

May 2013

*Turn to me and have mercy on me,
as you always do to those who love your name.
Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me.
Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may obey your precepts.
Make your face shine on your servant
and teach me your decrees.*

—*Psalm 119: 132-135*

Colombia—Indigenous Christian converts in Colombia for years have faced systematic persecution from the indigenous community and from anti-Christian militias. The Christian church on the Arhuaco reservation, under siege in 2006 by guerrillas hired by indigenous authorities, was denied food and water for 3 days in an effort to remove them from the region. Consequently, a number of Christians were put on a hit-list by the guerrillas, including Colombian couple, Elizabeth Chaparro, 31, and her husband, Eliud Landero, 33, who were gunned down in their apartment Valledupar this past March 7, while their young sons, Estevan David, 5, and Luis Daniel, 3. The boys were not physically harmed but clearly face a long process of emotional and spiritual healing from this great trauma. The couple had relocated to Valledupar along with 45 other families who had all fled the persecution on the Arhuaco reservation. Eliud had been a lay pastor, who supported his family as a motorcycle taxi driver in addition to his church work, and Elizabeth—an indigenous Arhuaco—was a Christian musician who had recorded three albums. The couple worked among the Arhuaco people, singing and sharing the gospel. Pray for the Christian Arhuaco community who still face constant persecution from tribal authorities and guerrilla groups. Many still remain on the hit list, such as the Torres family who miraculously escaped a similar attack in December. Pray also for the family of Eliud and Elizabeth, for strength, healing, and the comfort and forgiveness of Christ following this tragedy. Pray for tribal authorities and guerrilla groups who attack and oppress Christians in the region. Pray that they would come to know personally the light, love, and forgiveness of Jesus. (*Source: Open Doors*)

Nigeria/United States—Recent years Nigeria has witnessed a terrifying increase in terrorist activities aimed primarily at Christians in the region, despite the fact that Northern Nigeria is home to a Christian majority. Though Islamic extremist group Boko Haram has been responsible for numerous church bombing and other vicious attacks, the United States State Department has consistently refused to accurately label Boko Haram a terrorist group and its mass-murders the genocidal campaign that they are. Nigerian leaders, including the Honorable Tigwar Zainab Naazem, a female Muslim member of the Plateau State House of Assembly, recently convened at Capitol Hill to describe the atrocities committed by both Boko Haram and the Fulani Tribesmen, the latter of whom commit midnight machete massacres on innocent sleeping villages. They also have attacked indigenous Muslims of the Plateau state. Pray that the wishes of leaders in Nigeria and a variety of human rights groups, who are urging the United States State Department to accurately identify the assaults on Christians as pre-genocidal systematic oppression and the groups perpetrating them as terrorists. Pray for the protection and comfort of the Christian community in Nigeria, where more Christian were killed in 2012 than in all the other regions of the world combined. Pray for leaders to act decisively, with wisdom and integrity, to intervene and stop these atrocities. (*Source: Jubilee Campaign*)

Ethiopia—Pray for the 74 percent of Ethiopians who have no access to clean water and the many more

who have to travel great distances to get water, clean or otherwise. In a world where 80 percent of all childhood diseases are related to unclean water or inadequate sanitation or hygiene, where many girls remain uneducated because they spend hours of their day going to fetch water, where people drink from rivers infested with worms and other parasites, pray for the success, funding, and expansion of well-drilling and sanitation projects like World Vision's. Lives have already been transformed by new access to clean water. Pray for the flourishing of consequent benefits like the elevated role of women in communities, eradication of water-borne diseases, increased time to pursue productive activities such as small businesses, protection of crops against drought, and the improved health and longevity of livestock. (*Source: World Vision*)

China—Pray for the family of blind activist Chen Guangcheng, who have suffered widespread persecution and attacks since his amazing escape. At the end of April, government-hired assailants began a brutal attack on the home of Chen Guangfu, the eldest brother of Chen Guangcheng, throw bricks, bottles, and explosives at it. When Chen Guangfu attempted to call the emergency police line, he found his phone had been disabled. When he attempted to alert authorities using another phone, the operator who answered tried to evade the issue and then later the department simply did not answer the phone. Previously, government thugs had destroyed his garden and uprooted saplings from his property. The same was done to Chen Guangcheng and Chen Guangfu's mother's property. Additionally, Chen Guangfu's son—Chen Guangcheng's nephew—who is serving a three-year sentence for injuring a policeman when he and his family were attacked in retaliation for Chen Guangcheng's escape, is now suffering from an appendicitis, but the prison officials are refusing him medical parole to be treated. Pray that the efforts of China Aid and international governments might be effective in protecting the Chen family from further assaults and persecution, and to encourage the President Xi and the Chinese government to pursue a more just and humane manner of ruling. Pray for the protection of Chen Guangcheng's nephew's life, that he might receive treatment for his appendicitis and healing. Pray that the Chen family will be strengthened, able to persevere, and know the peace and comfort of Christ during this awful trial. (*Source: China Aid Association*)

Syria—On April 22, while traveling near the border of Turkey on a humanitarian mission, two bishops of Aleppo were abducted by armed assailants, and their driver murdered. Bishop Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church and Bishop Boulos Yaziji of the Greek Orthodox Church were traveling in the region in part to help negotiate the release of two priests, Michel Kayyal (Armenian Catholic) and Maher Mahfouz (Greek Orthodox), who were kidnapped on February 9. While the identities of the perpetrators remains unknown, there is some evidence that they were non-Syrian militants. Pray for the family of the murdered driver that they might be comforted and find peace in the midst of this great loss. Pray for the kidnapped bishops and priests that they might have an overwhelming sense of the presence of Christ throughout their ordeal, that their actions might be a tremendous witness to those around them, and that they might be freed soon and unharmed. Pray for those who committed these crimes that they might be convicted by the Holy Spirit and seek the love and forgiveness of Christ. Pray for the Christian community in Syria, who has suffered greatly in recent days. Pray that they might be strengthened and upheld during this increasingly dangerous time in their country, and pray that the peaceful coexistence of all people might be restored to this nation. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Afghanistan—In Takhar Province on Sunday, April 21, 74 school girls were hospitalized after a suspected gas poisoning at their school. Many were treated and released, but several remain in critical condition. While no one has claimed responsibility for this attack, it follows just three days after another incident in the same city of Taluqan, the capital of Takhar, where more than a dozen girls were hospitalized after gas poisoning at their high school. In fact, mass poisonings at girls' schools has

become an increasingly common tactic used by Taliban and other extremist groups as a means to threaten and intimidate those girls seeking the education they have been entitled to since 2001, when the Taliban was ousted. Many fear that this recently acquired right to education, along with the rights to vote and work, will be in jeopardy as foreign forces begin to evacuate the country. Pray for the protection of girls and women in Afghanistan, as they struggle to enjoy even the few simple rights they have been granted. Pray for those who would seek to oppress and denigrate women in Afghanistan, that they might come to realize that no good, just, or whole society can be maintained while one half of the population is so brutally repressed and controlled. Pray for the healing and restoration of all the girls poisoned in these attacks, and for the continued courage of their families in the face of such vile evil. (Source: Reuters)

Nepal—Pastor Chhedhar Nhoté Lhomi has been an active ministry leader in Nepal since 2003. Now this husband and father of 3 is facing a 12-year prison sentence based on claims that he killed a cow—which violates Hindu dietary law—as well as charges that he has spread the gospel and made Hindus eat beef. During his imprisonment he will be denied visits from other Christians. Pray that those working for his release will have wisdom, guidance, and be granted success. Pray for Pastor Lhomi's encouragement during this imprisonment—as long as it lasts. Pray that he despite the lack of Christian visitors, he will be upheld and comforted by many believers around the world sending messages of love and words of hope. Pray that he will sense strongly the presence of Jesus each day of his ordeal and that his life and actions within the prison will be a great witness to others. Pray for his wife and young children, that they will not be disheartened, but will find deeper ways to trust their Father in Heaven to care for them, give them peace, and provide for their needs. Pray for the courage and faith of the Christian community in Nepal, especially those served by Pastor Lhomi. Pray for the Hindu community that has sought to harass Pastor Lhomi in this way. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

Bangladesh—More than 370 garment workers perished on Wednesday, April 24, when the unstable building in which they worked collapsed on them—and many more remain buried in the rubble. Despite fears about the dangerous conditions and the ominous cracks appearing on factory walls, workers were told they would lose a month's pay if they didn't report to work the day after the appearance of the cracks. The building housed six factories, which all make clothes for major US and European labels, such as H & M, Gap, and Wal-mart. Now it is home to the largest garment industry disaster known in history. Pray for all those affected by this tragedy, that somehow they will find the peace and comfort of Christ amid the loss and pain. Pray for those who oversaw this horrific event might be personally convicted of the wrongness of their actions, as well as be brought to justice for their corporate greed and criminal negligence. Pray that consumers in the West will become increasingly aware and active, and demand products that are produced with workers' rights and safety assured. (Source: *International Labor Rights Forum*)

Senegal—After 5 months detention, Brazilian missionaries Jose Dilson da Silva and Zeneide Moreira were released on bail. The missionaries ran an orphanage for street children in Dakar, until they were imprisoned due to false charges claimed by a father of an attending child, who was angered that his child had been taught from the Bible. Though Jose Dilson da Silva has worked in Senegal for 22 years without incident, and Zeneide Moreira also served faithfully as the orphanage's matron, this angry parent accused them of founding the organization as a means to violate children. Pray that the truth of this situation will be revealed and all the charges dropped. Pray that the anger and vindictiveness which drove this father to make wrongful accusations will be replaced with a desire to learn about the Bible himself. Pray that the good work and efforts to help vulnerable children will not be thwarted by this incident, and that our Heavenly Father will protect these little ones and draw them to Him. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

Vietnam—In a positive move toward increased human rights in Vietnam, United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Dan Baer visited the country this past April for 17 U.S.- Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue. During his visit, Deputy Assistant Secretary Baer was able to visit with a number of human rights lawyers and activists, however Christian human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai was barred from meeting with him. Deputy Assistant Secretary Baer was also prevented from seeing businessman and activist Dr. Pham Hong Son. Despite being issued an invitation from the United States Embassy, Mr. Dai was phoned by a security officer and warned him not to go. The same day the Embassy informed Mr. Dai the Vietnamese government would allow Mr. Dai to go, 20 security officers blocked the way to Mr. Dai's home, and then further, they ordered 10 elderly women to stand in the road. While the meetings Deputy Assistant Secretary Baer had, including one with imprisoned Christian and activist, Father Nguyen Van Ly, were an encouraging sign, the hostile intervention of Mr. Dai's meeting was not. Pray that the Vietnamese government will continue on a road to make real concrete changes in its human rights policies, rather than just engaging in empty motions—especially in the area of religious freedom. Continue to pray for the freedom of Father Nguyen Van Ly and for the safety and human rights work of Mr. Dai and other human rights and religious freedom advocates within Vietnam. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)