

STANDING IN THE GAP

for the Persecuted Church

May 2026

25. IRAN – **Edwin Abnous** with *Heart4Iran* reports about the now 56-day internet blackout that Iranians have endured. The connection with the outside world is critical for discipling Iran's underground church. Pray for open communication lines and emotional resilience for Iranians.

26. CHINA – praise God that three leaders of Linfen Covenant Home Church in Shanxi province were released from prison April 19 having served their sentences. Pray for **Li Jie, Han Xiaodong, and Wang Qiang** as they are reunited with their families and as they adjust to life outside of prison.

27. ERITREA – praise God that 24 Christians were recently released from prison. Most had been held without charge for over 2 years, but one of them had been in prison for over 18 years.

28. CHINA – pray for **Huang Yizi**, the well-known pastor of Fengwo Church in Zhejiang's Wenzhou City. He stood trial in April on charges of 'illegal business operations.' He was previously imprisoned for his church activities in 2015. Pray that he will be acquitted.

29. INDIA – **Prakesh** and his 8-year-old daughter, Lavanya, were returning home from a ministry trip to a nearby village when they were attacked on the road. Their motorbike was rammed from behind, causing Prakesh to lose control and swerve into a roadside ditch. He suffered a head injury, a broken leg and a broken wrist, but he soon recovered. Lavanya however died as a result of her injuries. Prakesh and his wife, **Sangeetha** believe the attack was provoked by a local community leader who had recently threatened the family because of their ministry influence. The couple pursued police charges, but local authorities refused to investigate. Even so, Prakesh has seen God's goodness amid the injustice of his daughter's death, and he is ready to forgive the man responsible. "God has said to forgive those who hurt us, so that is what I have for him," he said. Pray for the family as they continue to minister as they recover from this great loss.

30. SRI LANKA – pray for **Pastor Arias**, founding pastor of Gethsemane Church, who has faced persecution from the Hindu Tamil insurgents. He has been beaten up and his home pelted with stones. However, the church continues to grow, angering the Hindu fundamentalists around them. Pray for his protection.

31. SRI LANKA – pray for **Selvan**, son of Pastor Arias. He and his wife, **Aanya** continue to serve their church and community despite opposition from the Hindu community. Some Hindu leaders plan to build a tall Hindu shrine next to the church to block it from view. None of this has stopped the bold vision and witness of the church. "There are 1,500 people in this village, so our plan is that the whole 1,500 will be saved, and that they will come to church," Selvan says. "We believe that this whole community will become believers. That is why we keep moving forward in our ministry. Until the last breath, we want to serve the Lord."

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
Amen.

SOURCES:

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

1. YEMEN -The people of Yemen have endured years of severe suffering, with political instability and poverty greatly intensified by the ongoing civil war between the northern Houthi rebels, backed by Iran, and government forces backed by a Saudi-led coalition. Thank God that fighting has mainly paused and pray for those working to bring about a permanent peaceful settlement.

2. UKRAINE – In mid-April, Russia launched its largest attack on Ukraine this year. Eighteen people were killed and over 100 wounded. One target destroyed was a church in Zaporizhzhia. *Slavic Gospel Association's Eric Mock* was there recently visiting ministry partners. These pastors go out with literal body armor and the spiritual armor of God. And while church buildings are struck down, the believers' faith is not destroyed. Pray for Ukrainian Christians' encouragement.

- Pray for Ukrainian believers to be encouraged.
- Ask God to comfort the congregation of the destroyed church building.
- Praise the Lord new churches are being planted across Ukraine in wartime.

3. SUDAN – April 15 began year four of a brutal civil war between Sudan's army and militia known as the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF. Hundreds of thousands of people have died since the civil war began. Millions are displaced. One in three Sudanese need humanitarian aid to survive. With the help of *Greater Reach Alliance*, Sudanese Christians are sharing the hope of Jesus in displacement camps. Ask the Lord to give them strength. Pray that the war will end soon.

- Ask the Lord to give believers His strength.
- Pray Sudan's war will end soon.
- Pray that God would move in the leadership of Christian nations, and they would bring their influence to the issue of Sudan.

4. NORTH KOREA — Some headlines claimed North Korea has nearly wiped out underground churches. But Eric Foley of Voice of the Martyrs Korea urges caution. He says the reality is more complex, and reliable information is limited. The government blocks news about Christians and would not admit their existence or lack of religious freedom. Foley says the church is not gone but still growing despite persecution. He urges believers to pray regularly for North Korean believers. But also to stay informed through trusted ministries.

5. INDIA — India's Chhattisgarh State has passed a revised anti-conversion law, despite protests from the minority Christian community. John Pudaite with Bibles For The World says that the new law outlines stricter fines and prison sentences. The law comes at the same time that India's Supreme Court is reviewing anti-conversion laws nationwide. Their future verdict could bring relief for Christians, who often find such laws used against them, but the legal process has been slow. Pray for endurance as Christians continue to share the gospel.

6. PAKISTAN — In Pakistan, many Christian girls are abducted, then forced to convert to Islam and to marry older Muslim men. Teenager **Maria** was taken last July. Despite her parents' efforts, a Pakistani high court has ruled that her marriage to a 30-year-old Muslim is valid. Nehemiah with FMI says this pattern has been going on for years and calls it a form of modern-day slavery. FMI partners share the hope of Christ in the midst of these realities, trusting that God is at work even in suffering. Pray with them for protection for Christian girls.

Call to action

- Pray for healing for victims of forced marriages and their families. Pray that even in the midst of suffering, many will encounter the love and hope found in Jesus Christ.
 - Ask God to bring justice and meaningful legal reforms in Pakistan's legal system that will protect girls from forced marriages.
 - Pray for courage and safety for FMI partners serving in Pakistan.
- 7. UNITED STATES** – praise God that the US Supreme Court on March 31, sided with a Christian counselor who challenged a Colorado ban on mental-health counseling that seeks to change young people's sexual orientation or gender identity. The ruling said that the state law restricts counselors' freedom of speech under the First Amendment. **Kaley Chiles**, a counselor who offers talk therapy, sued to challenge Colorado's ban. She said she wanted to offer counseling to young clients that could help them eliminate unwanted sexual thoughts or become more comfortable in their bodies. - WSJ
- 8. CHINA** – continue praying for Chinese pastors and church leaders who are in prison in China:
- Pray for senior pastor **Ezra Mingri** and 17 other members of the **Zion Church Network** who have been in detention for the past 6 months. Pray that the Lord will encourage each leader and supply all the needs of their families.
- 9.** - pray for **Elder Yingqiang and Brother Lin**, 2 leaders of **Early Rain Covenant Church** in Chengdu who have been charged with 'inciting subversion of state power.' Pray for peace for them as they await trial.
- 10.** - pray for 22 members of **Yayang Church** in Zhejiang Province as they continue to be detained since a police raid in December. Pray for their families as they seek information about where they are being held and if they will face charges.
- 11.** - pray for **Elder Ding Zhongfu and Pastor Zhou Songin** of Ganquan Church in Hefei as they begin serving four-year prison sentences for 'fraud.'
- 12.** - pray for *China Aid*, partner of *Church in Chains*, as it continues its project of printing and delivering children's Bibles to Christian families in China.
- 13. YEMEN** – Yemen is 99% Muslim with only a few thousand Christian converts from Islam. The persecution of Christians is severe. Pray for Christian believers who must all meet secretly in small groups in homes. Pray for the families of those who have been detained, including **Majed**, who was recently 'disappeared.' Pray for his family and the families of others detained- that they will be able to find out where their loved ones are being held and have contact with them.
- 14. NIGERIA** – At least 30 people in Nigeria's Plateau State were killed by Muslim militants on Palm Sunday in a coordinated attack targeting believers. Northern Nigeria remains a hotspot for Christian persecution. Pray for God to protect Christians. Ask God to comfort families grieving after the attack. Pray for wisdom, strength and bold faith amid the ongoing attacks.
- 15. MYANMAR** – Min Aung Hlaing has been sworn in as the country's new president, but the conflict continues nationwide. With help from *Unknown Nations*, local believers are carrying the gospel to unreached people groups. Pray for their strength and endurance.

16. LEBANON – pray for the staff at the **Arab Baptist Theological Seminary** in Beirut. **Loulwa Maalouf**, one of the staff members, says they are busy hosting hundreds of displaced people. Pray that these families will come to know Jesus through word and deed of ABTS staff. Pray for the region, that the war may come to an end and that nations may experience God's peace, safety and security.

17. CHINA – *China Partnership* asks for continued prayer for the city of **Xiangtan**. One pastor says, "Campus ministry has shrunk and has been restricted. The church cannot enter campuses or communities, even social charity activities are hard to organize in the church's name because we are considered an illegal church and cannot operate in that way." Pray for more creative ways for churches to love and witness to students in the name of Christ.

18. EGYPT – pray for Christian convert **Said Abdelrazek** who faced a court hearing April 21 at Egypt's First Criminal Terrorism Circuit in Badr. Supporters say the case arose out of his conversion from Islam and his attempt to change his religion on identity documents. Pray for peace as he waits on the results of the hearing. Pray for a change in the law in Egypt so that thousands of Christian converts will be able to obtain Christian identity documents.

UPDATE – Said's case has been adjourned until June 15, and he will remain in detention in the meantime.

19. CHINA – pray for **Pastor John Cao** who served a seven-year prison sentence in China from 2017-2024. He has been hospitalized with severe pain in his back and legs. Pray that the Lord will give wisdom to doctors as they treat Pastor John. Pray that the Chinese authorities will lift restrictions preventing him from being united with his wife and family in the US.

20. IRAN – continue praying for the church in Iran. **David Yeghnazer**, director of *Church in Chains'* partner organization *Elam Ministries* says that 'amid war and uncertainty, the church in Iran is not retreating – it is stepping forward in faith.' Pray for protection, courage, unity and continued growth among Christians in Iran as they serve the Lord in a time of great uncertainty and danger.

21. IRAN cont – pray for **Yahya**, a leader in Iran's house church movement. He is a Christian from a Muslim background and has paid the cost of being a believer under the Islamic regime. He has been interrogated, detained, abused and may soon be summoned to serve a long prison sentence for his Christian ministry. "Life is hard, but we are continuing. And the Lord is showing His glory," Yahya said after returning from a trip to several remote villages where he had gone to serve the poor, share the gospel, and offer Persian New Testaments to curious residents.

22. IRAN cont – pray for house church leaders **Amir and Parvin** who prepare basic food parcels for families in their neighborhood.

23. CHINA – *China Partnership* asks for continued prayer for the city of **Xiangtan**. Many house-church leaders shared that 2 rounds of persecution in recent years have driven their churches to gather in smaller groups or even meet in private homes. Pray that God will give church leaders clarity and flexibility in times of uncertainty.

24. CHINA cont – pray for **Brother Yang** in Xiangtan who asks for prayer for young people. The state forbids children under 18 to have religious life, and in public schools, children spend most of their time receiving evolutionary thought. Young people feel the tension between evolution and their parents' faith. Ask God to help Brother Yang and his wife in their youth and church ministry, as well as for wisdom in raising their children to know God's plan for their lives.

