

August 2022 Prayer

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all time and in every way.
—2 Thessalonians 3:16a

You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.
—Psalm 119:114

Sudan—Badar Haroun Abdul-Jabbar, Mohamed Haroun Abdul-Jabbar, Tariq Aref Abdallah and Mortada Ismael Yousef, four Christian men who met to pray and fellowship as a church, were condemned as apostates after being held in prison and treated inhumanely. They were told to stop praying, meeting together, witnessing, or anything that would make them look like Christians. When told to renounce their faith in Christ or receive the death penalty, they refused. Praise God for the courage that He’s given these men. Pray that they would be protected from this unjust sentence of death. Pray for their miraculous release and protection and that God would bless them abundantly in the midst of their trial. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

International—Pray for the 70 or more countries that criminalize blasphemy—often nothing more than believing differently than the dominant religion. Pray for believers and other religious minorities in those countries where blasphemy and apostasy laws are used to justify incommunicado detention, torture, denial of access to legal counsel and/or medical care, and prolonged imprisonment. Among the 70 countries globally that criminalize blasphemy, 22 also criminalize apostasy, and 12 maintain the death penalty for religious offenses. As the UN Secretary General has noted, this has a “chilling effect on the peaceful exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. It also leads to mob violence and extrajudicial killings committed with impunity. Pray for the protection of Christians and religious minorities in countries hostile to their faith. Pray for countries that resort to this extreme repression in an attempt to maintain a false sense of order and homogeneity. Pray for the work of organizations like Jubilee Campaign, who recently introduced two charters to the UN urging for the embedding of language into UN resolutions regarding the death penalty and extrajudicial, summary, and arbitrary executions that would emphasize that the death penalty should never be used for apostasy or blasphemy. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

Myanmar—In July, the Burmese military junta boldly executed four human rights activists, Kyaw Min Yu, Phyo Zeya Thaw, Hla Myo Aung, and Aung Thura Zaw. Two were leaders of the resistance movement, and their death was likely by hanging. As the world condemns this brutality, please pray that other nations would be effective in curbing this injustice and would know what actions to take. Pray for the citizens of Myanmar to know how to pave the way back to democracy. Pray for comfort and help for the families of these activists and that their deaths would not be in vain. (*Source: The Washington Post*)

Mexico—Three years ago this July, leaders of the village of Cuamontax Huazalingo, in Hidalgo State in Mexico, forced two Christian couples to leave their homes and flee to a neighboring village. The homes of Gilberto Badillo and his wife Agustina Lara, and Uriel Badillo and his wife Adelina, were attacked, doors and windows smashed, and belongings stolen. The authorities explicitly indicated that the attack and expulsion was due to the

couples' refusal to sign an agreement that bans Protestant Christians from entering the village. Forced expulsions along with other kinds of harassment such as cutting off water and electricity and threats of violence are common in areas where indigenous communities are governed by traditional laws and customs. Despite filing numerous official complaints, the Badillos have not been able to return to their homes or recover their property in the intervening years. Pray for the softening of hearts of local leaders. Pray for divine provision for and protection of the Badillos and others who suffer similar discrimination. Pray for the believers in these regions to be a strong, loving, and faithful witness amid this persecution, so that many might come to know and love Jesus. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Nepal—Reverend Keshav Acharya has been accused of forcing conversions on Hindus and sentenced to two years in prison. The pastor has been freely sharing the Gospel, but has not been coercing, forcing, or threatening anyone. Nepal's religious laws are ambiguous enough that they can be abused and used to persecute and unjustly punish Christians. Please pray for perseverance, strength, and protection for Reverend Acharya while he is serving his sentence. Pray that he would be a light and encouragement to those in-prisoned with him, and that he would have ample opportunities to share the Gospel with them. As we pray for the Nepalese laws to be just and protect Christians instead of target them, pray also that believers there would not give up hope or give in to fear. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Afghanistan—"My bones ache. Too many children are perishing." These are the words of a World Vision worker returning from clinic visits in Afghanistan. During the precarious change of government there, COVID, poverty, drought, and ongoing conflict have led to more than 22.8 million Afghans facing potentially life-threatening levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Overburdened health clinics are filled with children under 5—approximately 3.2 million—suffering from malnutrition, pneumonia, acute diarrhea, and emaciation. One million of those children are on the brink of starvation. Families have lost primary breadwinners and/or have lost their homes and livelihoods altogether. The magnitude of suffering is unimaginable, and it is threatening to become the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Pray for the suffering, vulnerable, literally starving people of Afghanistan—for miraculous provision. Pray for the opening of hearts around the globe to pour generously from abundant resources into the region of tremendous need. Pray for the repressive Taliban regime, that they might redirect their efforts from excessive and futile attempts to control the population—especially women—and make swift, practical, and effective efforts to relieve the suffering of their own people. (Source: *World Vision*)

Nigeria—Thirty-six Christians were kidnapped on July 25 when Muslim extremists attacked their village. The week before, two Catholic priests were abducted and one, John Mark Cheitnum, was killed. Another bishop shared, "I was crushed by the news of the death, but I am convinced that his death will prove to our enemies the genuineness and the beauty of our faith. Those whose stock in trade is the abduction and the gruesome murder of members of the clergy should know that this will not stop us from courageously carrying the torch of the gospel to the ends of the earth, notwithstanding the barrage of attacks on our faith." Please pray for those who are grieving John Mark's death. And please pray for all those who were kidnapped to be safely returned. Pray that their faith would remain bold and strong, that they would cling to their Savior, that their suffering would cause them to know God's presence all

the more, and that many would come to salvation in the midst of all the spiritual attack in Nigeria. (Source: Reuters; International Christian Concern)

Wales, United Kingdom—Rolands Kazoks, a thirty-one-year-old Latvian man came to Wales in search of work and a better life. His transport from Germany and his work in a meat processing plant were arranged by Normunds Freibergs and Jokubas and Ruta Stankeviciene. However, when he arrived, his passport was taken along with his wages, as he was forced to pay back his “debts,” which included exorbitant interest and huge charges for things as nonsensical as a National Insurance number, a fee for the job in the chicken factory, and “Brexit.” He was forced to live in a tiny room in the Stankevicienes’ house, do manual labor for them, was denied sufficient food, and was never allowed to wash his clothes despite them being covered in blood and meat byproducts. His supposed debts were mounting into the thousands. Coworkers at the processing plant became concerned when Rolands seemed to be hungry and came to work wearing sandals in the winter. Finally, through his employer he was able to get police help, and the three traffickers are being prosecuted. Pray for the healing and provision for Rolands. Pray for justice in this situation and that these three individuals might face the reality of their cruel, dehumanizing exploitation and repent. Pray that we in “free” societies might not be blind to the exploitation around us, including understanding where our cheap products often come from and that trafficking and slavery happens “in our backyard,” as well as in other countries. Give thanks for a judicial system in the United Kingdom that will prosecute these criminals and pray for the protection and strength of these legal systems that do combat injustice and exploitation. (Source: BBC)

Syria—At the inauguration of a new Greek Orthodox church building near Hama, designed as a replica of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, a rocket strike killed two people and injured twelve. The unknown terrorists attacked just as a large crowd had gathered to celebrate the opening of the church. In addition to the people affected, the explosion also damaged the new church building. Please pray for healing for those injured and comfort for the loved ones of the two who died in the attack. In the midst of the shock and grief, pray for encouragement and that the Christian community in Syria would grow instead of dwindle. Pray for the Lord’s protection of the body of believers in this turbulent country. (Source: International Christian Concern)

Iran—Mona Heydari was a child bride who attempted to flee her forced marriage, only to be captured and beheaded by her “husband” Sajjad, as shown in a horrific video posted of him smiling as he carried her severed head through the streets. This is just one of approximately 450 “honor” killings that are committed each year in Iran. The medical journal, *The Lancet*, indicated that over 8,000 honor killings were reported in Iran between 2010 and 2014. Similarly, a women’s rights group in Iran—the National Council of Resistance of Iran—published a number of shocking but not uncommon examples of these murders that took place just in the last year: “A 27-year-old woman was kidnapped, raped, and strangled after turning down a suitor. A 22-year-old woman was soaked in gasoline and set alight by her father after she told him she wanted to remarry. A 14-year-old child bride was strangled by her husband, a cleric, after he heard rumors about her. A young woman was stabbed to death by her father for coming home late.” Pray for the protection of the very vulnerable women in Iran and in other countries where honor killings are seen as acceptable. Pray for governments to take decisive and thorough action to eradicate these kinds of murders and bring perpetrators to justice. Pray for the families, and particularly the rage-filled men, who value

their own perceived reputation over the well-being and even the very life of those they should be caring for, protecting, and honoring. Pray that they might be convicted in their spirits of the horror of what they have done and be filled with deep regret and remorse. (*Sources: CBN; The Lancet; NCRI*)