

Monday 14th September

IS

"But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Ps 86:15

Since 2014, this group have called themselves IS. They have been known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS, and also known by the Arabic-language acronym Daesh. This group was based in Iraq and Syria but was defeated in Iraq almost 4 years ago and lost control in Syria earlier last year. They once controlled 34,000 square miles of territory. Although IS has suffered substantial losses, it is believed to still control between 14,000 and 18,000 militants in Iraq and Syria, including up to 3,000 foreigners..

In Iraq, the group has already "substantially evolved into a covert network", UN Secretary General António Guterres said in a report to the Security Council released last year. IS militants are active in rural areas in Iraq with remote, rugged terrain that gives them freedom to move and plan attacks, including kidnappings for ransom, targeted assassinations of local leaders and attacks against state utilities and services. The IS network in Syria is expected to evolve to resemble that in Iraq.

Although IS has lost territory, its ideology remains. In 2014 it declared itself a caliphate (an Islamic state led by a caliph who is a spiritual leader of Islam and who claims succession from Muhammad) and shortened its name to Islamic State to reflect its expansionist ambitions. The group has forged links with militants from Nigeria to Pakistan, embracing regional franchises that have pledged allegiance to them. Some of those pledges came from existing groups which went on to re-brand themselves as new IS branches.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the overall leader of IS. They follow a fundamentalist jihadist doctrine of Sunni Islam.

For more ways to pray for IS, you can go to: <http://prayforisis.com/about/>

- Pray that members in each branch of IS would come to know the Lord. May Jesus find faith among IS members and leadership.
- Pray for the salvation of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and other leaders within IS. Ask God to make them into leaders who draw those serving below them into the truth and life of Jesus.
- Pray that members of IS would be rooted and established in God's love! If they were to truly experience God's love, how would that change what is happening now in the Muslim world?

Sources: <http://prayforisis.com/about/> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-27994277>

Tuesday 15th September

Testimony from a former IS member

You might like to watch this video from Leading The Way for the full account of Muhammad's story as a former ISIS leader who became a follower of Christ:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUAbRYvMbDA>

Muhammad contacted Peter, a field worker from an agency called Leading The Way, after watching one of their television programmes. Muhammad was a leader within the ISIS group, teaching members the Quran and urging them to fight. One day he was asked why he was a Muslim. He searched the Quran for answers to prove that Allah was real and the Quran was right. He didn't find the assurance he was seeking. Knowing that Peter was a follower of Christ who evangelised Muslims, he contacted him and they arranged to meet. Peter had misgivings, but felt prompted by God to meet up and trust in God's protection.

During their meeting as Peter shared the gospel, Muhammad became angry. But as Peter continued to share God's Word, Muhammad broke down in tears and Peter prayed for him.

They met up again after Muhammad had a dream that left him fearful; he had seen Peter give him an envelope with blood dripping from it. Peter explained the dream, that without the shedding of Jesus' blood, our sins can't be forgiven. Muhammad wanted this forgiveness. They continued to meet and as Peter disciplined him, Muhammad confessed that he had wanted to kill Peter when they first met. He repented of his sins and because of the constant love of Jesus that Peter showed him, Muhammad gave his life to Jesus. His life then changed completely, he was baptised, and went on to lead a Bible study in his community with three other people.

- Let's take time to thank God for the bravery of all field workers, who in spite of the danger to themselves, fearlessly preach the gospel so that others might be saved.
- Pray that God would come to IS members in dreams and visions. Pray for large-scale dreams and visions, even that whole groups would have the same dream or vision at the same time. Pray for God to release His wonders among them so that they will call on His name and be saved.
- Pray for all members of fundamentalist groups who take the risk to follow Christ and then disciple others, knowing God's heart is for everyone to come into a relationship with His son Jesus.
- Pray for group members to know that the shed blood of Jesus is sufficient to cover every evil act and for them to be completely forgiven.

Source: <https://uk.ltw.org/watch/testimonies/isis-leader-comes-to-christ>

Wednesday 16th September

Al-Shabab

“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

Al-Shabab is an Islamist militant group in Somalia and other parts of East Africa. Al-Shabab means The Youth in Arabic and it emerged as the radical youth wing of Somalia's now-defunct Union of Islamic Courts, which controlled Mogadishu in 2006, before being forced out by Ethiopian forces.

Allied to al-Qaeda, it has been pushed out of most of the main towns it once controlled in Somalia, but it remains a potent threat. It has carried out a string of attacks across the region, including suicide bombings.

Al-Shabab was chased out of Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, in 2011, but the city is still hit regularly by these militants. The group, which is fighting to overthrow the internationally-backed government, sees anyone working with the government, the UN or NGOs as an enemy. In late July last year, members of the group attacked the mayor's office in the capital of Mogadishu, resulting in his death. The mayor, Abdirahman Omar Osman, had been an outspoken opponent of the group.

Its leadership positions are mainly occupied by Afghanistan- and Iraq-trained ethnic Somalis and foreigners. It is primarily concerned with nationalist and clan-related affairs as opposed to the global jihad. Ahmed Umar is the current overall leader.

- Pray for God to give members of al-Shabab undivided hearts that seek to follow His ways. Ask God to turn them into a people who are devoted to Him.
- Pray that members of al-Shabab may comprehend the extravagance of God's love filling their hearts, no matter how undeserving they may feel.
- Pray that the voice of the Lord, whether loud or very quiet, would be heard clearly and that members al-Shabab would heed it. Pray that God would speak to them in the specific way that they need to hear and understand.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15336689>

Thursday 17th September

Abdirahim's testimony as a former member of al-Shabab

When I was ten, our class bully beat me up. When my dad heard, he beat me harshly and told me to go back and retaliate. As an adult, one day at work I thrashed a man who insulted me, and I was fired. Eventually I ended up joining al-Shabab and saw many people killed. Violence was our way of life.

One day I was ordered to infiltrate a group of Christians in order to murder them all. I pretended to be interested in them and was warmly welcomed. I joined their regular meetings. Some of their relatives in a neighbouring town were killed by al-Shabab and the Christians forgave them! That

undid me. I confessed to them why I was there, repented and asked their forgiveness. I began to follow Jesus.

With their help, I escaped from al-Shabab, went to Mogadishu, and started my life over again. The more I experience God's forgiveness, the gentler I am becoming.

- Pray that God would use His disciples to change the lives of al-Shabab members. Pray for the Holy Spirit to encourage them to reach those around them with power and courage.
- Pray for those whom God will save out of al-Shabab to have extreme boldness and a fruitful witness. Pray that others from this group and the world would look at them and marvel at the radical change. Pray that many would be 'confounded' by their testimonies.
- Pray that al-Shabab members would know the gentle touch of our Lord. May they come to Jesus, give him their burdens and rest in His gentleness.

Source of some content: <https://prayercast.com/violence.html>

Friday 18th September

PKK

"If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me." Jeremiah 15:19

The PKK is a Kurdish militant and political organisation based in the Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iraq. It was established in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan. It is seen as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government. It launched an armed struggle against the Turkish government in 1984, calling for an independent Kurdish state in Turkey. Tens of thousands died on both sides during the long conflict between Kurds and Turks. There was a ceasefire in 2013, but the war in Syria ended that and conflict restarted and escalated in July 2015.

At the end of 2015 in the city of Sur in south-eastern Turkey, there was fighting between the PKK and Turkish military. Much of the city was destroyed and virtually levelled. Of the population of 120,000, some 40,000 fled.

Following a failed coup attempt in July 2016 against President Erdogan by mutinous Turkish officers, the PKK was and continues to be targeted by the Turkish government. They want to rid Turkey of Kurds living in the southeast of the country and quash the PKK, who have been a thorn in their side for many years. The conflict has claimed more than 40,000 lives since 1984.

Murat Karayılan is one of the co-founders and has been the acting leader since its original founder and leader, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured in 1999 by Turkish intelligence agents.

- Pray that the leaders of the PKK would know Jesus as King and that they would lead their people according to His rule.
- Pray that God would bring restoration to members of the PKK. May they discover that they can stand before God free from sin, adopted as children made righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ.

- Pray that God would remove the spirit of division. Pray for unity and healing in Christ, that people would worship as one body. Ask God to show them the joy of worshipping His glory in unity and the blessing of submitting to Him.

Source of some content: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20971100>

Saturday 19th September

Boko Haram

“The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.” Ps 146:7b-8

Boko Haram is a militant Islamist group based in Nigeria, that aligned itself with IS in 2015. It was formed in 2002, as a moderate group with an operational base in northeastern Nigeria. In July 2009, its founder and spiritual leader, Mohammed Yusuf was executed. This paved the way for his deputy, Abubakar Shekau, to assume a leadership role. It is believed this led to the radicalisation of this group.

It has caused havoc through a wave of bombings, assassinations and abductions, including the kidnapping of female students from a college in Chibok in 2014. They have killed, looted, attacked schools, abducted women and children and conscripted men and boys into their army. In June last year, it was responsible for abducting and killing five aid workers in north-east Nigeria. It is fighting to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state. It has lost control of much territory but remains a threat.

Boko Haram promotes a version of Islam which makes it ‘haram’, or forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with Western society. Boko Haram regards the Nigerian state as being run by non-believers, regardless of whether the president is Muslim or not and it has extended its military campaign by targeting neighbouring states such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The UN estimates that at least 20,000 people have been killed and millions displaced in the conflict to date, but the true number who have lost their lives is thought to be higher.

This group is never short of recruits. They target the growing number of street urchins in the north, many of them drug addicts and sex slaves. Kidnapped girls and women have also been used as suicide bombers.

- Pray that members of Boko Haram would fear God above all else, not those who rule over them, and that in their trouble they would find perfect peace and hope in Jesus. Pray that they would truly see who God is and turn to serve Him.
- Pray that God would redirect the honour and valour of these group members toward His purposes. Pray that they rise up as mighty men who stand for the Lord Jesus.
- Pray that young people who are targeted for recruitment by Boko Haram would encounter the Lord Jesus.

Source of some content: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/29/dozens-feared-killed-by-suspected-boko-haram-fighters-in-nigeria>