

March 2022 Prayer

for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

–2 Timothy 1:7

*The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.*

–Psalm 33:5

Ukraine—Pray for freedom, peace, and safety for the people of Ukraine, as they suffer the illegal onslaught of the outrageous aggression of Russia. Pray for those who are already mourning the loss of loved ones in this violent assault that they may be comforted. Pray for Vladimir Putin, that he may have a miraculous wakening of conscience and that his evil efforts and of those in power with him might be thwarted. Pray for the protection of vulnerable nations in the region. Pray that those in the West who enjoy freedom and democracy will have the moral fortitude to stand up to the aggressor, even if it means challenges to our own comfort and lifestyle. Pray that amid the suffering, terror, and injustice, many will turn to the One who is truly sovereign and who will wipe away every tear. (*Sources: Multiple*)

India—Forty Christians were forced to re-convert to Hinduism by radical Hindu nationalists in Madhya Pradesh. They were brought to a Hindu temple and forced to perform a ceremony which included breaking a coconut and eating foods dedicated to Hindu gods. Anandi Ben and her family have been Christians for 4 years, but they were threatened with being kicked out of the community if they did not comply. Anandi said, “I was threatened that I will lose Government subsidies, affirmative benefits, if I continue as a Christian, I was also threatened that my agriculture land will be taken away from me, I had no choice. No one can take away the faith that is inside of our heart, we hope to join the Church again soon, God will help us.” Please pray for the Christians living in India where it is so difficult to stand up for one’s faith and where it comes at such a price. Pray for them to have discernment and courage. Pray for God’s protection over them and their families. Pray that this maltreatment will actually result in the strengthening of their faith in Jesus Christ. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Eritrea—On 9 February 2022, the rightful head of the the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church died after spending the last 15 years of his life under house arrest. Patriarch Abune Antonios was illegally removed from his role and replaced by the government-approved Bishop Dioscoros of Mendefera, after years of refusing to bow to pressure from the government. He faithfully stood up to the unrelentingly persecution of Christians in Eritrea, including his refusal in 2004 to expel 3,000 members of the Orthodox renewal movement (Medhane Alem) and his protest against the detention of three priests involved in the movement. As the founder and president of CSW, Mervyn Thomas said, “Despite 16 years of unremitting pressure, mistreatment, and defamation, the patriarch never compromised, even when it could have led in his reinstatement.” Praise God for the faithful life of this Christian man, and give thanks that he is no longer suffering but in the joyful presence of Jesus. Pray for those who were close to Patriarch Abune Antonios and are grieving the loss of a friend, that they might be comforted. Pray for the Church in Eritrea, who have lost an inspiring leader, that they would be strengthened by the example of this man and by the Holy Spirit to persevere despite the terrible oppression of the Eritrean government. (*Source: CSW*)

Iran—Just over 3 years ago, nine Iranian believers—Abdolreza (Matthias) Haghnejad, Khalil Daeghanpour, Hossein Kadivar, Kamal Naamanian, Mohammad Vafadar, Mohammad (Sharooz) Eslamdoust, Babak Hosseinzadeh, Mehdi Khatibi and Behnam Akhlaghi—were arrested over a series of weeks and sentenced to 5 years in prison for “endangering state security and promoting Zionism.” Praise God that on 28 February 2022 these charges were overturned, after the surprising determination by the Supreme Court that promoting Christianity and “Zionist evangelism” in private homes is not an example of “gathering and collusion against internal or external security.” Three of the converts from Rasht, however, still face other charges. Matthias, Babak, and Behnam all might have to serve long prison sentences for other activities related to sharing their faith. Join with Middle East Concern, praying that: “the charges against Matthias, Babak and Behnam will be dropped; God will bless the judge for his courage in deciding against the violation of the rights of these converts; and Iran will consistently uphold human rights, especially with regard to freedom of religion or belief.” (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

China—Pastor Li Juncai led a state-sanctioned Three-Self church until 2013 when he refused the compromises the government required. His congregation became a house church and ran into trouble with the government again when he refused to allow the cross to be removed from the front of his church as was required. He also would not allow the government to replace the sign that read “Love God, Love People” with “Love [Your] Country, Love [Your] Religion.” He was arrested for disturbing the public and embezzlement and was sentenced to 5 1/2 years in prison. After his arrest, the government removed the cross, changed the sign, and raised a government flag in front of the church. Please pray for Pastor Li’s protection and health while he is in prison. Pray that he would know the Lord’s presence and encouragement and that he could be a light to others there. (*Source: Church in Chains*)

Democratic Republic of Congo—While traveling in Karuruma, four people were killed when their car was blocked by Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) terrorists. One of the victims was a staff member of the Anglican Church of the Congo, Sylvia Kombi, who was appreciated as a trauma counselor. In fact, she was returning from counseling Christian refugees when the car was stopped. A church leader in Uganda said, “She would spend days with the Muslim background believers here to pray with them and guide them on how to face persecution and become bold servants of the Lord. She was a humble and loving sister who put the gospel needs of the church first and she never hesitated whenever we needed her to come all the way from DR Congo to train our evangelists.” Please pray for comfort as all four of these Christians will surely be missed. Pray that the ADF Terrorist group would be stopped and that violence in the region would cease. Pray for those who have lost family and friends in brutal attacks such as these, while also praying for the many child soldiers that are recruited into these terrorist groups. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Afghanistan—In January 2022 after attending peaceful demonstrations calling for the Taliban to respect the rights of women, 6 activists have been disappeared. Parwana Ibrahim Khil and her brother-in-law were abducted while traveling in Kabul. Later that same evening, Tamana Paryani and her three sisters were taken from a house in the city. The Office for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has received ongoing reports of gross human rights violations against activists, journalists, and former Afghan government workers and security forces. Arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, harassment, and other kinds of oppression have been credibly reported. Even as the UN calls for the Taliban to act in accordance with internationally recognized standards of human rights and civil society, the whereabouts and well being of these 6 missing activists are still unknown and the situation is very concerning. Pray for their safety and for their return to their families. Pray for the protection of women in Afghanistan—especially those who have had roles of leadership in the past 20 years. Pray that many

in Afghanistan will see the example of Jesus's gentle and respectful treatment of women and be compelled to turn to Him. (Source: *UN News*)

Algeria—Many churches in the province of Tizi Ouzou have been closed recently, due to increased government involvement. Because of this, an elder named Mohammed Derrab started preaching outside the closed doors of his church. He gave a Bible to an interested listener and was arrested the next day because of Algeria's anti-conversion laws. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison. Authorities also searched his house and confiscated his Bibles. Algeria has become increasingly hostile to Protestants, and the US State Department has added it to its World Watch List for "severe violation of religious freedom." Praise God for Mr. Derrab's courage and boldness in proclaiming the Gospel in public. Pray for his protection and continued witness while in prison. Pray also for the 16 churches in Algeria that have recently been closed by the government. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Latin America—A recent report by non-profit Freedom House has revealed that Latin America has become the most dangerous place for human rights activists, with more than three-quarters of murders of activists around the globe occurring in countries in Latin America. In addition to threats on their lives, journalists, women's rights defenders, indigenous leaders, and artists are among those who face increasing hostility, physical assaults, intimidation, and even legislation making their work illegal. Governments have also used the pandemic to crackdown on any kind of peaceful assembly or freedom of expression. Another byproduct of these crackdowns is the migration of huge numbers of people—as many as 5.6 million from Venezuela and 2,000 from Nicaragua fleeing to nearby Colombia and Costa Rica respectively. And while these are safer countries, there are fears of transnational repression coming after activists who have fled. Pray for the safety of those who courageously speak out for truth and justice in Latin America. Pray for leaders who use authoritarian measures to control their population that they might see the injustice and cruelty of their methods and govern with integrity and fairness. Pray for the families and friends of the many individuals murdered for speaking up for human rights. May they be given courage and comfort to continue on in a country that killed their loved ones. (Sources: *The Hill*; *NBC News*)

Tanzania—Andrew was raised in a Christian home, but became very attracted to Islam as a young adult when the sheikh promised that he would make a lot of money. Once Andrew joined the radical Muslim group linked to Somalia, the sheikh trained him with machetes and rifles so he would be ready to defend his Muslim faith by giving his life away and killing his enemy. Andrew was taught to wage holy war against Christians, and that, in killing them, he would go to heaven. He burnt his parents house down in an act of defiance, but when the sheikh told him to kill his parents because they were infidels, he found that he could not do it. When the sheikh angrily pressured him again to kill his parents, Andrew started to question the violence of his new faith. Praise God that Andrew repented and turned back to Christ in a miraculous change of heart. He soon had to leave his parents' house to go into hiding as his life was in danger. He now is at a training center and hopes to help other young men like himself who are being drawn to Islam. Praise God that He turned Andrew's life around and can use him for the kingdom. Pray that he would be fruitful and faithful and that the Lord would protect his life. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)