

October 2019 Prayer

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

—2 Corinthians 4: 16

*Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

—Isaiah 40: 30-31

China—In 2015, Christian believer and human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang was arrested as part of a widespread crackdown in China on those advocating for human rights and was held incommunicado for more than three years. Just this past January 2019, he finally received his sentence of 5 years in prison. And as so often the case, the suffering of those persecuted for their faith has repercussions for their loved ones as well. Wang Quanzhang's wife, Li Wenzu, and their 6-year-old son, Quanquan, have both felt acutely the absence of husband and father—but also have suffered harassment and discrimination themselves. Most recently, Quanquan was denied access to school after his father's arrest, after the local police instructed all the kindergartens to refuse Quanquan. Persevering, his mother found a private school that he could attend. However, upon being advanced to primary school, the police arrived at the school multiple times to pressure them to refuse Quanquan enrollment. So once again, Quanquan can no longer go to school. Pray for this family who have stood faithfully for Christ and for the rights of others. Pray for the safety of Wang Quanzhang in prison, pray for the whole family that they might know the strength and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Pray that Li Wenzu will continue to have courage to fight for her son and her husband's release, pray that they might be reunited as a family, and pray for the police and government officials that are persecuting this family and others, that they turn from oppression and darkness to the light and salvation of Jesus. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Pakistan—Samra Bibi, a 14-year-old Christian, was abducted from her home by a radical Muslim man named Muhammad Ramiz and his friends. They converted her to Islam and forcibly married her to Ramiz. Samra's brother and father immediately went to the police, where they were met with mocking and a refusal to make a formal complaint. When the authorities finally took action two days later, they changed Samra's age to 16, which is the legal marrying age. Ridiculously, Ramiz was arrested for one hour, and then released, and no further action has been taken since. Please pray for young Samra's release from this terrifying bondage, and pray for her safety while she remains with this man. Pray that she would cling to Christ and find refuge. Please pray that the authorities in Pakistan would act justly, uphold the law, and protect innocent girls like Samra. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Venezuela—Venezuela has been led into a spiraling political and humanitarian crisis by President Maduro, who has retained power through manipulation and what is widely viewed as a rigged 2018 presidential election. This has resulted in the extreme hardship for the entire population as there have persisted shortages of food and medication and basic human necessities, causing the suffering and death of thousands. Now under suspicions of the extrajudicial execution of approximately 6,000 people has led to an UN-led investigation of these and other human rights violations, such as disappearances and torture. It is estimated that approximately 7.5 million are in severe need and 4 million have fled to neighboring countries. Pray for the horribly oppressed citizens of Venezuela, for their protection and provision. Pray for those in government, including President Maduro, who are clinging to power rather than seeking the well being of their people. Pray for those in power to seek integrity, and pray for a positive outcome of the UN investigation, that the truth might be discovered, that justice served, and that the suffering of the Venezuelan people would be abated. (*Source: BBC*)

Iran—Three Persian Christian converts in Iran have recently been sentenced to 6 months in prison for their faith and related activities. Asghar Salehi and Mohammadreza Rezaei both have come out of past struggles with addiction to find life and salvation in Christ. They were arrested a year ago in their homes, along with 4 other associates, subjected to days of interrogation, often blindfolded, and they along with one other believer have been charged and convicted of propaganda against the Iranian state. Pray that they will have peace and perseverance throughout this ordeal. Pray for their spiritual, mental, and physical well being, especially as Asghar is suffering health problems as well. Pray that their appeals of the sentences will be successful and that their faith in Christ will be deepened and strengthened through these trials. Pray for justice in Iran and that the government will cease their persecution of Christians, political dissidents, and other religious minorities. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Algeria—New laws in Algeria require that places of non-Muslim worship obtain a license to remain open. In order to comply with the law, Protestant churches in Algeria, named the EPA, or l'Eglise Protestante d'Algérie, have attempted to procure necessary documents. Ironically, the government refuses to grant licenses for church buildings, and all applications have been ignored. As a result, church after church has been closed and boarded up across the country. Please pray that the hundreds of Christians without church buildings in Algeria will continue to meet for fellowship, worship, and teaching under the Word of God. Pray that the true Church, the body of Christ, will flourish and grow and that believers there will not lose heart amidst this persecution. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Iraq—Believers in Iraq have been particularly targeted throughout the conflicts of the past many years, and now sleeper cells of ISIS have been identified in the country, making those who have fled even more fearful to return. Additionally, many returnees who had to abandon jobs, businesses, and possessions when they fled are now struggling to find work and livelihoods. Pray for these individuals and families, who would like to return to their homes but face so many challenges. Pray that they are able to trust the Lord to protect them and provide for them. Pray that they experience peace, despite their circumstances, and that their faith would be an incredible witness to those around them. Pray for the Church in Iraq that it would remain strong and quietly grow amid the persecution. (*Source: Open Doors*)

United States—The average for the United States' refugee resettlement program has historically been around 95,000. Even at its height, this was a small fraction of the approximately 26 million refugees around the world. However, last year the refugee resettlement program in the United States was reduced to only 30,000, and the last week of September 2019, the government announced that that number will be further reduced to 18,000 in 2020. It is worth noting that of all the immigration processes available, refugee resettlement is the most rigorously vetted. It is also worth remembering that around the globe, one of the most persecuted people groups happens to be Christians, so this policy has a direct impact on believers suffering for their faith. Join World Relief in praying for the protection of and provision for vulnerable refugees of all kinds. Pray that leaders in the United States will be both wise and compassionate, and increase the maximum quotas for refugees. (Source: *World Relief Chicago*)

Nigeria—On September 14th, Fulani militants attacked Pastor Ishaku Katung and his wife, Esther, in the Bagoma village of Kaduna State. The pastor and his wife were sleeping when they were attacked in the middle of the night. He was shot, yet managed to escape and survive, but Esther was not able to flee in time and was kidnapped. The militants demanded a ransom from the family and threatened to kill Esther if they did not receive it. After two weeks, the family and friends were able to raise \$700 and brought it to the attackers. Tragically, soon after paying, the family found her dead body in the bushes, her legs broken and head violently injured. Please pray for this family and church who surely are devastated by this wicked and merciless act. Praise God that Esther is safely home in Heaven now, but continue to pray for comfort and healing for her husband. Pray also for protection for Christians in this violent and dangerous region of the world. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

India—Pastor Mahesh was leading a Friday night prayer meeting in Tamil Nadu state, when Hindu extremists entered the building and attacked him with metal rods. The group of believers eventually was able to protect him and chase away the attackers, but Pastor Mahesh was severely injured on his head and his shoulder was fractured, so he is now hospitalized. Please pray for his healing, both physical and emotional. Pray also for his church and family while he is unable to work. Pray for the love of Christ to shine in the hearts of the attackers and other extremists that they may be reborn as followers of the Christ that they persecute. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

Vietnam—Nuns of St. Paul church in Hanoi marched with banners protesting construction that was happening on land belonging to their church. The authorities had confiscated land that St. Paul's had already purchased and then sold it. While the nuns protested peacefully, unknown men assaulted them with batons while police officers stood by and watched. Reports claim that "hired thugs" are often used by the government to intimidate religious groups, so it's likely that authorities themselves instigated this attack. The nuns' further petitions for help and fair treatment were ignored. Please pray for physical healing for these nuns and for justice in this case. Pray that the Vietnamese government would protect innocent citizens and their rights to their land instead of robbing and assaulting them. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)