

January 2020 Prayer

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

—Romans 12:12

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

—Galatians 6:9

International—As we start the new year, we pause to pray for all those working on the frontlines of persecution in organizations such as Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs, International Christian Concern, China Aid, Middle East Concern, and others. Using the specific prayer requests from CSW, we join them in praying:

- For strength and energy for all staff, especially those with an increased workload due to staffing shortages.
- For the safety of our advocacy team as they travel the world to document violations of religious freedom, support those affected, and offer training in how to document violations and speak up for their rights.
- For God-given inspiration for the communications team as they seek fresh ways to communicate the message of religious freedom to existing and new audiences—especially young people. (*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Myanmar—Pray for the Kachin and Karen minority groups that populate IDP camps along the Thai border of Myanmar, who are suffering due to government oppression and continual military conflict. They lack sufficient employment, food, and healthcare, and the Karen children seem to be suffering the most. Please pray for more volunteer teachers and doctors to come to their aid, and pray that there would be sufficient food. Many of the children do not have the means to even eat lunch at the IDP school they attend. (*Source: World Watch Monitor*)

India—Believers in India continue to face mounting harassment and violence from Hindu radicals. The past year, seven families in Jharkhand State were forced to flee their villages due to threats and intimidation, while three other families were forcibly converted to Hinduism. Ironically, four Christians in the same region were arrested on false charges of forcibly converting others to Christianity. Seven states have adopted anti-conversion laws despite legal protests, further enabling radical groups to act with impunity. Believers and other religious minorities also face violence, like two men in Karaikal who were assaulted for handing out tracts, and a Christian laborer from Tamil Nadu, who sustained serious head and upper-body injuries after being attacked by a neighbor who accused him of converting locals. Pray for overwhelming peace and courage for Christians in India who face these constant trials. Pray for justice and healing for those attacked. Pray for the release of those unjustly imprisoned, and pray for the return of families to their homes after being driven away from their communities. Pray for the cessation of “Homecoming Ceremonies,” which are becoming widespread across India and are nothing more than the forcible conversion of believers to Hinduism through oppressive and violent means. Pray for comfort, boldness, and healing for all who suffer in India. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Morocco—To be a journalist in Morocco is a perilous occupation, despite claims of a free press. Reporters there describe the “three red lines” that mark disallowed topics, for which a journalist could be harassed or imprisoned: criticism of the monarchy, of Islam, or of Morocco’s claim on the disputed Western Sahara. Pray for the freedom and protection of journalists, such as 28-year-old Hajar Raissouni, who was imprisoned on false charges of having an abortion and having sex outside of marriage. Though eventually released and pardoned—as was the doctor, medical office assistant and Raissouni’s fiancé, who were all accused with her—it is widely understood that the government only took this action after mounting international pressure. One of eleven journalists imprisoned in recent years, the number has doubled in the last decade signaling a crackdown on free speech in this conservative country. Similarly, editor Taoufik Bouachrine was charged and convicted with human trafficking and sexual assault, despite his trial being deemed unfair by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. He is now serving a 12-year sentence, while journalist Hicham Mansouri served 10 months in 2015 for allegedly committing adultery, and Ali Anouzla is still awaiting trial since 2013 on charges of terrorism. These are just a few of the more high profile cases of using trumped up charges to intimidate and silence those who report on human rights and governmental issues in Morocco. Many more are denied press cards, solely controlled by the government, even when working for news agencies such as the Associated Press and Reuters. Pray for the protection of those who investigate and report the truth. Pray for their perseverance and for their integrity. Pray for the government of Morocco, that it will reverse this troubling trend toward tyranny and oppression, and seek to rule its people with equity and justice. Pray for the

freedom of speech that will allow many to come to know the ultimate truth of God's grace. (Source: *U.S. News and World Report*)

Iraq—"Although I might suffer, I feel happy because I know that the Lord has defeated this world!" These are the words of Khalda, a young Christian converted forced to flee Iraq, who was beaten by his family for leaving Islam and who experienced the discrimination that is common for religious minorities. Khalda was assisted in his escape by other Christians, and we give thanks for his escape and pray for his continued growth in his faith. Give thanks for his bold faith and the peace he expressed, for his courage to refuse to drop out of school and get married to a Muslim girl, as his father attempted to force him to do. Pray for the same courage, faithfulness, loving witness, and protection for other believers who remain in Iraq, who face harassment and often experience loneliness and isolation. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

China—House church pastor, Wang Yi, from Early Rain Covenant Church in Sichuan was sentenced to nine years in prison for "subversion of state power and illegal business operations." Only government lawyers were permitted at his secret trial, so Pastor Wang's lawyer was not able to represent him during this unjust trial. In addition, his wife and their 12-year-old son were placed under house arrest and denied access to outsiders. Please pray for this sentence to be overturned, for Wang's bold influence with the Gospel while in prison, and for him to be set free. Pray for protection for his wife and son while they are treated so unjustly. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Kenya—In early December, al-Shabab militants stopped a bus traveling in northern Kenya. Most of the passengers were workers from Nairobi heading to Mandera on the Somalia-Ethiopia border. The attackers separated ethnic Somalis they assumed were Muslim from 10 other passengers they assumed were Christian, and then shot the 10 people to death. Suspects, including the actual bus driver, were arrested, but there is little certainty that they will be prosecuted. The holidays are often a time of increased persecution in the region, and many believers face even greater fear of violence and death. Pray for their continued protection and strength and comfort. Pray for members of al-Shabab and other perpetrators of these atrocities that they might be convicted of the evil they commit and come to find the light, love, and salvation of Jesus. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

Cuba—A 12-year-old boy, Liusdan Lescaille, and his younger brother, Daniel, have been forbidden to wear their Jewish kippah to their school in Nuevitas and thus have not been able to attend school recently. The older boy had been regularly bullied and severely beaten by classmates four times since 2016 because of his Jewish background, and yet the school has failed to make any effort to protect him. When his parents took action, the school authorities attempted to blame the boy and have him expelled. Indeed, instead of protecting him, they issued a ban on wearing the Jewish kippah to school, and when the Jewish children attempted to enter the school, they were physically prevented. When their parents asked for the ban to be lifted, the educational authorities actually took legal action in a case against the family and threatened that the boys would be taken away and the parents would be imprisoned for "threatening the children's normal development." Sadly, this type of discrimination and injustice is not uncommon in Cuba, as another couple is in prison for attempting to homeschool their children. The US State Department has put Cuba on the Special Watch List for governments that "have engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom." Please pray for justice and protection for Liusdan, Daniel, his parents, and others like them (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Nepal—Two widows in Nepal have experienced loss upon loss, after first losing their husbands in an accident years ago. Following that tragedy, Rabiya and Shilpa became roommates, living in a small hut they built themselves with no electricity or water. However, when Rabiya became sick, she sought prayer from the local church and both women became believers following Rabiya's cure. What followed, though, was increased suffering as they were shunned by their community for attending church, and they are not allowed to use the local well, adding to their hardship. Yet despite this, they are solid in their faith and persevering for Christ. Pray that they will have all their needs miraculously provided and that they will feel the ministering presence of the Holy Spirit. Pray for their community, that their hearts will be softened toward Rabiya and Shilpa and that many will come to faith in Jesus. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

Nigeria—On Christmas Day, a sect of Boko Haram murdered ten Christians and one Muslim to avenge the United States' execution of two ISIS leaders. The government of Nigeria seemingly took no action to protect these hostages. Please pray for the continual dire situation in Nigeria. Pray that this nation would uphold freedom and human rights. Pray in particular for the families of these eleven victims—for their comfort and peace and hope in God. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)