

January 2012

Undisclosed Country: A young teacher, only identified as “Anong,” recently was offered a salary raise and help with tuition to further her education. The only condition: to abandon her Christian faith. Though she has been recognized by the principal of her school as bright, hardworking, and a gifted teacher, she will not only be refused advancement if she doesn't recant her faith, she will lose her current position as well. Anong works very hard to support her elderly parents and help pay for her younger brother's college education, so the loss of her job will have an impact on many. Despite this, Anong refused to give up her faith, stating, "I will not deny Jesus and I will stand in the truth. Even if they don't like me or remove me from my position, that is not bad. I believe God will help me and He prepares good things for me." Pray that her commitment to Christ will remain strong, that she will not be deprived of a job or advancement because of her beliefs, but should this occur pray for God's provision for her and for her ability to continue to trust in His goodness. Pray for those who would deny a hardworking employee a position, and pray for the children who would be deprived of a gifted teacher. Pray for Anong's church community—where she is known as an active member, volunteer, and Sunday School teacher—that they might not be discouraged either, but steadfastly support and encourage Anong and her family. (*Voice of the Martyrs*)

Ivory Coast, Western Africa, and International: After more than 10 years of promising to do something about the endemic use of child and/or slave labor in their supply chain, Nestle Corporation has pledged to work with the Fair Labor Association to put an end to this practice within their production process. Considering that Nestle has historically had one of the worst track records for unethical labor practices, this is a major development. This past October, CAN joined with a number of fair trade organizations in calling chocolate-producing giants Nestle, Hershey, and Mars to clean up their sourcing of cocoa—an industry reliant on the use of forced, child labor. We praise God that our prayers and actions have been answered thus far with this positive change, and continue to petition Him on behalf of the vulnerable people still exploited by this industry. Pray in particular for the 1.8 million children involved in cocoa production, many of whom have been abducted from or sold by their families. Pray that those who make, sell, and consume these products might become increasingly aware of these gross injustices and be moved to make changes in their own actions. (*BBC*)

Mali: This land-locked, extremely poor nation in western Africa relies on the mining of gold as one of its main sources of revenue. Sadly, much like its neighbor to the west, Ivory Coast, Mali also relies on the cheap or free labor of children to extract this precious metal used to adorn people around the globe. Children as young as six do dangerous, back-breaking work, all the while inhaling toxins like mercury. Pray for the freedom of these children, pray for the government of Mali to adopt policies that protect their most vulnerable citizens, instead of exploiting them. Pray also for the small Christian population in Mali (approximately 1 percent) that they might be a light in this nation and provide a visible alternative to a way of life that exploits and enslaves. Pray for their courage and protection as they live in a nation where they are most definitely the minority. (*Care2*)

Nepal: Praise God for His protection in Nepal! On November 28th, in Kathmandu, Nepal, a church janitor, Arjun Magar, discovered a bomb outside of the Navajiwan Church, and was able to alert the police in time to diffuse it. He noticed a plastic sack with a cloth bag inside at the gate of the church, and considered it suspicious. Please pray for continued protection for the church in Nepal who are a part of less than 1 percent of the population not identified as Hindu (approx. 80 percent), Buddhist (approx. 10 percent), Muslim (approx. 4 percent), or Kirant (approx. 4 percent). (*Eurasia Review*)

China: The government of the Netherlands awarded Ni Yulan, a Chinese human rights activist, the 2011

Tulip Award for her “exceptional courage” in defending human rights in China. Ni Yulan was nominated by China Aid Association and Christian Solidarity Worldwide after multiple police detentions, during which she was severely beaten and left partially paralyzed. During previous imprisonments, she was deprived crutches or a wheelchair, yet forced to crawl long distances around the prison to go to work assignments, including going up and down stairs. A police officer also peed in her face during an interrogation. This is all due to the Chinese government's anger over Ni Yulan's work defending those who face forced evictions—especially prevalent during preparations for the 2008 Olympics. Ni and her husband were evicted themselves. Now the 51-year-old former lawyer faces trial at the end of December and beginning of January for trumped up charges. Recently, she attended her hearing lying in a bed in the courtroom, using oxygen to breathe. Reports from Amnesty International and other organizations fear a negative outcome from these proceedings, and liken Ni's case to the harsh treatment received by other high profile human rights workers in China, such as Chen Wei and Chen Xi. Pray for Ni Yulan—for her sustenance during this current ordeal, for a positive outcome and freedom, for both emotional and physical healing, for courage and strength to continue her vital work. Please pray that others will rise up in China and around the world, calling on the Chinese government to abandon its endemic human rights abuses. Pray for others, who like Ni Yulan, still suffer at the hands of authorities for nothing more than standing up for others and for what they believe: Gao Zhisheng, Chen Wei, Alimujiang Yimiti, Li Ying, Yang Rongli, Pastor Wang Xiaoguang, Zhang Huamei, Yang Xuan, Chen Xi, Liu Xiaobo, and many others. (*The Guardian*)

Somalia: After decades of conflict, combat, and famine, Somalia has been left a destitute country, where the infrastructure and whole cities have been devastated and the population is starving. Due to this most recent famine, the necessary mass-movement of citizens have left women and children most at risk, and victims of pervasive abduction, gang-rape, and murder. Even prior to these recent events, Somali girls and women led lives of deep deprivation and abuse—most are illiterate and subject to genital mutilation. Now bands of armed men force girls, some as young as 10, to become “temporary wives,” a practice which amounts to cruel sexual slavery. If they refuse, they can be stoned. Some of the main perpetrators of this violence are members of Shabab, a militant group that “presents itself as a morally righteous rebel force and the defender of pure Islam.” Pray for those girls and women victimized by these violent men, that they might find safety, protection, and healing. Pray for those who commit these crimes that they might become convicted of the grievous wrong they are perpetrating, change their ways, and seek to defend and aid vulnerable people instead of attacking and abusing them. Pray that they might come to know Christ, and pray for any believers in Somalia, that they might be courageous in their defense of others, outspoken about their faith, and offering of a love and forgiveness contrary to what the world offers. (*New York Times*)

Nigeria: Release International reported that “Militants launched Christmas Day bomb attacks on Christian worshipers in three Nigerian states. The blasts killed around 40 who had gathered to celebrate Christmas and injured scores more.” The attacks took place in Madalla, Niger state, near the capital Abuja, in Jos, central Plateau state, and Gadaka, Yobe state, in the northeast. Christian-owned shops and a home were set alight in Potsikum, also in Yobe. Pray that Christians will not allow themselves to be provoked into retaliation. Pray also that the Nigerian government will protect Christians and deal effectively with the terrorist threat to their nation. (*Release International*)

Iran: We join Elam Ministries in rejoicing in the acquittal and release of Shahla Rahmati from Evin Prison. Shahla Rahmati was imprisoned for 3 months in Tehran's Evin Prison. For more than half this time, this Christian woman and director of a successful electronics company was held in solitary confinement, and then later was moved to an overcrowded cell with 80 hardened criminals and drug addicts, where her health deteriorated drastically. Pray for her recovery and continued bold witness.

Pray also for three imprisoned pastors in Iran: Farshid Fathi-Malayeri—an evangelical pastor and father of two, held for more than a year without charge, and refused release even when his family raised the unreasonable amount set for bail; Pastor Behnam Irani—charged with “actions against national security,” beaten so severely by fellow prisoners he now has difficulty walking, now serving a 5-year sentence that labels him an apostate that “can be killed”; and Youcef Nadarkhani, pastor and father of two young boys, still awaiting a verdict on the appeal of his death sentence for “apostasy.” (*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

North Korea: With the recent death of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, now more than ever is a time to pray for this country, one of the most repressed and isolated on the globe. Pray that this transition might create an opportunity for freedom and reform to break through the totalitarian oppression that has characterized North Korean leadership since its inception. Pray for Kim Jong-un, the youngest son of Kim Jong-il, who has been named the new supreme leader, that he might pursue a course entirely different from his father, and that he and others in leadership in North Korea might find Christ. Pray for a population cut off from truth, freedom, and basic human rights. Pray for the sustenance and perseverance of the persecuted Christian population, most of whom are languishing in prison camps under horrific and inhumane conditions. (*New York Times*)

India: Kutty, a former slave in a rice mill in Chennai, India, was recently elected to public office in his community. After being rescued by International Justice Mission, along with his wife and children from inhumane conditions in a rice mill, Kutty participated in an after-care program also run by IJM, which educates the vulnerable and impoverished citizens of their rights and provides emotional and physical support and rehabilitation. Kutty responded to his new freedom by taking on a leadership role in his community in an effort to bring better roads, water supply, and electricity—his recent election to the position of Panchayat President will enable him to do just that. We praise God for the work IJM does for His kingdom and for the “least of these.” Praise God for the freedom and restoration of Kutty, his family, and others from similar circumstances. This winter we thank Him that Christ came to “proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners . . . to bestow upon them . . . a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” (*International Justice Mission*)