

# Canopy of Prayer

October #73-2019

contributor  
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## Dear praying friends in Europe

*Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great."*

*For the most part, people today are focused on ensuring comfort and ease – they want to glide through life and face as little resistance as possible. They certainly don't want to face any sort of persecution or difficulties. And yet Jesus said that we should rejoice when we are persecuted for His sake! Peter even said that we shouldn't be surprised when we face persecution (1 Peter 4:12). So where we or others we know are facing persecution, we can be encouraged that The Lord says we are blessed by Him during these difficult times.*

## Persecution of Christians in Europe

Did you know that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world? The Pew Group – a US Research centre – found that Christians are harassed for their faith more than any other religious group. And according to an independent review for the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, an estimated 245 million Christians faced significant persecution in 2018 – an increase of 30 million from the previous year.



Court of Human Rights  
Strasbourg

We can be thankful that in Europe, our laws take the right to freely live out of faith much more seriously than in many other parts of the world. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that citizens of Europe have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which includes the freedom to change their religion and to publicly and privately manifest their religion in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

However even with these legal guarantees, we know that as Christians we can still expect to face persecution for our beliefs. While we might not face death in the same way that Christians in North Korea or Iran do, there are other ways in which we might face persecution.

News from across Europe in the past few years has been bleak at times: we have seen politicians and pastors being investigated for "hate crimes" simply for teaching or quoting from the bible. We have seen medical professionals lose their jobs because they did not want to be complicit in practices that went against their conscience. And we have seen families risk losing their children because they sought to bring them up in accordance with biblical principles.

We have seen Christians who fled persecution in the Middle East finding themselves facing harassment and oppression in European refugee camps that was painfully similar to what they left behind. And there has been a rise in attacks on churches – last year in France alone, on average two churches were desecrated every single day.

However, even in the face of these difficulties, we believe in a God of redemption, who can turn things that are meant for harm into things for good.

### With that in mind, let's pray:

1. That the Lord comforts all those who are suffering persecution across Europe, and that He would draw closer to those who feel under attack for their faith in Him.
2. Pray that the Lord speaks to those persecuting Christians, and like Saul, they might come to know The Lord for themselves.
3. Pray for boldness for Christians, that they would be able to speak the Good News of the Gospel despite living in a culture that can be hostile to their beliefs.

## Update



### EUoP Finland

Thank you for your prayers for the EU of Prayer meeting in Finland. The thread running through all our prayers was "May your name be hallowed, your kingdom come, your will be done" in all the situations we prayed over. One highlight was meeting Antero, a member of the Finnish parliament, whose route to becoming a politician was through a call to serve those working in parliament and to pray for them there.

### Additional prayer points:-

1. Pray for the EU summit in Brussels on 17 - 18 October, where the multi -annual financial framework will be discussed and, in the light of events, Brexit issues may be addressed.
2. The conflict between Catalonia and Spain which is about to escalate again.
3. The forming of the new government in Austria, which is relevant for Europe concerning the connections to the Visegrád-states

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