

April 2021 Prayer Items

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

—Isaiah 53: 5-6

Nigeria—Yet another school kidnapping has terrorized Nigeria. One boy was killed and 40 kidnapped from a boarding school in Niger state, in the northwest of Nigeria. The kidnappers, named simply “bandits” by locals, arrived in the middle of the night, dressed as military soldiers. No one knows who these men are, where they are coming from, or who they are targeting — which contributes to the feeling of fear and uncertainty. Bus hijacking, village raids, and other abductions like this one have become more and more frequent in Nigeria. The country has closed its other boarding schools in the area in an effort to keep students safe. Please pray for this terrifying situation where children are being attacked. Pray for the 40 that are held captive now, that they would be released unharmed and soon. Pray for families to look to God for help and security, and pray that He would bring peace to the area. (*Source: New York Times*)

Egypt—A young woman named Marian Rafat was walking from church to her home when a man named Gamal Nasser attacked her in Al Fashn. He harassed the 19-year-old girl and then started attacking her, hitting her face with a broken bottle. Marian lives close to the church, and he went into her home to attack her parents and ransack their house as well. Police arrested Gamal, so please pray that he would be convicted for his crime and that he would repent of the deep-seated hatred that caused him to attack someone so brutally. Pray that Marian and her parents would heal from their physical wounds and emotional trauma. Pray for God to comfort and strengthen Marian and for her to not feel that her facial scars mar her God-given beauty. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Democratic Republic of Congo—Recent violence against civilians demonstrates that the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) are increasing their attacks in the eastern part of the country. Hundreds of civilians have been killed in the past year, forty thousand have been displaced, and many others have been injured, raped, or kidnapped. Tragically, many of these are women (even pregnant women) and children. And it seems that they are getting away with it with impunity. Please pray for justice and protection in the DRC. Please pray that innocent civilians would be safe and no longer targeted, and that the perpetrators would be convicted in their hearts and turn to the Lord in repentance for salvation. Pray for comfort for all who have suffered up until now. Pray for those in authority to know how to keep their citizens safe. Please pray for peace in this turbulent region and that they would all look to the Prince of Peace. (*Source: United Nations News*)

China- Pastor Wang Yi is still languishing in prison, serving a nine-year-sentence for illegally pastoring an unregistered house church. When Pastor Wang was arrested in December 2019, he left a note that read, “I hope God uses me, by means of first losing my personal freedom, to tell those who have deprived me of my personal freedom that there is an authority higher than their authority, and that there is a freedom that they cannot restrain, a freedom that fills the church of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. . . . Separate me from my wife and children, ruin my reputation, destroy my life and my family—the authorities are capable of doing all of these things. However, no one in this world can force me to renounce my faith; no one can make me change my life; and no one can raise me from the dead.” Please pray that God would use this modern-day Paul to bear witness for Him, and that He would comfort and encourage him and bring him safely home. (*Sources: Christianity Today; Desiring God*)

Yemen—Ethiopians being held for weeks at a cramped immigration detention center reported horrible conditions— no mattresses, not enough drinking water, and lack of food— and started a hunger strike in an effort toward better treatment and release. In retaliation, the guards beat the protestors who then responded by throwing plates at the guards. Houthi military then arrived, warned them to “say their final prayers” and threw tear gas and grenades into the hangar. These explosives started a fire in the locked facility, and many were burnt to death or severely injured. The Houthi blame the UN for not providing a place for illegal immigrants. Please pray for our Father of Mercies to rescue those that have suffered so much and still meet hardship on every side. Pray for the burn victims to heal, and pray that no one will return to these unsanitary and unsafe conditions but instead be given a safe haven. Pray for immigrants around the world who are trapped in horrible situations and have nowhere to turn— that they would turn to Christ for deliverance. And pray that God would give leaders wisdom on how to solve these crises. (*Source: Human Rights Watch*)

Mozambique—The end of March saw the deadliest attack in the four-year insurgency in Mozambique, perpetrated by rebels initially called Shabaab (“the Youth”), but was recently recognized as a terrorist organization by the Biden administration, noting the group’s suspected links to Islamic State. The most recent attack overran the town of Palm in Cabo Delgado in Northern Mozambique—the most impoverished part of the country, despite significant wealth in natural resources. Dozens were killed, many beheaded, and for the first time, foreign workers were targeted. Hundreds stormed the town, attacking and burning down buildings—focusing on shops, hotels, banks, and military barracks. Since the insurgency began in 2017, more than 2,500 people have been killed and 700,000 displaced. Recent attacks in neighboring Tanzania indicate spreading violence makes adjacent countries vulnerable. Pray for the protection of and provision for innocent civilians in this volatile place. Pray for the stemming of violence and atrocities. Pray for wise, immediate, and effective intervention by the government of Mozambique and other countries poised to assist. Pray for the alleviation of poverty and discrimination, which in part fuels the anger of insurgents and is used as an excuse for violence. Pray for peace, justice, and the light of Christ to prevail in the region. (*Sources: CNN; BBC; CBS*)

Myanmar—Myanmar (or Burma) gained its freedom from Britain in 1948 and was then ruled by a totalitarian military regime from 1962-2011. During that time, Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, was detained from 1989 to 2011 for her opposition to the regime and her calls for free and democratic elections. She was elected president in 2015, in the country's first democratic elections. Sadly, the predominantly Buddhist Myanmar has been the scene of a horrific genocide targeting the Rohingya Muslim minority, claiming the lives of thousands and displacing over 700,000. Suu Kyi surprised the international community by denying that the military had perpetrated these atrocities, including murder, rape, and torture. Though facing international criticism for this stance, Suu Kyi and the NLD won a landslide election in November 2020, but in the first days of February, the military, in an early morning raid, had detained Suu Kyi and top members of the NLD in a coup that threatens the young democracy and has led to massive protesters, to which the military has also responded with an oppressive crackdown. Pray for this nation that has attempted a free and just society that those aims might be restored and truly pursued. Pray that those responsible for terrorizing the Rohingya would be convicted—both in their own hearts and in a court of law—of the terrible crimes they have committed. Pray for the protection of the millions of vulnerable people in this nation. Pray for peace, justice, and truth to be restored. Pray for the release of Suu Kyi and NLD leaders. *(Sources: Reuters; BBC; The New York Times)*

Philippines—In recent years, targeted efforts by International Justice Mission and other organizations have seen dramatic positive results in the fight against child sex trafficking, including a 75 percent reduction in the number of children available for these criminal purposes in Manila over the past 6 years. That being said, as COVID has swept around the globe, it has also propelled the online sexual exploitation of children—as more perpetrators turn to online outlets during restrictions, and children are locked in homes and cut off from potential community advocates in schools and other places. The Philippines has been identified as a hotspot for the activity. COVID has compounded an already growing problem that began with the increasing availability of technology and the internet. In 2019 the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children had 69.2 million images relating to child sexual exploitation reported to them, and that number increased by 31 percent in 2020, primarily due to live-streamed child sexual abuse. The average age of the children rescued from these situations is 11 years old, though some have been as young as 2 months old. Pray for the miraculous rescue and healing of the truly innocent children being violated in the most unspeakable ways. Pray for those who have sunk to the deepest of depravity to use helpless children for pleasure or economic gain. Pray for the good work of IJM and others. May advocates be protected. May their efforts be massively successful and unthwarted. May the Holy Spirit be with those small, exploited children. *(Sources: The New York Times; International Justice Mission)*

Nepal—In recent years, hostilities towards Christians and other religious minorities have increased in Nepal, beginning with the introduction of anti-conversion and blasphemy laws in 2016. This has played out in more discrimination against believers in

the country, including the cases of Pastor Keshav and Pastor Acharya, who were detained for charges such as “outraging religious feeling” and proselytizing. Pastor Acharya was taken on a 3-day journey to face his charges, during which he was continuously hand-cuffed behind his back and given limited food. Pastor Acharya was not released for 99 days after posting bail. The bail set for both men was the same as or exceeded the amount of the fines for their alleged “crimes.” Pray for the charges against these men be dropped. Pray for believers in Nepal that they would persevere with the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit. Pray especially for pastors and Christian workers, who are particularly vulnerable under these recent laws. Pray that these discriminatory laws would be overturned and that religious freedom would be restored in Nepal. Give thanks that during the United Nations, 37th Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Denmark, Haiti, and the Netherlands all specifically called for Nepal to overturn these laws. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

United States—Pray for the friends and families of the victims of the shooting at spas in the metropolitan Atlanta area in March, as well as for the 65-year-old Filipino woman who was brutally attacked outside an apartment building in Manhattan. A non-profit tracking hate incidents against Asian Americans had 3,800 incidents reported to them in the past year, and police department statistics from 16 US cities reveal a 150 percent increase in hate crimes directed at Asian Americans from 2019 to 2020. Pray vigilantly that grace, generosity, and compassion would triumph over hate and violence in our country, which prizes freedom, opportunity, and justice. Pray for the protection of those within our borders who are more vulnerable because of race or ethnicity. Pray that the Church would lead the way in loving as Christ does. (*Source: The New York Times; Washington Post*)