

## October 2012

**Colombia**—For decades, this Central American nation has been plagued by violence, crime, and civil unrest caused by rampant drug trade and armed guerrilla rebellion. While this has disrupted and endangered civil society in general, drug lords and rebels are especially hostile towards Christians—targeting pastors and Church leaders, who spread Christ's gospel of peace. Children are often used as threats and leverage to stop the work of believers in the area. Both rebels and drug lords threaten church families with the abduction of their children unless they cease sharing the gospel. Many children lose their parents to the violence in their country. Pray for the families who face the horrible choice to sharing their faith, or lose their children—pray for their courage and peace, and for the protection of those most vulnerable children. Pray for the organizations like Open Doors, who have opened “safe houses” for children who are orphaned by violence or who are brought there by parents who believe this is the only place their children will be safe from kidnapping or worse. Pray for kids like Jacqueline, who has lived in one of these safe houses since she was eight years old. Now ten years later, she has finished high school, with Youth with a Mission (YWAM), tutors other children, and is now pursuing an engineering degree, through an online program facilitated by a local university. Thank God for, not only the safety of these safe houses, but also the opportunities they provide for kids to heal, grow, and thrive. Pray for children like four-year-old Cristina, who was with her mother and brother when they were gunned down on their way to church. Her father, a church elder, was also murdered by beheading by those hostile to his work. Pray for the healing physically of Cristina, who was also shot that day and trapped beneath the body of her brother, but also pray for her emotional and spiritual healing and that she will find the love of family through the church. Pray for the country of Colombia, rife with violence and crime, but where the peace and light of Christ persists nonetheless. (*Open Doors—One with Them*)

**China**—In a move similar to what happened recently with Alimujiang Yimiti, the lawyers for Gao Zhisheng were denied access to him when they traveled to Shaya county, in the remote part of the region of Xinjiang where Gao is being held. Though Gao's brother made formal requests for the meeting, when he and the lawyer arrived at the prison they met with a variety of delay tactics and being shuffled along a bureaucratic chain. When their request was finally answered, they were denied on the basis that the prisoner himself had to request the visit—which is not only illegal, but it is impossible, as Gao has had no contact with the outside world for many months. Praise God that Gao's brother was able to secure the services of prominent human rights lawyers, Li Xiongbing and Li Subin. Pray for both these men that they might have wisdom and tenacity as they pursue Gao's case with the Chinese authorities. Pray for Chinese police and prison officials at Shaya prison and the Xinjiang Prison Administration Bureau, such as Dong Ping, Mr. Xu, and Mr. Kang, that somehow they would no longer desire to participate in such a grave injustice, but allow Gao his basic right of legal representation. Continue in vigilant prayer for Gao, who has languished for years in unimaginable suffering. Pray for his faith, pray for his freedom, pray that his ordeal might soon come to an end. (*China Aid Association; Christian Newswire*)

**Sudan**—At the end of August, many were relieved to hear of the release of Sudanese peace activist, Rudwan Dawod, who had been arrested along with around 2,000 other peaceful protesters calling for the end of the genocide in Sudan. After weeks of phone calls, emails, and other grassroots efforts to free him, Dawod was allowed to return to his wife in the United States and their home in Oregon. Dawod had been in South Sudan helping to build a church as part of a reconciliation project in the region. From there he traveled to Khartoum to protect against the Bashir regime, at which point he suffered multiple arrests, detention, torture, and trumped up charges of terrorism. Give thanks for the release of this man willing to leave the safety of his life in the U.S., in order to shine a light on the

ongoing tragedy in South Sudan. Pray for the many more who remain imprisoned by the corrupt Bashir regime, and also for the thousands who have been victims of and remain vulnerable to the mass atrocities being perpetrated by this despot and his government. (*United to End Genocide*)

**Eritrea**—While the plight of marginalized minorities, especially Christians, in this small African nation is often overlooked by the international media, slow and steady progress has been made in addressing the horrific human rights abuses committed by this repressive regime. For decades, thousands of Christians have detained in sub-human conditions, with little hope of release or return to a normal life. However, vigilant human rights organizations had persisted in bringing up the situation in Eritrea to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Praise God that the UN HRC has finally passed its first-ever resolution addressing human rights in Eritrea. Part of the resolution will include a Special Rapporteur to investigate these crimes. Pray for the individual appointed to this important post, pray for his or her effectiveness, tenacity, and integrity. Pray for believers who have been imprisoned there for years, such as Kidane Weldou, Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel, and Haile Nayzgi. Give thanks for the work of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, and other organizations, who were unrelenting in their fight for the oppressed in Eritrean, despite the lack of international attention and media coverage. Pray also that the Eritrean government will be responsive to international pressure and change their handling of religious minorities and those who peacefully dissent. (*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**China**—Though at times it seemed impossible, praise God that the Chinese government has finally changed its stance on the use of forced abortion as part of its One Child Policy. The recent coverage of the tragic story of Feng Jianmei, a woman who was 7 months pregnant when she was beaten by family planning officials and then had a forced abortion performed on her this past June, certainly played an integral role in bringing to light the brutality with which this policy is enforced. Also, Kat Lewis of All Girls Allowed, credits the Christians and their continued pressure as important to bringing about this change as well. Continue in prayer as families still face extreme repression and coercion in regard to family planning and “unauthorized” pregnancies. Pray for this country where more than 13 million abortions are performed each year.

**Pakistan**—Praise God for the release of Rimsha Masih, a 14 year old girl in Pakistan. After being falsely accused of burning pages of the Quran, she was arrested last month and charged with blasphemy, which could carry a death sentence. Instead, a Muslim cleric was charged with planting evidence against her, and she was freed from jail. While her exoneration on charges of desecrating the Koran is good news, Rimsha's ordeal is far from over, and she and her family are still in great danger, as there are many in her community who seek to harm or kill them in retaliation. Beyond this, she still faces charges of blasphemy. Please pray for her further protection, and continue to pray for others accused of blasphemy that are still in prison, like Asia Bibi. Pray for the cleric who allegedly committed the crime of planting the pages on Rimsha's property, that he would not only be justly prosecuted, but more important, might recognize the wrong he has committed. Also pray this case will serve as a deterrent to this increasing practices in Pakistan of falsely accusing Christians of crimes against Islam. (*Washington Post; Jubilee Campaign*)

**Iran**—Praise God for the long-awaited release of Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, who had faced the death sentence for apostasy after protesting the mandatory teaching of the Koran to his young sons in their school. Thank Him for faithfully carrying Pastor Nadarkhani through this ordeal, sustaining his faith, and reuniting him to his family. Pray for the ongoing witness of this family and the growth of the church in Iran, as well as their safety. Persevere in prayer for Benham Irani and at least 19 others known to still be imprisoned in Iran for their Christian faith. Benham has suffered extensively from a number of serious health issues while imprisoned and continues to do poorly. Pray that these believers

and their families separated from them might experience the presence of the Holy Spirit and might grow in their faith throughout these ordeals. Pray for the government officials and prison authorities interacting with Christian prisoners, that they too might be transformed by the witness of these imprisoned believers. (*Multiple sources*)

**United States/Thailand**—For millions in America, Walmart is a convenient source of low-cost food and home goods. For many working in Thailand’s shrimp industry, Walmart low prices translate to unlivable wages and working conditions—being forced to work unfair hours without breaks or adequate toilet facilities; being forced to pay for food and lodging from the company, but not making enough to cover expenses; and unpayable “transport” fees for migrant workers from Cambodia and Burma that result in indebted servitude—i.e., slavery. While Walmart denied that they bought shrimp from Phatthana Seafood—the main perpetrator being investigated—U.S. Customs documents reveal Walmart to be one of their largest customers. After denying their use of Phatthana as a supplier, Walmart then sent officials to audit the site, which amounted in nothing more than a superficial cleanup for a glossed over inspection—basically a cover up. Beyond this, fishing boats used in this industry have been used to traffic foreign workers, cannot read the contracts they are agreeing to, and who have no hope of ever being free. United States' law and trade policy forbids the import of any products that have slave or trafficked labor as part of their supply chain. Pray that the United States government and multinational companies like Walmart will use their considerable influence to improve worker conditions and eliminate slave labor altogether. Pray that host countries, such as Thailand, and home countries, such as Cambodia and Burma, will do more to protect migrant workers from slavery, and become responsive to reports of abuses on the job sites. Pray that consumers in the West will use their buying power to encourage Walmart and other similar companies to take greater measures to eradicate slave labor from their supply chains and be transparent with their consumers about the ethicalness of the sourcing of their products. (*Human Rights Watch*)

**United States/International**—Please pray for the estimated 100,000 to 150,000 underaged sex workers in the U.S. These are virtually slaves, not entering prostitution voluntarily, and their average starting age is 12 to 14. Pray for these children to be discovered and protected, and for the perpetrators and pimps to be caught and prosecuted. Please pray for the human trafficking tragedy around the world, that people would be made aware so that it could no longer be hidden and allowed to continue. Pray that evil doers would be found out, and that God would heal and protect those that are suffering. Thank the Lord for the documentary *Nefarious: Merchant of Souls*, which exposes the exploitation of millions of young women. Pray that this film will lead people worldwide to help fight against the crisis and that precious lives would be protected as a result. (*Huffington Post; Nefarious: Merchant of Souls*)

**Kenya**—On Sunday, September 30, while worshipers were gathered at St. Polycarp's Church in Nairobi, a grenade attack exploded in the Sunday School, seriously wounding at least three children and killing one—many more suffered less critical injuries Nairobi police strongly suspect the sympathizers of Somalia's al-Shabab and believe it is connected to a string of grenade attacks carried out in Kenya over the past six months. Though the attack targeted a Christian church, it is also felt that these attacks are motivated anger over Kenyan forces entering Somalia as part of a UN intervention effort to root out al-Shabab and other terrorist groups. Beyond this, a few of the attacks initially attributed to al-Shabab sympathizers were found to be related to turf wars between rival gangs within Kenyan cities. However, after the church grenade attack, a retaliatory mob went out with sticks and stones to attack Somalis living in the neighborhood around the church. Pray for the comfort and healing of all those wounded in the attack—both physically and emotionally. Pray for the parents of the child who died and of those who suffered critical injuries, that they would experience peace and forgiveness. Pray for the whole Christian community in Kenya that through the Holy Spirit they end the cycle of

violence by resisting the human urge for revenge and displaying the love and forgiveness of Christ. Pray they can continue their lives and live out their faith with boldness, and that this experience would deepen their trust and knowledge of Christ. Pray for whomever carried out these attacks that they might be convicted of the senseless and evil nature of what they are doing and see the contrast of the light and truth of Christ. Pray for the police and Kenyan officials to investigate these crimes with diligence and integrity. *(BBC)*