

March 2014

This is what the Lord says:

*“Maintain justice
and do what is right,
for my salvation is close at hand
and my righteousness will soon be revealed.
Blessed is the one who does this—
the person who holds it fast.*

--Isaiah 56: 1, 2a

*“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness[a] will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.”*

--Isaiah 58: 6-9a

Mexico—In the past several years, and as recently as the beginning of 2014, the state of Chiapas has seen ongoing conflict and human rights abuses—including forcible displacement of whole communities—between Christian groups of differing denominations. In some regions, local authorities have also been implicated by the National Commission for Human Rights as participants in broad discrimination and hostility. At very least, they have not sufficiently investigated, intervened, or provided protection equally for all their citizens. Please pray for peace and unity among Catholics and Protestants of varying denominations in Chiapas, Mexico. Both groups have treated each other with violence, humiliation, and cruelty, even forcing people from their villages and destroying churches. Pray that they would humble themselves and imitate Christ, whom they both claim to follow. If they are Christians by name only, pray that they would find salvation in Jesus Christ and point those around them to Him through their love. Pray that the Mexican government and local officials would act with wisdom, integrity, and in a fair, unbiased manner for the well-being of all their citizens. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

South Sudan—Since the mid-December, the hope for the new, democratic nation of South Sudan has rapidly disintegrated into violence and chaos as conflict erupted along political and ethnic lines. A dispute between the South Sudanese president and vice president and possible coup attempt resulted in massacres and armed conflict primarily between the Dinka and Nuer tribes. Indiscriminate violence and rape has been perpetrated on the civilian population—including a massacre of approximately 2,500 people in the village of Bor.. Pray for comfort for the families of "scores of women" in South Sudan who were raped and killed while seeking refuge in a church in the town of Bor. Many of the women

were in their 60s and 70s and worked for the church. Pray in particular for the families of Dorcas Abuol Bouny and Akut Mayem Yar, both 72, Tabitha Akuang, 60, and Mary Alek Akech and Martha Agok Mabior, both 70, and Agel Mabior, all workers in the church who are known to be among those raped and murdered. Pray for peace in this area of South Sudan, and pray particularly for the men in the militant group called the White Army—comprised of primarily members of the Nuer tribe—to repent of their wickedness and come to Christ for salvation and new life. (*Source: World Watch Monitor*)

Pakistan—Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, near the Afghan border, was the site of a cruel attack that not only ended the lives of innocent victims, but also prevented life-saving vaccinations from reaching desperately vulnerable people. Pray for the families of 11 humanitarian workers who were killed by a roadside bomb aimed at the police-protected convoy of a polio vaccination team. Pray also for the children who were intended to receive this vital medication. Pray for those who are willing to perpetrate this kind of vicious violence targeting those doing good and helping the vulnerable in an effort to further their own political agenda, intimidate the population, and to exert power and control. Pray for the comfort and peace of Christ for the families of those killed, the provision of the Father for those in need of vaccinations, and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who attack and violate others. (*Source: BBC*)

China—Pastor Xu Yonghai and 11 other believers are being held in detention in Beijing, China. They were arrested when their house church, Holy Love Fellowship, was raided on January 24th. Please pray that these brothers and sisters would stay strong and courageous while imprisoned, and that God would give them many opportunities to share the light of the Gospel in that dark place. Pray that they would be able to stay together and help one another until they are released, and that their faith would be strengthened through this trial. Pray for God's comfort and protection, and that this suffering would be used for His glory. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Morocco—Arrested in his home on 28 August, 34-year-old Christian Mohamed el Baldi was originally sentenced to 30 months in prison for “attempting to shake the faith of a Muslim.” However, after an online petition to King Mohammed VI and significant media attention, the case was dropped completely after the charges were determined to be false. Give thanks for lawyers with integrity are willing to take on unpopular cases and defend human rights. Give thanks for individuals and journalists around the world willing to speak out against injustice. Give thanks for the success of people speaking out and most of all, for God's sovereign hand in all situations, particularly for the positive outcome in the case of this believer. Pray for the comfort, strength, and boldness of Mohamed el Baldi and the 25,000 Christians in Morocco. (*Source: World Watch Monitor*)

International/North Korea—The UN just released one of its most detailed and scathing reports of the human rights situation of a sovereign nation. The report, which the North Korean government completely denies, documents the deaths of hundreds of thousands of citizens at the hands of the government, the use of food as a means to control the population, and systematic abductions, public executions, and other forms of bizarre and horrific torture. Please pray for the international community as a whole to respond to the UN's human rights' report on North Korea—to move from mere reporting to real and meaningful action. Pray that our leaders around the globe will respond quickly and effectively to this recent report on the atrocities and abuses of the world's worst human rights offender. Pray that God In the would show those in positions of power how to put a stop to the torture and injustice, and that He would move their hearts to compassion. Pray a miraculous transformation of the leadership in North Korea. (*Source: BBC*)

Egypt—Please pray for protection for Christians in northern Egypt where kidnapping is very common.

In Minya province, where most of these kidnappings occur, there is a larger Christian community than in other areas of Egypt, and apparently, some perceive these Christians as wealthy and target them in particular in order to gain ransom money. Additionally, law enforcement in the region—which is significantly weaker than security structures in Cairo—is ineffective in preventing these abductions and in investigating them when they do happen. Criminal gangs operated with impunity in the area. Recently, even children have been abducted. Please pray for better law enforcement and God's protection in this area. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Syria—As the conflict in Syria continues, the Christian population has also continued to suffer particular persecutions. Most recently, in the town of Raqqah, rules of submission for Christians has been formalized which institutes a special tax for Christians only, the prohibition of any religious practices in the sight or hearing of any Muslim, the mandatory adherence of Christians to Islamic codes of dress, commerce, and dietary regulation, and the prohibition of doing any repairs or reconstruction to church buildings or monasteries, even those damaged in the recent violence or as a result of intentional desecration. The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) was the group issuing this contract which the required Christian leaders to sign. However, the Syrian conflict is complicated in nature, and other opposition factions, such as al-Nusra Front, have demanded ISIS refrain from their attacks on other groups. Pray for this multifaceted, difficult, and deadly conflict, praying for wisdom and integrity for leaders involved and the international community to bring this horrible situation to a peaceful resolution. Pray for the protection and sustenance of the Christian community in Raqqah and throughout Syria. Pray that humanitarian aid will be overwhelming, forthcoming, and effective in reaching all those devastated by this crisis. (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

Central African Republic—After 10 months of being terrorized by Islamic militia groups, factions of the Christian population in the Central African Republic have responded in kind, perpetrating atrocities similar in scale and nature. Furthermore, there is a sense that many in the Christian majority—long the underprivileged class subjugated to a wealthier Muslim minority—are seizing this as an opportunity to overthrow an exploitative ruling class. Clergy are finding their messages of restraint, forgiveness, and love going largely unheeded. Human rights organizations are calling on the UN and the international community to intervene in coordinated and meaningful ways. Previous efforts have been disorganized and ill prepared, leading to escalating violence and a further disintegration of the situation. Pray for peace, justice, and resolution to be sought and found in this horrific situation of violence and revenge. Pray for the protection of those bold enough to refrain from violence and to speak out against it. Pray that the international community will find the compassion, integrity, and efficacy to truly aid this situation. (Source: *Amnesty International; National Public Radio*)

International—In their 2014 report, global analytics Maplecroft documented an approximate 50 percent increase since 2008 in countries now classified as “extreme risk” for grave human rights abuses. Rising from 20 to 34 countries in six short years, the report reveals many factors contributing to this global worsening of human rights—including shifting markets creating demand for low-cost workers and feuding over natural resources. Endemic sexual and ethnic violence characterize these societies, as well as systematic repression from the state. Pray especially for the ten countries identified as the worst offenders: Nigeria, Yemen, Myanmar, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Syria. Pray for the protection of the population and for leaders to love mercy and act justly. (Source: *Huffington Post*)