

***"When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."***

~ Matthew 10:19-20 ESV

### **SYRIA: Christians At Risk**

Sources: AINA, Middle East Concern, CBN

When American troops pulled out of Syria, and Turkish troops moved in to establish a "safe zone" in northeast Syria, there were understandable concerns about the safety of the people living in this area. Turkish authorities gave assurances that their forces would not persecute religious minorities, including a significant number of Christians. However, recent reports have indicated otherwise.

Troops were reportedly told to not physically harm any Christians. However, that has not stopped them from driving civilians who practise Christianity out of their homes and land. Armenians and Syriac Christians in the region have been intimidated and forbidden access to their land, keeping them from harvesting their crops. As a result of the takeover, combined with bombings of towns and villages in the area, many Christians have been forced to flee. Witnesses describe it as a "soft ethnic cleansing."



Church leader Hovsep Bedoyan  
Photo: Middle East Concern / Middle East Council of Churches

Along with the danger posed by invading Turkish troops, Islamic extremist groups – including self-proclaimed ISIS terrorists – have been emboldened. On November 11th, an Armenian Catholic priest, Hovsep Bedoyan was murdered by gunmen, along with his father. Two others in the vehicle were also injured. ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack. The terrorist group has also been responsible for some bombings that took place on the same day near a Chaldean church in Qamishli, leaving six dead. For more details on the persecution facing Christians in this war-torn country, see our [Syria Country Report](#).

***Please remember the family and friends of those killed in these recent attacks. Also intercede for the many displaced civilians who have lost their homes, land and livelihoods. May they be encouraged and strengthened as they sense the Lord's tangible presence among them and witness His miraculous provision for each of their needs. As for the political unrest, pray that the ministry of the Holy Spirit will bring greatly needed peace to this volatile region.***

### **TURKEY: Teacher Dismissed for Social Media Posts**

Sources: Middle East Concern, Yeni Asir



Kusadasi, Turkey  
Photo: Wikipedia / jpitha (c)

A Christian teacher has been dismissed from her teaching job after the press accused her of conducting missionary activities through social media. Esmâ Bağcı Kaya had been teaching religion and morality at the Hasan Fatma Onal Anadolu High School, a private school in Kusadasi, for the past two years.

On November 6th, the newspaper, *Milli Gazete*, published an article drawing attention to Esmâ's Christian faith and accusing her of conducting missionary activities through her private social media account. The story was picked up by other media outlets, leading to an investigation by the National Board of Education. Esmâ was suspended under orders from the Minister of National Education, Ziya Selçuk. Esmâ has opened a court case alleging defamatory and discriminatory remarks by the press and the board of education.

In 2016, Esma also faced allegations of her association with Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim cleric who is presently living in exile within the United States due to accusations of instigating a coup. The unfounded allegations against Esma were eventually dismissed. Similar false accusations were the basis for charges against American pastor Andrew Brunson, who was released in October 2018 after serving two years of imprisonment and then subsequently forced to return to the States. (Go to our [country report](#) to learn more about the challenges encountered by Christians in Turkey.)

***Pray that the truth will be revealed in Esma's case and that she will be allowed to return to teaching. May the governing leaders of Turkey, as well as the members of the media press and the board of education, all realize the importance of promoting freedom of belief for all citizens. In the meantime, prayerfully uphold the pastors, evangelists and lay workers of country's various churches, as they seek to spread the Gospel despite opposition.***

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## REPORT UPDATES

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### IRAN: Recent Prisoner Updates

Source: Middle East Concern

Christians in Iran face constant danger when living out their faith. This is particularly true for those who convert from Islam. For many, faith in Christ leads to torture and imprisonment. More information, including various reports, can be reviewed at our [country report](#).

Ismaeil Maghrebinejad, 65, was taken into custody on January 25th of this year on charges of propaganda against the state (note [previous report](#)). In a hearing on October 22nd, charges of apostasy were added by the judge, even though Ismaeil had been a Christian for nearly 40 years. The next court hearing is expected in two months' time.

On October 31st, it was reported that Ebrahim Firouzi had been released from prison and would be facing two years of exile after a temporary leave (see [this report](#)). Ebrahim has now been sent to Sarbaz, a city that is located hundreds of kilometres south of his home and nears the border with Pakistan. Ebrahim was scheduled to arrive on November 12th to the city, where he will be learning of the conditions and restrictions enforced on him for the next two years.

Five other Iranian Christians were scheduled to have their appeals heard on November 13th. For some of them, a previously appointed hearing scheduled for September 3rd was postponed when the judge failed to appear. All five of these believers are facing sentences between five and fifteen years for "acting against national security."

***As we await the results of the November 13th hearing, please pray that all five of the believers involved in this most recent case will experience God's peace and grace regardless of the outcome. Pray that the Lord will also minister in wonderful ways to Ismaeil, who is facing another court hearing in the future, and Ebrahim as he begins his lengthy separation from family and friends. While settling in his new location, may Ebrahim be divinely connected to other committed believers so he can partake of Christian fellowship and receive opportunities to share the love of Christ with those in the community who are spiritually seeking.***

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit [VOMC's prayer wall](#).



Ismaeil Maghrebinejad  
Photo: Middle East Concern

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For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review this [listing of options](#).