

31. INDIA – pray for **Narendran and Kavita**. Formerly both were traditional Hindus but came to Christ after experiencing miraculous deliverances from their problems and sicknesses. Narendran committed his life to the Lord's ministry. Kavita sold jewelry given to her by her parents to buy a piece of property so they could build a bamboo shed for church services. The church soon grew to 40 believers. But then the persecution began. Hindu extremists attacked during a worship service and severely beat both Narendran and Kavita. They had to be hospitalized and continue to suffer from their injuries. The church has shrunk since the violence. The remaining believers who come to church are very afraid. But the couple continues their ministry in the village.

Here's how we can pray with Narendran and Kavita:

- Please pray for Narendran and Kavita as they stay in the same village and continue their ministry. Pray for their protection and financial needs.
- Kavita shares: “Please pray for our children; we all are so fearful after the incident. Pray that the Lord would protect us and our children always. Pray also for our good health. I fall sick frequently—please pray that I am able to remain healthy.
- Kavita also asks: “We are still living in a rented accommodation; please also pray that the Lord would provide us with our own house.”
- Pray for the Christians from the church; many of them are too afraid to attend services. Pray that the Lord would bring peace so that the church could meet freely.
- Pray for Christian leaders like Narendran who are vulnerable to attacks by extremists; ask God to protect them and strengthen their faith
- Pray that Christians in India could have true equality and feel safe and free in their choice of worship and their decision to follow Jesus.
- Ask God to change the hearts of Hindu extremists who oppose Christians in India. Pray they would see the hope and love of Jesus.

SOURCES:

CHURCH IN CHAINS; CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE; CHRISTIAN TODAY; OPEN DOORS; PRISONER ALERT; RELEASE INTERNATIONAL; VOICE of the MARTYRS; WORLD MAGAZINE; WORLD WATCH MONITOR

Now I urge you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God. Romans 15:30

STANDING IN THE GAP

for the Persecuted Church

July 2024

1. **ALGERIA** – continue praying for Algerian church leader **Rev Youssef Ourahmane**. He has lost his appeal against his one-year prison sentence for holding an unauthorized religious assembly in a building not permitted for worship. Rev Youssef remains out of prison while an appeal to Algeria's Supreme Court is prepared.
2. **IRAN** – pray for **Esmail Narimanpour** who was released on bail after four months in detention. He was one of 46 Christians arrested during a crackdown on house churches across Iran over the Christmas season.
3. **INDIA** – pray for **Laxman** who started a church with his wife. Hindu extremists in his community wanted to put a stop to it. “I was told that if I continue my ministry, I would be buried alive on my land,” Laxman said. Despite being beaten and put in jail, he continues to lead his church. “The church building is closed, but my ministry continues,” he says. “This is God's work. No one can close it or shut it down. It is for the kingdom of the Lord.”
4. **PAKISTAN** – On May 2, a pastor and Church in Chains partner visited **Zafar Bhatti**, 61, in Adyala Prison in Rawalpindi. Zafar has been in prison for the past 12 years on blasphemy charges and is suffering from several serious health issues. Numerous court hearings of his appeal have been adjourned because no judge is willing to hear the case.
5. **CHINA** – pray for **Pastor Lian Changnian**, 71, of Xi'an Church of Abundance who has been imprisoned since August 2022. His lawyer recently visited him and found his health to be ‘severely damaged.’
6. **IRAN** – pray for **Laleh Saati** who is serving a 2-year prison sentence. Her mother recently visited her and says she is struggling with her mental health due to the pressure she has been under since being imprisoned in February and needs psychological help.
7. **INDIA** – pray for **Ramesh and Sakshi Ahirwar**. In May they were granted continuing bail at an appeal hearing in Madhya Pradesh state. The pastor and his wife have each been sentenced to 2 years in prison after Hindu extremists accused them of ‘forcible conversion.’
8. **NORTH KOREA** – continue praying for Christians in North Korea. “We lack everything,” said one secret church leader. “We also notice stricter surveillance of people who have a family member who fled the country. During this wintertime, many people were starving and freezing. Please pray that we will receive proper medicines when we are sick.” Pray also:
 - that they can find food and heat
 - that they will know that they are prayed for
 - that God will change the heart of ruler Kim Jong Un
 - that North Korean believers will be able to get to Open Doors' safe houses in China to rest and receive food, medicine, and training to strengthen their faith.
 - that the underground church will be able to continue standing strong in God's grace.
9. **LAOS** – pray for **Kham**, an Open Doors partner who despite the risks he faces for his faith, reaches out to believers with spiritual and practical aid. “I have decided to follow Jesus because He gives me hope. I found hope only in Him, so I decided to give my life to Him,” Kham says.
10. **COLOMBIA** – pray for churches that are working to prevent teenage boys and girls from joining guerrilla or paramilitary groups.

11. **CHINA** – continue praying for **Elder Zhang**, 60, who has been in detention since March 2021. In May, Elder Zhang’s lawyer visited him at the Guiyang City Detention Center and reported that he looked slightly thin but said he was very comforted to hear about the release of 2 imprisoned leaders of Qingcaodi Reformed Church in Deyang, Sichuan province.
12. **IRAN** – continue praying for imprisoned **Pastor Matthias Haghnejad** who has been told that he will no longer be permitted to return home to visit with his family each month, as he had been doing since Nov 2023. His family home is 1,600 km away from where he is imprisoned.
13. **CHINA** – China Partnership asks for prayer for the city of **Nanking**. Even though there are many universities in Nanking, campus ministry has been hurt in recent years by the Covid pandemic and resulting lack of students. Pray for more students to return to Nanking and for the church to be a witness to university students there.
14. **PAKISTAN** – pray for the Christian community in Mujahid Colony. On June 3, Nazir Masih was laid to rest following his death. He died from severe head injuries he received May 25th in a brutal attack following a false blasphemy accusation. He underwent 2 head surgeries but died of multiple organ failure on June 3.
15. **INDIA** – pray for **Jime Kawasi** whose husband, Kosa, 22, was killed at their home in Kapanar village on May 4. Jime has fled their home and village and is living in fear that her husband’s killers will find and kill her. Kosa was killed by an angry mob led by his uncle and cousin who were angry because Kosa and Jime had converted to Christianity.
16. **IRAN** – pray for Armenian Christian **Hakop Gochumyan**, 35, who in early June was informed that his appeal against a ten-year prison sentence had failed. He has been in prison since his arrest in Aug 2023 while visiting Iran on a family holiday.
17. **INDIA** – The results of India’s national election are somewhat encouraging for Christians in India. Although Prime Minister Modi and his BJP party were re-elected, it was with significantly less support than expected. What this means for India’s Christians is that they may be able to hope for a slowdown in the Hindu nationalistic rhetoric that has driven so much persecution over the last decade. Pray that this will indeed be the case.
18. **INDIA cont** – pray for Open Doors partner **Rahul Reddy** who says that given the lack of absolute power of the BJP, their nationalistic goals may now be kept in check. “This election is clear evidence of the beginning of the fall of hatred politics,” he continues. Churches in India were heavily involved in the elections and praying for its outcome. Open Doors partners ask for prayer - that the new government will work for the betterment of all religions, cultures, and castes. - for wisdom for the Christian community
- for Indian Christian leaders and pastors, that they may equip the church for any challenges ahead
- for the decline of persecution and curtailment of extremist groups.
19. **NIGERIA** – continue praying for Christians in Nigeria. Pray for **Rev Gideon Dawel**, 45, pastor of Christ Apostolic Church, who lost his wife and 5 daughters when Muslim Fulani attacked his village.
20. **NIGERIA cont** – pray for **Rev Koeleh Saleh** who said that 62 members of his church had been killed in the last 8 months.
21. **NIGERIA** – Christians in Nigeria are being wiped off the map. Some local leaders call these attacks genocide because they are systemic attacks to get rid of people. The Biden administration has bewildered experts for removing Nigeria from its list of ‘countries of particular concern’ – nations persecuting religious believers that can be subjected to sanctions and penalties.
22. **LEBANON** – pray for **Haytham** and his wife, **Mary**. He leads a growing congregation in Lebanon despite being wheelchair bound after being shot by Islamists in Iraq. He asks for prayer that the Lord will strengthen them and continue with them.
23. **SYRIA** – pray for 2 sisters, **Rajaa and Samia**, their mother, **Nawal**, and Rajaa’s daughter, **Yara**. These 4 women fled Syria during Islamists attacks that killed their husbands and brothers. After living in a refugee camp, a pastor helped them find more permanent housing and now the 2 sisters along with their pastor regularly deliver aid and share the gospel with Muslim refugees. The 4 women request prayer for God’s provisions as they continue to hope for an eventual return to their Syrian homeland. “We want to go back and tell them about Jesus.”
24. **IRAQ** – pray for **Pastor Karwan** who has an online outreach to Iraq’s overwhelmingly Muslim population. Numerous Muslims have come to know Christ through his website and have been baptized. His church has grown to more than 100 members. Local officials however have closed Karwan’s church building several times, and radical Muslims regularly send him abusive and threatening messages through the internet. Karwan requests prayer for encouragement and protection for his family and church members as he continues to share the gospel as a faithful soldier of Christ.
25. **RUSSIA** – pray for **Aleksiy Uminsky**, a Russian Orthodox priest who was fired in January and is facing expulsion from the church after refusing to read a prayer for victory over Ukraine. He has served a Moscow church for 30 years and led Mikhail Gorbachev’s funeral. He lost his position after telling fellow priests to ‘pray more for peace than for victory.’
26. **FINLAND** – The state prosecution on January 12 asked the country’s highest court to consider a case against an evangelical Christian lawmaker and her pastor even though the Helsinki District Court and the Court of Appeals have already acquitted them twice. Pray for **Paivi Rasanen** and **Pastor Juhana Pohjola** who have been newly charged with ‘hate speech’ for voicing Biblical views on human sexuality. The new dispute centers on “whether quoting Bible texts can be criminal,” said Matti Sankamo, Paivi’s lawyer.
27. **EGYPT** – Suspected Islamist extremists set fire to the homes and stores of Coptic Orthodox Christians in the village of Al-Farakher in the southern Minya Governate in April. About 3,000 Christians live in the village, The attack came after they received an official permit to build a church. Pray for the Coptic Orthodox Bishop **Anba Macarius**.
28. **IRAN**- Eight Iranian Christian converts have been sentenced to a total of nearly 45 years in prison. One of them, **Yasin Mousavi**, was sentenced to 15 years. They were from the western city of Izeh in Khuzestan province. Yasin was sentenced to prison for ‘membership of a group intent on disrupting national security.’
29. **IRAN cont**- pray for the other Christian converts arrested: **Hamid Afzali** who was sentenced to 10 years; **Nasrullah Mousavi**, **Bijan Qolizadah**, and **Iman Salehi** all to 5 years each; and **Zahrah Shahbazi** to 9 months. Iman is reportedly still detained while the others are currently out on bail.
30. **ERITREA** – continue praying for Christians imprisoned in Eritrea. Church in Chains along with Release Eritrea held a Prayer and Protest vigil outside the Eritrean Embassy in London on May 30th to mark the 20th anniversary of the imprisonment of Eritrean Christians beginning in 2004 with the arrests of 2 Eritrean pastors, **Rev Haile Naizghe** and **Dr Kiflu Gebremeskel**. Pray also for Eritrean refugees who have fled from Eritrea, thousands every year, fleeing imprisonment, torture, and persecution for beliefs.

