

September 2014

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

--Matthew 5:10

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

--Romans 8:35-37

China—Praise God that human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng was recently released from prison. He had been incarcerated for the past three years, enduring physical and emotional torture. Pray that the Lord would bring healing now to this man's body and mind, as he is both malnourished and mentally confused. Friends who have talked to him since his release have reported that he mutters and speaks unintelligibly, and only briefly answers their questions. He had been held in solitary confinement, fed only one slice of bread and cabbage per day, and tortured ruthlessly for the past few years. Pray for God's perfect peace and restoration. His family is in the US while he is under surveillance at his wife's sister's home in China, so please pray that he will be able to move to the US to reunite with them soon. Pray that he may be the last to experience such torture in China, that his guards and persecutors would fully repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness for their wickedness, and that the Chinese government would no longer sanction such unbelievably cruel and inhumane treatment. (*Source: BBC*)

Thailand—Slave labor in Thailand is producing much of the world's supply of shrimp, including those sold by Walmart, Costco, and Aldi. Migrant workers are trafficked and sold to work on Thai shipping boats, where they are starved, beaten, and even killed. Please pray that these men would be set free from slavery and draw near to Christ to be healed. Pray also that the perpetrators of these crimes would see the wickedness of their sin, repent, and seek Christ's forgiveness and salvation. Pray that the International community would not tolerate this barbaric treatment. (*Source: The Guardian*)

Algeria—Pray for our brothers and sisters in Algeria as they encounter opposition when seeking apartments or church buildings to rent. It has become increasingly difficult and frustrating as landlords refuse to rent to them because they are Christians. Pray that God would provide shelter for these Christian families and safe places for them to gather for worship, and that their presence in the community would be a light to draw others to Christ. Pray also that Algeria would uphold basic human rights toward all its citizens, regardless of their religious background. (*Source: Open Doors*)

Pakistan—Pray for those that are suffering unjustly because of Pakistan's blasphemy laws. More than any other country, Pakistan uses and abuses this law that enables Christians to be punished with life imprisonment or death because of an often fabricated charge of blasphemy against Mohammed or the Koran. Those accused are rarely offered a fair trial, and they are often convicted with no evidence to support their accusations. Pray that Pakistan's justice system would be amended in such a way that its citizens would be offered fair and just trials, and that innocent victims like Asia Bibi would be spared the unjust suffering of religious persecution. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Afghanistan—Two Finnish women were killed recently in the city of Herat on their way home from morning shopping. The two friends had been Christian aid workers in Afghanistan for sixteen years, serving the women there in the field of mental health. Please pray for comfort as the families and friends of these two women mourn. Pray for peace for the country of Afghanistan, as civilian casualties

increase as the unrest continues in this troubled nation. Pray that the light of the Gospel would shine into the darkness and bring salvation and healing to this country. (*Source: World Watch Monitor*)

Thailand—British investigator Andy Hall working on behalf of a Finnish civic organization, Finnwatch, recently uncovered gross exploitation and modern slavery practices within the company Natural Fruit, part of NatGroup in Thailand. Because of the published report, Andy Hall is being prosecuted by NatGroup, and faces up to seven years in prison and \$10 million in legal damages. Not only is this a grave injustice against Andy Hall, and free speech in general, but it leaves the many workers who face confiscation of passports and work permits, debt bondage, arbitrary deduction of wages, forced and excessive overtime, and even violence from supervisors and guards without recourse. If successful, this travesty of a suit will serve a big blow to the movement to expose and reform abusive labor practices around the world and will set a dangerous precedent. Pray that truth and justice will prevail in Andy Hall's case. Pray that those around the globe who source fruit from NatGroup will take action and pressure them to reform their practices, and pray that those in power at NatGroup will have a change of heart and treat their workers with basic humanity and equity. Pray for those who labor under these harsh conditions, that they might soon see a day when they can provide for themselves and their families with dignity and in safety. (*Source: Walk Free*)

India—Despite great religious diversity, India has been host to ongoing and systematic communal violence against religious minorities for years, with widescale incidents in Muzaffarnagar (2013), Kandhamal (2008), Gujarat (2002), Southern Rajasthan (1998); and ongoing attacks in Karnataka State. While international attention has brought positive developments, such as the drafting of the Prevention of Communal and Targeted Violence Bill, the violence and its aftermath are far from resolved. The election of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister, representing the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a more troubling development. According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, “Mr Modi is stoutly unapologetic for the communal violence which engulfed Gujarat during the early months of his tenure as chief minister in 2002, in which 2,000 people died, mostly Muslims.” We join them in praying for an end to division and violence between various communities within India. We pray for the leadership of India, both local and national, to recognize the moral gravity of these atrocities, especially when perpetrators go unpunished and victims have no recourse for justice. Pray for victims, their families, and whole communities who live in fear and repression, that they might be comforted and find peace. Pray that the light, peace, and truth of Christ might pervade this nation. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Iran— Please pray for Pastor Matthias Haghnejad and his two friends, Mohammad Roghangir and Suroush Saraie, who were arrested at Pastor Matthias' house in July. The security forces took Bibles and Christian literature from his home and took the men to an unknown location. Pray for patient endurance and freedom for these men who have all endured prison sentences for their faith in the past. Please pray that they may be witnesses for Christ in the dreary prison and that others would come to faith through their testimony and suffering. (Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

Sri Lanka— Please pray for an unnamed pastor and his family who were attacked recently for holding prayer meetings. They live in a small village that is generally intolerant of Christians, and they knocked the pastor unconscious by hitting him with a pole. Pray for healing for this Christian family, and safety and boldness as they continue to meet together in fellowship with other believers. Pray that the members of the attacking mob would see their need for Jesus and turn to Him for salvation. (Voice of the Martyrs)

Pakistan— Praise God for the work of a Christian man named Edward, who taught sewing classes for Christians and Muslims. Before each class he prayed and read the Bible, and his faithful evangelism led a Muslim woman named Abia to accept Christ. As a result, her family members have twice attacked Edward and he and his family have had to flee the town they were in. Praise God for their faithfulness in sharing the gospel and please pray for their protection in their new town. Praise God for Abia's salvation and pray that she would lead others to Him. (Voice of the Martyrs)