

## November 2012

*Each November, the church around the world joins together to remember and pray for persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, who suffer for their faith. Christian Advocacy Now observes the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) with our 24-Hour Prayer Vigil — praying through the 50 most restricted nations, filling every minute of the 24 hours of IDOP. Beyond this, though, at our regular monthly meetings, we will continue to focus on praying for countries where those who are free in Christ are not free to worship Him.*

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### Afghanistan

Leader: President Hamid Karzai

Afghanistan is plagued by criminality, insecurity, and the elected government's inability to control all parts of the country. One of its most serious challenges is the growing illegal opium trade. The major religion is Islam (about 98 percent of the people). Anyone who acknowledges faith in Christ experiences intense persecution, including death. No churches are allowed to exist, not even for expatriates. Persecution normally comes from family members and neighbors, while police and government officials turn a blind eye. Recent accounts include a young man who became a Christian and was banned from his family's house. In another, radicals beat a man severely when they found he was sharing Christ with others. Both of these two men remain firm in their faith. An evangelist who was formerly Muslim was attacked by al Qaeda assassins, but they were unable to kill him. The attackers were later arrested by police. This same brother is still receiving death threats, but he boldly continues to evangelize. Another believer led several friends to Christ, and two of them were killed for their conversion shortly afterward.

- Pray for strength for secret believers under pressure to renounce their faith.
  - Pray for Christian radio and TV programs to encourage isolated believers and help seekers to find the way to Jesus.
  - Pray for wisdom for young Christians, both physically and spiritually, who are eager to share the gospel with others despite the risks.
  - Pray that the Taliban's threats toward Christian aid organizations will not be successful; instead pray many, including the Taliban will find the lives and actions of those working for these organizations a compelling witness for Jesus.
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### Algeria

Leader: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Algeria has suffered from both internal and external war for nearly half a century. Ethnic-minority Berbers have long agitated for autonomy. Even so activity by extremist militants continues. The major religion is Islam (97 percent of the people). Freedom for the evangelical church in Algeria is very limited. A restrictive religion law introduced in 2006 prohibits efforts to convert Muslims and gives the government the right to regulate aspects of Christian practice. Active application of the law seemed to decrease in 2009, but since then the church faced several setbacks. In January 2010, a church in Tizi Ouzou was attacked by Islamists and church material was burned. In September 2010, four Christians were put on trial for "creating an illegal place of worship." Protests against the regime in January 2011 left five dead and over 800 injured, but the government remains in control.

- Pray that the church will continue to grow, despite ongoing opposition.

- Thank God for many new believers. Pray that they will become a firm foundation for the future.
- Pray that the restrictive law of 2006 will be abolished.

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## Azerbaijan

Leader: President Ilham Aliyev

Azerbaijan is a former republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and gained its independence in 1991. After independence, the country faced internal coups and war with Armenia. The majority of the population lives in poverty, and most of Azerbaijan's towns and villages have never heard the gospel. Over 86 percent of the country is Muslim. Azerbaijan's government continues to limit religious freedom. The government and state-controlled media encourage people to return to Islam, their "ancestral faith." In May 2009, a new law took effect requiring all religious organizations to re-register with the government by January 1, 2010. Unregistered religious organizations are viewed as illegal and are not allowed to operate until registered. On March 25, 2009, officials raided a home in Agdash, Azerbaijan, where 12 children had gathered to listen to Bible stories. The children were questioned and their names recorded before they were released to their parents. The police also confiscated 508 books and 40 films from the house. In the capital city of Baku, three believers were fined for "illegally spreading Christianity and other faiths."

- Pray for the provision of more Bibles, literature and training material, despite restrictions on imports and distribution.
- Pray for undisturbed opportunities for children to hear the gospel through summer camps or weekly activities.
- Pray for endurance and courage for active Christians, who face much opposition.

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## Bahrain

Leader: King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa

Bahrain is centrally located in the Persian Gulf, and it experiences a fairly liberal society. Many expatriate Christians live there and are free to practice their faith and hold church services. There are also some Christian bookstores and hospitals, and Bible distribution is allowed. However, converting from Islam to Christianity often results in abuse from family members and the community. Bahrain is somewhat politically unstable due to the Sunni-led government clashing with the Shia majority population. There have been violent street protests and general unrest.

- Pray for the foreign Christians there to be salt and light and to have opportunities to discreetly share the Gospel.
- Pray for general protection and safety during the protests, and that there may be peaceful dialogue between the differing political groups.
- Pray for Muslim converts to Christianity to be bold in sharing their faith despite persecution from family and friends, and that those around them would see the truth of the Gospel.

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## Bangladesh

Leaders: President Zillur Rahman; Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed

Bangladesh is plagued by deep poverty and social unrest. Frequent floods and cyclones cause billions of dollars worth of damage and the tragic loss of many lives. Nearly half of this densely populated nation live on less than a dollar a day. Islamic extremism is on the rise in this nation of 150 million. As head of the government, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed has more control over daily life than President Rahman. Islam is the official religion of Bangladesh. Other religious minorities may worship openly but face social discrimination. The Vested and Nonresident Ordinance (formally called the Enemy Property Act) states that property can be confiscated if the owner is considered an “enemy” of the state. This ordinance is used to seize property from Christians and other religious minorities. The majority of discrimination against Christians comes from Muslims, who deny Christians access to public water wells, beat them, extort money from them and destroy rickshaws to eliminate their only source of income. On December 10, 2008, Buddhists and local officials took converted Christians from the Chittagong division in Bangladesh and held them against their will. They were pressured to convert back to Buddhism and forced to undergo Buddhist rituals.

- Pray for the expanding literacy program as it reaches rural believers and unbelievers.
- Pray for abused women in rural villages, including the wives and daughters of Muslim-background believers.
- Copies of the Bible Storybook are being distributed to children and semi-literate adults. Pray that they will grow in their understanding of God.

## Belarus

Leader: President Aleksandr Lukashenko

Belarus became an independent state in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The failure to change Soviet economic structures stimulated inflation, hindered foreign investment, and crippled economic development. President Lukashenko’s rule is considered a dictatorship, and only the Orthodox Church is recognized. A repressive religious law in effect since 2002 bans unregistered religious activity, meetings with fewer than 20 members, and any religious activity in private homes. All religious literature is subject to censorship. The largest fine ever for religious activity (\$739 or three months’ wages) was given to Pastor Nikolai Poleshchuk for running a Christian street library in Osipovichi, Belarus. The literature was confiscated, and Poleshchuk was charged with “violation of the procedure for organizing or conducting mass events or pickets” and fined three months’ salary.

- Many churches have to wait several years to register. Pray for a breakthrough.
- Foreign Christian workers face many government-imposed obstacles, including deportation and visa refusal. Pray for a change in the government’s attitude to Christianity.
- The law restricts the ability of religious organizations to provide religious education for children. Pray that Christian parents would have wisdom in bringing up their children to know the Lord.

## Bhutan

Leader: King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Bhutan is a small country in South Asia that is transitioning from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. The few Christians that live here are mainly secretive about their faith, especially in the rural areas where persecution is more intense. Legally, only Buddhist and Hindu organizations are recognized, but Christians are free to meet in private homes. Evangelism is restricted, and only Buddhist religious material is permitted.

- Please pray that the change in government will allow greater freedom for Christians to meet and evangelize.
- Currently, evangelism can be seen as forced conversion, which is illegal. Pray that Christians will be able to share their faith discreetly.
- Pray that the evangelistic radio broadcasts that reach Bhutan are effective so that many will turn to Christ.

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## Brunei

Leader: Sultan/Prime Minister Sir Hassanal Bolkiah

Brunei is one of the richest states in Asia. Oil is the sole source of wealth, but its reserves are predicted to be used up by the year 2020. It has been ruled by the same family for more than six centuries. Muslims in Brunei officially follow Shafi'i Islam, a sect of the Sunnis. Though the constitution guarantees freedom of religious practice for non-Muslims, in reality religious freedom is limited. Conversion to Christianity is prohibited, Christian literature is banned, Bible importation is not allowed, and the government regularly ignores requests to build or expand churches. Even religious symbols on imported magazines are censored. There are only three registered churches in the country, all built during the colonial era. No new churches have been allowed, so other believers must meet secretly. In 2011, the prime minister proposed a new Islamic Criminal Law, which if passed, could dramatically make things worse for Christians.

- Pray for the few pastors prepared to minister to believers from a Muslim background.
- Pray that local churches will embrace converts fleeing threats because of their faith in Christ.
- Pray for children of believers from a Muslim background, that the seeds of faith will be preserved in their hearts.
- Pray that the proposed Islamic Criminal Law will not go into effect.

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## Burma (Myanmar)

Leader: President Thein Sein

Myanmar (also known as Burma) has a political system that remains under the tight control of the State Peace and Development Council, the military government in place since 1992. Officially, Buddhism is no longer the state religion, but it is actively promoted by the military regime. All those who advocate improved human rights are harassed or imprisoned. Spring of 2012 saw some hopeful changes in Burma, most notably with the release of political activist Aung San Suu Kyi after more than 18 years under house arrest. Beyond this further reforms led to the release of thousands of political prisoners and a move to a semi-civilian government. Even though the government claims freedom of religion in Burma, Christians have not seen any improvement in their situation in regard to the government or society in general. The culture that produced the secret memo titled "Program to Destroy the Christian Religion in Burma," which details instructions on how to drive out Christians, remains active. It calls for anyone caught evangelizing to be imprisoned. There continue to be reports of churches being burned, forcible conversion of Christians to Buddhism, and Christian children being barred from schools. Ethnic Christians, in particular, are singled out for repression.

- There has been severe famine in Chin State since 2008. Pray for pastors' families, who sometimes have nothing to eat but rats.

- Pray that the headway that has been made in terms of human rights and increased freedom in Burma is part of real, lasting, and progressive change.
- Pray for women who suffer a great deal of physical abuse in Burma, even within Christian settings.

## Chechnya

Leader: President Ramzan Kadyrov

Chechnya is part of the Russian Federation and is predominantly Muslim. It has had a Civil War with Russia (which tends to be Russian Orthodox). As a result, the few Chechnyan Christians are seen as siding with Russia and are thus persecuted both politically and religiously.

- Pray for safety, as some that convert from Islam to Christianity are in danger of “honor killings” by family members.
- Pray for the very, very few Christians to remain strong in their faith and cling to Jesus.
- Pray for many more to be added to the church.

## China

Leader: President Hu Jintao

China was declared the People’s Republic of China in 1949 by Chairman Mao Zedong, who quickly sought to purge society of anything religious. In recent years, living standards have improved in urban areas while little has changed in the countryside, promoting discontent. Political controls remain tight. The human rights record in China is one of the worst in the world. Its system of “re-education through labor” detains hundreds of thousands of people each year in work camps without a court hearing. In Tibet, an autonomous region within China, Christians are trapped between the oppression of Buddhism and the oppression of communism. Each year, China forcibly repatriates around 4,000 refugees to North Korea—where they face imprisonment, torture, and even execution. More Christians are in prison or under detention in China than in any other country. House churches (unregistered churches), which make up approximately 90 percent of China’s Christians, endure unimaginable persecution. But they stand by their commitment to preach the gospel, no matter the cost. In Tibet, most of the persecution against Christians comes from militant Tibetan Buddhists. Other house church Christians remain in detention, and several churches have been forced to close or relocate.

- Pray for Alimjan Yimit and Gao Zhisheng, both Christian human rights activists now in prison. Pray also for the family of freed activist Chen Guangcheng, who now face reprisal persecution for his freedom.
- Pray that the church will have a positive influence on society through ministries to the aged, migrants, dysfunctional families, and the poor.
- Pray for the leaders of the house church movement, that they might have more and more access to training, that they might be enabled to lead with wisdom and equip other believers.
- Pray for the Shouwang Church in Beijing and other Christian house churches that the government of China is actively trying to close. Pray that despite constant persecution their faith would be deepened and strengthened.

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## Colombia

Leader: President Juan Manuel Santos

Colombia is plagued by paramilitary and Marxist guerrilla groups, which are known for assassinations and kidnappings. The government has gained considerable control over major metropolitan areas, but rural areas and the jungle are the domain of guerrilla groups. Colombia is considered one of the world's most violent countries. In the last five years, the Marxist guerrilla group Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) has killed more than 300 evangelicals and displaced hundreds. Guerrillas see Christians as a threat to their recruitment of young men and women into the FARC. Their violent acts are funded by illegal drugs. The mother of an 11-year-old girl named Grace was shot to death by the FARC for leading devotions in her home. Grace's pastor father had been killed by the FARC just a year earlier. In 2011, at least five believers were confirmed murdered in retaliation for the growth of the church there, but many believe the count to be much higher.

- Pray for healing and comfort for Grace as she mourns her parents' martyrdom. Pray for the many children like her, some of whom are targets themselves as a means to deter the Christian activity of their parents. Pray for their protection as they grow up, and that they would cling to Christ.
- Pray for protection for believers against kidnapping and assassinations.
- Pray that Christians would love and minister to guerrilla groups, and that many would be won to Christ.

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## Comoros

Leader: President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi

The country of Comoros comprises a group of islands in Southern Africa at the northern mouth of the Mozambique Channel. One of the world's poorest countries due to internal governmental unrest and low educational level, among other factors. Ninety-eight percent of the population are Sunni Muslim, and there are fewer than 200 Christians out of 750,000 nationals. Comoros is reported to be a source country for men, women, and children for forced labor and sex trafficking. Persecution of Christians generally takes the form of social discrimination. Christians are forbidden to witness in public.

- Pray for the elimination of trafficking and for governmental leaders to investigate, prosecute, and convict trafficking offenders. Pray for the victims of this horrific trade to receive care and emotional, spiritual, and physical healing in Jesus' name. For the traffickers, pray that they would turn from their wicked ways and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.
  - Local authorities limit the practice of Christianity in some areas. Pray for the Comorian believers to stand firm in their faith and continue to fellowship together in spite of the discrimination. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:12-13
  - During Ramadan in 2011, a local believer was jailed for five days for not fasting and praying as required by Islam. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of Comorian Muslims that they will know the truth and be made spiritually alive with Christ.
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## Cuba

Leader: President Raul Castro Ruz

In the 1960s, Castro promised to rid the country of religion within 10 years. Forty-eight years later, there are eight times more Christians than before. Out of the population of 11 million, nearly one million are believers. Strict regulations against house churches went into effect in September 2005, prohibiting a church from being located within a mile and a quarter of another of the same denomination and restricting meetings to three per week. In February 2008, as his health declined, President Fidel Castro turned power over to his brother Raul Castro. Observers hoped the change in leadership would bring more openness, but some Cuban Christians say it has gotten worse. Churches have been infiltrated by government agents, and believers are often subject to surveillance. While few Christians have gone to prison for their faith in recent years, the Cuban government still mistreats, marginalizes and openly opposes Christians, especially those who live according to their Biblical convictions. Christians are denied rights and opportunities. They are often let go from jobs, or not allowed to apply for a certain status of jobs. The best jobs are awarded to Communist Party members. Children are required to renounce Christ and embrace communism in school. Christian young people are often not allowed to graduate from high school or enter university.

- The growing numbers of unregistered house churches have little access to Bibles, which are distributed through official channels only. Pray that God's Word will reach them.
- Pray for President Raul Castro and for his salvation. Pray God will transform him to become a godly leader who rules with justice and mercy.
- Pray for church leaders, as they have become the primary focus of state-led persecution, rather than broader persecution such as the shutting down or destruction of churches.
- Pray that some of the inroads the church in Cuba is making with the government-social programs emphasizing the importance of the family and moral values in schools-would reap great results for the gospel on all levels of Cuban society.

## Djibouti

Leader: President Ismael Guelleh

This small Northeastern African nation is bordered by Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea-and it controls access to Red Sea. Because of this strategic location, there is much foreign influence, and it is the site of the only US base in Africa. Although the Islamic-based government of Djibouti allows for religious freedom and tries to protect its citizens, Christians experience persecution at the hands of family and community members. Conversion from Islam is not accepted by society, so the few natives that have turned to Christ tend to hide their faith because of fear. Most of the believers here are expatriots.

- Pray for the 99 percent of the population that are Sunni Muslim. Pray that they would turn to Christ for salvation.
- Pray for the few believers in Djibouti to find each other and enjoy fellowship in safety. Pray for opportunities to safely share the Gospel.
- Pray for the government to continue to allow religious freedom, and that it would protect its Christian citizens from persecution by others.

## Egypt

Leaders: President Mohammed Mursi; Prime Minister Hisham Qandil

Egypt was mainly Christian during the first centuries after Christ. By the mid-seventh century, Islam had conquered the country; however, Egypt's Coptic Church never disappeared. Due to ongoing and recent attacks on churches, Christians' homes and rioting, many Coptic Christians have fled the country. However, more have stayed, determined to preserve a community and Christian presence and strive for an Egypt that honors freedom of religion. The events of the Arab Spring led first to hopefulness in regard to human rights and religious freedom, but as events continued to evolve, there is more and more doubt as to if Egypt truly will develop into a freer society more tolerant of Christian believers.

- Pray for governmental leaders to uphold the basic human right of freedom of religion and for them to know the truth of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the Christians in Egypt to be strong in their faith and be a light to a dark nation.
- Pray for the light of Christ to shine in all parts of Egypt once again. Pray for revival and for many Muslims to come to Christ.

## Eritrea

Leader: President Isaias Afewerki

This small North African nation gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993. Since that time, President Afewerki has maintained absolute and often cruel dictatorial rule. Eritrea has been devastated by war and drought, but the hope found in Jesus Christ is still alive in the country. The government imprisons tens of thousands of citizens, tortures at will, and pursues a systematic policy to eradicate evangelical Christians and churches. Thousands have fled as refugees into neighboring Ethiopia and Sudan. Up to 500 Eritreans leave their country every week to escape this oppressive military state.

- The government ordered all independent Protestant churches to be closed in 2002. Pray for those secret believers meeting underground; pray for boldness, courage, peace, and for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and opportunities to share about Jesus Christ with others. Pray for them to hide His word in their hearts. Pray Ephesians 3:14-21.
- Some Christian prisoners have been held in underground cells or metal shipping containers in an effort to pressure them to recant their faith. Pray for Haile Nayzgi, Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou and at least 3,000 other Eritrean Christians who are imprisoned for their faith in Christ.
- The Eritrean government sees Christians and evangelicals as a threat to national security because of their allegiance to God over the state. Pray Psalm 2 for the Eritrean government and that they will "be wise, be warned and serve the Lord with fear and celebrate His rule with trembling."

## Ethiopia

Leaders: President Girma Woldegiorgis; Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn

Since the Marxist-like governmental rule ended in 1991, the Christian freedom to worship and evangelize has increased; however, Muslims have recently begun massive campaigns to Islamize Ethiopia by penetrating areas with bribes and mosque-building campaigns. Since March 2, 2011, more than 4,000 Christians have been displaced after Islamic extremists burned 59 churches and 28

homes in Asendabo, Jimma Zone. Further, Ethiopia's fragile stability is dependent on agricultural production—such as coffee—and cycles of drought and famine have brought the population—two-thirds of whom are illiterate—to the brink of starvation more than once.

- Pray for the healing of those persecuted and assaulted for their faith, and for grace to forgive their attackers and to continue sharing the gospel with fearless love and boldness. Pray for unity among all the members of the Church—especially between Orthodox churches and Protestant denominations.
- Pray for these Christians who have lost their homes and their places of worship. Pray they continue to gather together and worship the Lord and thank Him that even though churches are destroyed, He is alive in the hearts of His people.
- Pray that the attackers and members of al-Shabab will seek salvation that only faith in Christ offers. Pray for resolution to conflict on the eastern border involving Eritrean, which has given al-Shabab and other extreme factions opportunity to use terror and assert a foothold in both nations.
- Pray for access to the Word of God and study materials for church leaders in Ethiopia, and pray that the faith of all believers in the country will grow in depth, maturity, and strength.

## India

Leaders: President Pranab Mukherjee; Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

As radical Hindus seek to purify India of all religions except Hinduism, Christians are a particularly soft target since they do not retaliate, as demonstrated by the systematic violence against Christians in Orissa and Karnataka in 2008-2009. In 2010, nine Christians were killed, and there have been numerous reports of Christians being arrested and assaulted, and church buildings and schools being damaged. Yet the church is growing rapidly, and unity is increasing as a result of the mounting opposition felt by every denomination. Praise the Lord for the spread of His Gospel.

- Seven Indian states have anti-conversion laws in place. These laws impose prison terms and hefty fines on anyone who converts Indians by force, fraud, or allurement. Pray for seekers in these areas to be courageous to put their faith in Christ. Pray for God's grace and faith to be infused in their hearts.
- As more people are coming into the family of God, pray that leadership and discipleship training programs would help believers grow in faith and maturity.
- Pray for the peaceful resettlement of Christians displaced by the violence. Ask God to provide for children orphaned in religious riots.

## Indonesia

Leader: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

Although national laws continue to uphold religious freedom, Sharia-inspired laws are creeping into civil policies and regulations at the regency level, which often take precedence when believers are disadvantaged. The church is facing increasing hostility, especially violence from Muslim extremist groups. Extremists operate with impunity and use the blasphemy law as a justification for their persecution of believers—including a bomb planted near a Catholic church just prior to Good Friday of 2012. Thank God it was discovered and diffused prior to exploding.

- In June 2012, Bethel Church in Penayongan was stormed and believers were forced to flee out the back door. The church was vandalized, equipment taken, and the pastor charged with violating Shariah law. He was denied entry to the building, which served as his home and forced to return to his hometown of Medan. Pray that the pastor would be released from the charges and the church body would not be deterred from continuing to worship.
- In September 2012, a Muslim extremist attacked a church in Java, wounding 27 people. Attacks against church buildings are a regular occurrence. Pray that the authorities will do more to bring those responsible to account and pray for healing and a forgiving spirit for those wounded.
- To avoid inciting hostility from locals and village leaders, churches barely reach out to Muslim-background believers. Pray that the Lord will lead Muslim-background believers to Christians who will help them in their walk with God and that Christians will welcome their brethren into their fellowship.
- Many recent troubles have come in the form of closing churches or prohibiting expansion.

## Iran

Leaders: Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

After a disputed election in 2009, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reassured his position as president, endorsed by the Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei. Since his reign, Ahmadinejad's government has become increasingly anti-Western and anti-Christian. Iran's state religion is Shi'a Muslim, and the followers of all other faiths are treated severely. Protestant pastors are forbidden to preach in Farsi (the official language) and can only use the Armenian or Assyrian language. Mission organizations are not allowed to enter Iran. Open witnessing to Muslims is banned, and the government sends spies to monitor Christian groups. Believers are discriminated against in education, employment, and property ownership. After decades of government oppression, Iranians are hungry for spiritual meaning as well as freedom from their oppressive government.

- Praise that many Muslims in Iran are coming to Christ. Christian satellite programs receive hundreds of calls asking for more information about Christianity. House church leaders can be overwhelmed with caring and shepherding these new believers. There is a huge need for Bibles. Ask God to supply Iran and His people with His Word.
- Many Muslim-background believers live in fear of harassment by the government. Pray for courage and fearless faith for this Christians. Pray they will sense the presence of Christ with them.

## Iraq

Leaders: President Jalal Talabani; Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki

Violence against Christians increased in 2010, with large numbers of believers killed and injured. There were a number of attacks on Christians in Mosul in the run-up to elections, leading to an exodus of Christians to villages in the Nineveh plains. Attacks on church buildings and Christian institutions increased in the second half of the year of 2010. Sectarian violence has been ongoing, and the Christian population feel particularly vulnerable to attacks, including robbery, assault, and rape—and feel that the government does not sufficiently protect them. In the past year, tens of thousands more Christians have fled Iraq.

- Pray that believers displaced by the violence will find a place to go to and will not have to flee Iraq.

- The need for trauma counseling is high among young people. Pray that children who have lost parents will receive the care they need and will grow strong in their faith in Jesus.
- Pray that the Iraqi government will be able to restore a situation of peace without limiting the church's freedom.

## Jordan

Leader: King Abdallah II

This Middle Eastern nation shares the longest border with Israel of all the nations in the region, and is one of only two to have made peace with Israel. It is also host to millions of refugees from Iraq and Palestine, many of whom are Christians. This Muslim nation does allow for some religious freedom, which is technically protected by the constitution—given that non-Muslims do not “violate the public order or morality or conflict with Islamic law.” Jordan, however, has the smallest economy in the Middle East, and pervasive poverty is a chronic problem. King Abdallah has instituted many social and economic reforms.

- Pray for courage and strength for believers who face discrimination from government or society.
- Pray that jurisdiction of sharia courts would not be applied to believers from a Muslim background.
- Pray for wisdom for expatriate Christians seeking to share their faith with Jordanians.

## Kazakhstan

Leader: President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev

- Pray for protection over small churches that do not have enough members to be registered. Pray that they will not be forced to give up meeting together.
- Pray that the Gospel is spread.
- Pray that God would grant Christians in Kazakhstan more boldness than ever and that as the government restricts their freedom that they respond with even greater courage to witness.

## Kuwait

Leader: Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jaber al-Sabah

Kuwait borders Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and has a long shoreline on the Persian Gulf. This oil-rich nation was the first Arab country in the Gulf to have an elected parliament, and in 2005 full political rights were granted to women. Despite the claim of religious freedom, only Muslims are allowed to be citizens, and evangelism of any kind is strictly forbidden. Further, the government offers financial incentives to discourage the conversion to any non-Muslim faith. The Christian community is comprised of only a few hundred, though the church is experiencing growth through the conversion of Muslim citizens.

- Pray for local believers to be strong in their faith and bold in their witness.

- Pray that Christian communities will attract the interest of local Kuwaitis and reach out to them. Pray especially for Kuwaiti children, who are taught Islam in school and where any teaching of Christianity is not allowed in any form.
- Pray that the government would ease restrictions on places of worship.

## Kyrgyzstan

Leader: President Almazbek Atambayev

Kyrgyzstan is a central Asian state of 5.5 million bordering China, which became independent with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It remains one of the poorest nations of the former Soviet Union. Though most in the country are only nominally Muslim, sharing other faiths is not allowed, and Christians from a Muslim background face ostracization from family and community. They also can face harassment and find it difficult to get jobs.

- Pray for wise leadership and peace for the country.
- Pray for Muslim-background believers who face hostility and rejection from their relatives.
- Pray for protection on all evangelism and outreach activities, as they are legally not permitted. Pray especially for opportunities for children to learn about Christ, such as summer camps.

## Laos

Leader: President Choummaly Sayasone

Sandwiched between Thailand and Vietnam, Laos has been a communist nation since 1975, but in 1986, a trend toward privatization and greater free enterprise began. However, these moves have not improved the situation for Christians in the region, who make up little more than 1 percent of the population. The government is very antagonistic toward Christians. Believers experience extreme physical and emotional pressure to renounce their faith. In 2010, 29 Christians were killed and at least 20 were arrested and held without trial. A number of churches were destroyed. In January 2010, 11 Christian families were forced out of their villages into the forest when they refused to recant their faith. Despite high levels of persecution, the church is growing.

- Pray for God's protection and provision for families expelled from their villages, especially the young children.
- Pray that Christians will have the courage to remain in the faith, in spite of the high price they must pay.
- Pray that religious policies designed to promote free expression of faith would be implemented in rural areas and benefit the believers, who are mostly tribal and rural.
- Thank God for the progress that has been made toward religious freedom, such as the recent granting of land to Christians, as well as access to medical care and education. Pray that this trend will continue.

## Libya

Leaders: Chairman of the General National Congress Mohamed Magarief; Prime Minister Ali Zidan

An oil-rich North-African nation, Libyan borders the Mediterranean Sea. Despite its great oil revenue, little of the wealth trickles down beyond the most elite minority in the country. This economic disparity led to the civil unrest and violence resulting in the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi, ending his 42-year autocratic, repressive regime. Throughout this time, the secret police have made organized churches impossible, and the government defines all citizens as Sunni Muslims. Within their own communities, those who convert to Christianity are harassed, threatened, and ostracized. Evangelism and missionary activity have been criminalized by the government, and most Christians are believers in secret. While the world was hopeful that the displacement of Gaddafi would lead to greater freedom for Christians, there are now concerns that their situation may become worse. In light of this, as many as 75 percent of expatriate Christians have fled Libya since the unrest. The National Transitional Council is expected to implement Sharia and make Libya an even more Islamic state than before. Saint George's Church was ransacked when they took control of Tripoli.

- Thank God for the small groups of Christians gathering in houses. Ask Him to give them strength.
- Pray that people in remote areas will tune in to Christian radio and TV broadcasts; pray for those who are importing Christian materials and literature into the country. The National Transitional Council has detained at least two believers on account of this.
- Pray for wisdom for young believers sharing their new faith with their families.

## Malaysia

Leaders: Sultan Tuanku Abdul Halim; Prime Minister Najib Razak

A country of 28.9 million, the relatively diverse and prosperous nation in Southeast Asia, is distinctly divided itself. The West of the country is predominantly Muslim, while the East remains largely Christian and traditional animistic. Despite general stability and economic growth, Malaysia's human rights record has come under criticism from the international community. While religious freedom is constitutionally protected, the reality is that ethnic Malays are only allowed to be Muslim, and outreach to them is strictly prohibited. Church building is almost impossible, and those that exist have experienced a recent escalation in antagonism towards them, including the destruction of several Christian churches.

- Pray for courage and perseverance for churches that have experienced attacks.
- The country's secular legislation is increasingly being made subordinate to Islamic laws. Pray for a reverse in this trend.
- A number of non-Muslim religious clubs in schools have been closed. Pray for wisdom for Christian teachers.
- Thank God for the recent positive breakthrough with the government allowing the printing of Malay-language Bibles locally.

## Maldives

Leader: President Mohamed Nasheed (who was became president in 2008, after the first democratic election in the Maldives, replacing the 30-year autocratic rule of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Prior to this, President Nasheed himself had been imprisoned and tortured for his role in promoting democracy in his country).

This tiny island nation of only 311,000 citizens, is situated in the Indian Ocean, just southeast of India and Sri Lanka. It is, in fact, comprised of almost 1,200 coral island, most of which are

uninhabited. Though this relatively poor nation relies primarily on tourism and fisheries for its economy, visits from foreign tourists is strictly limited to short visits only to designated areas, thus limiting any foreign impact on the Muslim culture. In general, there is no religious freedom. All Maldivians are expected to be Muslim, and it is illegal to convert, evangelize, or build a church. The few indigenous Christians that do live there are very isolated from their communities and from each other. They are closely watched by the police and their communities. No Christian literature is allowed to be imported either, and 2010 saw greater restrictions, after some tourist were found to have Bibles with them. Maldivians themselves enjoy a great amount of democratic freedom, but the press and non-Muslims do not have freedom of speech. These tiny islands, none of them more than 6 feet above sea level, were hit hard by the December 2004 Asian Tsunami, and there is great concern that any rise in sea level, related to climate change, could wipe them out altogether.

- Pray that believers will have discernment and courage to witness to those who are earnestly seeking the truth.
- Pray for the many children growing up in broken families, without good role models to emulate; pray that the many plagued by the endemic problems of substance abuse, broken marriages, and child abuse might be transformed, forgiven, and forgiving through the power of Christ.
- Ask the Lord to provide ways for Christians to meet for fellowship despite the restrictions.

## Mauritania

Leaders: General Mohamed Abdelaziz; Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf

This West African nation gained its independence from France in 1960, but did not have a democratic elections until Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was inaugurated in April 2007 as Mauritania's first freely and fairly elected president. His term ended prematurely in August 2008 when a military junta led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz deposed him. About half the population still relies on agriculture and livestock, and the country experiences ethnic tensions and increased threats from terrorism. The only acknowledged religion is Islam, and any kind of evangelism or distribution of non-Muslim religious materials is prohibited by the government. To convert from Islam can mean death, and it certainly results in discrimination and isolation from one's community and family. In 2010, one young woman was beaten and burned to death because she had converted to Christianity, and there are other accounts of Christian adults and children having to flee because of persecution.

- Pray that this young church will become deeply rooted in faith, so it can withstand the storms of persecution.
- Pray for wisdom for Christian parents as they bring up their children in a Muslim society that can be very hostile.
- Pray that believers will be equipped and trained to reach people groups who never heard the gospel.

## Morocco

Leaders: King Mohammed VI; Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane

Touching both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, this North African nation has relative economic stability and steady trade with Europe and the U.S. King Mohammed VI appears to desire some measure of reform and modernization, and Morocco is one of the few predominantly

Muslim countries to recognize and tolerate other faiths. Ironically, tension between different Muslim sects have led to government crackdowns on all religious groups including Christians. Beyond this, those who convert to Christianity or another religion face extreme pressure and isolation from their families and communities. In some cases this has escalated to Christians being beaten and harassed.

- Pray for unity in the Moroccan church as pressure on Christians increases.
- Pray that young Moroccans will discover the truth of Jesus Christ through internet or satellite TV; pray for increased access to Bibles and Christian literature, as the distribution of these materials is forbidden.
- Pray that the king will use his power to give more liberty to the Moroccan Church.

## North Korea

Leader: Chairman Kim Jong-Un

North Korea is one of the most repressive and isolated regimes in the world. Government officials deny the country's citizens even the most basic human rights. The government considers Christians to be a stability threat, and they are hunted all over the country. Being a Christian carries a more severe punishment than espionage. The largest number of Christian worshipers in North Korea exists in concentration camps. Many flee to China to avoid imprisonment only to be hunted down by the Chinese government and then face prison, torture and death.

- Despite the oppression, more than 100,000 are thought to worship secretly and many more (an estimated 25 percent of Christians in the country) continue in faith despite being in prison camps. Pray for the gospel to spread in the midst of terrible persecution.
- Pray for courage and endurance for the 50,000 and 70,000 Christians in labor camps; pray especially for those "total control zone" of the Yodok Camp, also known as No. 15. These prisoners, many of them believers, are never released, languish under unimaginable conditions, and are often sent there with their small children and elderly relatives, who die there with them because they are "guilty by association."
- Pray that the situation will change for Christians now that Kim Jong-Un is the new leader.

## Northern Nigeria

Leaders: President Goodluck Jonathan; Vice President Mohammed Namadi Sambo

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, with over 70 million people living within its borders. Approximately half of these are Christian. Despite massive oil resources, the Nigerian economy has struggled due to lack of infrastructure, political stability, and macroeconomic management. Some movements were seen in 2008 toward economic reform on the part of the government. However, an incredibly ethnically diverse population, a corrupt government and the influx of Islam in the northern states have created a situation ripe for conflict. Religious riots are very common and often churches, Christian schools, homes and business are burned or destroyed by rioters. Numerous Christians have lost their lives in the conflicts.

- Pray for wisdom and courage for church leaders reaching out to their Muslim neighbors and caring for converts.
- Pray for comfort and provision for Christians bereaved or made homeless through violence.

- Praise God for the unity of the church as a result of this pressure. Pray that they would continue to draw together in faith.

## Oman

Leader: Sultan/Prime Minister Qaboos bin Said al-Said

Bordered on the east by the Arabian sea and west by Saudi Arabia, Oman is dominated by the state religion of Ibadhi Islam. Though more open and liberal than many of its neighbors, Oman's legislation is rooted in Shariah law. In 1996 a charter was established that included a ban on discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnicity, religion and social class. The charter also guaranteed freedom of expression and assembly, but not all provisions of the charter have been fully enacted. The state controls all media, and government approval is required for public assemblies. The Christian population consists almost entirely of foreign workers. Churches and church activities for the expatriate communities are permitted, but Muslims are forbidden to convert. Christians are lower-class citizens with regard to citizenship and legal rights. Religious groups are required to register before they can legally meet. Although sharing the gospel with Muslims is not illegal, it is strongly discouraged, and the government will sometimes pressure those who do evangelize. However, Muslims are permitted to evangelize to non-Muslims.

- Pray for more openness in society towards Christianity; pray for the effectiveness of various media—television, internet, and radio—in giving Omanis access to the gospel.
- Pray that small groups of believers will find ways of sharing the gospel with Omanis and will have access to Christian materials. Pray for the growth of the church not only in numbers, but also in spiritual maturity and wisdom.
- Pray that the law will be upheld and pressure or discrimination against Christians would not increase and the gospel will spread.

## Pakistan

Leader: President Asif Ali Zardari

Only 5.3 million of Pakistan's 117 million citizens are Christians, and religious freedom within Pakistan is constantly being eroded. Although persecution does not come primarily from the state, the the authorities fail to protect the rights of religious minorities. This is also a country where the Taliban exerts great pressure on the population, for instance attempting to deter girls from seeking an education by attacking them en route to school, shooting them and permanently scarring them with acid attacks Pakistan suffers from suicide bombings and killings associated with terrorism. The conflicts are mainly between fundamentalist Islamic groups and the secular government. Though religious freedom is guaranteed in the constitution, Christians increasingly suffer under Shariah law. Things are particularly bad for Pakistani Christians in northern areas. Christians there live under constant threat from fundamentalist Muslims, as evidenced by the murder of a Christian cabinet member in March 2011.

- Pray that the government would review the blasphemy laws and do more to protect religious minorities.
- Pray for extremists in this nation, that they would abandon violence and embrace the love of Christ.
- Kidnapping of young girls to force them to convert to Islam is common. Pray for protection for Christian girls.

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## Palestinian Territories

Leader: President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas

Gaza and the West Bank have been occupied by Israel in 1967. However, in January 2006, the Islamic terrorist group Hamas won democratic elections in Gaza and the West Bank. The nation is 98 percent Muslim. The Christian population is small; there are about 9,000 Arab-evangelical Christians worshipping in 30 churches in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

- Christians in the region face frequent opposition from authorities and Muslims for their efforts to share Christ. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of unbelievers and for the light of the Gospel and the Word of God to penetrate their lives. Pray for grace and faith for them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Political turmoil in the Palestinian territories has created an environment that enables militant Islamic groups to persecute Christians. Pray for our brothers and sisters in this nation to have fearless love for those opposing their testimony of Christ. Pray for there to be a strong unity between believers. Pray for their protection.
- Pray that Arab Muslims would not consider Arab Christians their enemies, but friends. Pray that Messianic and Arab believers would be one in Christ and that the hostility between them would be broken down. Overall, pray that God's peace may reign in their hearts in this area with so many racial and religious tensions.

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## Qatar

Leader: President Amir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani

This Middle Eastern nation is a large peninsula extending off of Saudi Arabia, and like many countries in the region, was transformed from an impoverished nation to one of incredible wealth through oil. While there is a tiny Christian minority, comprised mostly of foreign workers, the vast majority are Muslim. The constitution explicitly provides for freedom of worship, and Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches are officially recognized. However, the government places restrictions on public worship and continues to prohibit evangelization of non-Muslims. Several foreign Christians were expelled from the country in 2010, almost certainly because of their Christian faith. Leaving Islam is considered apostasy; believers from a Muslim background face severe persecution.

- Being a foreign believer in Qatar does not ensure safety. Even expatriate Christians face police harassment, torture, and additionally deportation. Pray for the witness of the foreign Christian community. Pray that no more foreign Christians will be expelled from the country.
- The economy has been booming in Qatar. Pray that the Qatari people will open up to the gospel and not rely on wealth and their feeling of Islamic superiority.
- Pray that isolated indigenous believers will connect with other believers and experience real fellowship.

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## Saudi Arabia

Leader: King/Prime Minister Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud

Occupying most of the Arabian peninsula, the nation of Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to the religion's two most holy cities: Mecca and Medina. With such strong historic

roots to Islam, the nation fiercely guards its Muslim heritage by suppressing all other religions. Converts from Islam to Christianity are rare in this nation. Barriers to spreading the gospel are intense. Leaving Islam is punishable by death. Anyone who does mission work or converts a Muslim faces jail, expulsion, lashing, torture or execution. Public non-Muslim worship, even for foreign Christians, is prohibited. Christians are regularly imprisoned or deported, and Christian churches are banned. Saudi Arabia is a main source of funding for madrassas (Islamic religious schools) worldwide, where extremism can breed. Though oil and hydrocarbon reserves have made Saudi Arabia an extremely wealthy nation, and one of the most influential in the Middle East, rising unemployment and zero tolerance for opposition have increased pressure on the ruling family to embark on societal reforms.

- Some high profile prisoners have been released in the past few years. Pray that more pressure would be put on the government. So many more are still in prison and on death row. Pray for their release as well. Pray that the recent unrest in the Middle East and North Africa might be a catalyst for positive change and greater freedom in the region.
- Pray for wisdom and courage for the missionaries sharing their faith; and pray for the continued strength and faith of believers who convert. Thank God for an increased boldness among Christians in sharing their faith.
- Pray for the Saudis living or working outside the country, that they would come to faith.

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## Somalia

Leader: President Sheikh Ahmed

Somalia has experienced continuous conflict for more than a decade. A transitional government maintains loose control over the capital, Mogadishu. Christians fear that the rise of radical Islam will lead to Shariah law and greater persecution. Islam is the official religion, and there is no official religious freedom. Article 5 of the Somali constitution states: “Promotion of any religion in the territory of Somaliland other than Islam is prohibited. The laws of the nation shall be grounded on, and shall not be valid, if they are contrary to Islamic Shariah.” Most Christians are secret believers and subject to intense persecution from family members, clan members, Islamist extremists and local administrators.

- Pray for God to bring stability and peace to the region. The atmosphere in Somalia is becoming increasingly more hostile as the government is unable to bring order, and jihadists are streaming into the country. Thank God that some progress in stemming the funding of al-Shabab, but continue to petition Him as al-Shabab recently merged with al-Qaeda. Pray for the government to turn from corruption and pursue justice, or to be replaced by rulers with greater integrity.
- The worst drought in 6 years has left many without food and water, fleeing to other countries. Pray for the famine to subside and aid to reach those who need it most. Pray for those in camps for the displaced, especially women, who are in constant danger and where rape has become endemic.
- Pray for the believers that they would find courage and fellowship in a dark area. Many have already given their lives for Christ. Pray for the sustenance and growth of the tiny secret house churches—the largest comprised of five—who face even beheading for their faith.

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## Sudan

Leader: Omar al-Bashir

After South Sudan seceded from Sudan, president Omar al-Bashir decided to base Sudan's Constitution on Sharia (Muslim) Law. There is very little freedom for Christians, and in fact many have left the country. Of the over 33 million people here, the number of Christians is unknown, but it is reported that the number is steadily growing.

- Pray for safety in this dangerous region, and that war between South Sudan and Sudan would be avoided.
- Pray that Sudanese Christians would be strong in their faith and have opportunities to safely share the Gospel with others.
- Pray that those that don't know Jesus Christ will recognize their need for his salvation and come to know him as Lord.

## Syria

Leader: President Bashar al-Assad

Syria is under Shariah, and its constitution requires the president to be Muslim. Missionaries are not allowed in the country and evangelistic activity is banned. Syria is unstable at present and could be in danger of a Civil War. Thousands of Christians fled during the Arab Spring, following increased persecution. Some accused them of following a Western religion and forced them to leave their homes.

- Pray for our many brothers and sisters in Syria who say they do not feel safe leaving their house each day. Pray that they would be protected, and that God would give them courage and hope.
- Pray for those that have fled the country and may be homeless or refugees.
- Pray for the light of the Gospel to shine in this country, so that many would turn to Jesus for salvation.

## Tajikistan

Leaders: President Emomali Sharipovich Rakhmon;

Tajikistan is the poorest country of the former Soviet empire, as well as the poorest in central Asia, and many struggle to provide for their families. A renewed interest in Islam among the general population is attributed to dire economic situation. The constitution guarantees religious freedom, but the government controls religious activity to a certain extent. In particular, teaching Christianity to children is discouraged, and distribution of Christian books is very restricted. Beyond this, in 2009, the president approved a religious law that severely limits the legal status of most churches. Further restrictions were enacted in 2011, and most recently the Parental Responsibility Law was passed, which does not allow children under the age of 18 to participate in any religious activity other than a funeral. Tajik identity is tied to being Muslim, so new Christians face shame and pressure from family and the community to return to Islam.

- Pray for Tajik Christians who are active in spreading the Gospel as they risk harassment and possible beatings and arrest.
- Although 90 percent of Tajikistan's citizens profess to be Muslim, and the number of mosques grew from 18 to 4,000 since the fall of communism, few Tajiks actually practice Islamic rituals. Pray that they would see the truth of the Gospel instead and turn to Christ.
- Pray for Christian parents to have the courage to boldly teach their children about Christ.

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## Tunisia

Leaders: President Moncef Marzouki; Prime Minister: Hamadi Jebali

This tiny country sits at the very top of Africa, just southeast of and across the Mediterranean Sea from Italy. Its geography consists of the desert climate of the Sahara, and a particularly fertile northern region. It was the site in December 2011 of the unrest which set off calls for change around Africa and the Middle East, when a fruit seller dramatically set himself on fire in frustration after being harassed, beaten, and humiliated by a police. Although the constitution provides for freedom of religion, its laws must adhere to the teachings of Islam. Islam is the main religion and Islamic religious education is a compulsory subject in schools. The number of practicing Christians in Tunisia is quite small, and because Christian literature cannot be openly distributed, it is difficult to spread the Gospel. While real democratic change seems most possible in Tunisia, there are still factions that are determined to establish Tunisia as an Islamic state and pose a real threat to the democratic process—which would lead to a worsening situation for Christians.

- Pray that many will continue to find Jesus Christ through Christian satellite TV programs and internet sites.
- Pray for freedom for the men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking and for the young girls forced into domestic servitude.
- Pray that new believers will not return to Islam because of the oppressive environment, as has been the case in the past. Pray that they will have the courage to meet for fellowship with other Christians.

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## Turkey

Leaders: President Abdullah Gul; Prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Turkey is a large regional power that in many ways bridges the cultures of East and West. Since 2005 Turkey has been negotiating for full membership in the European Union, which is at least somewhat contingent on improving their human rights record. Officially a democratic, secular republic, the majority of the population is Muslim. Despite a constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, only a few religious minorities are recognized. Evangelical Christians can only meet to worship if they have received official status. Foreign missionaries are not given visas. Leaving Islam for Christianity is seen as a disgrace, and Christians are negatively portrayed in the media. In 2010 there were reports of Christians being arrested and physically assaulted.

- Pray for protection for believers who speak out boldly about their faith.
- Pray for perseverance for believers from a Muslim background facing pressure to return to Islam.
- Pray that the public would not believe the false rumors that are spread about Christians in general, but that they would instead be drawn to Christ.

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## Turkmenistan

Leader: President Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov

Although the constitution provides for freedom of religion, this is limited to Sunni Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy in practice. In 2010 police officers threatened Christians that they would do

everything to ensure that there are no Christians left in the country. Ethnic Turkmen Christians are pressured to return to Islam, and many believers run the risk of losing their jobs. Believers cannot freely maintain public places of worship, and those caught in house churches have received fines, seizure of family possessions, and deductions from individuals' salaries.

- Pray for President Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, in power since 2006, who has done much to undo the cult of personality of his predecessor, but has made bizarre, unwise decisions such as closing most of the country's medical clinics. Pray that he might find wisdom in Christ and lead his nation with integrity, justice, and increased freedom.
- Turkmenistan is a source country for men and women subjected to forced labor and forced prostitution in Turkey. Pray for their deliverance.
- Pray for protection for Christian young people. Summer camps are sometimes raided by police.
- Praise God for the release in February 2012 of Ilmurad Nurliev, who was serving a four-year prison term for false allegations because of his faith.

## United Arab Emirates

Leaders: President Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nahayyan; Vice president and Prime Minister, ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum

Islam is the state religion, with a Sunni majority, and all of the country's citizens are considered Muslim. The constitution provides for religious freedom, although the government restricts this freedom in practice. Evangelism and the distribution of non-Islamic religious literature is prohibited. The law denies Muslims the freedom to change religion and converts may face pressure to return to Islam. However, non-Muslim groups can worship freely, either in dedicated buildings or in private homes.

- Pray that the events of the Arab Spring would lead people to discussion about freedom, integrity in leaders, and faith.
- Pray that foreign Christians would have wisdom in sharing their faith.
- Internet use is extensive; pray that Christian internet sites would reach many with the gospel.
- The standard of living is generally high because of oil wealth; pray that riches would not be a barrier to people receiving the gospel.

## Uzbekistan

Leader: President Islam Karimov

Uzbekistan's government is secular, but it promotes a moderate form of Islam. Its religion law bans unregistered religious activity such that even importing books is illegal. In southeast Uzbekistan, police have campaigned to prevent children from attending worship services. The campaign, which uses the state-controlled mass media, attacks schools and parents who allow children to attend what they consider to be religious "sects." President Karimov came to power during the Soviet era and has continued to exert ruthless control ever since.

- Pray for Tohar Haydarov who is imprisoned for his faith. In March 2010, a criminal court in Uzbekistan sentenced 27-year-old Haydarov to ten years in prison for fabricated charges of illegal drug selling as punishment for his religious activity.

- Persecution has increased recently, specifically the number of church raids. Fines for illegal religious activities were up to 100 times the minimum monthly wage. Pray for believers' protection.
- Uzbekistan is a source country for women and girls trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation; men are trafficked for purposes of forced labor; and Uzbekistan is on the Tier 2 Watch List for its negligible progress in ending forced child labor. Pray for protection for the vulnerable poor, and for an end to these atrocities.

## Vietnam

Leaders: President Truong Tan Sang; Secretary-general of the Communist Party Nguyen Phu Trong

Vietnam is a communist country. Many Christians in Vietnam experience harassment, fines, torture, and imprisonment. Some have been forced to renounce their faith or have died because of severe torture while in prison. Despite persecution, many Vietnamese, especially from ethnic groups in the mountains of Central and Southern Vietnam, have turned to Christ in the past ten years. They baptize at night in streams and walk for days to obtain and distribute Bibles.

- Pastor Y Wo Nie was arrested in 2004 and given a nine-year sentence for leading a demonstration demanding more religious freedom and the release of property confiscated by the Vietnamese government. His family has not been able to visit him, and his wife writes, "Our family situation is very difficult. I don't have a job; some days I work as a day laborer and some days I'm unemployed. My youngest son is sickly." Pray for this pastor and his family.
- Pray for the protection as many Vietnamese women and children are subjected to forced prostitution throughout Asia.
- Pray for trained teachers and leaders as the church continues to grow in number.
- In November 2010, two Christian evangelists were sentenced to six and four years in prison for "undermining national unity." Pray for their strength, and that they would be a light in the prison. Pray for Father Nguyen Van Ly, who has been in and out of prison since 2007 for distributing Christian materials deemed "harmful to the state," and who was rearrested in July 2011, and is imprisoned currently.

## Yemen

Leader: Interim leader Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East, with a reputation as a haven for Islamic militants. About 90 percent of the men use a drug called "khat" daily. Islam is the state religion, and Yemeni converts from Islam face the death penalty if discovered. While some religious freedom is allowed for foreigners, the few hundred Muslim-background believers in this nation meet secretly and face persecution from the state, from their communities, and even from family. Yemen, too, has been affected by the events of the Arab Spring, which has further reduced the numbers of Christians as they have fled the unrest.

- Because believers live under constant threat of persecution, pray for their safety. Pray also for boldness in a country where evangelism is prohibited.
- Three foreigners were killed, and nine foreigners, including three children, were kidnapped by an unknown group in June 2009 because of their evangelistic work. Four of them remain missing even years later. Pray for the two young German girls that were rescued, as their parents and brother are still missing.

- Yemen is a country of origin for men, women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Pray for perpetrators to be caught and for protection of the innocent ones.
- Pray for the continued spread of the gospel through Christian media.