

27. HONDURAS – pray for **Omar Rivera** who was part of a commission formed by President Hernandez in 2016 to purge rampant corruption from the Honduran police force. He says, “We had at least 3 things: we had moral strength; we had Christ in our hearts; and we weren’t worried about whether we’d be killed.” The 6-person team included 4 out-spoken Christians. Rivera and **Carlos Hernandez** joined the group as part of their work with the Christian organization **Association for a More Just Society (AJS)** The commission eventually removed 6 out of 9 police generals and 5,000 out of 13,000 police officers on the Honduran force. Three years later Rivera still has to travel with security and avoids public areas where he might be a target. “Our lives have changed, probably forever,” he says. “But Jesus would tell us not only to pray for the country, but to do something for it.”

28. HONDURAS – pray also for **Kurt Ver Beek**, a Calvin University professor in Tegucigalpa, who helped start AJS more than 20 years ago. For him, the goal is as simple as it sweeping. “We are doing our very best to make Honduras a place people don’t want to leave.”

29. SUDAN – praise God that a Sudanese court has ordered the return of land belonging to the **Baptist Church**.

30. Cuba – continue praying for religious defender **Fernandez Izaguirre** who was detained for one week in July because of his work documenting freedom of religion or belief violations. He was again detained in Nov for 30 hours and has been threatened with false criminal charges. Pray for God to protect Mr Izaguirre and for all those who document human rights abuses in Cuba, often at great personal risk.

31. CUBA – continue praying for the **Ladies in White**, a peaceful activist group consisting of wives and female family members of political prisoners. Government officials frequently stop the Ladies in White from attending Sunday Mass and weekly religious services by arbitrarily detaining them for the duration of the service, then dropping them off in a remote area to find their own way home. Pray for God to grant these courageous women the freedom to worship.

Pray from Psalm 7-

O Lord my God, in You I put my trust.
 Save me from all those who persecute me, and deliver me...
 Arise O lord in Your anger;
 Lift Yourself up because of my enemies.
 Rise up for me to the judgement You have commanded!
 O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
 But establish the just...
 I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness,
 And I will sing praise to the Lord Most High.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus.
 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.
 Amen.

SOURCES:

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

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel. Stir up Your strength and come save us! Restore us, O God. Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved! Psalm 80

STANDING IN THE GAP

for the Persecuted Church

December 2019

- 1. GREECE** – continue to pray for the **Greek Evangelical Church** in Volos as they continue to minister to the flood of refugees coming to Greece. There are currently 88,000 refugees and migrants in Greece, mostly from Syria, but many from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and some African countries. The islands’ reception centers are intended to host 5,400 people; the recent increase brought the population to 20,500, placing in particular risk the 1,180 unaccompanied children among them. Pray for the **Center for Unaccompanied Minors**, part of the Volos Church’s ministry. The center has 30 boys who are being cared for. Pray for the church to make an impact on these boys but also to have a testimony of the love of Christ. Continue to pray for **Peri-ergon Perichoresis**, the ministry that teaches refugee women to sew items to generate income.
- 2. UNITED STATES** – pray for the **Little Sisters of the Poor**, an organization of Catholic nuns that is again heading to the Supreme Court in their second lawsuit. In November, the nuns asked the Supreme Court to review a case from the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals in PA that barred the federal government from offering a religious exemption to an Obamacare contraceptive and abortifacient mandate. Without the exemption, the nuns could be forced to provide coverage in their employees’ health plans that violate their religious beliefs.
- 3. ALGERIA** – “All churches in Algeria are at risk of closure,” reports an officer with the *World Evangelical Alliance*. In the past 7 weeks, authorities have closed **12 evangelical Protestant churches**. Pray for the church in Algeria.
- 4. MEXICO** – continue praying for Protestant pastor **Aaron Mendez Ruiz**, and his co-worker, **Alfredo Castillo de Luna**. There has been no word since they were kidnapped in Nuevo Laredo on August 3. Pastor Ruiz is director of the Casa del Migrante which serves hundreds of migrants from all over the world hoping to go to the US. Mr De Luna is another staff member. Staff at the shelter are carrying on with their ministry, but those receiving services fear that the criminals will attempt to kidnap more people.
- 5. IRAN** – praise God that **Ebrahim Firouzi** was released from prison in Karaj on Oct 26, near the end of a five-year sentence relating to his Christian activities. He must now serve two years internal exile in the remote town of Sarbaz, near the border with Pakistan. Ebrahim says he is in good health but requests prayer for patience when he begins to feel upset and angry.
- 6. UNITED STATES** – praise God that the Kentucky Supreme Court vindicated Christian printer, **Blaine Anderson**, who didn’t want to print pro-LGBT messages on T-shirts promoting the city’s 2012 Gay Pride Festival. His print shop is **Hands On Originals**, and Anderson defended his objection to print the T-shirts because of his religious conviction about sexuality and marriage. *Alliance Defending Freedom* senior counsel **Jim Campbell** said the ruling should encourage religious business owners.
- 7. CHINA** – praise God that **Gou Zhongcan** of Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu has been released after seven months’ imprisonment. Continue praying for **Pastor Wang Yi and elder Qin Defu** who remain in criminal detention.
- 8. VIETNAM** – pray for **Y Bi** who became a Christian in 2018. The villagers destroyed her home. Her husband rejected her and she was beaten. “They pulled my hair and they dragged me out of the village. My child was crying; they took her so she could not see me.” After Y Bi left her village, one of *Open Doors* partners, **Pastor Thang** helped disciple her and build a new home.

9. **CHINA** – pray for the 6-year old Chinese Bible app called **WeDevote**. The app is a much-needed resource for the Chinese Christians. Nearly all the WeDevote’s users are from mainland China where government officials recently made it more difficult to purchase physical copies of the Bible. Since **Levi Fan** and 2 others launched WeDevote from Beijing in 2013, Chinese officials have monitored its growth, intimidated Fan and tried to shut the app down. Fan was finally pressured by authorities to shut down the app and close the company; but they simply set up another company in Hong Kong. However, since July, the authorities cut off access to its web-site.
10. **HONG KONG** – pray for 80-year-old **Pastor Kwok Naiwang** who has been in the fight for Hong Kong democracy since the 1980’s . Now he is watching another generation take up the cause. He continues teaching at **Lutheran Theological Seminary**, pastoring at different churches and training pastors.
11. **UNITED KINGDOM** – pray for **Dr. David Mackereth** who was forced out of his job by the Department of Work and Pensions because of his Biblical beliefs on human sexuality after he refused to use transgender pronouns. The Employment Tribunal ruled that Dr. Mackereth’s beliefs are not “worthy of respect in a democratic society.”
12. **UNITED STATES** – The Trump Administration had announced a new ceiling for refugees admitted to the US, starting with the new fiscal year in October. For 2020, the maximum number allowed will be 18,000 refugees, slashing a ceiling that 40 years ago averaged 95,000. The number of Iranian Christians resettled in the US has fallen from 2,086 in 2016 to 66 in 2019. Families at refugee camps around the world have been stopped in process, reports *Bethany Christian Service’s*, **Nate Bult**. *World Relief’s* **Matthew Sorens** says that “by further restricting refugee resettlement, the administration is exacerbating the humanitarian nightmare along our border.”
13. **VIETNAM** – pray for **Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton**, a Protestant church leader and human rights activists. In Feb 2017 he was kidnapped by state agents, beaten and abandoned in a remote location. He was sentenced to 12 years in prison in April 2018. Pray for physical and mental healing for Pastor Ton and for his immediate release.
14. **VIETNAM** – pray for **ethnic Montagnard Catholics and Protestants** in the Central Highlands who suffer severe abuses, including denial to access to public services following conversion to Christianity. Ask God to protect them from all harm.
15. **ERITREA** – continue praying for Christians in Eritrea. It is estimated that there are at least 600 Christians currently in prison in the country’s 360 prisons.
16. **EGYPT** – **Three Coptic churches** in Upper Egypt region were hit by fire in the last 3 weeks which the Copts say is ‘not a coincidence.’ Pray for the **Mar-Girgis (St George) al-Gyoushi Church** in the Shuba district of Cairo; the **Mar-Girgis Orthodox Church** in Mansoura, 120 km northeast of Cairo; and the famous wooden **Mar-Girgis Orthodox Church** in Cairo’s southern Helwan district.
17. **SYRIA** – two separate suicide attacks killed at least 5 people in the historically Christian community of Qamishli, Syria, Nov 11. One of the bombs exploded at a **Chaldean Catholic Church**. The town’s Armenian Catholic priest and his father were killed.
18. **UNITED STATES** – continue praying for **David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt** and the **Center of Medical Progress (CMP)**. On Nov 15, a federal judge ruled that they must pay up to \$2.3 million in damages to Planned Parenthood for secretly recording the abortion giant’s associates talking about harvesting and selling aborted baby parts. Lawyers say that obvious pro-abortion bias by the federal judge who oversaw the civil trial in San Francisco, US District Judge William Orrick, gives Daleiden and Merritt plenty of grounds for appeal. Judge Orrick has known ties to Planned Parenthood and barred the jury from seeing CMP’s videos.
19. **MIDDLE EAST** – pray for *Open Doors’* project of having 20 house churches by 2020 led primarily by leaders that *Open Doors* has trained at their training camps for young Christians. These Christians help lead house churches in the Middle East that have to operate and worship in secret.
20. **NIGERIA** – pray for **Alisa**, one of many women who has survived sexual violence by Muslim Fulani militants and has been emotionally devastated by violent persecution. Thankfully, she is also one of the many who have found healing through *Open Doors’* trauma care for survivors of persecution in Nigeria. She shares, “I didn’t think I would survive. But God in His mercies has brought me this far.”
21. **INDIA** – on Nov 12 a group of Hindu extremists attacked and severely beat the members of a small house church in Jharkhand State. **Pastor Kuman Paul** and his wife and son were badly injured. Pray for them and the **Evangelical Church of the Calvary Gospel Ministry**. The pastor’s elderly mother was also beaten.
22. **INDIA** – In Nov 2018 **Ahladpur Church** in Utter Pradesh state was burned down to the ground. *Church in Chains* and *Persecution Relief* have partnered together to build a replacement church, **Pastor Sone Lai** said that the concrete boundary wall has been constructed and worship is taking place in a temporary shed. Thank God people are still coming to the church and no further attack has happened.
23. **ERITREA** – continue praying for **Aklilu Desbele**, 46, who has been in prison since 2008 because of commitment to share the Gospel.
24. **IRAN** – continue praying for **Mahrokh Kanbari**, 65, who is serving a one-year prison sentence for propaganda against the system. She was arrested in Dec 2018 and imprisoned in Oct 2019.
25. **SYRIA** – continue praying for those effected by continuing attacks by Turkey. Pray for American **Steve Gumaer**, president of *Partners Relief and Development*, an NGO working amid the sudden humanitarian crisis. 138 families recently arrived with no place to stay after fleeing the town of Tel Tamar because of Turkish bombardments. An estimated 300,000 Syrians have been forced from their homes by the Turkish invasion of northeast Syria. Many of those fleeing have no where to go after the UN rejected a proposal to set up a temporary camp in Hasakah where Gumear is located. Local officials agreed to close Hasakah’s 68 schools to convert them to shelters. International aid agencies and governmental agencies normally on the scene are staying away from a chaotic and dangerous landscape. Turkish forces have deployed drones to attack civilian areas despite a cease-fire agreement. No one is protecting civilians- leaving that to volunteers from Kurdish groups, local churches, and NGO’s like Gumaer’s. One area came under deadly fire Nov 3 when a Turkish mortar killed **Free Burma Rangers medic Zau Seng** who had been part of the team under **David Eubank** rescuing civilians and the wounded. **Alberto Fernandez**, a former US diplomat in the region who heads up the *Middle East Broadcasting Network* says, “Turkish controlled Islamist fighters in Syria shell American evangelical Christian humanitarian group, killing one aid worker and wounding another. Meanwhile, the President talks about ‘protecting the oil’ in Syria after abandoning religious and ethnic minorities to these things. Shameful moral incoherence at work.”
26. **HONDURAS** – continue praying for **Michael Miller**, 47, an elder at the bilingual **Union Christian Church** and leader for 20 years of the **Micah Project** – a Christian ministry to the street children of Tegucigalpa. Some of the boys in the Micah Project have kicked addictions, turned to Christ, grown up and built careers and have families of their own.

