

April 2019 Prayer Items

Lord, how many are my foes!

How many rise up against me!

Many are saying of me,

“God will not deliver him.”

But you, Lord, are a shield around me,

my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

I call out to the Lord,

and he answers me from his holy mountain.

—Psalm 3: 1-4

Syria—This past month saw the end of the last ISIS stronghold. While ISIS no longer controls any physical territory, its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, remains at large while its remaining fighters transition back into a shadowy terror group. During the assault on its last stronghold, near Baghuz in eastern Syria, Kurdish and British SAS soldiers discovered a mass grave containing the severed heads of more than 50 Yazidi women who had been used as sex slaves by ISIS jihadists. A second grave was found nearby with the decapitated bodies of dozens of women. With no where left to go, ISIS jihadists decided it better to execute the Yazidi women than let them be liberated. It is estimated that at least 3,000 Yazidis have been executed by ISIS since 2014, with thousands more being enslaved. Please pray for the Yazidis and other religious minorities in the region whose future, despite the defeat of the caliphate, remains very much uncertain. Please pray that with the defeat of ISIS as a hybrid-conventional force, Western leaders will not leave those who have already suffered so much, to the fates others have faced. Pray for that for God’s hand of protection and provision on the vulnerable populations in this region. **(Source: Newsrep)**

China—Last December, 100 members of the Early Rain Church were arrested under charges of “subverting the state.” Currently, at least a dozen remain in the custody of authorities and it has recently been discovered that two of its members, Pan Fei and Gou Zhongcan, have disappeared. The pair are believed to be held in a detention facility or prison. Other church members are facing increasing pressure as many of their landlords have begun asking that they leave. Please continue to pray for this body of believers, that they will continue to place their in the Lord for their future. Continue to pray for Chinese authorities, that there hearts will be turned away from this type of oppression. **(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)**

China—On 23 March 2019, the prominent, unregistered Shouwang Church was shut down by authorities and its possessions confiscated for “refusing to register as a social organization.” Despite these allegation, the church had submitted its application back in 2006 to the Haidan District Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau, but the application had been rejected because the pastor, Jin Tianming, had not been officially ordained by the state. He has since been placed under house arrest. This church closure is but one of a number as Chinese authorities continue their crackdown on religious minorities unabated. Please pray for Christians in China who continue to see their religious liberties under attack from authorities. Pray that they will continue to trust in God’s sovereignty in the face of injustice. **(Source: China Aid)**

North Korea—The “Hermit Kingdom” has consistently ranked as the number one human rights abuser for years. The country has concentration camps within its borders the size of Los Angeles, wherein many of its inhabitants spend their entire lives from birth to death. Yet an organization named Liberty in North Korea (LiNK) has set out to aid those escaping from North Korea. Escape across the border with South Korea is impossible. So many North Koreans escape into China which presents numerous dangers itself. Once in China, escapees can face repatriation and certain death upon return to North Korea or being forced into human trafficking. LiNK has personnel on the ground in China who assist those fleeing in making the arduous journey from North Korea to the safety of South Korea. To date, they have assisted dozens of North Koreans find safety and instant citizenship in the south. Pray for the continued success of this organization, and pray for those who escape and those who remain imprisoned to all find true freedom in Christ. Pray for the Light of Christ will transform the seemingly impenetrable darkness of this country. **(Source: National Review)**

Nigeria—Attacks in Nigeria by Fulani militia have continued unabated. On 11 March 2019, 52 people were killed and 100 homes destroyed in the villages of Inkirimi and Dogonnoma in Maro. Pictures of the victims, including women and children, show deep machete wounds across their bodies. Despite assurances of increased security from Nigerian authorities, these assurances have proven to be only words thus far. Please pray for those in Nigeria who continue to come under attack from these well-financed and externally supported terrorists. Pray that the Christian community will be sustain by the love of Christ, and that they will be able to offer His forgiveness even to the perpetrators of these horrific crimes. Pray for those who commit them as well. **(Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)**

Pakistan—A Christian woman, Aansa Bibi, after fleeing her abusive home, began working as a house cleaner for a Muslim family. Her employer’s aunt warned him against allowing an “infidel” woman into their home and so the employer told Aansa that she must convert to Islam if she wanted to keep her job. Aansa told him that she could never leave Jesus Christ. The next day, her employer sent her to a friend’s house where she was beaten, raped, and locked in a closet in order to “teach her a lesson.” She later escaped and is now in hiding at a women’s shelter. While in the shelter, her ex-husband kidnapped her children, and her former employer has been reportedly searching for her. Please pray that Aansa will find safety, the ability to recover from her trauma, and for the return of her children. Also, please pray that she is able to find work and that she remains strong in her devotion to Christ despite such fierce oppression. Pray for the protection of her children and that she might be reunited with them one day. **(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)**

Tanzania—In Muslim majority parts of the country, Christians routinely face harassment. Such was the case during a church service when Pastor Morris William Ndbila of Malunga Parish began to hear rocks hitting the metal roof of the church building. When he stepped outside to investigate, he was confronted by five young Muslim men who began to hurl rocks at him. Attacks of this kind have been on the rise in predominantly Muslim parts of Tanzania recently. Please pray for Christians that they will stand firm in their faith despite efforts at intimidation. Also, pray for Muslims who perform such persecution, that they will be led to saving faith in the one true God. **(Source: Voice of the Martyrs)**

India—Attacks against Christians in India are reportedly up 57 percent in the first two months of 2019 versus last year. Two Christians, one in the Tamil Nadu state and the other in Odisha state have been murdered due to their faith. Hindu militants and Indian communist groups are believed to account for much of the increased violence. Another cause is thought to be India’s increased religious polarization. Since the ruling, nationalistic BJP party took over 2014, there has been an increased perception that to

be Hindu is to be Indian and those who are not Hindu are considered non-Indian. Please pray for the Christians in India, that this country will return to the relative tolerance of different religions it had once practiced. **(Source: Christian Post)**

Vietnam—Persecution of Christian Hmong has been on the rise as communist authorities there seek to suppress Christianity. The reason is two fold. First, the Hmong who are ethnic Chinese, have historically been viewed with suspicion by the Vietnamese as outsiders and reclusive. Christianity is also viewed as being an external influence and possible cause for separatism due to its association with French and American periods of the country's history. The 2018 Law on Religion and Belief gave the government greater oversight and control over religious expression. Churches and Christians were required to register with the state yet many see this as a guise designed to identify and persecute those who are viewed as having separatist ideologies. There are approximately 300,000 Christian Hmong in Vietnam, and despite official efforts to the contrary, that number has been rapidly growing since the 1980s. Please pray for Christians across Vietnam that they will be allowed to practice their faith unfettered from communist interference. **(Source: South China Morning Post)**

United Kingdom—The British government has launched an independent review into how it can support the religious rights of Christians around the globe. The review comes after a startling rise in Christian persecution globally in 2018 and the first quarter of 2019. In recent decades, post-colonial guilt has hindered British attempts to address this growing persecution. But Home Secretary Jeremy Hunt, himself a devout Christian, said the aim of the review ought be “to banish any hesitation to look into this issue without fear or favor that may exist because of our imperial history, because of the concerns that some people might have in linking the activities of missionaries in the 19th century to misguided imperialism.” He then pointed to the fact that 80 percent of people facing religious persecution globally are Christians. Please pray that this review will highlight the plight of Christians globally and will prompt the British government, among others, to address this issue head on. **(Source: The Guardian)**