

March 2023 Prayer

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.

—Isaiah 12:2

I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.

—Psalm 34: 1-3

Turkey/Syria—Pray for the tens of thousands of victims of the devastating earthquake with shook Turkey and parts of Syria on February 6. Houses, apartment buildings, businesses, and shopping malls collapsed, leaving thousands dead and many more injured. Considered the worst natural disaster to hit Turkey in 84 years, its impact has been compounded by winter, snowy weather and the fact that Turkey's energy infrastructure was also damaged. Pray for comfort for those who have lost loved ones and livelihoods. Pray for provision and healing for those who survived but whose whole lives have been disrupted by the disaster. Pray that many will respond with generosity and compassion, and that this will be an opportunity for the Church in Turkey to show Christ's love in tangible ways. (Source: BBC)

Egypt/Libya—Six Christian men from Egypt were traveling in Libya for work when their car was stopped and they were taken to an unknown location. The kidnappers are demanding over \$3000 per person in ransom, but these men come from impoverished backgrounds and would not have the money to pay this without selling their homes. Apparently, they are locked in a small room with other captives from different countries and are being beaten and given little food. Kidnapping for ransom is common in this region and activists are calling on the government to act to put a stop to it. Please pray for these six Egyptian believers and those that are held captive with them. Pray for their protection from beatings and that they would receive adequate food. Pray also that as they are locked up with these others they would be able to share Christ with them and that they would truly know the presence of Christ is with them. (Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

Nicaragua—Since 2018 the Nicaraguan government has been cracking down on dissent of any kind or expression of independent voices—increasingly religious leaders have been targeted. Most recently Bishop Rolando Alvarez Lagos was sentenced to an astounding 26 years in prison under false charges of conspiracy and spreading false information. Those who are familiar with the case believe that the harsh sentence was in retaliation after Bishop Alvarez refused to go into forced exile—the Nicaraguan government forcibly deporting over 200 political prisoners to the United States in early February, which violates international law. In August, Bishop Alvarez was among 12 people detained in the Diocese of Matagalpa curia. Among them was also Protestant Pastor Wilber Alberto Pérez. Nicaraguan security forces stormed the curia after 15 days, placing Bishop Alvarez under house arrest and the other in maximum security prisons, described by human rights organizations as torture centers. Give thanks that most have been released, but continue in prayer for Bishop Alvarez, now being detained in La Modelo Tipitapa prison. We join CSW: “praying for the immediate, unconditional release of Bishop Álvarez, and all other political prisoners in Nicaragua. Giving thanks for courageous Nicaraguans like Bishop Álvarez, who refuse to stay silent in the face of corruption and rampant human rights violations. Praying for the 222 political prisoners who have been released into exile. Pray for provision, comfort and wisdom as they adjust to an unfamiliar land and navigate an uncertain future; for their families, who were reportedly not informed before their loved ones were removed to the US; and that the

international community will hold President Ortega and his regime to account for its continued crackdown on independent voices. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Democratic Republic of Congo—In early February, a militia group from the eastern area of the Congo opened fire on civilians in the town of Mongbwalu, killing ten people on the street. The Allied Democratic Forces, a Ugandan terrorist group that has pledged allegiance to the Islamic state, then killed twelve other people in a nearby town. Violence in this form or by raiding villages has been common in the DRC for the past twenty years. All of the peace-keeping efforts on the part of the UN and the government there have been ineffective. Please pray that the Prince of Peace, the only One who is able to bring true peace to the people of this region, would work in their hearts. Pray for eyes to be opened and many to be saved. Please pray also for comfort and hope for the families of these 22 who were recently killed. (Source: *US News and World Report*)

Gaza—Pastor Hanna Massad—former pastor of the Gaza Baptist Church—describes being believers in Gaza as a “Church between two fires.” He and his wife, Suhad, have served faithfully in the face of intense persecution, including the bombing of the the Bible Society, which Suhad led, and the murder of their friend and coworker Rami Ayyad. Rami, who also worked for the Bible Society, was kidnapped and eventually killed for his faith. Despite all these challenges, Hanna and Suhad remain strong in their faith, trusting that God will especially use these hardship to strengthen the Church and their witness. As he says, “Our faith will not be tested when everything is going fine.” Give thanks for the faithfulness and courage of believers like Hanna and Suhad. Pray for the Church in Gaza, that they would withstand the “two fires” and come out refined. Pray that many in the region would come to know the grace and peace of Jesus. (Source: *The Voice of the Martyrs*)

Indonesia—Reli was raised as a Muslim and started working at Flourish Cafe in West Java in 2021. The owner of the cafe is a believer who reaches out to women who have been trafficked. She hosts a “Discover the Bible and Quran” study at the cafe every Saturday, and Reli has been attending the study. She started reading the Bible on her own through a Bible app and started praying to Jesus. Her parents and husband did not know that she had accepted Christ until she decided to be baptized. They are upset about her conversion and are pushing her to return to Islam. Please pray that her family would see the positive changes in Reli’s life, that the Lord would open their eyes, and that they would find salvation in Christ like she has. Pray for her safety and that they would not persecute her. And pray for the wonderful work that Flourish Cafe is doing to reach out to those who have suffered and those who don’t know Christ. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Iran—Praise God that Yousef Nadarkhani, who along with three other men was given a ten-year prison sentence in May 2016 for “acting against the national security through propagating house churches and promoting Zionist Christianity,” was just released as part of a general amnesty in honor of the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. Though his sentence had been reduced on appeal to six years, Pastor Nadarkhani still had been unjustly detained, he and his two sons had been assaulted during his arrest, and he had previously been sentenced to death for apostasy. So as we give thanks for this deliverance, we remember that Yousef and his wife and family have suffered greatly and are far from secure living in Iran. We also remember in prayer that many continue to endure prison for their faith. We join Middle East Concern in praying that: “Yousef will quickly adjust to life with his family and overcome the trauma of prison; other Christians in Iran imprisoned for their faith will also be released; Iran will stop the persecution of Christians and other faith communities.” (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

Laos—Laos has a one party Communist state and a population mostly made up of Buddhists. Although religious freedom is supposedly protected, time and again Christians have been cast out of their villages. Recently, 15 families and their pastor were forced to leave their homes in a rural village of northwestern Laos. The Ahka minority has its own beliefs and did not tolerate these families' recent conversions to Christianity. The believers that were literally chased out of town have no place to live right now. Official authorities have met with the Christians and villagers to attempt a peaceful resolution in which they can all live in the same village, but this has been unsuccessful. In general, even the authorities do not welcome believers, saying that Christianity is a foreign religion of their Western enemies. Villagers are angry that Christians do not participate in ethnic ceremonies and try to spread their faith to others. Although authorities claim religious freedom, persecution has been widespread. In recent years, many have been cast out of their villages, one home was burned to the ground, and a pastor was beaten to death. Please pray for this country to extend religious freedom to all of its population and to protect basic human rights. Thank the Lord that many have been turning to Christ, and pray that this persecution would not discourage but strengthen their faith. (*Source: Radio Free Asia*)

China—Among the numerous ongoing situations of persecution, pray for Kang Fuguo and his family, member of the Early Rain Covenant Church, who were illegally detained by security guards from Southwest Minzu University. They were taken to the police and refused entry to their own rented campus house. The security guards also tried to convince their landlord to evict the family. Pray also for Pastor Lian Changnian, Pastor Lian Xuling, and Preacher Fu Juan, leaders of Xi'an Church of Abundance, who were transferred to a detention center after six months of residential surveillance in a "designated location." The three men had been falsely accused of criminal fraud, and members of the church has been interrogated, harassed, and were lied to by the police about the pastors. Pray also for Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, and his secretary, Fr. Paolo Jiang Sunian, who were detained by officials—without any reason or indication of release time, in an effort to prevent them from attending the funeral of a well-known "underground church clergyman." Pray for these suffering believers that they may face untrue and unjust accusations with grace and perseverance. Pray for their protection and deliverance and provision. Pray for the country of China, for the strengthening and growth of the Church there, for persecutors to be convicted of their cruelty, for human rights to be protected, and for many to find salvation in Jesus. (*Source: China Aid*)

Pakistan—A believer named Yusuf lost his inherited land when it was stolen by a tenant of his named Mughal. Yusuf's father had leased part of his land to Mughal, but his father died before the lease ended. When the land passed down to Yusuf at the time of his father's death, Mughal claimed that the father had sold him the land and that it was now his. When Yusuf refused to leave his own land, Mughal and other radical Muslims attacked him. As a Christian, Yusuf faces injustice in the courts and has no legal recourse to gain back what is rightfully his. Christians have helped him start a first-aid clinic to earn money for his family. Please pray that this would succeed and for justice in this situation so he can gain back his farmland. Pray also that his dealings with the attackers and Mughal will be safe and full of grace and that his kindness and forgiveness would even win them to Christ. Pray for their conviction and recognition that they need the Savior. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)