Christians in Iraq and Syria Desperately Need Prayer

Christians in Iraq and Syria are fleeing severe violence targeted at them. The violence includes church attacks, killings, robberies, and rapes. In the past decade the Christian population in Mosul (city in northern Iraq and the capital of the Nineveh Province) shrank from 35,000 to 3,000. In recent weeks, the remaining Christians fled, according to World Watch Monitor, which analyzes the reasons behind the exodus.

In late February 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) invaded Raqqa in northern Syria. They forced Christian community leaders to sign a contract agreeing to a set of stringent conditions. These included the payment of a special tax (known as jizya), conducting Christian rites only behind closed doors so as to be neither visible nor audible to Muslims, and adherence to Islamic commercial, dress code, and dietary regulations. In exchange for "protection," ISIS has prohibited the ringing of church bells and all praying in public, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported.

An array of 175 American religious leaders recently urged the United States to support Christianity's historical heartland. U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), a longtime religious freedom advocate who helped create the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in 1998, says, "These defenseless religious communities are facing an existential crisis, which threatens their very survival in the lands they have inhabited for centuries. The faith leaders . . . recognize that unless the American church begins to champion

this cause, the foreign policy establishment will hardly lead the way. [These faith leaders] are committing to be their ‘brother’s keeper,’ whether in Nineveh, Cairo or Homs.”

The International Prayer Council has issued several calls to prayer that include these prayer points:

- that Christians will not be discouraged and will continue to unite in authoritative prayer for their nation
- that Christians throughout Iraq and Syria will know the peace and presence of Jesus each day and will remain faithful to Him and clear in their testimony
- that God will bring about His purposes for these nations and the surrounding areas
- that those who are perpetuating the conflict will know the Spirit’s conviction of sin and come to understand the depth of Jesus’ forgiveness.

Adapted from International Prayer Connections.

Prayer Connect magazine