

June 2022 Prayer

Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

—Romans 12:10

For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, “Do not fear; I will help you.”

—Isaiah 41:13

Eritrea—Persecution of Christians in Eritrea remains arbitrary and severe. Pray for the safety and deliverance of Pastor Samuel Okbamichael and Pastor Girmay Araya—elderly pastors near retirement—who were abducted from their homes by government forces in July 2021. Despite it being unclear what charges were being leveled against them, both were transported to Wengel Mermera Central Criminal Investigation Interrogation Centre, a maximum-security facility. It is believed that it is due to their Christian faith and work—even though at this point in their ministry they are only involved in minimal Christian activities, such as weddings. Pray for those who love them, that they would feel the peace of Christ. Pray that these elderly men of God would be protected and returned to their families. Pray for Eritrean believers, who for decades, have faced unrelenting, brutal oppression by their own government. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

Nigeria—Deborah Emmanuel, a 25-year-old Christian college student, was falsely accused of blaspheming Muhammad after refusing a date with a Muslim. Tragically, an angry mob of extremists stoned, beat, and burned her to death on 12 May. Although many Muslims condemn her killing and the highest Nigerian Muslim leader calls for her killers to be brought to justice, a popular Islamic cleric posted a video that not only approves of her murder but calls on others to kill anyone who insults the prophet Muhammad. Please pray for this tragic situation. Pray for comfort and care for her family and friends. And pray for God to use this volatile situation as a wake-up call, with so many protesting and disagreeing on both sides, and to bring many to humility and conviction. Pray for protection, peace, and the saving of many souls in Northern Nigeria. (*Source: BBC; International Christian Concern*)

Egypt—While Egypt remains far from a fully free and tolerant society, we offer thanks for several encouraging developments in recent days. On 20 April a meeting chaired by the prime minister granted 239 more churches and places of worship legal status, bringing the total to 2,401. In addition, on 23 April nine Coptic Christians, who had been arrested in January 2022 for protesting for permission to rebuild their church in Minya (which had burned down under suspicious circumstances), were released from prison. Along with these Christians, 41 political activists were released from pre-trial detention. Nonetheless, in certain regions, hostility to Christianity remains high, and there is active opposition to granting legal status to churches or to the building of them. Other religious groups face even worse repression, such as the Ahmadi, Baha’i, and Shi’a communities. Continue in prayer, with thanksgiving, asking that these releases will be permanent and unconditional, that authorities will engage in political dialogue that will improve human rights and religious freedom in Egypt. Pray for the perseverance of the Church in Egypt, for the strong and faithful witness of believers there, and for many to find Jesus through it. (*Source: CSW*)

Yemen—The war that began in 2014 is still ravaging the country, displacing 4 million people and leaving over 17 million without sufficient food. Hunger was an issue even before the war started, and since 90 percent of the food was imported and trade has been disrupted because of the conflict, the famine has devastated the poor. Although 2022 has brought worse fighting, both sides agreed to a 2-month ceasefire, led by the UN in April, to allow humanitarian aid to reach those in need. Please pray

that this ceasefire would enable humanitarian aid agencies to provide to all who are malnourished. Pray that it would transition to a permanent ceasefire and peace. Because many Christians are often unjustly denied aid, please pray that they would receive sufficient food now. Pray that all who are suffering there would call out to God and find help and salvation in Jesus. And pray that wealthy countries and agencies would know how to help Yemen most effectively. (*Source: World Vision*)

Thailand—Activist Sombat Thonogyoi was sentenced to six years in prison for merely resharing on Facebook an article about university students refusing to attend a graduation ceremony. His comments regarding the article were simply “very brave,” “very good,” and “thank you.” This kind of extreme governmental reaction to the most benign actions of dissent does not bode well for freedom of expression or belief in Thailand. Pray that this trend will be reverse, that Thai officials will seek to govern with a moderate and fair approach that respects the basic human rights of their citizens. Pray for the immediate release of Sombat Thonogyoi. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

China—Lai Jinqiang owned an electronics company that produced audio Bibles, but two years ago he was arrested for distributing them and has been held in prison since then. He was recently sentenced to another five years, but his family is attempting to contest this injustice. His daughter has type 1 diabetes, and it is difficult for his wife to take care of their three children alone. Please pray for justice in his case. Pray for both Lai and his wife as they both struggle during this persecution. Pray that his work of distributing Bibles would not be thwarted and that while he suffers he would not lose courage and hope and faith. Pray for him to lean on Christ and be strengthened by Him. (*Source: International Christian Concern; ChinaAid*)

Russia/Ukraine—The illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces has not only devastated the country and killed or injured thousands of civilians, the Russian army has also specifically attacked Christian buildings and leaders. In February, Orthodox priest and military chaplain Maksym Anatolyovych Kozachyn was shot and killed as he attempted to flee Kyiv. Similarly in March, a village priest named Rostyslav Dudarkenko was manning a checkpoint. Seeing Russian vehicles approaching, he raised his cross necklace above his head and was shot multiple times and killed in the street. Russian Christian leaders and believers have also been targeted within their own country, particularly due to their calls for peace. In March, Russian Orthodox Priest Ioann Burdin of Resurrection Church in Kostroma was arrested for a sermon that was critical of the invasion of Ukraine, as well as for including a link to an anti-war petition on his parish’s website. Pray for comfort for those mourning the loss of these Christian leaders, giving thanks for their courage and faithfulness while under attack. Pray that the Church within Russia and Ukraine will be instruments of truth, peace, grace, and reconciliation. Pray that Russian aggression would be thwarted and innocent lives protected. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

Mexico— A research project called “Let Her Be Heard” that documents indigenous women’s experience has revealed considerable discrimination against minorities of a different faith from their remote indigenous communities. The team encourages women to process their experiences of persecution and express their hopes through art and traditional embroidery. They have also found that many, including two sisters named Gudelia and Patricia, have been displaced or assaulted because of their Christian faith. It has been encouraging for the women to meet others like them and to share their struggles. Praise God for such a unique opportunity to combine artistic creativity with healing and sharing. Pray that these women and their families will find their conditions improving in the near future, that Mexico would grant them legal protection, and that they would continue to experience encouragement and fellowship. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

United Kingdom/Australia—The United Kingdom recently signed a \$160 million deal with Rwanda to offshore the processing of refugees and asylum seekers to Rwanda, a Commonwealth nation. This was met with widespread outcries from humanitarian and human rights organizations such as Doctors without Borders, Human Rights Watch, and the UNHRC. Quite apart from being an inhumane and inferior option for those seeking asylum in the UK, there appears to be deep concern that the arrangement does not provide nearly enough safeguards to ensure the proper processing of those with legitimate claims. As the UNHRC stated, “the UK has an obligation to ensure access for asylum seekers—integrating those deemed to be refugees and safely returning to their country of origin, people with no legal basis to stay.” Australia has taken a similar approach to refugees seeking asylum in their country. Pray for the hearts of those who live in safety, freedom, and prosperity to be softened to the plight of those who have lost everything and remain at risk in their own home countries. Pray for the protection of those fleeing conflict and persecution, especially from traffickers who seek to profit from the hardship of others and exploiting them. Pray for the resolution of conflicts that force people to leave their homes and livelihoods just to survive. Pray for a change of tide in repressive regimes, which also force those who speak up for truth, freedom, and justice to flee for their lives. *(Source: UNHRC; The New York Times; Human Rights Watch; Doctors without Borders)*

Pakistan—Twenty-six-year-old Aneeqa Ateeq was sentenced to death for blasphemy charges. She met a Muslim Pakistani man on social media, and when she refused to be friendly with him, he accused her of sending blasphemous messages to him on WhatsApp. The court convicted her and condemned her to hanging. Although capital punishment rarely occurs in these blasphemy cases, prisoners typically spend their lives in jail, awaiting death. Aneeqa is being held in a small cell in horrible conditions as her trial continues. Please pray for her release, and pray that Pakistan will amend these completely unjust, arbitrary laws that can so easily be abused. Pray for protection for Christians who are so often targeted in this way. *(Source: The Guardian; International Christian Concern)*