



PRAYER LETTER 55

This letter is written by the friends of the **Synod of Evangelical Church of Iran** in Diaspora, as the country still faces financial pressure and struggles with the spread of Covid19. We invite our partners and sister churches to pray for the people of Iran, including the Christian communities and churches, as they trust in the Lord's protection and guidance and work hard to remain faithful witnesses in these difficult situations.

General information:

Political and economic Situation- Ebrahim Raisi, a protege of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has been the president for more than a year. The turnout for election in 2021 was below %50, which says something about voters' thinking that participation may not make a difference. A large number of people have lost hope of any positive change. There is widespread disillusionment because those in power continue to make promises despite knowing they do not have the capability to fulfil them. Skyrocketing inflation is pushing Iranian's away from basic food items. Housing, increasing rent prices, continues to be a major concern for those living in large cities. Despite the above-mentioned major challenges and pressures the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his allies have other concerns, enforcing the country's hijab and chastity law, that has resulted in a new list of restrictions on how women can dress. After months-long standstill in nuclear negotiations recently the sides resumed the talks and there are some hopes for a new deal.

Covid 19- The situation in Iran is not very different from other Countries. Covid continues to be a major concern, but here there are not many choices. Testing is not an option, due to shortage of testing kits. Some are cautious and limit travels and public events. Many even do not take the risk seriously. They have no choice but to live with it. They continue their daily routine despite having symptoms. If the symptoms last for more than a week, they know it is Covid, and not regular cold, therefore they need to wait a little bit longer until the symptoms go away! And they spread the virus.

Hope?- Many are depressed and have almost lost the hope for any change in the economy or in political situation. The wave of immigration to the Western countries has stopped, because of the lack of options. Some young people, especially Armenians have started moving to Armenia, but situation there is not stable either. At present every person struggles for survival. The stress and anxiety have affected the physical and mental health of the community. Health care and medication is very expensive and a major concern for many. All of the above has impacted the families and the relationships are suffering as well.

Churches- Churches are back to in-person activities, but online services continue to be an option, despite the limitations in internet services. Despite the intense pressure, church members are well connected through WhatsApp and try to encourage and support each other.

The situation for the new converts and house churches remains very challenging and dangerous. Despite the threats, the underground church continues growing in number and in faith.

SECID- Some leaders of the church who have already left the country, have created the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Iran in Diaspora (SECID). The goal is to support brothers and sisters in the country and the worldwide Iranian Presbyterians, to maintain the unity of the scattered members, groups and congregations in coordination with the partners and international organizations.

Prayers Topics:

Please pray for...

1. The financial needs of the families. Wisdom for the leadership to find creative ways to support the increasing numbers of needy families
2. The health care challenges of people
3. The physical and mental health and strength of the pastors and the lay leadership of the churches. Many of them are exhausted and extremely overwhelmed. Pray that God may strengthen them so they are able to offer hope and encouragement to their members and to the community in this difficult situation, and help them keep their passion in matters of faith and Christian witness
4. The unity of the leaders of different churches and an opportunity for them to support and encourage each other
5. Raising and training a new generation of church leaders to serve inside and outside the country
6. Home groups and underground churches and their leaders who are always at the risk of being discovered and facing harsh consequences. Pray for wisdom and strength to overcome all kinds of challenges they face to continue the ministry. Pray for the creation of opportunities for them to experience Christian community and fellowship. Many of them have no idea about public and open worship service and the only Christian community they have is their small group
7. The Evangelical churches who are facing serious challenges in maintaining/obtaining legal status as recognized religious organizations
8. The many legal issues the church leadership deals with, as authorities do not miss any opportunity to seize different church properties. For the Lord's wisdom and protection in such matters
9. Lord's guidance for the SECID leadership as they try to encourage those who are in the country, those who are in refugee status in different countries, and those who have started new life in new places
10. The political situation of the country, for some opening and an end to the continuous injustices. And also, for freedom in the country and peace in the area

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