

## VOM-USA Prayer Update for March 30, 2012

### **Iran--Arrests Continue as Government Clarifies Position on Nadarkhani Case**

*Sources: Middle East Concern, ChristianPost.com, VOM Contacts*

#### Acts 20:23-24

As Iran celebrates the Iranian New Year, Iranian Christians face an ongoing wave of arrests that began last December. Several believers were released in March, but at least 27 remain in detention. Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, who was arrested in October 2009 and subsequently sentenced to death, remains a matter of international concern. The Christian Post reported on March 15 that an Iranian envoy told a human rights investigator that Nadarkhani was guilty of "offending Islam." The envoy said Nadarkhani was inviting juveniles into his home to preach Christianity, that he had an illegal church in his basement, and that by preaching Christianity he had offended Islam. Previously, the Iranian government had said Nadarkhani was charged with rape, extortion and Zionism. The United States, Brazil, Netherlands, Germany, Mexico, France, Great Britain and the European Union have all called for Nadarkhani's release. Pray for all Iranian Christians who are persecuted for their faith.

### **Egypt--Christians Seek New Leader After Coptic Leader's Death**

*Sources: VOM Contacts, Compass Direct News, Assist News Service*

#### Matthew 5:13-14

The leader of Egypt's Coptic church has died, and Egyptian Christians ask for prayer as they choose their next leader. Shenouda III, who led the Coptic Christian Church in Egypt for more than three decades, died on March 17 at age 88. Shenouda led the church through some of its most challenging times, often coming into conflict with the government. He spent three years in prison in 1981 for his criticism of then-President Sadat. His death comes at a time when the church is battling the worst persecution in its history. Salafist Islamist leaders publicly celebrated Shenouda's death. The church now faces the daunting task of choosing a new leader. "We need to pray that God might choose the right man ... who could unify all the different denominations in the country against the expected persecution," wrote our VOM worker in Egypt. "Many Christians have left the country already..., but we pray for those true believers to remain as God's salt and light."

### **Yemen--Al-Qaida Claims Responsibility for Death of Development Worker**

*Sources: Newser.com, NewYorkTimes.com, The Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era*

#### Psalms 116:15

A 32-year-old American English teacher was gunned down in the central Yemeni city of Taiz on March 18, and al-Qaida members have claimed responsibility. A Pennsylvania newspaper identified the victim as Joel Wesley Shrum, a former high school football star who moved to Yemen in 2010 to work for International Training Development Centre, a nonprofit organization. Two men on a motorcycle approached Shrum's car and opened fire as he was on his way to his

job as an English teacher at the center. Text messages later circulated saying "holy warriors" had killed a "senior missionary." The school has denied that Shrum was a missionary. He leaves behind a wife, Janelle, and two young sons.

## **India**

### *VOM Program*

Pray for the family of "Matthew," who was martyred for his faith, and especially for 19-year-old Roger, who received an auto rickshaw to help support the family.