

May 2023 Prayer

*The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.*

*Those who know your name trust in you,
for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.*

—Psalm 9: 9-10

Yemen—On 25 April, in Sanaa, the capital city, 78 people were killed at a charity event for Ramadan. They were crushed at a school where they had gathered to receive aid. A local merchant was passing out alms of \$9 for Ramadan at a school, so hundreds of poor people lined up outside Maeen school, causing overcrowding. When the gate was opened, the group pressed in to receive money and created a stampede that crushed so many men, women, and children. Besides the 78 killed, 77 were injured. Please pray for healing for those that are recovering, and pray for comfort and support for those who lost loved ones in this tragedy. (*Source: BBC*)

Russian—The international criminal court issued warrants for the arrest of Russian president Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, his commissioner for children’s rights for war crimes connected to the forced abduction of Ukrainian orphans from areas in Ukraine where Russian forces have invaded and taken control. According to the AP, “officials have deported Ukrainian children to Russia or Russian-held territories without consent, lied to them that they weren’t wanted by their parents, used them for propaganda, and given them Russian families and citizenship.” Removing and adopting children without the consent of the home country is even against Russian law. The relocation and “re-education” of children for the purpose of eradicating their culture and heritage is considered an act of genocide. Despite these, Russia has purposefully and intentionally paid Russian citizens to “adopt” Ukrainian children (even those already placed in foster/adoptive homes in Ukraine and making no efforts to locate surviving family pursued). Children have been placed in camps for “rest and re-education” as mandated by Russian initiatives at the highest level. Pray for the protection and of over 16,000 Ukrainian children, whose lives are already traumatized and disrupted by war, violence, and loss—and who now are being forced without consent into “care” situations in the country of their aggressor. Pray for extended families and Ukrainian foster and adoptive parents who cannot locate children illegally taken by Russian forces—that they would have peace and strength to persevere, and that they would one day soon be reunited with the children they should be caring for. Pray that this illegal and brazen aggression by Russia would be thwarted, that they would be forced to retreat and abandon this attempt at occupation, and that those responsible for war crimes and atrocities would be brought to justice, starting at the highest levels. (*Sources: Associated Press; The Guardian*)

Democratic Republic of Congo—Five siblings watched as Muslim extremists tore through their village, shouting “Praise Allah” as they attacked people. The children, ages 9 to 18, watched as their parents were brutally murdered. The five siblings were taken hostage and were told to become Muslims. If they agreed, they would be trained, and if they refused, they would be killed. Praise be to God that after three days, the Congolese army rescued two of the children and that the other three recently escaped. Praise God for their rescue, and pray that all five of them would be able to find each other and stay together. Pray for their healing from this unspeakable trauma. And pray that the extremists who perpetrated this violence would be brought to justice, recognize their wickedness, and seek the Lord. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Iraq—Thirty-eight-year-old Jagarkhuin Abdulrahman Ismael, known as “Jagar,” has been repeatedly arrested and harassed for his evangelistic social media posts that have been deemed as “threatening,

defaming or insulting” of others. Having become a Christian in 2018, this married believer was first arrested in 2022, and this most recent charge carries the harshest possible sentence. It is thought this charge was brought due to rising Islamic sentiment in the Kurdistan Region (KRI). On 16 April 2023, an appeal court upheld Jagar’s previous conviction, and his case along with the case of Bishop Bahzad Mziri—regional leader of the Anabaptist church also charged with blasphemy—has spurred anti-Christian activity. Pray for Jagar and Bishop Mziri and their families that they would experience the peace of Jesus and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Pray that Jagar might be able to further appeal his conviction and pray for his immediate release. Pray for the end of the incitement of hate against Christians in the KRI and for more freedom for believers in Iraq. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

Mexico—A fire broke out at a migrant detention center in Juarez on 27 March, and 38 people from Central and South America died. Some of the migrants had set fire to mattresses when they heard that they would be deported. Many were locked behind bars and were not set free in order to survive the blaze and smoke. This horrific catastrophe highlights the struggles migrants have, the poor conditions of detention centers, and the ongoing dilemma of how to handle the large number of displaced people. Please pray for protection over these suffering families as governments decide where to send them. Pray that they would know that they are ultimately in God’s hands, that He determines their future, and that they would put their trust in Him. Pray for those families who have tragically lost loved ones in the fire in Mexico, and pray for their needs to be met while they wait in limbo. Pray, in addition, for discernment for those in authority. (*Source: Reuters*)

Zimbabwe—Jacob Ngarivhume organized a peaceful protest in July 2020 calling for an end to corruption in Zimbabwe and for the government to stop denying the socioeconomic rights of their citizens. For these activities, this opposition leader was sentenced to four years in prison. Human rights groups see this conviction as just a part of a growing oppressive crackdown by the government of Zimbabwe against opposition leaders, human right defenders, journalists, and other dissenters. It is further concerning because of the abuse of the legal system that is used to target critics, silence dissenting voices, and quell freedom of expression. Pray for Jacob Ngarivhume and others in Zimbabwe courageous enough to call out corruption and injustice at great personal cost. Pray that Jacob and other political prisoners would be released. Pray that freedom of expression, healthy political discourse, and governance with integrity would be restored to Zimbabwe. Pray that all who suffer there due to socioeconomic inequities and exploitation might find justice, opportunity, and equity in their country. (*Source: Amnesty International*)

North Korea/China—Joon-ki is a pastor who shares the Gospel with North Koreans who are temporarily working in China. His ministry involves seeking out North Koreans, befriending them, and carefully talking to them about the Word of God. His father escaped North Korea in 1954, and he has always had a heart for his father’s people. Because they can easily get reported, he has to be very careful in how he shares the truth. He builds friendships in order to show them that Christians are different than others and to develop trust. Please pray for this brother’s ministry to be effective and for him to be safe and to be an example to others to boldly befriend North Koreans. Pray that God’s name would be glorified and that many who are so lost and deceived would find Him. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Sudan/Chad/South Sudan—As conflict has reignited between warring factions in Sudan, hundreds of thousands of people are now fleeing the violence in the region, adding to the millions of internally displaced people within Sudan and refugees who have fled there from South Sudan. Tens of thousands are also flowing over the borders into Chad and Upper Nile State. This is all part of a mounting humanitarian crisis that the UNHRC—the UN’s refugee agency—is attempting to support and assist, as

they mobilize temporary shelters, sleeping mats, food and medical supplies, and other aid to protect the vulnerable populations caught in the escalating conflict. Pray for the provision and protection of those devastated by this ongoing, senseless conflict—marked by criminal behavior and arbitrary violence. Pray that thugs and despots would be deposed and leaders of integrity and good character would be raised up. Pray that neighboring countries and beyond would show compassion and welcome. Pray for peace to finally be established in Sudan and South Sudan after decades of war, atrocities, and genocide. (Source: UNHRC)

Indonesia—Elianu Hia was frustrated that his 17-year-old Christian daughter was forced to wear a hijab to school. When he spoke to the school officials, he was asked to sign a refusal to comply which would be seen as a reason to expel her. He posted this interaction on a Facebook video which then became very popular. Many protested the hijab requirement and the government consented and allowed Christian girls to go without one. However, hundreds started threatening Mr. Hia over Facebook and WhatsApp, and he has since lost most of his customers in his air-conditioning business. He and his family will have to sell their home and move to find a place where he can work. Please pray for this family who is undergoing persecution for a simple protest. Pray that God would provide their needs for a home, work, and food. Pray for their daughter’s protection and education as she finishes her last days of high school. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

India—In a trial that has lasted over 13 years under six different judges, a special court just recently acquitted all 67 individuals accused of the massacre of 11 Muslims in Naroda Gam in 2002. Those acquitted included several former right-wing political and religious party leaders. The massacre allegedly took place during protests following the burning of the Sabarmati Express, in which approximately 58 Hindus were killed and riots and protests broke out across Gujarat state in response. As the CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Scot Bower, stated: “It is worrying and disappointing that no one has been held accountable for the massacre that took the lives of 11 members of the Muslim community in Naroda Gam over two decades ago. We call upon the Special Investigation Team at the Supreme Court to carefully consider the matter again and to ensure that justice is served.” Pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones through senseless violence. Pray that those responsible would be held accountable, because unaddressed injustice only breeds more injustice and cycles of violence. Pray for peace among the various religious and ethnic communities within India and for leaders who will promote tolerance, freedom, justice, and the rule of law. (Source: *CSW*)