

April 2023 Prayer

“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”
—Mark 15:12-15

Democratic Republic of Congo— The situation in the DRC grows steadily worse as the ADF terrorist group wreaks havoc. Some members of the group have threatened to attack church services if the pastors don't pay them money. They also shoot and kill randomly in Christian villages. In the village of Mukondi, on March 9, the ADF trapped villagers in their burning houses and killed others with machetes. In addition to these terrorist attacks, the country is suffering from poverty and war and an orphan crisis. (In one orphanage that has room for 100 orphans, 300 children are being housed.) Please pray for miraculous deliverance from this suffering. Pray that many would turn to Christ and seek His help and comfort and receive peace from him. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Kosovo/The Hague—Former president and prime minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi; Kadri Veseli, former head of the KLA's intelligence service; Rexhep Selimi, head of the KLA's operational directorate; and Jakup Krasniqi, member of the KLA's political directorate, are all set to go to trial at the beginning of April in The Hague for war crimes committed during and after the Kosovo conflict with Serbia. All are charged with creating a joint criminal enterprise resulting in mistreating, intimidating, committing violence against, and even the removal of individuals seen as opponents to the KLA. The victims of these alleged crimes include Serbs, Roma, and ethnic Albanians who were considered collaborators with Serbian forces or political opponents of the KLA. More than 1,600 people remain missing from the Kosovo conflict, and Serbia refuses to identify mass graves where bodies were unlawfully removed and buried. Leading up to the trial there have been documented cases of witness intimidation as well, including at least one death. While the vast majority of war crimes, including murder, rape, and torture, were committed by Serbian forces, it is still vital to Kosovo's future as a civil society guided by the rule of law that those involved in war crimes be brought to justice—even 24 years later. Pray for truth to be revealed and for justice to be served for the victims and their families. Pray that those who committed these crimes will comprehend the magnitude of its evil. Pray that this region—plagued with conflict, violence, and corruption—will move forward in an era of peace, security, and integrity. (*Source: Human Rights Watch*)

Myanmar—Sixty-five-year-old Pastor Hkalam Samson has met with multiple US presidents in the past to share how his ethnic Kachin people have been oppressed and tortured by his military government. The mostly Christian Kachin people have been in a civil war with the military junta for decades, and Pastor Samson has organized aid, called prayer meetings, and advocated on his people's behalf. However, in December 2022 he was arrested and imprisoned and now faces 13 years in prison for meeting with Kachin military and praying with government leaders in exile. He was arrested while traveling for medical treatment, and his wife is concerned about his health because he has pneumonia and high blood pressure and is being denied medicine. Human rights groups around the world and the U.S. State Department have called for his release. Please pray for Pastor Samson's protection and for his acquittal. Pray that this courageous man would continue to speak out for the oppressed, and pray that God would use him to accomplish His work even while in prison.
(*Source: Christianity Today*)

Laos—As a result of becoming a Christian, Jai and his wife Tai have faced increasing persecution. As of 2019, there had been about 80 believers in their village, Jai's parents among them. But when a pastor led Jai to faith in Jesus, Jai immediately lost his role as a village leader and persecution in general intensified—including not allowing children under 18 to attend church. Police had threatened to

slaughter all of Jai's livestock, and on January 5, 2023 they came and killed all of Jai and Tai's animals—4 pigs, 16 ducks and 20 chickens—essentially leaving them without any livelihood. Praise God for this couples strong faith. Pray for them and the other 13 families who are following Christ under these challenging circumstances. Pray that they will remain courageous and that God will miraculously provide abundantly for all their needs. Pray for the police, the authorities, and the other villagers that they might repent of their cruelty to Jai and others, and that they might find light and life in Jesus. (Source: *The Voice of the Martyrs*)

Nigeria—Twenty-nine farmers and fishermen were brutally murdered by Boko Haram in the town of Dikwa in Borno State of northeast Nigeria. In recent years, there had been fewer attacks probably due to military presence, but this recent violence shows they are regaining strength and are a considerable threat to the region. Please pray for comfort for the families of those who were killed. Pray that the leaders of Boko Haram would be convicted of their wickedness and see their inevitable destructive end. Pray that they would seek the Savior and his forgiveness and turn from their wicked ways. And pray for protection of the innocent in these regions. (Source: *BBC*)

International—Just as Pontius Pilate played a role in the persecution and unjust execution of Jesus, leaders and people in authority around the world play direct roles in the ongoing persecution of Christ, through His body, the Church. Pray for leaders around the world, such as Xi Jinping in China; Kim Jong-un in North Korea; the military junta in Myanmar/Burma; President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, in Nicaragua, that they would be transformed by the Holy Spirit, stop perpetrating human rights abuses, and end their crackdowns on freedom of religion and belief. Pray for police officers, prosecutors, judges and others in positions of legal authority around the world. Pray that God will raise up people with integrity, who will listen to evidence and use their power for good. Pray for unjust verdicts to be overturned—especially for those targeted because of their religion or belief, or for defending the rights of others. (Source: *CSW*)

Iran—Hadi Rahimi and Zaman Fadaei were released from Evin Prison as part of an amnesty for the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in February. Both men had been held in prison because of their involvement in the house church movement. Praise God that they have been released and are reunited with their families, but please pray for the hundreds of other Christians behind bars in this notorious prison. Hadi Ghaemi of the Center for Human Rights in Iran says, the “so-called ‘pardon’ is nothing but a shameless public relations stunt that shows the completely arbitrary nature of justice in the Islamic Republic, where arrests and releases are at the whim of the state.” Please pray for protection for our Christian brothers and sisters in Iran, that they might share the gospel boldly without being punished. (Source: *Middle East Concern*)

Cuba—Loreto Hernández García, leader of the independent religious group Association of Free Yorubas, was imprisoned on July 16, 2022 after the government began cracking down on the spontaneous peaceful protests that were carried out across the country on July 11, 2022. He is serving a seven-year sentence in Guamajal Prison in the province of Villa Clara on charges of disrespect and public disorder. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom considers Mr Hernández García to have been “imprisoned for his religious identity, religious activity, and religious leadership role.” Loreto Hernández García has diabetes and hypertension, and is now exhibiting signs of pancreatic cancer. Yet the Cuban government has denied requests that he receive medical treatment outside of the maximum security prison where he is being held. His wife Donaida Perez Paseiro is serving an eight-year sentence. While in prison, Loreto Hernández García has been mistreated too. Pray for this faithful man and his wife. Pray for God's intervention and provision of medical care. Pray for their comfort and sustenance as they endure the hardship of prison. Pray for the leaders of Cuba, that

they would turn from their oppressive practices. Pray for greater freedom in Cuba, for the strengthening of believers there, and that many more would come to Christ. (Source: CSW)

India—Please pray for the 1,383 rural pastors who are equipped with a bicycle and a hundred Bibles to share with those in the rural areas of India. This ministry, called Bikes and Bibles, seeks to reach the unreached in a country where Hindu-radicals can be a considerable threat. In the past nine years, persecution of non-Hindus has tripled. Pray for the pastors’ protection, pray that God would lead them so they would know where to go, and pray that many hearts would be softened and ready to receive the Gospel. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

United States—The laws and protections that were hard-fought for in the US at the beginning of the 20th century to stop the gross exploitation of child labor are unthinkably being overturned in numerous places across the country. Both *The New York Times* and *Reuters* have reported on migrant children as young as 12 working at car factories, meat processing plants and construction sites. And since 2018, there has been a 69 percent increase in the illegal use of child labor. Terri Gerstein, a labor law expert, has explained this surge in illegal exploitation of children this way: “Facing a labor shortage that could have been avoided, it appears that some business interests and lawmakers would prefer to expand the pool of exploitable workers to vulnerable children rather than improve working conditions to attract age-appropriate employees.” Pray for better enforcement of current child labor laws. Pray that lawmakers in Arkansas and nine other states who currently have enacted or are proposing laws that would make it easier for companies to put younger children to work and “would expand work hours for children, lift restrictions on hazardous occupations, allow them to work in locations that serve alcohol, or lower the state minimum wage for minors.” Pray for the protection of vulnerable children and families. Pray for leaders, business people, and lawmakers to choose justice and compassion over greed and profit margins. Pray for consumers to be aware and active and use their buying practices and voting to refuse such practices. (Sources: *The New York Times*; *Reuters*)