

## Prayer Update August 2011

I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O LORD, I will sing praises. [Psalm 101:1](#)

**IRAQ—Car Bomb Explodes Near Church**—*Assyrian Universal Alliance, Compass Direct News*

[Matthew 5:44](#)

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

A car bomb exploded outside a church in Kirkuk, Iraq, on Aug. 2, 2011, injuring more than 30 people in the latest of a series of attacks on Assyrian churches. Local authorities disarmed explosive devices near two other churches the same day. The blast, which covered the church building with glass, rubble and dust, caused serious damage to nearby houses and cars. “This has become ordinary for us, and we expect that any minute something will happen here,” a local pastor said. “Sometimes we feel there is some pressure over the Christians all over Iraq to make them leave their cities and go to the northern part of Iraq, to Kurdistan.” About half of Iraq’s Christian population has left the country since the beginning of the war.

**SUDAN—Christian Girl Escapes After a Year in Captivity**—*Compass Direct News*

[Matthew 5:11](#)

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Sixteen-year-old Hiba Abdelfadil Anglo recently escaped from a gang of Muslims who kidnapped her more than a year ago. The kidnapers locked Hiba in a room, beat her, raped her and tried to force her to convert to Islam. “[On several occasions], the man who put me in his house tortured me and threatened to kill me,” she said. “Several times I was warned that if I did not convert to Islam, then I risked losing my life.” After a year in captivity, Hiba was left unguarded. She then escaped from her captors and begged a motorist to take her home. Hiba’s mother said Hiba was targeted because she is Christian. Hiba is recovering from a recent blow to her face, and it will be a long time before she recovers emotionally. “I cannot forget this bad incident,” she said. “And whenever I try to pray, I find it difficult to forget. I ask believers to pray for me for inner healing.”

**CUBA—Persecuted Family Resettles in United States**—*Compass Direct News*

[Isaiah 4:6](#)

And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.

Rev. Carlos Lamelas, once jailed in Cuba for his faith, recently arrived in the United States as a political refugee along with his wife and daughters. During his imprisonment, hundreds of Christians wrote him letters of encouragement, many through [www.prisoneralert.com](http://www.prisoneralert.com). Carlos was released from jail four months after his arrest on June 26, 2006. Unable to find employment and fearing another arrest, Carlos applied unsuccessfully for political asylum in 2010. In 2011, however, his case was reviewed and he and his family were granted status as political refugees. “For our part, we have been open to the will of God, and we know he will take us where we can best serve him,” he wrote. “Our moral commitment with the Lord’s work is permanent and without borders. We know that many brothers and sisters have collaborated for our benefit; we’re sorry not to know specifically who they

are. Nevertheless, we want them to know that our love and gratitude is sealed in our hearts for the rest of our lives.”

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. [James 4:17](#)

**PAKISTAN—Widow Struggles with Grief—***VOM Sources*

[James 1:27](#)

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Sana had been married only a month when she became a widow. On March 21, 2011, a group of young Muslim men attacked a Salvation Army Church in Hyderabad and shot to death her husband, 25-year-old Jamil, and another man. Jamil had been supporting Sana, his parents and two siblings by working as a sweeper. When our VOM team in Pakistan visited Sana and her family recently to see how Sana was doing, they found that she was very emotionally unstable. “One minute she is laughing and the next she is crying,” the team leader reported. “Her behavior is very erratic.” Our VOM team will help arrange counseling for Sana and will continue to pray for her. Please pray for Sana and her family, as well as for Sosan, wife of the other man killed. Sosan has six children.

**SRI LANKA—Anti-Christian Violence Increases—***VOM Canada, National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka*

[Ephesians 6:18–20](#)

praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Several Christians have been assaulted and threatened in Sri Lanka in recent weeks. On July 10, a pastor was assaulted at a meeting in Ampara District, Eastern Province. During the meeting, which was held for the purpose of discussing land distribution, the pastor was assaulted by a Buddhist monk who had convened the meeting. The monk kicked the pastor, causing serious injuries to his arm and stomach. Assailants later followed the pastor to his home and continued to verbally abuse him and his family. Just over a week later, on July 19, a mob of about 50 people attacked the homes of five Christian families in Badulla District, Uva Province. The mob damaged the homes’ roofs by throwing stones, and they busted windows with stones and clubs. The attackers also destroyed a grocery shop belonging to one of the families and stole merchandise. The shop owner was seriously injured in the attack, and some families fled to the jungle until the attack had ended. The mob reportedly planned to force these families to renounce Christianity or leave the village. Pray that these Christians will trust the Lord in all things and will lovingly and boldly proclaim the gospel amid persecution.

**ERITREA—Mass Arrests Continue—***Release International, Release Eritrea*

[Psalm 102:19–20](#)

For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary;  
From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,  
To hear the groaning of the prisoner,  
To release those appointed to death

Eritrean officials have arrested 90 Christians since May, many of them college students. In June, 26

students from the Mai-Mefhi College of Technology were arrested and detained at an unknown location. And in May, authorities detained 64 believers in Adi Abeyto, a village near the capital, Asmara. Only six of the 90 arrested have been released, and the rest are thought to be at a police station or in the notorious Mitire military prison. It is not clear why the Christians were detained, but Release sources said college students have been arrested previously for refusing to take part in Independence Day celebrations. Independence Day was May 24. In 2002, the Eritrean government banned all Christian groups that do not belong to a state-approved church. Since then, thousands of Christians have been imprisoned, and 16 have died in custody. Pray that Christians in Eritrea will remain strong and that those in prison will hold fast to their faith. Pray for their release.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. [1 Timothy 1:12–13](#)

**SOUTH SUDAN—Christians Remain at Risk—***VOM Canada, Middle East Concern*

[2 Timothy 1:7–12](#)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

South Sudan officially gained independence from Sudan on July 9, becoming a new nation. The secession follows a long history of violent conflict, including two civil wars between the largely Islamic north and the Christian and animist majority in the south. Christians, in particular, have endured severe oppression. Although many have expressed hope for a more peaceful future, it is clear that Christians on both sides of the new border remain at risk. Violence erupted in several areas in the months leading to South Sudan's independence. Government agents and Islamic militants looted churches and killed Christians in parts of South Kordofan state. Many are concerned that churches in Sudan may face further restrictions on freedom of worship if the government implements a strict form of Islamic law. As Christians continue to flee to South Sudan, it is also feared that believers who remain in the north may be especially vulnerable to violence, pressure and accusations of defaming Islam. Pray that Christians in both Sudan and South Sudan will continue to entrust themselves to Christ, knowing that he is sovereign over kings of the earth.

**NIGERIA—Maiduguri Christians Face Extremist Threat—***Release International, Compass Direct News*

[2 Corinthians 5:18](#)

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Christians are fleeing the northern city of Maiduguri amid threats of further large-scale attacks by Islamic extremists. Most churches in Maiduguri have been boarded up and are under police or military guard as rumors spread that Boko Haram militants are planning a “massive attack” for the end of July. The widely anticipated assault would mark the two-year anniversary of the death of the group’s founder, Mohammed Yusuf, who died in police custody. Church attendance in Maiduguri has reportedly fallen dramatically following a series of bomb attacks on churches there. Leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria have advised churches to suspend or reschedule services, and several have changed service times to try to outwit potential attackers. Church leaders fear that this extremist threat could deepen the divide between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. “This Boko Haram has to be dealt with before they plunge the entire nation into a very serious crisis,” a church leader in Maiduguri told Compass Direct. Pray for the safety of Christians in Maiduguri, and pray that Muslim extremists will see that they can be reconciled to God only through Jesus Christ.