

“The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5)

During the past year, we have prayed for many Christians who have let their light shine in dark corners of our world and have faced persecution as a result. As we prepare for Christmas, please pray for some of those who are experiencing the forces of darkness at this time. Overleaf, we list five prisoners (three under sentence of death, the other two serving long sentences). Pray that they and their families will know God's peace in their hearts, God's protection in their prison cells and for their families and God's provision for all of their needs.



Church in Chains television service on St Stephen's Day

Don't miss a *Church in Chains*-themed worship service to be broadcast on RTÉ1 Television at 11.20 am on St Stephen's morning. The service, led by David Turner, features music from the *Crinken Community Gospel Choir* and *Mr Jag* and an overview of persecution from St. Stephen and the early church to the present day.

Roger Childs, Head of Religious Programming at RTÉ, comments:

“The feast day of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, seems the perfect time to remind people of the religious freedom we are able to enjoy in this country and to express solidarity with those who are less fortunate elsewhere. It's RTÉ's great privilege to welcome Helen Berhane (former prisoner in Eritrea) and Davood Mahmoodnezd (from Iran) and to allow them to share their stories, while highlighting the valuable work of Church In Chains.”

Freed Acteal prisoners still await resettlement

Al Schreuder, who spoke at the Church in Chains conference in Athlone in September, has written from Mexico about his visits to the released Acteal prisoners: **“I had a good worship with the released men on Sunday (12 December). 19 men attended; others were on home visits or off doing other things. After worship, I had a good discussion with those present about their responsibility to evangelise or re-evangelise their fellow prisoners – released and still in jail. The resettlement process is dragging out, so the released prisoners would like to move forward with obtaining land, having houses built, moving to their new venue, and planting their fields.”**



Al has also been to Amate prison to visit the remaining 35 men from **“The Innocent of Acteal”** group. He found the men in fairly good spirits and they had a good worship time together. The men were encouraged to receive cards from Ireland which Al brought with him.

In prison this Christmas

YOUCEF NADARKHANI (IRAN) is awaiting a decision from the Supreme Court on his appeal against being executed by hanging for the crime of apostasy.

Youcef has been in prison for over a year following his arrest for protesting against a government decision to teach Islam to all schoolchildren including Christian children. Youcef (aged 33) is married to Fatemah and they have two sons who are aged eight and six.



ASIA BIBI (PAKISTAN) is a 45-year-old Christian who is the first woman sentenced to death under Pakistan's "Blasphemy" law. Asia's lawyer has filed an appeal with the Lahore High Court against the sentence imposed in November. There were hopes of a presidential pardon, but President Asif Ali Zardari has decided to let the appeal process proceed.

Death threats have been made against Asia and her family. She and her husband, Ashiq Masih, have five children.

SAID MUSA (AFGHANISTAN) is a former Muslim who became a Christian eight years ago. He was arrested in May after pictures of Christians worshipping were shown on national television. Said has been ill-treated in prison. He is facing apostasy charges, which are punishable by death.

An amputee with a prosthetic leg, he worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (ICRC) for 15 years, fitting patients for prosthetic limbs. (He stepped on a landmine while in the Afghan Army.) Said is married with six young children.



TOHAR HAYDAROV (UZBEKISTAN) is a 27-year-old Baptist from Tashkent who was given a ten-year jail sentence on false charges (selling drugs) earlier this year. Tohar's friends are convinced that police planted drugs on Haydarov, and church members state that he is "a man with a pure conscience and an honest Christian."

Tohar is imprisoned in a labour camp near Karshi (400 kms away from his home town).

ALIMUJIANG YIMITI (CHINA) is a Uighur Christian from Xinjiang province in north-west China. He has been imprisoned since January 2008, charged with "revealing state secrets". He was eventually put on trial in July 2009 and later that year was given a 15-year labour camp sentence.

It is believed that the real reason for Yimiti's detention is his Christian faith and witness among the Uighur people. Yimiti is married to Guli Nuer and they have two young children.



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