

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ Live-in couples more likely to divorce

Couples who live together before marriage are at significantly greater risk of divorce, a recent report says. 'Those couples who have lived with each other are noticeably (around 15 percent) more likely to divorce; couples who have previously lived with a different partner before getting married are around 45 percent more likely to divorce,' report authors Dr. John Hayward and Dr. Guy Brandon in 'Cohabitation: An Alternative to Marriage?' released by the Jubilee Centre. About 55 percent of cohabitations now lead to marriage, while 45 percent end in separation, they said, adding that even those couples who do separate and go on to other live-in arrangements, later marrying their second (or subsequent) partner, are far more likely to divorce. Since the early 1980s, cohabitation overtook marriage as the most common form of first live-in relationship. Marriage remains by far the most common family form of choice overall, the report concluded.

Pray: that this report will raise awareness and the importance of marriage in relationships. (Heb.13:4)

More: <http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/205844/20110830/live-in-couples-more-likely-to-divorce-after-marriage.htm>

■ Fears that change to ONS figures sidelines marriage

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) has changed the frequency with which figures are published concerning children born outside of wedlock. Critics say that the changes are part of continued efforts to marginalise marriage as an institution. Figures for children born to unmarried mothers and those born to parents in 'legal partnerships' will now be released on an annual, as opposed to quarterly, basis. An ONS spokesperson said that the adjustments were due to spending cuts. There are fears that changing the publication of data in this way will make it harder to demonstrate the benefits of marriage for children. Patricia Morgan, of the think-tank Civitas, said: 'This is a way of crossing marriage out of the public consciousness. It has been done one step at a time. The evidence that marriage is better for families and children is overwhelming, but if you don't have the evidence you can no longer prove it'.

Pray: that despite these changes marriage will not be sidelined but the truth will out. (Ps.103:2)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/social/fears-that-change-to-ons-figures-seeks-to-sideline-marriage>

■ Pre-abortion counselling could cut abortions

Members of the British Parliament are looking at a plan to require that all women in England considering an abortion undergo pre-abortion counselling - a move they say could stop as many as 60,000 abortions annually. Abortion counselling is currently only offered by abortion businesses, which have a financial incentive to ensure they do not talk women out of having an abortion by emphasizing the numerous alternatives available to them or offering any non-abortion pregnancy assistance. However, the proposed legal changes would have abortion businesses following laws similar to those in the United States that require them to mention other options. Such laws have proven to reduce abortions. Tory MP Nadine Dorries will file the amendment to the Health Bill later this week that would put the abortion counselling rules in place. 'Abortion has become a factory-efficient process that denies women the right to independent, professional counselling,' she said.

Pray: that this proposal will be successful and lead to many lives being saved. (Job.12:13)

More: http://www.lifenews.com/2011/08/29/britain-considering-pre-abortion-counseling-could-cut-abortions/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+lifenews%2Fnewsfeed+%28LifeNews.com%29

■ Charity launches ad campaign to help people in housing difficulty

The housing and homelessness charity Shelter has launched a new advertising campaign to encourage people facing housing problems to seek earlier advice. The campaign aims to tackle a common reluctance to do this: a survey carried out in 2010 by the Civil and Social Justice Panel found that 50 per cent of people do not seek external advice when they are in housing difficulties. The main focus of the activity is a series of poster advertisements. Each depicts a person in distress because they face a serious crisis, such as sudden job loss or mounting debt. They carry a single headline which shares with the viewer the desperation the person is feeling. The charity says that early advice can be crucial in helping people with housing issues to find a positive outcome for their problem. The advertising campaign aims to highlight this as well as demonstrating how people can seek help.

Pray: for all those facing critical issues in their lives at this time. (Heb.4:16)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/15293>

■ Bid to lift morale after riots

Premier Christian Radio and Premier Gospel Radio have launched an advertising campaign to lift morale in the nation's capital in the wake of the riots. Posters will appear in parts of the city that saw the worst rioting, pointing to the work the radio stations do in offering hope and inspiration. The posters will appear in Croydon, Hackney, Ealing, Haringey, and Lewisham. Peter Kerridge, CEO of Premier Radio, said: 'The aim of these posters is to be a source of hope. We want to be a beacon of hope to Christians, those of other faiths and none, who live in these areas. In the aftermath of the riots there has been a lot of condemnation. We want to focus on a tried and tested way of re-building lives and communities. Hope and inspiration are things we all need and the Christian gospel provides it.'

Pray: for all affected areas and that the Gospel message will bring healing to these communities. (Pr.13:17)

More: <http://www.religiousintelligence.org/churchnewspaper/news/bid-to-lift-morale-after-riots/>

■ Commission wavers over Christian cases in Europe

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has changed its mind over how it will intervene in the four cases of discrimination against Christians that will be heard in Europe soon. (See Prayer Alert 23-2011 & 34-2011) The EHRC said in July that it would intervene on behalf of Nadia Eweida, Shirley Chaplin, Gary McFarlane and Lillian Ladele in the European Court. It also said that the British courts had got it wrong in these cases, stating in a press release that 'Judges have interpreted the law too narrowly in religion or belief discrimination claims' and that the courts had given 'insufficient' protection to those manifesting religious beliefs. However, in a subsequent consultation document, the EHRC has said that it will now act to support Chaplin and Eweida (relating to the right to wear a cross) but will oppose Ladele and McFarlane (relating to providing certain services to homosexual couples), stating that the 'domestic courts came to the correct conclusions' in these two cases.

Pray: God for this initial success but now pray that the EHRC will reconsider Ladele and McFarlane's judgement. (Ps.9:19)

More: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-concerns/sexual-orientation/equality-commission-wavers-over-christian-cases-in-europe>

■ Parliamentary inquiry to assess Christian freedoms

Are Christians being marginalised in public life? Is it becoming more difficult to speak freely or be authentically Christian in the workplace? What does the law actually have to say about these issues? These are just some of the questions a cross-party group of Christian MPs and Peers are attempting to address as part of Clearing the Ground - a parliamentary inquiry to see how the law treats Christians. The All Party Parliamentary Group 'Christians in Parliament' has launched the inquiry to seek clarity regarding what Christians can and cannot do within the law. It will cut through the claims made in the media and by opposing campaign groups to consider whether Christians are finding their freedoms eroded. Gary Streeter MP, who is chairing the inquiry, said: 'There has never been a more significant time for Christians to make a positive contribution to our society.'

Pray: for God's wisdom to prevail leading to positive contributions and clear understanding. (Col.2:2)

More: <http://www.eauk.org/media/clearing-the-ground.cfm>

EUROPE

■ Estonia: Spirituality in the world's 'least religious' country

Estonians were recently asked whether religion played an important part in their life, only 20% said yes. Suggesting the Baltic country is, statistically, the least religious country in the world. Spires decorate the old town, bells ring out Sundays as visitors walk in and out. A closer look reveals that many of these visitors are tourists. Tallinn's large Lutheran Church almost all of the 70 congregants turned out to have travelled from the Netherlands. A handful of people standing at the back - 15 at the most - were the sum total of regular Estonian church-goers. As the dean of the church, Arho Tuhkru, explains: 'People believe, but they do not want to belong to the Church.' The Lutheran Church accounts for only 13% of the population. Fewer than one in five Estonians say religion plays an important part in their lives. In schools religion does not feature on the curriculum.

Pray: for people of Estonia that God would send His Holy Spirit to reveal the fullness of the Gospel. (Eph.3:19)

More: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14635021>

■ **Norway: Christian convert attacked with boiling water**

An ex-Muslim Convert to Christianity was attacked with boiling water and acid by Muslims at an 'asylum reception centre' in Norway last Friday, reports the Iranian Christian news agency (Mohabat News). An Asylum seeker in an immigration centre in Jaeren, Norway, had boiling water poured over him after he converted to Christianity and would not comply with Ramadan fasting rules. He and the other converts at the centre now fear for their lives. 'If you do not return to Islam, we will kill you' was the message from the other asylum seekers at the Asylum Reception in Hå, in the Jaeren region of Norway. He refuses to disclose his real name for fear of further reprisals from them. If Afghan authorities found out about the incident and he were to be subsequently deported he risks being sentenced to death by stoning, he claims. He survived the incident, but has been left with a severely disfigured back.

Pray: against such attacks on believers for their protection and that God would hold the hand of the enemy. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue13735.html>

WORLDWIDE

■ **Syria: Priest tells of fear and uncertainty**

A London-based priest, The Rev Nadim Nassar, who is in Latakia, reported that 'it felt like the whole city has closed down because people are scared to leave their homes and people don't know what's going on and what is next'. Speaking on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, he added: 'On Sunday, you could hear a lot of shooting and bombing from different parts of the city. At least 30 people are reported to have been killed in Latakia so far, and government forces are accused of shooting at women and children trying to escape. Tanks have gathered on the outskirts of the city. Syrian government television has denied that any civilians have been targeted, and authorities say that it is tackling armed terrorist gangs. The crackdown began last Saturday, a day after there were anti-government protests in the city. The next day, activists say, Syrian warships fired shells at the city.

Pray: for the situation in Syria that a just solution would be found to bring about changes in the Syrian Government to halt the hostilities. (Ps.7:6)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/priest.tells.of.fear.and.uncertainty.in.syria/28507.htm>

■ **Iran: Evangelical Pastor detained; whereabouts unknown**

The whereabouts of an evangelical pastor in Iran remained unknown Saturday, August 27, some 10 days after he was detained by Iranian security forces as part of a reported government crackdown on Christian converts, BosNewsLife established. Abdolreza 'Matthias' Haghnejad, of the evangelical Church of Iran denomination, was arrested August 17 by Iranian authorities in the northern city of Rasht while making a pastoral visit, according to Iranian Christians and human rights investigators. Pastor Haghnejad, from the nearby seaport city of Bandar-e Anzali, has not been able to contact his family and 'it is believed he is being held without access to an attorney,' said advocacy group Christian Solidarity Worldwide. This year the pastor was also detained along with ten other members of his denomination, on charges of 'activities against the order' but he was later released.

Pray: for the whole nation of Iran and the many individuals being held by the authorities, that God would breakthrough with His freedom and grace. (Lk.4:18)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/17976-iran-detains-evangelical-pastor-whereabouts-unknown>

■ **Bangladesh: Christian activist hiding In Hong Kong**

He was tortured for his Christian faith, but still wanted to 'sing the songs of David.' He was naked, but 'Jesus Christ' clothed him 'with His Love.' Words of Christian rights activist William Nicholas Gomes, a former Muslim who fled rough police and Islamic extremists in his native Bangladesh. Gomes confirmed Thursday, August 25, that he now lives in Hong Kong. 'I have received a visa for six months.' But the young man misses his young wife and two small sons. 'I am afraid that Muslim fundamentalists will do something bad to her and kill my young sons. They already attacked our house,' he added in an extensive interview with BosNewsLife. Gomes spoke after a High Court in Bangladesh reportedly ordered police and angry Muslims on Wednesday, August 24, to stop harassing his family in the capital Dhaka. 'But I don't think it will help as there is no rule of law in Bangladesh,' he cautioned.

Pray: for the protection of the Gomes family and that the authorities would stand by their word. (Ps.5:11)

More: <http://www.worthynews.com/10918-tortured-bangladesh-christian-activist-hiding-in-hong-kong>

■ **Nigeria: Army said to help in slaughter of Christians**

Muslim extremists with the alleged help of Nigerian army personnel killed 24 Christians this month in central Nigeria's Plateau state, area sources said. The attacks started Aug. 11 in Ratsa Foron village, where assaults that day and on Aug. 15 left six Christians dead; also in Heipang village, Muslim extremists killed nine members of one Christian family along with another Christian, the sources said. 'They were in army uniform. I even know some of them; they came along with the Muslims to attack us,' said Nnaji John, who lost her family in the attack. 'I can swear to God Almighty that the attack was carried out with the support of the soldiers; I saw them.' Attacks on Aug. 21 in Kwi, Loton, and Jwol villages killed six more Christians, said the sources, who added that Nigerian army soldiers participated in the assaults or at least accompanied the assailants.

Pray: for the Christians of Nigeria that God would extend His hand of protection over them. (Nu.14:9)

More: http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/nigeria/article_116835.html

■ **Algeria: Churches violates guaranteed freedom**

While many people residing in Middle Eastern and North African countries are undergoing turmoil, one group in particular are experiencing extreme change for the worse: Christians. This is particularly true for Algerian Christians. Algeria ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1989. Article 18 of this covenant guarantees freedom of religion

and belief for all human beings without discrimination. Further, the constitution of Algeria guarantees fundamental freedoms and human rights to all Algerian citizens. Despite these guarantees, Mustapha Krim, the president of the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA), was informed by police that all non-Muslim places of worship in Béjaïa Province, would be shut down. Algerian authorities based their decision to shut down the churches on the discriminatory Ordinance 06-03, which regulates non-Muslim worship. In addition to this attack on the Christian community.

Pray: against the authorities that use the law against the church and pray that just laws would prevail. (2Ch.11:14b)

More: <http://www.opendoorsusa.org/press/press-release/2011/08-August/Closing-Algerian-Churches-Violates-Guaranteed-Freedom>

■ Fiji government again cancels Methodist conference

The annual conference of Fiji's Methodist Church, due to start 23 August, was cancelled by Fiji's military government for the third consecutive year after church leaders defied a government directive to step down from their positions. Fiji's Land Force Commander Colonel Mosese Tikoitoga, also directed that no Methodist Church minister be allowed to leave the country, and banned permits under the Public Emergency Regulation for all official Methodist Church meetings. There are concerns that the ban will lead to the collapse of the Methodist church administration and severely affect funding. Michael King, World Church Relationships Team Leader for the Methodist Church in Britain, said the ban was a 'massive setback' in church/state relations, given that it seemed that relationships had improved and the political situation had eased.

Pray: that the relations between church and state would be improved and that God would open the doors of reconciliation and understanding. (2Cor.5:11)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=5105>

■ Mexico: Drug violence traps believers in fear

Most headlines involving Mexico over the past few years have revolved around some sort of drug cartel shootings, kidnappings, or most recently, arson. Of the 40,000 deaths that have occurred since 2006 connected to Mexican drug cartels, most have been men actually caught up in some way with the cartels. But the violence has spread easily and quickly outside those circles to include many civilians, paralyzing many who live along the border with fear. 'People have a feeling that today could be the day that they die,' says Todd Szalkowski with E3 Partners. 'They literally approach every day, because of the violence there, as if it could be their last day on earth. People are afraid to gather in large groups, and that affects church-going people'. He added, 'They're seeing their pastors abducted out of the pulpit and held for ransom. Gripped by fear, even believers are too nervous to attend church'. (See also Prayer Alert 33-2011)

Pray: to the Lord while He may be found and pray that God would anoint our prayers and heal the Land. (2Chr.7:14)

More: <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/16163>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ Soul Survivor and Momentum bring 1,500 to Christ

A whopping 33,000 delegates attended youth conferences Soul Survivor and Momentum this summer, with more than 1,500 youngsters becoming Christians. Soul Survivor Director and event host Mike Pilavachi, said, 'Once again we have been humbled by how God has met with us and moved among us as we've gathered to worship him. 'One of the highlights has been seeing so many come to faith and hearing their stories.' One youth leader told me he'd brought seven staunch atheists to Soul Survivor, four of whom gave their lives to Jesus before the end of the week. 'We've seen many healed and set free and, in contrast to many of the negative reports about teenagers in our nation, many have told me they want to make a positive difference and serve their communities. We're praying that the things God has done in people these last weeks will bear fruit for many years to come.'

Praise: God for all those new Christians that their faith will be sustained and grow. (2Th.1:3)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/soul-survivor.and.momentum.bring.1500.to.christ/28512.htm>

■ Turkey: Religious property seizures overturned

The Turkish government made a historic U-turn in state policy this past weekend, issuing an official decree inviting Turkey's Christian and Jewish communities to reclaim their long-confiscated religious properties. Last Saturday's decree comes 75 years after the Turkish government seized hundreds of lands and buildings owned by its Greek, Armenian, Syriac and Jewish communities. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the surprise decision last Sunday in Istanbul, addressing a large gathering of Istanbul's non-Muslim religious leaders. Invited as the honoured guests for an iftar (breaking the fast) meal near the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan, Erdogan declared, 'The times when citizens in our country were oppressed for their beliefs, their ethnic heritage or the way they dressed is over.' Acknowledging past injustices inflicted on those of different faith groups, he vowed, 'Those days are over, no citizen is superior to another.'

Praise: God for this bold decision by the Turkish government. (Pr.16:33)

More: http://www.compassdirect.org/english/country/turkey/article_116880.html/

PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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