

May 2022 Prayer

*or this is what the high and exalted One says—
he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
“I live in a high and holy place,
but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly
and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

—Isaiah 57:15

Believe Me by Irina Ratushinskaya

Believe me, it was often thus:
In solitary cells, on winter nights
A sudden sense of joy and warmth
And a resounding note of love.
And then, unsleeping, I would know
A-huddle by an icy wall:
Someone is thinking of me now,
Petitioning the Lord for me.
My dear ones, thank you all
Who did not falter, who believed in us!
In the most fearful prison hour
We probably would not have passed
Through everything—from end to end,
Our heads held high, unbowed—
Without your valiant hearts
To light our path.

Ukraine—In Vorzel, Katerina Tkachova's parents were shot dead by Russian forces outside their home. In Bohdanivka, an unarmed man was shot in the head in front of his family by Russian soldiers. In Hostomel, well out delivering food and medication to people in bomb shelters, Yuri Prylypko, the city's mayor, was gunned down by the Russian army. In the same town, Volodymyr Zakliupanyy's son is forcibly taken away by Russian forces and later found shot in the head. In Bucha, a woman looked over her fence at a Russian military vehicle and was promptly shot in the head. These are just a handful of the thousands of atrocities and war crimes being committed by Russian military in their illegal aggression and Ukraine. But they bring home the reality that every horrendous crime affects an individual human being, with a name and a life, as well as their friends and family. Rape and torture are also being documented as widely used by Russians soldiers in this violent conflict. Pray to the One who knows each and every name of those being brutally murdered, violated, or losing their home and country that he might comfort those facing so many losses and that he might deliver peace and freedom to the people of Ukraine. Pray that the Russian forces would at very least abide by the minimal rules of war and treat civilians humanely. Pray for an end to this aggression. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

India—A pastor in India was visiting his relatives with his family in Anamouh Anna Village in North India, and when they were singing and praying in the evening, a group of police officers barged in. They took the pastor into their van and began beating him. Then they brought him to the police station and continued to beat him for almost 24 hours. They told him to say, “Glory to Lord Rama” (“Jai Sriram”), and when family members called to inquire about him they beat him with belts and sticks all the more intensely. They accused him of converting others to Christianity. He was released the next night, but was unable to walk out of the police station because of the pain and swelling in his legs. Please pray for this pastor as he is healing, that there would be no lasting physical ailments and that he would heal emotionally from this trauma. Pray for him to forgive his torturers,

police officers who are supposed to protect and instead used their authority for brutality. Please pray for the protection of religious minorities in India who are so often targeted in this way, and that Christianity would flourish despite the persecution. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Turkey—Istanbul’s Heavy Penal Court sentenced Human Rights Activist Osman Kavala to life in prison for allegedly attempting to overthrow the government of Turkey. Amnesty International’s European director calls this a “travesty of justice of spectacular proportions.” He says, “This verdict deals a devastating blow not only to Osman Kavala . . . but to everyone who believes in justice and human rights activism in Turkey and beyond. The court’s decision defies all logic. The prosecuting authorities have repeatedly failed to provide any evidence that substantiates the baseless charges of attempting to overthrow the government. This unjust verdict shows that the trial was only an attempt to silence independent voices.” Pray for truth and justice in the court systems of Turkey. Pray that if Osman does not know Jesus, he would come to salvation while he’s in prison. Pray for his protection and for him to be released of all charges. Pray that others would soon take his place in defending the cause of justice and human rights in Turkey despite the risk of persecution and arrest. (Source: *Amnesty International*)

Sri Lanka—On March 6, a mob of 600 people stormed the newly planted church of Pastor Indunil. Breaking window and hurled threats. Hearing of the attack, congregants rushed to the aid of the pastor and his family, and the crowd turned on them, beating some of them so severely they have been hospitalized. The police eventually intervened and dispersed the crowd, but the local authorities have demanded that Pastor Indunil no longer hold services. However, this persecution has only strengthened the church’s resolve. They continue to meet in homes, are praying more, and report how the Bible has come alive for them. Pray for the Christians of Sri Lanka, who make up only 4 percent of the population, that they will be protected and that they will continue to grow in their faith and be bold. Pray for local authorities to come to see Christians in the region as friends and not threats, to support and protect them, and to work to help the local community to come to accept Christian churches. (Source: *Open Doors*)

Cuba—Since the peaceful protests of July 2021, the Cuban government has increased its repressive targeting of any groups exercising their beliefs, including the Ladies in White—a peaceful movement of women who have relatives who are prisoners of conscience. Each week since 2003, they have met to silently march, pray, attend mass, and stand witness to the unjust detention of their loved ones. For this, they endure harassment, arrest—held in poor conditions. We join CSW in praying for the following specific situations: “María Josefa Acon Sardiña and Micaela Roll Gibert were arrested by agents of the National Revolutionary Police while leaving a Ladies in White prayer meeting. They were taken to a police unit, interrogated, threatened and released several hours later. Such arrests are a regular occurrence. Berta de Los Ángeles Soler Fernández is the leader of the Ladies in White, and one of the women most routinely, violently and systematically targeted by state authorities. Ask God to provide Berta with strength and resilience. Pray that she would remain secure in the love of God that surpasses knowledge. Reverend Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo has been unjustly detained since he participated in nationwide peaceful protests on 11 July 2021. He was sentenced to eight years in prison after his trial in December, yet neither Pastor Lorenzo nor his wife learnt of the decision until over three months later. Ask God that Pastor Lorenzo would be swiftly released and returned to his family.” Pray for freedom of belief and expression in Cuba, for the government to relent from its oppressive tactics, and for many to find Christ. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Sudan—While Christians in a church in Hajj Abdallah were praying during a church service for Palm Sunday, an Islamic extremist group attacked them. They beat the pastor, named Estefanos, and three women, and all four needed medical treatment as a result. The attackers, including a police officer, also damaged church property such as Bibles, tables, and chairs. Pray for justice in this case, where innocent people were attacked for no reason. Pray that the attackers would feel convicted of their wrongdoing, seek forgiveness from Christ, and turn to Him in repentance for salvation. Pray that what wicked men intended for evil, God would use for His glory. Pray also for healing for those who were injured, and that the church would be able to meet safely in the future. (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

North Korea—Free North Korea Radio has been separately sharing the Gospel and the news over the radio for many years, however, recently, they have started presenting them together in an effort to reach more North Koreans with the truth. They try to intersperse Gospel teaching with current events. Their programs have featured North Koreans who share about finding life in Christ and have a clear message of God’s love for them. Recently, members of the U.S. Congress were invited to speak over this radio program to North Koreans. For example, one of them, Representative Smith said, “As a Christian and a U.S. Representative, I always remind myself of John 1, ‘And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.’ Please know that we haven’t forgotten about you. I know of human rights violations in North Korea and atrocities under Kim Jong Un.” Praise God that this radio station is able to transfer words of truth into the darkest country on the planet. Pray that it would be effective and that many would hear the Gospel and believe. Please pray that any who are seeking truth in North Korea would have safe and easy access to this program and that the government would not be able to shut it down. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Egypt—Mawada el Adham, Hanin Hossan, and seven other young women are spending their 20s in prison on "morality offenses." Each are on social influencers with millions of followers, but their fame did not protect them from the harsh and gender-biased legal system of Egypt. Their sentences range from 6-10 years, for doing nothing more than expressing themselves on social media. They wear dresses that reach their ankles and wrists, or bulky hoodies with long sleeves, their heads covered. They do not even wear much make-up. And yet, Egyptian authorities see these young women as threat to the moral fiber of their society—or more likely a threat to the extreme control it exerts over women in general. The injustice, the irony—the *immorality*—of those sentences is profound. Pray for their protection and for their release. Pray for increased freedom of speech and expression in Egypt, whose repressive rule hinders not only social expression, but any kind of dissent. Pray for the treatment of women in Egypt, and that they might learn about Jesus’s kind, respectful treatment of women and come to love and follow Him. (Source: *Amnesty International*)

Myanmar—The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recently reported that the persecution of Myanmar Christians compares to the past Rohingya (Muslim) genocide. The Tatmadaw military is linked to Buddhist nationalism and has recently started persecuting Christians. The report states, “The Tatmadaw targeted houses of worship, faith leaders, and religious communities in its crackdown on the opposition.” The report advises the U.S. to consider Myanmar a “country of particular concern.” Please pray that the recent attacks against the Christian minority (only 6 percent of the population) do not escalate to the scale of the devastation of the 2017 mass killings and rapes against the Rohingya Muslims. Pray for healing and comfort for both groups of minorities. Pray that this report would alert the international community and would be effective. Please pray especially that the Lord would protect and help His people in Myanmar. (Source: *U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom*)

Syria—In the past 11 years of conflict, at least 100,000 Syrians have been disappeared by government forces and armed opposition groups. To this day, their families have been given no information about the whereabouts or whether they are even still alive. Again, to keep this monstrous tragedy from registering as just another horrible set of statistics, here are the names of just a few of those who are human rights lawyers, peace activists, poets, ordinary citizens, and even little children: Kahlil Maatouk, Rania al-Abbasi (and her 6 children), Mohammed Issam Zaghoul, Yusef Eido, Maher Tahan, Abd al-Aziz al-Khayyir, Fa’eq al-Mir, Nasser Saber Bondek, Abdullah al-Khalil, Razan Zeitouneh, Wael Hamada, Samira Khalil, and Nazem Hammadi. (Source: *Amnesty International*)