

February 2020 Prayer Items

*The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.*
—Zephaniah 3:17

Romania—With an estimated 86,000 people living in slavery in Romania and the country consistently ranking in the top three worst European countries for human trafficking, International Justice Mission (IJM) has chosen Romania as its base for its first Central and Eastern European anti-trafficking programs. It has been reported that fewer than half the victims of human trafficking in Romania ever receive assistance, and IJM will begin by assessing the various forms this kind of exploitation takes, from sexual slavery to online child sexual exploitation to labor trafficking. As we give thanks for the good work IJM is doing in Romania, and around the world, to bring God's justice and rescue to the most vulnerable people, let's pray into these efforts, that the Holy Spirit will go ahead of their efforts, work mightily through them, and push back the powers of darkness. Pray for those still in captivity—the victims who are enslaved and the perpetrators captive to the evil that compels them to commit these horrors to fellow humans. Pray for the immediate rescue of their bodies, healing of their spirits, and eternal rescue of their souls. (*Source: International Justice Mission*)

Algeria—A church named House of Hope in Ain Turk has been forced to close down this month and requests prayer. Since 2017, the government has closed down 19 churches because they do not have a license to function as a non-Muslim creed, but every attempt at procuring a license has been rejected. Clearly the government is persecuting the believers there, so please pray for their protection. Pray that the body of believers would continue to gather together to worship and be under the word of God. Pray for opportunities to gather in secret without being detected and they would be encouraged, strengthened, emboldened, and protected. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Greece—Originally meant to temporarily house 3,000 people, the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, in recent months the numbers have gone up to 19,000 with approximately half under the age of 18. This is due in part to the closing of European and American borders, and in part to the unrelenting conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and other countries in turmoil. Girls fleeing the Taliban, with hopes to find safety and education, ironically and tragically find themselves in the opportunity-less limbo. In addition to horrifically unhygienic conditions, shortage of tents and shelter, no electricity, and inadequate water supply, there is no work, school, or safety. Doctors Without Borders is the only major NGO presence in the camp, and young children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable people are getting sick and dying amid the squalor as they await a totally unknown future. Pray for the people who have already witnessed violence, trauma, and loss while fleeing their homes, and now face unspeakable, ongoing suffering. Pray for all those like Jalila and 18-year-old girl from Kabul, who was given a coat because there were no tents available, and all the others who are sleeping out in the elements, despite cold winter conditions. Pray for grace and

mercy to prevail in the international community, to rescue and welcome the alien as scripture commands, and for peace to be established in these conflict regions so others do not need to flee. *(Source: The Guardian)*

North Korea—Praise God for the encouragement He gives to Christians serving in the darkest country on earth. A believer named Young-sik was sent by the government to a remote part of the country, away from his family, and he doubted he would ever find Christians there. One day, he went out to forage for food in a field and was praying secretly when an older Christian man named Byung-Chul noticed him. Byung-Chul marked a cross on his palm and hummed a hymn to identify himself as a Christian. Praise God for bringing these believers together. Young-Sik joined Byung-Chul's underground church and is now leading it. Please pray fervently for Christians in North Korea who are hungry, hunted, and often alone. Pray that they would be able to safely gather for much-needed fellowship and encouragement. Pray that the Lord would miraculously preserve them, strengthen them, and use them to spread the Good News to those living in darkness. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

Pakistan—March 15, 2015, twin suicide bombs targeting churches during the Easter season left 17 dead and 80 wounded. Subsequent protests by the Christian community provided a convenient excuse to blame the murder of two suspects in the bombing on believers in Lahore. Even though confirmed witnesses indicated that the suspected involved in the suicide bombing were actually murdered by a Muslim radical to incite violence and conflict, police at the time arrested 42 Christians for the two deaths. They had been held for 5 years in deplorable conditions, facing abuse and without adequate food—and as a result 2 of the Christians died in custody. Finally, after all their suffering the remaining 40 were acquitted and released. We give thanks to the Lord for this deliverance and for sustaining them throughout this trial, even as we pray for ongoing healing for these 40. Pray also that the Father would encourage all the believers in Pakistan. Pray for the defense lawyer for these believers, Joseph Francis, and his team, for wisdom, strength, and protection. Pray for changes in the legal system and discriminatory laws, and for brave judges to rule with integrity. *(Source: Jubilee Campaign; World Watch Monitor)*

Burkina Faso—Sadly, the unrest in Burkina Faso may be the fastest growing humanitarian crisis in the African continent. Islamic terrorism overflowing from nearby Mali and violence towards Christians have risen exponentially. The already impoverished people of Burkina Faso are now facing displacement, hunger, violent attacks, and death. Please pray for God's mercy in protecting the population there and thwarting the evil plans of the perpetrators. Pray that other countries would have wisdom to know how to help most effectively. In the midst of the unrest and suffering, please pray for the lost to find Jesus Christ. *(Source: International Christian Concern; The Guardian)*

China—Amid widespread, pervasive, and unrelenting harassment and persecution of the Church in China, we pray for the many as we pray for one individual, Tang Jingling, a human rights lawyer who has dealt with the oppression of the Chinese government, even as he has advocated on behalf of others facing corruption and other unjust practices, including illegal land appropriation. In 2006, his legal license was suspended, and he began working for non-violent civil disobedience. In 2012, he was arrested and detained for 5 days for

investigating the death of a human rights defender Mr. Li Wangyang, and finally he was arrested in 2014 leading up to the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests. Held for more than a year without trial, Tang Jingling and two other prominent political advocates were tried in July 2015. Though no verdict was reached, they have remained imprisoned, with an unclear future. Pray for Tang Jingling and so many like him, courageously living for Christ in a hostile environment and standing up for justice and the rights of others. Pray for their continued boldness, for joy in terrible circumstances, for protection and sustenance, and for a continuing and compelling witness. Pray that the exponential growth of the Church in China would continue unabated! (*Source: ChinaAid*)

Kenya—An Al-Shabaab terrorist group recently targeted eleven Christians and killed them. They were traveling by bus in Kenya near the border of Somalia when the attackers forced the bus to stop and separated all the passengers into two groups based on what region they were from. Those from a Muslim region were left alone, and those from a Christian region were forced to lie down on the road and were shot and killed. The Christians were security officers, teachers, and a medical practitioner. Please pray for this evil to be stopped, and pray for the perpetrators to be convicted of their wickedness and turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. Pray for great comfort for the families of the victims and for the traumatized witnesses in the bus. May this act of senseless violence actually be used by the Lord to draw many to Himself. (*Source: World Watch Monitor*)

United Kingdom—In the United Kingdom, 16- and 17-year-olds can still legally marry if given parental consent, but what that caveat has led to is the unchecked practice of forced underage marriages, especially for girls to much older men. Payzee Mahmud was one such victim, when forced at 16 by her parents to marry a much older man, who then dominated and abused her for two years until she was able to escape. Her sister, Banaz, similarly forced to marry underage. When she tried to escape her abusive husband, she was murdered as the victim of an “honor” killing. Payzee Mahmud spoke to the British Parliament about her experiences in support of a bill which would prohibit the marriage of any individuals under 18, when he or she is legally an autonomous adult. The hope is that this will mitigate against the coercion and exploitation families exert over their young daughters, forcing them against their will into unhealthy and often abusive situations, as well as thwarting their opportunities to develop, be educated, and have a complete childhood. Pray for the success of this legislation in the United Kingdom and for similar measures in other western countries where parental consent allows vulnerable girls to be sold off by their own families. Pray for those young girls around the world forced into inappropriate relationships that they would be delivered from these circumstances. Pray that men of real honor would stand up and model what it is to protect the girls entrusted to them in their lives and to cherish the women they have mutually chosen to marry at an appropriate age. (*Source: Freedom United*)

Tajikistan—Praise God that Bakhrom Kholmatov has been released from prison three months early, and he is well and healthy. He was charged and sentenced to three years in prison when the secret police raided his church and heard him singing “extremist songs.” They claimed that songs such as “*Our Fight Is Not Against Flesh and Blood*” and “*God’s Army Is Marching*” call on people to overthrow the government. They also found Josh McDowell’s *More than a Carpenter* to be extremist. Praise God that his sentence is over and that God protected and strengthened him and his family during that time. Kholmatov said that prayers

from believers around the world strengthened him and caused him to grow spiritually while in prison. (Source: *World Watch Monitor*)