

Monday 9th August

Imprisoned for their faith

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12

A Frontiers couple working in East Africa recently shared the following:

“There has been a lot of persecution in our country in the last 6-9 months, more than we’ve seen in the previous 12 years. We know God is bringing His Kingdom in these days, so persecution is expected, but that doesn’t make it easy for us or our friends. Below is a letter a sister of ours sent us last week.

“Speaking on behalf of my husband M and me, I am sending you this letter from prison for having faith in Jesus Christ and following our Lord and Saviour. We send this letter to all our brothers and sisters whom the blood of Jesus Christ unites.

May grace and mercy be with all of you in Jesus Christ.

My husband and I would like to share with you our situation in prison and how God is with us always. My husband told me that that he was arrested and confined in a single room as a punishment, but he found time to spend with God and he is happy despite the trials that he is going through now.

A week ago, he was taken out of solitary confinement and put in a large room with 17 people in it. The guard in charge told inmates to stay away from my husband because he is a follower of Jesus. Inmates told my husband to sleep near the bathroom which is unclean and such a dirty place. He accepted this and stayed there. While he was sitting there, he found 4 Ethiopian believers that were arrested with him, in that room. One of them recognised him, quickly came over and hugged him, and they became five believers in that room.

They prayed together for a while and then the prison guards removed my husband, and they put him back in his previous lonely room in solitary confinement.

Brothers and sisters, God is with us at all times and all of us as followers of Christ expect trials as Christ foretold us. He is our Good Shepherd. The Lord is always with us.

Also on the day of our trial, the Lord gave us strength and a happy and fearless face and we stood in front of the devil with the weapons of God.

And God will be with us to the end.

Brothers and sisters, pray for us without ceasing.

May the blessings of Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.””

- Please pray today as you are led for M and his wife. Praise God for their faith and that of the other believers in prison. May they, like Paul and Silas, sing God’s praises and see His power released in that prison.

- Let's pray that, as with Paul and Silas in prison as recorded in Acts 16:25-34, the prison guard and his family will come to faith too.
- Pray for all Muslim background believers persecuted for their faith, that they will stand strong in the Lord and know the Lord is always with them, that He is their Good Shepherd.
- Pray for our workers who themselves are facing increased persecution. This year we have seen a number of our workers expelled from various Muslim countries where they have gone to live and serve. It has caused much emotional stress and turmoil, as they have had to leave friends and ministries at short notice.

Tuesday 11th August

Increasing persecution of believers

Yesterday we mentioned a story from Frontiers workers in East Africa. Some East African countries are in the top ten of this year's World Watch List from Open Doors of countries where believers face persecution for their faith.

Here, in order, are the top ten most dangerous countries:

North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, Yemen, Iran, Nigeria and India

You can see the full list of 50 countries and get more information here:

<https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/> and watch a video from Open Doors: <https://vimeo.com/500051386>.

Apart from North Korea, the countries listed are all Muslim-majority countries or those such as India with large Muslim populations. We have prayed for several countries on this list in recent months and read stories of MBBs facing persecution. In an article by Bruce Allen of Forgotten Missionaries International that was recently published in Mission Network News, he said that while there are still only 50 countries ever on the list, the situations in those countries are becoming much more severe. Open Doors reports that 1 in 8 Christians worldwide suffer high levels of persecution. Every day on average, 13 Christians are murdered for their faith.

The total number of Christians killed for their faith rose 60% in 2020, and 91% of these killings occurred in African countries like Nigeria. The COVID-19 pandemic has also created an environment and excuse to blame Christians and other religious minorities. China entered the top 20 for the first time in a decade, due to its treatment of Uighur Muslims and other religious minorities.

But Bruce Allen went on to say that the increase in persecution isn't the full story. There are those who stand firm in their faith. He relates a story from Pakistan, the 5th most hostile country on the list. The imam of a mosque, a Muslim leader in his community, came to faith in Christ. When he told his family and his community, he was beaten, expelled from the mosque and he lost his job. But his reaction to the violence was surprising. Allen quotes him; "This is fine. I have no despair. I have no panic. This is showing me that I'm actually following in the footsteps of Christ."

- Followers of Christ serve a Lord who was beaten, mocked, and even executed. But He rose from the dead. Even death can't defeat the church. Let's pray for the church to stand firm in

those countries where persecution is so prevalent and Muslim background believers are martyred for their faith.

- Ask God to give courage and perseverance to all His people around the world.
- Pray for the leaders in these Muslim nations to have a powerful encounter with God through dreams and visions.

Source: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/2021-world-watch-list-reveals-most-dangerous-countries-for-christians/>

Wednesday 11th August

Following Christ in the Heart of Islam

The following story is from Frontiers workers that gives cause for praise and encouragement to keep praying:

“Amazing things are happening in our Muslim country. We live in a city that is known as a major theological centre of Islam. Years ago when we first moved to the country, God gave our team a vision to see Him move right here in the heart of Islam—and to see the rest of the world impacted as a result.



Now we're witnessing that vision coming to life.

Tayeb was one of the first people who joyfully responded to the gospel. As we prayed with him and coached him, he started sharing the message of Christ with his family and neighbours. Soon he had a small group of new Muslim background believers praising Jesus with him. Because of his witness, Tayeb has faced persecution and spent time in prison. Seeing his courage in suffering, fellow Muslim background believers have

stepped out in faith to share Jesus even more boldly. As they spread the gospel, entire families are turning to Christ and following Him.

Today there are more than 70 Muslim background believers worshiping Jesus in our city, and that number continues to grow. They meet twice a week in groups of about six people for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. Some of these faithful believers have already taken the gospel into a neighbouring Muslim country, where their witness has led a dozen people to Jesus Christ.

The magnitude of this situation cannot be overstated. Such a move of the gospel in a Muslim nation like ours is miraculous. It's the first time in known history that a church of local believers is forming in this place.”

- Please pray for Tayeb and our new brothers and sisters to hold fast to Jesus as they endure tests of faith.

- Pray that this movement to Christ will grow beyond ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and political borders.
- Pray for wisdom for Frontiers teams as they nurture movements of faith and help believers mature in the face of persecution.

Source: <https://frontiersusa.org/blog/following-christ-in-the-heart-of-islam/>

Thursday 12th August

Praying for persecuted believers

James wrote to believers who were who were angry and hurt by the persecution they were enduring:

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” James 1:19-21

Is there a story in the news today or in the past few weeks about the persecution of believers that causes righteous anger in you?

I recently read this story from Pray Africa about the Somali of East Africa:

“I urge international observers to attend our next court day. It is the day that we will defend ourselves against the accusations, and it is important to have witnesses that day. We now believe that the police are against us only for believing Jesus is our Lord and Saviour. Today the investigator was asking why we follow Jesus and have left Islam. And in court he even said, “Leaving Islam is a crime according to Sharia law that we use.”

Hebrews 13:3 tells us; *“Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.”*

- Let’s remember and pray for all Muslim background believers facing trials, that God will strengthen them so they will rejoice in every circumstance that they go through.
- Pray God will change the decision of the government in favour of these Somali believers.
- Pray for all Muslims leaving Islam, who are accused of being apostates. Ask for divine intervention in the situations they face.

Source of some content: <https://prayafrica.org/2021/05/05/third-letter-from-prison/>

Friday 13th August

An Imam chooses to follow Jesus

"I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matt 5:44

At the end of last year, Cry Out posted this inspiring story about an Imam coming to faith:

"One day about 6 months ago an Imam was preaching his normal Friday sermon in his mosque which is in a completely Muslim area. As he was preaching from a certain passage in the Quran, he came to a verse that calls for the discrimination of non-Muslims and disassociating from them. As he was preaching this, he realised that this verse just could not be right and yet here he was not only believing this himself but teaching it to others. The Holy Spirit convicted him which in turn prepared his heart to meet our disciple in secret just a few weeks later in his own house. This disciple was a believer who came to faith in the same village and attended the same mosque several years earlier. This believer experienced tremendous persecution including being violently kicked out of his house and village because of the preaching and encouragement of this same Imam.

Now God had miraculously orchestrated this meeting between these two men. He softened the heart of the Imam to open his house and listen (despite facing danger on his part) and gave boldness to this disciple to go and love this man who had previously persecuted him and preached against him. This disciple was even bold enough to give this Imam a Bible after sharing his testimony of how Jesus had changed his life and had been with him and his family even through all the great trials of the past years. A series of secret meetings followed with the Imam opening up more and more each time. After about six meetings this Imam realised that he needed to believe in Jesus and follow Him! Subsequently, on the very next meeting, he made the decision to repent of his sin and give his whole life to serve Jesus! His life has been changed and he already feels like a new person.

Several weeks later after preaching in the mosque, he immediately changed out of his robe (or dish dash) and took an hour's taxi ride to meet this other man. They then drove three hours south to meet in private because of persecution and people watching him and other imams in the area after some recent terrorist activity. Here they continued to walk through what it means to follow Jesus and obey him. After sharing his desire to follow Jesus and how Jesus had already caused his heart to totally change, he also said that he was ready to be baptised. So right then and there he was baptised by the one he had formally persecuted.

He is very excited and committed to His faith in Jesus and is already sharing with others! He remains the Imam and continues to preach in the mosque but now he preaches Bible truths. We are praying for the 100-200 regulars of this mosque to come to know Jesus as well and for this Imam to turn into a great leader and walk in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. We praise God for this miracle and for all the others coming to faith in this area as well. We are believing for much more to come despite the heavy persecution and the great obstacles against us! One of our disciples was shot and killed this summer for his faith but we are holding tight to the belief that "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

- Let's agree in prayer for the Muslims who attend this Imam's mosque, that they too would come to know Jesus, whatever the cost.
- Pray for this Imam to become a great leader and fearless preacher of the gospel like Paul.

- Let's thank God for the brave Muslim background believer who forgave his persecutor and led him to faith (Matt 5:44). Pray for many others in this region to come to faith and let's thank God and give Him all the praise for what He is doing in this place.
- Pray for new healthy churches to be planted here for we know that Jesus will build His church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it!

Source: <https://www.cryoutnow.org/imam-follows-jesus.html>

Saturday 14th August

Praying for the persecuted church

"Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people." Col 1:24 – 26

Fatima Al-Mutairi was a woman from Saudi Arabia who was killed by her brother in 2008 for being a follower of Christ. Her case was widely publicised at the time. Although death is the exception and not the rule, the cost of turning away from Islam to Christ is enormous. Many have lost families, friends, communities, jobs, reputations and freedom. They have been imprisoned and killed in honour killings as in the case of Fatima. Jesus even predicted this (Matthew 10:21-22). Since the Arabian Peninsula is the very heartland of Islam, persecution is a reality.

You can listen to Fatima's story here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBQ1D29959I>

Click on this link to read a poem by Fatima before her execution:

<http://www.apinfo.eu/fatimapoem.pdf>

Last year in a prayer guide about Iran, we read about a film called Sheep Among Wolves Part 2. It described a rapidly-reproducing discipleship movement that had brought more Iranians to faith in the last 30 years than in the last 1,300 since Islam came to Iran in the 7th century. Leaders within the movement attributed the growth of the gospel to severe persecution at the hands of the regime. In this film, an Iranian believer living in America was interviewed. She said that she wanted to return to Iran. In America she felt far from God, because life was easy. When living in Iran in daily fear for her life, she had felt the presence of God with her so powerfully. Each day, believers in Iran leave their homes, not knowing if they will return. They consider themselves living sacrifices for the sake of the gospel (Romans 12:1). The powerful and deeply challenging film has a profound message for the Western Church. You can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SAPOLKF59U>.

- Pray for our brothers and sisters who are currently being persecuted in the Arabian Peninsula and Iran because of their faith in Jesus. Ask God to comfort them in all of their afflictions, as they share in Christ's sufferings (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).
- Pray for those who persecute Muslim background believers, that God would convict them of their sins, that they would repent, and believe in the gospel and be brought into the kingdom, especially Fatima's family as she writes in her poem; "the Lord Jesus will guide you, Oh Muslims, and enlighten your hearts that you might love others."

- Spend a few moments pondering the suffering of the persecuted church across the Muslim world and consider how much you might suffer for your faith. Have we in the West settled for being genuine believers but never true disciples? Let's pray for God's Spirit to help us to love the lost and proclaim Christ in all we do and say.

Source of some content: <https://www.pray-ap.info/downloads/Ramadan2021.pdf>