

"RENOUNCE YOUR FAITH OR DIE!"

On a desert road travelling to Sunday worship at a monastery, Egyptian Christian families were given the choice of renouncing their faith or dying. When they refused, 29 were gunned down by armed men, killing 29 and injuring 25 others.

Christian researcher Soliman Shafik explained that in many villages in Minya, there are no churches and Christians must travel to monasteries instead. As a result, these villages are fertile ground for extremism.

He explained that although most non-Christians in Egypt were distressed by the attacks, unity between the country's different groups is under threat as anti-Christian feelings appear to be on the rise. Among Christians, he said, "the general sentiment has moved from anger to terror and a feeling of lack of security." Egyptian Christians fear they will face the same fate as brethren in Iraq and Syria, where Christian communities have been decimated by wars and IS persecution.

SAT-7 spoke to victims' families and to commentators in a country where frustration and fear has reached a new level. During the funeral of the slain Christians in Minya, one believer said, "Why are we being killed? We don't hate anyone. Our religion is one of love."

Many others expressed similar feelings of pain and confusion, emphasising the peaceful nature of the Christian faith. Gabriel, a priest from Beni Mazar, said: "We will never ask for anything but peace. We have nothing but peace. The world is witnessing how the Church is glowing, and the Cross is glowing."

The Christians who spoke remain firmly in their faith despite the trauma and threat they have experienced. One said, "If we as Christians are weak, we have a strong God. If we are weak then [God] is strong and protects us."

- Ask that God will answer the cries of Egyptian Christians.
- Pray for sensitivity and wisdom as SAT-7 seek to encourage and give a voice to suffering Christians.

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Prayer † News



MAKING
HOPE
VISIBLE

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SYMBOLIC PEACE MARCH IN IRAQ

In Iraq, Patriarch Louis Sako, the most senior bishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church, joined a symbolic peace march from Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, to Alqosh in the Nineveh Plain.

A hundred people took part in the 100-mile pilgrimage, walking through "ghost towns" cleansed of IS control. The pilgrimage was intended to bear witness to the hope of rebirth of the cities and towns of the Nineveh Plain and ended with a service, attended by Christians of the region.

75-year-old Christian Kyriacos Isho, who attended the pilgrimage and the service with his 12 children and grandchildren said: "God willing, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ will also mark the return and rising of the Christians in Iraq." No matter how bleak the present, Middle East believers like Isho, hold firm to the Easter promise of resurrection and restoration in Christ.

The Church of England's only Syrian-born clergyman, Dr Nadim Nassar, confirmed this message of new life in Christ in an interview broadcasted by SAT-7, "Ultimately, we Christians are not the people of the cross, we are the people of the resurrection, the people of life, so don't think Christianity is all about suffering – it's about life."

- Thank God for the witness of Iraqi Christians. Pray for SAT-7's role in sharing this message of hope and new life in Christ.
- Continue to pray for peace, greater stability and security for the people of Iraq.
- Pray that Christians find the courage to turn to one another in this time of trouble, rather than fleeing.
- Pray too that Christians, as they return to their homes, can be agents of reconciliation. Christians will need our prayers to be able to forgive non-Christian neighbours who stayed behind and, in some cases, took over their properties. They will need God's grace to forgive and rebuild trust with those they might feel betrayed them.



Prayer Requests from Viewers

Please pray for the following viewers
while reading their messages:

From a viewer in Jordan – “Pray for my family in Syria, my sisters and their children, to survive the war. I have not heard from them for a year.”

From a viewer in Turkey – “Praise God for all the people who translated the Bible into our language. Pray for me and for all the people on your channel who help me grow in faith.”

From a viewer in Iran – “You sent me the Bible through social media, and I forwarded it to five friends. Two of them gave their heart to Christ. Praise God for the power of His holy word.”

From a viewer in Morocco – “Thank you (SAT-7) for making me review many of my actions and watch my words. Pray that others will meditate on your message and experience progress in their lives.”

From a viewer in Iran – “I tried to cross the border, even crawled under the barbed wire with my two-year-old. If you are a Christian here, people stay away from you. Pray I will hold onto my faith anyway.”

From Pedram in Iran – “Greetings to my brothers and sisters in faith. Praise God for your great programs which truly bless us. We learn a lot from all the answers you give to our questions. Thanks.”

TWO STORIES OF FAITH

Jabar was searching for freedom

"For years, Afghanistan has been at war. Many people blame this war on believers and the Jewish community, and as a result these minorities are often persecuted. I always thought I should leave this country to have freedom. First, I went to Pakistan, and it didn't work out. Then, I went to Iran, but that was very difficult. I have been through many hardships, but now I understand that it was all part of God's plan despite me thinking how horrible those experiences were. Now I understand that these hardships helped me grow in my faith."

Mehnoush needed companionship

"I was a very lonely person; I didn't have anyone. I tried to cross the Iranian border twice illegally. I even crawled under the barbed wire at the border with my two-year-old child. I have been through a lot and have experienced a lot of hardship. In most places, if an Iranian finds out that you're a Christian, they won't treat you very well. They will stay away from you, and that is very disheartening. If you have put your faith in Jesus, you should hold on to your faith. New life in Christ is not out of reach. "

“In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 1: 6-7

Prayer Requests from Viewers



Please pray for the following viewers
while reading their messages:

From a viewer in Germany – “An Afghan man killed an Afghan woman because of her Christian faith, here in Germany in front of her two small children. Pray for God's comfort for the children and salvation for the man.”

From a child viewer in Egypt – “Our religion is one of peace and love. Why do people hate us and want to kill us? Pray God will be with us and not let Christians be attacked anymore.”

From a Farsi-speaking viewer in USA – “Until three months ago, I prayed my traditional prayers, but nothing happened. Then I started praying in Jesus' name and I began to receive answers. I am a new believer now. Pray I learn more about Christianity.”

From a viewer in Syria – “We are in the midst of the fire. My problems are overwhelming. Pray for me to find a way out of the country to some place safe and close.”

From Fardin in Iran – “I used to tell my friends about how I came to faith, but recently I've come to the realisation that it wasn't my own doing. Christ Himself came to reside in me and brought me to faith; all I did was ask Him for help. He lives in me: I was dead, and now I am alive.”