

Dear Christian leader,

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was an era of amazing progress in Christian mission and Church growth. In 1960, around 80 percent of the Church was white, Western and middle class. By 2000, around 80 percent of the Church was coloured, non-Western and poor. This has not been due a decline in the West, where the percentage of Christians has remained fairly constant. Rather, it has been due to phenomenal church growth in the non-West where Christian radio, the Jesus film and an explosion of indigenous ministries have seen multitudes turn to Jesus Christ.

Stories of triumphant missions and great humanitarian feats stir the soul and excite the mind; they sell many a book and magazine, and may be used to encourage believers, recruit workers and extract dollars. But in truth, this *sweet* story has a *bitter* side (Rev 10). For church growth will always trigger a backlash – a spiritual counter offensive.

In November 1998, in an effort to address the problem of escalating religious persecution, the US enacted its International Religious Freedom Act which tied US foreign policy to international religious freedom by mandating that severe violators be sanctioned. In response to this Act, dictators around the world reigned in hostile elements and tinkered with reform for the sake of US aid and trade. But when the US housing bubble burst in Aug-Sept 2008 and the US lost its economic leverage, the Act lost its teeth and persecution immediately escalated. Today, Christians around the world are facing not just hostility, but displacements and massacres on a scale not seen in a century. We have entered an era of great persecution the likes of which has not been seen in our lifetime; an era where violent persecution with impunity is becoming the order of the day.

With millions of Christian families facing suffering that is truly "*vast as the sea*" (Lam 2:13); as they cry "*rivers of tears*" (Lam 3:48), how will we respond? How would God want us to respond?

In Galatians 6:2 the Apostle Paul exhorts us to "***Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ***" [i.e. the law of love]. The Church will endure by standing united, firm in faith, and by caring for one another -- speaking out and extending aid. Above all we must get serious about the serious business of intercessory prayer, which is advocacy in the courts of heaven, to the highest authority in the universe.

International Day of Prayer (IDOP) for the Persecuted Church is observed in early November annually. On that day, Christians / churches around the world pray in solidarity for the persecuted Church. Along with the thrill of participating in a global prayer event, IDOP provides Christian leaders with a wonderful opportunity to introduce a new element into their ministry and lead believers into an awareness of and enduring engagement with the persecuted church.

For a global overview, see: Critical Prayer Requests (CPR) at [criticalprayerrequests.blogspot.com](http://criticalprayerrequests.blogspot.com) .  
For on-going participation in advocacy, aid and intercessory prayer, visit the Blogs and Links on [ElizabethKendal.com](http://ElizabethKendal.com); sign up for a weekly Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin at the [RLPB blog](http://RLPB blog) .

I can assure you: ***when we bear the burdens of the persecuted, we do not compound our own burdens, we displace them.*** It is a humbling, inspiring and surprising liberating experience.

May God bless you as you serve him.

Elizabeth Kendal

International Religious Liberty Analyst and Advocate ([Religious Liberty Monitoring](http://ReligiousLibertyMonitoring))

Director of Advocacy, [Christian Faith and Freedom](http://ChristianFaithandFreedom) (Canberra, Australia)

Author: [Turn Back the Battle: Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today](http://TurnBacktheBattle) (Deror Books, Dec 2012)