

Pray for these believers in prison around the world:

1. Pakistani Christian Imran Ghafur is serving a life sentence because a neighbor claimed to see him burning pages of the Quran.
2. Alimujiang Yimiti is serving a 15-year sentence on a conviction of evangelizing China's Uyghur Muslim population.
3. Iranian authorities arrested Christian convert Ebrahim Firouzi in 2011 for 'acting against national security.'
4. Eritrean church leader Kiflu Gebremeskel was abducted from his home in 2004 and his family hasn't seen him since.
5. Lacheng Ren is imprisoned for sponsoring a new Christian book store in Taiyun, China.
6. Pastor Kidane Weldou disappeared in 2005, presumably detained by Eritrean security forces.
7. Pastor Yang Hua was arrested in China after his church grew too large.
8. Kazakh citizen Yklas Kabduakasov, a Christian convert from Islam, was accused of proselytizing.

Pray from Psalm 10

Why dost Thou stand afar off, O Lord?
Why dost Thou hide Thyself in times of trouble?
In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted;
Let them be caught in the plots which they devised...
Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thy hand.
Do not forget the afflicted.
Why has the wicked spurned God?
He has said to himself, "Thou wilt not require it."
Thou hast seen it, for Thou hast beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Thy hand.
The unfortunate commits himself to Thee;
Thou hast been the helper of the orphan.
Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,
Seek out his wickedness until Thou dost find none.
The Lord is King forever and ever,
Nations have perished from His land.
O Lord, Thou has heard the desire of the humble;
Thou wilt strengthen their heart,
Thou wilt incline Thine ear
To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,
That the man who is of the earth may cause terror no more.

SOURCES:

CHURCH IN CHAINS; CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE; CHRISTIAN TODAY; OPEN DOORS; PRISONER ALERT;
RELEASE INTERNATIONAL; VOICE OF THE MARTYRS; WORLD MAGAZINE; AFA JOURNAL; WORLD WATCH MONITOR

STANDING IN THE GAP

for the Persecuted Church

MARCH, 2017

1. **COLOMBIA** – praise God for the work of **Russell Stendal** who has been in Colombia for over half a century after arriving with his parents who were also missionaries. Mr. Stendal recently received an award, the *Shahbaz Bhutti Freedom Award*, named after Pakistan's first Christian cabinet member who was murdered almost 5 years ago for his criticism of Pakistan's blasphemy laws and his defense of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman still on death row for 'blasphemy.' Mr Stendal launched his Bogota-based ministry, Colombia for Christ, after being kidnapped by FARC. His audacious vision: that all of the FARC leaders can learn about Christianity and that, if embraced, it will change the guerillas' hearts and minds. He received the award for his "extraordinary peace work for 32 years", that has led to a change of heart in many FARC leaders, and also in Colombian army leaders that contributed to the peace agreement last August.
2. **INDIA** – pray for **K.A. Swamey**, 47, an Indian Christian who has suffered a brain hemorrhage after he was interrogated by police about his role in distributing Bibles and other Christian literature in the city where he works as a professor of engineering. Swamey volunteers for Gideon International and has been threatened several times by Hindu extremists. He has also been taken to the police station many times before. He is now in a coma.
3. **EGYPT** – continue praying for Coptic Christians as the 5th death over a 13 day period occurred January 16 with the murder of **Ishak Younan**, 37. He leaves behind a wife and 2 children , ages 10 and 12.
4. **BHUTAN**- pray for 3 church leaders who were arrested on their way to church. They are being held in separate cells and denied visitors.
5. **SUDAN** – pray for Czech aid worker, **Peter Jaasek**, who has been sentenced to 20 years in prison in Sudan after being found guilty of 'spying.'
6. **ETHIOPIA** – praise God for the release of 4 Ethiopian teenagers given a one-month jail sentence for distributing Christian literature. The girls, **Gifti, 14, Mihiret, 14, Eden, 14, and Deborah, 18**, are all reported to be in 'good health' following their release from the large prison in Gelemiso where they served their time alongside criminals.
7. **NIGERIA** – pray for Christian communities in southern Kaduna state as attacks perpetrated by Muslim herdsman from the Hausa and Fulani tribal groups continue.
8. **IRAQ** – pray for **Archbishop Bashar Warda** of Erbil who is overseeing the care of thousands of displaced Christians who fled Islamic State jihadists. He has announced ambitious plans for the Church and charities to reconstruct their towns and villages. "The desecration and destruction in the newly liberated villages was so personal in its hatred and anger that it dealt further deep and destabilizing blows to IDP's when witnessing their destroyed homes, livelihoods, and communities," the Archbishop said. The Catholic Bishops' Emergency Committee there spends on average \$1.2 million per month supporting displaced Iraqi families. Some charities say little or no aid from international donors, such as UKAID or USAID, reaches IDP's .
9. **SUDAN** – pray for **Rev Rawor and Mr Abdumawla** who have been sentenced to prison along with Czech aid Peter Jasek (see March 5 entry). The 2 Sudanese Christians were sentenced to 12 years each for 'assisting Jasek in alleged espionage' and 'for inciting strife between communities.' Lawyers for the 3 Christians plan to lodge appeals.

10. **PAKISTAN** – pray for **Adnan Prince**, 29, a Christian accused of blasphemy and facing the death penalty. He has recently been granted bail by the Supreme Court of Lahore after spending more than 3 years in jail. Similar cases have been known to take as long as 7 years to reach trial.
11. **PAKISTAN** – continue praying for **Asia Bibi** who was sentenced to death for insulting Islam in 2009 and still remains in jail, awaiting a delayed final appeal hearing by the Supreme Court. She has been denied bail, and if the appeal is denied, she could be the first Pakistani Christian woman to face the death penalty, as 150 Islamic leaders call for her to hang.
12. **EGYPT** – pray for **Fadi**, a 15 year old Coptic Christian boy who has been sentenced to 15 years in an Egyptian prison for sexual assault, even though forensic reports showed no evidence of a crime. His mother says her son is innocent and targeted only because her Muslim neighbors, whose 8 year old son was the alleged victim, 'don't like Christians.' The Muslim's boy's grandfather is Iman at the local mosque.
13. **MALI** – pray for **Gloria Agoti**, a Colombian nun kidnapped by armed men in January in southern Mali. She is part of the congregation of Franciscan Sisters in the convent of Karangasso, a relatively safe part of the country which has been mainly unaffected by Islamist attacks until now.
14. **PAKISTAN** – pray for members of the **Alba Presbyterian Church** in Sankhatra, Narowal District. More than 200 labourers armed with sticks tried to destroy the church building and take the land to set up a market. This is part of the on-going attacks on Pakistan's Christian minority that has been linked to land disputes.
15. **INDONESIA** - pray for **Taman Yasmin Indonesia Christian Church** that will hold its 100th open-air Sunday worship because the local mayor has padlocked their church building.
16. **INDIA** – pray for **Pastor Grandham Padma Rao**, 49, who is in intensive care after being beaten by a gang of ten Hindu extremists.
17. **VIETNAM** – pray for **Pastor Nguyen** and students arrested as they gathered for a Bible class in Hanoi. "All students had to stay in the police station to write about what we were doing. The foreign missionary leading our class was charged \$1000 US dollars and expelled from the country," reported Pastor Nguyen. Christians in Vietnam have been experiencing an increase in persecution since the communist government adopted the new 'Law on Belief and Religion' in Nov 2016, which further limits freedom of religion considerably.
18. **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC** – pray for the **ECC Church** in Bangui, the capital of CAR. The pastor of the church, Pastor Jean-Paul Sankagui, was killed at his home by supporters of a local militia leader.
19. **PAKISTAN** – pray for **Nabeel Masih**, 16, a Pakistani Christian boy accused of blasphemy and has been refused bail.
20. **ERITREA** – pray for **Pastor Haile Nayzgi**, the leader of the Full Gospel Church in Eritrea who was arrested in May 2004, one year after Eritrea's government shut down all evangelical churches in the country. Pastor Haile has been in prison since his arrest even though he has never had a trial, never been offered legal representation or even been charged with a crime. He simply disappeared into Eritrea's prison system.
21. **IRAN** – continue praying for Iranian converts to Christianity, **Amin Naderi** and **Hadi Asgari**, who have been imprisoned since August 2016 and are reportedly seriously ill. They are the two remaining detainees from an initial group of 5 Christians arrested while picnicking in the Alborz Mountains north-east of Tehran last summer. The other 3 were released late last year after posting bail.
22. **IRAQ** – pray for Iraqi Christian couple, **Almas** and **Hathem** as they hope to be some of the first people to return to Karamles, a now-deserted town in the Nineveh Plains of northern Iraq. They fled their home in August 2014. However, the Christian couple has been told that their hopes of returning are unrealistic because of the need for security, continued military presence, lack of infrastructure (no water or electricity) and destruction of homes, most beyond repair. See next entry:
23. **IRAQ** – pray for the **Center for Support and Encouragement**, created by Father Thabet, a visiting priest from Bartella. When opened it will be a place where people can stay while they restore their homes. He plans to buy a generator to give people power for their tools and machinery, and will supply visitors with free bottled water. Hathem and Almas (see previous entry) are members of his church.
24. **INDIA** – pray for Christians in India as they have witnessed a deterioration of their rights because of the rise of power of Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist BJP party and the passage of 'anti-conversion laws.' Incidents of anti-Christian violence have reached an 'alarming level', with more than 30 incidents a month being reported.
25. **TURKEY**- continue praying for American pastor **Rev Andrew Brunson**, who has been imprisoned since October 2016. On February 16, a letter signed by 78 members of the US Congress was sent to President Erdogan of Turkey seeking his release.
26. **TURKEY** – pray also for Canadian-American **David Byle**, who with his wife, **Ulrike**, and their 5 children have lived and ministered in Turkey for the past 17 years. He is facing greater scrutiny because of President Erdogan's crack-down on supposed 'terrorist organizations' and 'threats to national security.'
27. **EGYPT** – continue praying for Egypt's Christian Coptic Community. The Islamic State has recently released a propaganda video, vowing to wipe out Egypt's Coptic Christians and 'liberate Cairo.' Pray especially for the **Moemen family**, as their 10 year old daughter, Maggie, recently died from injuries she sustained in the December attack on a church in Cairo, bringing the death toll to 28.
28. **SWEDEN** – pray for **Elinor Grimmark**, a pro-life midwife who refuses to perform abortions because of her Christian beliefs. Consequently she has been refused three different jobs by local clinics. With the help of US legal group Alliance Defending Freedom she has filed an appeal to her discrimination case. Her lawyers argue that under the European Union's definition of human rights she should have freedom of conscience in her vocation.
29. **RUSSIA** – pray for believers in Russia who can now be fined for speaking about their faith with non-believers, even in their own homes.
30. **NORTH KOREA** – pray for the estimated 40,000-70,000 Christians in political prison camps.
31. **KAZAKHSTAN** – pray for **Pastor Kashumbaev**, a 1995 convert from Islam to Christianity, who spent a year in prison as a 'threat to the state.' He still remains under house arrest and must check in with police every two months. He continues to minister to his congregation.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus

