

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

IRAN

Praise for:

- The growth of the 'underground' church & the courageous testimony of many Christians
- The astonishing growth of the Iranian churches here in the UK

Pray for:

- Pastors & leaders in prison in bad conditions, & their families
- Our brothers & sisters who have met in secret today, & their children. Strength & protection for them. Wisdom for leaders as they minister in highly sensitive contexts
- Relief for the injured & homeless following the earthquake earlier this week. Help for the bereaved
- Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in prison; husband Richard (son of Margaret Kingman's cousin) & daughter living with her grandparents. Boris Johnson!

Background:

- Iran is an Islamic State
- Christians are under 1% of the population- ancient Christian Armenian & Syriac communities, which are officially recognised, but which have to worship in their languages, rather than the national language of Farsi.
- The remaining Christians are house-church believers, who are severely persecuted, with many of their leaders currently suffering long prison sentences, including Pastors Victor & Amin.
- Christians meet secretly & are under constant surveillance. Most of them are Muslim background believers.

SUDAN

Praise for:

- Pioneer church planting of the heroes of the Sudan Interior Mission & the Sudan United Mission in previous years.
- Faithfulness of our brothers & sisters under attack from the authorities and others

Pray for:

- Christians who are facing ongoing harassment and intimidation
- Christians to remain strong in their faith & witness, especially that many will still find ways to meet secretly where necessary. Their children.
- Protection for believers from a Muslim background
- Wisdom, patience, & peace for church leaders. Courage for Christians to bear witness to Jesus
-

Background:

- Approx. 97% Sunni Muslim. Christians 3%, including Orthodox, Catholic & Protestant denominations
- No permissions granted for new places of worship since 1990
- Christians under intense pressure. Last Sunday 5 Church leaders were arrested near Khartoum at a church service, after they had been forbidden to meet.
- Many churches being denied registration & being forcibly demolished

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

YEMEN

Praise for:

- Small house-churches, meeting secretly. Isolated believers.
- Courage of relief agencies, including Medicine without Frontiers, & medics serving in hospitals & clinics, exposed to bombing without adequate resources

Pray for:

- Young, tiny underground Yemeni churches, with local Christians taking responsibility & leadership, & also supporting one another. Protection for Christians
- Peace & justice throughout the country & an end to war & violence
- Sustainable support to reach those who urgently need it, whether food or medicine
- Many Yemenis to hear & respond to the good news of Jesus

Background:

- A Muslim country suffering from a catastrophic combination of civil war, lawlessness, famine & disease, principally cholera
- 65% Sunni Muslims, supported militarily by Saudi Arabia; 35% Shia Muslims, supported by rebel movement & Iran. Apostasy from Islam punishable by death
- Under 1% Christians, most of whom until recently were expats.

SYRIA

Praise for:

- Commitment of many Church leaders to stay in Syria to serve their people, despite the dangers
- Many relief agencies providing medical care, schooling opportunities and trauma counselling

Pray for:

- Peace, justice & the rule of law to be established throughout Syria
- Sustainable solutions for the millions who are displaced in Syria & the refugees in neighbouring countries
- Leaders such as Pastor Edward Awabdeh in Damascus: "We want to be like Christ, & Christ told us to love our enemies. If we fall into the trap of hatred & revenge, then we've lost our power in the spiritual war. But we trust in the Lord. The Church has a pivotal role to bring people together & sow the seeds of forgiveness, acceptance & reconciliation."
- Christians to bear faithful witness to the good news of Jesus.

Background:

- Ongoing civil war, despite apparent defeat recently of Islamic State.
- Millions of refugees & displaced people in Lebanon & Jordan (several thousand in Europe). Most still fearful of return to Syria
- Used to have a nominal Christian population of approx. 10% of population
- Churches in pro-Government areas enjoy reasonable status, so long as they are loyal to the President
- Christians in rebel areas are under threat from radical Muslims, as they are perceived as pro-Government. Many suffered terribly under Islamic State. Many different rebel groups still fighting for control, supported from abroad