

October 2023 Prayer

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

—Galatians 6:10

Azerbaijan/Armenia—Thousands of ethnic Armenians have now fled Nagorno-Karabakh, the disputed territory where a humanitarian crisis has arisen for over 120,000 ethnic Armenians. They are fleeing to Armenia where they will now be homeless and unemployed, but they feared persecution and ethnic cleansing in Azerbaijan. In their rush to leave, chaos ensued, and a gas depot exploded and killed 20 people and injured over 300. Please pray for healing for those that are in the hospital now and seeking medical treatment for their injuries. Pray for this whole community of ethnic Armenians, who are homeless and destitute and terrified. Pray that the country of Armenia would welcome them and be able to provide the jobs and aid they need. Pray for those that are suffering to seek the Lord for help and deliverance. (*Source: Reuters*)

Libya—Pray for the thousands who have been killed or are missing in the massive flooding in Libya after Storm Daniel tore through, bursting two important dams in the city of Dern that were aging. Reports also indicate that a normally operating meteorological service could have prevented many if not most of the casualties. Pray that the God of comfort would make Himself known to the thousands who have survived this disaster but are mourning the tremendous loss of loved ones, homes, businesses, and all kinds of infrastructure. Pray that God would provide in profound and miraculous ways for those who are suffering unimaginable tragedy. Pray that their hearts and minds would be given peace and healed from this trauma. May believers in Libya and the church around the world lean in with care and love to this hurting country, and be the hands and feet of Jesus in this place. (*Source: CNN; AP; others*)

Indonesia—Juhari grew up as a Muslim, but became a Christian in his late 60s. He was delivering wood when he had an accident. His neighbor, Jusuf, helped him and started speaking to him about Jesus. Juhari also had a dream that Jesus was speaking to him and telling him to believe in Him and follow Him. Juhari is now a believer in the Lord, but he has been rejected by his wife and grown children who want him to return to Islam. Praise God for the miraculous salvation of this man in his older years. Pray that his family would welcome him back and hear his testimony about Jesus Christ. Pray for them to be saved and for this brother in Christ to be a light and share the good news with those he comes in contact with. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Iran—On September 14, the one-year anniversary of the brutal murder of Mahsa Amini at the hands of Iran's "morality police," efforts to honor her and continue to shine a light on repression in Iran have been met with heavy-handed crackdowns. The government and police are using Chinese facial recognition technology to round-up and arrest any perceived dissenters, and Mahsa's father was even temporarily detained. In separate incidents around Iran, security forces have used both pellet guns and live ammunition on crowds resulting in deaths and injuries. The lawyer for Mahsa Amini's family, Saleh Nikbakht, was charged with "propaganda against the system," will face a trial himself, and possibly one to three years in prison. Amnesty Iran described the government's response to the year-long protests of Mahsa's wrongful death this way: "Instead of abolishing discriminatory compulsory veiling laws, Iranian authorities have waged an all-out assault on women's rights, unlawfully killed hundreds and tortured thousands." Pray for the protection of those who mourn Mahsa Amini, who seek fair and humane treatment of women in Iran, and who seek democracy and religious freedom in this country. Pray that these crackdowns will cease, and that Iranians will gain the right to safely protest.

Pray that the Church in Iran will continue to grow and be a strong witness of true freedom in Christ. (Sources: *The Guardian*; *CBN*; *Amnesty International*)

North Korea—Since it sealed its borders in 2020, North Korea has faced even greater challenges. The country has never been able to provide enough food for its citizens, so with no food being imported or smuggled in from China, some are starving to death. Many fear another famine such as they had in 1990. The government has also made the border even more secure, and guards are ordered to shoot anyone who approaches it. Even watching foreign television or listening to foreign music can be punished with execution now. Kim Jong Un seems to want to prevent people from seeing the quality of life in other countries and rising up against him. Please pray that as the population grows more discontent, they would have the courage and miraculous means to revolt as those in Eastern Europe did in 1989. Pray for this ruthless tyrant to be removed and for freedom to reign in North Korea. Pray for the people to have enough food and be safe from starvation. And pray that in this darkest of countries, the light of the Gospel would shine the brightest and bring hope and salvation to countless sufferers. (Source: *BBC*)

United States—Child labor continues to rise in the United States, with conditions and wages that are more akin to circumstances in the early 20th century. Tens of thousands of children and teens in all 50 states work fulltime—often night shifts and in dangerous workplaces—as they have been allowed to enter the United States, but then when placed in “sponsor” families, are not protected or given the opportunities for normalcy, education, and basic opportunities. Pray for children like 15-year-old Marco Crux who was maimed while working the night shift at a poultry processing plant owned by Perdue Chicken—for their protection, for provision for them, for them to be able to go to school and to lead safe, healthy, normal lives. Pray that companies such as Perdue and Tyson will be serious and vigilant about abolishing child labor from their supply chain. Pray for countries like Venezuela, Colombia, and other Latin American nations suffering from political collapse, violence, corruption, and endemic poverty—that they might become functional, safe nation-states that do not cause the most vulnerable to seek desperate measures of migration just to keep themselves and their families alive. Pray that the United States will do all to protect those seeking safety and asylum here. Pray that the Church in the United States would be the generous hands and feet of Christ to those in need. (Source: *The New York Times*)

Burkina Faso—Groups linked to Al Qaida and the Islamic State are perpetuating horrible violence in the northern part of this African nation. More than 2000 have died and 2 million have been displaced. Although its constitution used to guarantee religious freedom, coup d’etats in 2022 have suspended the religious freedom rights granted in the constitution, and persecution is rampant. Despite this, the church is strong. One church leader says, “It is truly striking to note that Christians who had to some extent abandoned religious practice before the crisis are returning to the faith at a time when the terrorists are doing what they can to extinguish Christianity. While the terrorists prevent Christians from gathering in churches, families get together in their homes to rekindle the flame of faith . . .” Please pray that this continues, and that the church grows stronger and stronger so that truth is spread throughout this nation. Pray that God would protect the church and would grant safe opportunities to gather for worship and share the gospel. As we pray for religious freedom, pray that Christians would continue in faith and courage and hope even in the midst of persecution. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

Pakistan—After two members were accused of committing blasphemy, a mob of over 100 violently attacked a Christian community in Faisalabad. Although the police knew this would happen, they warned the community that they could not do anything to stop it. In addition, no charges have been made against the perpetrators. When these attacks are allowed to happen with impunity, others are

encouraged to perpetuate the violence. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Pakistan to be safe. Pray that the horrible blasphemy law would be repealed, that the police and government would protect minority groups and punish wrongdoers, and that the church in Pakistan would grow stronger in faith and in number. (Source: *Human Rights Watch*)

Mexico—After a brutal attack by members of her community, Maria Concepción began 2023 in an ICU with little hope of recovering. An indigenous woman and member of a Baptist church, Maria faced persecution on a number of fronts. The violent attack against her is just one of the many severe and ongoing violations of freedom of religion or belief in Rancho Nuevo, Huejutla de los Reyes, Hidalgo State. Praise God that even though she was expected to die, after the prayers of many believers around the world, Maria has survived and is beginning a slow recovery. She is able to walk with the assistance of a cane and her son. Pray for the relief of her constant back pain, and for the many other indigenous women who have suffered similar violence and are also unable to access medical care. Pray for their physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Pray that officials in Hidalgo state will no longer allow these attacks to continue with impunity, but act with integrity and justice. Pray that God will draw those who suffer for their faith in Hidalgo state. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Ghana/International—While good intentions have motivated thousands to use their vacation time to also volunteer while traveling, a horrible by-product of this “voluntourism” has been the rise in exploitation of children. Because orphanages are a “popular” choice to serve for volunteers traveling to other parts of the globe, traffickers and other who would seek to exploit the vulnerable and impoverished have used deception, coercion, and violence to keep orphanages full of children—many of whom are not in fact orphans, but really just the children of the extremely poor who have been promised that their children will receive better food, care, and an education if they are given to the “orphanages.” Pray for the following situations—reported by Freedom United—and those like them around the globe:

- “In Cambodia, Sinet Chan was repeatedly beaten, raped, starved and forced to work on the orphanage director’s rice paddies and farms without pay. Now, she is a strong ambassador for the Cambodian Children’s Trust, telling her story and raising awareness of the potentially terrible conditions children face in institutions.
- In Haiti, some families were paid 75 USD to give their children away to orphanages on false promises their children would receive an education and opportunities for the future, only for them to end up living in slave-like conditions.
- Vulnerable children being separated from their families and placed in orphanages to attract funding, volunteers and donations from well-meaning tourists is replicated across Southeast Asia and has also been reported on in Nepal and across Africa.
- In one case in Nepal, a mother searching for her two children who she believed were in school, found them in an orphanage. The orphanage director then extorted the mother and insisted she pay him 144,000 rupees (1,440 USD) before he would release her children.”

Give thanks that some organizations who arrange travel and placement for voluntourism—such as Plan My Gap Year—have taken definitive action and no longer place volunteers in “institutional settings” so as not to incentivize this gross exploitation. Pray for the protection of these poorest of the poor.

(Source: *Freedom United*)