

January 2019 Prayer Items

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.*

*For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

—Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7

Central African Republic—The humanitarian crisis in CAR continues to deteriorate and has reached a critical level in recent months since a civil war began there in 2013. To date, an estimated 1.2 million men, women, and children have been forced to flee their homes. Despite the fact that 63 percent of the country is in need of aid and 35 percent require immediate assistance, aid efforts have been hindered by the lack of security, poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and severe rains. However, there is a peace process underway which is offering a glimmer of hope for those affected. Please pray for the people of CAR, that peace will return, that there will be an end to retaliatory violence, and that those in need will receive the assistance they need and be able to return to their homes. (*Source: Refugees International*)

China—The widespread crackdown by Chinese authorities against churches in China continues unabated. On 9 December 2018 over 100 members of the Early Rain Church in Chengdu were arrested on charges of subversion and 12, including Senior Pastor Wang Yi and his wife Jiang Rong. Six more are missing and numerous others remain under close police surveillance. This mass arrest of church-goers in China is among the latest in the ongoing effort on the part of the Communist Party to suppress believers and the spread of the Gospel. Please pray for those in custody and for those who face routine harassment from government officials for the sake of Christ. Pray for continued strength, courage, and perseverance that only the Holy Spirit can provide. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Nigeria—Clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria continues to escalate resulting in 3,641 deaths over the past three years alone. While these clashes have occurred seasonally for decades, their intensity has grown exponentially, fueled by scarcity in pasture land and the Nigerian government's lethargic response. Often government forces arrive only days after attack or arrive in too few numbers to be effective in mitigating the violence. Furthermore, investigations into finding the culprits are few

and superficial at best. One attack at the beginning of 2018 lasted 11 days without meaningful government intervention, resulting in the deaths of at least 88 people, though some accounts put that number at 120. Please pray for an end to the cycle of violence in Nigeria, that government authorities will take seriously their responsibility to protect citizens, and that those who have lost loved ones will find healing. Pray especially for believers in these areas that they might respond as Christ would, and that they would continue to be a witness, even amid violence and persecution. *(Source: Amnesty International)*

Pakistan—Two Christian brothers have been sentenced to death under Pakistan’s strict blasphemy laws for insulting the prophet Muhammad. The ruling came days after the release of Asia Bibi that led to protests across the country. Attempts to moderate Pakistan’s blasphemy laws are met by extreme resistance from hardliners, and two politicians who spoke out on Bibi’s behalf were assassinated. Since 2011, approximately 100 blasphemy cases have been registered and 40 people are either serving life sentences or awaiting execution. Many accused are murdered by vigilantes before their case can reach trial or while awaiting appeal. Please pray for Christians in Pakistan as they continue to undergo extreme persecution and their very lives are threatened by both judicial and extra-judicial killings. *(Source: The Telegraph)*

China—While China’s repression of its Uyghur and Kazakhs Muslims is not a new fact, the exact scope of the persecution continues to shock even seasoned human rights groups. In 2014, China initiated its “Strike Hard Campaign Against Violent Terrorism,” which the Communist regime claimed was a response to violent religious extremism. However, this is generally viewed as being a smokescreen for the eradication of minority cultures, languages, and religion in order to solidify one-party rule. It is estimated that over 1 million people are currently in political reeducation camps where they are forced to denounce their culture and religion, learn Mandarin, and swear allegiance to the Communist Party and leader Xi Jinping. Please pray that Chinese authorities end the practice of harsh repression and forced reeducation and that people of all faiths in China would experience true freedom of religion. *(Source: Human Rights Watch)*

Democratic Republic of Congo—Elections in the DRC have hit another roadblock as opposition candidates refused to sign a joint statement aimed at mitigating the rising political tension and looming threat of all-out violence. They cite their concerns with the use of electronic voting machines—since huge swathes of the country do not have consistent electricity—and the potential for election tampering. The DRC has not had a peaceful transition of power since 1960, when it gained its independence from Belgium. The current president, Joseph Kabila, took over after his father was assassinated in 2001. He is unable to run for reelection since new term limits went into effect. However, these current elections were supposed to take place two years ago and have been delayed as the voting commission claimed the need for more time to register voters. DRC is a mineral-rich country but has only experienced extreme poverty due to continuous violence and corruption—much of this funded by the unethical mining of the industrial minerals that power cell phones, computers, and even electric cars all over the globe. Please pray for a smooth and peaceful transition of power and that these elections will not lead to outright civil war as many fear it will. Pray for the innocent population caught in the crossfire of these conflicts and often the victims of unspeakable atrocities. Pray for the end of slave-like conditions for those working in the mines and the diverting of revenue from these national resources away from the population and national economy. *(Source: BBC)*

India—Tens of thousands of people are fighting to leave the city of Mahul, a heavily industrialized and polluted city. Many residents were forced to relocate there after their illegal slums were torn down. Yet the toxic conditions in the relocation camps have led to widespread health problems with 67 percent of residents claiming breathlessness and 84 percent complaining of eye irritation. Yet the government is not allowing them to move until new and permanent facilities are built for them. This has taken far longer than they were promised and many have taken to protest in an effort to save their health and even their lives. Most of those affected, of course, are women and children. All are the most powerless and voiceless in their society. Please pray for the health and safety of these thousands and that the Indian government will redouble its efforts to relocate them to healthier living environments as well as to begin to address the deep-rooted issues of systemic exploitation and injustice, especially for those lowest in the social hierarchy. *(Source: BBC)*

Egypt—Arrests have been made in response to the terrorist attack on pilgrims visiting the Monastery of Anba Samuel the Confessor on 2 November 2018. Seven Christians were killed in the attack and 18 injured. The arrests signify a new commitment on the part of the Egyptian government to protect its Christian minorities from radical violence. Additionally, it has authorized the building of 168 churches this past week and a new law now allows provincial governors to approve the building of new churches. Previously, this could only be done by presidential decree and occurred only once a year or once every other year. Please pray that these reform efforts will continue, that Christians in Egypt will be protected from religious violence, and that those who perpetrate such acts will be brought to justice. *(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*

Uzbekistan—A church in Tashkent was recently raided by plain clothes authorities on 25 November 2018, and numerous people were arrested and subjected to interrogation. Authorities searched the church for hours looking for “unlawful propaganda” and those arrested were forced to stand in the cold before enduring nine hours of interrogation. According to those detained, the police chief warned them that authorities would return every Sunday until they ceased their worship services. Please pray for Christians in Uzbekistan, that they will be able to worship free from official harassment, that they will be sustained under interrogation, and that authorities would have a change of heart toward their Christian citizens. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*

Laos—As many as 23 Christian families are being forced to leave their village in Laos. While many of them have lived there for years, the church there has had an especially strong witness and many more in the village have come to Christ as a result. This drew a strong rebuke from local leaders, who demanded the exile of these families. Additionally, they refused to compensate the families for the loss of their lands, crops, and other personal possessions. This has left them with little other than what possessions they can carry with them and places their very lives at risk. Please pray for these families that their lives would be protected and sustained and that they would serve as an encouragement to other Christians. *(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)*