

## **AUGUST 2017 Prayer Items**

**Psalms 91:2** I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,  
my God, in whom I trust."

**Egypt**—Arrested in August 2013, the then 25-year-old Egyptian photojournalist Mahmoud Abu Zied, also known as Shawkan, has been imprisoned in subhuman, oppressive conditions for the "crime" of taking photos of demonstrations in Cairo. He has been subjected to torture, beatings, and at one point was held in a locked van by the Egyptian police with numerous other political prisoners for 7 hours in the hot Egyptian sun without water or ventilation. Since his imprisonment he has been diagnosed with Hepatitis C and depression. Pray for his sustenance and preservation during this horrific time. Pray for his immediate and unconditional release. And pray that amid this struggle he might find true freedom in Christ. Pray for the Egyptian government, which persists in oppressing its people and ruling with fear and intimidation. Pray that it might embrace freedom for all its people and promote freedom of expression and religion within its borders. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

**Saudi Arabia**--In 2012, 17-year-old Mujtaba al-Sweikat was leaving his home to fly to the U.S. to study at Western Michigan University. Instead, he was arrested and detained, and charged with participation in pro-democracy protests with thirteen other Shiites like himself. Five years later, he has been sentenced to beheading for his "crime". Please pray for this young Shiite man and the other thirteen to, first of all, find salvation in Jesus Christ. Secondly, pray that the unjust Saudi government would pardon them and grant them freedom. In addition, pray for basic human rights, fair trials, and political and religious freedom in Saudi Arabia. (*Source: Mission Network News*)

**United States**—We give thanks on the recent reversal of a decision by the president of East Central University in Oklahoma regarding the removal of Bibles and crosses from the chapel on its campus. The university had received a complaint from the organization, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, and had initiated the process to remove the cross and Bibles from this chapel that have been built with donated money. While they have halted immediate action to make changes on the Catherine P Boswell Memorial Chapel which was opened in 1957, there will be a committee of students, faculty, and community members to study the issue. Pray for wisdom and grace to prevail in this ongoing debate. Pray for those who seek to repress all expressions of faith in the United States that they would both love freedom of expression, as well as respect freedom of religion. Pray that they might find ultimate freedom in Christ as well. (*Source: US News & World Report*)

**Tanzania**--Last month during Ramadan, a Christian couple named Emmanuel Yohana and Katherine Emmanuel were frying fish for a meal in their kitchen with their friend, Khadij, when police burst through the door to arrest them for not fasting during Ramadan. They remained in custody for three days in Zanzibar, even though they are Christians and are not required to

participate in Ramadan. In addition, they were in their private home, and the Tanzanian constitution supposedly protects religious freedom. However, clearly this incident and other frequent instances of church persecution indicate that this is not the case. Please pray for the law to be upheld by local authorities, and for religious freedom to truly be upheld in Tanzania. Pray for the church to be bold and courageous despite the persecution that is increasing in this African country. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**China**—We persevere in prayer for Alim, a Christian from Xinjiang Province in China, who has been imprisoned for his faith since February 2008. He is currently serving a 15-year sentence that UN experts have ruled is solely due to his faith. He has used up all his appeals and for the past 8 years every visit and conversation he has had with his wife has been watched by prison guards. Pray for his endurance and for him to feel the strength and comfort of Jesus as he faces another 7 years in prison. Pray for his wife and children that they might find God to be the Great Comforter and Provider, even as they suffer the absence of Alim. Pray that authorities might soften their hearts toward Alim and his family and allow more visits to him by his wife and children. Additionally we give thanks for the unexpected release of Li Heping, the Christian human rights lawyer who has been in prison since 2015 yet whose sentence was suspended in May 2017. We pray for his recovery and for perseverance, courage, and wisdom as he and his family continue to be under surveillance. Finally we pray for Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province who, much like Christians in China, have been targeted for arrest and restrictive laws. We pray for the 39 Muslims arrested after attending lectures by what the state calls unsanctioned imams. We pray for the protection of all Chinese citizens and for the government to move towards increasing the rights and freedoms of all their people. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**Pakistan**-- Javed Masih was a 32-year-old Christian man who was essentially enslaved by a wealthy landowner named Bilal Wahla that his family was indebted to. Although he was required to work only 24 hours per month to pay off his parents' debt, he was instead treated like a permanent slave until recently when he was accused of stealing a motorcycle. The landowner beat him with sticks in a rage until he died. This extreme injustice and heart-wrenching incident will most likely go unnoticed and unpunished by legal authorities because the victim was poor and Christian. Please pray for Javed's family to experience God's comfort and strength right now as they mourn and suffer. Pray that justice would be served and that Bilal Wahla would be sentenced for this murder. Pray also that he would be convicted of his sin and turn to Jesus for salvation. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

**India**—We pray for the family of Pastor Sultan Masih, after he was shot dead on July 15 in Punjab State. Two months prior, his church celebrated its 20th anniversary, and it is believed that Hindu extremists took this action in response to that celebration. At the time of the attack, the pastor was talking on his cell phone outside the church when two men drove up on a motorcycle and shot him. It is believed that the attackers actually were the ones who called him on this phone and told him to go outside. Pray for his wife Sarabjit and the rest of his family that they might have a deep sense of the love and comfort of Christ despite the difficulty of these

circumstances. Pray for those who carried out this violent crime that they would both be brought to justice and also find the grace and mercy of Christ. Pray for the church to remain faithful and courageous even after the death of their pastor, that they would respond with forgiveness, and would continue to be a bright witness amid growing opposition. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*

**Kazakhstan--** On June 17, Yuri Pak was released from prison and was able to share how letters written to him and Yklas Kabduakasov had improved their treatment. They were sent over a thousand encouraging letters each, and, although officials did not allow them to receive the letters, many were given to their wives. Yuri's wife, Olga, said, "Your prayers and letters helped us to go through this difficult trial without losing our faith and courage." Also, although Yuri and Yklas were not permitted to read any letters, they were aware of them, and the attention served to protect them from mistreatment behind bars. Apparently, prison officials became fearful as they saw the letters coming in and realized that people from around the world knew about their imprisonment. As a result, Yuri and Yklas received more medical care and better food. As you praise God for Yuri's release, please continue to pray for Yklas who is still in prison, and pray that these prison authorities would see the hand of God in the encouraging and compassionate letters and turn to Him in repentance and faith. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*

**Laos—**Five families were recently offered homes with electricity and running water and better schools for their children if they were willing to deny their faith in Jesus. Despite this offer enticing them to a better lifestyle, and the societal pressure to conform, these families have continued to follow Christ, to face persecution, and to be ostracized by their community. However as a result of their faith four other families from the neighboring village have also come to Christ. We pray for these nine families that they would grow in their faith and that they would be upheld by the Holy Spirit as they face many pressures from their communities. Pray that despite these challenges and trials many others will come to find salvation in Christ. Pray for the government of Laos, both locally and nationally, that they would come to value freedom of religion and expression for all their citizens. Pray that many officials might even come to know Christ. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*

**Syria--** Despite the extreme persecution and danger, many Christians have chosen to remain in Syria to minister to the lost instead of fleeing. One pastor reports that while he and fellow believers were serving food and preaching the Gospel message, an extreme fundamentalist Muslim came into the church. He ate the meal and heard the Gospel, and then turned his life over to Christ. Praise God for saving this lost man, and praise Him for instilling courage and boldness in these believers. Pray that many more would come to Christ, and that He would continue to protect His body there in Syria. Pray for comfort and aid during this time of war, persecution, and hunger. *(Source: Open Doors)*