

Algeria Cracks Down on Christians

Persecution against Christians continues in Algeria, as authorities have ordered that several Protestant churches close their doors—a trend that is expected to continue until all the country's Protestant churches are shut down.

According to International Christian Concern (ICC), it appears Algeria's campaign to eradicate Christianity in the predominantly Muslim country has simply advanced one more step. "Seven churches in the northeast of the country were given notification by the governor to close their church doors. It came as a surprise to the Evangelical Association in Algeria. Basically, they are given a matter of days to close their doors for no apparent reason." The government and courts are also continuing to target individual Christians. ICC reported, "In another case, there was an Algerian Christian who was sentenced in court with a five-year imprisonment for sharing his Christian faith with a neighbor." In response, some Christians have been burying their Christian literature to avoid detection. ICC is urging people to contact the Algerian embassy in Washington and politely encourage the government to drop the case of Siaghi Krimo, the man given the five-year prison term.

This Month You Can . . . Fund Critical Airstrip Repairs



Wycliffe Associates is working to repair and reopen airstrips in some of the most difficult-to-reach areas of Papua New Guinea to ensure that Bible translation efforts continue moving forward. "Air transportation—the lifeblood of support for translators—is at risk," said Bruce Smith, president and CEO of Wycliffe Associates. "In addition to repairs, we must reopen multiple airstrips this year to begin translation in languages that desperately need God's Word."

Located in the eastern half of the island of New Guinea in the South Pacific, Papua New Guinea comprises an area approximately one-tenth larger than California and consists mostly of mountains and lowland foothills. Bible translators can travel for as many as five days by boat and on foot to reach some language groups, while the same trip by aircraft takes as little as two hours. But many of the remote airstrips are little more than clearings that cling to the sides of mountains or are surrounded by jungle. Translators rely on aircraft for the delivery of food and supplies, as well as transportation for themselves and support staff. An air evacuation during health emergencies and natural disasters can mean the difference between life and death.

According to SIL International's *Ethnologue*, there are 830 living languages in Papua New Guinea, representing 12 percent of the living languages on earth. About 200 Bible translation projects are currently under way, while 175 have been completed to date. At any given time, approximately 1,000 adult volunteers, translators, support personnel, and children are in Papua New Guinea in connection with the work of Bible translation. If you would like to make a contribution, call 1-800-THE-WORD or visit www.wycliffeassociates.org.

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CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD

NEWS OF SIGNIFICANCE TO CHRISTIANS

Some news that's encouraging—some disturbing. Please read with discernment. Watch and pray.

Focus on . . . *Greenland*

Greenland is the world's largest island but has the lowest population density of any country; 85 percent of the island is covered by glacier ice. Greenland has been Christianized, but not converted. Though nearly every settlement has a Lutheran church building, too many lack a real spiritual life. The culture of Greenland had been finely tuned to its inhospitable environment for centuries but has been devastated by modern culture. There is widespread immorality, sexual abuse, alcoholism, mental illness, and suicide. There has been an increase in efforts by indigenous believers, missionaries, and short-term workers to address the nation's issues and offer counseling and support.

Pray for

- The spread and effectiveness of the more contemporary version of the Bible in Greenlandic, which was released in 2001
- The *JESUS* film, translated into Greenlandic, to be an effective witness
- Indigenous leaders and pastors to minister to the needs of all Greenland



Radio Ministry for North Korea's Persecuted Christians

Open Doors USA has launched a new effort to draw attention to the plight of Christians in North Korea. Open Doors spokesman Jerry Dykstra said, "Twenty-three Christians in a house church in a province . . . were discovered by the police in a meeting, and three of them were immediately sentenced to death and the rest of them [were] put in prison." Open Doors is urging Christians to pray for North Korea and to send messages via radio. "There's an organization called Free North Korea Radio, which has been sending messages into North Korea since 2004," Dykstra explained, adding, "There's a way that people can sign up and send . . . an e-mail of encouragement." The messages will be read on the air by people who escaped to South Korea and want to reach the North with encouragement and the message of Christ. Dykstra noted, "We do know that many people are listening to those messages over the air links in North Korea, though the government is trying to jam their signals."

The World Watch List, issued annually by Open Doors, ranked North Korea in the number-one spot for the ninth year in a row, which means the country leads the world in the persecution of Christians.

[Jesus said,] "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you." —LUKE 11:9

Eritrean Christians Finding No Escape from Persecution

Eritrean Christians fleeing persecution face imprisonment, torture, beatings, and sexual assault in Egypt, reports Barnabas Fund. The charity estimates that hundreds of Eritrean Christian refugees have been abused after arriving in Egypt, which is the most popular destination for those escaping. Eritrea is one of the most hostile countries in the world for Christians, who are seen as a threat to national security, and persecution has intensified in recent months after an Eritrean governor ordered a purge against Christians at the end of 2010.

Hundreds of Eritrean Christians risk their lives to enter Egypt, in hopes of eventually being able to get to Israel. Many of them instead end up in Egyptian prisons or are held hostage in the Sinai by Bedouin Muslim nomads. There are currently between 500 and 600 Eritrean prisoners in Egyptian custody and as many as 200 in the hands of traffickers. Hostages who are not ransomed are killed. There are also unconfirmed reports that the hostage-takers are harvesting the organs of hostages who have been unable to secure the ransom for their release.

Archaeologists Discover Ancient Church in Acre, Israel

Archaeologists have unearthed a 1,500-year-old structure, believed to be a church in Acre, a city in northern Israel. This marks the first time the Israel Antiquities Authority has found solid proof that the city of Acre played a role in early Christianity. "This is an important discovery," said Nurit Page, head of the excavation.

The ancient structure is believed to be a church because of its size, which indicates

that it was a public building, and the style of the building, including the roofing tiles.

Excavation teams regularly find ancient churches and tombs in Israel, which naturally lead to comparisons with Bible stories for historical accuracy. Last February, archaeologists found a wall in Jerusalem that dates back to the time of King Solomon and matches the Bible's description of that era.

High School Fund-raiser Canceled over Bible Verses

A California school district has canceled a memorial brick paver fund-raising program after religious controversy ensued regarding the messages to be displayed on the bricks. "Buy a brick, inscribe a message" was the theme of the fund-raiser approved by the Palm Desert High School and the Desert Sands Unified School District. No restrictions were placed on the content of the messages, other than the length. The pavers were to be displayed along the walkways at the Palm Desert High School.

Two participants purchased brick pavers engraved with Bible verses but were later told that their messages would cause "an unconstitutional establishment of religion." Former principal Pat Walsh told the purchasers that due to the separation of church and state, their bricks would

not be installed at the school.

The rejected bricks had messages that stated, "Tell everyone about God's power" (Psalm 68:34) and "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) sued district officials, and as a direct result of the lawsuit, the Desert Sands Unified School District decided to cancel the entire fund-raising program and refund all of the purchases made by community groups or individuals. "It is cowardly to shut down everyone's participation in this program simply out of animosity toward Christian speech," an ADF spokesman said. "The school could simply have allowed the Bible verses, but instead, it chose to punish everyone."

Despite Threat, Mosul Believers Fight for Rights

Christians in Iraq want their own province, and although there has been a mass exit of Christians from Iraq because of persecution, some are standing their ground. That is especially true in Mosul, the biblical town of Nineveh. "The Christians in the area of Nineveh are working to get their own province—and, of course, this is an area that has been dominated mostly by Muslims," said a spokesman for Christian Freedom International. "And given the recent attacks that have happened to Christians in Iraq, they're actually standing up now trying to get some of their own land back."

Some argue, however, that even though the Iraqi constitution allows for a Christian state, putting Christians in one state would simply make them a bigger target for terrorists. "Any time Christians in this part of the world stand up for their own freedoms, it is like putting a target on their own back," stated the ministry spokesman. "But the Christians especially in Iraq right now are basically saying this is a time we need to get our rights back." Christians, he explained, are willing to fight for their own state, but Muslims in that region tend to follow *sharia* (Islamic law) rather than their own constitution.

Syria's Christians Prefer Assad

One group not wholeheartedly embracing the protests against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad is Syrian Christians, who make up at least 10 percent of the population. Under Assad, Christians have been allowed religious freedom, and they have prospered to the point that they now make up much of the professional middle class. "Our feeling is that if the regime falls, the Salafis and the Muslim Brotherhood will seize power—and that is bad news for us," said Archbishop Mor Cyril Aphrem Karim of the Syriac Orthodox Church. "History has proven

to us that Christians have always had more secure lives, better treatment by people who may be looked on as dictators, like Saddam Hussein." After Saddam fell, Iraqi Christians were targeted by extremist groups, and fully half of the Christian population fled, many to Syria. "Syria has been a beacon of freedom and security for Christians in a largely hostile Arab world," said Patrick Sookhdeo of the international Christian group Barnabas Fund. "If they are now forced to leave the country, where will they go?"

US Trafficking Reaches Epidemic Levels

The founder of an organization that is working to stop human trafficking says the practice of selling women and children for illicit activity has reached epidemic proportions in the United States.

Trafficking has been a long-standing problem, but according to Nathan Wilson of Project Meridian Foundation, it has gotten worse over the last few decades, partly "because of those that are being brought here illegally, that are being exported at a higher rate. The numbers are a lot larger than you're hearing from your congressional leaders—I can guarantee that." An estimated 1.6 million children in the United States are victims of human trafficking.

