

## August 2019 Prayer

*You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.*

—Psalm 119:114

*For the LORD is righteous,  
he loves justice;  
the upright will see his face.*

—Psalm 11:7

**China**—Uncomfortable with the rising number of Christians, Chinese officials aim to control Christianity in China, though at the time being have indicated that do not intend to completely destroy it. As a result of that goal, police have been weeding out underground churches, “house churches,” and other secret, unofficial congregations, shutting them down and arresting pastors and congregation members. Most recently, president Xi Jinping has added to the Regulations on Religious Affairs, which bans anyone under the age of 18 from entering a church. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is demanding that teachers feed strong anti-Christian messages and propaganda to school children. Praise God that the Chinese government felt threatened by the quickly growing number of Christians in their country because it shows the work God is doing in the hearts of citizens of China, and pray that His gospel will only be furthered in this country full of people who do not know Him, especially those who persecute believers. Pray that the strength, resilience, peace, and hope of Christ will fill the hearts of His followers throughout China in the struggles they face for their faith. Pray for president Xi Jinping, who is choosing to follow in the footsteps of his dictator predecessor Mao Tse-tung. Pray that he, his advisers, and even the arresting police officers will repent from their hateful actions toward their people, especially those who love Christ. (*Sources: The Guardian; National Review*)

**Sudan**—Since the fall of Sudanese strongman Omar al-Bashir, the government’s grip on affairs remains fragile. This, coupled with the discovery of gold in northern Darfur has given rise to a new power structure and new conflicts. The Rapid Support Forces appear to be the real power ruling Sudan. Previously known as the Janjaweed, they were formally established as the RSF by former President al-Bashir in 2013, and today, are led by General Mohamed Hamdan "Hemeti" Dagolo. Their rise to power, however, has not resulted in greater peace for Sudan. Hemeti has used this new revenue stream to consolidate his power in the new government and brutally suppress those viewed as a threat. Last month, the RSF was accused of massacring 120 people and dumping their bodies in the Nile River. The RSF has also profited by striking deals with Egypt and the UAE to send expeditionary forces to Yemen to battle the Houthi rebels and to Libya to support General Haftar and his Libyan National Army. Please pray for the people of Sudan who have known little peace in the past few decades, and pray for the arrival of good governance for this conflict-ridden land. (*Source: BBC*)

**Iraq**—Pope Francis last month announced his desire to visit Iraq sometime next year. During the same month, on a trip to London, Bashar Warda, the Chaldean Archbishop of Erbil announced that the Christian community in Iraq is “almost extinct,” having declined by 83 percent since 2003. Despite the defeat of ISIS, Christians continue to remain targets of lurking ISIS militants who have blended back in with the population. Additionally, attacks and threats by both Sunni and Iranian backed Shia groups continue to stunt efforts to rebuild the Christian community there. The government of Hungary, which is the only government in the world with a ministry dedicated to providing relief for persecuted Christians around the world, has been at the forefront of relief efforts there. Yet much of the rest of the West remains indifferent or unaware of the plight of Christians. Archbishop Warda also attributes Western apathy to political correctness and fear of being labeled “Islamophobic.” Warda then went on to ask, “for the sake of not wanting to speak the truth to the persecutors...will the world be complicit in our elimination?” Pray for the preservation and protection of the Christian community in Iraq. Give thanks for the efforts of Hungary and pray that other nations will follow their example. Pray for all civilians who have suffered during this long conflict. (*Source: Catholic Herald*)

**Bangladesh**—Trafficking in sex workers in Bangladesh has greatly increased in the recent decades. In the “Brothel Village” of Mymensingh, a young woman who goes by Labonni recently recalled how she came to be

forced into prostitution. Forced to marry an abusive man when she was only 12 years old, she later escaped her marriage only to find a new hell. Alone and crying at a train station, a woman came up to her offering her food and a place to stay. After leaving with the woman, she later was informed that she now had a “debt” she needed to pay off, and that because she had no money, she would have to work it off. She described living in a room with five other girls, some as young as 12, being given homemade liquor to numb the pain while men walked the hallways to pick out a girl, and of being raped several times a day. Ten minutes of sex would cost the men approximately \$7.00. Initially Labonni did not receive anything for her “work,” but after five years, she began receiving approximately \$70 a month for food, clothes, and toiletries. Labonni has now paid her “debt” back 50 times over. Yet though she could now leave, social stigma, and mental trauma have kept her in the brothel. It is estimated that 70 percent of sex trafficking victims are in Asian countries and that globally, sex trafficking is a \$150 billion industry. Please pray for the victims of this horrendous practice and that permissive governments will begin enforcing their own laws on human trafficking. Pray that many women and girls will be rescued from this horrific situations and that they might find emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing, and ultimately life and freedom in Christ. Pray for those who perpetrate these crimes, such as the woman who lured Labonni, that they would be convicted in their hearts of the gross wrongness of their actions and turn away from this way of life. (Source: *The Guardian*)

**Nigeria**—Last month a delegation of Nigerians traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with members of Congress and the White House to describe what is actually occurring in the north of Nigeria and the potential the situation to spill over into the rest of the country as a whole. Two young Christian women, Alheri Magaji and Mercy Maisamari, have been particularly vociferous in their accounts of the nature of the violence. Western media have been careful to frame the conflict in Nigeria in terms of “herders versus farmers” or as an ethnic issue. But both Magaji and Maisamari had been captured and held hostage by Fulani militants, and as Dede Laugesen, Director of Save the Persecuted Christians Coalition puts it, “this really is a jihad that is raging in Nigeria and we are ramping up to a genocide.” Reports out of Nigeria would tend to support this view as last month, the systematic killing of 2,000 Christians in northern Nigeria was reported. Please pray for Christians in Nigeria as they continue to suffer at the hands of their neighbors and that governments around the world would act to put an end to the violence, especially the Nigerian government, which should be most interested in the safety of its own citizens. (Source: *CBN*)

**Hong Kong**—Just days after the 30th anniversary of the Tienanmen Square protests, over 2 million (out of a population of 7 million) Hong Kong citizens took to the streets in protest of recent proposed legislation that would allow citizens extradition to the mainland. Since the British hand over of governance in 1997, Hong Kong has enjoyed semi-autonomous governance and expected to until 2047 when Beijing, according to the agreement would take over governing the city-state. Yet Beijing has been active in its attempts to erode Hong Kong’s independence, as evidenced by this most recent legislation. Hong Kong citizens are under no illusion as to the implications of this legislation as it represents a severe and premature curtailment of their rights. In the past year, a pro-independence party was banned and following the failed 2014 Umbrella Movement, several pro-democracy advocates were imprisoned. Please pray for Hong Kong and its continued semi-autonomous status. Pray that the Communist Party will relinquish one-party rule and its tyrannical hold over its people. (Source: *CNN*)

**Pakistan**—On July 23rd, a mob of Muslim men attacked a church during a prayer service in Bhiki village. According to local reports, “there were over a hundred of individuals praying in the church when Muhammad Azam, Muhammad Ijaz, Muhammad Amjad and Muhammad Zafar, along with other armed Muslim men, intruded into the church...they forcefully seized the prayer service and reportedly thrashed both men and women.” When Christians from the church reported the attack to police, it was rejected by them. This is one of an increasing number of organized mob attacks against Christians in Pakistan and is indicative of a growing trend across that country. Pray for Pakistani believers who live under constant threat and persecution that they might remain strong in their faith and forgiving of those who oppress them. Pray for those who persecute, that they might find the peace and grace of Jesus. (Source: *ICC*)

**India**—Attacks on Christian house churches continues to rise in India with both greater frequency and intensity. In a house church approximately 20 miles west of Hyderabad where 15 Christians were meeting, a group of Hindu radicals attacked. As Pastor Prasad notes, “this is not the first time I was attacked...I have been attacked five times in the last two years. However, the latest attack had more serious consequences.” Following the attack, Prasad’s landlord demanded he leave the property within two months. Police are generally ambivalent or supportive of radicals in these situations leaving Christians, without recourse even though Article 25 of the Indian constitution requires religious freedom be protected. Please pray for the protection of Christians in India, that they will remain steadfast in their faith, and exemplify Christ to those who persecute them. *(Source: ICC)*

**Vietnam**—At 5am on May 5th, activist Ha Van Nam was arrested by public security officials from Bac Ninh province for “disturbing public order” under article 318 of Viet Nam’s 2015 Penal Code. These charges were brought against Ha Van Nam because of his Facebook post outlining many injustices in Vietnam and calling on people to fight against past and recent human rights violations and abuses. In January, two unidentified men abducted Ha Van Nam, beat him, and threatened him, telling him to stop the work in activism he is doing. In February, he found many death threats, including the heads of chickens and blood smears covering his car. He is currently detained and on trial, facing a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment. Pray that the outcome of his trial results in his being released from custody and being able to continue in his human rights activism in Vietnam. Pray that he may also come to know well the love of Christ in the suffering he faces. Pray that God changes the hearts and minds of the government officials and public security officials, so that they realize and stop the evil persecution of all citizens, including the targeting of Christians. *(Source: Amnesty International)*

**Lebanon**—Though Lebanon has hosted the largest number of refugees per capita in their small country, in recent days they have begun to take measures to force refugees, primarily Syrians escaping conflict, to leave Lebanon. While they have begun a campaign to sign refugees up for “voluntary” repatriation, there are reports of thousands of forcible repatriations, and the employment of other tactics, such as forcing refugees to take down protective cinder block walls around temporary settlements, and crackdowns on unregistered Syrian businesses. Most Syrian and refugee business are unregistered, because the government also refuses to grant them permission to operate. It has largely been Lebanese NGOs who have decried this trend, while the international community has remained disengaged. Pray for these Syrian refugees, who are no longer welcome in Lebanon (and other countries), subject to the same rhetoric employed around the globe about vulnerable populations that they are stealing jobs and are a nuisance, and who face real danger if they are forced to return to their home country. Pray for their protection and provision. Pray for those in power, especially those overseeing regions of conflict or unaddressed violence and corruption, that they might become effective and active forces for transformation in their countries, that they would rule with integrity, and that they would make protecting their populations a priority. *(Source: US News & World Report)*