

December 2011

International: Having just celebrated Thanksgiving and anticipating Christmas and the end of the year, it is only appropriate to reflect on the many joyous answers to prayer that occurred throughout 2011. We thank God for the release of Sun Minghua (China, 9/2011), Zhang Rongliang (China, 8/2011), Dmitry Shestakov (Uzbekistan, 1/2011), Girmay Ambaye (Eritrea, 1/2011), Nguyen Van Dai (Vietnam, 3/2011), Shi Weihai (China, 2/2011), Yang Caizhen (China, 2/2011), Said Musa (Afghanistan, 2/2011), Vahik Abrahamian (Iran, 8/2011), Sonia Keshish-Avanesian (Iran, 4/2011), Arash Kermanjani (Iran, 4/2011), and Arezo Teymouri (Iran, 4/2011)--all believers imprisoned for their faith. We also are thankful to God for the release of Eynulla Fatullayev (journalist, Azerbaijan, 5/2011), Idris Yousef Abdelrahman (UN worker, South Darfu, 7/2011), Aleksei Sokolov (filmmaker/human rights activist, Russia, 8/2011), as well as Zarganar (comedian/actor/director, Burma/Myanmar, 10/2011) along with 120 political prisoners. Though it happened at the end of 2010, a little more than a year ago, we rejoice at the long-awaited release of Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese human rights defender and Nobel Laureate, freed on November 13, 2010 after nearly 20 years of house arrest. We remain prayerful and hopeful that these glimmers of justice will usher in greater freedom and security in each of these places. (*Voice of the Martyrs; Amnesty International*)

India: Missionary to India, Manshi Tamang was severely injured after being attacked on October 16, 2011. He is still in critical condition and cannot speak due to a throat injury. His attackers threatened him on previous occasions, warning him to stop teaching about Jesus Christ. Manshi and his family were walking home from church when the men attacked him. Pray for Manshi's healing and for protection and comfort for his family after this traumatic event. Pray that the Lord would strengthen the church that he pastors, and that the men that attacked him would find Jesus Christ and know His love for them. (*Gospel for Asia*)

Indonesia: On his last visit to Indonesia in November 2010, President Obama made a point of praising Indonesia's religious tolerance. However, despite his encouragement of greater religious freedom in Indonesia, religious violence has become more frequent and deadly in the past year, as Islamist militants have repeatedly mobilized mobs to attack religious minorities in their homes, places of worship, and community centers. Additionally, more than 100 activists are behind bars for peaceful acts of free expression.

There are calls for Indonesia to step up reforms and for President Obama to use his influence to urge even greater moves toward religious freedom. "Obama needs to temper his past praise of religious tolerance in Indonesia with some tough talk on religious freedom," said Elaine Pearson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "He should press President Yudhoyono to end discriminatory laws and actively protect the country's religious minorities."

Pray that world leaders will address key human rights violations in Indonesia, including attacks on religious minorities, restrictions on freedom of expression, and the lack of accountability of Indonesian security forces for human rights abuses, especially in the easternmost province of Papua. Pray for President Yudhoyono and for our president's courage to focus on our country's core values in discussions both here and abroad. Pray for those in prison to remain strong and healthy, and for protection and provision for their families. (*Human Rights Watch*)

India (and international human-trafficking crisis): On Tuesday, October 26, members of International Justice Mission collaborated with local police in finding a young Nepali woman in Kolkata, India's major red-light district. Their efforts were successful as she was brought out of the brothel and is now living in an aftercare home to receive healing and counseling. Another girl named Suhana had been rescued from a Kolkata brothel when she was 16 years old. She had received support

and care for more than a year after her rescue, and she later set out to get a new job. Unfortunately, the friend she made at the new job tricked her, and she was again trafficked, this time to Mumbai, a city with a population of 18 million people. Like searching for a needle in a haystack, investigators relentlessly worked to find one young girl, Suhana, in a massive, crowded city. Four months later, Suhana's exact location was found and she was rescued, again, from the horrific life of prostitution. Since then, several of her traffickers have been convicted and sentenced to 7-10 years in prison.

Pray for those who are on the front lines committed to breaking down operations involving human trafficking, child slavery, and prostitution happening not only in Kolkata, India, but around the world. Pray for the children and women who are being exploited and abused, and for their rescue and healing. Pray for their perpetrators, and for them to be exposed, tried, and convicted. Pray for their salvation. Pray for those who are on the front lines committed to breaking down operations involving human trafficking, child slavery, and prostitution that are happening not only in Kolkata, India, but around the world. Pray for the children and women who are being exploited and abused, and for their rescue and healing. Pray for their perpetrators--for them to be exposed, tried, and convicted. Pray also for their salvation. (*International Justice Mission*)

Uganda: A BBC article from October details a disturbing trend in Uganda of child ritual mutilation and sacrifice. The reason--to increase the wealth of those who contract with witch doctors to perform these abductions and murders. Equally upsetting is the apparent ineptness of local police and even the "Anti-Human Sacrifice Police Task Force" in effectively addressing this grotesque criminal activity. Parents in the areas around Kampala, in particular, are gripped with fear, and the investigative report discovered that the numbers of these killings is likely far greater than what is officially being reported. Beyond this, police seem unwilling to rigorously investigate and arrest perpetrators despite adequate evidence to prosecute. Pray for this country, which has suffered so much after years of a brutal civil war. Pray for a population plagued by darkness—especially pray for the families of victims that they might find comfort and healing despite this unthinkable tragedy. Pray that those in positions of power would protect the innocent and bring murderers to justice, including those who contract for these acts to be performed in an evil and deluded belief that it will be for their advantage. (*BBC*)

Democratic Republic of Congo: At the end of November, the citizens of the DRC participated in presidential and parliamentary elections—only the second time since 1997. The country, long plagued by horrific violence and human-rights abuses (particularly brutal rape as a weapon of war) perpetrated both by rebel groups and sometimes government forces, finds itself in a tenuous position. Many have doubts about the country's ability even to hold credible elections, let alone sustain a democratically elected government. These recent elections were preceded by outbreaks of violence, and there is fear that if these elections do not prove to be free and fair, more violence will follow. Pray that the outcome of these elections will not only be trustworthy and fair, but that the DRC will inaugurate officials who will be true servants of the people, ready to protect the population they serve and improve general conditions throughout the country, as well as be courageous enough to bring to justice those who have terrorized the most vulnerable with impunity for decades. Thank God for the role the Church in the DRC has played in caring for, healing, and restoring victims. Pray that the Church would continue to expand its work and reach more people with the love and healing of Christ. (*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*)

Sri Lanka: A staff member and volunteer of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka were driving through Vavuniya in Northern Province, Sri Lanka when they were stopped and attacked by a group of approximately 12 people, wielding clubs and rods. Both men suffered head injuries, as well as numerous other injuries, including a broken arm. One man got away and called the police, but the mob dispersed before the police arrived. The injured workers were transferred to a hospital in

Colombo, and the motive for the attack remains unclear. However, it appears to be part of a recent trend in violent attacks on citizens in the region. Pray for healing for these men, enabling them to return to their valuable work. Pray that peace and order will be restored in the area.

Somalia: This September 17-year-old Christian Guled Jama Muktar was beheaded in his own home in a carefully planned attack carried out by members of al-Shabab, in their ongoing effort to rid Somalia of all Christianity and Western influence. Not only have Guled Jama Muktar's parents lost their son, but they have had to flee the area as well, as they feared for their own lives. The family had moved from Kenya to Somalia in 2008. This is only one in a string of attacks perpetrated by al-Shabab, including suicide bombings, kidnappings in Kenya, and brutal murders of Somali citizens. Al-Shabab has links to al-Qaida, is fighting the transitional Somali government for control of the country, and enforces strict Sharia law in regions under its control. Pray for the protection and healing of Guled Jama Muktar's parents, and for peace for other Christians in the area. Pray that they would be able to exhibit a spirit of love and forgiveness in the face of such persecution. Pray for justice in the case of Guled Jama Muktar, and pray for those who committed this violent act—that they might become convinced of the wrongness of their actions and turn from the course they are seeking. (*Compass Direct; Associated Press*)

Iran: Heydar Moslehi, Minister of Intelligence of Iran, announced that house churches are a threat to youth and acknowledged a new series of efforts to fight the growth of the house church movement in Iran. An article in *Mohabat News*, an Iranian Christian news agency, predicts that the Islamic republic's new wave of attacks to confront Iranian Christian converts will occur during the Christmas celebrations. Pray for believers in Iran to stand firm despite concerted efforts to intimidate them and to undermine their faith. Pray for the growth of the Church in Iran, despite the determination of the government to thwart it. Pray for imprisoned believers in Iran. (*Mohabat News*)

Famine in the Horn of Africa: World Vision is reporting that the famine crisis is growing in Somalia and in the rest of East Africa. While the UN has now officially labeled this a famine (something they have only done a few times in recent decades), and the death toll is in the tens of thousands, the report notes how absent this enormous humanitarian crisis has been from the U.S. media. They cite that even as this tragedy is unfolding the most-read stories on news sites from CNN.com to the *New York Times* are items as frivolous as a Lady Gaga impersonator and coverage of a demonstration by “nudist activists.” The reason given for this indifference to what many are claiming may be the worst humanitarian crisis in 50 years is a tiredness in the west of hearing about one crisis after another.

World Vision blogger, Scott Bessenecker writes, “Prayer is a valuable resource which is not easily depleted. As long as we have breath we have the currency of prayer. I believe in praying to thwart the designs of those who are perpetrating evil, such as warring factions who control aid in order to gain power. I believe in praying for rain, and strength for the dying and stamina for those who are assisting the vulnerable. This is praying for God’s will on earth as it is in heaven. As overwhelmed as I can become there is always a simple, 'Lord have mercy,' within me.”

Let us pray with him to remain compassionate, generous, vigilant, and reliant on God in the face of the overwhelming. Let us pray for those who perpetrate evil and for those who suffer because of it.