

# INTERCEDE

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## Seeking Superior Systems: Why Muslims Come to the West

By M.L. Rogers

“I like Springfield,” said my Afghan friend after we welcomed him into our Midwestern city in late 2021. He is one of 100 million displaced people in the world today,<sup>1</sup> many of whom have come to the West seeking refuge from wars, religious extremism, and ethnic and religious persecution.<sup>2</sup> A majority of these hail from Muslim lands and come in search of security, justice, and the provision of their basic needs.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the influx of refugees, an increasing number of students from afar enter the West’s exceptional universities; the United States alone hosts around 1 million international students each year in its institutions of higher learning.<sup>4</sup> Many of these students choose to stay in the West beyond graduation, “where facilities for their profession are superior, political freedoms wider, and economic rewards greater.”<sup>5</sup> How did the West come to be the coveted place to resettle?

Western countries, even those considered post-Christian today, contain systems that reverberate with echoes of the Mosaic Law and, more specifically, the Ten Commandments, which “have served as the legal and moral foundation for the Western world and molded its culture.”<sup>6</sup> Just as this law attracted many sojourners to the Israelite community during

Old Testament times because of its superiority, many today are drawn to nations whose systems stand on its shoulders. The Law of Moses speaks to humankind’s desire for security, *shalom*, and selfhood. As people come to the West from all over the world, they are drawn to systems indebted to an ethic born of the Holy Scripture.

### The Search for Security

Many people come to Western countries today in search of safety and security, needs that are affirmed throughout the Law of Moses.<sup>7</sup> Bruce Waltke notes that the modern legal category of negligence, in which the endangerment of life occurs, finds its roots in the Mosaic Law. For example, a parapet must adorn the roof of an Israelite’s house to prevent someone from falling off (Deut. 22:8). If someone possesses an ox that habitually gores others, the owner of the ox will find himself liable for any damages (Exod. 21:28). If several men engage in fighting and accidentally hit a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, the perpetrators shall pay, up to their very lives, for any harm done to those involved (Exod. 21:22-23). The entire Bible affirms humankind’s basic need for safety and security. In the book of Psalms alone, the believer finds numerous appeals to look to

*continued on page 4*



# Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

**Mark Brink**

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The World Assemblies of God Fellowship (WAGF) recently released a report entitled, “Diaspora Opportunities,” where they highlighted the best practices in reaching peoples on the move globally. They come to the following conclusion: “Diaspora communities provide unique opportunities to extend the reach of the Church but also provide access to the gospel to those communities that surround them.” In this edition of the *Intercede*, M. L. Rogers examines the possible reasons why Muslims immigrate and the opportunities this “diaspora movement” provides for the Church to reach those who have never heard the gospel or interacted with a Christian. *Webster’s Dictionary* defines diaspora as “the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland.” In this context, the

term “diaspora missions” refers to the ministry opportunities provided to churches by the movement of people, especially those who are unreached.

The authors of this 2020 WAGF committee reported: “Even as God used the diaspora in different contexts in the Bible for spiritual purpose, so too he can use these movements of people today to accomplish his purposes. As diaspora Christians migrate, opportunities for planting the church among those communities and beyond can serve as a platform for further missions outreach.” The movement of people from north to south and east to west across our globe opens the doors for evangelism. First, it allows migrating individuals to move to contexts where open evangelism is not restricted. Second, as Christians migrate, it provides opportunities for them to evangelize and do missions in a non-traditional manner. In both cases, the goal is to win the lost and develop churches among people who have never had an adequate witness of the gospel.

Since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, we have seen the birthing of the Church among the diaspora peoples of the world. Even during the Early Church period in Acts, believers who followed “the Way” faced severe persecution, which resulted in a scattering of believers who preached the Word of God everywhere they went (Acts 8:4). As the church came under persecution, “those who were scattered because of the persecution ... traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word” (Acts 11:19). As believers scattered, either due to persecution or the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Church expanded.

What we currently see with people on the move due to war, persecution, famine, or a search for a better life, has created incredible challenges, as some immigrants have created “cultures within a culture.” Nevertheless, this people movement creates great opportunities for the spread of the gospel. We must not be naïve as to the less-than-noble motives of some diaspora people, but we must also take advantage of these opportunities for planting the Church. As you read this edition, may God move you to pray for and reach out to diaspora people in your own neighborhood or city during this Christmas season.





# Muslim World News

## **Germany: Hate Speech**

A Hamburg judge sentenced journalist Michael Stürzenberger on September 7, 2022, to six months in prison without parole on the grounds of hate speech in Germany. Stürzenberger criticized political Islam and refugee crime.

Stürzenberger will appeal. He was convicted under statute 130 StGB—essentially found guilty of incitement—a crime punishable up to five years in prison.—*PI News*

## **Pakistan: Blasphemy Convict Marks 10 Years**

Fears that Zafar Bhatti (55), Pakistan’s longest serving blasphemy convict, could be the first ever to be executed, after a judge increased his sentence from life imprisonment to death.

Zafar Bhatti, however, was convicted based on an unsubstantiated report declaring his guilt, made by police in the early stages of their investigation. During that investigation Bhatti stated he was coerced into a false investigation under a brutal police interrogation.

Bhatti could still be executed at any time under the terms of his blasphemy conviction under Section 295C of Pakistan’s Blasphemy law.—*BACA News*

## **Mozambique: Jihadi Rebels Gain Ground**

A new offensive by Mozambique’s Islamic extremist rebels in the embattled northern province of Cabo Delgado has

increased the number of displaced by 80,000 and undermines the government’s claims of containing the insurgency.

Rebel control has expanded in a two-month campaign. The offensive follows a period of relative calm when the commander-general of Mozambique’s national police had declared that “the war against terrorism is almost at an end.”

That claim proved to be hollow as the fighters have struck further south than ever before, burning villages and beheading civilians in the Ancuabe, Chiure, and Mecufi districts, which had previously been untouched by the conflict since it began in October 2017.—*AP*

## **Nigeria: Sustained Campaign**

Four nuns kidnapped in southern Nigeria on Sunday, August 21, have been returned to their community. The kidnapping of the four nuns has highlighted what some believe is the disquieting reality of a deliberate attempt to annihilate Christianity in Africa’s most populous nation.

“I am shocked (at the spate of kidnappings) because I know many priests and religious in that part of the country,” Johan Viljoen, director of the Denis Hurley Peace Institute (DHPI), a peace and justice organization of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC), told *Crux*.

“We are dealing here with a sustained campaign to wipe out Christianity in general and the Catholic church in particular. No Christian is safe,” he said.—*Crux*

# Seeking Superior Systems: Why

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God for safety, referring to Him as a “shield” (28:7), “hiding place” (32:7), “stronghold” (37:39), “refuge” and “fortress” (91:2). This concern for safety looms large in the West today. Seatbelts, bicycle helmets, crosswalks, and handrails all trace their roots to the Mosaic Law. These safety features, which many people take for granted, stand in stark contrast to the experience of most people in non-Western countries.

The interest in safety found within the pages of Scripture is firmly planted in a deep concern for human life. In the Bible’s first chapter, God creates man in His own image, a fact that warrants a distinction between people and all other creatures. Without this, “we are only animals, perhaps top dogs on the evolutionary ladder, but animals nevertheless.”<sup>8</sup> Upon this foundation rests every pursuit of safety for humankind and every rational notion of the value of human life.

## The Search for Shalom

While many define the meaning of “*shalom*” as “peace”, some undertake the task of explicating a richer interpretation of this complex concept. Tim Keller captures its intricacies this way:

God created all things to be in a beautiful, harmonious, interdependent, knitted, webbed relationship to one another. Just as rightly related physical elements form a

cosmos or a tapestry, so rightly related human beings form a community. This interwovenness is what the Bible calls *shalom*, or harmonious peace. ... [*Shalom*] means complete reconciliation, a state of the fullest flourishing in every dimension—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual—because all relationships are right, perfect, and filled with joy.<sup>9</sup>

This is certainly an attractive ideal, and one that issues from the ethic of the Mosaic Law. This “harmonious peace” can only occur when all people, even the weak, are treated with kindness and equity, a subject about which the Mosaic Law has a lot to say. For example, God states that a pledged cloak must be returned to its owner before the sun goes down, for the indebted person may become cold and not sleep comfortably (Exod. 22:26).

Based on a swath of passages within this Law, God seems to hold justice for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow close to His heart. Exodus 22:21-24 illustrates this strongly:

You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the

# Why Muslims Come to the West

from page 1

sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

The book of Deuteronomy alone contains ten references to the sojourner, fatherless, and widow urging the Israelites to welcome them, help them with basic necessities, and provide them with justice.<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 27:19a emphatically declares, “Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.” Leviticus 23:22 admonishes Israelites to leave the gleanings of their harvest for the poor and the sojourner so that they may be nourished. Is it any wonder that sojourners, who enjoyed many benefits and protections under the Mosaic Law, still strive to settle in countries today that stand on the foundations of this Law?

To ensure equity, a society must install fair and impartial judges. The Law of Moses provides stipulations for such leaders, declaring that they must not pervert justice, show partiality, or accept bribes, “for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous” (Deut. 16:19). This ethic lives on in many countries of the West, where one can incur great penalties for even offering a bribe to a government official. In contrast, acquiring a favorable judicial decision in many non-Western nations requires a certain amount of “under the table” currency to grease the palms of an official.

God makes known His care for peoples’ property when the Mosaic Law forbids the shifting of a neighbor’s landmark (Deut. 19:14). Interestingly, property, upon which people construct houses and other forms of shelter, is protected by law in many parts of the West. These laws preventing the arbitrary taking of one’s property came to fruition over several centuries following the Magna Carta (1215 CE). This revolutionary document established a rule of law, even for kings. This is not far off from the Mosaic Law, which established that a king should “write for himself in a book a copy of [the Mosaic] law ... and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them” (Deut. 17:18b, 19). A king was also admonished to avoid greed (vv. 16-17) and embrace humility (v. 20). Democracy itself, then, a scion of the groundbreaking Magna Carta, exhibits many traits of its ancestor, the Law of Moses.

In places untouched by the Judeo-Christian worldview, property lines morph with the movement of people. In one

South Asian country, someone may possess holdings on paper, but those occupying the land retain real ownership. Sadly, due to this “squatter’s rights” ethic, property disputes lead to many of the crimes in this part of the world. Indeed, God’s law paves the way for *shalom* through its commands on fairness and justice. Though true *shalom* will not take place this side of eternity, many Western nations strive for this ideal, born of the Judeo-Christian ethic.

## The Search for Selfhood

A friend from South Asia told me recently that when he entered his secondary education as a young man, two potential career paths hung in his future: he could become a doctor or an engineer. No choices existed beyond these. For many in the non-Western world today, the notion of self-determination sounds as unfamiliar as a foreign language. To rise above one’s station or to make choices as an individual is uncharacteristic to the surrounding collectivistic culture. Why is the West so different?

The Ten Commandments give a clue as to the roots of individuality. While most of the Torah contains laws expressed in the impersonal third-person pronoun, in the Decalogue, God speaks personally to each Israelite within the camp, using the second person singular, not second person plural for “you shall [not]”.<sup>11</sup> Here, in an intimate fashion, the Creator of the universe addresses those in the house of Israel individually. In many other places in Scripture, God reveals himself as a personal God—One for the nations as well as for the individual. He reveals himself to Moses as the God of individuals—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 3:6). After the Exodus, Moses declares, “The LORD is *my* Banner” (Exod. 17:15, emphasis added). David says, “The Lord is *my* Shepherd” (Ps. 23:1a, emphasis added).

The advent of the Christian faith buried the roots of individuality further into the soil. The Early Church bore witness to the ethic of equality. By its nature, equality does not mix well with highly stratified and collectivistic social structures. Where all stand equal, individuality reigns. Going further, the Bible teaches that for one to become a Christian, he or she must make a choice to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Except in rare cases where entire families or communities come to faith in Christ (i.e., the family of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30-33), following Jesus entails a personal or individual decision. In contrast, those of the Muslim faith hold no determination as to their religious affiliation. For them, they enter the world as Muslims, and they will leave

continued on page 6

# Why Muslims Come to the West

continued from page 5

as Muslims. In other words, aside from those who convert to Islam from other faiths, no choice exists in the matter. Those who leave Islam for Christianity, therefore, break a social mold in declaring their individuality within collectivistic cultures, in addition to breaking the religious mold.

## The Search for Superior Systems

The desire to migrate to better systems reverberates in the nature of mankind. Joseph Castleberry claims, “Human beings instinctively move from low-opportunity environments to high-opportunity situations.”<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 4:7-8 makes bold claims concerning the superiority of Israel’s God and its Law. Concerning this passage, Christopher Wright asserts:

No nation has such a God or such a social system. ... Old Testament law invites—even welcomes—public inspection and comparison. But the expected result of such comparison is that Israel’s law will be found superior in wisdom and justice. ... And even as Christians we still go on finding the social relevance of Old Testament law today.<sup>13</sup>

The Law of Moses serves as the foundation for the Western world. The desire of the nations to come to the West confirms the Torah’s superiority. The goodness of a particular social system is measured by whether or not people want to live under it. As an example, consider Islamic or *sharia* law, a derivative from several sources, including the Qur’an, Muhammad, and the Hadith. Fifteen countries practice *sharia* law in full or in part, including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, and others.<sup>14</sup> One of the greatest arguments against the Islamic faith today issues from the fact that many Muslims want to leave countries where *sharia* law reigns. Rached Ghannouchi, a political leader in Tunisia, observes this phenomenon in his context: “The evidence that people in North Africa are migrating to France is that the life in France is better. ... Muslims are living there in peace.”<sup>15</sup> The systems spawned by Islam have been tried and found wanting.

While the seeds of the Mosaic Law have sprouted superior systems, Islam creates no such system. Rather, Muslim countries are “disproportionately dominated by dictators.”<sup>16</sup> Since its inception, Islam has birthed no counterpart to the Magna Carta, and though democracies exist in several Muslim countries, many freedoms known to the West are limited in these contexts. This fact will lead to the influx of many more Muslims into the West as history marches on.<sup>17</sup> Ghannouchi, a more progressively minded Muslim, believes that “true Islam [can] only flourish in free and just societies, not under sectarian oppression, even in Muslim societies.”<sup>18</sup>

This freedom and justice comes to them courtesy of a Judeo-Christian ethic.

Christians should see this centripetal pull to Western nations as no accident. It is God who has “determined allotted periods and boundaries of [various peoples’] dwelling place[s], that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:26-27). As a “mixed multitude” joined the people of God in the Exodus (Exod. 12:38), and later in the worship of Yahweh (Exod. 12:43-49; Josh. 8:30-35), Scripture reveals that the Israelite faith was not a closed system.<sup>19</sup> Believers, to whom the mystery of the gospel has been revealed (Eph. 3:6), should all the more extend a warm welcome to the nations in their midst. As many Muslims and people from other faiths come to the West where churches and Bibles abound, may Christians stand ready to share the gospel—because every person must know the Truth about Jesus!

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<sup>1</sup>“UNHCR: A Record 100 Million People Forcibly Displaced Worldwide,” *UN News, Global Perspective Human Stories*, posted May 23, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1118772>.

<sup>2</sup>Khalid Duran and Daniel Pipes, “Muslim Immigrants in the United States,” Center for Immigration Studies, posted August 1, 2002, <https://cis.org/Report/Muslim-Immigrants-United-States>.

<sup>3</sup>Murat Yetkin, “Why Do Muslims Seek Refuge in the Non-Muslim West?” *Hurriyet Daily News*, March 8, 2017, <https://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/opinion/murat-yetkin/why-do-muslims-seek-refuge-in-the-non-muslim-west-110558>.

<sup>4</sup>Emma Israel and Jeanne Batalova, “International Students in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, January 24, 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/international-students-united-states-2020>.

<sup>5</sup>Duran and Pipes, *Center for Immigration Studies*.

<sup>6</sup>Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 406.

<sup>7</sup>Waltke, *Old Testament*, 428.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Tim Keller, *Generous Justice: How God’s Grace Makes Us Just* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2012), 173-174.

<sup>10</sup>Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19-21; 26:12-13; 27:19.

<sup>11</sup>Waltke, *Old Testament*, 414.

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Castleberry, *The New Pilgrims: How Immigrants are Renewing America’s Faith and Values* (Franklin, TN: Worthy Publishing, 2015), 90.

<sup>13</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 131.

<sup>14</sup>For a complete list of countries that practice *sharia* law, visit <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/sharia-law-countries>.

<sup>15</sup>Yetkin, *Hurriyet Daily News*.

<sup>16</sup>Duran and Pipes, Center for Immigration Studies.

<sup>17</sup>Yetkin, *Hurriyet Daily News*.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>David M. Howard, Jr., *Joshua*, vol. 5 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 215.



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**Friday, November 4, 2022. Please pray for**

...*local groups of Tatar Muslims in the Russian Republic of Tatarstan* who are expressing a thirst for the Word of God. Of Tatarstan's population of 3.7 million, the majority are Muslims.

...*the Sunni Muslim Kibet people*, numbering 74,000, in Chad, Africa. They are unreached, with no Bible translation or radio broadcasts in their language, Tama.

...*the "handful" of Muslim Uyghurs in China* who have become followers of Christ. Of the 12 million Uyghurs in the Xinjiang area, between 1 and 3 million have been imprisoned in "re-education camps" in the last few years.

**Friday, November 11, 2022. Please pray for**

...*Abebech, a former Muslim in the Oromia region of Ethiopia*. Muslim Wahhabi extremists burned her home. She said, "Even while the flames were shooting up, I was thanking God. Jesus has helped me pass through these difficulties."

...*a newly-organized Arab church in Turin, Italy*, made up of Muslim Background Believers, a result of outreach ministries by Italian churches to Arabic-speaking Muslims.

...*evangelistic teams in Spain* who have the opportunity to read the Scriptures out loud in the streets. Muslim immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East regularly hear the gospel readings and receive follow-up from team members.

**Friday, November 18, 2022. Please pray for**

...*qualified workers to take the places of retiring "recording team members"* in Indonesia. With over 700 languages in Indonesia, many people still do not have the Gospels recorded in their mother tongue.

...*safety for thousands of Muslim-background Algerians* who have put their faith in Christ since the year 2000—and regularly face persecution. Of Algeria's population of 46 million, 99% are Muslim.

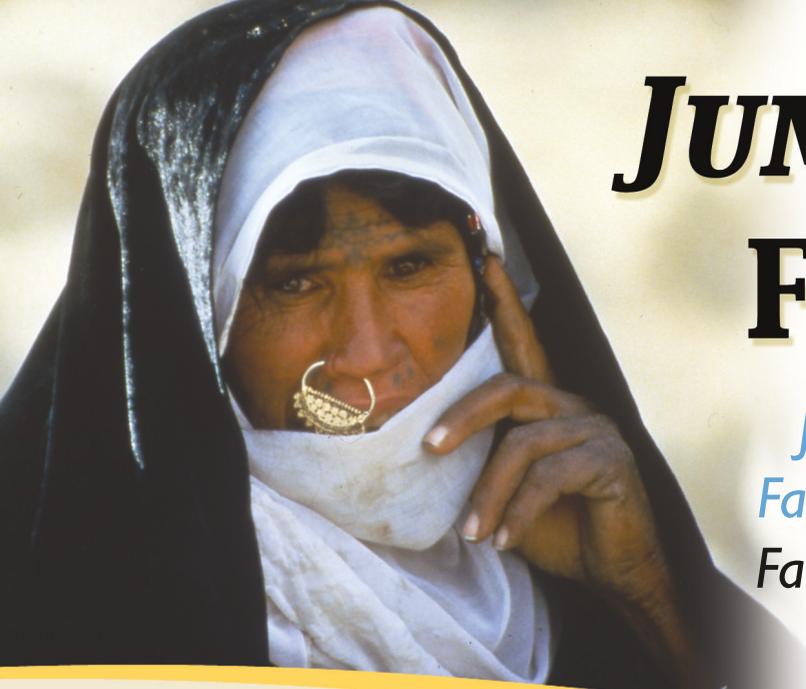
...*follow-up ministry for new converts* as a result of street ministry projects in different cities of Iran and Turkey. During a 5-month period, 28,000 Bibles were distributed and 480 Muslims decided to follow Jesus.

**Friday, November 25, 2022. Please pray for**

...*workers who are reaching out to Muslim Mauritanian refugees* in the country of Guinea-Bissau. Opportunities for evangelism in Mauritania are limited, thus workers recognize the opportunity among Mauritanians in Guinea-Bissau as a "God thing."

...*Christian workers in Iraq* who are seeing incredible opportunities to connect with Muslim seekers face to face as a result of Arabic social media campaigns.

...*the ministry of Iranian Christians* among Muslim Azeri Turks who live in Iran. Many Azeri Turks have become followers of Jesus while attending house meetings in northwestern Iran.



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**Friday, December 2, 2022. Please pray for**

*...ministries to Afghan refugees.* Workers in countries adjacent to Afghanistan report that dozens of Afghan refugees have become followers of Jesus Christ and their numbers are multiplying.  
*...Albanian churches evangelizing Muslims.* Of Albania's 3 million people, 58% are Muslim, and 17% are Christian.  
*...Holy Spirit intervention* to thwart Islamic jihadists in Nigeria. Of Nigeria's 216 million people, almost half are Muslim.

**Friday, December 9, 2022. Please pray for**

*...the witness of Christians in Indonesia* to draw Muslims away from the divisive and violent lies inherent in Islam  
*...an Arabic media ministry* that has established a team to share the gospel using animated films.  
*...Hajira, a Muslim convert in Uganda.* Following a vicious beating by her father, Hajira was in a coma for three days.

**Friday, December 16, 2022. Please pray for**

*...spiritual maturity for new converts from Islam* in Iran and Afghanistan. A house cell group network reports that 67 Iranians and 24 Afghans have followed the Lord in water baptism during a two-month period of this year.  
*...protection for outreach ministries among Kurdish Muslims* in northern Iraq.  
*...Soheil, a Muslim who was converted in an Iranian prison.* He says, "Only Jesus could change my life. Samuel, a fellow prisoner, shared the love of Christ with me. I am now out of prison and wish to tell every person I see about Christ."

**Friday, December 23, 2022. Please pray for**

*...protection and spiritual growth* for 37 new believers from Muslim backgrounds in a major city of Pakistan.  
*...Afghans who have crossed over the 559-mile border into Iran.* Iranian Christians have arranged special Bible study groups "for only Afghans" in Tehran and the north.  
*...Pastor Stephanous in Sudan.* When his church gave food to hungry children, Muslims accused them of trying to "steal children from Islam." Muslims entered the church, ripped up Bibles, tore the pastor's shirt, and punched him in the face.

**Friday, December 30, 2022. Please pray for**

*...believers in the country of Somalia,* which remains one of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians.  
*...Peninah, a Christian widow and mother in Kenya* whose husband was martyred by Muslim terrorists.  
*...Lebanese Christians who have opened a school in the Bekaa Valley* for Syrian children who have fled the violence of their country. Approximately 200 Muslim children are instructed for 4 hours each day.

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