

July 2018 Prayer Items

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

—Isaiah 58:6

*Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.*

—Psalm 37:1

Chicago, Illinois—Recently, a human trafficking and prostitution ring in Chicago’s Belmont Cragin neighborhood was uncovered, headed by a local couple. Kishan Modugumudi, a prominent Indian businessman organized the ring and lured young women to the US on temporary visas with the promise of furthering their movie careers. Once in the United States, the women were forced to go on “dates” with numerous, mostly Indian businessmen where they were forced to perform sexual acts. For each “date” the women were paid as much as \$3,000 though it is unlikely the women themselves saw any of the money themselves. Modugumudi reportedly threatened the life of one woman and her family if she went to the police, and his wife Chandra, kept a detailed log of each girl, their “dates” and the sexual acts involved. The couple remain in police custody and are awaiting trial. While their arrest is a positive development, they represent only a small portion of the overall problem of sex trafficking in both Chicago and the US. Please pray for the deliverance of those held in bondage and that their traffickers and captors would face justice. Also pray for those who profit in the sale of human beings that God would turn their hearts away from this horrific trade. (*Source: Chicago Tribune*)

Syria—Four years after Christians and Yazidis were initially forced to flee the onslaught of ISIS, finding relative safety in Kurdish-controlled territory, they once again find themselves on the run again after Turkish forces launched an offensive into northern Syria. The Turkish forces, who appear to be working in tandem with various Islamist groups including the Free Syrian Army (FSA), seized the previously peaceful town of Afrin, forcing its 200,000 Kurdish residents to flee. Amongst the Kurds were about 3,000 Christians and 35,000 Yazidis. This Turkish incursion into an already multifaceted war has served to bring carnage to one of the few relatively tranquil parts of Syria. It has been met with little public outcry from the United States and other Western governments, largely due to wider strategic considerations. Please continue to pray for the seemingly overwhelming situation in Syria and for those afflicted by its rampant violence. Also, please pray for remaining Christians there, that they will remain resolute in their faith in Christ and that God’s hand of protection will be over them. (*Source: World Magazine*)

United States/International—The US Department of Justice announced in June the arrest of more than 2,300 suspected online child sex offenders in a sweeping, nationwide effort code named “Operation Broken Heart.” The three-month operation involved law enforcement from across the country and targeted those involved with the production, distribution, and consumption of child pornography. To date, this is one of the largest and most successful operations in the fight against child pornography. However, those victimized by these sick acts will likely be traumatized for years to come. Please pray for healing of the victims of these crimes, that justice will be brought to those who prey on

the most innocent and vulnerable in our society, and for the hearts of those who perpetrate them these acts that they will turn away from these practices. *(Source: United States Department of Justice)*

Africa/Yemen—As war, drought, and poverty continue to ravage large areas of the continent of Africa and Yemen, millions face the difficult choice of facing famine or perilous migration. Somalia in particular is facing its fifth season of poor rain leading to increased migration to even war torn Yemen as Somalis desperately try to escape drought and famine. Please pray for both physical & spiritual food for those afflicted. May they be comforted as they bury their children & loved ones lost to hunger and disease. May they be able to return to their homes & land and support themselves again rather than depending on refugee camps for survival. May supplies not be intercepted by corrupt parties and may those with means not grow weary of caring for those without. *(Source: Mercy Corps)*

India—Several anti-trafficking activists were attacked in the Indian state of Jharkhand in June. The five women were gang raped by local men and the three activist men with them were also brutally beaten. This most recent attack follows an attack last month in the same region where two teens were raped and then set on fire. Approximately 100 sexual assaults are reported across India every day and 2016 saw a 12 percent increase over the previous year for a total of around 39,000 sexual attacks. The frequency and viciousness of these attacks are thought to stem from tribal communities' hostility toward outsiders and a tendency in India to blame the victims of such crimes while protecting offenders. Yet there is also reason to believe that both the number and heinousness of these attack may be pushing events to a tipping point as more Indians are voicing their outrage. Please pray that the victims of these attacks will be healed both physically and spiritually and that justice will be dealt swiftly and thoroughly. *(Source: CNN)*

Nigeria—Fulani tribes continue to wreak havoc across large areas of Nigeria this past week as tribesmen attacked numerous towns across Plateau State. The militants burned homes, churches, farms, stole cattle and killed innocent men, women and children. There have been a reported 200 deaths as a result of these most recent attacks though that number is expected to rise as those fleeing the violence continue to flood into adjacent communities seeking safety. Attacks by the Fulani have surpassed those of even Boko Haram and are at least equal in terms of their brutality. To date, the Nigerian government appears unable to bring the Fulani tribesmen to heel. Please pray for the largely Christian victims of these attacks, that they will gain the means to defend themselves against the multiple threats that keep arising in northern Nigeria. Continue in vigilant prayer for Nigeria, for all who face danger and violence there, and all who perpetrate it. Pray that the love of Christ might overwhelm this nation in turmoil, that many might come to know His salvation, and that peace and security might be restored to all regions. Pray that neighboring countries and the international community would do their parts in encouraging peace in Nigeria, rather than exacerbating it. Pray for those who mourn great losses in Nigeria, that they will be comforted. *(Source: CNN; Jubilee Campaign, Christianity Today)*

Pakistan—Students in Pakistan continue to be subject to both institutional and informal forms of persecution on the basis of their faith. School text books routinely refer to religious minorities as inferior and subject to disdain or outright hostility and teachers largely display preferential treatment toward Muslim students. Additionally, students are pressured to convert to Islam and that doing so will result in further academic success. Those who resist conversion are often driven from formal education or are greatly hindered in their academic pursuits. Please pray for Christian students in Pakistan as they face mounting pressure to stand for their faith, often at the expense of their worldly achievements.

Pray that they will be humble examples of Christ in a darkened country, overwhelmingly hostile to His message. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

China—We rejoice with the congregation and family of Pastor Yang Hua, who was recently released after serving a two-and-a-half-year sentence for his faith. Pastor Yang Hua was released on June 19th from prison after being wrongly convicted for “illegally possessing state secrets” and was fined \$1 million USD for collecting “illegal” donations from church members. Pastor Yang Hua and fellow Pastor Su Tianfu have filed several appeals against the fine on the basis that the donations were given voluntarily by church members and used exclusively for church activities, all of which have been rejected. While their release from prison is certainly a positive development, the future is still rather murky for both pastors and the church in China as a whole as crackdowns against “illegal” churches continues to intensify. Continue to hold Pastor Yang Hua up in prayer as he is in need of acute medical attention after his imprisonment, having developed numerous, serious medical conditions from the harsh conditions of prison. Also pray for the our brothers and sisters in Christ who are the congregation of Living Stone Church, where he is pastor. As you pray, please thank God for the release of these pastors and for their work for the cause of Christ. Also pray for their future well being and for the sustainment of the church in China. Finally, pray for the leaders in China, that their hearts will be turned from hostility toward their Christian countrymen and their eyes will be opened to the truth of Christ. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Tajikistan—In February 2017 Sonmin Sonbogym [Good News of Grace] Protestant Church was raided by KNB officers. Church members were beaten, Christian materials confiscated, and their pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov was arrested. He was then arrested again on April 10, and after being sentenced to three years in prison, he has now been held for over 400 days. Officials have called their church “illegal” and the materials confiscated, such as Josh McDowell’s *More than a Carpenter*, have been classified as “extremist.” In the wake of this ordeal, numerous church members have lost their jobs, and under pressure the church has since closed. Pastor Kholmatov’s wife, Gulnora, has struggled with health issues after his arrest. Along with the clear religious persecution, it is also clear the government was motivated to target this church, because they wanted their building. Pray for Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov, his wife, Gulnora, and their family as they weather this ordeal. Pray they have a strong sense of Christ’s presence and are sustained in their spirits and their faith as they trust God throughout this time. Pray for the church members who have endured years of harassment, the loss of jobs, and physical attacks for following Jesus. Pray that their perseverance would be a compelling witness to those around them, especially those who persecute them. Pray for provision of all their needs. Pray for the government of Tajikistan and all the officials involved in this and other cases, that they might become increasingly uncomfortable with these acts of oppression, and might come to know the light and love of Christ. (Source: *The Voice of the Martyrs*)

Eritrea—We give thanks for the recent release of Pastor Oqbamichel Haiminot, after ten years in the horrific conditions of prison in Eritrea. This last long sentence was not the first time Pastor Oqbamichel Haiminot faced persecution for his faith. Prior to this, he was harassed, abused, imprisoned, beaten and put into solitary confinement, and forced to carry large rocks up hills, all because he refused to recant his faith in Jesus. This pastor, husband, and father of three has been described as a “passionate preacher, caring pastor and an extremely hard-working church leader.” Sadly, it is understood that he also is in need of

serious medical attention, as his health has suffered significantly from these years of hardship and mistreatment. Pray for his full recovery, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Pray for peace and joy for his family as they reunite. Pray that God would bless them after so much sacrifice and suffering. Pray for believers who remain in prison in Eritrea for their faith, under the harshest of conditions, and pray for the Church in Eritrea that it would continue to grow in numbers and in depth of faith. (*Source: The Voice of the Martyrs*)