

Christians in Libya Praying for Nation's Future

While a defiant Moammar Gadhafi assured “martyrdom or victory” in the battle against the “aggressors” in Libya, Christians in Tripoli met in prayer for the country and the future of Christians throughout the northern African nation.

The Open Doors country coordinator for Libya, who asked to remain anonymous, said: “Every day around noon, a part of the small Christian community gathers to encourage each other.”

Open Doors estimates the number of indigenous Libyan Christians is around 150. However, prior to the start of the revolution, the expatriate Christian community was believed to be approximately 180,000. Large numbers of migrant workers left Libya after the revolt that started Feb. 15, but a small number of foreign Christians remain in Libya.

“Today a group of Christians from Tripoli shared with me that they are doing well and said the atmosphere is okay,” the Open Doors worker said. “Also, the church is still in good condition and undamaged despite fighting in the capital.”

About the personal safety of the Christians, the coordinator said: “Believers from African origin are not going outside the city for their own safety, but otherwise everyone is safe.”

The country coordinator added: “Getting in touch with Christians in Tripoli is not easy. Phone service is off and on or not answered, but I understand that the Internet is up in Tripoli again, so I expect communication opportunities will improve in the next few days.”

Concerning the future of the church, the Open Doors worker noted: “The situation will change, that is for sure, but will Christians gain from the change? Will there be more religious

freedom under a new administration? No one knows. The government will be Islamic, but the question remains how strict it will be and how strong fundamentalist influences will be shaping the new Libya.

“Seeing the disorder of the rebels, it remains to be seen if Libya stays united. It is very much a tribal society and may even split into the two or three original provinces – Fezzan, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, the latter we know as Cyrene from the Bible.”

The Open Doors worker says that prayer by Christians inside and outside of Libya is vital as the rebels attempt to take control of the government.

“No matter what the geographical and governmental future of the country, I hope and pray that local Libyan Christians find safe opportunities to meet with each other and have fellowship that will help the church to plant roots deep into Libyan society. Please pray for the Christians there,” the worker said.

Libya is ranked No. 25 on the Open Doors 2011 World Watch List of the 50 worst persecutors of Christians.