

Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Pray that individual prisoners:

remain strong in faith and trust despite physical and psychological abuse
 will be able to forgive those who persecute them or who fail to support them
 will experience and know love, joy and peace from God (Romans 8:28-39)
 will walk humbly in their identification with Christ's sufferings
 will be fruitful witnesses to others
 will be able to balance standing up for their rights, yet use grace and love

Pray that the spouses & children of prisoners:

cope with the sense of loss and isolation
 cope with caring and providing for children alone
 remain full of faith and hope
 overcome any intimidation from police or other aggressors
 are protected from long term psychological/emotional harm and bitterness
 might know and experience the love of God

Pray that converts will:

receive help to grow spiritually
 are protected and provided for should their family or community shun them
 will have the courage to lead others to know Christ

Statistics on Christian prisoners obtained from Open Doors, Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Barnabas Fund:

Burma	1 named		Middle East	1 named
Bhutan	2		Morocco	8 named + 33 unnamed
China	7		North Korea	70,000 approx. unnamed
Colombia	1		Pakistan	7 named
Egypt	17		Saudi Arabia	1 named 2 unnamed
Eritrea	1 named		Syria	3 named
India	4 unnamed		Somalia	1 named
Indonesia	2 unnamed		Sudan	4 named + 1,100 women and 135 children
Iran	34 named 12 unnamed		Tanzania	1 named
Kazakhstan	2 named		Turkmenistan	1 named
Kenya	1 named		Uzbekistan	1 named + 2 unnamed
Laos	2 named		Vietnam	6 known + 29 unnamed
Maldives	1 unnamed			

Please pray for the prisoner named in the biography overleaf and when any named prisoners are released, we will inform you via LASP. Thank you.

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Prisoner Name: Pastor Kim Kuk-gi

Location: North Korea

Arrested: December 2014

Sentence: Awaiting

Arrest and background

Kim Kuk-gi is a South Korean Presbyterian pastor, detained by the North Korean government on charges of espionage. He has dedicated years to helping North Korean defectors in China. In a dispatch in March, North Korea's news agency described Kim as a 'heinous terrorist' who operated from the Chinese city of Dandong. The agency reported 'He zealously took part in an anti-North Korea smear campaign', alleging his activities were organised by US intelligence and the South Korean Intelligence Service (NIS).

In Seoul, the NIS said the charge Kim was working for the agency was 'absolutely groundless'. A spokesman confirmed Kim was a South Korean citizen but denied he was engaged in espionage. 'We strongly demand North Korea to quickly release our citizen Kim Kuk-gi and repatriate him without hesitation.' Kim was also accused of spreading 'religious propaganda' from an 'underground church' he ran in Dandong, which has a large ethnic Korean community and is a hub of cross border trade.

The Seoul-based General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Korea identified Kim Kuk-gi as one of their registered pastors and demanded his release. A representative said, 'He was carrying out missionary works for North Korean defectors in Dandong'. South Korean authorities delivered a written request for him to be released. North Korean officials refused the request.

'Kim Kuk-gi was sent as a missionary to Dandong in China in 2003, and since then, he has been operating a "shelter for refugees," and has been taking care of refugees, homeless children and Korean immigrants living in China,' General Assembly of Presbyterian Churches in Korea stated.

Please pray

1. That any charges against Pastor Kim would be dropped and that he would be released.
2. That he would experience God's presence, peace and power.
3. For wisdom for those involved in dealing with the North Korean authorities on his behalf.

Prisoner Name: Tohar Haydarov

Location: Uzbekistan

Arrested: January 2010

Sentence: 10 years' imprisonment

Arrest and background

Tohar Haydarov is a Baptist from Tashkent in Uzbekistan, who is serving ten-years in a labour camp. Problems began for the 31-year-old was a Muslim in 2010 when his relatives asked police to help force him to return to Islam.

In January 2010, Uzbek police arrested him and pressured him to renounce his Christian faith. He refused, so police charged him with storing drugs, charges that are fabricated. They believe he is being punished for refusing to deny Christ. When Tohar appeared in court, church members reported that he could hardly walk and showed signs of having been beaten. Family and friends from his church have supported him since he was arrested, describing him as 'a man with a pure conscience and an honest Christian'. They have appealed against his sentence twice, citing new evidence proving Tohar's innocence. Yet, the Supreme Court has upheld the conviction. Tohar is serving his sentence in a labour camp.

Neither the church nor the international community is convinced by the legality of the trial or by the sentence. Corey Bailie, International Christian Concern's regional manager for Central Asia, said, 'The circumstances surrounding Haydarov's arrest and subsequent ten-year sentence are suspect at best and a typical form of Christian persecution in the region.' According to one report, the authorities showed Tohar some of the letters sent to him but have not permitted him to read them because 'there are too many citations from the Bible'.

In 2015, Tohar will have served half his prison term; he will be able to qualify for a change to house arrest for the rest of his sentence. He could then work from home and pay the state for the rest of his punishment. Tohar is not doing well at the moment, has problems with his spine and cannot do hard work without pain.

Send a card of encouragement to Tohar: UYa 64/69, Otryad 13, Pos. Shaikh-Ali G.Karshi, Kashkadarya Region, 180020, Uzbekistan. When writing, please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities. In Tohar's case, we also recommend not including direct Bible verses or quotations, but rather expressing the Biblical truth or promise in your own words.

Prisoner Name: Maryam Naghash-Zargaran

Location: Iran

Arrested: 2012

Sentence: Four years' imprisonment

Arrest and background

Iranian Christian convert, Maryam Naghash-Zargaran, also known as Nasim, was initially arrested in late 2012, and is serving a four-year sentence in the women's prison. Maryam, has been linked to the ministry of fellow prisoner of faith, Saeed Abedini, was charged under article 610 of the Islamic penal code with 'conducting propaganda against the Islamic regime and acting against the national security.'

These are charges routinely levelled against Iranian Christians in order to criminalise any expression of their Christian faith. In Maryam's case the court determined that she had converted from Islam to Protestant Christianity, set up house churches, evangelised Muslim women and youth and propagated Christianity.

She was found guilty and sentenced to four years' imprisonment 2013. For some time it was not known that Maryam had been sent to jail. Since her incarceration, the 35-year-old believer has experienced serious health concerns. Her arrest, imprisonment and treatment in prison have proven to be emotionally, spiritually and physically challenging. In September 2013, Maryam was transferred from prison to hospital to be treated after an apparent heart attack. Although Maryam underwent cardiovascular surgery several years ago and has a history of heart problems, the pressure and stressful conditions have exacerbated her heart disease.

June 2015 - Serving out her sentence

It is very hard to get information from Iran about prisoners, even for the families; not knowing from day to day exactly how their loved ones are being treated or concerns regarding their health places enormous pressure on the parents, spouses, children, siblings and relatives of prisoners. Please continue to pray for her and for her family as she does have an ongoing heart condition.

Send a card of encouragement to Maryam: Prison address – Evin Prison, Saadat Abad, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran. When writing, please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

Prisoner Name: Twen

Location: Eritrea

Arrested: 2005

Sentence: Indefinite

Arrest and background

Twen was imprisoned in a shipping container. She is an amazing Christian woman who endured terrible beatings and torture at the hands of Eritrean prison guards. Twen was arrested in Eritrea in 2004 but was released after her father persuaded her to sign a paper saying she would not continue to meet with other Christians, share her faith or engage in Christian activities.

In 2005, she was re-arrested after being found participating in a prayer meeting in an underground church. Twen was sent to prison. In 2006, she was joined by a large group of detainees who'd been arrested at a Christian wedding celebration. Of this group, all the women refused to sign the paper stating they would no longer engage in Christian activity (which was tantamount to recanting their faith), they were sent to one of Eritrea's harshest prisons situated on the Red Sea, one of the most inhospitable places on earth. Hundreds of prisoners have died there as a result of the extreme heat and deplorable sanitary conditions. The prison was eventually closed by a government order.

Twen and her group were sent to another prison, in the remote north-west of Eritrea; the prison houses mainly Christian prisoners. Twen has been in prison for almost ten years now. She was 23 years old when she was first arrested. At that time, Twen was a new believer. Now 33, Twen would be considered a key senior women's leader in the prison. She continues to look after and care for the other women prisoners. She has had opportunities to escape. On one occasion, she was given permission to stay with her family for a month, because of a health problem. After receiving treatment, Twen made her way back to the prison of her own volition, rather than trying to arrange to be smuggled out of Eritrea. People who know and love Twen say she is a lovely Christian who is determined to remain a faithful follower of Jesus. They also say she is willing to stay in prison as long as God enables her to serve him there and to help others.

Send a card of encouragement to Twen's family: Twen, c/o Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT. When writing, please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

Prisoner Name: [Bishoy Armia Boulous](#)

Location: Egypt

Arrested: December 2013

Sentence: 5 years' imprisonment

[Arrest and background](#)

Bishoy Armia Boulous, also known by his former Muslim name, Mohammed Hegazy, was arrested in December 2013. The security service claimed he was working for The Way TV, a Coptic, Christian-owned, US-based religious television channel, and was contributing to a 'false image' that there was violence against Christians.

Many Egyptians now believe his arrest has more to do with his earlier conversion from Islam than to any alleged offence connected with his reporting. Born in 1982, Bishoy converted to Christianity in 1998. After his conversion he was arrested several times and tortured but refused to recant his faith in Christ.

His recent detention cast doubt on assurances of religious freedom in Egypt's new constitution, and reflect the vulnerability of Christians in Egypt – especially those from a Muslim background. The continued persecution of Bishoy Boulous reveals two things: the authorities are reluctant to face the truth about attacks against Christians, and converts to Christianity remain at serious risk despite the country's new constitution, which is supposed to protect religious freedom.

While it is easy and even encouraged for someone in Egypt to convert to Islam, it is impossible for a Muslim to convert legally to Christianity. Bishoy has now faced severe persecution since 2007.

[June 2015 - Reportedly being beaten regularly by prison staff](#)

Bishoy is reportedly being beaten several times a week by prison staff. Bishoy's jailers appear to be humiliating him to try to make him recant his faith. His head has been shaved, a punishment normally reserved for violent criminals. Bishoy, was detained after trying to document Christian persecution.

[Send a card of encouragement to Bishoy](#)

Please write to – c/o Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 4RT, Kent
When writing, please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

Prisoner Name: [Peter Hahn](#)

Location: China

Arrested: December 2014

Sentence: Awaiting

[Arrest and background](#)

Peter Hahn, a Korean-American aid worker who lived in China on the border with North Korea for more than a decade was formally arrested by the Chinese authorities in December 2014. He remains in detention in China. The aid worker, 73, escaped from North Korea many years ago. He is accused of embezzlement and possession of fraudulent receipts, according to his lawyer, Zhang.

Hahn ran a Christian school and aid agency in Tumen City, a trading town across the border from North Korea in China, from which he provided supplies to the poor in North Korea, Zhang said. The authorities began visiting Hahn in April 2014, asking about his life and his humanitarian work. In July, the police closed his vocational training school. In an effort to satisfy the police, Zhang, who is based in Shanghai, visited Hahn in September 2014 and advised him to write a document detailing his escape from North Korea, his life in the US and his return to China to help people in North Korea. The document was handed to the authorities.

Hahn's wife, Eunice said that the Chinese authorities froze the couple's bank accounts in 2014 and confiscated their cars. The Chinese Foreign Ministry has offered no reason for the apparent crackdown on Christians. China's traditionally warm relations with North Korea have cooled since Kim JongUn, came to power. China fears that instability in North Korea could result in refugees flooding into China where Hahn lived and worked.

Supporters of Hahn point out that he had used his life savings to help relocate from the United States and set up his NGO. Hahn maintains his innocence, is likely to face trial within months. The maximum sentence is 12 years in prison. In a recent interview, Mrs Hahn said, 'I never thought he would get detained; my heart beats very hard when I imagine how bad his circumstances are.' She is concerned for his health.

[Please pray](#)

1. That any charges against Hahn would be dropped and that he would be released.
2. That he would experience God's presence, peace and power.
3. For his health, his wife, his ministry partners and the release of funds that were frozen.