



PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Revealed: UK's first official sharia courts

Islamic law has been officially adopted in Britain, with sharia courts given powers to rule on Muslim civil cases. The government has quietly sanctioned the powers for sharia judges to rule on cases ranging from divorce and financial disputes to those involving domestic violence. Rulings issued by a network of five sharia courts are enforceable with the full power of the judicial system, through the county courts or High Court. Previously, the rulings of sharia courts in Britain could not be enforced, and depended on voluntary compliance among Muslims. It has now emerged that sharia courts with these powers have been set up in London, Birmingham, Bradford and Manchester with the network's headquarters in Nuneaton, Warwickshire. Two more courts are being planned for Glasgow and Edinburgh. Sheikh Faiz-ul-Aqtab Siddiqi, whose Muslim Arbitration Tribunal runs the courts, said he had taken advantage of a clause in the Arbitration Act 1996.

Pray: [against these creeping changes to the laws of our nation. \(Nu.15:15-17\)](#)

More: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article4749183.ece>

■ Archbishop of Canterbury: 'No repentance in the City'

The Archbishop of Canterbury has told the BBC he fears financiers feel no 'repentance' for the excesses which led to the economic collapse. Dr Rowan Williams said the government should have acted to cap bonuses. He also warned that the gap between rich and poor would lead to an increasingly 'dysfunctional' society. But Gordon Brown says he is confident an agreement on greater regulation of the financial system can be reached at next week's G20 summit in the US. Dr Williams told BBC Two's Newsnight programme: 'There hasn't been a feeling of closure about what happened last year. There hasn't been what I would, as a Christian, call repentance. We haven't heard people saying 'well actually, no, we got it wrong and the whole fundamental principle on which we worked was unreal, was empty.' Dr Williams also said there was a sense of 'bafflement' and 'muted anger' at the bonus culture.

Pray: [for an agreement on financial regulation that is fair and just for all. \(Pr.1:3\)](#)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8258136.stm>

■ Is Britain in moral crisis?

The Rt Rev Michael Nazir-Ali said that the rejection of Christian values is having a damaging effect on the country. Speaking at his farewell service, he expressed particular concern at the breakdown of the family and at growing calls for the legalisation of assisted suicide. Although he is stepping down as bishop, he vowed to continue to speak out on important issues and to fight for a return to Christian principles. 'I believe that the Christian faith is necessary for the life of our country,' he said. 'We need to get away from the constant making of moral decisions by opinion poll. We are facing a crisis about affirming the dignity of human purpose. Is the weakening of family life responsible for what we face on our streets, in our classrooms and homes?' Dr Nazir-Ali attributed many of society's ills to the breakdown of the family. (See also Prayer Alert 3609 & 1409)

Pray: that this message may be widely heard and for a resurgence in Christian values and faith. (Jas.1:21)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/bishop.warns.of.moral.crisis.at.farewell.service/24179.htm>

■ **Green campaign posters banned for mentioning God**

Christians have been told by a council that they cannot put up a poster promoting a climate change meeting because it mentions God. Camden Council, in North London, has refused to allow a parish group holding a weekend of events on climate change, to display their posters in libraries or social centres - unless they remove words such as 'God' and 'Christian' from the text. A spokesman for the council said: 'We are very happy to help promote community events that are open to everyone on our notice boards. However we are not able to accept posters that promote particular religious beliefs or political points of view.' Mike Judge, a campaigning group for the Christian Institute, added: 'Camden's decision is ridiculous and most people will roll their eyes and shake their heads at it. It would be laughable, if it were not so serious.'

Pray: for the members of the council that they will receive insight that would open their eyes to the truth and not these so called 'politically correct' ideas. (Dt.5:11)

More: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/politics/6193689/Christians-told-to-take-down-green-campaign-posters-that-mention-God-by-Camden-council.html>

■ **EXCLUSIVE: Afghanistan- the following was written home by a young soldier**

'As I write this, in the last 48 hours two soldiers from my Battle Group have been killed – one who is survived by his fiancée and three children. Perhaps what is worse for the second soldier is that he was worked on so very hard by the excellent Combat Medical Technicians we have in the Army. Whilst I cannot release the details surrounding the incident, I can confirm that Herculean efforts were expended into keeping this boy alive. It was heartbreaking to all involved when we found out he did not make it. I know – I was in the next room. Yet all of us here go through this regularly and with much greater trauma to our minds and souls besides, and yet we mostly don't even leave Camp Bastion. Imagine it for the poor soldier who is at the front of a convoy with little but a metal detector to stop him being blown into oblivion (it does not always work, and what's left afterwards is not often very much). The bravery they show day in and day out is truly humbling.

**** So my friends, my prayer requests are as follows.** Obviously, MANY prayers for the safety of every single soldier (of every nationality) who has to work in this exceedingly dangerous place. Please pray for their worried families and loved ones, who do not understand why we are here and only want their precious ones back. Please pray for the souls and minds of the soldiers under the greatest pressures, who have seen many things that no man can see without being marked permanently. Also pray for the leaders of Great Britain, that they give proper attention and support to the people they are demanding so much from. Please pray for the people of Afghanistan, who mostly only want to have a country where they won't be blown up by a landmine that the Russians left there a generation ago, or shot by a Taliban who only takes what they want. Only our Lord God can truly win this war, and it is on Him we must, as always, place our hopes and prayers.'

Pray: as the Lord leads for all those involved, as this soldier requests. (Eph.6:18a)

More: <http://www.militarychristians.org.uk/>

■ **Churches offer resources for Peacemaking Sunday - September 20**

Church leaders are being encouraged to mark The International Day of Peace on Peacemaking Sunday using worship resources provided by The Baptist Union of Great Britain, The Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. The three Churches have put together prayers, hymns, readings and images in order to help people think about peace. The union of prayer and hope, known as Peacemaking Sunday, will take place the day before the United Nations International Day of Peace on September 21. The International Day of Peace calls for a global ceasefire and offers communities the opportunity to commemorate and strengthen the ideals of peace. The three denominations have called upon churches to hold peace services and to pray for those in areas of violence such as Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine. Peace workers and victims of religious attacks in Pakistan will also be held in prayer.

Pray: for a huge committed response to Peacemaking Sunday and the International Day of Peace. (Mt.5:9)

More: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=openogod.newsDetail&newsid=378>

■ **Churches called to take part in climate change cocoa challenge**

With less than 100 days to go until the biggest climate change summit in history, Christians across the UK are being called on to take part in a 'climate change cocoa challenge' as a way of urging the UK and other governments to prioritise action on water in poor countries at the Copenhagen climate negotiations this December. The international development charity, Progressio, is asking people to join its 1950s-themed Just Add Water campaign by serving cocoa as well as tea after church on 25 October as part of the 'climate change cocoa challenge', which concludes with filling out an action card to send to British MPs, six weeks before the start of the vital summit. Progressio's Campaigns Officer, Brie O'Keefe said: 'The climate change cocoa challenge is a fun way for church members to respond as individuals or gather friends and family that weekend and help raise the voice and concerns of the world's poor.'

Pray: that this and other initiatives will succeed in raising awareness to the needs of the world's poor. (Ex.2:14)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/10218>

EUROPE

■ **German bishop urges N. Koreans to obey 'God' rather than 'man'**

Germany's senior Protestant bishop has urged Christians in officially atheist North Korea to obey God 'rather than man'. Bishop Wolfgang Huber, the council chairperson of Germany's Evangelical Church, spoke during a service in the Bongsun Church in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, according to a statement made available to Ecumenical News International on 15 September. Without alluding to Kim Jong-il, who in 1997 succeeded his father as leader of North Korea, Huber quoted

from the Bible's book of Acts of the Apostles (5:29), when he said, 'We ought to obey God rather than man.' Huber told those assembled his delegation's visit to North and South Korea should be seen as an attempt 'to better understand how we, as Christians can contribute so that here in Korea, all people in the North and in the South can live in peace without borders separating them'.

Pray: for the government and people of N Korea that they would learn to live as God intended. (Ac.5:29)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=3359>

WORLDWIDE

■ UN: Millions denied Human Rights because of discrimination

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, says millions of people around the world are denied their human rights because of, what she calls, the 'scourge of discrimination'. Pillay told the 47-member U.N. Human Rights Council, that women and ethnic minorities are among those who are most victimized by human-rights abuses. She notes there have been recent positive developments in some Persian Gulf states. Yet, Pillay says, the overall situation of women in the region falls below international standards. She notes that indigenous people and ethnic minorities, such as Tibetans or the Roma in Hungary suffer from discrimination and abuse. Civilians continue to be targets of attacks motivated by ethnic or religious hatred in conflicts in Afghanistan, Colombia, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Palestinian territory. In some of these conflicts, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples bear the brunt of hostilities. In virtually all of them, women and children suffer disproportionately.

Pray: for the work of those involved in Human Rights that they would have success in breaking discrimination in all its forms. (Ps.82:3-4)

More: <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-15-voa53.cfm>

■ 'Christians vital for Middle East peace'

Both Israel and Palestine are equally to blame for the recent war in Gaza, but Christians are vital in bringing peace to the troubled region. So says the head of the Palestinian Bible Society, Nashat Filmon. His views come as a report from the UN Security Council which claimed that both the Israeli and Palestinian armed groups had committed war crimes during the violence last December. Judge Richard Goldstone, who wrote the report, called on both Israel and Palestine to hold investigations into their actions. The UN report was released as the US Middle East envoy George Mitchell continues to press for a deal on Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Mr Filmon said that, while he welcomed George Mitchell's intervention, there was 'not a very strong chance of peace'. He blamed both a weakened Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government for the current impasse in the peace process.

Pray: that both sides would put aside their differences and learn to live with each other in peace. (1Th.5:10)

More: <http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/news/29/84/Christians-vital-for-Middle-East-peace/>

■ Egypt: Non-Muslims arrested

A religious rights organization is condemning the arrests of Christians and other non-Muslims in Egypt. According to reports, 155 people have been arrested there for publicly eating and drinking during Islam's holy month of Ramadan. One Christian group in the country says enforcing Islamic law on non-Muslims would be equal to creating another Taliban in Egypt. President of Open Doors USA Carl Moeller isn't surprised by the increasing tensions. Since Christians don't fast during Ramadan, Moeller says, 'This makes them stand out. If they're seen to be publicly flouting the rest of the country's practice of fasting, Christians will suffer harassment simply for practicing Christianity.' While Ramadan continues through to September 20, Moeller is asking you to pray that Christians will be strong despite the tensions. He's also asking you to pray for Muslims. 'We need to pray that during this time of Ramadan there would be openness for Muslims to engage in spiritual dialogue with their Christian neighbours.'

Pray: as Carl Moeller suggests pray for Christians and Muslims to have opportunities to engage in open dialogue. (Ps.133:1)

More: <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/13241>

■ Sudan: Christians urge prayers amid widespread killings

Sudanese Christians have urged fellow believers around the world to pray for them as armed groups are kidnapping and killing church leaders and other Christians, an advocacy group with close knowledge about the situation told BosNewsLife on Tuesday. In one of the latest known incidents, an unidentified armed group attacked the town of Wernyol on August 29, killing 'many people' including Archdeacon Joseph Mabior Garang 'who was shot at the altar while conducting a service,' said Middle East Concern (MEC). Earlier, three people, including an Episcopal Church lay leader, were murdered on August 12 in the town of Ezo of the country's Western Equatorial State during a raid by the militant Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), according to MEC investigations. 'In addition to the murders, several children were kidnapped. The town's clinic was attacked, with medical supplies being stolen and equipment destroyed, which made care of the wounded more difficult,' MEC added.

Pray: for the situation in Sudan and for a resolution to the ongoing hostilities across the area. (Lk.1:77-79))

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/9075-sudan-christians-urge-prayers-amid-widespread-killings>

■ Somalia: Converts from Islam jailed and pursued in Somalia's breakaway region

A convert from Islam in Somalia's self-declared state of Somaliland has been jailed for distributing Christian materials, and another is on the run from both family members and police upset over his new faith. Christian sources said Somaliland native Osman Nour Hassan was arrested for providing Christian literature in Pepsi village, on the outskirts of the breakaway region's capital city, Hargeisa. Hassan was accused of providing Christian literature to a village Muslim boy, who later

showed it to his family and friends. The boy's Muslim family reported the incident to the police, the sources said, leading to the arrest of the 29-year-old Hassan. The arrest has upset underground Christians who see it as a muzzle on religious expression. They said other Muslim villagers had received Christian materials from Hassan and took no offence, and that Christian Ethiopian refugees in the area have distributed the same literature without problem.

Pray: for our brothers and sisters in Christ that God would protect them when persecuted. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/somalia/9383/>

■ **Pakistan: Another attack on Christians**

In the latest attack on a Christian community in the Punjab region of Pakistan, a church was set on fire by local Muslims. Christian protesters were baton-charged and fired upon by police and a young man has been arrested under the country's Blasphemy Law. This incident comes just a month after the horrific attacks in Gojra and Korian, which resulted in the death of eight Christians. The pretext for the latest attack was again allegations of blasphemy. The latest incident took place on Friday 11 September in the town of Samberial. According to local sources the catalyst was a relationship between a young Christian man named Danish and a Muslim girl. He was accused of teasing her and desecrating her copy of the Holy Quran. The Director of CLAAS Pakistan, Joseph Francis, who arrived as events unfolded, believes the allegations are false: 'Our information is that this is an orchestrated attempt by the family of the Muslim girl to discredit the young Christian man and to get him arrested', he said.

Pray: for the church in Pakistan that God would strengthen and equip it for the task. (Heb.13:20-21)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/news/?NewsID=5021>

■ **Zimbabwe: Mugabe blamed over unity government stalemate**

Zimbabweans say President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party are to blame for the ongoing stalemate in the country's coalition government. They are accusing the embattled leader of refusing to fully implement the Global Political Agreement which led to the formation of the coalition government. But President Mugabe has said there are no sticking points in the agreement which threaten to unravel the government's unity. Rather he blames the international community for imposing sanctions, which he claims hinder the functioning of the government. Glen Mpani, a Zimbabwean political analyst said that President Mugabe is good at shifting blame. 'It is a statement that does not reflect reality that is there between the three political parties. Because if two of the principals are mentioning that there are outstanding issues that need to be resolved, I don't think that it is his (Mugabe) responsibility to justify whether there are disagreements or not in the agreement.'

Pray: that there would be a real breakthrough to bring a resolution to the problems of Zimbabwe. (Rom.5:5-6)

More: <http://www.voanews.com/english/Africa/2009-09-16-voa3.cfm>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ **Saudi Arabia: Thousands of Christians connect in 'Skype Church'**

Christians have set up an underground church in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, viewed by Muslims as the holiest city in Islam, while tens of thousands of other Saudi Christians are worshipping via the internet, a mission group confirmed. 'It is unclear how many people are participating in the church in Mecca, because people are afraid to talk about it openly,' said Jaap Bönker, director of Netherlands based Arabic World Mission, which has close contacts with believers in Muslim nations. News of the secret church comes despite strict rules forbidding non-Muslims to enter Mecca. In addition, Bönker said, some 70,000 people are worshipping in what has been dubbed Saudi Arabia's 'Skype Church', a reference to an Internet programme that allows people to communicate with each other via relatively secure telephone. Source: Jaap Bönker.

Praise: God for all the believers in Saudi Arabia that He would continue to bless and protect them. (2Th.3:2-3)

More: <http://joelnews.squarespace.com/>

■ **Philippines welcome peace moves**

The Philippine government and an Islamic separatist group have agreed to allow international monitors into the Mindanao conflict zone and mediate in an effort toward a lasting peace deal. The agreement between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was signed in Kuala Lumpur following the resumption of peace talks brokered by Malaysia. Released to the media on Wednesday, the deal allows peace monitors known as the International Contact Group to 'maintain a level of comfort that restores mutual trust' and ensure compliance in any future agreement. The group's members will be drawn from countries in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the European Union as well as non-governmental organisations. However, the text of the agreement did not say when the monitor group will be operational or set a date for the next round of talks, nor does the pact specify who will choose the members, but the wording suggests it would be done by both parties together.

Praise: God for this huge step towards peace and pray that the next steps will move forward led by the Spirit. (Mt.5:9)

More: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2009/09/20099169416496578.html>

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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