

April 2013

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.
Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.*

Psalm 27: 1-3

Libya—On February 10, Sherif, an Egyptian businessman, Christian, and bookstore owner, was arrested and detained in Benghazi. Several other Egyptian and non-Arab expatriates also living in this African nation, who had ties with Sherif, were arrested in the days following his arrest. None have been released and all have been accused of proselytizing, yet no formal charges have been made. On March 10, one of the detained Egyptian men, Ezzat Hakim Atalla Abdel-Malak died in detention after complaining of chest pain. He did receive some medical treatment, however, it was not sufficient and he died upon returning to the prison. There was severe bruising found on his body, evidence of physical abuse sustained during his detention. Pray for Sherif and the others still detained that they may feel Jesus' presence with them, and that their faith would be sustained. Pray especially for Ezzat Hakim Atalla Abdel-Malak's widow and two teenage sons that they might experience the peace, healing, and comfort of the Holy Spirit. As we pray for their release, pray each of these prisoners might be a strong witness for Christ. Pray that those who support these imprisoned Christians will be wise and guided by the Holy Spirit. Pray that officials involved will act justly, love mercy, and come to know Christ. *(Source: Middle East Concern)*

Azerbaijan—Pray for Jabbar Savalan, a student and activist, who was arrested on drug charges coincidentally the night after he posted a facebook post calling for protests against the Azerbaijani government's repressive policies. Despite having a blood test which revealed no evidence of drug use, the 20 year old was sentenced to 2 ½ years in prison. Thank God for Jabbar's desire for freedom of expression for all in his country and for his courage to speak out on behalf of all Azerbaijani citizens. Pray that his efforts will not be deterred by this trial. Pray for his freedom and for his protection and sustenance throughout this unjust incarceration. Pray that he might experience the love and light of Christ, even through this experience. Pray that the pressure on the government of Azerbaijan to promote greater human rights and freedom of expression and belief would be effective. *(Source: Amnesty International)*

Kazakhstan—Please pray for the protection of basic human rights in Kazakhstan. Courts recently ordered Bibles and other religious materials that were confiscated from a Christian to be destroyed. This appears to be the first court-ordered destruction of religious literature since communism ended in this area. Pray for Vyacheslav Cherkasov, the Baptist believer from whom the 121 books and Bibles were confiscated, as he faces a trial regarding the materials, as well as being fined a month's wages. Pray that his faith and his courage to share it with others will not be deterred by this negative

experience. Pray also for human rights defenders like Yevgeni Zhovtis of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, for their efforts to preserve freedom of expression and belief in their country. Pray that their work will result in greater protections for religious minorities within Kazakhstan. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Rwanda/Democratic Republic of Congo—After decades of terrorizing the populations of Rwanda and the DRC, Congolese rebel and warlord, Bosco Ntaganda, turned himself in to the United States embassy in Kigali, Rwanda, at the end of March. Praise God for this long-awaited step toward justice, as the United States has indicated that they will hand Bosco Ntaganda over to the International Criminal Court to stand trial for murder, rape, recruitment of child soldiers, sexual slavery, pillaging, and other war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ntaganda has been both a rebel leader and a general in the Congolese army. Most recently, he was part of a mutiny led by the M23 armed rebel group. Give thanks to that this man, accused of some many horrific acts, was compelled to turn himself in. Pray for that truth will come out at these trials, that justice will finally be served, and pray for the judges and lawyers involved in the International Criminal Court that they will pursue justice with integrity and tenacity. Pray that this case will serve as a precedent for further successful prosecution of war criminals, as well as a deterrent to others considering the perpetration of atrocities as a means to gain power and personal wealth. (*Source: Human Rights Watch*)

India—After eight years of being wrongfully imprisoned in Jharkhand, India, Pastor Samuel has finally been released. Originally accused of Naxalite (Maoist) activities, in a region plagued by violence and insurgency by Naxalite rebels, eventually it became clear that Pastor Samuel was not the person the police had suspected he was, nor was he involved in any way with Marxist rebels. Though cleared of all charges in 2010, he continued to be separated from his wife and child, while his release was held up with court delays and postponements. Finally, on March 13, Pastor Samuel was freed and reunited with his family and community. Praise God for the release of this pastor and missionary—and for his steadfast faith during this long trial. Praise God also for the faith and faithfulness of his wife and child—and pray that the reuniting of this family might bring healing, peace, and joy. Thank God for the amazing ministry Pastor Samuel has while he was imprisoned, and pray that the seeds plants in many hearts might flourish into full faith in Christ. (*Source: Gospel for Asia*)

Sudan—It has been more than ten years since Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir embarked on his countrywide genocide. Beginning with a campaign in Darfur, Bashir is responsible for the murder of over 300,000 Darfuri men, women, and children, and the displacement of 3 million more. In recent years, Bashir has expanded his murderous policies to the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan regions of Sudan. Despite the fact that the International Criminal Court has issued multiple warrants for his arrest, as early as 2009, Bashir is still in power, committing atrocities with impunity, and traveling freely to other nations. Pray that this tyrant might be removed from power and this reign of terror be ended for Sudan. Pray for that justice might be served in the case of Bashir and all those in power in Sudan who are complicit in this ethnic cleansing. Pray for the hearts and minds of these perpetrators, that they might be transformed by the light and truth of Christ. Pray for the people of Sudan, especially members of the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa tribes—who have suffered so much. Pray for their healing, restoration, and peace. Pray for the leaders of the international community and those at the ICC, that all will be moved and motivated to finally do something substantial to address this crisis and oppression. (*Source: Bashirwatch.org; United to End Genocide*)

Pakistan—Please pray for comfort and help for Christians in Lahore, Pakistan. On March 9, after Savan Masih was accused of blasphemy, and this was announced from a mosque loudspeaker, thousands of rioters burned over 150 Christian homes—forcing the believers to flee. Following the

attacks, Christians in Karachi and Lahore led angry demonstrations, and in some cases, clashed with police. Pray for safety for the Christians there and for peace in the community. Pray also that believers there will be enabled to respond with restraint and forgiveness. Give thanks for the official condemnation of the attacks given by the Pakistan's national assembly on the Monday after all these events. Pray that Pakistan will move continually toward more freedom and tolerance for all their citizens. Pray also for Savan Masih who was arrested for blasphemy, and for his family, including his three children, as they await the outcome of the accusations against him. Pray for Savan's friend, who leveled these charges, that he might come to understand the great wrong he has committed against his friend and understand the truth about Christ. (Source: *Open Doors*)

Central African Republic—After fighting broke out in the capital, Bangui, due to a coup at the end of March, a Christian radio station was looted and is now off the air. Vehicles were stolen and sound boards and computers were stolen or destroyed. Give thanks that now ministry workers with the radio station were injured, but pray for their wisdom and sustenance, as it is still unsafe for them to be out in public and at least one worker attempted to confront looters in his despair over the destruction of years of work. Pray for the tumultuous situation here, that peace might be restored, the civilian population protected, and this vital ministry might be up and running safely again soon. Pray that this might be an opportunity for believers working for the station and others in the community to demonstrate the love and reconciliation of Christ. Pray also for another radio worker—working with the same ministry in another African nation—who was arrested because of his beliefs and still awaits the outcome of his trial. Pray for his freedom and his return to work. (Source: *HCJB Global*)

China—We give both praise and continue in persevering prayer for the ongoing struggle for Cao Ruyi, one of the many women in China who have faced the horror of the government attempting to force her to have an abortion for an “unauthorized” pregnancy. Last summer was when Cao's difficulties began, when government authorities dragged the then-five-months-pregnant woman to the hospital, beat her, and attempted to admit her for a forced abortion. Providentially, the hospital was full, and so Cao was placed under house arrest to await the procedure. However, during this brief reprieve human rights organizations and others stepped in to help Cao and her husband. Through the process, United States Congressman Chris Smith intervened, insuring Cao and her child's safety. Praise God for the courage of Cao and her husband, the integrity and selfless actions of the congressman, and the ongoing vital work of Women's Rights in China and China Aid Association. Pray for the long-term protection of this family, especially the young son born to Cao and her husband, whom they named Dahai (which means, “help from overseas”). Pray that this little life would blossom into a wonderful example of the love and power of God, and His provision. Pray for immediate help for this family, as they still face a \$15,000 fine for having this child, and the repercussions of an unauthorized birth, including the inability to register the child for an identity card, which is necessary to go to school or get medical care, among other everyday needs and rights. (Source: *China Aid Association*)

Afghanistan—Give praise that a 6-year-old girl in Afghanistan was spared the fate of being sold as a child bride by her father to pay off a medical debt. After learning of the situation, an anonymous donor paid the \$2,500 debt so that little Naghma could stay with her family. Even as we give thanks for this intervention, continue in prayer for Naghma, her family, and for the more than 52 percent of girls in Afghanistan who will be sold as brides before the age of 15. Indeed, despite numerous steps taken by an American lawyer acting as an intermediary for the donor, the families, and the local Afghan council that oversaw the “sale” of Naghma, there is no guarantee that she will not still face this fate in the days ahead. Pray for families so destitute that they are forced into such extreme actions for basic necessities, such as firewood, food, and medical care. Pray for Naghma's family as they try to survive and mourn Naghma's 3-year-old brother, who recently froze to death in the refugee camp in Kabul where they live.

Pray the intervention of the Holy Spirit in this troubled country. Pray for that those with resources around the world might be moved to generosity, intervention, and being the hands and feet of Christ in Afghanistan and around the world. (Source: *The New York Times*)