

# Prayer Alert . . .

**Draft Issue 50**CONTACT US: [info@prayer-alert.net](mailto:info@prayer-alert.net)

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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### British envoy in Iraq still hopeful of hostage release

A British Muslim envoy currently in Iraq to help free the four kidnapped Christian Peacemaker Teams workers said Wednesday it was still hopeful the men would be released, reports CNews. Anas Altikriti travelled to Iraq to meet Sunni Muslim leaders and appeal for the release of the hostages. He said the lack of communication since the deadline had made him "slightly more hopeful". "The likelihood is that, had there been action taken against the hostages, we would have heard about it by now," he said. Altikriti said the hostage-takers could be "looking for a way out without losing face". "The other explanation is that they may be hoping for the next 24 to 48 hours to use the Iraqi elections one way or another," he said. Iraqis will hit the polling stations on Thursday. Nothing has been heard of the fate of the four men nor of their kidnappers, the previously unknown Swords of Righteousness Brigade since Saturday's deadline for their execution passed without compromise from the UK and U.S. governments. [www.christiantoday.com](http://www.christiantoday.com) *Keep praying for the hostages that the Lord will open the gates of their prison and set them free. Pray that their captors will find compassion.*

### The gang that killed a man for kicks guilty only of manslaughter

A gang of youths who kicked a bar manager to death during one of their regular rampages of violence were convicted of manslaughter yesterday. But the 14-year-old girl and three youths who kicked David Morley's head like a football and filmed the attack on their mobile phones were cleared of murder. Mr Morley, a survivor of the Admiral Duncan pub bombing, was one of eight people savagely assaulted by the group in an hour-long rampage of indiscriminate "happy slapping" attacks last October. The teenage girl had approached Mr Morley, 37, who was sitting with a friend Alastair Whiteside on London's South Bank, pointed her mobile phone camera at him and said: "We're doing a documentary on happy slapping. Pose for the camera." After her friends had beaten him to the ground, she then kicked Mr Morley in the head two or three times, according to Mr Whiteside... [www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk) *Continue to pray against this kind of behaviour in our young that then leads to such tragic results.*

### Cheap cocaine worries amid rise in drug users seeking help

Scotland is facing a growing drugs crisis, with the number of new users requesting treatment rising by 10 per cent last year. Figures released yesterday showed that more than 14,000 people, including just over 8,000 heroin users, attended one of Scotland's drug centres, an increase of 1,246 from 2003-4. Ministers welcomed the figure as proof that their strategy of drug treatment offering a range of options was working. However, drugs workers said inadequate funding meant lifelines faced constant closure at a time when cheap cocaine was causing drug misuse to escalate. Hugh Henry, the deputy justice minister, said the 14,322 new people attending drug services represented "real progress" in helping troubled individuals towards more stable lives. "Our drugs services are doing excellent work in helping some of the most vulnerable and chaotic people in our society," he said. "This is backed by record investment from the Executive. I pay tribute to those working in the front line." [www.news.scotsman.com](http://www.news.scotsman.com) *Pray that this progress will not be held back by lack of funding. Pray that the source of this cheap cocaine and other drugs will be closed.*

### **Racial and Religious Hatred Bill**

The Racial and Religious Hatred Bill receives its final reading in the House of Lords on Monday 19th December. The Bill will be read in its final form including amendments made at previous stages, and there is a final opportunity for further amendments to be made. [www.care.co.uk](http://www.care.co.uk) *Please pray that the Lords will be bold in making any further amendments that will protect our freedom of speech.*

### **Former gang member leads Manchester Street Pastors team**

Saturday evening 17th December, Street Pastors will be out on the streets in Longsight, Manchester, for the first time. The Longsight team is the second Street Pastor team to work in Manchester; the Moss Side team has been working there since July 2004 and has been warmly received by the local community. Street Pastors aim to prevent crime by building bridges between the young disenfranchised people and the community and hope to be a gateway between that community and the agencies working in the area, statutory and voluntary. [www.ucb.co.uk](http://www.ucb.co.uk) *Pray for the Street Pastors teams here and in other cities that they will continue to be effective in reducing crime and bringing the light into the darkness...*

### **Scottish Kirk gulf between grassroots and leadership**

The majority of Church of Scotland worshippers believe their leaders have lost their way and no longer represent members' faith and beliefs. A poll of 1,200 churchgoers found that only 13 per cent of people in the pews agreed with statements by the church's top leaders. Some 60 per cent thought the church was spiritually and theologically adrift. The clearest sign of the pew-central Kirk administration divide occurred in 2003 when a third of ministers challenged the last moderator's assertion that he would be "utterly untroubled" by the ordination of gay clergy. "Moderators tend to be from the liberal political wing and ... never seem to say anything that reflects the central purpose of Christianity," said report author Revd Robert Anderson. Source: Sunday Times (4/12) <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2090-1903714,00.html> *Pray for Church leaders that they will be led by the Spirit and not be led astray from the central purpose of the Church to make Christ known...*

### **Retired Judge speaks out in support of marriage**

The Government has contributed to the downgrading of marriage and done nothing practical to support married couples, the former president of the High Court Family Division said. Her speech was reported in the [Telegraph](#), [Times](#), [Independent](#) and the [Guardian](#). Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, delivering the Bar Council's annual law reform lecture, also called for a new approach to the way courts dealt with the "cancer" of domestic violence and warned separating parents that they underestimated the effect of divorce on their children. On the day that same-sex couples gave notice for the first time of their intention to register civil partnerships, she said she doubted that excluding heterosexual couples from the new legal relationship would achieve its presumed aim of encouraging marriage. She noted that the Government had proclaimed its support for the family. "It is, however, a sad fact that a Government which has published excellent proposals on helping parents and children after breakdown of relationships has done nothing practical to support married couples." [www.2-in-2-1.co.uk](http://www.2-in-2-1.co.uk) *Let us pray against this continued downgrading of marriage. Pray that those in authority will start to see the problems this causes.*

## **EUROPE**

### **EU Heads of State meet at the European Council, Brussels**

EU Heads of State meet for a summit at the end of the UK Presidency on 15/16 December in Brussels. The meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Blair, is the most important of the Presidency.

Top of the agenda is the funding of the EU budget for 2007-2013. The UK Presidency has put forward a proposal to reduce the amount of the EU budget overall and has suggested a cut in the development budget for Eastern Europe of 10% and a cut of about Eur6bn from the rural development budget in richer Member States. France has refused to consider reductions in the funding of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and in return UK Ministers have said that they will not surrender any of Britain's rebate which comes from agricultural spending. The UK proposals have been described as unrealistic, unfair to the poorer nations and self-serving. Prime Minister Blair has been asked by other EU leaders and the European Commission to produce new proposals. At present, there appears to be little prospect of agreement. (The Times, 3,12). *Pray for wisdom for Tony Blair as he seeks to find a consensus. Pray for an honest and open discussion between leaders and for a just outcome.*

EU leaders will discuss a global strategy on migration in the light of concerns expressed particularly by Spain and Malta about the pressures caused by people entering Europe illegally. The EU strategy will include proposals to strengthen the EU's external borders as well as partnerships with other countries to address the causes of migration. *Pray that leaders will get the balance right between protection of those in need and preventing abuse of immigration rules.*

The EU will continue to discuss their strategy for a partnership with African countries to assist their economic development and access to EU markets. *Pray for a partnership which is genuinely useful for Africa and assists African producers to gain access to EU markets. Pray that the EU will give generous and effective development aid to Africa.*

An agreement has been reached on reform of the rules on the pricing and marketing of sugar which is an improvement for producers in developing countries with the exception of Caribbean producers. Former colonies of EU Member States in the Caribbean had advantageous rights of access to European markets under the previous regime. EU leaders are considering the terms of transitional arrangements to assist Caribbean countries. *Pray that the EU will grant generous assistance to Caribbean countries which will aid their economic development.*

Measures to combat the threat of terrorism and to discourage recruitment by terrorist organisations will be discussed at the summit. In the wake of further terrorist attacks around Madrid on 6 December ([www.eu2005.gov.uk](http://www.eu2005.gov.uk)) EU leaders will discuss measures which could be taken to prevent the financing of terrorism and recruitment to terrorist organisations as well as cross-border police cooperation and emergency assistance between European countries. *Pray that leaders will agree effective measures to combat terrorism while respecting individual rights as much as possible. Pray for God's protection and that Europeans will turn to God and put their trust in Him alone.*

### **Belarus: Repression escalating ahead of elections**

Belarus is known as Europe's last Soviet-style dictatorship, and President Lukashenka as a repressive, controlling, pro-Soviet dictator. In 2002, Belarus enacted Europe's most repressive Religion Law. All religious groups must be registered with the government; registration is very difficult to achieve; and all unregistered religious activity is illegal. Lukashenka, who has perfected election fraud, has also amended the Belarus' Constitution, removing the limit on the number of terms a president can serve, so he may now stand again and effectively rule for life. He is presently clamping down on all freedoms and stepping up security in preparation for the 2006 presidential elections. The lower house of the Belarusian National Assembly, the Chamber of Representatives, has passed a tough new security bill. This will seriously impact churches and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), stopping them communicating concerns and reporting persecution and repression to the outside world or even to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, Adrian Severin. The bill goes to the upper house, the Council of the Republic, for final approval on today 16 December. It is expected to pass easily. [www.assistnews.net](http://www.assistnews.net) *Pray for Belarus at this time. Pray that God will intervene and bring about a peaceful transformation.*

### **2006 is Switzerland's first-ever year of non-stop prayer**

24-7 Prayer is ringing in the new year with Switzerland's first-ever year of non-stop prayer! This earth-shaking project has been launched with much prayer and networking by 24-7's [Susanna Rychiger](http://www.ch06.ch/index.php?id=home), who has been involved with 24-7 since the first prayer room unassumingly happened in Chichester, England in 1998. The year-of-prayer is made possible by a network of Swiss churches that are committing to pray together - starting in Susanna's hometown of Thun, and moving out across the country. "We have two major goals for this year," Susanna said. "First, we want to establish 24-7 long term in Switzerland. And second, we want to see a network of relationships built on community and prayer that will carry on into our future." Churches are coming together and it's all about relationships," said Susanna. "They are praying together and praying for one another. I knew this had to be a completely relational thing if it could be real, and so we haven't 'advertised' it...and God has done it!" <http://www.ch06.ch/index.php?id=home> *Let us pray that God will indeed continue to do it! Pray for the success of this project.*

## **WORLDWIDE**

### **'High turnout' in Iraqi election**

Iraqis have voted in large numbers for their first full-term government since the US-led invasion in 2003. Voting was extended by an hour in some areas because of the high turnout, Iraq's election commission said. Sunni Arabs, who boycotted the last election in January, appear to have participated in large numbers, even in insurgent strongholds. Despite tight security, several incidents of violence were reported, but voting was not seriously disrupted. Turnout is reported to have quickened throughout the day, with people queuing to cast their ballots. That was the case even in the predominantly Sunni cities of Falluja and Ramadi, hotbeds of insurgent activity. At one stage, an election official in Falluja said that so many people were voting, they had run out of ballot papers. Sunni nationalist insurgent groups had urged people to vote, in order to prevent the election of a government completely dominated by Shias and Kurds. [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) *Pray that the results of this vote will lead to peace and stability for this troubled nation and that all sides will be able to work together for this purpose.*

### **Rich nations criticised on trade**

Developing countries have urged the US and European Union (EU) to offer fresh concessions on agriculture to break a logjam in the trade talks. The G20 grouping of middle-sized economies said the EU must set a date for ending its farm export subsidies. Poorer countries have attacked new EU tariffs on bananas while criticising the US's stance on cotton subsidies. Squabbling between the US and EU over support for farmers has dominated the talks in Hong Kong so far [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) *Pray that the rich nations will stop squabbling and get down to the serious business of meeting the needs of the poor.*

### **Pakistani churches to fast and pray against blasphemy law**

Churches in Pakistan are to observe 20 December 2005 as a "day of fast and prayer" to hasten the repeal of the country's controversial blasphemy law. The law often leads to violence against the Christian community and other minorities in the Muslim majority nation, critics and human rights activists say. "As long as the blasphemy law remains in force, we will continue to suffer," declared Dr Victor Azariah, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Pakistan, which brings together four major Protestant denominations. [www.ekklesia.co.uk](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk) *Let us join the Pakistani Christians in praying for a breakthrough.*

### **Indonesian authorities broker peace in Muslim-Christian conflict**

For weeks there's been increasing tension between Muslims and Christians in the Bekasi area of Indonesia. Now it appears that police in Western Java have brokered a peaceful solution to avoid what could have become a violent conflict. For several Sundays Muslim radicals terrorized Christians as they worshipped in the streets in West Java. Members of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) even hurled death threats against the Christians. An Islamic leader even threatened the Christians, saying, "I want this [street worship] to be the last one. If not, it's either our blood or your blood that will be shed. Are you ready to die? We are ready to die." The Indonesian government is considering new laws that will appease the Muslims and ease the situation. But Jeff Hammond, a missionary in Indonesia for 30 years, says such laws will only restrict Christian activities. Hammond said, the proposed law "is going to create more difficulty because it will regulate all Christian worship. No more freedom for worship in homes, hotels or other buildings." Pastor Hammond says the real solution is for the government to work on laws that would support freedom of religion. [CWNNews.com](http://CWNNews.com) *Praise God for this answer to prayer but keep praying, for the situation is still volatile.*

### **UN pulls out Eritrea peacekeepers**

The UN Security Council has decided to pull US, Canadian and European staff serving in the peacekeeping mission in Eritrea out of the country on Thursday. Some 180 personnel, who are military observers and civilians, will be temporarily relocated to Ethiopia. The move follows Eritrea's demand that the UN staff should leave by Friday. Tensions along the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea have risen with reports of troop movements on both sides in recent months. Most of the UN peacekeepers monitoring the border following a war between the two countries that ended in 2000 are from Asian and African countries and these will stay. US ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, said Eritrea was acting unacceptably but that they also needed to focus on Ethiopia's lack of compliance. [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) *Keep the situation in Eritrea and the surrounding area in your prayers and pray that God will intervene and lift the spirit of war from the people and bring peace.*

### Australian prayer vigil against abortion

In Australia alone every year over 80,000 babies are aborted. Innocent lives are destroyed. Australians have always stood to fight injustice. We have been quick to act and come to the aid of the innocent and the dying. Yet each day all across the nation there are hundreds appointed to die in the womb, yet not a word is spoken. He proposed prayer vigil is not a protest but a silent prayer vigil asking God to end abortion in Australia. Those taking part in the vigil will also be praying specifically to prevent the introduction of the RU486 abortion pill. A conscience vote on whether this pill will be legally allowed into Australia will be taken in Federal Parliament in early 2006. The vigil will be held directly in front of Parliament House Canberra commencing at 11.45PM on New Years Eve 31st December and continuing every day between 10.00AM and 5.00PM from 1st January until 7th January inclusive. This will represent 7 hours of daily prayer for 7 days. A group of Australian youth associated with "The Call Revolution Australia" are rising to fight this injustice with a call for all interested youth and concerned people of all ages to join in a prayer vigil to be held outside Parliament House Canberra. [www.ausprayer.net.org.au](http://www.ausprayer.net.org.au) *Let us pray with our fellow Christians that the Lord will guide the government in its decisions and to remember the right to life.*

## PRAISE REPORTS

### Muslims will guard churches in Indonesia at Christmas

Five years ago a rash of bombings throughout Indonesia claimed the lives of at least 19 people, mostly Christians. This year police and Muslims will be doing their part to ensure this doesn't happen again. According to the Jakarta Post, on Christmas, volunteers from Indonesia's largest Islamic group will guard churches across the world's most populous Muslim nation. A youth wing affiliated with the Muslim group Nahdlatul Ulama is coordinating the effort. They're also asking young people from other religious groups to join their project. These volunteers will join 17,000 policemen who are expected to safeguard Christmas celebrations in Jakarta alone. [www.mnnonline.org](http://www.mnnonline.org) *Again praise God for this move and pray that the Lord will bless these young people for their brave initiative.*

### Good news from the Prayer Watch, Heidelberg Western Cape

Between 10 and 30 serious crimes are reported during every weekend in this little town in the Western Cape. Approximately 6 months ago one of the Community Police Forum members made a suggestion that they start with a "Prayer Watch" and specifically pray for the crime in the town. The suggestion was that all the Churches were asked to participate and that people in the community make time every day to pray. Every month, since the project was launched, a decline in certain types of crime started being recorded. Even those who were sceptical started looking for answers to this. There was only one answer – the Power of Prayer is underestimated. During the weekend of 13 October 2005 no serious crime was reported. This community will never be the same again. People who were sceptical about everything are now praying with us. [www.transformationafrica.com](http://www.transformationafrica.com) *Prayer works! Praise God!*

### Jesus Film translations increase, more are expected soon.

More people than ever before around the world are now able to see and hear the Gospel in their own language. According to the [JESUS Film Project](http://www.jesusfilmproject.org), the story of the life of Christ has been translated into 899 languages, that's up 12 languages since we reported the numbers in March. With these new translations, 5.4 billion people have seen the film with more than 201 million people indicating decisions for Christ as a result of watching the film. That represents people in 228 countries or territories who have viewed the film. There's more good news. The JESUS Film Project isn't finished. There are currently 238 additional translations that are in process. That will aid the 2,419 film teams and the more than 15-hundred denominations and mission agencies who are using the film in evangelism. [www.mnnonline.org](http://www.mnnonline.org) *Praise God that each year more and more people are exposed to Jesus.*

## LOOKING AHEAD

**18-25 January 2006:** *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.* Contact: Churches Together for Britain and Ireland (CTBI). Resources available. Website: [www.ctbi.org.uk](http://www.ctbi.org.uk)

**29 January 2006:** The theme of *Homelessness Sunday* is 'Build happiness Stop homelessness'. This was developed to show how everybody (as individuals or as members of churches) can build happiness and stop homelessness by thinking about the issues and offering practical help. More than 2,000 churches take part in Homelessness Sunday each year and thousands of pounds is raised for local and national homelessness charities. [www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk)

**29 January 2006:** *World Leprosy Day Please* encourage your church to join us in prayer and thanksgiving on World Leprosy Day as we celebrate God's blessing on The Leprosy Mission's ministry. [www.leprosymission.org.uk](http://www.leprosymission.org.uk)

**30 January - 2 February 2006:** Belfast. *Kingdom Come ... more than words.* An event jointly organised by the Evangelical Alliance and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, steered by senior church leaders from a range of denominations, and geared for those who have a heart for reaching Northern Ireland. [www.kingdomcomeireland.com](http://www.kingdomcomeireland.com)

**7-14 February 2006:** *National Marriage Week* Contact: Futureway Trust [www.nmw.org.uk](http://www.nmw.org.uk)

**12 February 2006:** *Education Sunday* Theme: Prizes that last. Contact: National Society or any of the main denominational HQs. Resources available. [www.natsoc.org.uk/](http://www.natsoc.org.uk/)

**27 February - 1 March 2006:** *Heaven to Earth Intimacy and Warfare.* Swanwick Prayer Conference, The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. The invitation is for you to come and stand with us in worship, in prayer, in learning, in praise, in declaring, in watching, in receiving, in possessing. Download the booking form (PDF version) [CLICK HERE](#)