

January 2025 Prayer

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

—Ephesians 3:20

India—Many Christians were targeted in India over the Christmas holiday. In Punjab, a pastor was attacked and accused of converting Hindus. In Rajasthan, extremists attacked teachers and students who were celebrating Christmas. In Odisha, two women were beaten, tied to a tree, and forced to chant the names of Hindu gods and goddesses. A pastor and his pregnant wife were beaten and forced to trample on Bibles and chant names of Hindu gods. Pray for believers across all of India who experience more and more persecution. Pray for them to stand firm in their faith and to be resilient, clinging to the truth of Scripture. Pray for their endurance and perseverance. And pray that they would be a witness to the truth of the Gospel and that many would turn to Christ. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

United Kingdom—The very important position of Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief in the UK government has been vacant since the summer. However, in December David Smith MP was appointed to the important position, which many are hopeful is an indication of the UK's continued commitment to advocating for and protecting of human rights and religious freedoms. Give thanks that nations who enjoy these freedoms are engaged in preserving and promoting these rights in their own countries and in other nations with whom they have relationships. Pray for David Smith as he serves in this role—for energy, commitment, and effectiveness. Pray that the UK will act with great integrity and compassion in all situations that impact human rights and the protection of the persecuted and vulnerable. (*Source: CSW*)

Indonesia—As a church choir was practicing for their Christmas service, community members entered the building and demanded that they get legal permission to gather. A few days later, over a hundred protesters blocked the entrance to a pastor's house where believers were attempting to gather for their Christmas service. Although the pastor was legally permitted to hold a service in his home, he had also alerted local police and military ahead of time. Yet they were still not able to meet. When the body of believers tried to meet in a field to worship together, they were again prevented by local protesters. Please pray for guidance in this frustrating situation and for the Indonesian believers to know how to honor God by gathering together for worship. Pray that God provides a safe place for them to worship, and pray that He would change the hearts of the Muslim community to seek Christ. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Iran—At Christmas 2023 twelve Christian converts were among 20 people arrested by intelligence officers in a raid in Nowshahr and Chalus. The twelve are facing charges of “propagation of the religions that are in conflict and against Islam.” Some have been released on bail. Six were re-arrested and three remain detained. The evidence against them consists of Bibles and religious books discovered in the raid, and accusations that they participated in Christian training. Already a year into this ordeal, they are in the process of learning their fate, and we join Middle East Concern in praying the Lord strengthens and encourages the converts and their families; the Lord gives wisdom to them and their defense counsel as they respond to the allegations against them; and that the court will acquit them of any supposed criminal activity when the charges are clearly related to their faith and its peaceful expression. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Nigeria—At a caroling service days before Christmas, gunmen killed 14 Christians of the Irigwe tribe, including a pregnant woman and a 1-year-old. Nearly a thousand Christians live in the community

where the church is located. They are often targeted around Christian holidays, and this Christmas was sadly accompanied by a mass burial of the victims. Please pray for protection over this vulnerable community of believers who are seeking to live out their faith in peace. Pray for a miraculous change of heart among the militant extremists who regularly attack them. Pray for comfort and peace for those who are mourning now, and pray for them to keep their eyes fixed on Christ the Redeemer. Pray that He would rescue Nigeria from this violence and persecution and bring many to salvation. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Syria—With the fall of President Bashar al-Assad and his notorious tyrannical, violently repressive regime, Syria sits at a crucial and precarious juncture. Prayer for a smooth transition to a safe, free and open society is vital. Christians, along with other minorities, especially face an uncertain future. But leaders in the Christian community have expressed their commitment to being sources of light, hope, and grace to their communities. Open Doors has suggested the following ways to pray for this country in flux: for unity and a spirit of reconciliation among leaders; for an end to decades of violence and the protection of Syrian citizens and the prioritization of their rights and needs; for other minorities (Alawites and others) to be protected to avoid more bloodshed. Pray especially for Syrian Christians to remain strong, courageous, and a beacon of hope in their war-torn country. Pray for wisdom for church leaders as they guide their communities amid immense challenges. Pray for the healing of Syria, for Christ to comfort the weary and restore peace and justice. Pray that the global Church would stand in unity with Syrian believers in prayer and advocacy as they navigate an uncertain future. (Source: *Open Doors*)

Myanmar—Since the junta military overthrew the democratically elected government in 2021, famine has steadily increased. 14.4 million people are experiencing food insecurity, and the junta has prevented rice and medicine from reaching war zones. For example, recently, military burned a warehouse that held enough food that would sustain 64,000 people for a month. They also cut off access to food and aid from severely malnourished children in an area experiencing cholera outbreaks. The cost of food has risen 154% since 2023. Although millions are suffering from extreme hunger and Myanmar is experiencing one of the worst food crises in the world, the military has prevented aid organizations from researching or reporting on the problem. When aid workers have tried to publish reports on the growing food crisis, the junta has threatened to shut them down and harm staff members, and indeed some have been detained and not released. Most aid workers decline to comment when asked about food shortages, and the UN report has been removed from the internet. Because of the secrecy surrounding the food crisis, organizations have not been able to publish reports as evidence for a dire need of food and funds. Many, especially of the Rohingya population, are experiencing such a crisis that they can't afford to buy even an onion and are instead foraging for food. Pray for aid to reach the needy in Myanmar, for a miraculous supply of food, and for the military leaders to care for the vulnerable. Pray that the truth of this situation would be made evident and no longer hidden and that many would come to their aid. (Source: *Reuters*)

International—World Vision, citing a recent report in the medical journal *The Lancet*, has highlighted the global epidemic of gender-based violence particularly against adolescent girls—often experienced at the hands of romantic partners or family members. The World Health Organization also estimates one in four adolescent girls who have been in a relationship have experienced some form of violence against them, and this prevalence is directly linked to child marriage—a dangerous, primitive, and archaic practice that leaves girls completely vulnerable and without rights or even legal protections. Pray for international efforts of governments and NGOs as they attempt to address this endemic, systemic violence by promoting the education of girls, the institution of policies that limit or eliminate child marriage or at least offer support and legal protections for those trapped in abusive situations, and

awareness programs for boys and young men to change cultural perceptions of what appropriate treatment of girls and women should be. *(Source: World Vision)*

Vietnam—Before Christmas, local authorities in many rural areas of Vietnam warned the Christians in their communities that there would be arrests if the believers participated in Christian Christmas services or even decorated their homes, played Christmas music, or prepared holiday food. In fact, on December 21, in the rural areas of the Central Highlands, many believers were arrested for preparing to celebrate in a non-government approved church. The Christians here of Hmong and Montagnard descent are particularly targeted. The Socialist government restricts forms of worship that are not in state-sponsored churches and also leaves local authorities the power to persecute believers, and this happens more often in rural communities. Please pray that the arrested believers would be released and safe, and pray for the many Vietnamese Christians who gather secretly in house churches to be safe and undetected. Pray that they would also have a hidden, powerful, and fruitful ministry of evangelism among the unsaved. Pray that God would strengthen and encourage their faith during this trying time. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

Turkey—Professor Şebnem Korur Fincancı, a world-renowned forensic medical expert, has been a tireless campaigner for the end of torture in Turkey. Her work with the UN, the World Health Organization, and the Turkish Medical Association has helped thousands in Turkey. Now she has become a target of relentless harassment by Turkish authorities, including arbitrary detention, baseless criminal investigations, and false charges against her. Most recently, in retaliation for her calls to investigate Turkey's use of chemical weapons in Iraq, she was charged with "making propaganda for a terrorist organization." She was convicted of this in January 2023, and though she is appealing this conviction, she could face a prison sentence if it is upheld. Across the board, Turkey is clamping down on all kinds of freedoms and has increasingly employed torture and other human rights violations in an effort to intimidate and control its population. This trend has had worsening implications particularly for Christians living in Turkey, as it has also moved in recent years from a secular state to a Muslim one. Pray for the appeal of Professor Şebnem Korur Fincancı to be successful and for her vital work against torture to continue. Pray for the government of Turkey to relent in their harassment of her and others who speak up for human rights and/or merely want to practice their own faith. Pray that Turkey would make an about-face on their recent draconian policies and return to a freer, fairer, more open civil society. Pray for believers in Turkey to remain bold, faithful, and comforted in the face of persecution. *(Source: Amnesty International)*