

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

March 9, 2018

From International Christian Concern
<http://info.persecution.org/newsbites-march-9>

Christian Church in Pakistan Attacked by Mob

3/5/18 Pakistan (UCAN)

On March 3, more than two dozen men entered the Pakistan Gospel Assembly Church in Punjab province and began beating people with sticks. Women and children were among those who have been injured. This led to a fierce confrontation between local Christians and Muslims and the roughly 200 families within the village are restricted to their homes, terrified of more assaults. Police have booked five Christians, while no action has been taken against those who instigated the aggression.

- Pray for protection over the village and the peace of God to reign where there has been tension and fear.
- Pray for justice for those responsible and for those who were attacked to forgive their persecutors.
- Pray for the persecutors to know the truth of the God who watches over His children and Church.

Religious Identity Used to Justify Violence in Egypt

3/5/18 Egypt (Watani)

Coptic Christians have been the victims of tyrannical extremist prejudice which has resulted in assaults ranging from contentious debates over possessions and financial achievements to blocked efforts for building churches. During the first moments of 2011, an abhorrent incident left 26 dead and 80 injured at a church in Alexandria. The stage was set for fundamentalists to announce that they needed no pretense to condone bloodshed simply because of a church's Christian identification.

- Pray for healing and forgiveness for those who have suffered loss during attacks.
- Pray for protection, security, and wisdom for those who come together in fellowship.
- Pray for those involved in the attacks to know the truth that God is with all who believe in Him.

Believers Continue to be Arrested on Con- trived Charges

3/3/18 Iran (WWM)

At the 39th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution, President Hassan Rouhani called for solidarity, stating, "We must allow all to participate in our elections...All Iranian religions, Shiites and Sunnis, Muslims, Christians, Jews." These remarks came after weeks of demonstrations and discord, revealing the social frustration present under the 39-year-old regime. According to advocacy groups, "disrupting national security" is a charge with enough weight to send Christians to the infamous Evin Prison.

- Pray for discernment for Iranian converts who face prison for "missionary activities."
- Pray for guards and authorities to see that God is present with all who call upon Him.
- Pray for physical and emotional healing for those who have experienced harassment and imprisonment.

Churches in China's Henan Province Tar- geted

3/3/18 China (China Aid)

A new action through China's current religious policy bureau forbids any religious meetings outside of registered locations. All Christians have been directed to assemble with churches affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, known to teach loyalty to the government. The fine for hosting or attending unregistered meetings is equivalent to \$4,700.00, but many still to choose to meet in secrecy in order to worship God freely.

- Pray for believers, especially those in positions of authority, to have wisdom and discernment as they practice their faith.
- Pray for the truth to be written on the hearts and minds of believers in China over all other teachings.
- Pray for the authorities to know that God is with the believers that they have arrested and targeted.

Churches Closed by Authorities in Algeria

3/2/18 Algeria (*The Express*)

Since December, 25 churches affiliated with the Protestant Church of Algeria have been visited by a commission of government representatives, stating that they were checking compliance with safety regulations. On February 21, two churches in Tizi Ouzou were asked "to cease all religious activities." Two additional churches, L'Oratoire in Oran and a village church in Layayda, were also sealed by officials.

- Pray for unjust closures to be overturned and for all affected churches to regain their status.
- Pray for the Algerian government to ensure religious freedom for Christians.
- Pray for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to be given proper oversight and accountability.

Two Men Arrested for Targeting Christian Converts

3/2/18 Bangladesh (*WWM*)

Despite a crackdown on extremist group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the group has increased its efforts, with a more selective process of choosing Christians, other minorities, and foreigners as targets. As a result, two men were arrested for planning attacks on Muslim-background converts to Christianity. One of the arrested noted that he had already chosen a man that he was targeting to murder.

- Pray for the salvation of the men arrested: Nuruzzaman Labu and Nazmul Islam Shaon.
- Pray for discord amongst the JMB members as they attempt to spread extremist ideas.
- Pray for protection of Christians in Bangladesh as they share the Good News.

From Voice of the Martyrs

<http://www.icommittoprayer.com>

Pray for Four Believers Arrested for Leading Others to Jesus

Mar. 08, 2018 | Laos

Four Christians were arrested recently after 16 villagers came to know Christ

as a result of their teaching. The Christians were from a community that VOM helped two years ago when they were evicted from their village for refusing to give up their faith. They are charged with spreading a foreign religion that goes against the country's traditional beliefs. Pray that the four believers will remain firm in their faith. Pray that their families and the rest of their community will continue to follow Christ and share his love among the lost in their district.

Pray for Churches Prohibited from Meeting in Hotels

Mar. 08, 2018 | United Arab Emirates

Churches in the UAE were informed by the government of Dubai that they must stop meeting in hotels or any other venue outside official church compounds. "As a licensed Evangelical Church, we may only meet at Dubai Evangelical Church Compound," one church informed its members. "Although the population of Dubai has grown over the last 20 years, the capacity of the official church compounds... have not increased at all." One church, which had been meeting in two hotels to accommodate its growing congregation, fasted, prayed and read through the Book of Esther from March 1–3 seeking God's guidance in the matter. Pray that believers will trust that God is in control and continue to seek and follow His direction. Pray that God will use the new regulation for His glory and that the larger or more frequent church services will draw more Muslims into a relationship with Jesus.

Pray for Churches Closed by Authorities

Mar. 08, 2018 | Algeria

On Tuesday, Feb. 27, police closed two churches in Oran after informing them that they did not have state approval to operate. Since December, government officials have visited 25 of 45 churches affiliated with Algeria's main protestant church. And on Nov. 9, 2017, a church that had trained and disciplined more than 7,000 former Muslims since 1997 was forced to close its doors. Authorities claimed it had been illegally printing

the Gospels and other publications for evangelism. Pray that these churches will find new places to meet and that believers throughout Algeria will support and strengthen one another. Pray that their faith will be a bright light in their predominantly Muslim nation.

*From Open Doors Prayer Calendars:
<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/take-action/pray/monthly-prayer-calendar/>*

March 9 | SYRIA

Pray that efforts to build bridges and work on peace and reconciliation will be fruitful, as refugees contemplate returning home. Pray for the leadership, in both the political and religious realms, to help guide their nation.

March 10 | MALAYSIA

Four participants in our Standing Strong Through the Storm seminar were killed in a car accident. We pray for their love of the gospel to continue to impact those they leave behind, and that God would comfort their grieving loved ones.

March 11 | BANGLADESH

Through the intensive Light and Salt discipleship training for youth, Open Doors hopes to strengthen and enable house churches to thrive. Please continue to pray for these efforts.

March 12 | AZERBAIJAN

Pray for our brother Shamil.* He came to faith two years ago when Open Doors partners came to his village. He has now become an outcast. Pray for God to provide another mature believer to help disciple him and help him.

March 13 | BHUTAN

Sherpa* is a Christian boy being bullied at school for his faith. His classmates make jokes about him. Please pray for God to strengthen him and provide a mentor.

March 14 | EAST AFRICAN ISLANDS

Discipleship of new believers is a challenge. Please pray for the Spirit to be at work, and that leaders will teach the truth in humility and courage.

March 15 | VIETNAM

Please pray for Lee,* a believer whose house church in northern Vietnam was visited by police. Church members were accused of illegal assembly. Pray for the Lord to give these believers discernment and wisdom.

GROUP SEEKS NEW U.S. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM POST FOR NIGERIA

by Diana Chandler, posted Thursday, March 08, 2018 (15 hours ago)

<http://bpnews.net/50505/group-seeks-new-us-religious-freedom-post-for-nigeria>

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (BP) -- A religious and secular coalition will urge Congress to create a U.S. coordinator for religious freedom in Nigeria as terrorism against Christians and other religious minorities intensifies in the African nation.

Muslim Fulani herdsmen are helping drive a resurgence of terrorism in Nigeria that is largely directed at Christians.

Termed the special coordinator for religious minorities and terrorism, the post would serve as a direct link between U.S. and Nigerian governments to address religious persecution, terrorism and the resulting economic crisis in Nigeria, a coalition representative told Baptist Press today (March 8).

The Global Coalition Working to Defeat Persecution and Violence in Nigeria, including representatives of the Baptist World Alliance (BWI), the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative (21Wilberforce) and the newly formed International Committee on Nigeria (ICON), decided to petition Congress for the new post after hosting a meeting with Nigerian governors and others Feb. 27-28 at BWI headquarters in Falls Church, Va.

The U.S. State Department currently operates an Office of International Religious Freedom, headed since Feb. 1 by U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam

Brownback, as well as an embassy and consulate in Nigeria.

"But there's been no sort of special coordinator, no individual that's taken up the cause or mantle of addressing specifically the Boko Haram and the Fulani pastoralist militia," ICON Director Kyle Abts told BP today.

Joining the coalition at the February meeting were Adeniyi Ojutiku, a North Carolina Southern Baptist working to help his Nigerian homeland through the Lift Up Now grassroots group. Also in attendance were several governors from Nigeria's Middle Belt, the Church of the Brethren, International Christian Concern, Doctors Without Borders and other groups.

Boko Haram terrorists and a militant group of Fulani herdsmen have reportedly strengthened in Nigeria's Middle Belt in recent months, more than two years after Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari declared a technical defeat of Boko Haram.

Texas native Elijah Brown, BWI general secretary since Jan. 1, said Nigeria is at a critical human rights juncture that could affect the entire continent of Africa with global consequences. The longstanding dispute between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers can no longer be viewed simplistically, Brown told BP.

"I believe that the violence sweeping through Nigeria is no longer best understood through an analysis of farmer-herder conflict," he said, recapping an address he made at the coalition meeting. "With thousands of individuals killed, entire communities burned to the ground, famine-inducing conditions inflicted upon entire populations, and the use of helicopters, machine guns mounted to vehicles and sophisticated weapons, this conflict has morphed into one of militant attack.

"Predominantly Christian communities currently account for over 85 percent of the victims," Brown said. "With ongoing discrimination against religious minority communities across northern Nigeria, Boko Haram to the northeast, and Fulani

militancy in the Middle Belt, Nigeria is the only country in the world to be currently facing two of the top five most lethal terrorist organizations, and Christians, including some Baptists, are caught in the crossfire."

Within the next month, the coalition will seek a Congressional hearing and request the new post, Abts said. ICON promotes itself as a diverse "group of committed Nigerians and other nationalities joining forces, resources, and voices" to strengthen oppressed and minority groups in Nigeria.

In most recent waves of violence, Fulani herdsmen have been blamed for killing at least 170 Christians in attacks on villages and towns in Nigeria's Middle Belt in January, according to reports. Nigeria's military has launched a six-week offensive to combat the violence that has increased in conjunction with several new local anti-grazing laws meant to protect the farmers.

In February, Boko Haram terrorists kidnapped as many as 101 Nigerian schoolgirls who remain missing, mirroring the terrorists' kidnapping of more than 300 schoolgirls in 2014 from a school in the Christian town of Chibok.

Buhari claimed in December 2015 he had technically defeated Boko Haram, weakening the group so much that it would only be able to carry out isolated suicide bombings.

Boko Haram, which began attacking first Christians and then others in its attempts to establish Sharia law in Nigeria, has killed an estimated 20,000 people and displaced 2 million in Nigeria and neighboring nations since 2009. The terrorists have claimed allegiance to the Islamic State and have been accused of killing Christian farmers increasingly in raids since 2017 in cooperation with or under the guise of Fulani herdsmen.