

Prayer Alert

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www.prayer-alert.net | editor@prayer-alert.net

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)

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

You may like to explore our new online Prayer [Alert Prayer Wall](#) where we can add our own prayers and praise, interactively. We trust that you will find this helpful and encouraging!

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Thank you for partnering with us in praying for the nations.

Blessings,

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert Team

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Praise Reports

[Iranian Christians released from prison](#)

Naser Navard Goltapeh, 61 years old, has served nearly five years in Evin prison for 'acting against national security with the intention to overthrow the regime'. Having been told on 17 October that he had been pardoned, he has now returned home. His 'crime' was running a house church. His conviction was a result of his alleged links to churches and Christian groups outside Iran. His requests for a retrial were rejected four times by the authorities. Evin prison is notorious for abuse and torture of prisoners. He was kept in solitary confinement for two months undergoing gruelling interrogation. Fariba Dalir was set free the following day. She had been sentenced to five years in prison for [establishing an evangelical Christian house church](#) (<https://mailchi.mp/ada3ea756518/email-prayer-alertiran-give-thanks-to-god-for-the-release-of-two-christians>). Their release comes in the midst of widespread anti-government protests. It is not known if their release is linked to the fire at the prison on 15 October (<https://www.mnnonline.org/news/iran-prison-blaze-kills-eight/>).

Praise: God for their release, and pray that they recover quickly from their ordeal. Pray for other Christians imprisoned for their faith to also be released. (Hebrews 13:15)

More: www.barnabasfund.org/gb/news/iranian-christian-convert-naser-navard-goltapeh-released-from-evin-priso/

[Brickfields worker now a minister](#)

Sarfraz wanted to reach Punjabis for Jesus. He worked stuffing balls of moist earth into moulds to make bricks. The gruelling work is done only by Christians, a religious minority discriminated against, doing menial work that nobody else wants. Extreme poverty means even children work in the brickyards. After work, Sarfraz shared the gospel door to door to convert the lost. He launched a church in his house, then rented a building to found a new denomination. He quit the brickfields and worked double shifts as a security guard to pay the teachers at the school he started. 'We started small. Now we have great churches in different areas', he says. 'The children at our school are lucky. Children are our future. If we give them education, they will know who Jesus is. If they live the Bible, then they can understand what is written in the Bible. It is very special.'

Praise: God for the free education now available to young Christian boys and girls, who otherwise might be condemned to work in the brickfields. (Psalm 106:1)

More: www.godreports.com/2022/10/pakistani-pastor-once-worked-in-brickfields-now-ministers-there/

British Isles

Prime minister resigns

Plymouth Christian MP Sir Gary Streeter called on the Conservative party to replace Liz Truss, saying the party should 'swiftly' change the leader to someone who can gather more respect in the parliamentary party. 'We are witnessing what happens when authority breaks down', he said. 'My message to my colleagues is, even if the Archangel Gabriel were to lead us this week and rediscover a sense of teamwork, mutual respect and discipline, you know this is going to happen again and again unless we sort ourselves out.' Shortly after he said this Liz Truss resigned, saying she could not deliver the mandate on which she was elected. This kickstarts a contest to find the next Tory leader and PM, which should produce a result by 28 October. Tory party members will have a say unless MPs unite around one candidate. Truss's departure after 45 days in office makes her the shortest-serving PM in UK history. See next article, on Conservative chaos.

Pray: for the United Kingdom to have a government that is fully functioning under God's direction in this time of economic turmoil and shaking. (Daniel 2:21)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/uk-politics-63309400

Liz Truss amidst Conservative chaos

On 17 October Jeremy Hunt reversed 60% of the promised recent tax cuts and committed to reduce the two-year energy price guarantee to six months, while introducing 'a new approach' to the most needy after winter. A cut in basic income tax rate, promised by two chancellors this year, was cancelled. Pray for adequate advice and aid for those facing staggering rises in the cost of living. The changes caused political turmoil. On 18 October, senior aide Jason Stein was suspended for leaking information to the media. Next, home secretary Suella Braverman resigned because she had broken the ministerial code, and attacked Ms Truss's leadership in her resignation letter. Grant Shapps, who six weeks ago was sacked as transport secretary, replaced her. On the 19th an attempted fracking ban sparked havoc when rebellious Tories were threatened with party expulsion if they didn't back Liz Truss. See the previous article, PM resigns.

Pray: for God to heal the many wounds inflicted by MPs on each other and Liz Truss recently. (Philippians 4:19)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-63325779

Jeremy Hunt, new chancellor of the exchequer

55-year-old Jeremy Hunt, a Christian, had previously been former foreign secretary and health secretary. He is a big supporter of the cause of freedom of religion or belief. In 2018, while foreign secretary, he commissioned an independent review into Foreign Office support for persecuted Christians. The report, by the Bishop of Truro, presented 22 recommendations for the Government to make changes in policy and practice to protect freedom of religion and belief around the world. Mr Hunt goes to church on Sundays and sometimes receives communion at a midweek lunch-hour celebration in the House of Commons. Asked about his faith in 2019, he said, 'I sometimes pray, like regular Church of England folk: it's part of my life and my identity, but I don't think it defines my politics.'

Pray: for this new season in the government to give Mr Hunt and other Christian MPs a renewed sense of their Christian calling in politics. (Psalm 33:12)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/church-going-jeremy-hunt-appointed-new-chancellor

Salvation Army supporting slavery survivors

Slavery has deep, far-reaching roots in today's society. Hidden in plain sight, it is hard to distinguish and harder to tackle. The criminals preying on vulnerable people for profit are highly networked within communities and across borders. Even when people are rescued from exploitation they can face complex and challenging routes to rebuild their lives and move forward. Despite this, there is much to be hopeful about. There is a wealth of expertise and dedication in the wide range of organisations pitted against these crimes and advocating for survivors. From police forces and criminal justice systems to businesses, charities and national and local government bodies, the trafficker is being attacked and the survivor supported on all sides. The Salvation Army holds the prime contract in England and Wales to deliver support to survivors of slavery. It thanks everyone who works with them, bringing creativity, expertise, time and resources to find solutions.

Pray: for God to bless the Salvation Army and the other concerned organisations with all they need to release and heal abused captives. (Isaiah 40:28)

More: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/2022-10/SA%20Modern%20Slavery%20Report%202022%20FINAL.pdf

Call to continue Homes for Ukraine scheme

Along with over thirty other charities, Sanctuary Foundation, which helps people welcome Ukrainian refugees into their home, has written to ask the Prime Minister for assurances the Homes for Ukraine scheme will continue to get government backing and support. There is concern the initiative is being 'quietly phased out'. Host families are worried that ministers will not increase support to match rising costs of living. Households receive £350 a month for hosting someone from Ukraine, but there are calls for that amount to be doubled. Since March, over 96,000 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in the UK, but a BBC investigation found that in 14 months 116 unaccompanied child refugees from across the world have gone missing from UK hotels. They were temporarily housed by the government, but charities fear they risk being exploited.

Pray: for the use of hotels and institutional care to end, and for Homes for Ukraine and similar schemes to go above and beyond all that is needed to support those fleeing war. (2 Thessalonians 3:13)

More: premierchristian.news/en/news/article/christians-call-for-government-to-continue-backing-homes-for-ukraine-scheme

Hong Kong protester beaten at Chinese consulate

UK activists and lawmakers want an investigation after a Hong Kong pro-democracy protester was beaten inside the grounds of the Chinese consulate in Manchester. Hong Kong Indigenous Defence Force (HKIDF) members were protesting outside the consulate, on the same day as the Chinese Communist Party congress in Beijing. A video on social media shows protesters shouting outside the consulate, then rushing towards the gated entrance. Next a protester was dragged through the gate by consulate guards and beaten on the consulate grounds by a group of men, said to be Chinese consular staff, until the local police entered the consulate grounds to break up the violence. The protester was taken to hospital and is in a stable condition. The police said officers responded immediately to defuse the situation. Enquiries are ongoing to understand the full circumstances. A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said, 'Our consulates have always abided by the laws of the countries where they are stationed.'

Pray: for an honest and just investigation, and reprisals if needed, so that Hong Kongers in the UK do not have to live in fear of Beijing's authoritarian rule. (Proverbs 21:15)

More: edition.cnn.com/2022/10/17/uk/manchester-chinese-consulate-protesters-intl-hnk/index.html

Turning a blind eye should be against the law

Institutions working with children should be required by law to report suspicions of child sexual abuse, a seven-year independent inquiry concluded. It found crimes are often concealed from authorities, allegations are not recorded, victims 'treated as if they were unworthy of protection' and blamed for the abuse. Many individuals who failed to report abuse to the police or social services failed to meet their professional or moral obligations but did not break any laws in doing so. The inquiry said 'systemic change' is needed to ensure reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse, and said urgent action is required to protect children. Many institutions have 'historically inadequate measures' which fail to safeguard children from abuse that happened and continues to happen in schools, care homes and in religious settings. Child sexual abuse is an epidemic that leaves thousands of victims in its poisonous wake.

Pray: for the Government and all other relevant institutions to implement the inquiry's recommendations as a matter of urgency. (Psalm 106:3)

More: news.sky.com/story/child-abuse-inquiry-turning-a-blind-eye-should-be-against-the-law-12725349

Europe

Russia: violating UN sanctions with Iranian drones

The Americans, French, and British agree that 'kamikaze' drones unleashed by Russia into Ukraine were made in Iran and violate a UN security council resolution barring Iranian transfers of certain military technologies. Ukraine has identified the drones - or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) - as Iranian Shahed-136 weapons, called kamikaze drones after the Japanese fighter pilots who flew suicide missions in World War Two. Iran denies supplying weapons to Russia, but the USA said, 'Russia's plan is to import hundreds of Iranian UAVs of various types. There is extensive proof of Russia using them in Ukraine. The deepening alliance between Russia and Iran is something the whole world should see as a threat. Russia and Iran provided key military support for President Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war.' The EU's foreign policy chief said it is 'gathering evidence' on the Iranian drones and is ready to act - implying intensification of sanctions.

Pray: for the flow of UAVs or ballistic missiles from Iran to Russia to be thwarted. (1 John 3:4)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-63294698

Russia: Father Grigory, prominent anti-war priest

When the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church is the most vocal supporter of Moscow's conflict in Ukraine, calling the conflict 'war' can land you in jail; it takes courage to speak out. But Father Grigory has been doing that ever since the Kremlin first set its sights on Ukraine. Once a Russian Orthodox priest, he has now set out to prove that not every Russian stands behind Putin's acts of aggression. Grigory's number one priority is helping the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian refugees trapped across Russia since February. His religious group, the Russian Apostolic Church, has assisted 7,000 refugees over the past eight months. He said, 'In April our organisation and the St Petersburg parish opened a centre for helping refugees. Many refugees need different types of help. Some need tickets to leave Russia, some need clothes or various medicines. So we do all that we can do to help.' Grigory is adamant that supporting an aggressive war goes against the tenets of true faith.

Pray: for the many who do not know that Christianity goes beyond having a long beard and strange clothes. Thank God for Grigory's boldness and demonstration of God's love. (Romans 10:9-10)

More: www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/10/12/meet-father-grigory-russias-most-prominent-anti-war-priest

Worldwide

Nigeria: dangers of being religious in a religious nation

Religious intolerance in one of the most religious countries in Africa is dominating debates ahead of next year's elections. It is rare to find anyone not devout in the mainly Muslim north or mainly Christian south. There is no official religion. Although they are guaranteed religious freedom the religious minorities live in fear. 'We don't have freedom to worship. You are in trouble if you dress like a Muslim. We hide our religion,' said Ibrahim, a Muslim in southern Nigeria. Obinna Nnadi once lived in the north but felt it was not safe to practise Christianity, so she moved her family south. Islamic law is in place in much of northern Nigeria. Rev Caleb Ahima, vice-president of the Christian Association of Nigeria, acknowledges that religious discrimination is a consequence of location. Meanwhile Odinani, the African traditional religion before Christianity, is making a comeback with younger people who are also facing intolerance and aggression.

Pray: for authorities in every region to crack down on religious discrimination and aggression, and for Christians to reach out to disillusioned and cynical youth to ease tensions. (Matthew 5:44)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-63255695

Iran: fire and shootings at Evin prison

Nine days after a fire and shooting killed ten at Lakan prison, a fire in Evin prison killed at least eight. Evin is notorious for human rights abuses such as lengthy interrogations and torture of political prisoners, including many arrested during recent nationwide protests. The government claims the fire was part of an escape attempt, but witnesses inside the prison deny it. Global Catalytic Ministries said over the last four weeks of protests thousands have been arrested. The prison guards and wardens are saying, 'To show that we're in control, we will start a fire and shoot some prisoners so as to create a spirit of fear among these newly arrested people.' The Iranian government has responded brutally to the recent protests, killing over 200 people using live fire and beatings. Nevertheless, huge crowds continue to gather, chanting 'Death to the dictator.'

Pray: for the safety of prisoners and protesters. Ask God to give wisdom to GCM partners, house church leaders, and other Iranian Christians. Pray for change. (John 17:15)

More: www.mnnonline.org/news/iran-prison-blaze-kills-eight/

Global: fuel protests in 90 countries

While governments look for solutions to their countries' economic crises, the people in 90 countries protest. Some pay a heavy cost. In nine months, over eighty people have died in protests over the cost of fuel, in at least nine different countries. Antarctica is the only continent free of fuel protests. Indonesia has seen 600+ protests over petrol this year: in 2021 there were 19. Italy had 200+ in eight months - 2 last year. Ecuador experienced 1,000+ protests over fuel in June alone. Most surprising is that protests are occurring in places not prone to protests. High costs of living are driving people to protest against crippling prices. Fuel costs affect much of daily life - personal travel, transportation of goods, energy for electricity and heating. People are demanding that petrol be made more affordable and available. They are sitting in peaceful protests or attacking governments.

Pray: for countries to act wisely in preventing the protests from turning violent. Pray for an end to armed police clashing with protesters. (Psalm 34:14)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-63185186

Malaysia: in search of stability

The polls on 18 November are a year earlier than scheduled after years of political upheaval and the first since the voting age was lowered to 18. The shaky coalition government of prime minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob is attempting to win a solid mandate to end the political manoeuvring that has seen three prime ministers in nearly as many years. Elections for assemblies will also be held in some of the country's 13 states. About 21 million people are eligible to vote. The 2018 election saw the United Malays National Organisation lose power for the first time in sixty years, amid public anger over the multibillion-dollar corruption scandal at the state fund. Voters are anxious about rising prices and higher interest rates, as well as the jostling for power among politicians.

Pray: for this election to end the corruption threaded through politics and the insecurity that has plagued the country in recent years. (Galatians 6:8)

More: www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/20/malaysia-to-go-to-the-polls-on-xxx

Global: digital repression

Governments are blocking swaths of the internet. Pro-democracy activist Ko Jimmy was executed after condemning Myanmar's military coup online. Idamange Yvonne was sentenced to 15 years in prison for YouTube videos criticising Rwanda's repressive president. Nicaraguan authorities sentenced journalist Miguel Urbina to nine years in prison for Facebook posts and tweets they deemed threatening to national integrity. Siarhei Tsikhanouski, who ran a YouTube channel criticising Belarus's government, was jailed for 18 years for inciting unrest. These are only a fraction of the cases in an internet freedom survey by Freedom House, which stated, 'The same rights protected offline should also be protected online. Human rights are restricted online in 70 countries and 2022 marked the 12th consecutive year of decline in internet freedom'. But it also found that when societies push back against repression, under the right conditions, they can win. Pray for the digital rights groups who research, advocate against, and bring strategic litigation cases to overturn repression online.

Pray: for access to reliable information that empowers people to make informed opinions, and for human rights abusers to be held accountable for their digital repression. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

More: freedomhouse.org/article/digital-repression-deepening-civil-society-wins-give-reason-optimism

China: recent persecution reflects broader trend

Persecution in China has filled the headlines recently. Authorities raided several house churches and arrested leaders within China, and harassed Chinese believers seeking shelter in Thailand. Asian Access reported, 'These specific cases follow a broader trend. Over recent years the government is more concerned about the rise and influence of underground churches. People are monitored or put under house arrest.' During Covid the government focused on China's health, giving new momentum to underground churches which thousands were joining. As the pandemic waned the government began doing more reviews of online formats. There is in-depth discipleship in many places but Chinese believers are not afraid of persecution or pressure; they've been through this before. Their plan is Jesus. They want a better society by having people follow Christ and then improve their lives - better marriages, families, better commitment to their communities.

Pray: for Chinese believers to find new strength and encouragement in the Lord. Pray also for wisdom and patience. (Philippians 4:13)

More: www.mnnonline.org/news/recent-persecution-in-china-reflects-broader-trend/

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