

May 2016 Prayer Items

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower;
The righteous run to it and are safe. Proverbs 18:10*

Greece/Turkey—"We are just going to try our chance. It is for our destiny. We are dead anyway," said Firaz, 31, a Syrian Kurd traveling with his cousin. These are the words of one of the hundreds of migrants who are being sent back to Turkey from Greece in the first days of April 2016. This is the result of a Turkey-EU pact that has allowed EU countries to return any migrants to Turkey in exchange for the EU to accept Syrian refugees, and offers Turkey money and improved status in its bid for EU membership. Authorities claim that none of those being returned requested asylum, however, that claim is highly suspect as the migrants have risked their lives to flee their countries, and as the quote above indicates, most feel their lives are in grave and imminent danger if they remain in their own countries. The pact has been broadly criticized by refugee advocates and human rights organizations, as there is clear evidence that Turkey is not a safe country for many of the refugees and that Turkey is also in the process of forcefully expelling many from their country. Return to home countries is even more dangerous, as it is almost surely a sentence to prison, torture, and possible death for being "disloyal," especially if they are part of a religious or ethnic minority. Pray mightily for this desperate and complicated situation, and especially for the thousands who are sincerely fleeing for their lives, many of whom end up in horrible holding facilities, where women and children in particular are vulnerable and plagued with disease, such as the flu epidemic in the camp in Lesbos, Greece. Pray for miraculous provision for these people, truly the least of these. Pray for the church around the world, but particularly in the west, to rise up to meet this great need with Christ's love and generosity. Pray that leaders of all countries will act with wisdom and compassion. Pray for these heartbroken people whom no one wants, who have lost everything, and in some cases, everyone they love, freezing cold, hungry, helpless, hopeless, victims of so many systems, trapped.

(Sources: Reuters; Yahoo News)

Nigeria/Neighboring Countries—As militant group, Boko Haram, has continued its terror campaign in and around Nigeria, some disturbing trends are being observed especially in relation to children. In the years 2014, 2015, and 2016, there has been a steady rise in the number of suicide bombing, and worse, these are being carried out by children. It appears Boko Haram is not only kidnapping children, but now forcing them to end their lives by committing these atrocities. The majority of these children are girls. In some cases, the children have been radicalized in their captivity. Either way, these children are truly victims, not perpetrators, and yet they face suspicion and ostracization in the rare situations where they escape or are rescued. Pray for these children in unspeakable situations, being forced to participate in heinous crimes, which might even end their lives. Pray for those whose hearts and minds are vulnerable due to the extreme and frightening conditions they are existing in. Pray for their rescue, total rehabilitation, and for communities to warmly welcome and embrace them. Pray also for the success of some progressive programs being established by the Nigerian government to rehabilitate Boko Haram members, approximately 800 of whom have surrendered. Pray that this will be an effective means of reducing numbers of terrorists and bringing peace to this region. Pray for the total mental and spiritual rehabilitation of all Boko Haram members through the acceptance of the love and forgiveness of Christ. Persevere in prayer for the return of the Chibok schoolgirls and other abducted children in the region.

(Sources: UNICEF; Baptist Press; BBC; The Christian Post)

Iraq—While most of us in the West hope and plan for a long life and peaceful retirement, surrounded by family and loved ones, this is not the case for one elderly Iraqi Christian woman, and far too many like her. Ninety-three-year-old, Miriam, is the only remaining Christian in her village since 2014, when Daesh raided and took control. Thousands of Christians have had to flee the region, including Miriam's family, and she remains

incredibly vulnerable and alone in this very dangerous place to live. Her life has been marked by persecution and tragedy. Pray for Miriam, and the many, many elderly people, who have been caught in this horror of war, who are unable to flee, and yet, cannot ask others to risk their own lives and futures to stay with them. Give thanks for local Kurds who have checked in on her, as well as VOM partners, who attempt to attend to her needs. Pray that she and others like her will feel the peace only the Holy Spirit can provide and that they will sense they are not alone or forgotten. Pray for their health, protection, and well-being. Pray that those who seek to dominate and destroy in this region will have mercy on these elderly people, who have already suffered so much. *(Source: The Voice of the Martyrs)*

Myanmar—In a previous prayer and action, the situation of Phyo Phyo Aung, a human rights activist in Myanmar, was shared after she and numbers of other student activists were beaten and illegally detained for participation in a peaceful protest for democracy and greater freedoms in their country. Give thanks that both Phyo Phyo Aung and her husband, Lin Htet Naing, were both freed. Continue to pray for the country of Myanmar, which historically has been one of the most closed and repressive regimes in the world. Though recent years have seen some progress, continue to pray for increased freedom and safety for the population, freedom of speech and religion for all, and continual movement toward a just and civil society. Pray for the government of Myanmar, that they would reform their practices of discrimination, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and brutality, and begin to implement policies of justice intended for the well-being of all their people. *(Source: Amnesty International)*

Sudan—While the genocide perpetrated by the government of Omar al-Bashir has faded in many ways from major media, the atrocities the Sudanese government has committed against its own people have not, including arial bombing and targeting of civilians. Continue to pray for the country of Sudan and for the replacement of a violent and evil regime with a just, stable, and peaceful one. Pray of Omar al-Bashir that he, and others who have joined him in his crimes, might come to know the wrongness of what they are doing and repent of their actions, and even come to know and accept the love and forgiveness of Christ. Pray for the healing of a country of individuals, who have survived decades of violence, economic hardship, and personal heartbreak. *(Source: Enough Campaign)*

Eritrea— Haile Naigzhi has been in prison under horrible conditions since May 2004. His wife and three children waited and prayed for his release, but in 2013 they received word that there was a high chance of her being arrested also. They decided to risk the dangers of fleeing the country for their safety, and praise God they survived the border crossing and desert conditions. They are in a new country where they have been granted asylum. Praise God for their safety and pray that God would protect, encourage, and strengthen Haile while he is still in prison. Praise God for his witness of suffering for Christ. His 19-year-old daughter says: “We learnt that having a ‘bed-of-roses’ kind of life on earth is not actually God’s number one plan for us, but that everything we face in this world shapes our spirits into the beautiful spirit the Lord wishes to see in us. I am happy in every way and most especially to be the daughter of the Most High God. I am also happy to be the daughter of a prisoner for Christ. He is the best dad ever! God will make things perfect one day, and I trust Him with all my heart. He is faithful to keep His word.” *(Source: World Watch Monitor)*

Niger— 75% of girls in Niger are married before they reach adulthood, often marrying against their will to much older men, sometimes in near- slave-like conditions. The legal age of consent is now set at 15, but a current proposed law would change this age to 18. In addition, President Mahamadou Issoufou says that he intends to implement programs to reduce the number of child brides. Please pray for these laws and programs to come into effect and that they would genuinely change the situation for young women in the country of Niger. Pray for their safety and protection and that they would be cherished and treated justly. Pray for God's help and

protection especially for the young women who have already become brides at too young an age. *(Source: Walk Free)*

India— The RSS Hindu radical group warned Christians that they should all leave India. A written notice was displayed at train stations in India, telling Christians that they do not accept their faith and that their mission is to bring all Indians back to the Hindu faith. The notice actually claims that they will eliminate all Christians from India by 2021 in order to have an entirely Hindu nation. These radicals state that they are willing to die to create a unified Hindu India. Please pray for the courage, faith, and preservation of God's people in India. Pray also for the very lost and depraved members of this radical group, that they would be convicted of their hatred and violence. May they turn to the Savior who gave his life to save them. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*

Uzbekistan— 33-year-old Tohar Haydarov has served six of his ten-year sentence, suffering persecution for his faith in an Uzbek prison. Guards have showed him the many letters that Christians have been writing to him, but he was not allowed to read them because of the many Bible verses that they contained. Pray for this Christian brother to be encouraged and sustained while behind bars. Pray for perseverance and boldness to share the Gospel with his fellow inmates. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*

Kazakhstan— Yklas Kabduakasov is a 54-year-old new believer in Kazakhstan. After leaving Islam and becoming a Christian, Yklas started boldly sharing his faith with friends and family. Last August, he was arrested by the secret police for spreading "religious discord". After spending time under house arrest, his sentence was recently changed to two years in a labor camp. Pray for perseverance and strength for Yklas and that his wife and children would be comforted and financially stable while he is in prison. Pray that he would have many opportunities to share the Gospel and that other prisoners would have hearts ready to receive Christ. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*