

March 2019 Prayer

China—Imprisoned Chinese human rights lawyer, Jiang Tianyong, who was scheduled to be released from prison recently, has been reported as missing. It has also been reported that two of his family members have also gone missing. Tianyong had served a two year sentence for trumped up charges of subversion of state power. His wife, Jin Bianling, had fled to the United States earlier and states that she has been able to contact her husband. Additionally, Tianyong's father and sister have had their phones shut off and are unable to have contact with anyone. Please pray for Tianyong and his family through this ordeal. Please pray that Chinese authorities would abandon tactics of repression against those who stand for human rights. **(Source: China Aid)**

Nigeria—Last month marked the one year anniversary of the abduction of Leah Sharibu by Boko Haram jihadists. Leah, who was named "Person of the Year" by Nigerian newspapers, has also earned the title of "slave-for-life" by Boko Haram. The Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) denomination churches, which is Sharibu's denomination, gathered together around the world on 19 February to pray for the captives of Boko Haram. Please pray for Sharibu's continued strength even while undergoing tremendous torment at the hands of her captives. Also pray that justice will be brought to Boko Haram and that others held in captivity will be released. **(Source: Christian Solidarity**

Worldwide)

Eritrea—There have been numerous human rights developments in the east African country in the past month. Despite its atrocious record on human rights, Eritrea has been named to the United Nations Human Rights Council. This position could threaten to end the mandate of the Special Rapporteur to Eritrea which has been effective in highlighting numerous human rights abuses in the country. One of the most recent of these abuses was the death of Haji Ibrahim Younus, a member of the Executive Committee of Al-Diaa Islamic School in Asmara. After an extended period in prison without charge, trial or contact with the outside world, his death due to his religious beliefs was reported last month. Please continue to pray for the human rights situation in Eritrea which consistently ranks among the worst in the world. Pray that its government will discontinue these unjust practices and begin respecting the rights of its citizens. **(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)**

Southeast Asia—A woman who is a recent convert to Christianity was forced to flee her village after her husband threatened to stab her. Her tribe, the Tai Dam, have traditionally practiced spirit and ancestor worship, and it is common practice for the women in the home to maintain the family altar. Her husband threatened that if she did not abandon her worship of Christ, he did not know what he would do. Her fellow Christians then took her to another city

for safety. Please continue to pray for this woman, that she will be sustained and protected, that God would change her husband's heart toward her and also come to follow Christ. **(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)**

China—The Early Rain Covenant Church has experienced great persecution over the past year and does not appear to see any kind of reprieve in the near future. Most recently, its Pastor Wang Yi, who continues to be held by Chinese authorities, was denied the opportunity to speak to council, according to his attorney. Yi is being held on “participating in religious activities in a public space.” It is estimated that 20 other church members are also being held in the custody of authorities and are expected to soon face formal charges. Please continue to pray for Early Rain Covenant Church, its pastors, members and for the Church in China more broadly as they continue to experience mounting persecution nationwide. Also pray that the Chinese Communist Party will end its persecution of its own citizens on the basis of their religious beliefs. **(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)**

Columbia—Violence in Columbia has been on the rise recently as guerrilla forces have been increasingly hostile and the 2016 peace treaty between them and the government may be under threat. In guerrilla-controlled “red zones,” pastors are routinely targeted for violence and killed as they are viewed as “objects of war” and therefore viable targets. Please pray for Christians and especially pastors in Columbia, that they will be protected and sustained. Also, pray that there will be a return to peace in that country. **(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)**

Venezuela—It has recently been reported that as a result of the ongoing humanitarian crisis, the infant mortality rate in Venezuela has doubled. As many as 40 percent of the country’s doctors have fled and medical supplies in hospitals are nearly entirely depleted. To make matters worse, the crisis is a man-made catastrophe, the result of the Maduro regime’s refusal to respect the results of the popular election and their implementation of harsh, socialist economic policies. While the regime has allowed aid from China and Russia into the country, they refuse help from non-socialist countries, namely the United States. Venezuela has closed its borders to Columbia and Brazil where urgently needed aid is piling up with no way to reach those who desperately need it. It is also estimated that as many as 3.4 million Venezuelans have already fled and now live as refugees in neighboring countries. Please pray for the people of Venezuela, that desperately needed aid will be allowed into the country and that the Maduro regime will respect election results. **(Source: The Guardian)**

Iraq—Christians from the Iraqi city of Bartella have been reluctant to return to their homes despite the defeat of ISIS. Historically, Bartella was an entirely Christian city. However, demographic shifts over the past 10 years saw a large influx of Shiite Shabaks effectively splitting the town in two. Bartella is now controlled by Shiite militias who routinely harass and threaten non-Shiites, particularly Christians. This has been a trend playing out across the country.

Please continue to pray for Iraq's Christians as they continue to face great persecution despite the defeat of ISIS. Pray that they will be able to return to their ancestral homes and live free from fear. **(Source: Christian Science Monitor)**

Iran—Six Iranian converts to Christianity were arrested in recent weeks in the northern city of Rasht. Those arrested are named as Khalil Pour-Dehghan, Hossein Kadivar, Abdolreza Ali Haghnezhad, Kamal Nemanian, Mohammad Vafadar and Mohammad Eslamdoost. While the Iranian constitution allows for "official" churches to exist, it is still illegal for Muslims to convert to Christianity. Some estimates claim that tens of thousands of Iranian converts to Christianity have been arrested and prosecuted in the past decade. Please continue to pray for Christians in Iran who have to practice their faith in secret, that they will be protected from official persecution. Also pray that the growth of the home church movement will continue unabated and continue to reach Iranians with the Word. **(Source: Radio Farda)**

Pakistan—A mob in the Farooq-e-Azam neighborhood of Karachi displaced 200 Christian families after four Christian women were accused of blasphemy. A Muslim woman, Samina Riaz, raised the accusation, claiming the women, aged 14-30, desecrated a Quran. The accusation came after her landlord, a Christian, asked the family to leave for causing problems for Christians in the community. A police investigation later revealed that it was Riaz herself who ruined the Quran and incited the mob, leading to her confession. This event exemplifies how Pakistan's blasphemy laws are routinely used by Muslims to manipulate and persecute their Christian countrymen. It also comes at a tumultuous time, following the acquittal of Asia Bibi. Please continue to pray for Christians in Pakistan who bear the brunt of these laws, overwhelmingly on the basis of false accusations. **(Source: The Christian Post)**