

July 2017 Prayer Items

The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love.

--Psalm 33:18

Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia—Fleeing violence, poverty, and war, now child refugees in Southeast Asia are being held like criminals in cells 24 hours a day, without proper food or medical care, often separated from family members and held alongside non-family adults. Instead of relief from danger, they are just moving from trauma to trauma. A joint report from Save the Children and the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network indicates that almost 2,300 children fleeing places like Afghanistan, Myanmar (Burma), and Bangladesh--where armed conflict and natural disaster have created life-threatening conditions--have been intercepted along the way and treated like criminals in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, despite the fact that this violates international law. Even with babies among them, children are forced to sleep on floors. (*Source: The Guardian*)

Iran—While participating in a communion service on May 13, 2016, Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, Mohammadreza Omidi, Yasser Mossayebzadeh and Saheb Fadaie were all arrested for practicing their faith and charged with “threatening national security.” Because they were also drinking communion wine in Iran where any alcohol consumption is illegal, they also have been sentenced with 80 lashes each. This past June 14, 2017, they were all summoned to 26th Branch of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, where Judge Ahmadzadeh assessed their case, as local courts were unable to reach a final verdict for these men. We join Middle East Concern in praying for these men, and for the officials making the final determinations in this case. With Iranian Christians we pray that the four men will be acquitted of the charge of acting against national security; the judge will overturn the sentence of 80 lashes; the Revolutionary Court and judges will stop intimidating Christian converts, and will respect the right of all in Iran to freedom of religion; and all officials involved will love mercy, act justly, learn about Jesus and choose to follow Him. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Eritrea—Imprisoned since 2007, the case of Mussie Ezaz has recently become known beyond Eritrea. This husband and father of three was an evangelist for 14 years, has worked with Youth for Christ, and was a youth pastor at Kale Hiwot Church. First jailed at a small village prison, Mussie was able to escape, and he fled to the border town of Adi Kaih. There he called family to let them know he made it, only to be arrested shortly thereafter. Also after his arrest, several other Christians were imprisoned as well, including Pastor Oqbamichel Haimanot. Initially, Mussie’s family had no idea where he was being held and they feared he had been killed or abandoned in a desert prison. Mussie has never been charged with a crime or tried in court. There is no release date set, nor is there any indication there ever will be—as is often the case with Christians in Eritrea. Pray for this believer, who has done so much for the kingdom already, that he might continue to be sustained and comforted through this ordeal. Pray that he and the many other

believers imprisoned in Eritrea might powerfully feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that their lives will continue to be a witness to other prisoners and officials around them. Pray for Mussie's wife and children—and for the families of other prisoners—that the Father would provide for them in miraculous ways and comfort them in the absence of their loved ones. Pray for the country of Eritrea and for the government officials, that they would repent of their oppressive regime and embrace freedom and equity for all their citizens. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Saudi Arabia—This spring marked 5 years that human rights activist, journalist, and blogger, Raif Badawi was arrested for promoting religious freedom in Saudi Arabia, and 3 years since he was actually sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes. We continue in prayer for this courageous man, himself an atheist, who has suffered many years in prison, as well as 50 of the 1,000 lashes, because he has defended the rights of others to practice what they believe. Originally, the death sentence was sought for Raif, for “abandoning his faith,” which in Saudi Arabia is apostasy. Pray for his preservation under these harsh circumstances. Pray for the remaining lashes to be overturned. Pray for the public outcry to continue and result in his freedom. Pray for the comfort and sustenance of his wife Ensaf Haidar and his three children who live in Sherbrooke, Canada. Pray that officials and others in power would recognize the injustice and brutality not only in this case, but in their pervasive practices of religious oppression and human rights violations in Saudi Arabia across the board. Pray that these officials and Raif himself might find total and true freedom in Christ. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

Cuba—In 2013, the Cuban government dropped the requirement of an exit visa for Cubans to leave the country to travel abroad. Despite this, numerous religious freedom and human rights activists have been denied permission to leave the country in what is being perceived as an effort to control and intimidate those working for freedoms in Cuba. Most recently, Félix Llerena López was barred by security agents from boarding a plane on June 17 to attend a conference on human rights and democracy. Others who have been barred from travel include Pastor Alain Toledano, a leader in the Apostolic church; Karina Gálvez, who works with Convivencia, an independent civil society organization in Pinar del Rio; and Berta Soler, a leader of the Ladies in White Movement. Pastor Toledano articulated the dangerous motives for these actions, stating: “...the strategy that the police are using here is that they come one by one to the house, they don't send a citation, nothing written down, and they don't give you a copy of the ‘actas de advertencia’ against you, even if you ask for one, since they know it can be used against them. They are perfecting their methods so as not to leave any traces of their persecution and acts of evil against the churches and ministries, even as we suffer here in the country.” Pray for these religious leaders, the churches they serve, and for other human rights activists courageously speaking up for freedom in their country. Pray for officials in Cuba that they might come to promote freedom and justice within their borders and that they might find truth and life in Christ. Pray for the country of Cuba that it might become a place where people can live in peace, without fear, and can pursue their faith freely. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Pakistan- Please pray for protection and salvation for Taimoor Raza, a Shi'a Muslim who has been sentenced to death for blasphemy for comments that he posted on Facebook against Islam. Pray that his sentence will be changed and that he will have opportunities to hear about Jesus Christ and the forgiveness that he offers. Perhaps he has recognized that Islam can not save him, so pray that he would seek the Lord while he is in prison. *(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*

China--Zhang Shaojie, the pastor of Nanle County Church, has been in Xinxiang Prison in Henan Province for nearly four years. He has been serving a 12-year sentence for petitioning against the government. After he attempted an appeal of his sentence, prison officials were commanded to torture him. They have inflicted him with sleep deprivation and starvation, so he is quite unwell and depressed. Pray for Zhang's protection and that this inhumane treatment would stop. Pray that the Lord would sustain him and bring him aid, that Zhang would keep his eyes fixed on Jesus and endure until he is granted relief. Pray also that his torturers would be convicted of this wrong and fear the Lord and that they would turn to Christ through Zhang's witness. *(Source: China Aid)*

Nigeria/Cameroon-- Refugees from Nigeria had been running from their country because of attacks from Boko Haram, and had arrived safely in Cameroon where they have been able to farm and live safely. However, in March, Cameroon soldiers arrived and forced thousands of Nigerians into trucks and sent them all back to a famine-stricken region in Nigeria. Some families were separated, children left behind, and even a few native Cameroonians were mistakenly taken to Nigeria. Please pray for the worldwide refugee crisis, where many countries like Cameroon do not want to host and help these very needy individuals, as they see it as a strain on their own economy. Pray for these people who have nowhere to go. Pray in particular for this group of Nigerian refugees that were forced to go back to a camp in Nigeria where there is very little food. Pray for sustenance, protection and miraculous help from God. Pray that families would be reunited soon. *(Source: The Washington Post)*

Eritrea-- During the month of May alone, 122 Christians were rounded up, arrested, and sent to detainment camps because they are not part of a legally-accepted church (which would be either Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox, or Sunni Islam). Among those that were arrested were elderly men, a disabled woman, and whole families. In addition, many children were left at home without parents. These arrests are likely to continue as authorities go door to door. In the meantime, Eritrean Christians are praying and fasting for God's protection and peace. Let us join with them and pray for our brothers and sisters in Eritrea to be safe from harm, to cling to Christ and remain faithful to Him, and for families to be reunited. Pray that they would endure and be fully equipped by Jesus to accomplish his purposes. *(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*

Philippines-- Abu Sayyaf Islamic gunmen and Maute militant groups have taken over and besieged the predominantly Muslim southern city of Marawi. The terrorists have been brutally murdering civilians and keeping people hostages for use as human shields and sex slaves. The fighting started when police tried to arrest the Abu Sayyaf leader. Please pray fervently that innocent lives will be protected and that this brutal situation can lead many to faith in Christ. Pray that the terrorists repent and find Christ as well. *(Source: The New York Times)*