thirds of students and over half of staff did not report racial harassment to their university, often because they had no confidence that it would be addressed or they were fearful of reprisals. Pray for improved handling of complaints, ensuring investigations are led by staff trained in understanding racial harassment.

Pray: for theological, social, cultural and racial differences and divides to be healed by love, forgiveness, and honour. (1 Samuel 16:7)

More: www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/23/universities-failing-to-address-thousands-of-racist-incidents

Children gamble with their own money

The Gambling Commission published its 2019 survey of gambling trends of 11- to 16-year-olds in the UK. 36% had spent money on gambling. Those who had gambled in the previous week spent £17 on average. Bets with friends, scratch-cards, and slot machines were the most popular; online gambling continues to be a particular problem. 12% had played an online gambling-style computer game, 47% of them doing so on an app. 52% had heard of in-game items, with 44% playing by using birthday or Christmas present money. Sadly 41% of young people do not believe gambling is dangerous, but the commission is partnering with GambleAware to develop education and prevention programmes to increase awareness and protect such vulnerable people from the harms of gambling.

Pray: for young people's interaction with gambling to be restricted by better age-verification tools on gambling websites and more regulation of the online gaming industry. (1 Timothy 6:9)

More: www.care.org.uk/news/latest-news/survey-finds-third-young-people-gamble-their-own-money

Europe

Europe's arms exports to Saudi Arabia

European countries temporarily halted arms exports to Turkey after its military incursion into Syria. But Europe's other arms trading partner, Saudi Arabia, has caused deaths or injuries of 18,000 in Yemen, where 24.1 million need humanitarian assistance. Despite these figures, EU countries still have arms deals with the Saudis. The UK only halted arms exports in June after exports licences were found to be unlawful. Saudi Arabia was France's second-biggest weapons client last year: over €1 billion worth, including armoured vehicles used in or near Yemen. Only Spain suspended arms exports to Saudi Arabia, citing 'use of this type of armament against a civilian population'. Why would EU countries halt arms to Turkey due to conflict, but not to Saudi Arabia for the same reasons? There could be several reasons, but two stand out - business and alliances.

Pray: for an end to countries putting concern for their economies and political alliances ahead of concern for people's lives. (1 John 2:15-17)

More: www.euronews.com/2019/10/19/european-countries-halted-arm-exports-to-turkey-but-why-haven-t-they-done-the-same-for-sau

Brussels: concern for displaced Venezuelans

The EU, along with UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), is organising a high-level international conference on 28 and 29 October in Brussels. They are calling for urgent and concerted action for Venezuelan refugees and migrants. On 23 October Brussels highlighted the dramatic flight of millions of Venezuelans - one of the direst displacement crises in the world, and the largest in the recent history of the region. Nearly 80% of the 4.5 million who left their country have remained in Latin America or the Caribbean. Although countries in the region show solidarity towards them, their capacity and resources are reaching breaking point. The conference aims to raise awareness of the crisis, reaffirm global commitments, and assess best practices.

Pray: for coordinated international technical and financial cooperation with the region to support refugees and migrants. (Matthew 25:35)

More: www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/10/5db00d364/solidarity-conference-calls-action-venezuelans-depart-droves.html

Spain: pre-election protests

On 10 November Spain will have its fourth general election in four years. The Socialists received the most votes in April's election, with Catalan separatist parties increasing their number of MPs. Since then, the supreme court has sentenced nine pro-independence politicians and civic leaders to a total of 100 years in prison. These sentences brought thousands of Catalonians onto the streets of many cities, and further violent clashes by far-right counter-protesters. Petrol bombs, blazing barricades, and vandalised buildings are new for Catalan's pacifist independence movement, but the graffiti on a Barcelona wall read, 'You have shown us that being peaceful is useless'. Hundreds have been injured in confrontations with security forces. The latest event was a 'clean protest' when protesters put detergent in a fountain, as a message to 'clean up the mess from Spain'. One protester said demonstrations would continue until all the political prisoners were freed. See <https://www.euronews.com/2019/10/23/catalan-independence-supporters-staged-a-clean-protest-in-barcelona>

Pray: for social peace and cooler heads to prevail in the runup to the election. (Proverbs 28:1,2)

More: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/21/spanish-politicians-catalan-crisis-nationalism

Worldwide

World: pray for terrorists

'Father, thank You for creating everyone in Your image, including those who have become terrorists. May godly people of peace meet and influence radicals so that lives are transformed and hatred turned to peace. May the Holy Spirit prepare hearts of individual extremists, bombers, kidnappers and assassins to come to know Christ. Father, please keep us from stereotyping terrorists. Remind us that Jesus loves and died for them too, and help us to understand the roots of terrorism and what causes people to walk that path (policies, corruption, greed, pride, etc). Grant wisdom and protection to those under attack, giving nations insight and military intelligence concerning aggression against them. Father, we ask You to thwart all Satan's plans with communication breakdowns, weapon malfunction, and leaked plans. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem and God's children worldwide. Remove long-standing hatred between Jews and Muslims, and grant peace and blessing to both. We pray in the precious name of Jesus.'

Pray: for blessings to replace curses and good deeds to replace evil thoughts and actions. (Matthew 5:43,44)

More: www.operationintercession.org/Terrorists.php

Syria: unsung heroes

The Free Burma Rangers (FBR) (<https://www.freeburmarangers.org/>) deliver emergency medical assistance to sick and injured internally-displaced people, and train teams in frontline medical treatment, humanitarian relief and reconnaissance techniques. On 21 October one ranger wrote, 'We evacuated more people from Seri Kani, including some wounded. We drove through the Free Syrian Army (FSA) who looked at us threateningly but when we smiled, some smiled back. The city is in ruins. The hospital was damaged and is controlled by FSA - I came face-to-face with them. I walked up to one and said 'God bless you' as I smiled and hugged him. He smiled back. We found civilians hiding behind the hospital and we helped evacuate them. On the way out there was more shooting. None of the bullets hit us and we thank God. As we left, we passed an FSA group by the roadside with their weapons and chanting "Allahu Akbar!" We thank God and all who made this operation possible.'

Pray: for FBR and all who risk their lives to bring relief to war zones. (Romans 12:18)

More: www.freeburmarangers.org/2019/10/21/another-rescue-fragile-corridor-northeast-syria/

Australia: freedom of the press

In June police raided Australia's national broadcaster and arrested a prominent journalist, Annika Smethurst, after government allegations of 'publishing classified material'. At the time ABC stated, 'An untrammelled media is important to public discourse and democracy'. Recently Australia's biggest news outlets, normally fierce rivals, united in support of press freedom with a campaign including blacked-out newspaper front pages and slots on prime time broadcasts. The media are highlighting the constraints on them under strict national security legislation. The news outlets joined forces through a coalition known as the 'Right to Know', in a joint action designed to agitate readers into action. One newspaper asked, 'When government keeps the truth from you, what are they covering up?' Annika Smethurst now faces possible criminal charges, ironically because she reported that the government was considering new powers to spy on all of us.

Pray: for the people to stand with the media and achieve practical press freedom allowing for the genuine needs of national security.
(James 1:25)

More: edition.cnn.com/2019/10/21/media/australian-newspapers-media-blackout-australia/index.html

USA / Mexico: stranded Africans

It is reported that 4,799 Africans were apprehended in Mexico between January and July, a fourfold increase over the same period in 2018. Between 1,500 and 3,000 Africans are currently camping in tents outside the Mexican city of Tapachula. They have been there for months after fleeing conflict-ridden countries like Cameroon and DR Congo. Most flew to Brazil, then made the dangerous journey north through road-less swathes of jungle into Mexico, hoping finally to reach the USA to claim asylum. They can't leave Tapachula without a permit, but these are scarce since Mexico agreed to help President Trump to limit numbers crossing the border. Now Trump intends to bar people from applying for asylum if they haven't first applied in the countries they crossed - Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Migrants could be deported back to 'safe third countries', which are not safe and would put many at renewed risk.

Pray: for Trump's recent policy 'Remain in Mexico' to be replaced by humane borders, for desperate refugees seeking safe havens.
(Psalm 55:8)

More: www.thenewhumanitarian.org/video/2019/10/18/Africans-US-Mexico-Central-America-migration

Israel: political deadlock

After the election last month, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu had 28 days to secure the 61 seats necessary to achieve a functioning majority government by building support from smaller parties in the Knesset. After nearly a month of fraught negotiations he acknowledged his failure to cobble together a coalition, and returned the mandate to President Reuven Rivlin. Rivlin has turned to Netanyahu's principal rival, Benny Gantz, of the centrist Blue and White party, who tweeted, 'It is time for blue and white.' Pray for the new government to bring God glory, and may the fear of God fall on all those who are in the political arena.

Pray: for God to bring the best possible outcome from this situation. (John 8:32)

More: www.npr.org/2019/10/21/771969660/benjamin-netanyahu-abandons-bid-to-form-government-amid-israels-political-deadlock

Coca-Cola and plastic

Tearfund has warned that Coca-Cola is in danger of being left behind, as more companies make the move away from plastic. It has urged the soft drinks giant to ditch single-use plastic after it topped a list of worst corporate plastic polluters for the second year in a row. The list, published by the Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) movement, is based on the number of items collected by more than 70,000 volunteers during community clean-ups across 51 countries. 11,732 branded Coca Cola plastics were recorded in 37 countries, more than the next three top global polluters combined. BFFP's 1,800 member organisations are calling on corporations to reduce their production of single-use plastic and find innovative solutions focused on delivery systems that do not create pollution. Other top polluters are Nestlé, PepsiCo, Cadbury, Unilever, Mars, Procter and Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive, Philip Morris, Mentos, and Chupa Chups.

Pray: for manufacturers to recognise that the plastic pollution problem is more important than profits. (Proverbs 13:22a)

More: www.christiantoday.com/news/coca-cola-needs-to-get-on-top-of-plastic-problem-tearfund/133492.htm

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Prayer Alert is produced in partnership with

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