

Prayer Alert

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

You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry. (Psalm 10:17)

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

Pray with us for the elections in Japan and Uruguay taking place on 27 October: [Insight Guide](#).

Invitation - to serve with the PA team!

How would you like to join our Prayer Alert team? We are a group of volunteers based in different parts of England. If you appreciate what we do and are confident with browsing the internet, discovering relevant articles and basic editing, we would love to hear from you! Please hit 'reply', introduce yourself, and we will be in touch.

In the meantime, because the team is currently short of personnel, please be aware that there may be occasions when Prayer Alert contains fewer articles than usual.

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

May God bless and encourage you this year,

David Fletcher and the Prayer Alert team.

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Praise Reports

[Iran: Christian man sentenced to ten years is released early](#)

Christian convert Mehdi Akbari has been released from Evin prison after serving nearly five years of a ten-year sentence for his involvement with a house church. Arrested in January 2019 alongside three other Christian converts, Mehdi endured solitary confinement, torture, and harsh prison conditions. The group was charged with acting against national security for forming an evangelical Christian group, with accusations of ties to foreign missionary organisations. Despite appealing multiple times, Mehdi was not allowed to attend the funeral of his son, Amir Ali, who passed away in December 2021. His sentence was ultimately reduced by the Tehran appeal court, leading to his release on 29 September. His case highlights the ongoing persecution of Christians in Iran, where religious freedom remains severely restricted.

Praise: God for Mehdi's release. Pray for protection for Christians facing persecution in Iran. Pray that Iran shall be saved. (Matthew 5:10)

More: www.christianpost.com/news/iranian-christian-sentenced-to-10-years-in-prison-is-released.html

[Holy Spirit led actor away from Hollywood, he 'lost everything'](#)

Cameron Arnett, an actor who starred in shows like Miami Vice, experienced a profound spiritual transformation which led him to leave the mainstream entertainment industry. Initially drawn into Hollywood's allure, Arnett later became a Christian. His faith was tested when he was asked to do partial nudity for a role; despite attempts to compromise with a body double, the Holy Spirit convicted him to reject even the appearance of evil. He refused, and as a result, he lost his career, agency, and connections. However, he saw God's plan in all of this, and realigned his career to reflect his faith. He became a pastor and then returned to film-making, this time with a focus on faith-based projects. To date he has appeared in over fifty movies and seven television shows, all with Christian themes. Arnett's journey illustrates the importance of standing firm in one's convictions and using every platform, even in Hollywood, to shine the light of Christ.

Praise: God for Cameron Arnett's bold stand for faith. Pray for more Christ-centred actors and film-makers. (Romans 12:2a)

More: www.faithwire.com/2024/10/09/i-cant-do-that-actor-reveals-moment-holy-spirit-led-him-away-hollywood-says-he-lost-everything/

British Isles

Government to outline major overhaul of workers' rights

The Government is preparing a significant overhaul of workers' rights, introducing several new measures aimed at improving job security and flexibility for millions of employees. Key changes include the removal of the two-year qualifying period for unfair dismissal protection, enabling workers to receive statutory sick pay (SSSP) from their first day of illness, and giving fathers access to paternity leave from day one of employment. Also, workers will be entitled to unpaid parental and bereavement leave from day one, and employers will be expected to consider flexible working requests immediately. However, the bill has faced criticism for delays and certain measures being watered down. Small business owners have expressed concerns over the potential impact on hiring decisions, probation periods, and the management of zero-hours contracts. Trade unions have welcomed the changes but insist more needs to be done.

Pray: for the implementation of fair employment laws which protect workers while promoting sustainable business practices. (Philippians 2:4)

More: www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp3w8n48234o

Tory leadership race: Cleverly out, Jenrick and Badenoch final two

In a surprising turn, on 9 October James Cleverly was eliminated from the Conservative Party leadership race, leaving Robert Jenrick and Kemi Badenoch as the final contenders. On 9 October, when Tory MPs voted, Badenoch regained her position as the favourite, receiving 42 votes, while Jenrick followed closely with 41 votes. Cleverly, who had gained momentum after the Conservative Party conference, had led the previous day's ballot with 39 votes, but only secured 37 votes and so failed to advance. Both Badenoch and Jenrick represent the right wing of the party, and key issues in the final race are expected to include immigration and the UK's membership in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Jenrick is for leaving the ECHR, while Badenoch prefers a review, with the possibility of leaving if necessary. The result sets up a contest between two candidates offering distinct visions for the future. The outcome, to be decided by the votes of party members, will be announced on 2 November.

Pray: for God's guidance in the leadership race. Pray for our elected leaders to prioritise integrity and justice. (Proverbs 14:34)

More: www.itv.com/watch/news/and-then-there-were-two-badenoch-and-jenrick-fight-for-top-tory-job-as-cleverly-eliminated/z63mg2n

Investigation into surgeon now includes four more hospitals

An investigation into concerns surrounding orthopaedic surgeon Yaser Jabbar has expanded to include four more London hospitals. Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) had launched a review of 721 children treated by him after concerns were raised about his care. The inquiry now involves three private hospitals as well as Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. An investigation in 2022, conducted by the Royal College of Surgeons, found significant concerns regarding Mr Jabbar's medical practice. Out of the 37 cases reviewed, 22 children were harmed, with thirteen suffering severe harm. Families of affected patients have raised concerns over the lack of documentation and governance in his decision-making processes. Solicitor Caroline Murgatroyd, representing the families, has called for full transparency across all hospitals where he worked. Mr Jabbar, who no longer holds a UK medical licence, now resides in Dubai.

Pray: for support for the affected families. Pray for thorough investigations that lead to justice and accountability. (Psalm 34:18)

More: www.standard.co.uk/news/health/great-ormond-street-hospital-st-john-london-royal-college-of-surgeons-b1186882.html

Scottish Labour stunned by rebellion on winter fuel payments

Two Scottish Labour MPs have surprised their leader Anas Sarwar by voting against the party line in support of a non-binding motion urging the UK government to reverse cuts to the winter fuel payment. The motion, proposed by first minister John Swinney, was passed by a large majority, with members of all other parties, including the Scottish Conservatives, backing it. Making this payment dependent on means testing, part of a broader debate about austerity measures inherited from the Conservative government, is opposed by the SNP. Sarwar defended Labour's position, arguing that the Chancellor did not want to cut the payment but was constrained by the economic challenges left by the previous administration. However, critics have warned that the cuts would force many elderly citizens to choose between heating and eating this winter.

Pray: for compassion in government policies. Pray for support and protection for vulnerable citizens facing winter fuel hardship. (Proverbs 19:17)

More: www.gbnews.com/politics/scottish-labour-stunned-rebellion-holyrood-votes-reverse-winter-fuel-cut

'Bonkers' plan to reach net zero by importing from North Korea

The Government's plan to import biomass from countries like North Korea and Afghanistan to meet its net-zero targets has drawn sharp criticism, with experts labelling the strategy as 'bonkers'. The plan, outlined in a bioenergy resource model, suggests a significant expansion of imported energy crops and wood to meet future demands. Critics argue that the reliance on biomass is flawed, especially considering its questionable role in reducing carbon emissions. The strategy assumes significant increases in global crop yields and overlooks the challenges posed by climate change and deforestation. Additionally, questions remain about whether countries like North Korea can comply with sustainability criteria. Further concerns include the impact on biodiversity, soil health, and Indigenous rights. A legal challenge against the biomass strategy claims it undermines the UK's ability to achieve net-zero by 2050.

Pray: for wisdom and accountability in our Government's environmental policies. Pray for responsible stewardship of natural resources globally. (Psalm 24:1)

More: www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/09/anger-uk-plan-net-zero-import-biomass-fuel-north-korea

Row over plans to transform derelict church into mosque

A controversial plan to convert St John the Evangelist Church in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, into a mosque has ignited tensions in the community. The Grade 2 listed church, built in 1788, has been unused since the 1980s after its tower was declared unsafe. Purchased by Darul Falah Mosque for £140,000 in 2022, the building's transformation into a mosque has been blocked by the CofE due to a covenant prohibiting its use for non-Christian worship. The church has since become a target for vandalism, with boarded-up stained glass windows and security guards posted outside. The proposal has divided local residents; some welcome the building's revival, but others mourn the loss of its Christian heritage. This dispute comes amidst a broader national context of declining church attendance, rising numbers of Muslims, and growing tensions surrounding immigration. The church also became a focal point during the anti-immigration August 2024 riots.

Pray: for peace, unity, and understanding in this and other communities facing religious and cultural tensions over worship spaces and associated activities. (Romans 12:18)

More: www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1955173/St-John-church-hanley-stoke-on-trent-mosque

Europe

Ukraine: Zelensky optimistic as he meets different leaders

Volodymyr Zelensky has expressed optimism that the current battlefield dynamics could create a chance to end Russia's invasion by 2025. Speaking at a summit meeting in Dubrovnik, Croatia, he highlighted the importance of Ukraine's allies, particularly the USA, in achieving peace and long-term stability. He noted that October, November, and December present 'a real chance' for decisive action, but did not explain how that would happen. Russian forces now hold nearly 20% of Ukraine's territory, and are closing in on [another key town, Toretsk](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-reports-fierce-fighting-toretsk-russia-steps-up-pressure-2024-10-10/) (<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-reports-fierce-fighting-toretsk-russia-steps-up-pressure-2024-10-10/>). Zelensky also called for Ukraine's integration into NATO as a means to strengthen its position in any potential negotiations with Russia. At the time of writing he is in London, to meet Keir Starmer and Mark Rutte, NATO's secretary general, and will then fly to Rome [to meet Pope Francis](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-zelenskiy-meet-natos-rutte-uk-starmer-thursday-2024-10-09/) (<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-zelenskiy-meet-natos-rutte-uk-starmer-thursday-2024-10-09/>).

Pray: for strength and perseverance in Ukraine, and for continuing international support as the war drags on. (2 Chronicles 15:7)

More: www.reuters.com/world/europe/zelenskiy-meets-croatia-pm-ahead-ukraine-south-east-europe-summit-2024-10-09/

EU: von der Leyen criticises Hungary's policies

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has sharply criticised Hungary's foreign policies, accusing Viktor Orban of endangering European security. In a speech to the European parliament, she took aim at Hungary's reluctance to support Ukraine in its war with Russia and its growing relationships with Russia and China. She said that Orban's government is weakening EU unity by easing visa restrictions for Russians and Belarusians, and allowing Chinese police to operate in Hungary. Von der Leyen also stressed the dangers of Hungary's continued reliance on Russian energy and its failure to align with EU energy security measures. Orban, in response, defended his policies, calling for a ceasefire in Ukraine and rejecting any comparison between Ukraine's current situation and Hungary's 1956 uprising against Soviet rule.

Pray: for unity within Europe, and wisdom for leaders navigating complex international relationships. (Mark 3:25)

More: www.reuters.com/world/europe/eu-commission-chief-hungarys-russia-china-policies-pose-security-risk-2024-10-09/

Worldwide

Lebanon: churches respond to thousands of displaced people

Amid escalating violence between Hezbollah and Israel, thousands of families in southern Lebanon, including many Christians, have fled their homes. As they move north, local churches have opened their doors, providing shelter, food, and medical supplies. Church leaders have stressed their commitment to helping all affected, regardless of denomination, showing God's love through practical support. Despite the challenges and fear brought by Israeli airstrikes, Lebanese Christians see this as an opportunity to reflect Christ's love. Leaders of the Kurdish Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church are among those leading relief efforts, with church members also welcoming families into their homes. SAT-7 continues to broadcast live, bringing messages of hope amid the chaos. As many as 200,000 people have been displaced, and church leaders ask for prayers for peace and strength during these difficult times. Breaking news: an Israeli airstrike on Beirut has [killed at least 22 people](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/cr54lyg2j8zt) (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/cr54lyg2j8zt>).

Pray: giving thanks for the churches which are helping those in need. Pray also for an immediate end to the conflict in Lebanon. (Psalm 9:9)

More: www.sat7uk.org/emergency-country-briefing-lebanon/

Gaza: over 400,000 civilians trapped, says UN

As Israeli forces intensify their offensive centred on the Jabaliya refugee camp, over 400,000 civilians remain trapped in northern Gaza, according to the head of UNRWA. He expressed concerns about repeated evacuation orders and worsening humanitarian conditions, including hunger and the closure of key medical services. Israel's ongoing conflict with Hamas has led to widespread displacement, with hospitals forced to close and critical aid deliveries disrupted. The USA has called on Israel to urgently address the 'catastrophic conditions' in Gaza. Journalists and civilians continue to be casualties of the violence. Humanitarian groups have condemned the forced displacements, describing northern Gaza as turning into a 'lifeless desert' while southern regions struggle to cope with the influx of displaced people. There have been more than 42,000 Palestinian casualties since October 2023.

Pray: for the safety of civilians, and for Israel to heed the concerns which are being expressed. (Psalm 33:5)

More: www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/09/at-least-400000-people-trapped-by-israels-latest-gaza-offensive-says-unrwa

USA: Helene was bad, Milton much worse

On 9 October Hurricane Milton hit Florida's west coast, bringing 120 mph winds and widespread destruction. At one point a Category 5 hurricane, the Category 3 storm weakened overnight to a Category 1 storm, but not before destroying over 125 homes and knocking out power for over three million residents. Tornadoes and heavy rain have also caused significant inland damage, with storm surges threatening coastal cities such as Tampa. Officials have warned of severe flooding along rivers and lakes as Milton continues to batter the state, with nearly 100,000 people sheltering in evacuation centres. Florida officials had issued urgent evacuation orders for nearly two million people, many of whom had not recovered from Hurricane Helene. Joe Biden, calling Milton one of the most destructive hurricanes in Florida's history, has urged residents to heed local warnings.

Pray: for safety and resilience for those affected by the two hurricanes. Pray that aid will quickly reach those who need it most. (Psalm 46:1)

More: news.sky.com/story/hurricane-milton-category-3-storm-makes-landfall-in-florida-13231149

Mozambique: crucial election

On 9 October, 17 million Mozambicans voted for a new president who many hope will bring peace to the oil- and gas-rich Cabo Delgado province, which has faced a jihadist insurgency since 2017. Over 1.3 million people have been displaced due to violence, with 600,000 returning to destroyed homes. The presidential candidates, including Frelimo's Daniel Chapo, Lutero Simango of the Democratic Movement, and independent Venancio Mondlane, have promised to prioritise peace and rebuilding. Chapo has pledged to end terrorism and rebuild infrastructure, while Simango has focussed on addressing unemployment, poverty, and healthcare. Mondlane has promised to eradicate terrorism within a year. Frelimo is expected to win again, despite wide-ranging allegations of electoral fraud in last year's local elections; it also has been tainted by corruption scandals, with politicians jailed for taking payoffs to favour government-controlled fishing companies. The country is also facing severe food shortages as a result of a long drought: the UN says that 1.3 million people are affected.

Pray: for a leader committed to peace, integrity, and Mozambique's restoration. (Psalm 29:11)

More: www.africanews.com/2024/10/07/mozambique-headed-for-crucial-elections-amid-jihadist-insurgency-and-drought-induced-hunger/

Kenya: IMF invited to audit corruption and governance issues

Kenya has officially requested the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to conduct a comprehensive review of its corruption and governance challenges. Cabinet secretary Musalia Mudavadi said that this will help the government address corruption, a persistent issue negatively impacting the economy and the livelihoods of Kenyans. President William Ruto, who has been facing pressure from widespread protests over high living costs, pledged in July to amend laws aimed at closing loopholes which enable corruption. He wants to focus on holding corrupt officials accountable, reducing government wastage, and curbing opulence among leaders. The IMF's review, which will encompass all government ministries and institutions, aligns with its previous calls for Kenya to address these challenges. Kenya hopes this effort will also secure delayed financial assistance from the IMF, crucial for its 2024/2025 budget.

Pray: for the IMF's review to be thorough, enabling Kenya's leadership to root out corruption at every level. (Amos 5:24)

More: www.thestatesman.com/world/kenya-seeks-imf-help-to-audit-corruption-governance-issues-1503351140.html

Japan: new premier calls snap election

Shigeru Ishiba, Japan's newly-appointed prime minister, has dissolved parliament and announced snap elections for 27 October. His Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), along with its coalition partner, is expected to win, capitalising on Ishiba's early popularity and a fragmented opposition. He wants to revitalise rural regions affected by Japan's demographic crisis, and aims to create a 'new Japan' with increased support for families and flexible work policies. Facing a complex security landscape, including threats from China, Russia, and North Korea, Ishiba plans to expand Japan's defence capabilities. Ishiba has proposed economic stimulus, particularly for local governments and low-income households, as part of his strategy to lead the country out of deflation. His call for an early election seeks to solidify his mandate before political momentum wanes, while distancing himself from scandals that plagued his unpopular predecessor.

Pray: for a peaceful election that leads to positive changes for Japan's future. (Luke 12:48b)

More: www.voanews.com/a/japan-pm-calls-snap-election-to-create-a-new-japan-/7815964.html

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C/O World Prayer Centre, 167 Newhall Street, Birmingham, B3 1SW

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