



Pray for Yemen

A 4-week Prayer Guide



Week 1 - Overview

[Yemen, My Heart Breaks #1](#) (*Watch this video to help you pray*)

A Complex Crisis

Yemen has only been recognized as a united and independent country since 1990. Currently, it is one of the poorest nations and the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.¹ However, it has not always been a scene of such poverty. In biblical times, Yemen was the land of the Queen of Sheba and was called “fortunate Arabia.” Located at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, the country spots tall mountains, barren deserts, beaches bordering the Red Sea, and exceptional landscapes. It produces coffee, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, along with oil and other mineral resources.

However, a series of complex civil wars and political struggles have brought deep instability to the country. President Ali Abdallah Saleh resigned during the Arab Spring of 2011, and his successor, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, was also forced to flee due to a rebel uprising in 2015. Since then, conflict between the loyalists and the rebels, both sides backed by outside nations, has plunged the country into war. The ongoing violence has led to a collapse of infrastructure and ensuing famine. Few humanitarian groups are permitted to enter the country, leading to further health and hunger crises. The destabilization has also created a fertile environment for Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other terrorist groups to flourish.



Shariifa sat motionless in her little hut. She felt numb. Her husband had been killed in the fighting between the Yemeni rebels and loyalists, leaving her a widow and their children as orphans. How would they survive? There was no social system in this country, and with the war raging, food and medical services were already hard to come by. Hopelessness for the future threatened to paralyze her. Would she receive any help?

Suffering Children and Families

In the midst of raging war, civilians have suffered the most. About half of Yemen’s population lives in areas directly affected by the conflict. Over 10,000 civilians have been killed,² a third of whom were children. Those who survive the fighting often face other terrible struggles. By April 2017, more than 3.3 million Yemenis had been forced to flee their homes, becoming refugees or internally displaced persons as they try to escape the worst hotbeds of violence.³

Because of destroyed infrastructure and mass migration, over 80% of the population is in need of humanitarian aid, but much international aid has been interrupted by the violence. As a result, an estimated 17 million people, about 60% of Yemen’s population, live without reliable access to sufficient food, and over half lack access to safe drinking water.

10.3 million require immediate assistance to save or sustain their lives. Malnutrition has increased by 57% since the beginning of the war, now affecting 3.3 million people.

Children suffer disproportionately, especially those younger than five: the United Nations Children's Fund estimates that a child dies every ten minutes from preventable causes. That means that nearly 150 children die in Yemen each day, or about 53,000 per year. Furthermore, many hospitals and schools have been destroyed or lack the supplies necessary to function. Over half of Yemen's population lives without access to basic health services, and three million children are unable to attend school.⁴ In addition, many families have been torn apart. Women and children who lose their male head of household, in addition to mourning their losses, are singled out for oppression.

Persecution of Christians

Though life in a war-torn country is hard for all Yemenis, Christians face the added threat of religious persecution. Because of the ongoing war, non-Yemeni Christians have been expelled from the country, and the few Christian churches left in the country are targets of vandalism. Yemeni believers who remain in the country face persecution and even death.

More than 99% of Yemeni citizens are Muslim, and those who convert to Christianity are threatened with the death penalty—not only by the government, but by members of their own communities.⁵ The risk is especially high for women. Family and community bonds are much stronger than those in the West, and Christian converts may be cut off from their social structure entirely. Worse still, a convert's greatest suffering sometimes comes from within their own family.

Not only must a new Christian face the choice between their faith and their most precious relationships, but they may even be killed by family members. Some view "apostates" who leave Islam as blemishes on the family's honor and believe it is better to kill a Christian convert than allow them to leave Islam.

A Future and a Hope

Because of the risks associated with their faith, Yemeni Christians lived mainly as secret, isolated believers, afraid to meet with others who could betray them. However, in 2005 the Yemeni church suddenly rose up and the local secret believers and new converts organized an unofficial underground church, which has grown immensely despite suffering and persecution.

Yemeni Christians started to meet together, even those who came from very different or even opposed backgrounds. Some are former Sunnis Muslims; others are former Shias. They are elderly people and teenagers, women and men, and people from different tribes and ethnic groups. They have a vision to grow spiritually and to help others, regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. They set an example of unity, both for Yemen and for the world.

In the midst of dark times, Yemeni Christians are bold witnesses who testify that suffering for Christ is a part of being a Christian. Some have said, "We want to learn from our martyrs, both the expats and the locals who died for Christ, and grow in our faith!" They show their neighbors and relatives that there is a future and a hope, even in these difficult circumstances.

Pray...

- That the war in Yemen will stop, bringing an end to the terrorism and violence
- For widows and orphans
- For Yemeni Christians who are willing to stay and to be a light in the darkness
- For many Muslims to seek and accept Christ
- For effective help for millions of people who are threatened by famine
- For security for the Yemeni church and persecuted converts
- For boldness for the Yemeni church
- For believers to help build a new future and not lose hope

