

INTERCEDE

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PERSECUTION TODAY

No one should ever have to see what 9-year-old Marlan Pontoh saw. While attending a youth retreat on Indonesia's Ambon Island, Marlan and his friends—more than 100 Indonesian Christians—were attacked and herded together by fanatical Muslim villagers on a murderous rampage. But for Marlan, the worst was yet to come.

He noticed his older brother, Roy, had been singled out for questioning. "Who are you?" an angry villager asked.

"I am a soldier of Christ," Roy said, barely able to control his fear. The villager slashed Roy's left arm with a machete and asked again, "Who are you?"

"I am a soldier of Christ," Roy replied with renewed courage. The villager hacked Roy's right arm, yelling, "Allahu Akbar!"

"Jesus Christ is the only Lord," Roy said, just before he was stabbed in the stomach. "I am a soldier of Christ," he whispered with his last breath. Roy was beheaded, and his body was thrown into a gutter. Marlan fled into the bush.

CHRISTIAN
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Christian persecution did not stop with the death of the Apostles. It has continued through the centuries and grown dramatically in recent decades. From a spiritual viewpoint we should not be surprised. The devil still "prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He still seeks to snuff out the life of Jesus in all who call upon His name.

Yet persecution's visible causes are varied. The attacks can be indirect and subtle, or violent and deadly. But make no mistake: Christian persecution is increasing, and one way or another it affects us all.

GROWING CONCERN

It's estimated that more than 200 million Christians worldwide currently suffer persecution and discrimination for their faith. Interestingly, it is a Jew, Michael Horowitz, a

senior fellow at Washington's Hudson Institute, who is often credited with initiating increased awareness of this persecution.

"It may have been easier for me than for many of you [Christians] to see the eerie parallels between what is happening to Christian communities today and what happened to my people during much of Europe's history," Horowitz said in a 1997 address. "I saw the vulnerable Christian communities fast becoming the scapegoats of choice of the world's thug regimes, and knew what that meant in my very bones."

Even the secular media listened. *The New York Times* ran a cover story on Nov. 9, 1998, headlined, "Churches Find New Focus in Opposing Persecution." Portland's *The Oregonian* sent its religion editor to five restricted countries over nine months and ran an excel-

by
Jeff Taylor

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Speaking on Behalf of Muslims



Ron Peck, Director

Center for
Ministry to Muslims

*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)*

The tragedy of the persecuted Church in today's world is a fact of life. It seems to be getting worse from year to year. If we happen to live where there is relative peace and security, we must be careful not to forget those who suffer, remembering that we are all spiritual members of one family.

When Jesus called the first disciples to be a part of His kingdom, He was clear about what they could expect. He said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He did not recruit by making attractive promises of how easy or rewarding it was going to be. Rather, He clearly stated the difficulties they could expect, and then gave them the promise of having a part in the Kingdom of heaven.

Later, when Jesus sent these same disciples out for ministry, He again issued a warning concerning what they could expect in their ministry. He said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves." When sheep and wolves enter into competi-

tion, the wolf usually has a nice meal and you never see the sheep again. Not exactly what most of us expect when we make a commitment to the Lord's work.

Jesus went on to share other words of caution. He told them to, "Be on your guard against men." And, "All men will hate you because of me. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body..."

He assured them that the harvest was to be plentiful, but the working conditions were going to be difficult. Persecution was to be an expected part of the package.

Again, when Jesus was ready to leave His disciples and return to heaven, He addressed the issue of persecution for the third time. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."

The whole idea was clearly declared. You can look at the treatment Jesus received and know what you can expect.

Jesus was treated very badly. After He was crucified He said, "A time is coming when anyone who kills you will

think he is offering a service to God."

How does all this relate to the persecuted Church today?

It let's us know that current events were foretold by the Savior. Thus, we should not be surprised by what is happening.

We must prayerfully support our suffering brothers and sisters but do so with the realization that the fiery trial may someday come to us as well.

The closer we come to the Lord's Return, the more intense the conflict will be. It will certainly be a test of our faith. But it will also be a great time of reaping the harvest.

Today there is significant growth in the Church in some areas where new converts have to face intense difficulty. We only have to look at the growth of the Church in China to see what persecution has done for this great body of believers. Many of them have incredible testimonies.

Not long ago, I received the following testimony from a young lady in a Muslim nation.

In her early twenties this young lady had accepted Christ as her Savior. She practiced her faith secretly for some time, but eventually her family discovered what she was doing. They brought a lot of pressure upon her, trying to get her to reverse her decision. When none of this was successful, her family reported her conversion to the police.

The young woman was taken by the police and placed in prison. After being confined in difficult circumstances for several weeks, the young woman's mother and sister came to visit her in the prison. It was their hope that the prison experience had caused the young lady to change her mind.

When they saw her, they said, "Why don't you recant and be set free from prison?"

She looked at her family members and replied, "I am not in prison, you are."

Such is the dedication of many persecuted followers of Jesus Christ.

We must make a commitment to pray continually for the hundreds of thousands of brothers and sisters who are being persecuted because of their faith.



**BLESSED ARE THOSE
WHO ARE PERSECUTED
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THEIRS IS THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**



Philippines

Suspected Muslim rebels shot 21 Christians in a mosque in southern Philippines. The dead were among 29 people seized by 100 armed men and taken to a mosque in Lanao del Sur province on Mindanao island. The guerrillas denied involvement, saying they would not desecrate a mosque by killing people there. They blamed the military for the killings.

—*International Development Brief*

Maldives

The president of the Maldives has declared that the island nation has no room for any religion other than Islam, and has accused foreigners of seeking to destroy religious unity by introducing other faiths.

In 1998, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs banned Maldivians from listening to missionary radio. Police arrested up to 50 local Christians from Muslim backgrounds, following a tip-off by teenagers, including the son of one of those arrested. While imprisoned, they were pressured to convert to Islam, forced to perform Islamic prayers and read the Qur'an. Police also searched foreign workers homes, confiscating passports, Christian books and other possessions.

—*Newsroom*

Iceland

From Europe's hot spot to one of its coldest, 70 refugees from Kosovo have been repatriated in Iceland. The small, largely homogeneous country of 275,000 people has established something of a reputation as a haven for the dispossessed from Europe. It has also accepted newcomers from Poland, members of mixed marriages from Croatia and Vietnamese boat people.

The refugees are eligible for citizenship (after five years), free medical care, a financial grant and a small, furnished home. They

receive a one-year course in the Icelandic language, but children are encouraged to learn their native cultures. Those who choose citizenship, however, must take one Icelandic name.

In the town of Dalvik, a Kosovar told the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "In Kosovo our children were nervous, wild. No discipline. No schooling for months. Even here, when they see a uniform, they ask, 'Are these policemen going to kill someone?' But they are becoming happy again. They enjoy school. Even though we are Muslims, we sometimes go to the local church. No problem. There is only one God."

—*World Pulse*

United States

Muslims are making an impact in American society from educational institutions to Capitol Hill. Here are a few samples from *Islamic Horizons* and the *Newsroom*:

Judith Khadijah Muhammad was named campus department chair of general studies at the University of Phoenix-Metro Detroit campus. In addition to her administrative duties, Muhammad will continue to teach both in the classroom and online. Celebrating her promotion, she thanked Allah and said: "It is clear evidence that Muslim women can succeed in the non-Muslim workforce wearing hijab (head covering) and adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet. We do not have to compromise our religious values."

Aliyah Muneerah Bilal will join Oberlin College on a \$130,000 scholarship from Project Excellence. The merit-based award, established by syndicated columnist Carl T. Rowan in 1987, honors students who excel in writing and speaking.

Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL, has decided to change its Crusader Mascot in order to avoid the offensive connection to the Crusades in order to "communicate...spiritual passions without unnecessarily offending 17 million Jews and 1 billion Muslims."

A total of 1,421 graduates of the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University recited Surat al-Fatiha as part of the invocation for the school's 43rd commencement. The prayer was conducted by Al-Hajj Ghazi Y. Khankan, executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations' (CAIR) New York office.

The American Muslim Council (AMC) has stepped up its lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill, kicking off its ninth annual convention with a briefing session for lobbyists. This effort is enabling Muslims to promote issues that concern them. The most recent one is the Secret Evidence Repeal Act, which will probably pass.



Special Prayer Emphases Begin This Month:

**The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church—
November 12, 2000**

A resource kit is available from the World Evangelical Fellowship. It contains a video featuring the theology of persecution and songs by "Jars of Clay," an interactive CD-ROM and ideas for a church service, Bible study and prayer topics. There is a suggested donation of \$20.00. Order by phone: 630-668-0440 or on the web: www.world-evangelical.org/.

**30 Days Muslim Prayer Focus During Ramadan—
November 27 to December 26**

During this month Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. They are especially receptive to spiritual intervention in their lives at this time. Therefore we encourage Christians to join in prayer for them during Ramadan. This issue of *Intercede* includes a brochure with prayer requests for your use.

PERSECUTION TODAY

lent series of persecution-related articles.

The State Department sent its first "Annual Report on International Religious Freedom" to Congress on Sept. 8, 1999, saying, "Too much of the world's population still lives in countries in which religious freedom is restricted or prohibited. Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes remain determined to control religious belief and practice."

Concern for persecuted Christians is growing dramatically, and more and more individuals, churches and even politicians are trying to help.

The visible causes of persecution, however, are not always easy to recognize. Even the experienced persecution-watcher is often confused by their complexity.

PERSECUTION'S CAUSES

Rebecca Mathok and her three sisters were abducted by Arab slave traders in southern Sudan.

"The raiders descended on our village and destroyed everything. They burnt all our houses and seized cattle and property," she told a team from Christian Solidarity Worldwide. "My slave owner told me that I was his slave because the Dinka refused to follow Islam, and they therefore abducted the Dinka children."

Rebecca was forced to practice Islam for more than a year and a half before she was "redeemed," a controversial practice of purchasing freedom for captured southern Sudanese, which some say encourages more abductions.

Rebecca has a different perspective. "It is now wonderful to be back where I am free to choose to be a Christian," she said.

Religious Extremism. Christians in South Sudan are victims of "religious extremism," one of today's major sources of Christian persecution. Sudan has suffered under a devastating 16-year civil war between the Arab Muslim

North (the National Islamic Front) and the predominately Christian and animist South. Reports of slavery and the ethnic cleansing of Christians have been consistently verified, including the North's policy of forced conversion to Islam.

Saudi Arabia ranks as the world's most restrictive Islamic state. The Saudi government strictly forbids any non-Muslim worship meetings, even among expatriates, and no Christian religious literature may enter the country. A Saudi who converts to Christianity invites, at worst, death at the hands of his family; at best, estrangement and deportation.

Pakistan's small Christian minority suffers discrimination because of a growing movement to impose Islamic law on the nation. One of the most frightening tools of intolerance is the country's "blasphemy law," that makes it a crime to blaspheme the prophet Muhammad or insult the Qur'an.

Countries influenced by Hinduism, which has historically been tolerant of other religions, have recently seen their share of religious extremism. In India, growing incidents of anti-Christian violence have been spurred by the rise to power of Hindu-nationalist political parties. The world was shocked by the burning death on Jan. 23, 1999, of Australian missionary Graham Staines—who had spent 30 years in India working primarily with leprosy victims—and his two young sons. Hindu extremists surrounded the vehicle where the three were sleeping, doused it with gasoline and set it ablaze.

Remnant Communism. Another major source of Christian persecution is "remnant communism." While the Iron Curtain's fall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union sounded the death knell for communism, it continues in some countries, and their rulers' need to control the populace has not lessened. China's ruling elite, finally realiz-

ing they could never eradicate the church, decided to put on a new face that outwardly purported freedom of religion, but inwardly sought to make it subservient to the state.

The past three to four years in China have witnessed a frenzied government registration drive to force unofficial house churches—where most of China's Christians worship—to come under the wing of China's official church structure. Failure to register, which is the choice of most house churches, can result in harassment, fines, temporary jailings and even imprisonment of church leaders.

In North Korea, most Christians fled to the South during the Korean War. An unknown number of underground Christians still live in the North, but the quasi-religious personality cult built by long-time dictator Kim Il Sung, and now carried on by his son, continues its attempts to eradicate the church.

Cuban Christians have fared much better, at least recently. Their treatment seems to ebb and flow with the country's economic situation. Unprecedented open-air evangelical meetings were allowed in 1999 from May 30 to June 20. The four Sunday services were even televised nationally. The Christians there, however, have seen doors open and shut before. Either way, the situation is far from free.

Other Causes. What often makes dealing with the visible source of Christian persecution difficult is that other factors—society, culture, ethnicity, economics—are usually involved.

Indonesia's ongoing and spreading Muslim-Christian clashes are not driven solely by religious extremism. Other considerations include ethnicity and economics. Many Indonesians affected by high unemployment blame ethnic Chinese Indonesians for their poverty. The Chinese, who represent only five percent of the population, control 70

percent of the economy. A natural scapegoat during difficult times, half of them are Christian.

Then there are countries such as Colombia, possibly the world's most violent nation. Church leaders and members are caught in the crossfire of an ongoing warfare between government troops, rebel soldiers, para-military groups and narcotics traffickers. If a church shows allegiance to God alone and refuses to take sides, it becomes the enemy of all. Last year, Colombia's evangelical community denounced the killing of 36 pastors and the forced closure of more than 300 churches in areas where fighting is heaviest. Another 55 pastors were forced to abandon their churches and homes.

When Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak visited Washington, D.C., last July, he was confronted with examples of his country's religious rights violations. Of primary concern were events surrounding the Coptic Christian village of El-Kosheh, in Upper Egypt.

In August 1998, hundreds of Copts were arrested and tortured during a "murder investigation" of two Coptic men. Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom presented a list to President Clinton containing the names of 1,014 men, women and children who had suffered at the hands of Egyptian police during the investigation.

"A firm insistence on respect for human rights and democratic institutions by the administration could make an enormous difference in a country like Egypt that receives \$2 billion per year in American aid," said Nina Shea, director of the center.

Egypt's account of the incident was amazingly different. A report by the Egyptian Embassy said only 35 Coptic Christians were involved and that there was no evidence of torture. The police officers were exonerated.

Unfortunately, tension in El-Kosheh exploded on New Year's Eve, when a dispute between a Christian shop owner

and his Muslim customer resulted in three days of rioting, killing and destruction. By the time Egyptian security forces took control, at least 21 Coptic Christians had been killed and 34 were hospitalized. Fifty Christians' homes and businesses were destroyed, along with one village church.

PERSECUTION'S PARADOX

Oddly enough, such severe difficulties have led to blessings for the church.

Who would consider Chairman Mao a church-growth catalyst? Yet his repressive policies forced the Chinese church to depend solely on God. Mao also simplified and unified the language, then broke down cultural barriers, making the spread of the gospel easier. In 1949, there were between one to two million Christians in China. Today, a conservative estimate would be 40 million. Many China-watchers estimate 60 to 80 million believers.

"Some house church leaders believe that despite persecution, the church has been 'free' enough to spread the gospel," wrote John Chang, an experienced China watcher. "They believe it has been one of the most 'ideal' environments because the church, after going through long trials, has grown through painful experiences; believers became enthusiastic for evangelism and carried the gospel to remote and rural areas."

If the growth rate is maintained, by the year 2025, Chinese Christians could number more than 300 million—more than in any other country.

A few years ago, a church leader in Iran was asked how he felt about the Ayatollah Khomeini, whose return to Iran in 1979 initiated a harsh Islamic regime under which the church continues to suffer.

"He was the best thing that ever happened to the church in Iran," the pastor replied, matter-of-factly.

One of his stunned listeners shot back, "How can you say that?"

"Many in Iran had put their hope in

an Islamic state," he explained. "But under Khomeini, their hope soon turned to hopelessness. They began to look elsewhere for answers, and they are finding the only answer, Jesus Christ."

"IF ONE PART SUFFERS..."

Discrimination, slavery, torture, sexual abuse, estrangement, prison and death face Christians daily in many of the world's most restricted areas. For the body of Christ to function effectively, Christians who have opportunity must come to their aid.

We have to go back to the book [Bible] and acknowledge the body of Christ worldwide," says Brother Andrew of Open Doors. "The body of Christ cannot survive partially. We take care of the whole body, or the whole body goes under."



An expanded version of this article was originally published in the May/June 2000 issue of Moody. Jeff Taylor is the managing editor of Compass Direct News Service.

WORLD WATCH LIST		
RANK	COUNTRY	CHRISTIAN POPULATION*
1.	Saudi Arabia	600,000
2.	Afghanistan	2,500
3.	China	60,000,000
4.	Chechnya	200
5.	Sudan	4,800,000
6.	Yemen	5,000
7.	Comoro Islands	200
8.	Maldives	250
9.	Iran	200,000
10.	Morocco	25,000
11.	Tunisia	10,000
12.	Libya	140,000
13.	Vietnam	7,500,000
14.	Egypt	8,000,000
15.	Turkmenistan	60,000
16.	North Korea	100,000
17.	Pakistan	3,250,000
18.	Laos	50,000
19.	Bhutan	5,000
20.	Kuwait	75,000

*Estimate of the numbers of Christians of all denominations, and in some countries includes expatriate Christian workers (such as Saudi Arabia).

BOUND OR FREE— PAYING THE PRICE

It was an historic event when a German evangelist was officially granted seven days to come and hold public meetings in the capital city of a country with a Muslim majority. These meetings were advertised on television in the middle of a popular, imported Egyptian soap opera.

A *Narnian, working in Saudi Arabia, happened to be watching via satellite dish and he promptly bought himself and three Saudi Arabian Muslim friends airline tickets to attend the occasion. Many Muslims were healed and the meetings were the topic of conversation all around town.

One Arab young lady, dramatically healed, was now able to walk. Her father was deeply affected and threw a party for his friends.

As is customary in Folk Islam, he performed "*Karama*," which is the slaughtering of two sheep, and presided over a feast of celebration. Not content with only serving food and drinks, he set up a large television in his courtyard and began playing the video of the meeting—a video that included the whole salvation message preceding the altar service.

He also wanted to share his joy with other friends and neighbors, so he set up two loud speakers on the wall of his compound and blasted this salvation sermon into the whole neighborhood.

It did not take long for the *Ansar Sunna* (Islamic Fundamentalists) to gather their little posse and storm the compound. They demanded him to cease and desist.

"No!" he bellowed, "I would rather die here.... Besides, who do you think healed her?"

"Allah," they replied immediately.

"Exactly!" he bellowed, "God did it, so what is your problem?"

The gospel tape played on.

A Muslim taxi driver was asked by a friend whether he had heard about these events.

"Of course," he smiled. "My own mother was healed, and now she has become a follower of Christ. I would like you to come and visit her.... We are all tired of Islam."

She hails from a tribe with no known believers in it.

Not all the many testimonies that could be told, however, are so positive.

One young Arab man received the Lord as Savior and returned to his family to inform them. The news was not received gladly. One week later the young man was found dead; his head had been cut off, severed at the shoulders. The police arrested the murderer and held him for trial.

The family, however, approached the court and said, "This man did the correct thing to kill our son and cut off his head. We ask that he be released and allowed to go free."

The judge granted the request and the murderer now leisurely walks the streets. In reality, however, the murderer remains a captive and it is our headless hero who is now sound and eternally ransomed.

We cannot—we must not—forget those who remain spiritually bound. We urge you to continue to remember Narnia and her wonderful people who are so tragically deceived.

Pray that many more Narnians will turn to the Cross and find liberty for their souls, no matter the cost to their bodies.

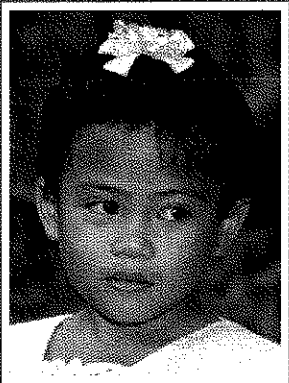
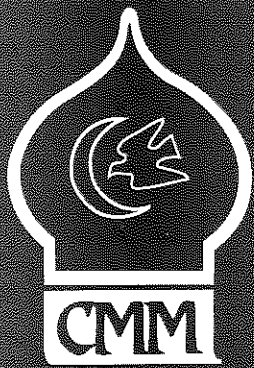
May we also turn to that same Cross daily and plead for those who, with so little, sacrifice so much.



*Narnia represents a limited-access country.

Further Reading on the Persecuted Church

1. *Good News About Injustice: A Witness of Courage in a Hurting World*, by Gary A. Haugen, InterVarsity, 1999.
2. *In the Lion's Den: Persecuted Christians and What the Western Church Can Do About It*, by Nina Shea, Broadman & Holman, 1997.
3. "Persecution," "Suffering," "Trials," "Tribulation." *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, InterVarsity Press, 1998.
4. *Reaching the Resistant: Barriers and Bridges for Missions*, edited by J. Dudley Woodberry, Evangelical Missiological Society Series No. 6, William Carey Press, 1998.
5. *Rwanda: A Walk Through Darkness Into Light*, by Carl Lawrence, Vision House, 1995.
6. *Sweet Persecution: A 30-Day Devotional With Reflections From the Persecuted Church*, by Ron Brackin, Bethany House, 1999.
7. *Their Blood Cries Out: The Untold Story of Persecution Against Christians in the Modern World*, by Paul Marshall and Lela Gilbert, Word Publishing, 1997.



Friday, November 3, 2000. Please pray

...for Christians suffering in Pakistani jails on accusations of blasphemy. We only have the names of a few (Ayub, Saleem, Rasheed, Kingri and Shafik Masih), but there are probably many more. Pray that they will be released soon.

...for the Nigerian Church as it challenges the institution of sharia (Islamic law) in Nigeria. Despite the violence that has occurred because of it, seven states have declared Islam as their state religion and begun full implementation of the Islamic legal system.

...for Indonesia's leaders: President Wahid and Vice-President Megawati, both advocates of religious tolerance and freedom. Pray that they will have wisdom in dealing with the violent situation in their country.

Friday, November 10, 2000. Please pray

...for a pastor's seminar being conducted by a CMM team member in Burkina Faso next week. Pray that each pastor will be encouraged and be better prepared to be involved in outreach to Muslims.

...for workers among Muslims who seem to have many additional stresses because of this involvement. Many have been forced to leave the field prematurely because of physical or emotional problems to them or members of their families. Pray for God's intervention on their behalf. Especially remember a Hollander who learned Turkish to minister to Turks and now has been diagnosed with cancer.

...for four Christians from Sumatra who are in jail on false accusations. They are: Samuel and Nenen Ongirwalu and Robert and Meliana Marthinus. Samuel is serving an 8-year sentence, while the other three are serving 6-year sentences.

Friday, November 17, 2000. Please pray

...for a CMM team member who is teaching Introduction to Islam at West African Advanced School of Theology in Togo these next three weeks. Pray that the students will benefit from this study and reach out to Muslims in their communities.

...that the publication of the revised Bible in modern Turkish will be available before the end of the year. Pray that many will receive it and be blessed by it.

...for those who were involved in summer outreach teams for missions exposure, prayer walking and other ministry. Pray that they not lose the burden for the unreached peoples and continue in prayer and eventually full-time ministry in these needy areas of the world.

...for the monthly Turkish outreach in a city in England. Pray that a powerful church will emerge from those who attend and find new life in Christ.

Friday, November 24, 2000. Please pray

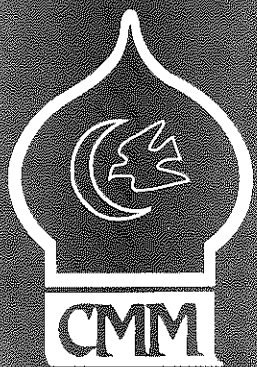
...for a CMM team member who is teaching a bloc course at Southern Asia Bible College. Pray for the students as they learn new techniques to disciple new converts.

...that German churches will respond to the increasing Turkish population in their neighborhoods. Pray that the believers will establish solid friendships with Turks and demonstrate the love of Christ to them.

...for the families of several imprisoned pastors in Turkmenistan that are destitute. Pray that their needs will be supplied.

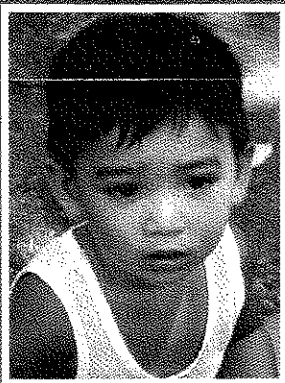
...for a North African convert who is now working with students in a major European city. Pray that he will have wisdom in defending his newfound faith.

I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.
—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)



Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims Around the World!



Friday, December 1, 2000. Please pray

...for the many Turkmen believers who are being fired from their jobs and prevented from getting other employment. Ask for God's provision for them and pray that other jobs might be developed.

...for the radio station beaming the gospel into Chechnya. Pray that many Chechen hearts will be touched both within the country and those who have fled from the war zone. Pray for those who have been traumatized and suffered great losses.

...for the situation in Sierra Leone, West Africa, now devastated by the recent civil war. Islam claims to be the majority religion, but an estimated 90 percent remain animistic in their worldview.

Friday, December 8, 2000. Please pray

...for CMM team members who are holding a pastors' seminar in Bulgaria. Pray for responsive pastors who will commit themselves in ministry to Muslims.

...for the judges and lawyers involved in the judicial cases of the Christians. It is difficult for them to handle cases objectively when they know their lives will be threatened if the Christians are released. Pray that God will raise up discerning lawyers willing to defend the rights of Christians.

...for those who have are suffering in Saudi Arabia because of the miscarriage of justice. During the first 6 months of the year, 15 public amputations occurred. Human rights organizations say the accused do not receive fair trials.

Friday, December 15, 2000. Please pray

...for converts in Egypt who face persecution and the scrutiny of secret police. Many are pressured to recant by police who assume the convert was paid to convert. Pray for those who do recant and are under pressure to become regular informers.

...that God will stem the tide of Christians in Tanzania converting to Islam. Many have succumbed because they are weak in faith, unsure how to defend their faith and unfamiliar with Muslim theology. Pray that God will give them wisdom, an understanding of the Word and confidence to stand for the Lord.

Friday, December 22, 2000. Please pray

...that adequate follow-up will be provided for radio listeners. Wisdom is needed to discern the sincerity of inquirers. One young man waited 8 years for a Bible he requested. A week after he received one, he gave his life to Christ. Pray this young man's life will continue to be transformed.

...for Syria during this time of transition in government with the death of Hafez Assad. Pray that his successor, his son Bashar, will grant greater freedom for Christians to share their faith.

...for the Church in Ethiopia. Drought, famine and war continue to plague their region, yet the Church is growing. Pray that Ethiopian believers will continue to be fervent in serving God.

Friday, December 29, 2000. Please pray

...for two young Sudanese who came to Christ outside their homeland. They went back home to share their faith and have been imprisoned and beaten because of their testimony. Pray for God's sustaining hand to be upon them, blessing and using them.

...that college students will be impacted with the great need of unreached peoples as they meet with Christian workers during the SALT and Urbana conventions being held between Christmas and the New Year. May many determine to make a difference where the needs are the greatest.

...that the fighting between Muslims and Christians that has spread all over Indonesia will soon end. At least 675 churches have been destroyed. Pray for peace and the rebuilding of the churches.

I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)