

May 2019 Prayer

*Lord, I have heard of your fame;
I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.
Renew them in our day,
in our time make them know;
in wrath remember mercy.*

—Habakkuk 3:2

China—In Xinjiang, efforts to control, suppress, and indoctrinate ethnic and religious minorities continues to reach new levels. Between 2016 and 2017, spending on security-related facilities doubled and saw a \$4 billion increase. This is triple the already high spending on such facilities in other provinces. While the government of China asserts that these facilities teach job skills, those who have been released and fled China describe working long hours in factories under slave-like conditions. Even those not confined to these facilities are not out of the reach of indoctrination efforts. In some towns and villages, all ethnic minorities under the age of 50 are required to attend mandatory Chinese lessons for two hours every night. Religious practices are severely curtailed and even perceived violations are met with beatings, tazings, or extended periods of time in hand cuffs or cages. Please pray that the Chinese government will end these oppressive practices against their minority citizens and abide by the international human rights norms they claim to embrace. (*Source: The Globe and Mail*)

Sudan—This month saw the ouster of longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir from power in Sudan. The coup, carried out by the Sudanese military, was brought on by increasing economic desperation due to international sanctions and the loss of most of Sudan's oilfield in what is now independent South Sudan. For years, Sudan under al-Bashir had one of the consistently worst human rights records in the world. His departure, however, has not brought about immediate peace and stability in the African nation. Protests continue in the streets of Khartoum, and Sudanese citizens press the military government for democratic elections and increased personal liberty. While the situation is still very precarious, the decades-long rule of one of the world's most notorious tyrants has come to an end. Please pray for a peaceful transition of government and that the next rulers of Sudan will embrace a freer and fairer system of governance. (*Source: BBC*)

United Kingdom—British Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson, in an effort to curb the weaponization of rape and other human rights violations in warfare has announced that the British military will be opening the Centre of Excellence in Human Security. It will focus on the impact of war on women and children and training will cover subjects such as human trafficking and sexual exploitation. It is hoped that this training will equip British troops to be able to recognize and respond to indicators of sexual exploitation, which are prevalent on many of today's battlefields. Please pray that these efforts will be effective in ending predatory practices against vulnerable demographics in conflict areas. (*Source: Forces Network*)

Egypt—On 12 April 2019, a mob attacked the Church of Society of Anba Karassof in Khalaf Allah Jaber in Egypt. As a result of the Islamist attack, the church building received extensive damage, forcing it to close and three people were injured, with many others traumatized. The attack was preceded by the local mayor's confiscation of building materials from the church in an effort to shut it down. Since the attack, the church has remained closed and the congregation was left without a formal structure to conduct their Easter services in. Pray for those who endured this attack, that they will be restored in spirit, mind, and body—and that this community of believers will remain strong in their

faith and demonstrate a spirit of forgiveness. Please pray for Christians in Egypt who are facing increasing persecution from both official and unofficial sources. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Kuwait—While among the most liberal and religiously tolerant Muslim countries, there are still a number of restrictions placed on non-Muslims in the country. In order to become a citizen, a person must be Muslim, churches are not allowed to have any external signs or religious symbols such as crosses, pork is strictly prohibited, and Muslim women are forbidden from marrying non-Muslim men. That notwithstanding, the Kuwaiti government has also made a commendable effort in protecting its tiny Christian minority. However, recent years have seen a sharp rise in the number of converts to Christianity and the spread of “unregistered fellowships.” This has led to calls on the government from some corners of Kuwaiti society to curb the spread of Christianity in that country. Please pray that the Gospel will continue to spread in Kuwait and throughout the Middle East as a whole. Also pray that Christians will continue to be extended the relative freedoms and protections they enjoy in Kuwait. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Nigeria—Attacks carried out by Boko Haram and Muslim Fulani militia against Christians in northern Nigeria continue, seemingly unabated. The past two months have seen at least another 150 Christians killed and many more displaced, though many estimates place that number much higher. Since 2009 deaths from Islamist violence is estimated to be in the tens of thousands. To date, the Nigerian military has been only marginally effective in protecting its citizens. These recent attacks have renewed calls to President Trump and the United Nations to intervene in the situation, which is rapidly spiraling from a terrible crisis to a potential genocide. Please pray for Christians in Nigeria, that they will remain strong in their faith in the face of such evil and for world leaders to discern a strategy that will bring this ongoing horror to an end. (*Source: ACJL*)

Sri Lanka—This past Easter Sunday saw one of the worst terrorist attacks in recent years and arguably the worst attacks against religious worshippers ever. Multiple coordinated attacks across the country occurred as Christians gathered to celebrate Easter services. More than 200 were killed and over 500 wounded. While investigations are still underway, initial reports indicate at least seven suicide bombers detonated themselves amid the Christian worshippers, and a number of remotely detonated devices were also activated. At least one failed to detonate and was later disarmed. A unique facet of this attack is that in Sri Lanka, both Christians and Muslims are minorities in the overwhelmingly Buddhist country. Please pray for the victims of this attack, that the perpetrators and conspirators will be swiftly brought to justice, and that future attacks will be detected and defeated. (*Source: Axios*)

Congo—Efforts to contain yet another Ebola outbreak in Congo have been additionally hamstrung by attacks on aid workers. This most recent outbreak was detected nine months ago in a particularly war-torn part of the country, which is home to over 100 militias. Dr. Richard Valery Mouzoko Kiboung, an epidemiologist from Cameroon, was working for the World Health Organization in the afflicted area despite previously expressing concerns about regional violence. His concerns would prove to be well founded on 19 April 2019 when gunmen burst into a meeting of health workers he was leading. The gunmen confiscated all cell phones and then began shooting, wounding two aid workers and killing Dr. Mouzoko. Such attacks on aid workers are common in the Congo and serve to allow the spread of the disease. These attacks are motivated by a combination of local superstition, tribal conflict, and short sighted gain. Please pray for the family of Dr. Mouzoko, that they will be comforted during this time of loss. Also, pray for those in the area of the outbreak and that it will quickly be contained. (*Source: The Economist*)

Algeria—From Middle East Concern: “On 16 May there will be a hearing in the case against the owner of land being used by a church in the Kabylie province of Bejaia. He has been charged with allowing unauthorized worship on his land, violating a 2006 Ordinance that regulates non-Muslim worship. The church involved is the “Ville de Refuge” congregation in the village of Azaghar, about 180 km south-east of Algiers. Active for more than five years, it has about 400 attendees and is a member of the EPA (Église Protestante d'Algérie), the legally recognised umbrella of Protestant churches in Algeria. Since the church was sealed by the police on 16 October 2018 it has been meeting in a tent erected on the property. The owner of the tent was summoned several times by the authorities, and asked to dismantle the tent, but the church has continued to meet. Since November 2017 most EPA-affiliated churches have been visited by so-called “building-safety committees,” which also ask for permits required for non-Muslim worship by the 2006 Ordinance. However, the government has yet to issue any license for a church building under this regulation. The congregation in Azaghar was visited by a “committee” in December 2017 which found safety code violations and was ordered to close. The church has since rectified all the violations mentioned. Several churches have since received written orders to cease all activities. A number were closed by authorities because they did not have a license, most recently in July 2018. Three of those closed churches have since been allowed to re-open. In a separate incident, the leader of the Church in Makouda, in the province of Tizi Ouzou, was verbally informed he will be charged for violations of the building plans. This church is the second-largest Protestant congregation in Algeria. The pastor has submitted documentation showing the building is suitable for public meetings. In November 2018, in a similar case a court ordered the church of Aït Djemaa, 35 km south of Tizi Ouzou to close. The court judgement stated that an affiliation with the EPA cannot replace a permission by a building safety committee.” We join Middle East Concern in praying that church leaders will have continued peace and wisdom to lead through these difficulties, that both church will remain open and free to worship, that official campaigns against Christians and other religious minorities will cease, and that those responsible will be convicted of their wrongs and come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

Iraq—While the Islamic State’s “caliphate” may no longer remain as a geographic entity, the impact of the Islamist group continues in areas it formerly ruled. However, there is hope for Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities such as the Yazidis that efforts at bringing ISIS members to justice will continue. In December 2018, President Trump signed the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act. The act calls on foreign governments to identify specific ISIS atrocities and bring ISIS members to justice. Within Iraq, the act strengthens efforts from groups such as the Shlomo Organization for Documentation which works to both document ISIS atrocities as well as locate persons abducted by the Islamic State. It also lends greater legal weight in prosecuting ISIS members as their crimes such as genocide, human trafficking, and sexual slavery fall outside the scope of Iraqi laws. It may also support calls from Iraqi Christians and other religious minorities for an international tribunal to be formed to prosecute ISIS members. Though ISIS has largely returned to the shadows, it is not lost on victims that its members still lurk. Continued and sustained efforts to bring perpetrators of atrocities to justice will go a long way in bringing healing to victims and rebuilding shattered communities. Please pray that members of ISIS will be brought to justice, that with the fall of the “caliphate” the world will not grow complacent against this evil and that healing and peace will be brought to victims. (Source: *The Washington Times*)