

CHANGE MAKERS

SPEAK



PART ONE - SPEAK SESSION

Our vision is to see a world in which the body of Christ understands persecution and responds prayerfully, pastorally and practically every time a Christian is persecuted!

Persecution: A situation where people are persistently and systematically inflicted with grave or serious suffering or harm and deprived of (or significantly threatened with deprivation of) their basic human rights because of a difference (race, religion, nationality, political opinion, membership of a particular social group) that the persecutor will not tolerate.

To see the toughest countries in which to be a Christian: Look at the map provided.

WATCH A VIDEO: Bruised not broken or Hear the story Sri Lanka on releasepotential.org

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

#HEARTHESTORY

Sergei Bessarab was killed as he was praying. One of the bullets broke the guitar he was playing, as he worshipped

the Lord. However, the guitar has been restored, and is now used for church services. On the wall in the church hangs a portrait of the murdered pastor, holding his guitar. The portrait bears his name and date of birth, but not the date of his death – a silent testimony to the fact that he is alive, he is simply with the Lord in heaven.

Group Activity: create a social campaign to share Sergei's story to raise awareness about persecution and to show how people can get involved.

Discussion:

Download the Tough Questions video on releasepotential.org .

As a group go around and answer the following questions:

- *If you could ask God one question, what would it be?*
- *Why do you think Christians are treated badly for choosing to follow Jesus?*
- *What is the hardest thing, for you,*

NORTH AFRICA

Pray for indigenous Christians who form a tiny minority in the Islamic nations of North Africa. Open Christian witness is often not possible, and many believers, most in secret.

EGYPT

Christians in Egypt, who have been treated as second-class citizens and discriminated against in the areas of employment and education, face attacks from extremist elements. Pray especially for believers from a Muslim background, who are under the greatest pressure.

ALGERIA

In 2006 the government passed a presidential order that requires all non-Muslim groups to register and be officially approved in order to operate. Pray for wisdom for church leaders.

NIGERIA

12 northern states have imposed strict Sharia (Islamic) law, and Christians face ongoing civil conflict in Plateau state. Pray for believers who have lost loved ones in the violence.

SUDAN

Following the formation of an independent South Sudan in July 2011, proposed implementation of Sharia (Islamic) law in the North will make life worse for the Christian minority already facing oppression there.

COLOMBIA

Pray for evangelical Christians and pastors who face violence from paramilitary groups and those behind the huge trade in illegal drugs. Pray especially for churches in rebel-controlled areas.

IRAQ

The conflict in Iraq has caused many thousands of Christians to flee, most heading for Syria, Jordan and Turkey. Those who remain have faced kidnapping and murder.

CENTRAL ASIA

Pray for Christians who continue to face persecution in a number of states within the former Soviet Union. Pressure comes from both 'old guard' communists, and Islamic extremists.

IRAN

In this unique Islamic republic clerics wield ultimate political control. Open Christian witness to Muslims is banned, and government spies monitor Christian groups. Pray that the church will remain strong.

CHINA

Despite the growth of China's free market economy, religious freedoms remain severely curtailed. Pray for the unregistered, 'illegal' churches which continue to grow.



AFGHANISTAN

Pray for the tiny Christian church which faces many pressures, including opposition from the hard-line Islamic Taliban, and continuing economic and political instability.

NORTH KOREA

All Christian activity is forbidden, and being caught with a Bible can lead to execution in this repressive state. Pray especially for the estimated thousands of believers imprisoned in labour camps.



LAOS

Religious groups must gain state approval for evangelism, printing religious literature, and raising or building places of worship. Pray that the government will ease restrictions on the church.

PHILIPPINES

Christians living in areas with significant influence from Muslim and Marxist guerrilla organisations have faced threats, kidnapping and death.

VIETNAM

The communist regime claims to uphold religious freedoms, yet continues to repress unregistered churches. Pray especially for believers among the Hmong and Montagnard people groups, who face the most intense persecution.

BURMA

The military junta rules Burma with an iron fist, and maintains control over all religious activity. Pray for the spread of God's Word - it is illegal to print or import Bibles in indigenous languages.



SRI LANKA

In recent years militant Buddhists, who feel threatened by the growth of Christianity, have encouraged the destruction of churches, and attacks against individuals. Ask God to protect churches, and especially in remote rural areas.

INDIA

Pray for all Christians and church leaders who have suffered violence at the hands of Hindu militants, who want a Hindu-only India. Several states have introduced the destruction of churches, and conversion laws. Pray these will not be used against Christians.

INDONESIA

Christians are marginalised in society, face legal obstructions to establishing churches and have been physically attacked when gathering to worship.



ERITREA

The autocratic government has closed evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and imprisoned and tortured leaders and believers. Pray for the many Christians being detained.

SAUDI ARABIA

Pray for the church in Saudi Arabia, where all religions other than Islam are forbidden. Anyone involved in evangelism, or who converts to a Muslim, faces jail, reputation or execution.

MALDIVES

This holiday destination in the Indian Ocean is one of the least evangelised nations on earth. There is a legal ban against any religion other than Sunni Islam. Pray that Christians have wisdom as they practice their faith.



PART TWO - SPEAK SESSION

In many of the countries and communities we work in it is the most vulnerable and marginalised who often suffer the most. Women and children suffer physical violence, rape, trafficking and economic oppression.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY ABOUT THIS ISSUE?

Ramsha (not her real name) lives in a rural village in the south of Sri Lanka. She is 17 and lives with her parents and younger brother. Ramsha's father pastors a church in the village. One day he went to the north of Sri Lanka for a couple of days to attend a court hearing for a case filed against the church. While her father was away, a mob of 300 targeted the family while they were at home. The attackers caused damage to the building, shouted abuse at the family and told them to leave the area because they were Christians. Some members of the mob climbed onto the roof of Ramsha's house, carrying a huge stone, which they dropped through the roof. This smashed the ceiling and fell into the family bedroom. Thankfully no one was in the room at the time. 'I was not afraid, but instead felt amazing strength,' said Ramsha. She knew that only God

could give her strength. Ramsha felt no anger towards her attackers but had a strong belief in God, that He would not let her down or put her to shame. Ramsha made a decision in her mind that no matter what came her way she would not give up her faith. Because she could hardly believe the strength she felt, she knew it had to be from the Lord. Ramsha said: 'I love my enemies. Every persecution I have faced has only made me stronger and brought me closer to God.'

WATCH THE HABILA VIDEO AT RELEASEPOTENTIAL.ORG

"NOT ALL OF US ARE CALLED TO DIE A MARTYR'S DEATH, BUT ALL OF US ARE CALLED TO HAVE THE SAME SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND LOVE TO THE VERY END AS THESE MARTYRS HAD."

— RICHARD WURMBRAND, THE MIDNIGHT BRIDE

Speak up on Facebook and Twitter!! Join our online campaign called #ONEFAMILY.

Spend the following weeks sharing, posting and liking articles, photos and new reports on the persecuted Church around the world.