

**April 2012**

**Colombia**—Pray for “Rolo,” a former FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia]) guerrilla, who came to Christ and now risks his life to bring the gospel, Bibles, and other Christian materials into the war zone. Traveling on a motorbike, Rolo is in peril from both the dangerous terrain and conditions and the armed groups he was once a part of. Though primarily at odds with the Colombian government, the FARC is extremely hostile to Christianity and has routinely murdered pastors. Pray that Rolo, whose situation is too dangerous to risk using his real name, will be upheld both physically and spiritually to maintain this arduous and life-threatening ministry. Pray for those he reaches with the Bibles and materials, that they would be open to the life-changing truth therein, and that through Rolo and others' work in Colombia, real change could be effected for this Central American nation that has suffered from decades of armed conflict and the corruption and violence resulting from pervasive drug-trafficking. (*Voice of the Martyrs*)

**Algeria**—Pray for Kabyle (*Kah beel*) Christians in Algeria. The Kabyle are ethnically non-Arab and are also known as “Berbers.” Living primarily in eastern Algeria, they are routinely harassed and oppressed. Though technically they are allowed to have churches, recently several have been ordered to be closed, and Algeria law explicitly prohibits evangelism of any kind or any activity that might jeopardize the faith of Muslims. Already oppressed in their day-to-day life, Kabyle Christians take a great risk sharing their faith. Pray that they would remain courageous to continue to do so, that their own faith and understanding of God's word would grow. Pray that they government would become increasingly tolerant of other faiths and the sharing of belief. (*Voice of the Martyrs*)

**Nigeria**—The tensions in Nigeria, especially concentrated around the city of Jos, has created increasing concern among Christians there and in the international community. Since December, the militant Islamic sect, Boko Haram, has carried out a spate of churching bombings, which have claimed the lives of hundreds, many of whom were just passers-by. After a mid-March attack on St. Finbar's Catholic Church in Jos, Christian youths were reported to have killed ten people in a retaliation. Amid, the increasing violence, Nigerians are having to contend with a recent government-enforced doubling of gas prices—the financial strain of which will do nothing to ease an already tense situation. Christian Advocacy Now also understands from direct sources that the Christian community in Jos and around northern Nigeria, and especially leaders of churches and Christian schools, are nearly at an emotional breaking point due to the constant stress of living with fear and danger. Persevere in prayer for the Christian community in Jos and the rest of northern Nigeria, that despite threat of death, they might experience the transcendent peace of Christ, and that they might exhibit incomprehensible forgiveness and refrain from the human urge to retaliate. Pray for those youths that did retaliate, that they might recognize the wrongness and futility of their actions, and pray that God protects Nigeria from escalating violence. Pray that the Nigerian government would respond to the many crises—financial and spiritual—that their country is facing with integrity and efficiency. Pray for the members of Boko Haram, that they might turn from a way of violence to the grace and forgiveness of Christ. (*The New York Time; Jubilee Campaign; direct sources*)

**Malawi**—The Dzaleka refugee camp, situated in the southeastern African nation of Malawi, is home to 16,800 forcibly displaced men, women and children from 14 different African nations. While the famine in the Horn of Africa has been fairly widely reported, a mounting crisis for these refugees has fallen sadly below the radar of most news reporting. Food, one of the most basic human rights, is a scarce commodity in a refugee camp, however, the inhabitants of the Dzaleka camp beginning in March 2012 had their food rations cut in half by the World Food Program—even after reports that the

full ration for a month rarely was sufficient. Currently, the cutbacks are slated to extend at least until the end of 2012. Already victims of human rights abuses and unrest in their own countries of origin, refugees suffer significantly in camps, and the onset of a food crisis brings on added levels of danger for those living there, including increased violence and prostitution. The most vulnerable, such as children, the elderly, and those suffering from HIV/AIDS, will bear the brunt of the situation. Pray that in mundane and miraculous ways, God will provide the refugees of Dzaleka camp their daily bread. Pray for protection of the hearts, minds, and bodies of those who must live under the harshest and most extenuating circumstances. (*International Association for Refugees*)

**Tibet/Nepal**—Anti-trafficking experts have identified a marked increase in the trafficking of Nepali women and girls in the border town of Zhangmu, Tibet—a place popular with tourists. In an effort to stem this disturbing trend, Free for Life International, a non-profit organization based in Franklin, Tennessee has partnered with Peace Rehabilitation Center (P.R.C.) of Kathmandu, Nepal, to establish an anti-trafficking monitoring station there. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 Nepali women and girls are trafficked into Tibet each year, under false pretenses of legitimate employment and economic opportunities. Free for Life has had great success with 15 other similar monitoring stations on the Indo-Tibet border, already rescuing 117 girls and bringing nine traffickers to justice. We pray for all these stations that they would be effective in rescuing those sold into slavery. We pray for those who have been rescued, that they might find healing and restoration in Christ. We pray for additional efforts to address root causes to trafficking, such as lack of education and economic opportunity, which leave the poorest among us most vulnerable to deceptive schemes. We pray for those who would participate in the exploitation of any other human—that they might come to a distinct awareness of the grievousness of their actions and repent. (*Christian Newswire*)

**Cuba**—After his visit to Mexico this March, Pope Benedict XVI arrived in Cuba on March 26, 2012, for a historic visit—only the second papal visit in the history of Cuba. While this is an encouraging sign of tolerance toward religion, events leading up to the visit tell a different story. Since January, there have been reports of increased harassment of those trying to practice their Christian faith—both Catholics and Protestants. Each Sunday for the past couple months, state security forces have prohibited many around the country from attending services—often doing so physically, and in many cases violently. Many of those prevented from practicing their faith are members of the Ladies in White, a peaceful group of citizens who organized in 2003 after what was called the Black Spring in Cuba, when 75 human rights advocates, journalists, and even librarians were arrested. The relatives of these individuals gathered to pray for their detained loved ones, some given sentences as long as 28 years. Since that time, the Ladies in White have called on the Cuban government to allow greater religious freedom and address other human rights issues, including poverty. The Cuban government's response has been to repress and arrest active members. One these members, Caridad Caballero Batista, who has been prevented by the police and state security agents from attending Catholic catechism classes, masses, or any other religious activities. They have also stopped her husband, Esteban Sade Suarez, and nineteen-year-old son, Erik Esteban Sade Caballero, from doing the same—surrounding their home on Sundays and following them to classes and at times, assaulting them. In the days before Pope Benedict's visit, state security forces have cracked down on Protestants as well. It was reported that on February 25, four Protestant church leaders were arrested and detained in Bayamo, Granma Province for evangelizing at a bus station. Juan Moreno was among those arrested, and according to local sources, was beaten so badly he had to be hospitalized. Pray for believers in Cuba, for whom the simple act of attending a church service can expose them to harassment and violence. Pray for the 75 dissidents and human rights advocates imprisoned for nothing more than calling for freedom and justice in their nation. Pray for Raul Castro, brother to Fidel and now head of the Cuban state, that he will choose a course of freedom and openness for the people of Cuban, despite recent actions that

would indicate otherwise. Pray that he might come to know the love and grace of Jesus Christ. Pray for those being harassed daily, that they might find strength in their weakness through the Holy Spirit, and fellowship with Christ in their suffering, and be able to share the truth and determination expressed by Caballero Batista: “God made us free and we are not going to stop trying to go to church.” (*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**China**—On February 10, 2012, Zhu Yufu was sentenced to seven years in prison for posting a poem online in response to the Arab Jasmine Revolution. Zhu, a Christian and a political dissident, is a veteran in the human rights movement in China, having been involved in the Democracy Wall movement in China in the late 1970s. And he has already suffered for his faith and activism, having served nine years in prison already. Also a victim of China's intolerance of dissent is Mr. Wu Zeheng, a Buddhist leader of millions in Asia, who has been beaten, detained, and tortured throughout the years for his own efforts to call on the Chinese government to increase religious freedom and improve human rights. In 1998, he wrote a letter urging the Chinese government along these lines and indicating that their human rights record “marred” the reputation of the government. For this, he served 11 years in prison. Release in 2010, Wu has continued to be monitored and persecuted, including being arrested twice and being denied a passport. Even his students have been harassed. As a last item highlighting the ongoing and pervasive problem of indifference to human rights in China, recent reports show that even companies such as Apple have difficulty monitoring their supply chain, and objects as ubiquitous in the United States as iPods, iPhones, and iPads are tainted with the sweat of those who work extraordinary hours in stressful, dangerous conditions for very little pay. The spate of suicide among workers at the Foxconn Chengdu factory have brought to light (and to headlines) the endemic problem of a nation with no labor laws and no protections for workers. Pray for those who struggle daily under these harsh conditions, and pray for multi-national corporations to pursue supply-chain monitoring that ensures human are valued above profit margins. Pray for the consumers around the world who enjoy freedom and wealth, that our consciences would be sensitive to the plights of others and we would become increasingly concerned and informed about how the items we purchase are made and at what cost, and that whenever able we would make choices that are the most ethical. Pray also for both Zhu Yufu and Wu Zeheng, as they suffer for what they believe and risk their personal safety and well-being to call for greater freedom for all. Continue to pray for the Chinese government and President Hu Jintao that they might respond to the calls of thousands within and outside of China and direct their nation toward a freer course. (*China Aid Association; Christian Solidarity Worldwide; Huffington Post*)

**India**—Throughout history and throughout geography, one of the most fundamental and systematic perpetration of human rights abuses has been the attack on girls and women around the globe. A stunning and ongoing example of this is the phenomenon of the gender-based murder of girls and women in India. Because of their lower value in society and within the family, female babies are often selectively aborted or in less educated and rural areas, the practice of infanticide is more common—families often paying a midwife the equivalent of \$2.50 to drown, starve, poison or strangle a newborn girl. Sometimes this “task” is performed by the father or paternal grandmother for free. The unborn and newborns are not the only ones at risk, though. Female children under the age of five have a 40 percent greater mortality rate, linked to neglect, starvation, and abuse. Beyond that, young married women are incredibly vulnerable to a husband and his family's insatiable demands for dowry money. When these cannot be met, kitchen “accidents” or fake suicides are staged, involving dousing with kerosene, forcing to ingest poison, or being hung. Nobel laureate, Dr. Amartya Sen, first identified this horrific epidemic in India in 1986, estimating at least 37 million women were “missing” from society because of these murders, and the number that were never born or accounted for in the first place, was incalculable. Unfortunately, since his grave findings more than 30 years ago, these practices have likely increased. Advocate for these most powerless and oppressed before our Father in heaven, who is a

Father to the fatherless, and who upholds the cause of the weak and oppressed. Also, take action with those in power in this world by adding your name to the online petition at the following link: <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/stop-female-genocide-in-india.html> Because this practice is found among both educated and illiterate classes, and among all the major religions represented in India, including those claiming to be Christian, pray especially that the Christian population in India, who often face extreme persecution for their faith, might provide an extreme contrast in their treatment of females in their families and communities. Pray that the might diligently follow Jesus' example in His gentle and respectful treatment of women while He was on Earth, even in a culture that also perceived them to be second-class citizens. (*50 Million Missing Campaign; New York Times*)

**United States**—In 2000, Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Act with strong bipartisan backing. It has solidly reauthorized the law, which increases enforcement of anti-trafficking and anti-slavery measures, the prosecution of those involved, and directs resources to the victims of trafficking, every three years until the present. However, now this same law is being held up in Congress, as bipartisan efforts have broken down, as Republicans have attempted to suddenly make several modifications to the law—despite the fact that it was overwhelming approved three times during George W. Bush's term in office. Pray that our leaders would not be motivated by partisan squabbling to delay this crucial legislation, which has provided hotlines to report suspected trafficking, as well as a rescue-line for victims. Pray for your specific congressman that as individuals they will strongly support all efforts (and perhaps suggest greater measures) to deter the modern-day slavery within the United States and around the world. Consider contacting your representatives to indicate that as a constituent, this is a matter of great concern to you and to urge him or her to quickly reauthorize the Trafficking of Victims Act. Pray for those who are subjected to this most horrific violation of their basic humanity. Pray for their rescue, physically and spiritually. (*New York Times*)

**Azerbaijan**—In 2009, the Azerbaijani government passed a religion law that, among other things, requires all churches to register in order to legally exist. This March, Greater Grace Church in Baku is being sued by the government in a first-time effort to use this law to close down an existing and previously registered church. Greater Grace Church has attempted to comply with governmental regulations but claims it was unaware of the need to re-register and had not been notified of this until the liquidation suit was already filed. For years, the government in Azerbaijan has harassed and made secret attempts to close down individual congregations, but many fear this is the onset of open and direct governmental persecution of churches nationwide. Several hundred churches, who are currently registered, would face similar suits if this one against Greater Grace Church succeeds. Pray for the Church in Azerbaijan, especially the Greater Grace Church, as it faces direct persecution from the state. Pray for their perseverance despite the outcome of this trial, even as we pray for the Greater Grace Church will be able to re-register and its members continue to meet. Pray for the Azerbaijani government to become convicted of the wrongness of there attacks against Christians in their country and the repression of freedom that this persecution represents. (*Voice of the Martyrs*)