

## Prayer Items February 2016

*When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place. The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Psalm 118: 4-5*

*The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love. Psalm 33:18*

**Turkey**—In 2007, we prayed for the families of three Christian staff of Zirve Christian Publishing House in Malatya in eastern Turkey, who were brutally murdered at their work. Five men were arrested for the horrific killings of Necati Aydin, Ugur Yuksel, and Tilmann Geske, however, the trials have been ongoing, in part due to an effort to identify others who may have been involved in and possibly directing these crimes. Some of those arrested in connection to the Malatya murders include a colonel in the gendarmerie, as well as three army officers. Not only has the long court process been an additional burden on the families of the three martyred men, in 2014 the five accused of actually committing the crimes were released with electronic monitoring that allows them to move freely in public, despite verbal threats they have leveled at surviving family members. Lawyers for these men have even requested that the electronic monitoring tags be removed completely. In January 2015, family members were given an opportunity to speak and expressed their frustration at the inefficient and lengthy process, and also urged the court that it was time for the truth to come out. In 2008 the families began a court case at the Malatya Administrative Court which found the Interior Ministry and the Malatya Governor's Office negligent in their duty to the victims' families, and awarded the families damages for their pain and suffering. The next trial is set for March 2016. We give thanks for at least the justice of the monetary damages awarded to the families, and we join with Middle East Concern in the following prayers that:

- a. Susanne Geske and her children, Ugur's mother and Necati's wife Semsu and others close to the victims will continue to know the peace and protection of Jesus as the trial process continues.*
- b. the trial will be brought to a conclusion and just sentences will be handed out to those responsible for the crime.*
- c. all those who aided or perpetrated the murders would have a deep conviction about what they have done, and understand the depths of Jesus' forgiveness.*
- d. all Christians involved will know the Spirit's enabling, equipping and assisting as they persevere in their efforts to promote justice.*
- e. all judges, other officials, lawyers and journalists involved will hear the gospel of Jesus, and be drawn to the Father's love, forgiveness and acceptance. (Source: Middle East Concern)*

**Cuba**—Violations of religious freedom in Cuba increased dramatically in 2015, reaching 2,300 as opposed 240 in 2014. Some of these violations include the designation for demolition of 100 churches, declaring 2,000 Assemblies of God churches as illegal, and 15 Methodist churches being converted to “permanent renters” of the state. While the government has targeted churches in an effort to bring even whole denominations under control, there has also been in an increase in churches being more assertive in standing up for their rights, including many peaceful demonstrations including a sleep-in to prevent the demolition of a church in Santiago de Cuba. Pray that the government would reverse their trend of persecution and respect the property rights of congregations. Please pray for safety for those who speak up for religious freedom in Cuba, for example Reverend Mario Felix Leonart Barroso and his wife Yoaxis Marcheco. (Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

**Uzbekistan**—This central Asian nation is the largest state-run forced labor system in the world, so deeply dependent on its cotton revenue that it even forces teachers and doctors to abandon their

posts two months a year to work in the fields. Pensioners are also forced into the fields or they must give up 50 percent of their income. The whole country suffers due to this system of slave labor, and when activist Elena Urlaeva attempted to document these violations, she was arrested by the Uzbek police, drugged and brutalized while in custody, and photographed nude. What makes all this worse is that the World Bank, and thereby the international community, funds at least \$500 million worth of projects in Uzbekistan that have been verified as using forced labor. Pray for a whole country at the mercy of the brutal labor practices of their government; pray that this same government will be convicted of the injustice of their systems and embark on wide-sweeping reforms. Pray for the healing and peace for Elena Urlaeva, for her ongoing safety, and for an investigation into the crimes perpetrated against her. Pray for a country that needs very much the light, life, and freedom of Christ. (*Sources: Walk Free; Cotton Campaign*)

**Colombia**—Throughout the ongoing conflict between the Colombia government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels, Christians have suffered at the hands of both sides. Pray for “Milena,” a Christian woman whose husband and three of her four sons were murdered by FARC guerrillas. Their family was targeted for their involvement with an evangelical church. Pray for the safety of Milena and her youngest son, “Luis,” who are both being relocated. Pray also for the sustenance of their faith, for the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and for the peace of Christ. Give thanks for the efforts of local Voice of the Martyrs workers who are helping them and setting up a small business for them to support themselves now after the deaths in their family. Pray for peace in Colombia, a country plagued with corruption, war, and drug cartels. (*Source: The Voice of the Martyrs*)

**Burundi**—Facing its worst turmoil since the end in 2005 of its 12-year civil war, new evidence has surfaced of the government covering up deadly retaliation against its opposition with mass killings. Last April when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he would seek a third term, tensions began to rise, and protests broke out when a court upheld his right to run amid rumors of intimidation of judges. Tens of thousands had to flee as protests turned violent and an attempted coup by army officers failed. Recently satellite images revealed what appear to be mass graves, and two foreign reporters were arrested along with 15 Burundians. While the reporters have since been released, stability in this African nation is fragile to say the least. In fact, it appears to be teetering on an ethnic conflict between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority, even as the UN has indicated it is less prepared to deal with this kind of a crisis than it was with Rwanda. Pray that all involved would take a step away from violence and retaliation and that another genocide would be avoided. Pray that the truth would be revealed where atrocities were committed and those responsible would be brought to justice. Pray that President Pierre Nkurunziza would act in the best interests of his country and countrymen, as well as others vying for power, and that all might be convicted in their hearts of the gross immorality of actions and attitudes that lead to hatred of and violence toward any other group. Pray that the love and light of Christ might make its way into this nation, the second poorest in the world, and bring real change to the lives of all. (*Source: BBC*)

**International**—Pray for the 59.5 million people currently forcibly displaced around the globe, of them approximately 19.5 are refugee who have had to flee the home countries entirely—and more than half of these people are under the age of 18. Syria has been the largest source of refugees, overtaking Afghanistan, which had held this position for the previous three decades. Yet, violence and conflict have driven innocent people from their homes in many regions, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan, Mali, and other countries. In the past year or so, Turkey has hosted the most refugees—approximately 1.59 million. Pray for the safety and provision for these very vulnerable groups of people, most of whom are children. Pray for peace in their home regions so that they may return to rebuild their lives and their countries, and that others will not need to flee. Pray for the many who will never be able to return because there is no safety or stability in

their country or they are seeking asylum for political or religious reasons. Pray for the compassion and wisdom for the international community as we react to these crises and interact with individuals arriving to our own communities from around the world. Pray that host nations will be diligent and careful without sacrificing our ability to be generous, gracious, and hospitable. Pray that Christians around the globe will lead the way in caring for the widow, the orphan, and the alien. *(Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)*

**Indonesia**— Three bombers recently attacked a shopping area in the capital of Jakarta and killed seven people and injured 19. Other terrorists attacked a police station and killed two people. Indonesia has the largest Muslim-majority population in the world, but it also has many Christians. These recent attacks that were instigated by Muslim extremists have been particularly trying for believers who have experienced increased persecution in recent months. During just two weeks in October, ten Indonesian churches were destroyed. Pray for our Indonesian brothers and sisters to have courage and hope in the face of persecution. Pray also that they would be salt and light in Jakarta where many unbelievers are traumatized and fearful. Pray that many unbelievers would turn to the Lord for salvation. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

**Pakistan**— A small congregation received permission to have a prayer meeting in a private courtyard, when a man named Rashid Jutt disrupted the meeting. Police arranged a meeting between Jutt and seven church members the next day to resolve the conflict but Jutt did not arrive. When the seven men returned to their homes they found Jutt along with 30 men with guns, machetes and batons in their houses and attacking their sons. Police arrived to rescue the boys, but none of the attackers were arrested. Praise God that the Christians were not seriously injured. Please pray that the shocked and scared families will be comforted and strengthened. Pray for Rashid Jutt to be convicted of his sins and for his heart to change. Pray that he would turn to Christ instead of fighting against Him and antagonizing His people. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

**Mali**— A Swiss missionary named Beatrice Stockly was abducted from her home in Timbuktu on January 8th. Armed men in four pick-up trucks took her from her home, but it is still unclear what group is responsible. This is her second time being kidnapped in the past three years. Beatrice sells flowers and shares Gospel literature in Timbuktu, where she has been a missionary since 2000. Conditions for Christians in the northern part of the country are becoming increasingly more dangerous. A month before her abduction, three men were shot at a Christian radio station. Pray for God's protection over Timbuktu, and for His comfort and peace for those that have lost loved ones. Please pray for Beatrice's safety and that she would be returned to her home in Timbuktu soon. Pray that she would experience the Lord's peace, love, and presence while in such a frightful situation. *(Source: World Watch Monitor)*

**China**— At least fifteen human rights lawyers and activists have been arrested in the past six months and accused of "subversion of state power". Among them are well-known Wang Yu, Li Heping, Liu Yongping, and Gou Hongguo. Some, if not all, have been unable to speak with their lawyers since being detained. Please pray for these activists and lawyers to be given a fair trial and to be released so that they can continue the fight against human rights abuses and defend the protection of religion in China. Please pray for their safety in prison while they await trials, and pray that they might be a source of encouragement and succor to fellow inmates. Give thanks that God has raised up people like these who are willing to fight for justice and risk their lives for others. Pray that their sacrifice and service is not in vain, but that it brings about positive change in China. *(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*