

Fervent Prayer Sought for Imprisoned Pastor Brunson Ahead of July 18 Hearing

Christians around the world are praying fervently for North Carolina pastor Andrew Brunson, who has been imprisoned in Turkey on accusations of spying or aiding terror groups.

Brunson has a court hearing tomorrow, July 18, in Turkey. One Turkish newspaper has reported that because of the national and international attention Brunson's case has received from groups such as the Save the Persecuted Christians (STPC) Coalition, the pastor could be released at this hearing.

"The newspaper reports that 'Brunson's case has been attracting enormous attention in the U.S., both politically and religiously' and has led to 'a number of serious congressional interventions against Turkey, which would cause political consequences,'" according to CBN.

The STPC Coalition advocates on behalf of 215 million Christians facing heavy persecution worldwide, and was also part of a protest organized by Magdi Khalil with Coptic Solidarity for Brunson last month in Washington, D.C. Brunson was arrested by the Turkish government in October 2017 and is facing up to 35 years in jail on charges of "espionage" and "terrorism." The protest was a way for those concerned about Christian persecution to show solidarity with Brunson and to shed light on the situation for Christians in Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was re-elected June 24.

National Religious Broadcasters, led by STPC Coalition member Dr. Jerry A. Johnson, is also reporting on Brunson's hearing tomorrow.

"Let's unite in prayer for pastor Brunson and his family,"

Johnson said. "It's time for the church to pray. It's time for the church to speak up and stand up. Let your voice be heard."

The Trump administration has said it is working to bring Brunson home, and the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is also working to free pastor Brunson. Those concerned may read more and sign a petition, which has more than 582,000 signatures.

The STPC Coalition 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. Americans can lend support by encouraging their pastors and faith leaders to visit and order a free banner to display in front of their houses of worship.

These simple banners feature the Arabic "nun" character, which has become an international symbol for the oppression of Christians ever since the Islamic State used this first letter of the Arabic word for "Nazarene" to designate homes of followers of Christ targeted for persecution.

Raising awareness is an important first step, especially as Christian persecution occurs so routinely it rarely makes headlines. 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.*

The STPC Coalition *is* a building movement, similar to 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.

With the fate of pastor Brunson—and thousands of other prisoners of conscience around the world—hanging in the balance, Coalition members pray Brunson's hearing tomorrow will end with his release and return home. {eo}