

January 2022 Prayer

Do not forsake me, O LORD!

O my God, be not far from me!

Make haste to help me,

O Lord, my salvation!

—Psalm 38: 21-22

Egypt—Three human rights activists named Alas Abdel-Farrah, Mohamed el-Baqer, and Mohamed Ibrahim were sentenced to up to five years in prison after being falsely charged of joining a terrorist group and spreading lies. Ramy Kamel, a defender of the Coptic church in Egypt who speaks out against persecution, was similarly accused and has been in prison for two years already. The US has threatened to withdraw military aid to Egypt because of its religious intolerance, and yet Egyptian leaders continue to mistreat human rights activists. Please pray for protection for these four men behind bars. As they have already sacrificed to help those in need, pray that they would now be comforted and encouraged. Pray that the Egyptian government would respect the human rights of its citizens, including those that strive to protect these rights. (*Source: Wall Street Journal*)

Belarus—Sixteen-year-old Mikita Zalatarou was standing at a bus stop on 10 August 2020 in Homel, Belarus, when a crowd protesting alleged fraud in the presidential election was running away from police violently breaking up the protests. Swept into the crowd, Mikita was soon arrested by the police, who accused him of throwing Molotov cocktails, and tortured him with electric truncheons. He was questioned without any adult or lawyer with him. He was denied due process and imprisoned in an “educational colony,” where all visits with his parents are monitored and where he has been punished with solitary confinement. The situation for democracy and dissent is rapidly deteriorating in Belarus. Over 30,000 peaceful protesters were detained for calling for fair elections. Activists, athletes, medics, journalists, all levels of society who have an opinion contrary to the government have been targeted, harassed, beaten, and tortured. Independent media outlets and NGOs have been shut down by authorities during the protests. Hundreds have been wrongly convicted of trumped up crimes. Pray for Mikita Zalatarou and his family, that they may persevere through this ordeal and finally receive freedom and justice. Pray for those in power in Belarus to be overwhelmed by the injustice, cruelty, and horror of what they have done. Pray for integrity and justice to be restored to this country. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

Pakistan—Praise God that Arzoo Raja, the 14-year-old girl who was kidnapped, forced to convert to Islam, and forced to marry a 44-year-old Muslim man in 2020, has been returned to her Christian family. Her parents appealed to authority and proved through her birth certificate that she was under age when forced to marry, and Raja also appealed to the court that she be returned to her parents of her own free will. After much debate, back-and-forth, and deliberation, she was set free and released to her parents. Praise God that He protected and delivered her. Pray for her healing and comfort now as she recovers from this trauma. And please pray for the one thousand Christian and Hindu girls each year that are abducted and forced into marriage and conversion to Islam. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

India—Missionaries of Charity, a relief organization started by Mother Teresa in 1950, has been accused of forced conversions and has therefore been blocked of funds from the west. Falsehoods spread about its various shelters, claiming that girls were forced to read their Bibles and pray. The charity has hundreds of shelters that help children and the “poorest of the poor” so denying them foreign aid is devastating to many. Apparently, radical Hindu nationalists have been attacking the

organization because of the many Christian converts. Pray for these disadvantaged and poor people, that they would continue to receive the aid they need, and that they would especially continue to hear the Gospel of Jesus despite the enemy's attempt to thwart this outreach. (Source: *Christianity Today*)

Myanmar—On Christmas Eve, government troops in Myanmar rounded up refugees fleeing an army offensive in Mo So village. The charred bodies of at least 30 people were found among burned out cars. Among them were women and children, and two staff people from the humanitarian organization Save the Children, who were in the area attempting to aid refugees, are also now missing. Their private car was among the burnt out vehicles. This comes a month after a similar attack perpetrated by the government forces that resulted in 11 burned bodies. These atrocities—and the ongoing genocide in Karen State in Myanmar—have been widely condemned by Western governments, including the United States. Pray for peace, justice, and rescue for the vulnerable people of Myanmar, especially the Rohingya who have been primary targets of government persecution. Pray for those who mourn in Myanmar. (Source: *Associated Press*)

Ghana—Lake Volta in Ghana is the largest man-made lake in the world, and the flooded forest and grasslands are now also home to an estimated 20,000 children who are enslaved in the fishing industry there. Prized for their small nimble hands, which can deftly untangle nets from tree branches that remain in the water, children as young as 5 work 18-hour days in frigid water under dangerous conditions. Most do not know how to swim, and many drown. The children are trafficked from all over Ghana—usually sold by parents or relatives who are deceived by traffickers into believing the children will be given a better life and an education. Instead, they work from sometime after midnight until noon. And they are the ones who are forced into the deep dark water to untangle nets. They are often beaten and abused, and girls in particular are frequent victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Within the region and the industry, there is not even an effort to hide their slavery or make a pretense of fair or humane conditions. Pray for these defenseless children, for their deliverance from this horrific life. Pray for the work of amazing organizations like International Justice Mission, who work tirelessly to rescue the children of Lake Volta and work with Ghanaian officials to tackle child slave labor and trafficking in their country. (Sources: *International Justice Mission; CNN*)

United States/China—United States Congress has passed a bill that bans exports from companies in the Xinjiang (Uyghur) region who cannot prove that their products were produced without forced labor. This bill, expected to be signed into law soon, comes after the United States accused China of slavery and genocide. It is aptly named the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act. “Many companies have already taken steps to clean up their supply chains. And, frankly, they should have no concerns about this law. For those who have not done that, they will no longer be able to continue to make Americans—every one of us, frankly—unwitting accomplices in the atrocities, in the genocide,” said Marco Rubio. As many large companies are against this law, please pray that it would be effective and protect numerous Uyghurs. Pray for both their spiritual and physical salvation, as well. (Source: *BBC*)

Madagascar—In the far south of this African island nation, a severe ongoing drought has led to a food crisis that has left 1.3 million people struggling to find food and 28,000 currently at risk of starvation. Many factors play into this natural disaster, including underdevelopment of the region by the government, as well as their slow response to the crisis. Even the trees in the region have been stripped in the harsh winds. Pray for those who are suffering and at risk. Pray for people like Mahosoa, whose whole family went without food or water for a week, and four of his 12 children died. Pray for rain. Pray for the government to act swiftly and responsibly. Pray for the generous intervention of the international community. Give thanks for the incredible efforts of local leaders like Loharano, who partnered with agricultural nonprofits to introduce drought-resistant crops and have taught people in the

region to plant natural windbreaks which protect topsoil from eroding winds. (*Sources: BBC; Doctors Without Borders*)

Burkina Faso—Islamic terrorists killed at least 41 people two days before Christmas in a single attack. Many others were killed the month before in the escalating violence. Although Burkina Faso enjoyed peace for many years, the past six years have brought extreme violence toward Christians by jihadists. Please pray for an end to the oppression and persecution. Pray for these Muslim extremists to find salvation and deliverance in Jesus Christ. Pray for protection of the persecuted church in this country and for comfort and healing for those who mourn or were injured in the attacks. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Iran—Pastor Matthias was among nine Christian converts arrested in Rasht in January and February of 2019, all of whom were then sentenced to five years in Evin prison in October of that same year. Give thanks to the Father that Pastor Matthias was released pending a review of his case. Believers in the area are hopeful that the other eight prisoners will be released and are encouraged by a recent Iranian Supreme Court order to review the sentences, stating that involvement in house churches should not be considered a crime against national security. Pray that this review will be upheld and that members of house churches will no longer be persecuted and treated as criminals. Pray that the other prisoners will be released and that all religious communities will be able to practice their faith freely and peacefully in accordance with international law. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)