

## February 2023 Prayer

*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

—Deuteronomy 6: 4-5

*“And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”*

—Luke 18: 7-8

**United States/Midwest**—At least 50 children were discovered working graveyard shifts cleaning slaughterhouses and meat packing plants in the Midwest, including plants in Grand Island and Worthington, Minnesota. It is believed that indications of the plight of these children goes as far back as 2016 when a young girl was discovered by a teacher to have chemical burns on her from work she was doing overnight for Packer Sanitation Services (PSSI). In addition to being dangerous work for adults, it is of course illegal to employ children, and it is suspected that these children were potential victims of a human trafficking scheme. Pray that the investigation would bring the truth to light and expose those who are horrifically profiting from the abuse and exploitation of these children. Pray that we might all as far as we are able hold corporations and business people from whom we buy our everyday products responsible for safe, legal, and ethical practices. Pray that these children would be protected, restored, and given a real chance at a good life after such terrible exploitation. (*Source: NBC News*)

**Peru**—Though democratically elected, Peruvian president Pedro Castillo has struggled to govern in this first year of his term. This January, he shockingly dissolved Congress and declared he would rule by decree. Within hours he was arrested, impeached, and put in detention. Two-thirds of the Peruvian population are poor or middle-class indigenous Peruvians who are supporters of Castillo, and protests erupted around the country. The government reacted with extreme force, firing real bullets into crowds, and at least 55 people have been killed, many more wounded. In general the mass population feels that the system is rigged and corrupt—a sentiment found in other neighboring South American countries. Pray for peace and safety and protection for the people of Peru. Pray for a Peruvian government that will be one that will rule with justice and integrity. Pray that the underlying issues of poverty and instability will be addressed. (*Source: The New York Times*)

**Iceland**—Human rights organizations have identified an overuse and misuse of solitary confinement during pre-trial detention for both children and disabled people. These are people who have not yet been convicted of their alleged crimes, but in 2021 alone 61 percent of people in detention have been subject to long periods of solitary confinement. Despite numerous studies which indicate the practice of prolonged solitary confinement is abusive and harmful, the Icelandic authorities have inappropriately misused it and have done so knowingly. This is in direct violation European prohibitions of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners. Pray for the protection of detained individuals—especially minors and those with physical and intellectual disabilities—who are held in Iceland while awaiting trial. Pray that the Icelandic authorities will quickly address these abuses and stop the creep of human rights abuses from further infecting a free, democratic, and civil society. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

**Indonesia**—Ruth was born into a Muslim family in Indonesia. She began having dreams about Jesus as a child, and a Christian at school told her about him. She bought a Bible and started reading it in secret and when she was older she began attending church. Her mother found her hidden Bible and told her to

leave Christianity or leave the house. So, Ruth left the home and secretly started living in her neighbor's garage and sleeping in the car. She believes that, "Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for [Jesus'] sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life" (Matthew 19:29) and "Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me" (Psalm 27:10). Praise God for Ruth's salvation and her courage to stand for Christ. Please pray for Ruth to find a safe place to live and for her family to accept Christ and be reconciled to her. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

**Azerbaijan**—The country has put a blockade on the territory of Nagorno Karabakh, where 120,000 Armenians live. The area is officially recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but ethnic Armenians make up most of its population. This blockade is the only road to and from the area and will prevent the Armenians from receiving food, medical supplies, fuel, and aid. The Armenians have already faced extreme oppression and persecution, and thousands were killed in 2020. A group of human rights organizations has issued a Genocide Warning for the people there, and John Eibner from Christian Solidarity Worldwide says of the blockade, "the dictatorship of Azerbaijan is clearly telegraphing its intent to carry out another phase of the Genocide." Please pray that the international community will step up to protect these innocent lives, and pray for God's protection over this population that has already suffered so much. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**Mexico**—In 2016 local authorities persecuted protestant Christians in El Encanto, Mexico by turning off their water and electrical supplies to their homes because the believers refused to participate in activities associated with the majority religion. Christian Solidarity Worldwide began a campaign calling for reinstatement of these basic services, and praise God there has been progress made. Though only a temporary solution, the municipal government has begun bringing in supplies of water for Protestant homes, saving them from walking miles daily to retrieve water. In December 2022, church leader Pastor Ranulfo was able to meet with a number of authorities, explain the hardships church members are experiencing, as well as express their support for participating in all community activities, except those of a religious nature. There also appears to be increasing local support for religious freedom and for persecuted believers, but there is still a long way to go. Give thanks for the progress that has been made and for the provision of clean water to the Christian families. Pray for continued progress for religious freedom in rural Mexico. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**Nigeria**—Rhoda Ya'u Jatau, a Christian woman, was arrested and is on trial for blasphemy simply because she shared a video condemning the murder of Deborah Yakubu, a Christian college student who was killed for blasphemy. After Rhoda was arrested, a mob came to her neighborhood to burn houses and attack Christian residents. In addition, Rhoda's husband is not permitted to visit his wife in prison, and he and their five children had to leave their city because their lives were in danger. Please pray for Rhoda and for her family. Pray that they would be safe and cling to Christ during this trial. Pray for Rhoda's release and protection and that her faith in Christ would strengthen. (Source: *Genocide Watch*)

**Eritrea**—While meeting in private homes for Christian fellowship, 39 women and five men were arrested and are being held at Mai Serwa prison, near the capital of Asmara. Please pray for their safety and protection and for their families who have so little information on what is happening. Pray that they will stay strong in their faith and trust the Lord as they suffer for His name. Pray that they would be an encouragement to one another and a light in the prison to others who don't know Christ. And pray that their guards and persecutors would come to faith through their witness and testimony. (Source: *Release International*)

**Israel**—In January there were a number of attacks on Armenian Christians in Jerusalem by extremist Jews. Graffiti slogans were painted on buildings in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City, including “Revenge,” “Death to Christians,” “Death to Arabs and gentiles” and “Death to Armenians.” On 26 January, a mob of 40 extremist Jews attacked an Armenian restaurant, causing much damage to the restaurant and adjacent businesses. Two night later, a Jewish man attacked a young Armenian man with pepper spray requiring the man to be hospitalized. A man urinated on the entrance of an Armenian convent, and priests have been spat upon, and young Jewish men wearing hoods have gone around intimidating Armenian Christians. Recent terror attacks have increased tensions among different faith groups. Pray for peace and protection for the Armenian community in Jerusalem and believers there. Pray for those who perpetrate these hate crimes—who do not represent all Jews in Israel—that they might understand the cruel and unproductive nature of their actions. Pray that many in Israel might come to know the Messiah. Join Middle East Concern in praying for Armenian believers, that: “God will encourage and console Armenian Christians in the face of extremist action; Armenian Christians will have wisdom and grace to respond appropriately; the Israeli security forces will diligently protect the Armenian community and apprehend those who are inciting violence; the different communities in Jerusalem will live in harmony and without fear.” (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

**Turkey**—Leyla grew up in a Muslim family but became a Christian when she met and married Murat. She hid her faith from her parents and siblings, but when they found out, her father held her and her children hostage. He demanded that she divorce her Christian husband because he had left the Muslim faith and lost the right to his family. She would have been forced to marry a Muslim man. Her husband, Murat, courageously and respectfully approached him and insisted that he would not leave Christ or his family, and by God’s grace, his father-in-law allowed him to take his family back with a warning: if he ever took them to church, he would kill him. The extended family then began following and spying on them to be sure they never went to church. Leyla and Murat have decided to leave the country and seek a safe place where her family can not find them and where they can safely be part of a church. Please pray for God’s miraculous protection while they prepare to leave. Pray that they would be able to safely escape and have the means to find a new home. Pray for Leyla’s family to find salvation in Jesus Christ. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)