

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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Issue 1510

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Friday 9 April 2010

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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ Nurse to fight on in 'Cross Row'

Shirley Chaplin, the Exeter nurse at the centre of the 'Cross Row' with her NHS employer, has vowed to 'fight on' after an Employment Tribunal found against her claim for discrimination on the grounds of her religion. The Tribunal found that there was no discrimination because all staff were treated equally. No one was permitted to wear a cross around their neck for religious reasons but if someone wanted to wear a hijab for religious reasons they could.

<http://www.ccfon.org/view.php?id=1046> Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, used his Easter sermon to hit out at the "wooden-headed bureaucratic silliness" which has seen some Christians stopped from wearing religious symbols at work. Dr Williams said there was a 'strange mixture of contempt and fear' towards Christianity. But he urged believers to keep a sense of perspective in the face of opposition and 'think about the larger picture'. (See Prayer Alert 1410.)

**Pray:** that the Employment Appeal Tribunal will reverse its decision and allow Mrs Chaplin to wear her Cross visibly. (Mt.5:10)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7552145/Archbishop-of-Canterbury-hits-out-at-cross-ban.html>

### ■ Westminster 2010: a declaration of Christian Conscience for General Election

Please take a moment to sign 'Westminster 2010', a declaration of Christian conscience as we approach the General Election endorsed by 35 Christian leaders and launched on Easter Sunday. 'Westminster 2010' is aimed to appeal to UK Christians of all denominations who subscribe to the historic Christian faith and who hold orthodox Christian beliefs about life, marriage and conscience. All parliamentary candidates are being asked to pledge that they will 'respect, uphold and protect the right of Christians to hold and express Christian beliefs and act according to Christian conscience'. Read the declaration and add your signature by clicking the 'More' link.

**Pray:** that this initiative will bear fruit. (Lk.4:43)

**More:** <http://www.westminster2010.org.uk/sign/>

### ■ Christians invited to 'Join The Party'

Christians should not only vote in the forthcoming general election but seek to influence the political system from the inside as party members, local councillors and even MPs, according to a campaign launched on Tuesday. 'Join The Party' has been launched by Christians in Politics, the politically neutral umbrella organisation jointly owned by the Christian Socialist Movement, the Conservative Christian Fellowship and the Liberal Democrat Christian Forum. It encourages Christians to get beyond shouting from the sidelines and to become part of the political process. The campaign is launched with video clips of the three main party leaders and the Archbishop of York available from Christians in Politics [www.christiansinpolitics.org.uk/home](http://www.christiansinpolitics.org.uk/home). In his video clip the Archbishop of York Right Revd John Sentamu encourages

Christians 'to vote, to engage, to converse, to discuss' and says 'it matters a great deal if all of us who are able to exercise our democratic right are able to turn out'.

**Pray:** that God's grace and guidance might be given to all engaged in the May 6 election process. (1Ki.4:29)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christians.invited.to.join.the.party/25650.htm>

#### ■ **Bishop calls for election which protects the vulnerable**

The Bishop of Ripon and Leeds has called for policies from the parties contesting the general election, which promote fairness and support for those most in need. The Rt Rev John Packer says that the 'burden of cuts' must fall on those with adequate resources and not on those struggling with debt or unemployment. It comes as ethics look set to play a central part in the election off the back of the scandal over MP's expenses, and slogans from the main parties which address 'fairness'. On taxing and cuts, Bishop Packer says, 'I shall be searching for signs of a concern for those in most need in our society. So in dealing with national debt, I shall want the burden of cuts to fall on those of us with adequate resources, and not those who have inadequate housing, who are unemployed or who struggle with debt. They need protection.'

**Pray:** for a genuine desire by the political leaders to support the truly needy in our country. (Dt.15:11)

**More:** <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/11714>

#### ■ **Portsmouth Christians seek to reach spiritually active non-believers**

Christians in the Diocese of Portsmouth are hoping to reach out to churchgoers in need of new inspiration as well as people who would describe themselves as spiritual yet do not go to church. They are inviting passers-by, tourists and worshippers to drop into the city's Anglican cathedral for its spirituality fair, which will host prayer stations, workshops and meditations on April 17. Organisers say they hope the 'Be Still' fair will inspire people to worship God in new ways and help those who rarely experience Christian spirituality. Also on offer will be poetry as a spiritual aid, the role of the senses in Christian spirituality, what the Bible has to say and a prayer tent. There will be a traditional labyrinth laid out in the centre of the building – a medieval maze that encourages contemplation. Workshops through the day include prayer and movement, weaving and sculpture.

**Pray:** for visitors to this special event that they will learn more of and feel closer to God. (Ps.46:10)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.co.uk/article/portsmouth.christians.seek.to.reach.spiritually.active.nonbelievers/25642.htm>

#### ■ **BBC TV Documentary on marginalised Christians**

Christians feel marginalised and pushed out of public life while other faiths are handled with kid gloves, according to a flagship BBC documentary shown on Easter Sunday. The film was presented by Nicky Campbell and featured two cases backed by The Christian Institute: Lillian Ladele, the registrar disciplined for her stance on civil partnerships, and Ben & Sharon Vogelenzang, the Christian hoteliers charged with a crime for criticising Islam. The hour-long programme called 'Are Christians Being Persecuted?' investigated widespread claims that Christianity is being sidelined in modern Britain. A poll conducted for the documentary showed that 44 per cent think Britain has become less tolerant of religion. Mr Campbell concluded the documentary asking: 'So, are Christians being persecuted? No they're not being tortured or killed like Christians in Pakistan and the Sudan. But a minority believes they are being sidelined and victimised. By the standards of a liberal society that can feel like persecution.' Watch on BBC iPlayer available until Sunday. See link: **Highly recommended** [http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00rx7tj/Are\\_Christians\\_Being\\_Persecuted/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b00rx7tj/Are_Christians_Being_Persecuted/)

**Pray:** that each one of us will live our lives as a clear expression of our Christian faith and not be 'sidelined'. (1Th.1:3)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/watch-bbc-tv-show-on-marginalised-christians/>

#### ■ **Survivors of forced marriage go on UK tour**

Victims will urge children at risk to tell the authorities of their fears. Their stories are ones not normally made public in intimate detail. In the first scheme of its kind survivors of forced marriages will travel the country in May to describe the ordeals they went through in an attempt to try to persuade communities to abandon the practice. Men and women who were forced to marry against their wishes will visit 12 cities to tell teachers and police officers to be extra vigilant about children going missing during the summer holidays. Each summer hundreds of girls and boys, largely from South Asian communities, travel with their families to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where they are forced into marriages. Those working to stop the practice say the period just before the summer holiday is always their busiest time of the year.

**Pray:** for those taking part in this tour, that their voices will be heard. (1Co.16:13)

**More:** <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/survivors-of-forced-marriage-go-on-uk-tour-1937602.html>

## EUROPE

#### ■ **EU to defend Christian minorities**

The European Union has announced the creation of a working group to assist Christian minorities in countries around the world where they are persecuted. The initiative launched by Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini is to help EU member countries' embassy staffs know how to intervene on behalf of persecuted Christian minorities. Frattini says that before action the first step will be to write a manual that will be given to the embassy staff of all EU member nations. It is the first European government organisation devoted to addressing the persecution of Christians, he said in an interview in the Italian newspaper Avvenire. EU analyst Jonathan Racho says 'This panel will be an official EU governmental agency designed to intervene on behalf of a nation's Christian minority,' Racho said. 'They will advocate on behalf of persecuted Christians even though the report we have from our sources doesn't go into a lot of detail.'

**Pray:** for this initiative to bring God's help to those persecuted for their faith in Jesus. (Ps.9:13)

**More:** <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=132577>

## ■ Brussels: Rebuilding Afghanistan

A senior European commission official told a Brussels conference on Wednesday that Afghan's drug dependency will make reconstruction of the war-torn country very difficult. One of the things Afghanistan needs is long-term development of its civil service so that Afghans themselves can take over control of future events. The aim has to be to allow the Afghan economy to become free of its dependency on drugs which continue to be the main source of illegal revenue in the country. There are 30,000 European troops in Afghanistan aiding the US-led war. Meanwhile, French president Nicolas Sarkozy said he will stay in Afghanistan because it is a fight against terrorists and he does not want the Taliban to make a martyr out of Afghanistan nor allow Pakistan with its nuclear weapons to fall into the hands of terrorists.

**Pray:** for God to give His strategy to the leaders attempting to free the region of death, deception and disorder. (Is.61:1)

**More:** <http://www.theparliament.com/policy-focus/foreign-affairs/foreign-affairs-article/newsarticle/drug-dependency-makes-rebuilding-afghanistan-more-difficult/>

## WORLDWIDE

## ■ Kyrgyzstan: Opposition seizes power, dissolves parliament

Kyrgyzstan's opposition said on Thursday it had taken power and dissolved parliament after a bloody uprising forced President Kurmanbek Bakiyev to flee the capital. Roza Otunbayeva, leader of the interim government, demanded his resignation. She said Bakiyev was trying to rally supporters in his power base in the south. The uprising, which began in the northern town of Talas on Tuesday soon spread to the capital Bishkek. A missionary living in Jalalabad Bakiyev's home town reports, 'Bakiyev is reported to be in Osh - the second city of Kyrgyzstan located further west. It's still peaceful here right now. Bishkek is a mess. There's meant to be a new government led by a woman in the opposition party. Nothing has been signed officially so anything could still happen. There are differing reports on numbers dead maybe 1-200 casualties with hundreds more injured. Looting has been going on in Bishkek and even here shops are closed.'

**Pray:** for the situation in Kyrgyzstan that the problems will not escalate and there would be peace. (Pr.12:20)

**More:** <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE6363E020100408>

## ■ Gaza: A generation of casualties

Israel's foreign minister warned Palestinians against plans to declare independence next year saying the move could prompt Israel to annex parts of the West Bank and annul past peace agreements. His remarks took aim at a Palestinian policy coming out of the stalled U.S. peace talks. [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2011533615\\_apmlisraelpalestinians.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2011533615_apmlisraelpalestinians.html) Last Friday Israeli warplanes, responding to Palestinian border assaults, bombed the Gaza Strip resulting in two children being hospitalised. The children of Gaza have much misery to contend with as they try to put memories of the war behind them. Much of Gaza is still piles of sand and rubble. The winter rains have brought leaks and floods for family homes and the blockades cause many shortages of necessities. Currently there is a shortage of cooking gas. Power cuts are also commonplace making it very difficult for children to study at night. The children are stuck in Gaza with little hope of the freedom we take for granted.

**Pray:** for the children of Gaza to have a future and a hope; pray also for the Palestinian Christians to have all their prayers powerfully answered. (Ps.69:32-33,36)

**More:** <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches/articles/children-of-gaza-filmmakers-feature>

## ■ Nigeria: Secret killings follow religious deaths

The religious massacres have stopped, but 'secret' killings of Christians and Muslims continue on a smaller scale across Northern Nigeria, claiming more than 30 lives this year police said on Tuesday. Three more people died and several were injured during an interfaith Easter prayer ceremony in Jos. The State Police Commissioner said the secret killings happen when Christians and Muslims stray into neighbourhoods dominated by the other faith. Police and security forces collect one or two bodies a night. The violence remains hidden from public view since it hasn't reached the horrors of earlier in the year when more than 200 people - mostly Christians - died in March massacres and more than 300 people - mostly Muslims - died in January during rioting in the same region.

**Pray:** for God's life giving spirit to heal the broken, bring reconciliation to divided groups and invade the darkness still hovering over the region. (Is.42:16)

**More:** <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iNCU46VYMF0VzhqKJUus45PrDAD9ETOKLG4>

## ■ Iraq: Christians under fire

Christians in Iraq face possible martyrdom as an ever present reality. The campaign of violence against Christians is one of the most under-reported stories of Iraq since the 2003 invasion and could fundamentally change the country's character. By the time the dust finally settles on the chaotic current chapter of Iraq's history, the Christian community may have disappeared altogether after 2,000 years as a significant presence. About 200,000 Iraqi Christians have already fled the country. They once made up three per cent of its population but now account for half of its refugees. Erbil in northern Iraq has become a safe haven for Christian refugees who are too poor to leave or do not want to abandon their country. It is the seat of the Kurdish Regional Government which treats the Christians well and there is an established Christian community to welcome them. Refugees also gravitate towards the traditionally Christian suburb of Ainkawa. (See also Prayer Alert 0110 & 0610)

**Pray:** for more of God's protection and provision for our brothers and sisters in Christ living and working in Iraq. (Ps.5:11)

**More:** <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7550048/Iraqi-Christians-under-fire.html>

#### ■ **Philippines: Illegal arrest and detention of Christian workers**

On April 7th Catholic bishops broke their silence over the arrest and detention of 43 health workers accused of undergoing communist rebel training on February 6th. 'They are being held in a military facility which is a serious threat to their civil liberties and makes them 'vulnerable to further abuses.' Bishop Odchimar said. Security forces arrested the health workers at a health seminar and police allegedly seized guns from some participants, including doctors and nurses belonging to a medical foundation under the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Authorities claim they were undergoing bomb-making training. Some interrogated detainees have now confessed to being communist rebels. Canon lawyer Bishop Odchimar pointed out that psychological and physical conditions while in detention yield confessions under duress. Detainees have complained of torture and parents say their children are being coerced into testifying against fellow detainees.

**Pray:** that the Government Commission on Human Rights would recognise all truth in this situation and act accordingly. (Ps.45:4)

**More:** <http://www.ucanews.com/2010/04/07/bishops-slam-workers%e2%80%99-detention>

#### ■ **Pakistan: Christians call for repeal of blasphemy laws**

Riaz Anjum Masih, Chairman of the Pakistan Christian Movement has stressed the need for unity among the Christians of Pakistan and urges them to launch a united effort to scrap all discriminatory laws against minorities. He also called for repeal of those sections of the constitution which allegedly discriminate against religious minorities. 'Although the constitution of Pakistan is unanimously agreed-upon, the Christians and other religious minorities have some reservations about it.' said Masih. He went on to say that according to the constitution it is necessary to be a Muslim for attaining high posts of Government. He vowed to launch a struggle from the platform of the Pakistan Christian Movement to see the number of reserved seats for minorities increased. Unveiling his plans for uplifting the Pakistani Christian community Masih said they would establish a Christian educational fund to provide educational opportunities for Pakistani Christians as it is imperative for them to get higher education.

**Pray:** that God would strengthen the voice of the Pakistan Christian Movement and provide fresh standards of justice in that country. (1Pt.4:10-11)

**More:** <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10040032.htm>

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Government drops home-schooling and sex education plans**

The Government has bowed to pressure and withdrawn its highly controversial plans for England. Under the proposals, sex education was to become a statutory part of the national curriculum and control over the content of lessons was to be taken away from school governors and given to Whitehall officials. Proposals to restrict the freedoms of home-schooling parents have also been shelved as the Government attempts to get its Children, Schools and Families Bill into law before the general election. The changes come as a result of the negotiations that take place in the final throes of a Parliament. Under the contentious sex and relationship education plans, children were to be taught that same-sex civil partnerships were equal in value to marriage. Faith schools were also set to be forced to teach children about homosexuality and tell kids how to access contraception.

**Praise:** God that prayer and pressure groups have caused this change. (Php.1:27)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/govt-drops-home-and-sex-ed-plans/>

#### ■ **Russia: Terrorism won't stop the Gospel**

Vladimir Putin is pursuing Islamist insurgents in the North Caucasus and some fear government crackdowns on Islam may lead to tighter restrictions on Christians. However Slavic Gospel Association are training the next generation of church leaders working specifically in cross religious, cross cultural environments where Christianity meets Islam. This training is equipping churches to reach Russian youth and protecting young people from brainwashing radicalism. They are also sending young people to Summer Camps to become agents of peace and love. Many families, tired of war and terrorism, have come to Christ because of summer camps. They are seeing a true Christian message of love. Also in St.Petersburg Buckner International <http://buckner.org/> are linking their orphanages with local churches thus enabling Churches to proactively adopt an orphanage. The city churches are now also organising summer camps. The above reports come from Intercrosser Networks. For an encouraging prayer insight from Russia's Schools Without Walls training click the 'More' button.

**Praise:** God that Russia's youth are coming to Christ and pray for more anointing on youth outreach in the Caucasus Mountains. (Ro.15:5)

**More:** [http://www.sga.org.uk/news\\_headlines/power\\_through\\_prayer.html](http://www.sga.org.uk/news_headlines/power_through_prayer.html)

## PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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