

February 2022 Prayer

Hear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am devoted to you.

–Psalm 86: 1-2

Righteousness and justice are the foundations of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.

–Psalm 89:14

Malaysia—Each week, children in Malaysian public primary school spend more hours in Islamic studies classes than they do in math and science combined. Malaysia claims to be a secular country, yet Muslim teaching is being quite overtly indoctrinated. Please pray that this push does not threaten the religious liberty of the country or result in further persecution of Christians there. Pray that as many parents are starting to question and complain about these Islamic studies that they would seek the truth and find salvation in Jesus Christ. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Mexico—In the first month of 2022, four journalist have been murdered in Mexico. José Luis Gamboa was stabbed at least seven times 10 January. Margarito Martínez, a photojournalist, was shot in his home in Tijuana. Lourdes Maldonado López was also shot dead on 23 January at her Tijuana home. Just a year ago, Maldonado had expressed at a news conference that she feared for her life and pleaded with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to take meaningful action to protect journalists. And Roberto Toledo was attacked and killed by three gunmen on 31 January in a parking lot in Zitácuaro, a region known for violence between drug cartels and criminal groups fighting for control of illegal logging, as well as government corruption and connections between politicians and organized crime. Mexico has now become the most dangerous place for reporters. In addition, 32 journalists have been murdered in the past few years, while others have been brutally attacked. The government has failed to do anything significant to protect journalists or to investigate the murders or prosecute those responsible. Not only is the situation an incredible tragedy for the family, friends, and colleagues of these fallen journalists, but these attacks also represent the total corrosion of the integrity and free speech that underpins a free, just, and civil society. Pray for comfort and peace for those who loved these slain journalists. Pray for justice for them, and for integrity and justice to be restored in Mexico. Pray that the drug cartels and corruption would be driven back, and that the people in Mexico can live peaceful, stable lives. Pray for Christians in Mexico, as well, as they are often subject to pressure and persecution from cartels, local communities, and at times the government. Mexico is number 43 on Open Doors World Watch List. (*Sources: NPR; The Guardian; The Hill; NBC*)

Kenya—John Odhiambo had just returned from Somalia when he went to visit his neighbors, Petro, Mary, and their 13-year-old daughter, Nancy. Petro was a Christian who often shared his faith and got into frequent discussions with John, who was a Muslim. On the day of this visit, John greeted his neighbors, sat down near the three of them, and then detonated a bomb that he was wearing. The explosion killed Nancy's parents and the suicide bomber himself, but Nancy survived. She spent two weeks recovering from her numerous severe injuries, but is miraculously doing well now. Please pray for this young girl whose parents

were martyred right before her eyes. She was their only child and is now an orphan and being raised by extended family. Please pray that Nancy would cling to Christ for strength and comfort and that she would know Him as All-Sufficient Savior. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Pakistan—Praise God for His deliverance in the lives of a couple, Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausat, who had been on death row for eight years but were recently released and acquitted of all charges. They had been accused of sending text messages of disrespect against the prophet Muhammad, even though neither of them are literate or able to text. The Christian lawyer who helped defend the innocent couple says that international pressure played a large role in acquitting them. Praise God for this excellent news of the release. Pray for their continued protection and that they would be able to join in fellowship safely with other Christians. Pray for healing from the traumatic experience of being on death row for so long. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Uganda—While millions have suffered loss of health, income, and even life due to COVID-19, there have also been other unseen tragic consequences of the pandemic. In Uganda, and countries with similar challenges, where virtual classrooms are impossible, young people have gone for almost two years without any education—some aging out of the possibility of returning, others desperately behind. Worse, however, is that in the absence of regular school—and regular contact with adults outside the home—the incidences of abuse and sexual exploitation has exploded. Uganda's Education Officer, Nelson Ayo, reported that over 90,000 schoolgirls under 18 years old became pregnant during this time. Most of these were not the result of sexual activity with peers but were the result of exploitation by mature men, for instance those working on sugar plantations. Pray for the protection of girls and women in Uganda and other countries where school is a primary source of protection from abuse. Pray for innovative ways to keep children educated even when there is a necessity to shut schools. Pray for the hearts of those who would take advantage of an already tragic global pandemic for their own evil pursuits. Pray for all the babies being born to very young mothers, who are at risk of poverty and exploitation themselves. Pray for the 243 million girls and women around the globe—in both impoverished and resourced countries—who have been victims of sexual and/or physical violence in their own homes in the past 12 months—with numbers likely to increase as financial and emotional strains persist and people are living in increasingly cramped quarters. Pray for the Lord to show Himself as the Father to the fatherless and Protector of the widow, the orphan, the oppressed. (*Sources: UN; Child Voice*)

China—In 2020, Pastor Pan Yongguang led 28 adults and 32 children from their Shenzhen Reformed Holy Church to resettle in Jeju, South Korea. After applying for asylum based on religious persecution, they just received word that the South Korean High Court issued a total rejection of the church members' asylum request. Undoubtedly there has been tremendous pressure on South Korea from the Chinese government. Yet, if this group is deported, they will certainly face extreme consequences such as harassment, arrest, torture, and even forced disappearances. These asylum-seekers and their legal team are attempting a last ditch effort to have this verdict overturned. Pray for their protection whatever the outcome. Pray that the South Korean government's stance will be softened and will allow this church group to find safety within their borders. Remembering that Jesus Himself was an asylum-seeker as an infant fleeing to Egypt, pray for asylum-seekers around the globe, who face incredible loss

of home and identity to find some kind of peace and safety in an unfamiliar—and often unwelcoming—new country. Pray that those of us who are blessed with security, stability, and freedom would meet the needs of those fleeing danger with compassion and kindness. (Source: *China Aid*)

Myanmar/Burma—One year ago, on 1 February 2021, the Myanmar army seized power, continuing their violent campaign against religious and ethnic minorities and all who dare dissent. As of 25 January 2022, 11,737 civilians had been arrested and almost 9,000 of them remain in prison. This September, Baptist minister Cung Biak Hum was shot and killed by the army as he tried to help put out fires ignited by army artillery fire in Thantlang, Chin State. Nineteen homes were destroyed. Religious buildings, hundreds of homes, and the offices of NGOs have been destroyed in Thantlang. Democratically elected president, Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison. A genocide has been perpetrated against the Rohingya Muslims, and other minorities such as Christians suffer daily injustices. There have been airstrikes by the military wreaking havoc across the country, particularly in Chin, Kayah, Karen, and Kachin states. Pray for the country of Myanmar, for relief from what can only be termed a living hell. Pray for the removal of a murderous, evil regime. Pray for a miracle of repentance in the hearts of those in power who are perpetrating these crimes against humanity. Pray for the movement of the international community to be swift and effective in bringing a halt to these atrocities. Pray for miraculous protection of and provision for the suffering people of Myanmar/Burma. (Source: *CSW*)

Iran—Iranian Christians are praising God at news that the case of Christian convert Naser Navard Goltapeh's sentence will be reviewed by the Supreme Court. Arrested in June 2016, along with three Azerbaijani believers, Naser has served a third of his 10-year sentence in Evin Prison, he has had an appeal rejected, and he has been refused parole twice. Though not yet scheduled, Iranian Christians are cautiously encouraged that this appeal will be heard. Similarly, the cases against nine Christians from Rasht is scheduled to be reviewed on 22 February. These positive developments seem to be due to the November 2021 ruling by the Iranian Supreme Court that "preaching Christianity and promoting 'evangelical-Zionist' Christianity through house-church gatherings do not constitute a crime against national security." Pray that these judicial reviews will overturn these sentences and will lead to the ability of Iranian Christians to practice their faith freely, in accordance with international law. Give thanks and praise along with Iranian Christians for these encouraging events, and pray for the continued strengthening of the Iranian Church. (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

Afghanistan—The Taliban's militaristic influence on Afghanistan has resulted in more persecution for Christians and poor treatment of women and girls. No religion other than Islam is tolerated in the country. In the schools that remain open, art and PE have been replaced with Islamic studies. Girls are only allowed to go to primary school and then are to stay home instead of attending high school. They are not allowed to leave home without a man and have restrictive dress codes. Please pray for the desperate situation in Afghanistan where they've experienced such traumatic upheaval and their lives have changed so drastically. Pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this country so that many lost souls would find hope and eternal security in Christ. (Source: *Human Rights Watch*)

Nigeria—In January, Islamic extremist group Boko Haram abducted 17 girls after attacking

their village of Pemi. They also set fire to two churches and several homes and then killed many Christians in the town of Bimi. Some of the abducted girls are 10-, 11-, and 12-years old. Pray for these children who have been torn from their homes and loved ones and are surely terrified. Pray that the God of all Comfort would show them that He is with them every moment and that nothing can snatch them out of His hands. Pray for a miraculous deliverance so that they may be returned soon to their distraught parents. And please pray for protection and strength for Christians in northeast Nigeria that are continually targeted. Pray for comfort, courage, and help for those who have lost homes and loved ones. Pray that this terrorist group would turn from their wicked ways. *(Source: ABC News)*