

September 2013

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:28

Commit your way to the Lord;

trust in him and he will do this:

*He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.*

—Psalm 37:5,6

Syria/United States—Syria has progressively become the most tragic and horrific outcome of the Arab Spring. Estimates of the total number of people killed through violence related to the Arab Spring upheavals is around 130,000; more than 107,000 of those are Syrians—and the conflict is still raging. Recent reports indicating the use of chemical weapons on the general population has added another dimension to the tragedy and suffering in this conflict. Approximately 1.7 million Syrians have fled their home country. Furthermore, as refugees flee into other countries such as Lebanon, tensions within these other nations are heightening between various factions. Pray as the international community debates whether to intervene and through what methods. Pray for wisdom and integrity for the leaders involved directly in the Syrian crisis, and pray for international leaders to be effective in helping Syrian become a peaceful, democratic nation. Pray for the thousands upon thousands who have been wounded, displaced, tortured, and have lost loved ones, their homes, and their livelihoods to the violence and unrest. Pray for the peace of Christ to pervade this land. Pray for Syrian Christians who have become a particular target for attack and abuse. (*Source: BBC; multiple sources*)

Tanzania—In the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in northwestern there are 68,000 people living together in one of the most severe malaria regions under difficult conditions. Though preventable, last year alone 62,000 cases of malaria were reported, endangering many lives, especially the most vulnerable such as young children. Mothers routinely check their children in the mornings for symptoms of this mosquito-borne disease, in an effort to catch it early enough to save their children's lives. The impact of the disease also extends beyond those stricken. Adults caring for ill children and relatives often do not have time to properly care for the rest of their families or maintain work that can support families already living on the edge. If one or both parents are lost to the disease, children become vulnerable to many other tragic outcomes. So much of this communities resources are used for medical care to address this health crisis, that efforts to bring longterm improvements, such as education, cannot be undertaken. Pray for individuals and families affected by this terrible disease. Pray that desperately needed resources can be directed to this vulnerable community—especially treated nets, which not only protect sleeping individuals from mosquitoes, but also reduce the mosquito population. Over time, this would help eradicate this debilitating disease from the region. Pray that those who have lost loved ones would be comforted and that those who have lost resources would be helped and restored. Pray for the hope of Christ to pervade this region struggling with hope. (*Source: Nothing But Nets*)

Pakistan—Pray for Zafar Bhatti, a Pakistani Christian who had worked and traveled door-to-door in communities, giving presentations and selling medicines, while also using his work as an opportunity to share Christ. Through this, he began a small NGO called “Jesus World Mission,” dedicated to helping the poor. In July 2012, he was charged with blasphemy based on a rumor started by another NGO worker that Zafar had sent text messages that insulted Muhammad's mother. While incarcerated,

Zafar has been beaten and mistreated repeatedly, and his wife and sister are very concerned for his well-being. Pray for Zafar's protection and sustenance during his time in prison. Pray that the truth will come out, and Zafar would be cleared of these charges. Pray that many might see Jesus in Zafar and his family during this time. Continue in prayer for Asia Bibi and Imran Ghafur, believers who have both been imprisoned for their faith in Pakistan since 2009 and 2010, respectively (*Source: The Voice of the Martyrs*)

Nigeria/International—In a video released mid-August, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau stated that the terrorist group would no longer limit their atrocities to Nigeria, where they have carried out systematic attacks on Christians and their churches and communities for several years now. The extremist group, whom the United States State Department still has failed to officially designate a terror organization, indicated that Nigeria was no longer a “big deal,” and that they now planned to extend attacks to all who did not follow Sha'ria law—meaning the United States and other Western nations. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom released a report detailing the religiously motivated violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, whose targets have extended beyond Christians to individuals who are Muslim critics of Boko Haram, those deemed “un-Islamic,” and institutions such as police stations and newspapers, among others. However, according to Jubilee Campaign, more Christians were killed in Nigeria in 2012 than in all other places around the globe combined, and Boko Haram is second only to the Taliban for sheer number of violent attacks. Pray for two bills currently in Congress attempting to address the violence in Nigeria, to call on Secretary Kerry to designate Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization or submit an unclassified report justifying his reasons for not doing so, and to make provisions to place sanctions on any persons known to provide support to Boko Haram. Pray that our leaders would act with courage and integrity. Give thanks for Senator Risch and Congressman Christopher Smith for sponsoring bills in the Senate and House calling for the designation of Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. Pray these efforts will be successful and effective in addressing these atrocities. Pray for Abubakar Shekau, that he might come to recognize the evil of this campaign of terror and change course for himself and those who look to him for leadership. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

Egypt—August saw a huge escalation in violence directed toward the Christian minority in Egypt perpetrated by Muslim extremists and Muslim Brotherhood supporters in retaliation for what is perceived as Christian complicity of the ouster of former president, Mohammad Morsi. Churches have been attacked and burned with gasoline bombs, as well as Christian homes and businesses. Christians were concerned about their well-being when Morsi came into office; ironically, they are now more concerned than ever despite the current military government's official response denouncing the attacks. In fact, throughout the days of violence, neither the police nor the military intervened or showed up at all, despite many calls to the police and police stations and government buildings being only yards away from sites of violence. Many Christians recall the similar quandary they had under Hosni Mubarak, where the government officially and vocally supported the Christian minority (about 10 percent of Egypt's 84 million) to the international community but did nothing to protect them or promote their basic rights at home. Pray for protection of the Christian community and stability within Egypt. Pray that believers there will continue to respond with love and forgiveness. Pray that their lives and reactions to the unrest will display the grace and compassion of Jesus and point many to Him. (*Source: Wall Street Journal*)

Bangladesh—Since February 2013, there has been ongoing protests as the country has established an independent court to finally prosecute war crimes and atrocities committed during the country's liberation war in 1971. The protests are calling for the conviction of certain officials and stiffer sentences when they have been convicted. In retaliation, Bangladeshi security forces have responded

with excessive force, killing at 150 and injuring at least 2,000. In some cases, children have been injured or killed, and in other cases, extrajudicial executions have been documented. Pray for those who have been victimized calling for justice and those left behind to mourn the loss of loved ones. Pray that justice will be served after these many decades, and that those who committed atrocities might come to truly repent of their actions. Pray that this process will lead to greater transparency, accountability, peace, and civil rule in Bangladesh in the future. (Source: *Human Rights Watch*)

Iran—In December 2012, Mostafa Bordbar was arrested in Tehran, along with 50 other Iranian Muslim converts. His ordeal continues, as his parents attempt to post bail (putting their own house up for bond) was denied. He was sentenced at the end of this July with ten years in prison for “anti-security organization” and “gathering with intent to commit crimes against Iranian national security.” However, a detailed summary of the charges against him, provided by Voice of the Martyrs, clearly demonstrates he is being punished for his faith, and is as follows: “Being involved in Christian evangelical activities used to fight the Islamic regime of Iran through the establishment of evangelical ministries and holding underground worship meetings; Mostafa’s baptism; Continued attendance to a house church; Leading weekly house church gatherings; Providing other believers in other cities with evangelical material; Translating and dubbing five movies related to Christian evangelism; Clear confession to the court that he left Islam and converted to Christianity; Clear confession to the court that he considered evangelism a duty; Confession that he has distributed 12,000 pocket-sized Bibles; Discovery of 6,000 Bibles, gospel CDs and other books and CDs related to Christianity in his house.” Pray for Mostafa to be comforted, strengthened, and emboldened during this ordeal. Pray for his faith to remain steadfast, and that many will see the love and light of Jesus even within Evin Prison, where he is being held. Pray that other Christians around the world, who have so much less to risk, who be “guilty” of such massive outreach to others. (Source: *The Voice of the Martyrs*)

China—Even as new stories are reported daily, we cannot forget and we continue in prayer for those whose suffering is ongoing and longterm. We persevere with them through our prayers and actions on their behalf. We especially remember Chinese Christians Gao Zhisheng and Alimujiang Yimiti. Gao Zhisheng is a Christian human rights lawyer who has been repeatedly arrested, since 2005, has been tortured with electric batons, pistol-whipping, and other horrific methods. He was disappeared for a time, feared to be dead, but then reappeared in a remote prison in the West of China. Alimujiang Yimiti, who like Gao Zhisheng, is a husband and father of two, was sentenced in 2008 to 15 years in prison for his evangelistic work among the Uyghur ethnic minority. He was accused of jeopardizing national security and could have faced death. Most recently, the visits from his family have been cut off, and he was last allowed to see his wife in November 2012 for 15 minutes. Since that time, he has only been allowed one phone call to his wife on New Year's day. Both men have truly laid down their lives to take up their cross and follow Christ. May we pray that a day never passes when they are not both held up in prayer by believers around the world, and may they feel the sustaining power and comfort of that network of people praying for them. May the Holy Spirit strengthen and uphold them in ways we can only imagine, and may many around them come to know Christ through their sacrifice and witness. (Source: *The Voice of the Martyrs*)

International—Around the globe, especially in developing nations, indigenous children with disabilities face multiple levels of discrimination and abuse that results in them being isolated, denied services, and perhaps most important, denied an education. A recent report from the Mexican Human Rights Commission revealed just how pervasive these challenges are: a survey of children in Mexico indicated that more than half would prefer not to go to school with indigenous children and almost half would prefer not to have someone with a disability in their family. By belonging to both these groups, indigenous children face the more extreme rejection and mistreatment. Beyond this, families often do

not want to send kids with disabilities to school, and schools often discourage their attendance. School facilities also do not accommodate the children's special needs, and teachers are not given . Of course, without an education, these children, who already face many disadvantages, will face a future with little hope or prospects for productive lives. Pray for new initiatives being undertaken by UNICEF and other human rights organizations address both the challenges they have in the educational setting and the prejudices they face in their communities at large. Pray that communities will respond with grace, compassion, and acceptance. Pray parents of all children will teach and model acceptance. Pray that those in positions of power will act to rectify these great inequities. *(Source: Human Rights Watch)*

Mali—Recent events in Mali have been more optimistic than the days of crisis in 2012 and 2013, and the African nation is poised to inaugurate a democratically elected president on September 4. Because of the intervention of the African Union in 2012 and then of French troops in January 2013, the militant extremists who had seized control of north Mali, imposing harsh Sharia law, were driven out of the country. However, much prayer and intervention is still needed for this country reeling from the fallout of violence, as well as a region-wide food crisis. Pray for the nearly 350,000 people still internally displaced because of the violence, for the approximately 175,000 Malians who fled to neighboring countries, and for the more than 350 million people considered food-insecure in the region. Pray that they will all be able to rebuild their lives, and pray that the developed world will pour the resources they have been so blessed with into this situation of need. Pray for the incoming president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, that he might rule his country effectively, with integrity and justice. *(Source: World Vision)*