

June 2018 Prayer Items

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

—Revelation 21:2-4

Sudan—Recently, a 16 year-old Sudanese girl, Noura Hussein, was forced by her family to marry a man of their choosing, against her will. After fleeing her family to live with relatives, Noura's family lured her back home, promising she would not be forced to marry the man, who was also a cousin of hers. Upon her return, she quickly realized her family's deception and was forcibly married to the man. On the wedding night, Noura refused to have relations with her new husband, who in turn called his brother to hold her down while he raped her. The next day, he attempted to rape her again, but this time Noura acquired a knife and killed him. In Sudan, it is legal for men to rape their wives, and girls as young as 10 can be married with the consent of a parent or guardian. Last month she was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by hanging. While there has been significant international outcry following the ruling, Noura remains in prison in Omdurman. While her circumstances are sadly common in Sudan, Noura's resistance is quite uncommon as most girls remain silent for fear of retaliation and social stigmatization. Pray for the women and girls who are coerced into marriage or are socially stigmatized and threatened for their refusal to comply with these demands placed on them, often by their own families. (*Source: Freedom United*)

India—Pastor Abraham Topno was abducted and beheaded on May 2nd by Maoist rebels in India. Friends say that Pastor Topno specifically sought to minister to tribal minorities, despite being fully aware of the risks involved to his personal safety. His church had recently grown to approximately 60 members and had been subject to threats of persecution. Please pray for this church body and Pastor Topno's family, for their continued commitment to Christ and their physical and emotional protection. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Nicaragua—Recent protests have turned deadly in Nicaragua leaving at least 60 people dead and over 400 wounded. The protests were in response to the Sandinista government's decision, led by Manuel Ortega, to increase payroll and income tax while reducing pension payments by 5 percent. Catholic priests in the country have been supportive of the protests. While the Catholic church in the 1980s had a difficult relationship with the Sandinistas, they had been supportive of Ortega in his overthrow of the previous Somoza regime. Yet once in power, Ortega declared his regime a Marxist government and took a much more adversarial stance against the church. The latest pension legislation appears to have been the tipping point for many Nicaraguans after decades of rule under the Sandinistas. With the decision to back the protests, the Catholic church has once again found itself in direct conflict with the Ortega regime. As events continue to develop, pray that they will take a decidedly peaceful course and that crackdowns against clergy will not reappear. Pray also for the families and friends of those who were killed in the protests that they might be comforted by the Holy Spirit. Pray for Nicaraguan government that their rule might be equitable and marked by integrity. (*Source: BuzzFeed News*)

China—Conditions for Chinese Christians in China continue to deteriorate as new legislation regulating churches and church activity have swept across the country this past February. The communist Chinese government has historically limited church attendance to state-run churches. Yet, many Chinese Christians have sought out underground house churches in an effort to avoid the corruption and propaganda of state-run ones. The new regulations have given authorities an even freer hand to raid churches, force Christians to register their beliefs with the state, submit to “ideological reorientation,” and prohibit minors under the age of 18 from attending church services. Some are forced to sign a statement denying any religious belief, and those who refuse can be fined \$5,000. Despite this redoubling of restrictions, many Chinese Christians continue to boldly attend underground churches and the body of Christ continues to grow there. Please pray for the continued resiliency of Chinese Christians in the face of increasing pressure on their faith. (*Source: China Aid*)

Syria—As the war in Syria rolls on, the toll it has taken on Christian and Yazidi communities has been especially acute as groups such as ISIS, Al Nusra and Al Qaeda have sought their complete annihilation. However, there may be a cause for some cautious optimism as Kurdish and Christian leader came together last January of 2014 in Geneva to form a new coalition capable of resisting against Islamist attacks. The coalition first halted the onslaught by ISIS by preventing them from taking the city of Kobani. Since then, the coalition has been able to consolidate its position in northern Syria. This new coalition however was met with resistance from Turkey, who launched its own offensive from the north into Kurdish controlled areas in Syria, leading to renewed humanitarian crisis. The Turkish assault and butchery on the city of Afrin in particular has been compared to the worst savagery carried out by ISIS. Additionally, Turkey has worked to keep several Kurdish parties on the list of terrorist groups in order to justify their actions. Please pray for the members of this coalition who are battling for their very survival in the face multiple adversaries and that Christians in Syria will have their faith continually renewed in the face of constant challenge, threat, and uncertainty. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

Zanzibar—Christians in Zanzibar, which is 99 percent Muslim, have undergone increased persecution in recent years. One such example of this is Pastor David whose house was burned down 18 months ago by a group of local Muslims. Pastor David was not home when the attack occurred during the middle of the day, but his wife and children were. While the family fortunately escaped, all of their possessions were destroyed in the fire along with their home. Officials in Zanzibar have been apathetic in their response and have not pursued criminal charges against those involved. This seems consistent with a broader effort on the part of the government of Zanzibar to remove all Christians from the island. Please pray for Pastor David and his family as well as the other Christians in Zanzibar for their continued protection and boldness of faith in the face of increased persecution. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Egypt—As the month of Ramadan begins, many Christians in Egypt who are already facing unprecedented persecution, face a time of year when their identity in Christ is especially pronounced. This has both recently and historically led to threats, intimidation, and outright violence against the religious minority. Despite this, many Christians in Egypt, including children, have chosen to publicly and boldly carry on a tradition dating back centuries of getting the symbol of the cross tattooed on their wrist. The tradition dates back to the period of the Muslim conquest of Egypt where Christians were forcibly tattooed with the symbol in order to identify them as those being required to pay the jizya (the tax paid by non-Muslims required under Sharia law). Today, it is a symbol of faithfulness to Christ and

a way to honor past martyrs. Pray for protection of Christians in Egypt and that through their bold example, many others will come to saving faith in Christ. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

Chechnya—On May 19th, four attackers struck at the Orthodox Archangel Michael Church in Grozny while services were being held. Witnesses stated that they heard the attackers shout “Allahu Akbar” before opening fire. Two parishioners managed to close the front door as the attackers began shooting. A Molotov cocktail was also thrown through one of the church windows but fortunately failed to explode. Police promptly arrived on the scene, engaged the attackers, and a brief fire fight ensued. All four attackers were killed in the assault, as well as two parishioners and one police officer. One other parishioner was injured and taken to the local hospital. The attack was claimed by ISIS and has renewed security concerns in Chechnya as scores of Chechen fighters who fought for ISIS in Iraq and Syria have now returned home. Please pray for Chechen security forces as they combat this revived threat and for the Christian minority there who will likely bear the brunt of any renewed Islamist violence in that country. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

Indonesia—Indonesia has long stood as an example of a religiously tolerant, Muslim-majority country. Yet recent events there have drawn concern from both observers and Christians in the country. Forgotten Missionaries International (FMI), an organization that works with indigenous missionaries throughout the world, reports increased pockets of Islamic radicalization throughout the country leading to an increase in vigilante attacks against Christians who express their faith publicly. Additionally, Indonesia’s hate speech laws have been used to squelch those professing faith in Christ. A recent example of this occurred in April when Anoldy Bahari was imprisoned for five years and fined 100 million rupiah (\$7,200 USD) for a Facebook post which questioned Islam. Yet those close to events in Indonesia remain optimistic. FMI has reported working alongside 20 new churches within the past three years alone, composed mostly of Muslim converts to Christianity. FMI also reports a renewed thirst among Muslims for the Gospel of Christ. Please pray for the continued work of both organizations like FMI as well as the indigenous pastors and churches they partner with. *(Source: Mission Network News)*

Myanmar—A new offensive is underway by the Burmese military against the mostly Christian Kachin people in the north of the country. These attacks, which employ the indiscriminate use of air and artillery strikes, are sadly reminiscent of previous attacks against the predominantly Muslim Rohingya people. These attacks saw the use of mass rape, the burning of entire villages, left thousands dead and drove 680,000 Rohingya into neighboring Bangladesh. The attacks against another non-Buddhist religious minority has been seen as being inspired by the lack of consequences from the international community against the military regime in Myanmar. However, legislation has recently passed in the United States House of Representatives calling for the administration of President Trump to compile a list of Burmese officials involved in the ethnic cleansing and to impose sanctions against them. A Senate floor vote is also expected to pass. Pray for the protection of the all religious minorities in Myanmar and that justice will be enacted against those who have perpetrated these atrocities. Pray that true freedom and a civil society will be established for all in Myanmar. *(Source: The Washington Post)*