

## March 2024 Prayer

*Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.*

—Jeremiah 22:3

**Democratic Republic of Congo**—Since 2012 there has been fighting in eastern DRC between the Congolese army and M23, an non-state armed group, and in recent days escalated conflict has displaced thousands, worsening an already dire humanitarian crisis. Additionally, the main roads around Goma and Sake have been closed off due to the violence, meaning basic goods and humanitarian aid cannot get through to desperate people. Since November 2023 a million people have been displaced due to the conflict, bringing the total of internally displaced people in the DRC to 7 million. The city of Goma alone has already hosted 500,000 displaced people and is being overwhelmed by the thousands more who are coming in the recent wave—resulting in severe overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure leaving people at risk for water-borne diseases and unchecked gender violence, women and girls walk long distances to get water. According to Mercy Corps Country Director for the DRC, Emilie Vonck, “Over the past few days, thousands of women and children who fled their homes could be seen for miles on the roads to Goma carrying babies and heavy luggage, visibly hungry and distressed, having trekked for hours. One woman who fled Sake told us she left everything she owned behind. She came with her seven children on foot, walking for seven hours. They witnessed neighbors die on the way and others injured by bombs. They sat down along the road and cried many times before finally arriving in Goma. Now, she wonders how long they can survive and what will come next.” Pray for the protection of the millions of vulnerable people who have lost so much through this conflict and who continue to be at extreme risk. Pray that the warring parties could come to some kind of peace agreement. Pray that the Lord would comfort and provide for all those who suffer in DRC, and that He would draw many to Himself. *(Source: Mercy Corps)*

**Afghanistan**—After the Taliban took over the country, many thousands fled to Pakistan where they suffered under poor conditions and hunger in refugee camps. A Afghan pastor in the camp started sharing the hope of God’s love with his fellow refugees. Some were in awe of the idea of God sacrificing His Son for them. They continued to ask questions, so he started a Bible study with them, and they started coming to faith. He recently baptized 22 new Afghan believers. Praise God for this beautiful miracle in the midst of such devastation. Praise God that He opened their eyes to see the truth of the Gospel, and pray that He would use these new believers to share the good news with many more. Pray also that their living conditions would improve and that they would be able to find permanent homes. *(Source: International Christian Concern)*

**Canada**—Eight of Canada’s provinces have taken action to block Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) from using provincial jails to incarcerate migrants and asylum seekers on administrative grounds. In addition to the use of provincial jails for asylum seekers being punitive and devastating to their mental health, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented significant discrimination against racialized people, especially black men, and people with disabilities—including more restrictive conditions and longer periods of time in immigration detention. The incarceration of asylum seekers in prison is not consistent with international standards for human rights. Give thanks for the decisions of these eight Canadian provinces to take a stand against the inhumane use of prison for those who are seeking asylum. Pray for the fair and human treatment of those who have already suffered in their home countries only to find themselves imprisoned in the countries where they have

sought relief and protection. Pray for the resolution of conflicts and humanitarian crises that cause the involuntary disruption of lives all around the globe. (Source: *Human Rights Watch*)

**Iran**—Ebrahim Firouzi died of a heart attack on February 20 at age 37. He had spent 7 years in prison for his house church involvement and for sharing Bibles and another two years in exile. Please pray that his ministry of evangelism and Bible-sharing will multiply in the country of Iran. Pray for comfort for those who will miss him and are mourning now. Praise God for this faithful man who was such a witness for Christ and an example to believers the world over. Before his court appearance he had said, “I ask Christians to pray not for my acquittal, but for the great name of God to be glorified.” (Source: *Church in Chains; Voice of the Martyrs*)

**United States**—In the beginning of March two of the largest pharmacies in the United States—Walgreens and CVS—will begin selling the abortion drug mifepristone. Previously only available through hospitals and clinics, this change will significantly change accessibility to the drug—possibly even making it available by mail without an in-person physician visit. Pray for the protection of unborn children in the United States. Pray that regardless of legal status of abortion, a culture of compassion toward the vulnerable and the preservation of life could be cultivated in the United States. Pray that the church in the United States would be an effective, compassionate support for those who find themselves with unplanned pregnancies. (Source: *BBC*)

**India**—On February 6, twenty people surrounded Ayatu Ram Podiyami near his home in a small village and asked him if he would convert back to Hinduism. He and his family had become Christians in 2020. When he refused, nearly 250 people gathered at his house to convince him to renounce his faith in Christ, and he fled to the jungle. While he was gone, the mob told the rest of his family that they had one week to change their minds about Christianity. Once he returned, he went to the police station, asking for help, but they were unable to assist him. A week later, men from the village came to his house and again asked if he would renounce his faith. When he refused, they began beating him with rods, and he again fled to the jungle. While he escaped, the group beat his brother and father. All three men were brought to the hospital and are now recovering. Please pray for this family of believers to remain courageous and firm in their faith. Pray that they will be a witness to the power of the gospel and that their enemies and other villagers would see their faith and turn to Christ. Pray for their continued protection and that God would give them discernment about whether they should stay in the village. (Source: *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

**Eritrea**—For over 7,000 days, three leaders in the Eritrea Orthodox Church have been detained for their effective work in leading the church and bringing many to Christ. Rev. Gebremedhin Gebregergis, Dr. Fitsum-Berhan Gebrenegus, an Eritrean pastor and psychiatrist, and Rev. Dr. Tekleab Mengisteab, a medical doctor, ordained priest, and well-known theologian have all been involved in leading the Mekanehiwet Medhane Alem Church, a renewal movement in the Eritrean Orthodox Church, which has focused on teaching the Bible in the local languages, instead of the ancient languages only known by clergy, making the Bible accessible to all and especially reaching the youth in Eritrea. Dr. Fitsum was the most senior doctor at St Mary Psychiatric Hospital in Asmara and was the only psychiatrist in Eritrea. His wife died while he has been in prison. All three men are widely respected for their integrity and love of Jesus. They are believed to be held in notorious maximum security detention centers, but they have not been allowed any access with the outside world. Pray for their protection, preservation, and sustenance as they endure this cruel imprisonment. Pray that their faith would remain strong and that they would have a strong witness for Christ to other prisoners and their jailers. Pray that the seeds of the movement they began will flourish and grow and many more in Eritrea will come to faith in

Jesus. Pray for the Eritrean government and all who oppress believers and dissenters in general. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

**Burkina Faso**—In the past three years, Islamic militants have been particularly targeting churches, and on February 25 gunmen attacked a Catholic church during a worship service. They opened fire and killed 12 people and injured many more. Three of those who were injured died in the hospital. Please pray for the families of these 15 who so tragically lost their lives. Please pray that the Father of mercies would comfort and encourage those that are grieving. Pray also for healing for others that were injured in the attack. And pray that the Lord would be a shield for His people and would thwart any further plans to attack Christians in this country. (Source: *International Christian Concern*)

**Venezuela**—The spiraling crisis in Venezuela has left 90 percent of the population in extreme poverty, where *monthly* salaries have fallen to as low as \$2.50. More than 6 million Venezuelans have fled their homes to escape life-threatening poverty, insecurity, and violence—despite Venezuela having the world’s largest known oil reserves. Decades of endemic corruption and poor policies have plagued Venezuela, and efforts for reform have only been met with more excessive crackdowns and repression by the government. Most recently the arrest 57-year-old lawyer and military expert Rocío San Miguel have shocked observers. Though detained on allegedly being part of a plot to kill President Maduro, her arrest is thought to actually be linked to her work exposing corruption in the military. Days later when the UN human rights commission criticized her detention, the entire office and staff were ordered to leave the country within 72 hours. Her family was not told of her whereabouts for 2 days after her arrest, and she has not been allowed to seek legal counsel for her case. Similarly, Emirlendris Benítez, a tradeswoman, was arbitrarily arrested for also allegedly being part of a plot to assassinate Maduro. She was sentenced to 30 years in prison, and she reports that military intelligence officials suffocated her with plastic bags, held her underwater, and beat her so badly she is now in a wheelchair. She was also taken to a medical practice and given a forced abortion. More than 300 people are behind bars for their criticism of the government, while thousands of children are on the brink of starvation because of the wildly unethical practices of this government. Pray for Venezuela, most of whom are in dire poverty. Pray for the peaceful removal of a government that rules by fear and oppression. Pray for the migrant crisis that has resulted from this deteriorating situation, and pray for the neighboring countries of Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Chile as they host fleeing Venezuelans. (Sources: *World Vision; The Guardian*)

**Yemen**—Saleh came to Christ as a young man and started sharing the Gospel boldly. During the war, he fled to a nearby country and stayed in a refugee camp. While there, he told countless people about Jesus and became known as “the person who knows Jesus.” They debated with him and asked him questions and many came to faith. When he returned to Yemen, he and his brother started a home church, although many were fearful of persecution. During a secret baptism, Saleh’s brother and a friend from the church were arrested and taken to a prison in an unknown location. Saleh was devastated and he and the others from church prayed constantly for the two believers. After eight weeks, the man who had planned to kill these two Christians miraculously provided a way for them to escape. In addition, while they were in prison, they led many to Christ. Saleh says that the situation in Yemen is extremely harsh, but the church is growing. Even the civil war has helped lead many to Christ as they become disillusioned and disappointed with religious extremism and violence. Please pray that God would continue to protect our brothers and sisters in Yemen and continue to grow his church there. (Source: *Open Doors*)