

After Two Years, Will Imprisoned Pastor Andrew Brunson Be Freed in 10 Days?

In 10 days, imprisoned American pastor Andrew Brunson will enter a Turkish courtroom again for an important hearing that will decide his fate—still under house arrest in Turkey on false accusations of “spying” and “aiding terror groups” or finally free after two years.

Many media outlets, including *The Hill*, have reported that Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has said Brunson has “dark links” to terrorism and is standing firm about keeping him imprisoned. But ultimately, it will be up to the courts to decide if Brunson is released on Oct. 12.

The Save the Persecuted Christians (STPC) Coalition has been following Brunson’s case closely, advocating for his release and working with other groups to raise public awareness and encourage prayer.

“Just 10 days before this crucial hearing in Turkey, thousands of Christians continue to pray for pastor Brunson’s release, as well as for the many Christians suffering hardship there,” said founding Coalition member and Save the Persecuted Christians Director Dede Laugesen. “Andrew Brunson’s case is remaining in the spotlight because of the ongoing commitment of the Trump administration, for which we are immensely grateful and appreciative. But millions of Christians around the world do not share this same notoriety and are therefore suffering in silence and alone.”

Pastor Brunson has been detained in Turkey since October 2016 and was moved to house arrest in late July but is still not free to return to the U.S., venture outside his home or preach in his Turkish church. Several of the pastor’s previous

appeals have been denied.

The Trump administration has fought for his release, by both imposing sanctions on Turkey and doubling down on tariffs, which has made the Turkish lira, and in turn the Turkish economy, suffer. Two recent encouraging signs were that the prosecutor in the pastor's case was reassigned and that the lira rallied after reports that Brunson's release was possible at the upcoming hearing.

The STPC Coalition, which advocates on behalf of 215 million Christians facing heavy persecution worldwide, continues to work diligently to disseminate actionable information about ways in which the American people can help those like pastor Brunson who are being persecuted for their faith.

The STPC Coalition also offers the "The People of the Cross" exhibit, which features a banner for pastor Brunson with these words: "Despite letters from 66 U.S. Senators and 50 members of European Parliament and repeated requests from President Trump and his administration, Turkish President Erdogan's prosecutors insist that pastor Brunson serve a life-sentence—an explicit and ominous warning to other Christians, especially those who lack the pastor's celebrity and international support." "The People of the Cross" exhibit is a traveling display that is available for other venues and events. Contact Save the Persecuted Christians for more information.

Especially in light of headlines surrounding pastor Brunson, raising awareness about Christian persecution is crucial, as violence toward and imprisonment of Christians occurs so routinely it rarely makes the news. For example, according to Open Doors, 255 Christians are killed worldwide every month. 104 Christians are abducted. 180 Christian women are raped, sexually assaulted or forced into marriage. 160 Christians are detained or imprisoned without trial. And 66 churches are attacked. *Every month.*

With such staggering statistics, and the knowledge that most of these crimes are not covered in the media, the STPC Coalition developed a special news aggregator—to capture current instances of persecution that do make the news and to provide readers an easy way to share these heartbreaking stories with others.

One of the simple and economical ways Americans can render support is by encouraging their pastors and faith leaders to visit and to order a free banner to display in front of their houses of worship. These simple banners feature a graphic “Save Us” plea with a cross and the coalition’s website where Americans can learn about the global persecution of Christians and find out more about what they can do to help stop it.

With so much of the world’s population attacked, imprisoned or exiled for their beliefs—like Pastor Brunson and other followers of Christ in Turkey—the time is fitting for the work of the STPC Coalition. The Coalition is building a movement like one in the 1970s that helped free another population suffering from heavy persecution—Soviet Jews—so as to impel policy changes that will hold the persecutors accountable and increase the costs for their crimes against humanity.

Building such a movement is necessary to provide American policymakers the leverage needed to influence change worldwide and to alleviate the suffering of those who are being persecuted merely because of their faith in Jesus Christ.