

## STANDING IN THE GAP

for the Persecuted Church

April 2025

**27. SRI LANKA** – pray for church planters **Chaminda and Janani** in southern Sri Lanka where the overwhelming Buddhist majority is fiercely opposed to Christianity. The church they have planted has grown to 300 people and they have built a church building. In 2024, they planted 3 new churches in the area. Anti-Christian sentiment exists in their community. The city has refused to pave their road, and local Buddhists throw stones at their house.

**28. SRI LANKA** – pray for **Banda** who was healed of a painful skin disease. He and his wife, **Rajeswary**, became believers and attended an evangelism training camp their pastor recommended. They started sharing the gospel with the workers on the tea plantation that Banda managed. More than 70 people were soon gathering at their home to hear the Good News and 32 new Christians were baptized. Then the estate owner fired Banda and hired a new manager. With assistance from the global body of Christ, Banda was able to purchase equipment for processing the regions valuable cinnamon and spices. The business now supports the family's ministry work in the village.

**29. SRI LANKA** – pray for **Dinesh and Chandra** who became Christians after Chandra was healed from a mysterious disease. Then the opposition started: no one would hire them for a job, and local vendors either refused to do business with them or charged them higher prices. The opposition hasn't stopped them from traveling throughout the area to share the gospel and to pray for people in need. "Before we go to preach at a new village, we spend a day in fasting and prayer," said Dinesh. They have seen people healed and many come to Christ. Their church includes people who have been freed from addiction, people who have been released from demonic oppression and people who have been excluded from their families and communities. Their daughter, **Tanusha**, is the only Christian in her school and dreams of pursuing formal studies in Christian ministry. The house church the family started has grown to 46 members, and they have built a chapel adjoining their house.

**30. CHINA** – pray for **Naomi** who is principal of a church school where Christian parents send their children to avoid the state-run schools that indoctrinate the children with Communist propaganda. She has been approached dozens of times by the police asking her to shut the school's doors. Once the school was raided and many were detained at the police station. "God gave me this vision. He will provide for us and give us wisdom for how to respond to the authorities," Naomi said.

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. Romans 16:20

He who testifies of these things says, "Yes I am coming quickly."

Amen, Come Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen. Rev 22:20,21

### SOURCES:

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

- 1. IRAN** – pray for **Somayeh Rajabi**, a Christian convert who was arrested in Feb when 20 intelligence agents raided a gathering of 80 Christians in a private garden in Gatab in northern Iran. Bibles, musical instruments and communication devices were confiscated. Officers conducted body searches, singling out those wearing cross necklaces and forcibly tearing them off, injuring several individuals. Pray for protection and safety of Somayeh while she remains in detention and that she will be released soon.
- 2. MUSLIM-MAJORITY REGION** – pray for **Daniel** who has been a Bible smuggler for 25 years with *Open Doors*. Thank God for him and others like him who take the risk of bringing God's Word into restricted countries. Thank God for the thousands of books and Bibles he has helped smuggle to persecuted Christians. Thank God that He gave Daniel such inventive creativity to hide Bibles and books. Keep praying for his protection and for the people he is in contact with in the country where he serves.
- 3. CHINA** – pray for **Preacher Deng Yanxiang and 4 coworkers** from Shengjia Church in Guangdong province who were recently sentenced to between one and two years in prison. Preacher Deng is in detention, but his 4 coworkers have been out on bail and will not have to return to prison because of time served in pre-trial detention. Pray for health and strength for Preacher Deng during his next 3 months in prison. Pray for encouragement for members of the Shengjia Church.
- 4. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO(DRC)**- On Feb 13, militants rounded up 70 Christians, took them to a church, and killed them all. The militants are part of the Islamic State-affiliated ADF militants. The Christians were killed with machetes and hammers. "We don't know what to do or how to pray; we have had enough of massacres," said a church elder. "May God's will alone be done." This took place in Mayba, a predominantly Christian community in the North Kivu province in eastern DRC, which has been home to fierce fighting as another rebel group has taken over the territory. **John Samuel**, *Open Doors'* legal expert in Sub-Saharan Africa, says, "We call on the international Christian community to remain in prayer for Christians and vulnerable communities in eastern DRC. Pray for an end to violence and that government at all levels will diligently, impartially, and transparently address the violence. Pray for the church in Lubero territory as she seeks to bring physical and spiritual assistance to the families affected."
- 5. INDIA** – On the last Sunday in Feb, police arrested 9 Christians in 2 locations in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh for holding Sunday prayer meetings, which Hindu groups alleged were intended to convert Hindus. It is reported that they have since been released on bail. Pray for protection over all those gathering for worship services and prayer meetings in Uttar Pradesh. Pray that the 100 other Christians who are reportedly being held in different jails across Uttar Pradesh will be released soon.
- 6. INDIA** – pray against an influential Hindutva leader who produced videos that have been widely circulated on social media calling for attacks on Christians in 3 villages in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh. *Church in Chains* partner **Shibu Thomas** prayer walked through the 3 villages to pray for protection and the peace of Jesus to prevail in the 3 villages- **Ganeshpur, Bistrampur, and Janakpur**.
- 7. IRAN** – On March 8, **Abbas Soori, Narges Nasri, and Mehran Shamloui** were sentenced to over 40 years in prison for their Christian beliefs and worship meetings. Pray for hope for them. Pray for protection, wisdom and guidance for Narges who is pregnant with her first child.

- 8. CAMEROON** – pray for **Auristine**. She along with 6 other women from her church attended an economic empowerment training organized by *Open Doors* partners in northern Cameroon. Auristine's husband is a pastor in their community of Garous. The church faces persecution but not the violent kind; it is much quieter and more subversive. The church faces marginalization in the community and marketplace. Economic enticements from Islam and open discrimination are common. Now these women can help provide for their families. The main group manufactures products like neem oil. "These seeds fall from the trees, and we go to the villages and pay the women to collect the seeds," says Auristine. "These women can now participate in the financial growth of their households and the church." Pray for continued growth for these economic projects. Pray for wisdom for the leaders as they continue to extend and reach other areas.
- 9. PAKISTAN** – continue praying for **Zafar Bhatti**, 62, who has been in prison since July 2012 when he was falsely accused of sending blasphemous texts. In May 2017, he was sentenced to life in imprisonment, and this was increased in Jan 2022 to the death sentence. His appeal hearings have been adjourned repeatedly. Before his arrest he founded and led a small NGO called 'Jesus World Mission' to assist the poor. Zafar is in very poor health: he has gangrene in his right foot due to diabetes, and his heart function is only 10% after 3 heart attacks. His wife, **Nawab**, 75, is also in very poor health with high blood pressure and hearing loss. Pray for medical treatment and healing for both Zafar and Nawab. Pray that Zafar will be acquitted and released soon. Pray for reform of Pakistan's blasphemy laws.
- 10. NORTH AFRICA** – pray for **Batoul**, a former Muslim who became a believer. Now she has started a ministry for women like her- those who have accepted Jesus and are rejected and mistreated by their families and communities. Batoul asks for prayer for the salvation of her family. After losing another job because of her faith, she has decided to serve Jesus and His church fulltime. Pray that God will sustain her work and give her what she needs. She also asks for prayer that she will find a godly husband.
- 11. IRAN** – continue praying for **Mina Khajavi**, 61, who was detained in a raid on a house church meeting in Tehran in June 2020. She was tried in May 2022 and sentenced to 6 years in prison for 'acting against national security.' Mina has a husband and a daughter, both Christian converts, and they are permitted monthly visits. Ask God to protect and encourage Mina in prison. Pray for a retrial to be held soon and for her release. Pray for freedom for house churches to meet in Iran.
- 12. NORTH KOREA** – continue praying for South Korean businessman and missionary, **Choi Chun-gil**, 65, who was arrested and imprisoned in North Korea where he travelled from China transporting religious and humanitarian goods for North Koreans. He was charged with spying for South Korea. In June 2015, he was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. Since then, he has been held incommunicado, with no family contact. Pray for his son, **Choi Jin-young**, who has travelled widely to appeal for international support. Ask God to protect and sustain Pastor Choi in prison. Pray that he will be released soon. Pray for comfort and hope for his family. Pray for an end to persecution of North Korean Christians.
- 13. SYRIA** – More than 1,300 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in one week in March. *Open Doors* sources have been able to confirm the tragic deaths of 5 believers during this latest unrest, including a Christian father and son, a young Christian in his 30's, and an elderly Christian man. Many churches did not hold their Sunday services the following Sunday. Pray for **Greek Orthodox Patriarch John X, Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church and Patriarch Youssef Absi of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church**, as they called for national reconciliation and unity in Syria. Pray that this recent violence will not be the starting point of another civil war in Syria.
- 14. INDIA** – continue praying for **Pastor Sawan**. He was arrested after a Hindu priest complained to authorities that he had tried to convert him to Christianity. They also arrested Sawan's wife and 40 other church members. The others were released but Sawan was imprisoned. He was able to share the gospel with other prisoners. "I was able to bring 4 inmates to Christ," he said. Sawan's family has incurred a growing debt from legal fees, and it was almost 10 months before his sixth request for bail was finally granted. He is currently at home awaiting trial.
- 15. ERITREA** – continue praying for **Haile Naizghe** who has been in prison since May 2004. He was a former senior accountant with *World Vision* before his arrest. He was also chair of the Full Gospel Church of Eritrea, a large Pentecostal network of house churches that the government shut down in May 2003. Haile is imprisoned in the notorious maximum-security Wengel Mermera Interrogation Center in the capital, Asmara, where many political and military prisoners are incarcerated. Pray for his wife, **Rachel**, and their 3 children, **Shalom, Joel and Naher**. They had to flee Eritrea after his arrest and eventually moved to North America. His family has not been allowed any contact with him during his imprisonment. Ask God to encourage Haile and give him hope, and that her will be released soon.
- 16. CHINA** – pray for **Fu Xuanjuan**, 46, who is serving a six-year prison sentence with expected release date of July 2026. She was executive director of Shenzhen Tree of Life Technology Development Company which sells audio Bible players. The Chinese Communist Party authorities regard manufacturing and selling Bible players as 'illegal business operations.' Pray for her husband, **Deng**, 53 and their daughter. Fu is in poor health; pray for an early release from prison; pray for protection for all who manufacture Bible players.
- 17. VIETNAM** – pray for **Nay Y Blang**, 46, who was arrested in May 2023 and imprisoned for his religious beliefs and activity. The authorities accused him of 'abusing democratic freedom' for his affiliation with the unregistered Central Highlands Evangelical Church of Christ and for holding prayer meetings in his home. His expected release date is Nov 2027. Pray for his witness to guards and prisoners and for an early release.
- 18. CHINA** – Repression continues on a daily basis in China. Pray for these situations that all occurred in the month of Nov 2024:
- 19.** - on Nov 3, several house churches in Nanjing, Jiangsu province were simultaneously raided by police. A pastor, elder and several other Christians were detained.
- 20.** - also on Nov 3 about fifty police raided Grace Church's gatherings at a hotel in Changsha, Hunan province and 4 other venues. Police dispersed the gatherings and warned against further meetings.
- 21.** - on Nov 4, **Shu Hang**, wife of evangelist **Ma Yan** from Yinchuan, Ningxia province, requested a local court to clarify why her husband who was arrested on Aug 9, had not been charged. The court ignored her request.
- 22.** - on Nov 5, several members of **Early Rain Covenant Church** in Chengdu, Sichuan province, were summoned by Religious Affairs Bureau officials following their participation in a Sunday service.
- 23.** - on Nov 6, **Pastor Fan Yanmin** from Xingping, Shaanxi province, was sentenced to 15 days detention for 'endangering society by masquerading under the name of religion.'
- 24.** - on Nov 10, **Puguang Church** in Putian, Fujian province, had its Sunday worship disrupted. Six leaders were taken to the police station for interrogation.
- 25.** - on Nov 18, Shunghai Public Security Bureau arrested **Zhang Zang** for 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble,' a charge often leveled against Christians.
- 26.** - on Nov 19, 4 Christians from **Living Stone Reformed Church** in Bengdu, Anhui province, were tried for 'fraud.'

