

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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## PRaise REPORTS

### ■ Wycliffe reaches milestone in Bible translations

A milestone has been reached towards the goal of translating the Bible into every language in the world. For the first time in history, there are Scripture translation projects underway in more languages than there are languages left to translate. According to Wycliffe Bible Translators, there are now 2,075 Scripture translations in progress. Only 1,967 languages still lack a translation project. 'This is really a God thing because we couldn't do it on our own. These figures represent the work of many other agencies as well as the Church worldwide,' Wycliffe Bible Translators COO Russ Hersman told CBN News. 'But when you get right down to it God is wanting to see His Word available to all the peoples of the earth,' he said.

**Praise:** God for the work of the translators as they bring God's Word alive. (1Cor.13:10)

**More:** <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2012/December/Wycliffe-Reaches-Milestone-in-Bible-Translations/>

### ■ Jesus appears to Muslim widow, tells her to listen to messenger

The Christian relief team heard about the needy Syrian widow living outside a Lebanese Muslim village near the Syrian border. So they took food to her. Apparently, Jesus had been there first. She was observing a traditional 40-day period of solitude to mourn her dead husband, so she had received nothing from the local Islamic aid society. 'Who are you?' she asked anxiously. 'You don't know us, but we have great love in our hearts toward you,' the team leader answered 'I want to tell you what happened to me yesterday,' she said, her voice trembling with emotion. 'As I was sleeping, someone put His hand on my shoulder. He said, 'You don't know Me. You have passed through a great pain. I experienced a great pain, also. But I will not leave you alone. Tomorrow I will send you someone who will tell you about Me. Listen to him.'

**Praise:** God that He speaks into the hearts of the needy. (Rom.10:8)

**More:** <http://blog.godreports.com/2012/11/jesus-appears-to-muslim-widow-tells-her-to-listen-to-messenger-he-will-send-the-next-day/>

## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Payday Loans / Christians against poverty

The pressures of Christmas spending will drive four million people to take out payday loans to cover Christmas costs, despite a cut in the average budget for festive spending and giving fewer presents this year. Louise Brittain of R3 the insolvency trade body said, 'I would urge people to think again before taking out a high interest loan to pay for presents, partying or luxury food. Debt has been normalized, attributable in part to clever marketing campaigns of big payday lenders operating glossy websites who are capitalizing on a shift in attitudes towards saving and debt.' One in four families struggles to break even every month. Meanwhile a national debt counselling charity that works through local churches called 'Christians Against Poverty' offers hope and solutions to debt through a service showing God's love in action sustainable poverty relief of counseling and practical help. See: <http://www.capuk.org/who/aboutus.php>

**Pray:** for Christian charities and networks helping people in debt to reach those in most need; and for similar Christian resources to be birthed at this time of recession. (Mt.25:35-36)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/borrowing/loans/9720985/4m-will-use-payday-loans-for-Christmas-spending.html>

#### ■ One out of six charities say they may have to close in 2013

The UK's flatlining economy is having a devastating effect on charities, according to research that suggests that two out of five face closure, with many set to disappear as early as next year unless things improve. A poll commissioned by the Charities Aid Foundation confirms that public spending cutbacks and falling donations are conspiring to devastating effect. The foundation warns that as many as one in six charities believe they may close in the coming year, while nearly half say they are being forced to dip into reserves. One in three say they fear being forced to cut services. The figures will make gloomy reading in Downing Street, which believes the third sector has a vital role to play in delivering the Prime Minister's vision for his 'big society'. The funding crisis comes as charities report that there is more demand for their services.

**Pray:** for charities and their supporters that they may be able to continue to do their good work. (Ro.2:7)

**More:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/dec/09/one-in-six-charities-close>

#### ■ Anger as Government pushes ahead with gay marriage

A provision to make same-sex marriages illegal in the Church of England and Church in Wales has done little to assuage opponents of a change to the law. The plans were outlined in the House of Commons yesterday by Culture Secretary Maria Miller. Other religious organisations would be able to 'opt in' to offering same-sex weddings to gay couples, she said. However, it will be unlawful for religious organisations or their ministers to wed same-sex couples unless their respective governing bodies have opted in. Changes will also be made to equality laws to ensure that discrimination claims are not brought against clergy or religious leaders who refuse to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies. Ms Miller said the provision making it illegal for the Church of England and Church in Wales to marry same-sex couples 'recognises and protects the unique and established nature of those Churches'.

**Pray:** that the Government will listen to the many organisations which are standing up for traditional marriage as recognised by the majority. (Heb.13:4)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20680924>

#### ■ Belfast flag protest riots 'a disgrace'

Rioters have been warned against 'holding Belfast to ransom' after a petrol bomb attack on a police officer by suspected loyalists which is being treated as attempted murder. A gang of 15 men targeted, surrounded and smashed the unmarked vehicle on Monday night outside the offices of Alliance Party MP Naomi Long in Newlands Road. It was the worst incident in nine nights of violence in parts of east and south Belfast involving loyalists who took to the streets again in protest against a decision to restrict the flying of the Union Flag at Belfast City Hall. In a statement to the House of Commons, Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers said that while the matter was a sensitive issue, the clashes would not be tolerated. 'There can be absolutely no excuse or justification for this kind of thuggish and lawless behaviour,' she said. 'It is a disgrace. We condemn it unreservedly and it should stop immediately.'

**Pray:** that God would stay the hand of the enemy and bring about a peaceful resolution to this situation. (2Th.2:9-10)

**More:** <http://news.sky.com/story/1023570/belfast-flag-protest-riots-a-disgrace>

#### ■ Ann Clwyd MP's campaign for compassion in nursing

An MP who said her late husband died 'like a battery hen' in hospital says she will start a campaign for greater compassion and care in nursing. Ann Clwyd, Labour MP for Cynon Valley, has criticised the 'indifference and contempt' of some nurses who treated her late husband at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. She said she had received an 'amazing response' since speaking out. Mrs Clwyd will now meet campaign groups to see how best to raise standards. 'There are some good nurses, but there are also some very bad nurses and people have talked about their own experiences. I've had hundreds and hundreds of emails from people from all over the country and the theme is the same'. Mrs Clwyd said she intended to meet patient bodies and campaigning groups to see how the issues raised could be addressed.

**Pray:** for a society that cares more - especially for the vulnerable such as the sick and the elderly. (Php.2:3-4)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-20657747>

#### ■ Census reveals fall in number of Christians

There has been a drop in the number of people in Britain identifying themselves as Christians, according to new data released from the 2011 Census. The statistics reveal that the number of Christians has fallen from 37 million to 33 million since 2001. Christians now make up 59% of the population, as opposed to 72% in 2001. The number of Muslims has risen from 1.5 million to 2.7 million - or 5% of the population - while the number of people describing themselves as having no religion rose by 10% to 25% of the population. Obviously the fall in those choosing to identify themselves as Christians is a challenge. Knowsley had the highest percentage of Christians, while Norwich registered the highest number of people with 'no religion'. Newham, Haringey, Brent, Boston and Lambeth all showed increases in the number of Christians. There has also been a fall in the number of people who are married, from 50.9% in 2001 to 46.6% - or 21.1 million - today.

**Pray:** for the Church to take up the challenge by raising God's standard across the nation in all areas where we have influence. (1Sam.2:9)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/census.reveals.fall.in.number.of.christians/31225.ht>

#### ■ British servicemen and women deployed over Christmas

According to available published official figures from the Defence Analytical Services Agency the UK has 173,020 regular trained and serving personnel in the Armed Forces. The total number of personnel serving on permanent postings abroad is approximately 23,570. At this Christmas season we are asked to remember the men and women away from their family and

homes. Their work doesn't finish on Christmas Eve and their routine will continue as normal, even on Christmas Day. Please pray for a peaceful and quiet time for those deployed - for opportunities to attend Church and to be able to reflect on Christ this Christmas and for good communications home to loved ones. Pray also for the Military Chaplains who provide spiritual leadership, moral guidance and pastoral support irrespective of religion or belief, in order to meet their needs, over the Christmas season.

**Pray:** for those service families celebrating Christmas alone and for children missing their deployed mum or dad. (Lk.2:14)

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

## EUROPE

### ■ Poland obstructed EU climate ambitions at Doha

Climate activists say Europe failed to deliver at the UN's Doha conference on climate change. 'This time Europe - usually seen as a leader on climate change - comes away with dirty hands,' Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace international, said in a statement on Saturday. Poland demanded to keep its 'hot air' carbon credits awarded to them in the 1990s in opposition to developing countries, which wanted the surplus emissions scrapped altogether. The credits were handed out under the initial 1997 Kyoto protocol and allow Poland to emit far greater carbon into the atmosphere than its EU counterparts. European decision makers at the summit, says Greenpeace, sided with Poland to keep the surplus emission credits. A recent study published in the journal Nature Climate Change says current global carbon emissions may increase the world's temperature between 4 to 6 degrees Celsius. The Doha summit brought together almost 200 nations to extend, by seven years, the Kyoto Protocol.

**Pray:** for the EU decision makers that they will not keep procrastinating over decisions that affect our world. (Ge1:26)

**More:** <http://euobserver.com/environment/118464>

### ■ Poland: Believing in God is same as killing and stealing

A Polish atheist billboard campaign compares believing in God to killing and stealing, in what observers call an open challenge to the Roman Catholic Church. 'In a country considered to be Catholic it's hard to be an atheist. Contrary to popular belief there are many of us although not all of us have let our beliefs be known. The billboard action is not aimed at believers. It is to show people that in a country where the stereotypical Pole is a Catholic there is a large group of atheists,' Jacek Tabisz, President of the Polish Association of Rationalists, explained to The Scotsman. Over 80% of the Polish country identify as Catholic. The controversial billboards have been put up in several Polish cities featuring three boxes labelled 'Do Not Kill,' 'Do Not Steal,' 'Do Not Believe,' with tick marks next to each one. Another billboard asks the question 'Don't believe in God,' following it by 'You are not alone.'

**Pray:** hat tthis billboard action will have the opposite effect to that intended by causing many non believers to discuss and seek out Christian values.

**More:** <http://www.christianpost.com/news/polish-atheist-billboards-compare-believing-in-god-to-killing-and-stealing-85977/>

## WORLDWIDE

### ■ NIGERIA: Violence against Christians

Boko Haram's violent jihad against Christians in Nigeria has pushed the country from 12th place a year ago into 7th place in the list of countries most impacted by terrorism. The latest Global Terrorism Index reported the top six countries as Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Yemen and Somalia. Produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the index is based on the number of terrorist incidents, the number of deaths, the number of casualties and the level of property damage. The newly-published rankings relate to 2011 during which 168 terror attacks were recorded in Nigeria, accounting for 437 deaths and 614 injuries. This year Nigeria has already witnessed more than 700 Nigerian Christian deaths in Boko Haram-related violence - according to the Christian Association of Nigerian-Americans - and the coming Christmas holiday could bring more if past years are a guide.

**Pray:** for God to enable peace keepers to prevent an escalation of violence over the Christmas season of peace and good will to all men. (2Sa.22:2-4)

**More:** <http://www.religiontoday.com/blog/violence-against-christians-nigeria-no-7-terror-affected.html>

### ■ Syria-1: Christians face starvation and attacks

Minority Christians in Syria's largest city Aleppo said they face starvation after dozens of believers died in targeted attacks rocking Christian areas of the war-torn country. 'Bread isn't found since last week, there is no wheat in the city and of course fuel is not available so bakeries are not working,' said Majd Ajji, whose father runs a Baptist church in Aleppo, where airstrikes and gun battles transformed buildings into heaps of rubble. Witnesses saw children fighting for food. Most of the city is now reportedly under rebel control but the situation remains tense. 'Fighting didn't stop in the city,' Lebanon-based Ajji wrote on behalf of his father Reverend Mouner Ajji who remains in besieged Aleppo. Aleppo is experiencing days without electricity - making it more difficult to heat homes as winter sets in or to communicate with the outside world. People face starvation, bitter cold and death from attacks.

**Pray:** for the Christians living in areas where Christianity is practically a crime. May God strengthen those daily suffering persecution and hardships. (Job 5:16)

**More:** <http://www.worthynews.com/12023-syrian-christians-face-starvation-deadly-attacks>

### ■ Syria-2: Rebels move towards legitimacy with aid plan

The leaders of Syria's western-backed opposition unveiled plans to rapidly move hundreds of millions of dollars worth of much needed humanitarian aid into the most deprived areas of the country. The announcement made at the Friends of Syria summit in Marrakech was hailed as a watershed moment for the movement, and is intended to cement claims by the

Syrian National Coalition (SNC) to be an alternative to the government of president Bashar al-Assad. The US has signalled it will recognise the SNC as a 'legitimate' representative of the Syrian people because it is organising itself into a more inclusive and relevant body. Britain, France, Turkey and some Gulf states announced their endorsements last month. Western legitimacy is seen by opposition leaders as an essential step to attract support among Syrians. The opposition movement plans to move aid into Syria through local activists and newly formed civil administrations seeking help from main rebel groups in securing safe corridors.

**Pray:** for much needed aid to reach the increasingly desperate communities of up to 2 million displaced people. (Ps.9:7-10)

**More:** <http://hereisthecity.com/2012/12/12/syrian-rebels-to-take-step-towards-legitimacy-with-aid-plan/>

#### ■ Lebanon: Deadly clashes

Sectarian tensions in Tripoli have been aggravated by the conflict in Syria. Clashes in the north between the Sunni neighbourhood of Bab al-Tebbanah and the Alawite neighbourhood of Jabal Mohsen lasted several days last week leaving 17 dead and over 100 wounded in Tripoli. The fighting ended on Monday as the Army implemented a security plan. See:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Dec-11/198090-tripoli-clashes-fueled-by-sectarianism-hezbollah.ashx#ixzz2Eq0o5MEb>

On Sunday six people were killed and 40 injured in Tripoli in clashes between opponents and supporters of Syria's president. A group of Lebanese and Palestinian nationals appears to have joined the armed rebellion against President Bashar al-Assad. In October Lebanon's Bishop Maroun Nassar Gemayel said - the situation in Syria's capital Damascus was dramatic and many including those in Beirut believe they can no longer live in safety even in the Christian quarters. See: <http://www.persecution.org/2012/10/27/lebanon-bishop-expects-new-wave-of-christian-refugees-from-war-torn-syria/>

**Pray:** against the overspill of sectarian violence in Lebanon. (Ps.4:8)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20663630>

#### ■ Tunisia: Frustrations two years on

Two years ago a fruit and vegetable seller set himself alight - sparking a revolution in his country and 'the Arab Spring'. Today people are just as desperate. But no-one is taking much notice. Mr Garmzi has tried to kill himself many times to escape his life of poverty and pain. He's on hunger strike outside the governor's office in Siliana. The patch of grass around him is strewn with medical certificates, and a folder of grisly photographs from when he set himself on fire years ago. Mr Garmzi opens his cloak to show scars which cover his body. 'Nothing has changed here,' he says angrily. 'Not even after Bouazizi set himself on fire.' Last week on the streets of Siliana 300 people were injured when police used tear gas and shotgun fire to disperse peaceful protests. The people of Siliana are not violent but the protest turned violent very quickly.

**Pray:** for the Tunisian government to remove the growing poverty and sense of injustice that fuelled the last revolution. (Ex.23:6 & Lev.19:15)

**More:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-20663981>

#### ■ Egypt: Back to the Dark Ages?

Thousands battled outside the presidential palace in Cairo last Thursday demanding President Mohammed Morsi's be removed from office for seizing too much power. Morsi's supporters fought back resulting in six deaths and 700 injured. Michael Youssef, an Egyptian senior pastor of The Church of the Apostles in Atlanta said, 'When thousands demonstrated against President Mubarak in 2011 major western media outlets reported day and night. Now that an Islamist government - which was falsely installed by the military council - is in power and even more young educated democracy seekers are wounded and killed than in the Revolution of 2011; and Morsi declared his dictatorship, western media are saying nothing except for comments to support him and his push for total control.' Michael Youssef also talked about what Christian leaders in Egypt have been telling him - their concerns and the issues they have with the Islamist-dominated draft Constitution. Click here to read all his comments: <http://www.michaelyoussef.com/>

**Pray:** for the voice of the churches in Egypt to be heard in this time of transition; pray also for a real democracy in Egypt. (Ps.11)

**More:** <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2012/December/Egyptian-Pastor-Egypt-Going-Back-to-the-Dark-Ages/>

#### ■ Indonesia: Corruption and persecution

Many churches in the Jakarta capital area of Indonesia have been facing ever-growing pressure from radical Muslim groups to move out of the city. GKI Yasmin and HKBP Philadelphia - two of the most prominent churches - have faced rioting mobs of angry Muslims preventing them from entering their church buildings for service. Indonesian Supreme Court ruled to allow both churches to return to their buildings but radical groups and local authorities refuse to let them back in. Meanwhile the new mayor of Tasikmalaya has vowed to implement Sharia law on all people living in his jurisdiction to repay Muslim leaders who backed his successful election campaign. In a recent survey 8 in 10 Indonesians say corruption is widespread throughout the nation's government and businesses.

**Pray:** for God's powerful light to drive out the darkness in Indonesia's government and businesses. (2Ch.19:7 & Ps.18:28)

**More:** <http://www.persecution.org/category/countries/asia/indonesia/>

## PRAYER FORUM OF THE BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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