

# PRAYER ALERT...

An initiative of the Prayer Forum of the British Isles & Ireland  
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Friday 15 May 2009

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## BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

### ■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 15 May 2009 - Hope for justice - Isaiah 42:3-4**

May 17th is 'Not For Sale Sunday', <<http://www.notforsalesunday.org/nfss/>> an opportunity for the church to respond against the sex trafficking trade, and 21st May is the 'National Day of Prayer for the Police'. <<http://www.cpauk.net/>>

**Pray:** For great wisdom for the police and those working in the criminal justice system, that the Lord will give guidance and shine His light to reveal injustices taking place in our nations. For the restoration of those people that have been caught up in human trafficking in this country.

**More:** [http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday\\_Focus\\_May\\_2009.doc](http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_May_2009.doc)

### ■ **Lord Carey condemns 'clawing greed' of MPs**

Last week, The Telegraph published details of expenses claims made by the Prime Minister, Cabinet ministers and MPs. MPs have defended their claims saying that they are within the rules, and in some cases have challenged the accuracy of some of the reports. However many have now repaid these false claims. Writing in the News of the World, Lord Carey said, 'The moral authority of Parliament is at its lowest ebb in living memory. The latest revelations show it was not just a few MPs with their noses in the trough, but a culture of abuse.' He said, 'It is not just the clawing greed of painstaking claims for such minor items as tampons, barbecue sets and bathrobes, but also the egregious way some have transferred allowances from one second property to another – enabling them to refurbish homes at public expense, then sell them for profit.' The former chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life also criticised MPs for a 'failure of moral leadership', whilst former independent MP Martin Bell condemned 'scandals of shamelessness'.

**Pray:** that these revelations will lead to a cleansing and restoration of moral leadership in our government. (Jas.1:21-25)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/lord.carey.condemns.clawing.greed.of.mps/23320.htm>

### ■ **Unemployment rises to 2.2m highest for 13 years**

Unemployment has jumped by almost 250,000 to 2.2 million, the highest figure for 13 years, official data has shown. Average earnings including bonuses also fell for the first time as City workers missed out on the windfalls they enjoyed during the boom years, raising fears of deflation. Data due to be published yesterday was released a day early, and showed the biggest quarterly rise in the number of people looking for a job since 1981 – 244,000. UK production shrinks to lowest in over 40 years. The UK's unemployment total is now 2,215,000, the worst figure since 1996. The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance increased by 57,100 to 1,513,000 said the Office for National Statistics. 'The smaller than expected

rise in the UK claimant count in April is good news, but the rest of the labour market figures are pretty awful,' said Vicky Redwood of Capital Economics.

**Pray:** for all those who are finding this current situation difficult and are in financial problems or out of work, that God will speak into their lives. (Mt.6:25-34)

**More:** [http://www.theway.co.uk/news/shownews.php?news\\_id=7220](http://www.theway.co.uk/news/shownews.php?news_id=7220)

#### ■ **Muslim appointed as BBC head of religion**

A Muslim TV boss criticised for having a pro-Islam bias has been appointed as head of religious broadcasting at the BBC. Formerly an executive with Channel 4, Aaqil Ahmed has also been accused of dumbing down religious TV programmes. The BBC has recently appointed a member of the British Humanist Association to its new religion board and a Sikh as producer of its flagship religious show, Songs of Praise. This has led several commentators to say that the BBC is pandering to minority groups at the expense of Christianity. Church leaders question the BBC's decision to take Mr Ahmed from Channel 4, accusing the corporation of preferential treatment for minority faiths. The BBC attracted criticism last year when they appointed a Sikh, Tommy Nagra, as the producer of its flagship religious programme, Songs of Praise. There have been accusations that the show contains less and less religious content as a result. (See Prayer Alert 1709 & 1509)

**Pray:** that the influence of those who are not believers would be minimal and the Christian message remain strongest. (Jn.17:20)

**More:** <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/20090513/muslim-appointed-as-bbc-head-of-religion/>

#### ■ **Church of Scotland minister warns against inaction on homosexuality**

A Church of Scotland minister has spoken out against inaction in the face of an increasingly liberal approach to homosexuality within the Church. The Rev Ian Watson, who heads the group Forward Together, delivered a sermon at Kirkmuirhill Church in Lanark in which he called on Christians to fight against false teaching on homosexuality within the Church. In his sermon, which was also posted on his blog, Rev Watson said, 'There are very few people who enjoy conflict. The vast majority of decent people will do almost anything to avoid situations of confrontation. This is how bullies succeed. They realise that no matter how unhappy we are with their behaviour we're not going to stand up to them, because the last thing we want is a shouting match.' Rev Watson was speaking ahead of next week's crunch meeting of the Church of Scotland General Assembly, which will rule on the appointment of openly gay minister Rev Scott Rennie, who is being supported by the Aberdeen Presbytery.

**Pray:** that the results of next week's meeting will be in line with God's will and His word. (Jer.13:10)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.of.scotland.minister.warns.against.inaction.on.homosexuality/23343.htm>

#### ■ **Anglicans to re-evaluate how they interpret Scripture**

The Anglican Consultative Council expressed support on Saturday for a project that will explore the ways Anglicans worldwide read and interpret Scripture. The Bible in the Life of the Church project is being launched to build 'understanding, trust and respect' among those who differ in biblical interpretations. Formerly, the Anglican Communion had been called on in 2004 to 're-evaluate the ways in which we have read, heard, studied and digested scripture'. The request, however, was largely neglected. Initial plans for a project exploring the way or ways the Bible is used in the life of the Anglican Communion were discussed in February 2007 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Since then a more detailed proposal has been drawn up. The question Anglicans will be addressing through the Bible project is: 'What do we mean when we say that we are a Church that lives under Scripture?' Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams, the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion, expressed hope in the project.

**Pray:** that God will open up the true meaning of His word to enable the Church to teach the full gospel. (Heb.5:12)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/anglicans.to.reevaluate.how.they.interpret.scripture/23334.htm>

#### ■ **Praying for the Royal Air Force helicopters & their crews**

The Royal Air Force flies Chinook, Merlin and Puma helicopters in various operational theatres. They are in particularly high demand in combat areas such as Afghanistan. Astonishingly, given the high work rate and the threat they face each day, there have been no major incidents or accidents involving loss of life, despite the high intensity of operations and the testing and hostile environmental conditions in which they operate.

**Pray:** for the safety and well-being of the crews and ground support staff, for skill, good judgment and courage and for timely and sufficient supplies of equipment. (Is.40- 31b)

**More:** <http://www.raf.mod.uk/news/archive.cfm?storyid=42BA8B99-1143-EC82-2EBB8610545908FC>

## EUROPE

#### ■ **Uzbekistan: Mounting concerns over detained Pastor**

An international protest was underway Tuesday, May 12, to obtain the release of a detained, frail, evangelical pastor in Uzbekistan, who came to symbolize what rights investigators described as widespread persecution of Christians and other minorities in Central Asia. Dmitry Shestakov, pastor of the registered 'Full Gospel Congregation' in the town of Andijan, has been suffering from serious health problems since he was moved to a notorious labour camp in 2007, confirmed advocacy group Open Doors, which closely monitored the case. The Netherlands-based group said it has urged Christians to write protest letters to the Uzbek embassy in Brussels, where the European Union and NATO have their headquarters. 'His health has deteriorated because of the difficult circumstances in the labour camp,' said Open Doors spokesman Klaas

Muurling, 'There is a lack of food and temperatures are extreme, both in summer and winter.' he said. Open Doors regard him as a 'prisoner of conscience who has been illegally detained.'

**Pray:** for Dmitry that God would bless him and strengthen him and that the Uzbek authorities would release him. (Heb.13:3)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/7381-mounting-concerns-over-detained-uzbekistan-pastor>

#### ■ **Belgian: Ex-PM accuses commission of inaction in face of crisis**

Ex-Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt has strongly criticised the European Commission for failing to be more active in tackling the current economic crisis. Mr Verhofstadt, who heads the Liberal list in Belgium's Flanders region for the June European elections, accused the commission of staying 'silent' in the face of Europe's recession. 'It is the duty of the commission to take the initiative', said the politician, referring to the institution's right to propose laws. Speaking in Brussels to promote his new book, 'Emerging from the crisis, how Europe can save the world', Mr Verhofstadt, a strong EU federalist, said the only way to bolster the EU is to massively increase its spending, recapitalise banks, issue Eurobonds, set up a European financial supervisor and a single European bank for bad assets. He drew parallels with Japan, which, with its similarly over-heated housing market and ageing population in the 1990s plunged into recession and then took about a decade to come out of economic stagnation.

**Pray:** for the EU as it elects new MEP's in June that they will be proactive in tackling the needs of the Community and not be procrastinators.

**More:** <http://euobserver.com/9/28111>

## WORLDWIDE

#### ■ **Egypt: Believers from Muslim background request prayer**

A Muslim background believer (MBB), was arrested because of her marriage to a Coptic Christian. (Women registered as Muslim are not permitted to marry non-Muslim men in Islamic law.) She was released to her family, ran away from home and is now hiding from family and police. Also M, a MBB, was arrested at Cairo airport and detained for obtaining a fraudulent Christian national identity card and adopting a new name. The card would have enabled her to obtain a passport and marry a Christian. She also is in hiding with concerns over a fair trial because of her faith. M, also a MBB, wants to change his official religious registration from Islam to Christianity enabling him and his daughter to be legal Christians. This would allow his daughter to legally marry a Christian. Pray that such a precedent leads to other MBB's securing the same right. His hearing on 2nd May was adjourned until 13th June.

**Pray:** for all to know the presence of Jesus, for God to guide the legal teams and for the Holy Spirit to expose the officials to God's truth and draw them into revelation of Christian life. (Ps.40:10-11)

**More:** [https://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause\\_dir\\_news\\_item&cause\\_id=1489&news\\_id=66034](https://www.givengain.com/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&cause_id=1489&news_id=66034)

#### ■ **Iran: Two female Christian converts remain detained**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide urgently calls for the discharge of two female Christian converts from Islam still being held without charge. (See Prayer-Alert 1609) Maryam Rostampour, 27, and Marzieh Amirizadeh, 30, were detained by Iranian security officers on March 5 this year after their apartment was searched and their Bibles confiscated amongst other items. It is claimed that neither women violated Iranian law. They have now been separated from each other and are in solitary confinement, their current health condition is not known, earlier reports state both very unwell. There has been growing government intimidation of Christians in recent months with dozens of Christians from underground churches known to have been imprisoned, and there were reportedly some cases of torture. Legislators have taken steps to mandate the death penalty for citizens who leave Islam and those who attempt to convert people to Christianity.

**Pray:** for God to pour his peace into their emotions and his healing into their bodies and for appropriate legal representation to secure their imminent release. (Zec.7:8-10)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/7372-christian-women-still-detained-in-iran-following-reporters-release>

#### ■ **Middle East: The forgotten church**

Persecution, poverty and conflict are giving Christians in the West Bank and Gaza a sense of hopelessness and driving many away from home. 'Because of the economic pressures, many Christian families when they get the chance are leaving for a better life abroad,' said Pastor Jack Sara, senior pastor of the Jerusalem Alliance Church in Old City Jerusalem. There are no more than 5,000 evangelical Christians remaining in the West Bank and Gaza, facing pressure from all sides including a hostile Muslim culture, continuing tensions over the disputed territories, the recent offensive on Gaza and ongoing economic distress. The exodus of these Christians is not only a human and cultural tragedy but it is also a loss for the Palestinian population and for the stability of the area. For Palestinian Christians in the West Bank, the daily pressure is often harder to deal with than the occasional physical violence.

**Pray:** for God to strengthen the brave and resourceful Christians determined to continue a Christian witness amongst their neighbours. (Ps.2:1-2)

**More:** <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/we.are.the.forgotten.church.say.palestinian.pastors/23345.htm>

#### ■ **Sri Lanka: UN has 'grave concern'**

Prayer is needed to enable International aid agencies to enter the 'safe area'. The United Nations Security Council has asked the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tiger rebels to ensure the safety of civilians trapped in a worsening humanitarian crisis in the northeast. US President Barack Obama urged the army to stop shelling civilians and the rebels to lay down their arms. But the government in Colombo said it would not halt the offensive because that would give the rebels

time to recover. More than 50 people died in the war zone when a hospital was shelled for a second day on Wednesday. BBC's reporter in Colombo says 'because powerful countries like Russia and China see the Sri Lankan conflict as an internal affair and not an international threat, they have been reluctant to put the issue on the Security Council's agenda.' Britain, France and Austria have lobbied hard for the Sri Lankan situation to be addressed.

**Pray:** for an explosion of Godly action through all authorities able to change this 'Catastrophe' (Ro.13:1,2)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/8049261.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8049261.stm)

#### ■ **Pakistan: Vulnerable Christians in Swat Valley**

Residents flee Swat Valley where fighting rages between the Taliban and Pakistan's military (See Prayer Alert 1909); but Pakistani Christians are particularly vulnerable in the mass exodus. Working as poor day labourers, they occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder and have little money for costly transport or to stock up on resources before fleeing as the prices of transportation and commodities inflate. Some are fleeing the valley on foot, as the Taliban increase pressure. They are forcing Christians, other religious minorities and liberal Muslims in Swat to live according to Islamic fundamentalist norms. Christians are forced to grow beards and don Islamic attire for fear of their safety in an attempt to blend in with Muslim residents of Swat. Many Christians also fled due to insufficient funds to pay the jizye, a poll tax under sharia paid by non-Muslims for protection if they decline to convert to Islam. Nearly 15,000 troops have been deployed in the area.

**Pray:** for God to give His people wise strategies for survival and that He will strengthen and develop His underground church. (Ac.2:20)

**More:** <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=news&lang=en&length=short&idelement=5918&backpage=summaries>

#### ■ **USA: Unease grows over security**

Congressional Democrats are voicing growing unease over the Obama administration's national security policies, including the seemingly open-ended commitment in Afghanistan and the question of what to do with prisoners held at Guantánamo Bay. Some comments are, 'I am extremely dubious that the administration will be able to accomplish what it wants to accomplish,' 'What is our policy in Afghanistan? Is it an open-ended commitment to remake the country?' and 'We keep asking for a plan. I think the Democrats are nervous just because they haven't seen a plan yet.'

**Pray:** for God's leading of President Obama along the international road ahead. (Pr.21:1)

**More:** [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/us/politics/14cong.html?\\_r=1&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/us/politics/14cong.html?_r=1&hp)

## PRAISE REPORTS

#### ■ **Iran: Freed Roxana Saberi thanks supporters**

Roxana Saberi, the US-Iranian journalist released from jail in Iran on Monday, has thanked all those who helped to win her freedom. She was freed after four months in prison when an eight-year term on charges of spying for the US was cut. She denied the charges. Wearing a bright blue headscarf, Ms Saberi looked thin but in high spirits. 'I'm very happy to be free and to be with my parents again,' Ms Saberi told reporters outside her flat in Tehran. 'I'm thanking all those people all over the world - which I'm just finding out about - who - whether they knew me or not - helped me and my family during this period,' she said, smiling. 'I don't have any specific plans for the moment, I just want to be with my parents and friends, and to relax'. Ms Saberi's imprisonment drew international attention and sparked protests calling for her release. (See Prayer Alert 1609)

**Praise:** God for this wonderful answer to pray and pray for the release of Maryam and Marzieh - see World above. (Ps.146:7)

**More:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/8046056.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8046056.stm)

#### ■ **Saudi Arabia: Underground church in Mecca**

Halleluia! God is answering prayers for all eyes, hearts and minds in the Middle East to be opened to His truth BosNewsLife reports. Christians have set up an underground church in Mecca, viewed by Muslims as the 'holiest city in Islam', while tens of thousands of other Saudi Christians are worshipping via the Internet. 'It is unclear how many people are participating in the church in Mecca, because people are afraid to talk about it openly,' said Jaap Bönker, director of Netherlands-based 'Arabic World Mission' which has close contacts with believers in Muslim nations. News of the secret church comes despite strict rules forbidding non-Muslims to enter Mecca where huge Muslim Only traffic signs warn outsiders about these regulations. Some 70,000 people are worshipping in what has been dubbed Saudi Arabia's 'Skype Church', a reference to an Internet program that allows people to communicate with each other via relatively secure inexpensive, or free connections.

**Praise:** God for the growing Christian movement in 'the heart of Islam'. May the life of Christ flow through Muslim Christians. (1Ti.2:3-5)

**More:** <http://www.bosnewslife.com/7139-news-alert-secret-christian-church-in-mecca>

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