

October 2011

- **Zhang Rongliang—China:** Thank God for the early release of prominent house church leader Zhang Rongliang on August 31, 2011. This was nine months before he was due to complete his 7 ½ year sentence on false charges of “illegal border crossing” and “obtaining a passport through cheating.” During his imprisonment, many were concerned for his health due to diabetic condition. He is the leader of the Fangcheng Mother Church in central China's Henan province and the leader of the China for Christ Church, one of the largest house church networks with an estimated membership of more than 10 million. He had previously been imprisoned five times, serving a total of 12 years, and he has suffered extreme torture during his various incarceration. We thank God for his early release, for the relenting of the Chinese government, and that Zhang Rongliang was allowed to return to his wife and two sons alive and in good spirits. We continue to pray for the witness of his life and his work, for those who were in prison with him (both guards and other inmates), and for the increase of religious freedom and an improvement in human rights in general in China. (*Source: Christian Newswire*)
- **Youcef Nadarkhani—Iran:** We continue in vigilant intercession for Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani. Originally arrested and imprisoned in October of 2009 for protesting that his young sons were required to study the Quran in school. Since that time, his wife has been harassed, arrested, sentenced to life in prison, and finally released after an appeal. On November 13, 2010, Youcef Nadarkhani was sentenced to death for apostasy. Despite nearly a year with this sentence hanging over him, Pastor Nadarkhani has stood firm in his faith, refused to recant, and has even encouraged other believers around him. We pray his strength of spirit would remain, that many would find his faith compelling, and that he might be acquitted, released, and returned to his family. (*Source: prisoneralert.com*)
- **Involuntary Emigration of Coptic Christians—Egypt:** According to the Egyptian Union of Human Rights Organization (EUHRO), approximately 100, 000 Christians have emigrated from Egypt since March 2011 due to coercion, threats, and intimidation from hard-line Slafists and the Egyptian government's lack of protection. Most have fled to the U.S., but others have gone to Canada, Australia, and a few European countries. While certainly disrupting the lives of those who have been forced to flee, many worry that the loss of Copts, who are largely professionals and business people, will negatively affect the demographic makeup of Egypt, as well as the economy. In the months since March 2011, attacks against Copts have escalated, including the killing of Coptic youths in two cities, the cutting of an ear of another Coptic Christian, and widespread attacks on churches. We pray for safety and provision for those who have been forced to leave, and especially for those Christians who remain in Egypt. We pray the faith of all Egyptian Christians will remain strong, and that action will be taken to protect this community within Egypt and stem the tide of those leaving. We pray for Yasser Borhami, the head of Alexandria Salafists, who has been instrumental in heightening negative opinions about Coptic Christians in Egypt, including making inflammatory remarks on a popular TV show. (*Source: Assyrian International News Agency*)
- **The One-Child Policy—China:** Since this policy was instituted in the late 1970s, Chinese families who violate the mandate have faced fines, destruction of their homes, loss of their jobs, and worst of all, forced abortions. More than 30 years later, a huge gender disparity is becoming apparent, and the terrible repercussions of a society where men greatly outnumber women are beginning to be felt. Of course, the greatest tragedy is the loss of an estimated 400 million

innocent lives. We pray for a change of course in this country approach to “population control.” We also pray for the Western entities, including the UN, which have supported this policy in practice and also with funding. *(Source: The Weekly Standard)*

- **Su Su Nway—Burma (Myanmar):** Su Su Nway, a member of the opposition party in Burma—National League for Democracy—has been imprisoned since 2007 in one of the most remote and malaria-ridden prisons in the country. Her crime was putting up an anti-government banner, and her sentence is eight years. There is the added concern of her congenital heart condition. Since most Burmese prisoners rely on family to bring them food and medicine, the 1,200 miles between Su Su Nway and her family makes it almost impossible for them to get to her, and the prison has denied her all medical care, family visits, sufficient food, and clean clothes. Since 1962, Burma has been ruled by one of the most repressive and brutal military juntas in the world. Pray for Su Su Nway in prison, for her health and well-being, and that she might be freed from her illegal imprisonment. Pray for the work of human rights activists and those promoting a free and civil society in Burma. Pray for a change in leadership that will result in a government which will protect and serve its citizenry.
- **Chocolate That Is NOT a Treat:** There are an estimated 1.8 million children working on cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast and Ghana—where the vast majority of the world's cocoa is produced. The work is back-breaking, dangerous, and toxic. Yet, those who profit are a handful of multi-national corporations who process cocoa and produce chocolate, including Mars, Nestle, Hershey's, and Ferrero. Ten years ago, an agreement was signed by the cocoa/chocolate industry (the Harkin-Engel Protocol), the principal goal of which was “to eliminate the worst forms of child labor . . . in the cocoa sectors of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.” In the intervening years, almost nothing substantial has been done to effect the changes agreed upon. Pray for the children working under these harsh conditions, pray for those who employ them that they will choose a different course for their business. Most of all, pray that huge chocolate corporations will adopt and promote ethical practices in the production of their products, and that consumers around the world will become informed and demand that children not be exploited in these and other contexts. *(Source: www.10campaign.com)*
- **Li Ying—China:** Li Ying has been imprisoned in Wuhan Prison in Hubei Province since April 2001. She is a Christian journalist who is serving a 15-year prison sentence for her role in publishing an underground church magazine. The difficult conditions which Li Ying endures in prison include 15-hour work days making products for export out of China. We persevere in prayer for her, that she will remain strong and faithful. We also continue in prayer for others who are suffering in China for their Christian faith and the work on behalf of human rights and religious freedom within their country: Gao Zhisheng, Alimujiang Yimiti, Pastor Wang Xiaoguang, Zhang Huamei, Kim Kyung Il, Yang Rongli, Yang Xuan, and the members of the Shouwang Church.
- **Jabbar Savalan—Azerbaijan:** The day after he posted on Facebook calling for protests against the government in Baku, Azerbaijan, 20-year-old Jabbar Savalan was arrested on trumped up drug charges--an increasingly common practice in the country against those who speak out against the government. Savalan's lawyer was even threatened after the court case by one of the police interrogators. The practice of fabricating charges and intimidation to repress and control the public is common within Azerbaijan, and it commonly used to restrict freedom of religion, by attacking their leaders. This was the case with Pastor Zaur Balaev. We thank God

for his Pastor Balaev's early release after an international outcry against his case, and we pray for the same for Jabbar Savalan. (Source: *Amnesty International* and www.prisoneralert.com)

- **Ying—Burma (Myanmar):** As if living under a repressive regime were not challenge enough, a young woman, referred to only as Ying, has been abused and threatened by her aunt and two stepsisters after becoming a Christian two years ago. After her conversion, Ying began attending an underground seminary, and recently to prevent her from attending, her relatives have locked her in the house, beaten her, and threatened to withdraw all support, including food. They have also threatened to disown her and send her to a remote village, where there are no known Christians. But rather than recant her faith, she has run away, though she has no support (her mother is dead and her father is missing), and she is quite young.
- **International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church—**This November 13 is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. May this be a time where those around the world who are oppressed for their faith are particularly comforted and strengthened, and may it also be a time when the church in the West becomes more aware and sensitive to the suffering of others, and moved to intercession and action.