

PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

The Persecuted Church

In November we focus in prayer on the Persecuted Church. International statistics show that an estimated 150,000 Christians are martyred every year. More than 200 million Christians are restricted from living out their Christianity. There is a growing onslaught on Christianity world-wide. More and more countries are accepting legislation that creates greater difficulty for Christians to live out their faith and restricts them from gathering freely. This is true of China, Russia, a number of 2 countries in the Middle East, even Europe and Canada. There are also continuous efforts to ban the Bible.

The Century of Martyrs

As we focus in prayer on the Persecuted Church, it is important to have insight into the history of those who lost their lives for serving and following Jesus Christ. The following is a shortened history of the persecution of Christians over the centuries.

The persecutions of the 20th century were the most severe in the history of the church. In 1905, it started in the **Baltic States**. Time and again Bolshevik gangs ill-treated and killed many Christians. From 1894 to 1916 the **Armenians**, who had been officially Christian since 301, were repeatedly persecuted. In 1916, 1 million Armenians were killed by the "Young Turks." Today any mention of this massacre is outlawed in Turkey. The Aramaic-speaking **Assyrian** Christians, too, were greatly afflicted, first in 1895, then in 1933 and again in the 1970's and 80's when they were cruelly decimated. In South Eastern Turkey, the **Syrian** Orthodox Church has been reduced to a few thousand members. In 1921-22, when **Smyrna** was ceded to Greece, two million Greeks were exiled and thousands murdered. On 9 September 1922, 120,000 Greeks died in Smyrna alone. This brought to an end a 4,000-year-old period of Greek Christian history.

However, the fiercest persecutions took place in **Russia**. They started with the victory of the doctrines of Karl Marx, a German Jew who initially embraced Christianity, but later turned to Satanism. He wanted to "avenge himself on the One who rules above". His disciple Lenin, at the age of 16 tore his cross from his neck and spat and trampled on it. When communism was established in Russia, the Soviets immediately started to persecute the Christians. In 1918 bishops, priests and nuns were tried, shot and deported. In 1922 alone 2,690 priests, 1,962 monks and 3,447 nuns, altogether 8,100 people, were killed for righteousness' sake. The next wave of persecution came in 1928, when about 5,000 Christians perished during the dispossession of the Kulaks (farmers).

However, the worst came in 1927 after a census identified those who still called themselves Christians. In the next 6 years, 12 million people are estimated to have lost their lives. It is assumed that in 70 years of atheism and communism, 20 million men, women and children were killed for the sake of Christ. Now, nearly 20 years after the collapse of the USSR, it is an absolute miracle of God's grace that the Russian church is rising to new life again.

Even outside Europe Christians suffered great persecution. After 1920 and again in 1945, **Korea** endured affliction from both the Shinto religion and from communism. Yet Korea, too, has had a glorious revival and now sends missionaries into the entire world. In **Mexico**, a communist-infected liberalism caused the death of 5,000 priests. In **Spain**, during the civil war, the "Reds" killed 6,700 priests and monks. **Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria** recorded untold suffering of the saints. However, God raised up a defender of the suffering. Pastor Richard Wurmbrand of Romania was a Messianic Jew who, after many years of incarceration and torture, was redeemed for 10, 000 US\$ by Norwegian Christians. On his arrival in the West he established the *Voice of the Martyrs*, an organisation which has brought help and solace to martyred Christians all over the world.

China, Laos and Cuba, too, have not escaped persecution by the Communists. **Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Yemen** have fallen victim to Islamic persecutions. **Africa** has also had many martyrs, especially **Nigeria, the Sudan** and other countries. St. Paul describes the lot of the martyrs as follows: *Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated – the world was not worthy of them... (Heb.11:35f)*. But such intense persecution brings a believer closer to Christ and Jesus comforts all who endure on His account. *If we endure, we will also reign with him*, is the promise (2Tim.2:12). The martyrs have a special place in God's kingdom, for they are those *who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them... for the Lamb will be their shepherd... and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Re.7:14b-17)*.

A PRAYER for the Persecuted Church

I love you, o Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies (Ps.18:1-3 NIV).

O Lord our deliverer, deliver us from evil.

Sovereign Holy God, we marvel at Your work amongst the nations and we trust You. As we bring our requests to You, please forgive our sins, overlook our weaknesses and hear and answer our prayers for the sake of Your kingdom and glory. We pray today for our brothers and sisters who live with sadness, trauma and fear, and who live with daily hardship, discrimination and persecution because they have taken Your name and are Christians in a world that hates Christ. We bring before You our persecuted brothers and sisters whose lives and security are under threat daily. We bring before You especially those who are imprisoned and those who are branded 'apostate' and sentenced to death because they have turned to Jesus.

Lord our deliverer, deliver them from evil.

We bring before You our persecuted brothers and sisters whose lives have been shattered by religious repression, violent religious hatred and jihad, as they now face the daily struggle to maintain faith, hope and grace to forgive, as Satan attacks their hearts and minds.

Lord our deliverer, strengthen their faith and deliver them from evil.

We bring before You those who through ignorance, blindness, demonic interference and sin have set themselves against Your Church and yet are merely sinners in need of the Saviour.

Lord our deliverer, convict them of sin and deliver them from evil.

We bring before you all those who profess Christ and yet are soft, lukewarm, uncaring, unregenerate, fearful or lazy. Lord, may Your Spirit awaken, revive, reform and embolden us all to seek and embrace Your call upon our lives as ambassadors for Christ, no matter what the personal cost.

Lord our deliverer, forgive us our sins and deliver us from evil.

We pray to you, the only living God, the sovereign Almighty God for whom nothing is impossible. We ask that You, the God of Peace (Heb.13:20), will intervene in the conflicts in this world. We pray especially that You will 'frustrate the ways of the wicked' (Ps.146:9) and disrupt, expose and destroy terror networks and the illegal trade in weapons and ammunition. Put an end to this trade in death, shatter its foundations and strike its roots, disrupt its progress and starve it in the field, for the sake of Your kingdom and glory.

Lord, may Your Spirit embolden and compel Your church to preach the whole gospel. May conviction of sin abound, may righteousness spring up, may persecutors of the church be transformed into preachers of the gospel (Ga.1:23), may liberty fill the earth so that the sower may overtake the reaper (Am.9:13) and may all who see it rejoice in the Lord. We thank you for Your grace and mercy.

Deliver us from evil o Lord our deliverer, so we may live to serve You, for the sake of Your kingdom and glory. In the name of Jesus. AMEN

(Source: http://www.idop.org/idop_aprayer.pdf).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in North Korea, 1st and Saudi Arabia, 2nd on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would give them the nations as their inheritance and the ends of the earth as their possession in Christ (**Ps.2:8**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Iran, 3rd and Somalia, 4th on the *World persecution ranking list*. That the fruit of their righteousness will be a tree of life to the unsaved, for they who win souls are wise (**Pr.11:30**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in the Maldives, 5th and Yemen, 6th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would watch over His beloved people and rescue them from death and from the perils of politically-induced famine (**Ps.33:19**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Bhutan, 7th and Vietnam, 8th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that they would have complete trust in God and would not deny their faith (**Dan.3:18**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Laos, 9th and Afghanistan, 10th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would sustain them with abundant grace in all circumstances, especially when they feel weak (**2Cor.12:9**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Uzbekistan, 11th and China, 12th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that those imprisoned for Christ would be filled with the spirit of praise and that many will come to know God through their devotion (**Ac.16:25**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Eritrea, 13th and Turkmenistan, 14th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would open doors and greatly advance the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ (**Col.4:3**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Comoros, 15th and Chechnya, 16th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would protect those who take refuge in Him and fill them with joyful praises (**Ps.5:11**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Pakistan, 17th and Egypt, 18th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that they would firmly stand their ground in truth, righteousness, peace, faith, Christ's salvation and the Word of God (**Eph.6:14-17**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Myanmar (Burma), 19th and Sudan (North), 20th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that they would be strong in the Lord's mighty power (**Eph.6:10**). Pray for those who pray for the Persecuted Church.

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Iraq, 21st and Azerbaijan, 22nd on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would help us who are not persecuted to know His heart, to remember and identify with those in prison and those being mistreated (**Heb.13:3**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Brunei, 23rd and Cuba, 24th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that they would put on all of God's armour to be able to stand firm against all strategies and snares of the devil (**Eph.6:11**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Qatar, 25th and Libya, 26th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that we would pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit, stay alert and be persistent in our prayers for all Christians everywhere (**Eph.6:18**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Nigeria (North), 27th and Djibouti, 28th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would teach us how to pray, what to pray, and make our prayers effective (**Rm. 8:26**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in India, 29th and Sri Lanka, 30th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that we would know that the Lord of hosts is with us, and He would be exalted among the nations (**Ps.46:10**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Algeria, 31st and Mauritania, 32nd on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would give them faith to see the world changed through prayer (**Jas.5:16**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Morocco, 33rd and Tajikistan, 34th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that God would raise up people who would seek His face and pray for His people (**Is.64:7**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Turkey, 35th and Oman, 36th on the *World persecution ranking list*, that they would come to know Christ more and more, even have the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection (**Php.3:10**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Ethiopia, 37th and the United Arab Emirates, 38th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those who persecute the church, that God would remove ungodly rulers and raise up leaders who would fear and honour His name (**Dan.2:21**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Kuwait, 39th and Jordan, 40th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those who persecute the church, that despite their plans, the Lord's purpose for them will prevail and their hearts will be changed (**Prov.19:21**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Indonesia, 41st on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those who persecute the church, ask that God will show them His ways and teach them His paths. Pray that they will be led in God's truth, that He is the God of their salvation (**Ps.25:4-5**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Belarus, 42nd on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those who persecute the church, that the oppressors would see the love of God in those they persecute. That they fall on their knees, seek salvation and repent of their attacks against Christians (**Ac.16:30**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Colombia (conflict areas), 43rd on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those who persecute the church, that they would have a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, and themselves become ambassadors for Christ (**Ac.9:3**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Bangladesh, 44th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those who persecute the church, that they would be convinced of God's love through the lives of those they persecute, that it would spur them on to also turn to God, act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (**Mic.6:8**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Syria, 45th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those supporting the church, that God would establish His kingdom and accomplish His will through these agencies (**Mt.6:10**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Tunisia, 46th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those supporting the church, that they would have God's guidance and wisdom in both their ministries and supporting the Persecuted Church (**Col.1:9**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Kenya (north East), 47th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those supporting the church, that they would speak up and defend those who cannot speak for themselves and see

that they get justice (**Pr.31:8**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Nepal, 48th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those supporting the church, that God would open up opportunities so that these ministries would be even more effective (**1Cor.16:9**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Mexico (South), 49th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those supporting the church, that God would renew their spirit every day (**2Cor.4:16**).

Pray for the Persecuted Church in Bahrain, 50th on the *World persecution ranking list*, for those supporting the church, that God would enlarge, expand and strengthen their work (**Is.54:2**). That God would provide in all their needs (**Gn.22:14**).