

Prayer Items August 2016

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

--Philippians 3:14

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

Kazakhstan—In August 2015, Yklas Kabduakasov, a Muslim-background believer, husband, and father of four young children was arrested for “inciting hatred” because of his Christian faith. He began serving a two-year sentence at labor camp. In addition to the hardship of having their husband, father, and breadwinner absent on a daily basis, this imprisonment has been made even more difficult as visitation is extremely limited to only a few specific hours each month and the prison is 280 miles from the family's home. Pray for provision and perseverance for this young family, especially for Yklas' wife Karlygash, who is managing on her own during this trial. Pray that they all would experience God's presence in amazing and miraculous ways. Pray that their faith would remain strong and that through these circumstances and their responses to it, many might come to know Christ. (*Source: The Voice of the Martyrs*)

Egypt—On May 19, 2016, Christian Mina Thabet was arrested for his human rights work on behalf of Coptic and minority rights in Egypt. In recent weeks there have been reports of worsening health and other concerns for Mina's wellbeing. We give thanks that Mina Thabet was recently released on bail, but we continue to persevere in prayer for him, as his ordeal is far from over. Pray for restoration of his mental and physical health as is home from prison, and pray further that the charges against him might be dropped. Pray for the continued effectiveness of his human rights work and for improved conditions for all Christians and minorities in Egypt. Pray also for the many refugees that have had to flee the Egypt and the region in general, as persecution has increased in frequency and intensity in recent years. Pray that believers who remain will be able to continue to feel the comforting presence of God in their circumstances and to be a light to others. Pray many would accept the love and forgiveness of Christ through their witness. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Sierra Leone—Praise God for the effectiveness of a new evangelism tool which broadcasts audio Bible and Gospel messages through battery-operated digital media players. These players have proven to be particularly useful in remote areas of the country where believers and unbelievers alike are often illiterate. The audio Bible has been like a discipleship training program for evangelists, and with its speaker system that broadcasts messages in their native language to over two hundred people at a time, it is also an effective witnessing tool. Praise God that recently over 250 people were baptized after coming to faith in Christ. Pray that more Africans will hear the Gospel preached in their own language. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)

Egypt—The end of May and throughout June saw a string of attacks on believers in Minya Province and other parts of Egypt. In al-Karam village a mob attacked a home of a Christian man based on rumors of his having a relationship with a Muslim woman. The man's 70-year-old mother was also publicly stripped and attacked. Eleven of the 16 people arrested for the assault have already been released on bail. In Damshir village, a Coptic man was accused of building a church while he was doing construction on his home, and subsequently he and his family were attacked with knives by four Muslim men. Though they were the ones attacked, threatened, and told to leave the village, authorities only told the family to cease construction work. Additionally, a nun at a Coptic Orthodox medical center was attacked, as was a guard who helped her. The attacker returned later that day and attacked them both again with a knife, though the guard successfully locked the attacker out. Again, the police took no action on this attack either. In mid-June in al-Bayda village, a few thousand people mobbed the house of a Coptic man, accusing him of trying to turn his apartment building into a church. The mob proceeded to attack several other Coptic homes, seriously damaging two and looting ten. Less than two weeks later, four houses in Kom al-Loufy village were set on fire because of a rumor that two brothers were planning to construct a church. And finally, on June 30, the parish priest of St. George's church in Arish, Northern Sinai, was shot and killed on his way home from a church service by a member of Daesh (so-called "Islamic State"). After Father Raphael Moussa's murder, those claiming responsibility threatened more killings would come. In the wake of all these events, there are debates ongoing in the Egyptian parliament pertaining to blasphemy legislation, the regulation of personal status law for Christian communities, regulation of church construction, and bills regarding equal citizenship for all. Pray for peace, healing, and comfort for those who have been attacked and for those who lost loved ones in this violence. Pray for Daesh and those who seek to kill and destroy in order to promote their own agenda—that they might find the light, love, and salvation of Christ. Pray for Egypt in this ongoing tumult that leaders who be convicted in their consciences to do what is just and right for all their citizens. (*Source: Middle East Concern*)

China—After removing crosses and demolishing churches, Chinese authorities have now resorted to blackmail in an attempt to stop the spread of the Gospel among young people. In Huaqiu, a notice was sent to all schools stating that any children who attend any church except the state Three-Self Church will be ineligible for admittance into college or a military academy, and parents who bring their children to church will be sued. Recently, a grandfather was forced to sign a document agreeing to not attend church so that his grandson's application to the military would not be dismissed. Please pray for wisdom for Chinese parents to know how to obey God rather than man, yet to be able to provide for their children. Pray for great discernment and protection. Pray especially that despite the state's efforts to thwart the growth of the church, that many more people, young and old, would find salvation in Jesus Christ. (*Source: China Aid*)

Turkey—After waiting nine years for a verdict and being assured they would finally receive one on June 28, the families of the three Christian men murdered at Zirve Publishing House were disappointed to have the verdict again delayed. The families of Necati Aydin, Ugur Yuksel and Tilmann Geske have endured an increasingly complicated justice process, with reassignments of judges, prosecutors, and other court officials—all of which has been further complicated and delayed by recent political events. Amid this frustration, they have also had to contend with the threat and concern of having the five men accused of the crimes released on bail and moving around freely. In an interview with journalists, Tilmann's widow Susanne Geske, said, "Nine years have now passed and I haven't seen anything. A lot

of things have changed. I now only have confidence in God's justice. I will be surprised if a fair decision will be given." Similarly, Hatice Yuksel—the mother of Ugur Yuksel, expressed her weariness with the process and said, "I lost my child. On this holy day at least won't they [the defendants] speak the truth? How is it that the murderers remain free?" Pray for the protection and sustenance of each family member who has had to endure the horror of the murders, and then the subsequent mishandling of the criminal case. Pray that the verdict will finally be handed down on the new date of September 28, and that the verdict will be just. Pray that the long delays of justice will at least have provided an opportunity for the murderers to repent of what they have done, and that they will do so and experience the forgiveness of Christ. Pray for the nation of Turkey during these vulnerable times, that officials will act with integrity and more so, that they too might be drawn to the Father's love, forgiveness, and acceptance. Pray for the preservation, endurance, and witness of the Christian community in Turkey. *(Source: Middle East Concern)*

Russia—President Vladimir Putin approved a law stating that evangelism of any kind will only be allowed in approved churches, and not in public, in homes or online. Clearly, this anti-terrorism law severely restricts missionary and church outreach. Penalties will include almost \$800 fines for individuals, \$15,000 fines for organizations, and deportation for foreign missionaries. Pray that this law, in effect as of July 20, will not hinder outreach, but will cause seekers to flock to churches and fill them to overflowing. Pray that the Spirit would move in the hearts of the Russian people to seek Christ. Pray also for protection, that the state would not become overly powerful as in times past. *(Source: Christianity Today)*

Niger—After Boko Haram attacked Southeastern Niger in June, 75,000 people were forced to flee their villages. Three thousand of them were pregnant women in need of medical attention after having walked 35 kilometers. Some of these women gave birth in the bush along the way. They are now in IDP camps and are being offered reproductive health kits and treatment at mobile health clinics. Pray for protection for the unborn children, newborns and their mothers, particularly from violence and assault. Pray for hope and help for these women, and that they would seek the Lord for strength. Pray that they would find permanent homes now that their villages have been demolished, and that they would be able to adequately provide for their families. Pray that God would indeed be their Father, Helper, and Refuge. *(Source: United Nations)*

North Korea—Praise God for creative ways of reaching the lost with the Gospel. Former political prisoner Jung Gwang-il has recorded 32 “stealth gospel” songs in which praising references to the ruling Kim dynasty in propaganda music are replaced with the name of Jesus. The music, voice, accompaniment, and most lyrics are identical to North Korean propaganda music which worships their dictator, and because it sounds so authentic, customs officers do not check it closely enough to notice the references to Jesus Christ. The music is distributed along the border by smugglers. Pray for their protection as the penalty if they are caught is public execution. Pray that God would use Jung's simple attempt to challenge North Koreans' thinking to in fact lead them to worship Jesus. *(Source: The Guardian)*

Iraq—In August 2014, Daesh terrorists took control of Sinjar in northwestern Iraq, and began a genocide against the Yazidi people, an ethnic group they claim are “devil-worshippers.” Subsequently,

many have been killed, more than 40,000 Yazidi have been forced to flee, and thousands of Yazidi women and girls were taken hostage and forced to be sex slaves. Most recently, at the beginning of June, 19 of these young women were caged and burned alive in front of a crowd of hundreds of people in Mosul, Iraq, for refusing to have sex with their captors. Pray for this horrifically persecuted people group who have lost their homes, their family members, even their very lives in tortuous and unthinkably cruel ways. Pray for the healing and protection of those who have survived, like Yazidi activist, Nadia Murad, who spoke of her ordeal before the UN, including how the terrorists forced her to pray before raping her. Pray for these enemies who perpetrate this deep evil, which is not so great as that it cannot be overcome by the love of Christ. Pray that West would wake up, be active and merciful, wise and effective in combating these atrocities and the violence gripping the globe. Pray back evil and darkness in the name of Jesus. *(Source: The New York Times, Fox News, The Independent, The Daily Mail)*