

## February 2018 Prayer Items

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.*

—*Psalm 34:17*

**Honduras**—In November 2017, President Juan Orlando Hernandez was “re-elected,” despite strong allegations of irregularities and fraud. In response, protesters took to the streets, and the government retaliated by suspending constitutional rights and imposing a curfew. There have been many reports of security forces having used lethal force to suppress dissent, as well as unlawful detention, kidnappings, and torture. So far 30 protesters have been killed by Honduran security forces just for peacefully protesting against fraud and corruption. US security aid props up these actions. Pray that peace and integrity would be established in the near-neighbor to the US. Pray for the protection and sustenance of those who are peacefully speaking for truth and basic justice. Pray that the US would use its influence to promote the freedom and democracy we enjoy within our borders. Pray for Juan Orlando Hernandez and all those in power around him, that they might recognize the wrong they are committing, understand there is no honor in ruling by force, and that most of all, they might find Christ. Pray for those who are suffering amid this crisis and for those who have lost loved ones. Pray that the Church in Honduras might be a source of truth, comfort, and integrity during these dark times. (*Sources: International Labor Rights Forum; CNN; The New York Times; The Guardian*)

**Afghanistan**-- According to Open Doors, Afghanistan is the second most dangerous country in the world to be a Christian (North Korea is the first). Christians there have no church buildings and often have no access to underground groups of believers, so they are very isolated. Pray for their secret, underground fellowship to grow. Most of the population is Muslim, and when people convert to Christianity, family and community members often physically harm or even kill them for their apostasy. On average, eight Christians are martyred each day in Afghanistan. Pray for God's protection over the believers there. Women have no rights in Afghanistan and are often abused. Pray that they would find Jesus who cherishes them and turn to Him for salvation. Terrorism and drugs are rampant and powerful in Afghanistan. Pray for them to lose their foothold and for the Gospel to be the driving force in the Afghan culture. (*Source: Open Doors*)

**Eritrea**—The plight of Christians in Eritrea and the horrific conditions they face are well documented and persistent in this repressive nation. Similarly draconian conditions of forced labor, abduction, imprisonment, solitary confinement, and torture are now being reported for mine workers in this country. One such mine is majority-owned by Nevsun Resources Ltd—a Canadian Mining company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. We in the west must understand our own complicity in the plight of those who suffer, especially under forced labor, for our enrichment, comfort, or pleasure. We give thanks that the efforts to highlight these abuses, including a lawsuit against Nevsun (which they both fought and attempted to repeal) have resulted in greater awareness in the west about these abuses, led to the divestment from Nevsun of one major investor, Blackrock Investments, and to a potential Canadian governmental watchdog scheduled to be established early this year. Pray for the Eritrean government, which has continually displayed a total disregard for the well-being, even humanity, of their citizens and a total disregard for basic human rights. Pray that international corporations will be motivated to use their influence to further freedom and worker protections in the countries where they operate, rather than profit from the gross exploitation of others. Pray for the physical, emotional, and spiritual healing of all the mine workers who have been abused, tortured, and used as forced labor. Pray that an amazing revival and widespread knowledge of Christ might come to Eritrea. (*Sources: The Guardian; Freedom United*)

**Bolivia**-- In December, the Bolivian government passed a law that would sentence anyone participating in evangelism to a 5- to 12- year prison sentence. Christians in Bolivia responded to this by crying out to God in prayer and communicating their opinion to the government with petitions. Praise God that in January President Evo Morales

reversed the decision and abolished the anti-evangelism law. Pray that the government would continue to protect the rights of all its citizens, and that this freedom would spur many Christians to freely share their faith. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

**Israel**—Eitan, a native-born Jewish Israeli, has come under fierce harassment from ultra-orthodox Jews after his becoming a Messianic Jew and follower of Christ. In retaliation for evangelistic posts he made to a YouTube channel, he, his wife, and children have all faced threats, and they have had feces thrown in their garden and their car engine sabotaged. They have recently been forced to move for their safety, only to have their new address discovered and leaflets with the address on it distributed. Pray for peace and protection for this family. Pray that they will not lose courage, and that many will find the love and salvation of Christ through their witness. (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

**Iran**-- Two Christian men, Suroush Saraie and Eskandar Rezaie, were arrested during a raid on a prayer meeting. They were sentenced to eight years in prison essentially for their involvement in church work, although they were accused of "creating a group that works against national security". Please pray for these believers as they appeal their sentences. Pray that if it is the Lord's will they will be released and their religious rights will be protected. In the meantime, pray for their encouragement, hope, and strength and that they would be a witness to Christ during their suffering. Pray that they would even have many opportunities to lead many to Christ. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**Russia**—Another black mark on Russia's human rights record: Oyub Titiev, the leader of the Chechen offices of Memorial, Russia's oldest human rights organization, was recently arrested on trumped up drug charges and the next day their offices were torched. Titiev took over this position after the 2009 murder of his predecessor, Natalia Estemirova. An article in *The Guardian* states: "[Titiev's] arrest came shortly after Magomed Daudov, the speaker of the Chechen parliament, described human rights activists as 'enemies of the people' and suggested they should be executed." The US state department and the Council of Europe have both called for Titiev's release. This all comes on the heels of the UN formally accusing Russia of "grave human rights abuses" in Crimea. They have documented arbitrary arrests, torture, and at least one extra-judicial execution. They replaced Ukrainian laws with Russian ones, and forced civil servants to denounce their Ukrainian citizenship or lose their jobs. Pray for the safety and freedom Oyub Titiev. Pray for this country plagued by corruption, violence, and oppression as much now as it ever did during the Soviet regime. Pray for the growth of the Church in this oppressive environment, and pray for leaders who rule through oppression to find freedom in Christ and restore integrity to their land. Pray for the protection of those who speak out for the truth in this country, such as journalists, lawyers, and activists—many of whom have already lost their lives as a result of their work on behalf of human rights. (Sources: *The Guardian; BBC; The New York Times*)

**Syria**-- Fifteen Syrian refugees were tragically found frozen to death in the mountains while trying to reach Lebanon. The men, women, and children were caught in a snowstorm along the mountainous border while trying to escape the conflict of their country. Please pray for comfort for mourning families. Pray for safety and protection for fleeing refugees, that they would know the comfort and hope that is found in Jesus Christ. Pray that God would miraculously provide such stability and safety in Syria that no one would need to escape. (Source: *BBC*)

**China**—February witnessed the rolling out of new government regulations in China of religious affairs, stoking concerns that this will mean tightened control of all churches and more repressive actions against unregistered churches. In the lead up to the instituting of these regulations, there have been additional instances of the demolition of churches by government forces, most recently The Golden Lampstand Church. This mega-church in Shanxi Province was demolished by military forces on January 9. After years of its leaders and members being threatened and harassed, the building of this 50,000-member church was literally blown up with dynamite, leaving nothing to be salvaged. Pray that despite these new regulations, the Church in China will continue to grow in numbers and in spiritual depth and maturity. Pray that Christ will always remain the head of the Church in China, even as the government attempts to exert total control over all religious activity within its borders. (Sources: *Mission Network News; Open Doors; China Aid*)

**Somalia--** Ayan is a young woman who became a believer three years ago. Her family tried to force her back to Islam by keeping her in solitary confinement for a year. They recently performed an Islamic blood ceremony over her where Sheiks sacrificed a goat, surrounded her, and recited verses from the Quran. Now her family has arranged a forced marriage for her to an elderly Muslim sheik. Please pray that she would be delivered from this forced marriage, where she would surely experience isolation from Christians, persecution and possibly abuse. Statistics show that vast numbers of Somali women are forced into marriage, abused, and raped each day. Please pray for protection over the women of Somalia. Pray that Christian women, and Ayan in particular, would be delivered from forced marriages to Muslim men. One Christian there said, "In Somalia, there is no safe place to practice the Christian faith openly." Pray that the Lord would be their safe tower of refuge. *(Source: Open Doors)*