

April 2014

*Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.
Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.
Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
people without regard for God.
Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.
--Psalm 54: 1-4*

United States—Convicted in 2008 of sexual crimes against seven young girls in Cambodia, American Michael Joseph Pepe was just sentenced to life in prison without parole, as an United States judge tries to send a message that any Americans who commit these kinds of abuses abroad will be held accountable. Subjecting these children to extreme violence and abuse, Pepe also jeopardized the trust of all aid workers, as he was working as a civilian teacher at the time of the exploitation. Pray for the healing, comfort, and peace of Jesus for these young girls. Pray that He would restore them and heal them and help them experience His love. Give thanks that justice was served in this case, and for U.S. district judge, Dale Fischer, who when sentencing Pepe said, “Such crimes are not permitted anywhere in the world, and this country will do what it can to protect children.” (*Source: The Los Angeles Times*)

Burma—The country of Burma continues to be a nation in transition and in great need of prayer. Like many countries where decades of totalitarian control has maintained one kind of order—certainly at a great cost to human rights and liberties—the transition to greater democracy has also allowed previously suppressed ethnic, racial, and religious differences to surface. While positive changes to the government and human rights on a national level have made small, tentative steps, violence between various groups has erupted. In recent months, Burmese Muslims have been suffering attacks from Buddhists with whom they have previously lived peaceably for years. Ethnic Kachins, who are predominantly Christian, have also been subject to extreme and pervasive atrocities, including rape and torture. Pray for this nation that this time of upheaval will provide greater opportunities for the knowledge and peace of Christ to prevail. Pray for the Kachin people to demonstrate Christ's love and forgiveness amid horrific circumstances. Pray for the protection and healing of all vulnerable groups, as people act out of fear and hatred and attack each other. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Mozambique—The criminal code in this African nation has been in place since 1886, and has been in consideration for review since 2010. Unfortunately, rather than providing progressive reform, some of the proposed penal code actually could be a huge setback for women's rights and protections. In particular, a provision to let sex offenders and rapists not be prosecuted if they marry their victims is especially troubling. Additionally, there is another provision that even prevents law enforcement from investigating potential sexual crimes unless an official complaint is made by the victim or victim's family (if the victim is a minor). Already these practices have had devastating consequences for many young women in Mozambique, such as one who at sixteen, was forced to marry the man who assaulted her, and when denied justice and hope of a future free from abuse, chose to kill herself. Pray that these

provisions would not be enacted, and if they are, that they would be repealed. Pray additionally, that more measures to protect girls and women from sexual crimes and abuse would be enacted instead. Pray that victims would receive justice and experience the healing, love, and peace of Christ. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

China- Praise God that Wenxi Li, a Christian imprisoned for his faith, has been sharing the Gospel in prison and people are turning to Christ. He was sentenced to two years in prison in June of 2013 because of his involvement in a Christian bookstore. Mr. Li worked at a legal Christian bookstore in Beijing, but he was arrested while visiting Shanxi, another province. The purpose of his visit was to look for a rental property to help local believers open a new bookstore. This "crime" of bringing Christian culture to the area resulted in his arrest. Recently, his wife was allowed to visit him and she reports that he was doing well and he was very excited because he had been able to lead other inmates to Christ. Praise God for these new believers and for Wenxi's ministry. Pray for continued blessings amidst the hardship. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

North Korea - Praise God that John Short, an Australian missionary in Hong Kong, was released from North Korea where he was detained for two weeks. Mr. Short was held for questioning because he left Gospel tracts in a Buddhist temple while he traveled with a tour group in North Korea. Thankfully, this 75-year-old missionary was not imprisoned long-term in North Korea, the world's worst human rights offender. Praise God that Mr. Short will soon be reunited with his wife in Hong Kong. Please pray for the lost in North Korea to find salvation in Jesus Christ, and pray that John Short's Gospel tracts were found and read and produce fruit. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

North Korea- One day after John Short was released, North Korea announced that thirty-three people will be executed for their association with a missionary from South Korea, in an attempt to expel "unclean elements" from the country. Pray for their lives to be spared and for safety for all believers in this dark land. American missionary Kenneth Bae is still serving a fifteen year sentence in North Korea. Pray for his release and for healing as he is in poor health. Pray that the horrible oppression there would miraculously produce great growth in the church and that God's name would soon be glorified and honored. (*Source: World Watch Monitor*)

Ethiopia- Praise God that Alemayehu Legesse, a Bible school student in Ethiopia, was released from prison because of phone calls on his behalf. He was arrested in March of 2013 for possession of Christian literature. Many people advocated on his behalf by calling the Ethiopian consulate in the US and asking for his release. The Embassy chose to let him free because of "too many phone calls". Please pray for his protection, as he still may face charges in the future. Pray that the church at large would continue to pray and advocate on behalf of those who are oppressed and imprisoned. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Thailand- Pray for the 150,000 refugees from Burma who have been living in refugee camps for over two decades on the Thai-Burma border. They left their home in Burma because of ethnic strife and human rights abuses, but they are unable to work or even leave the refugee camps while they are in Thailand. Praise God they have found safety and provision for all these years in the camps, and pray for discernment to know whether they should stay where they are dependent on aid, or if they should move back to Burma. Pray for them to have opportunities to return to a safe living situation in Burma. Most

importantly, pray that any of these refugees who don't know Jesus Christ would find Him as their Savior and Lord- and as their true Refuge in times of trouble. (*Source: International Rescue Committee*)

Colombia- Pray for the region of Buenaventura, where people live in fear of horrible violence by paramilitary groups. The criminals are responsible for abducting and dismembering hundreds of innocent residents, and thousands are fleeing the port city to find safety. In fact, the country of Columbia has the second largest number of internally displaced people in the world. Over five million Columbians have left their homes in fear in the past decades of violence. A large part of the problem in Buenaventura lies in the fact that perpetrators terrorize without punishment because of the authorities' fear of their retaliation. Please pray for justice to prevail and that the terrorists will no longer terrorize with impunity. Pray for safety for the residents of Buenaventura. Pray that those living in fear would find a safe haven and true eternal security in Jesus Christ. (*Source: Human Rights Watch*)

Syria- Please pray for safety for the city of Aleppo as the Syrian government has been attacking the opposition there since November. Although a UN Security Council demanded that they stop attacking populated areas indiscriminately, the air attacks continue to kill and wound countless civilians, including numerous children. The principal means of attack seems to be barrel bombs dropped from helicopters. Barrel bombs are typically made of oil drums or water tanks filled with scrap metal and explosives. Because they are unguided, the crude bombs land in areas that are heavily populated with civilians. Even more, it appears that the bombers are deliberately attacking innocent citizens. Eyewitnesses explain that the destruction mainly occurs in residential neighborhoods that are far from the frontline, with no military targets even close by. Please pray that the Syrian government would value human life and not attack areas where there are innocent civilians. Pray that this strife in Syria would cease and result in a peaceful solution. Pray for the hearts of Syrians to turn to Jesus Christ especially now in their time of great need. Pray that the Christians there would reach out in love with the Gospel to both friend and enemy. (*Source: Human Rights Watch*)