

September 2018 Prayer Items

When I said, “My foot is slipping,” your unfailing love, Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.

—Psalm 94:18-19

United States—Energy drink manufacturer Monster recently received a score of zero out of a possible 100 in a report by Know the Chain for addressing human trafficking and forced labor practices by its suppliers. Monster, which controls 43 percent of the US energy drink market, has historically relied only on suppliers’ self reporting of labor practices in the production of sugar cane. Within the sugar industry, slave labor continues to be a significant problem in source countries such as Brazil, Pakistan, India and others. On 7 June 2018, As You Sow attended Monster Beverage’s AGM in California with a petition signed by 21,857 concerned individuals calling on Monster to develop its own sourcing verification process and for greater transparency in the sourcing of the raw ingredients that go into its beverages. Shareholders overwhelmingly voted in support of the petition forcing Monster CEO Rodney Sacks to address the matter at the meeting. Please pray for continued pressure on corporations and their compliance with calls to ensure the ethical sourcing of raw materials. *(Source: Freedom Untied)*

Costa Rica/Nicaragua—An average of 200 Nicaraguan refugees a day have been pouring into neighboring Costa Rica since protests against the socialist Ortega regime began last April and 300 have been killed in clashes with government authorities. The protests arose in response to controversial changes to the Nicaraguan social security system and have been the largest since the end of Nicaragua’s long civil war which ended in 1990. President Daniel Ortega has described the protesters as terrorists and refused calls to step down. Please pray for a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Nicaragua and that those displaced will be able to quickly return to their homes safely. *(Source: CNN)*

China—US Pastor John Cao has been imprisoned in China for more than a year for crossing between China and Myanmar last year in order to establish schools for impoverished children. Cao and his colleague Jing Ruxia were charged by Chinese authorities with “organizing illegal border crossings.” While Jing was released, Cao was given a seven year prison sentence and fined \$3,000. It is believed that the heavy sentence due to Cao’s Christian beliefs. Please pray for the speedy release of Pastor Cao and his reunion with his wife and family. Also pray that the Chinese government would end its practice of imprisoning believers within its borders. *(Source: China Aid)*

Nigeria—Esther from the West African town of Gwoza in southern Borno State has lived a life marked by loss and suffering. First, she lost her mother at a young age. However, her life was irrecoverably changed one day in October 2015, when Boko Haram raided her village, attacked her father, and abducted her. During the more than year-long captivity, Esther was repeatedly raped and abused, eventually becoming pregnant, without any idea who the father was. Finally after the Nigerian government secured her release, Esther’s suffering took on a whole new dimension, when returning to her community to be shunned and ridiculed. She and

others, like Salamatu Umar, who relayed her own trauma and abduction to NPR, are not welcomed back into their communities, are treated with suspicion and stigmatized, and are called things like “Boko Haram wife” and their babies, “Boko” or “Boko baby.” Give thanks for the trauma care centers run by Open Doors that offer care and counseling to girls and women traumatized by these atrocities. Pray for the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing of these girls who have suffered so much. Pray for the communities who respond with cruelty and shaming, instead of warmth, welcome, and restoration. Pray they recognize their own contribution to the trauma of these girls, and repent and begin to act with compassion. Pray for Boko Haram members that they might understand that their actions are violent and evil, that they repent, and that they find grace and life in Christ. *(Source: Open Doors)*

International—In recent years, a growing trend of people looking for “vacations” which also serve humanitarian purposes has evolved into an industry dubbed “voluntourism.” Sadly, corrupt people have begun to exploit this altruistic industry for their own evil financial gain. Traffickers are tricking families who think their children will be doing reasonable honest work or even going to school, only to sell them to unscrupulous “orphanages,” who deceive tour operators and receive funding from the tours that bring in volunteers for service projects. Freedom United has reached out to numerous “voluntourism” operators to help ensure their operations are not aiding in any way unscrupulous “orphanages” that are exploiting poor families; beating, starving, and abusing children; and casting a shadow on the good work of reputable humanitarian endeavors. Pray that the awareness and outreach efforts of Freedom United will be effective and that proper vetting of orphanages and other service projects will occur before being used as sites for voluntourism—thereby curbing the trafficking of young children for these horrific purposes. Pray for the “estimated 8 million children living in orphanages around the world and 80% of these having at least one parent or family member that is able to look after them, with additional support where needed”—that families will not be deceived and that they might receive the support they need to keep their families intact. Pray for children around the globe who have been routinely exploited in this way, that somehow they might be delivered from these circumstances and find healing and new life in Jesus. *(Source: Freedom United)*

China—Gary McDougall, a member of the UN Committee on the elimination of Racial Discrimination estimates that approximately 2 million Uighurs and Muslims have been forced into political indoctrination camps in the western Xinjiang autonomous region. The region has been described as having been turned into a single, massive internment camp or “no rights zone” for the purpose combating religious extremism and political instability and is said to be shrouded in secrecy. Yet there are numerous indicators that those interred have been so on the basis of their ethno-religious affiliation. Similarly, Tibetans have faced persecution along the same lines for decades and renewed crackdowns against Christians have also made recent headlines. Please pray that the Chinese government will

abandon its practice of institutional religious persecution and come to respect the rights of individuals. (Source: Reuters/Washington Post)

Eritrea—As the potential for a new peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea rises, many are hopeful that this will see new freedoms in Eritrea. The first flight between the two countries in years was seen on 16 July 2018, and some religious and political prisoners have been released recently giving reason some reason for cautious optimism. However, the situation remains tenuous and many Christian leaders in Eritrea remain imprisoned. Additionally, the specter of false theology continues to threaten the church there. Please pray that the church in Eritrea will remain both discerning and committed to the Gospel message and that political leaders in Eritrea will relent in their efforts to suppress it. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

India—After four years of virtual silence in the face of mounting attacks and violence against religious minorities across India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has finally condemned some recent incidents. The persecution of Christians, Muslims, and Dalit people (who comprise the lowest caste) in India has increased under Modi's leadership. Brutal attacks against Christians take place in India and the government is choosing to ignore these cases while condoning the perpetrators. India has received a lot of criticism on behalf of the international community, especially the United States, and for the first time India's Prime Minister condemns these actions publicly. Give thanks for this very small, yet encouraging step toward addressing the problem of violence against Christians and other religious minorities in India. Pray for the members of a Pentecostal church in Depura that was attacked at the beginning of August and then threatened again with "dire consequences" by Bajrang Dal, the militant youth wing of Vishva Hindu Parishad. Pray for the pastor and his son who were hospitalized after being attacked in July by a mob of 30 radical Hindus in central Madhya Pradesh. Pray for the many Muslims and Dalit who were attacked "in broad daylight" with no recourse for years, often murdered in the street. Pray for all these and more who suffer daily in India for their faith and/or their social standing. Pray for the patience and strength to endure—and for Christians to respond in a way that demonstrates the grace of Jesus. Pray that the international community will not give up pressuring the Indian government until they adequately address these crimes and persecution, and pray that the Modi government will finally act with justice and equity for all its citizens. (Source: *World Watch Monitor*)

Syria—Prior to the civil war in Syria, approximately 10,000 Assyrian Christians, who could trace the roots back to the ancient Assyrian Empire, lived, farmed, and raised animals in 30 villages along the Khabur River in northeast Syria. Now barely 900 remain. For years, many were abducted by ISIS and ransoms extracted to fund their violence—or beheadings resulted. In light of these and other dangers, most As Syria's eight-year civil war begins to slow, the absence of the country's Christians is increasingly noticeable. In a residential area where ISIS kidnapped over 220 Christians, the village and its surrounding areas have become like a ghost town. Rubble and abandoned homes fill the streets, empty of the Christians who once

lived there. Sadly, many will never return even if the civil war fully resolves itself. Pray for the protection and sustenance of the few believers who remain. Pray that the light of the Church will not be entirely extinguished in this region. Pray that peace, justice, and civil society will be restored to Syria. (Source: *The New York Times*)

Thailand—On 30 August 2018, Thai police raided a largely Christian community outside of Bangkok, arresting over 180 people, 50 of them children. This community is comprised of Montagnard Christians, believers who have been fled Vietnam due to severe persecution—almost all of whom have established refugee status with the United Nations. Additionally, the Thai government was involved in negotiations with the international community to help process these refugees, who have a well-established history of persecution, which would include not arresting them. In clear violation of these international standards and agreements, the Thai government has detained this large group, keeping them—children included—in what The Jubilee Campaign has called “obscene” conditions. They are unsure if even the basic needs of food, shelter, or sanitation have been met. Some have been transferred to “migrant centers,” and the Thai government has indicated they are not funding these places and are looking to humanitarian organizations to provide for these detainees. The plight of the Montagnard Christians dates back to the “boat people” crises of the 1980s, and the Jubilee Campaign has been advocating on their behalf since then. For this faithful work, we give thanks to God, even as we pray for the provision for and protection of this new group of Christian refugees driven from their homes only to flee to lands nearly as hostile. Pray that the Thai government will pursue a course of dealing with these refugee populations with compassion, justice, integrity, and equity. (Source: *The Jubilee Campaign*)