

Your daily prayer guide

CSW everyone
free to believe

prayer diary

January-April 2023





Sometimes our prayer is the only encouragement they have...

People often ask us how we persevere in advocating for justice and freedom when it looks like nothing is changing – or, in some cases, getting worse.

In all honesty, it isn't easy! But we are inspired by the incredible courage of the people for

whom we work. If they're not giving up, and because we serve a God who doesn't give up, then neither should we.

Over the last few years, I've journeyed with brave Sudanese contacts and partners through a rollercoaster of change in their country: from a brief period of hope, to the military coup and bitter crackdown which is today's reality. The unrelenting resolve of the Sudanese people through these highs and extreme lows has inspired my work and my prayers.

We can never fully understand the pain and turmoil of their experiences, but we can stand alongside them and show unity in prayer. Sometimes our prayers are the only hope and encouragement they have.

I've seen first-hand the impact that your prayers have – the fact that you persist in prayer is an act of unity, hope and encouragement, not only for those whom we serve, but also for the entire CSW team.

It is my privilege to pray with you and, in doing so, to honour the unrelenting resolve of so many people around the world, who hope and believe for a better future for their nations.

Every blessing,

Sarah
Sudan Desk Officer



Cyclists from the Bike Pilgrimage

Week 1: 29 January–4 February

‘Let them praise the Lord for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done for them.’ (Psalm 107:21 NLT)

We believe in a God who does wonderful things. A God who works miracles and can bring light into the darkest of situations. And he invites us to share in his transformative, justice-seeking and peace-building work.

Sometimes we can feel powerless to bring change, but that is simply not true! Thanks to your unfailing support – through prayer, campaigning and giving – we continue to see situations transformed and people's stories heard.

Let's give thanks for all we've achieved together in 2022, through God's all-sufficient power and love.

Sunday 29 January

Read about our training for human rights defenders on page 12 of Response. Praise God for the success of these workshops: that the participants felt cared for, and are now better equipped to support those in their communities facing violations because of their religion or belief.

Monday 30 January

Thank God for our continued engagement in international arenas, like the United Nations. Having UN Consultative Status means we are uniquely placed to raise the profile of cases involving violations of freedom of religion or belief, such as Pastor Lorenzo in Cuba.

Tuesday 31 January

In August 2022 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published a long-awaited report on China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. She concluded that the treatment of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups may amount to crimes against humanity. Give thanks for increased international attention on these abuses.

Wednesday 1 February

Today marks the start of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Thank God for the people who show genuine love for their neighbour (Luke 10:25-37) by speaking up for everyone facing injustice for their beliefs, even if they do not share the same faith.

Thursday 2 February

Give thanks for our wonderful fundraising heroes, who give so much of themselves to support CSW's work and to encourage others to join in. Pray a special blessing on them today.

Friday 3 February

Pray the blessing of 2 Corinthians 9:8 over all those who contribute to CSW's impact.

Saturday 4 February

Heavenly Father, thank you for everyone who says 'yes' to your invitation to participate in your justice-seeking work. For every staff member, trustee, volunteer, fundraiser, prayer-warrior, ambassador, gift-giver and more! May our efforts this year be blessed and multiplied by your grace, and for your glory. Amen.

Week 2: 5–11 February

‘The true enemy of peace is injustice. Respect for persons, their dignity and their rights, is the cornerstone of peace.’

These words were written in 2014 by Eritrea's four Catholic bishops, in a letter describing the country's ongoing plight which is causing thousands to flee every year.

Nine years later the situation remains just as dire. One of these bishops, Abune Fikremariam Hagos of the Catholic Eparchy of Segheneity, was arrested in October last year along with three other clergymen. The clergymen were still detained at time of writing, as were 98 of the 150 Christians arrested during a September raid in Asmara.

In his latest report to the UN Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea described how ‘the dismal human rights situation continued to push thousands of Eritreans to flee the country.’

Find out more at csw.org.uk/eritrea

Sunday 5 February

Over 30,000 Eritreans are currently imprisoned without charge or trial in makeshift detention centres where torture is rife and access to food, drinkable water and medical treatment is minimal. Many are prisoners of conscience. Pray for the release of all captives (Psalm 107:16).

Monday 6 February

Eritrea has played a pivotal role in the conflict in the Tigray region of neighbouring Ethiopia, where its troops are accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. A peace agreement was signed in South Africa in November 2022, but Eritrea is not a party to this agreement. Pray for the complete withdrawal of all Eritrean forces, and for peace with justice in the region.

Tuesday 7 February

The regime has forcibly conscripted thousands of men, women and youth, including the

underaged and elderly. The families of those who abscond are punished severely, including by being imprisoned or rendered homeless. Pray that this practice would end, and that all forcibly recruited individuals would be demobilised.



Patriarch Antonios

Wednesday 8 February

‘Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.’ (Isaiah 43:19 ESV) Ask God to do a new thing in Eritrea today.

Thursday 9 February

Today marks the first anniversary of the death of Abune Antonios, former patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church. He spent the last 15 years of his life under house arrest for resisting the interference of the Eritrean regime in the Church's affairs. Thank God for his abiding legacy of integrity, perseverance and steadfast faith.

Friday 10 February

Last September, police in London violently dispersed Eritrean refugees and asylum seekers who were protesting in response to a pro-government rally outside the Eritrean embassy. Pray for European authorities to recognise genuine refugees and asylum seekers, and to take action against pro-government agents provocateurs responsible for hate speech and incitement.

Saturday 11 February

Father God, thank you that you see all that happens in Eritrea – every lonely prisoner, every grieving family, and every ruthless crime. Lord, rise up and defend those who are marginalised, unheard, powerless and isolated. Amen.



Week 3: 12-18 February

Cubans took to the polls in September and just over 68% approved the adoption of a new Family Code, which has the potential to violate the fundamental freedoms of all citizens.

Worryingly, the code allows for children to be taken away if their parents fail to fulfil a list of responsibilities decided by the government, such as instilling a love of homeland and respect for its symbols. This essentially gives the Cuban Communist Party another very effective way of silencing critical voices.

The authorities pressured certain people not to speak negatively about the problematic

aspects of the Family Code in the run up to the referendum, and to support the vote in favour; the authorities made threats such as taking away their children if they disobeyed. Those summoned included religious leaders and people with influence on social media who actively speak out about issues of justice. Throughout this year we noted an increase in cases involving religious leaders being directly threatened with the loss of their children if they did not, for example, go into exile or shut down their church.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/cuba

At a time when many of us will be thinking about our loved ones, let's remember in prayer the many Cubans for whom the Family Code poses a very real threat. Use Psalm 68 to inspire your prayers:

- For those who are fearful of being unfairly targeted by the Family Code, such as independent religious leaders and human rights defenders.
- For wisdom and safe avenues for Cubans to speak the truth about the injustice they're experiencing.

- For those who are already separated from their loved ones because of their religion or belief. For example, children with a parent in prison on false charges, or families that have been separated after being forced into exile.

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

(Psalm 68:5-6)

Week 4: 19-25 February

'All we are asking is for China to honour its international treaty obligations and allow these refugees safe passage out of China. That is all.' – North Korea Freedom Coalition

In September we joined activists and NGOs around the world in marking Save North Korean Refugees Day. We delivered a letter to the Chinese Embassy in London, urging China to end its brutal and illegal repatriation of North Korean refugees.

Those who have fled North Korea – the most closed, isolated and repressive state in the world – risk execution if they are found out and repatriated.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/northkorea



Letter hand in on Save North Korean Refugees Day

Sunday 19 February

Give thanks for all who spoke out on Save North Korean Refugees Day. Pray that China would hear the global outcry, cease its long-standing policy of repatriating North Korean refugees, and allow them safe passage out of China.

Monday 20 February

Refugees who are returned to North Korea face certain imprisonment, likely torture, and even public execution. Pray protection over the thousands who have fled the country – including many Christians – that they would reach a place of safety and provision.

Tuesday 21 February

An estimated 80,000 to 120,000 people are detained in prison camps, many of them detained for their religious beliefs. Ask God to strengthen those suffering in inhumane conditions, and pray for the permanent closure of these camps.

Wednesday 22 February

Nine years ago, the UN Commission of Inquiry published its ground-breaking report on North Korea. It exposed the gravity and extent of

the regime's human rights abuses, yet most of the report's recommendations are yet to be implemented. Pray for concrete action and increased attention at the UN.

Thursday 23 February

The UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that the regime 'considers the spread of Christianity a particularly severe threat'. Pray God's divine protection over Christians in North Korea, who are routinely imprisoned in labour camps, tortured and even executed.

Friday 24 February

'The Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him' (Psalm 32:10). Pray this verse over Christians in North Korea, that they would know the Lord's unfailing love and peace as they put their trust and hope in him.

Saturday 25 February

Father God, thank you that you are sovereign, mighty and faithful. We lift the nation of North Korea to you today, asking for deliverance. Transform the hearts of its leaders, break the chains of those imprisoned and protect its people. Amen.

Week 5: 26 February-4 March

Thank you so much for your prayers and campaigning for the families of El Encanto – it really does make a difference!

Hundreds of you have raised your voice for Concepción Gómez Santiz and other Protestant Christian families in El Encanto, who have been living without access to running water in their homes since 2016.

Local authorities disconnected their water supply after they refused to take part in activities associated with the majority religion. The local authorities then blocked sewerage and electricity services from being installed in their homes.

Since the launch of our campaign, Mexican government officials have recognised that a crime may have been committed against Protestant Christians in El Encanto and have opened an investigation. In addition, the municipal government have begun delivering water supplies to the families every fortnight while they wait for their water supply to be reinstated.

This breakthrough is encouraging, but their ordeal is not over yet. Although the state

and federal authorities are now involved, in practice the local community has the final word, so it is especially important to continue praying.

Read more on p.2 of Response and pray for these families using the scriptures below.

Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. (Psalm 105:1 NLT)

Nonetheless, the Lord is waiting to be merciful to you, and will rise up to show you compassion. The Lord is a God of justice; happy are all who wait for him. (Isaiah 30:18 CEB)

The Lord loves justice. He will never leave his faithful all alone. (Psalm 37:28a CEB)

But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24 ESV)

I know that the Lord will take up the case of the poor and will do what is right for the needy. (Psalm 140:12 CEB)

Visit csw.org.uk/Mexico for updates on the case.



Women in Chiapas. Concepción Gómez Santiz second from left.

Week 6: 5-11 March

‘We have zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their own hands [and] mob lynchings will be dealt with full severity of the law.’

These were the words of Pakistan’s former Prime Minister, Imran Khan, following the tragic killing of Mushtaq Ahmed in February 2022. Mr Ahmed was stoned to death by a mob of hundreds after he was accused of burning pages of the Qur’an; he is believed to have been suffering from mental illness.

Hate speech against faith communities, along with the absence of the rule of law, often serves as a contributing factor to this kind of mass violence. The country’s controversial blasphemy laws also continue to disproportionately target religious minorities.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/pakistan

Sunday 5 March

Lift up in prayer all those who have been imprisoned on unjust charges of blasphemy. Among them is Asif Pervaiz, a Christian father of four who has been on death row since September 2020, and imprisoned since September 2013.

Monday 6 March

Minority religions are often discriminated against in educational settings, with textbooks presenting biased teaching and promoting intolerance. Pray for genuine reform in schools and universities, that they would become places of mutual respect where young people of all religions and beliefs can truly flourish.

Tuesday 7 March

Pray Jeremiah 29:11 over the nation of Pakistan: ‘For I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’



Wednesday 8 March

Today on International Women’s Day, pray for adequate safeguarding against abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage, which has increasingly targeted Christian and Hindu girls. Pray that the training CSW has given these communities will increase awareness and help them develop their own safeguarding mechanisms.

Thursday 9 March

Today marks 10 years since the attack on Joseph Colony, a Christian area in Lahore. It was one of the worst attacks on a religious community in the country’s recent history, with over 100 homes being burned down. Pray for comfort for all those still suffering the consequences of that attack.

Friday 10 March

The Ahmadiyya community, which has been declared non-Muslims by the state, is the most institutionally oppressed religious group in the country. Pray for the release of 13 Ahmadis who were unjustly arrested for celebrating Eid-ul-Adha in July – one of the biggest festivals in the Muslim calendar.

Saturday 11 March

Loving heavenly Father, you see the suffering of religious minorities in Pakistan. Be near to them today; give them strength, comfort and hope. Bring your justice and peace to this nation, we pray. Amen.

Week 7: 12-18 March

‘It looks like the life of common man does not matter in Nigeria...’ – Reverend Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of CSW-Nigeria.

We receive reports of attacks by armed groups in Nigeria’s northern and central states on an almost daily basis. Similar incidents are now occurring in the south of the country.

Tens of thousands have been killed and even more have been displaced, and there has been a marked rise in abductions for ransom.

During a visit to Nigeria in November 2022, CSW met with deeply traumatised people in southern Kaduna state. Some were victims themselves of abduction or attacks; some had lost loved ones; some had had loved ones kidnapped, and were having to negotiate ransoms in daily calls from their ruthless captors.

Christians – and church leaders in particular – are primary targets for abduction and extortion.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/nigeria

Sunday 12 March

Pray Psalm 10:17-18 (ESV) over Nigeria today, asking God for justice and righteousness to prevail in the nation.

Monday 13 March

Ask God to strengthen, bless and protect our colleagues at CSW-Nigeria today, including the state coordinators and volunteers. Ask him to give them wisdom as they continue to speak out for freedom of religion or belief for all, and bring hope to vulnerable communities and individuals.

Tuesday 14 March

Pray for physical, mental and emotional healing for former abductees across the country who were held in camps where arbitrary killings, assaults, rape and torture are rife. Pray for comfort for families whose loved ones were killed – often despite a ransom payment – and for deliverance for all still in captivity.

Wednesday 15 March

‘The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.’ (Psalm 34:18). Pray that this would be true for the communities in northern and central Nigeria who are hurting today.

Thursday 16 March

Leah Sharibu was abducted over five years ago from her school by IS-affiliated terrorists. The 19-year-old is still held captive after refusing to renounce her Christian faith. Pray for renewed efforts to secure Leah’s freedom, along with everyone else held by terrorists.



Friday 17 March

Ask God to protect vulnerable communities who have been terrorised for decades by Boko Haram and other extremists, and to disrupt every violent plan.

Saturday 18 March

Father God, deliver Nigeria from the hands of those who are set on violence. Release the captives, protect the vulnerable, raise up peacemakers, and stir the international community to respond decisively to the many injustices taking place in the country today. Amen.

Week 8: 19-25 March

‘Every case of injustice happening in this world is highly relevant to you, even if it’s far away from you, because it always tortures your conscience.’ – Xu Na, an imprisoned Falun Gong practitioner.

Not every case of injustice is brought to light, but even without these hidden stories, the extent of China’s known human rights abuses is overwhelming. People of all religions or beliefs have been affected by the extreme deterioration of human rights, including Christians, Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan Buddhists and more.

The Chinese Communist Party may seem like an insurmountable power, yet we believe God can bring positive transformation.

Read our 2022 report, ‘China: The untold stories’: csw.org.uk/untoldstories



Xu Na

Sunday 19 March

A Falun Gong book found in their car was enough to arrest Xu Na and her husband Yu Zhou in 2008. Sadly, Yu Zhou lost his life in prison 11 days later, though how he died remains a mystery. Pray for an end to the brutal persecution of Falun Gong practitioners, that they would be safe and free.

Monday 20 March

Xu Na is in prison for the third time since 1999 – currently serving eight years for reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic and practising Falun Gong. Pray for healing and protection from the frequent torture she has endured.

Tuesday 21 March

Zhang Zhan – a Christian journalist and whistleblower during the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan – is still serving a four-year prison sentence. Pray that the Lord would continually renew her strength and hope (Isaiah 40:31), as she remains on partial hunger strike.

Wednesday 22 March

Pray for urgent international action to close ‘re-education camps’ in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Millions of Uyghurs and members of other predominantly Muslim

ethnic groups are believed to have been arbitrarily detained in these camps since 2017.

Thursday 23 March

In October, the UN Human Rights Council voted against holding a debate on the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region at the next session of the Human Rights Council (February-March 2023). As the session continues this week, pray for other opportunities to raise the situation of human rights in China.

Friday 24 March

Today is the International Day for the Right to Truth concerning gross human rights violations and for the dignity of victims.

Pray for courage for the victims to report what has happened, and pray that they will not experience any repercussions for bravely bringing the truth to light.

Saturday 25 March

Lord, we lift up all who are suffering from appalling human rights abuses in China. Thank you that some of them have been able to report the truth of their experiences, and we pray that their voices would be heard by powerful decision-makers today. Amen.

Week 9: 26 March-1 April

‘The problem in India today is that people have adopted the creed of hate very willingly and we see the predominance of intolerance, hate and prejudice in the common sphere of life.’ – author and activist Tushar Gandhi

There has been a notable shift in public discourse in India under the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, which has failed to investigate attacks by Hindu nationalist groups. An uptick in hate crimes and hostility towards religious minorities has been accompanied by inflammatory statements by senior government figures; for example, one official publicly called for the forced sterilisation of Muslims and Christians.

The Indian government has largely remained silent – and in some cases is complicit in these violations.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/india

Sunday 26 March

CSW receives regular reports of mob violence targeting church services and private prayer meetings. As Christians gather across India today, ask God to shield them and to frustrate the plans of those who seek to do them harm.

Monday 27 March

Pray for justice in the case of an independent Christian evangelist who was burnt to death by his family and local villagers in August; they

disapproved of his conversion to Christianity. Police refused to intervene because they claimed the issue was a family matter.

Tuesday 28 March

Psalms 121:7-8 says: ‘The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.’ Claim these truths for Christians and other vulnerable communities in India.

Wednesday 29 March

Dalits who convert to Christianity and Islam find themselves excluded from government benefits that were intended to uplift the Dalit community (previously known as ‘untouchables’). Give thanks that the Indian government has formed a commission to address this issue. Pray for action to ensure that no one is denied support because of their faith.

Thursday 30 March

Just over a year has passed since Yallam Shankar, a 50-year-old Christian pastor, was murdered by a mob of around 50 masked men. Pastor Shankar had received several threats to his life in the past, including demands that he abandon Christianity. Ask God to comfort his family today.

Friday 31 March

India’s religious tensions spilled into the UK in September, as Hindus and Muslims clashed in the streets of Leicester and tensions also simmered in Birmingham. Pray for lasting peace between religious communities in India, as well as in the diaspora.

Saturday 1 April

Dear God, we know your heart breaks to see this nation, which was founded on democratic principles, slide further and further into intolerance and impunity. Please reverse India’s current trajectory and mould it into a nation of peace, justice, equality and interfaith harmony. Amen.



Members of Dalit community

Week 10: 2-8 April

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. (Matthew 27:45)

In the middle of the Easter story, it appears as though darkness has won. The disciples are in a dangerous situation as Jesus – their source of hope – has been crucified. Could God really turn this into something good?

And yet, the glorious Easter morning was just about to dawn. Victory was imminent. God was still faithful. The best was yet to come!

This Holy Week, as you read through some familiar passages, may they remind you of the people and places that seem hopelessly far from transformation, and desperately in need of a breakthrough of justice. Let's contend for these situations in prayer, believing that God is still working for good – even when we do not see or understand.

Jesus' unjust arrest (Matthew 26:50)

Pray for freedom for those who have been arrested or sentenced in connection with their religion or belief. People like Pastor Keshav Raj Acharya in Nepal, Pastor Lorenzo in Cuba and Pastor Nadarkhani among several others in Iran.

Jesus is mocked and mistreated by soldiers (Luke 22:63)

Pray protection over those in prison, such as Chinese lawyer Chang Weiping. He has been subjected to psychological torture and inhumane treatment while in detention for peacefully defending human rights.

Peter under pressure to deny Jesus (John 18:17)

Pray for miraculous transformation in countries like Sudan, so that no one would be pressured to renounce their faith in exchange for their freedom or safety.

Pilate's failure to release an innocent man (Mark 15:13-15)

Pray that God will raise up leaders with integrity, who will listen to evidence and use their power for good. Pray for unjust verdicts to be overturned.

'Why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46)

Christians are often targeted during significant festivals like Easter. Pray for protection for Christians who are at higher risk at this time of year. Pray that those who feel abandoned or alone would feel the hope of the Gospel afresh this Easter.

CSW everyone
free to believe

We believe in the power of prayer to bring change.

CSW is a human rights organisation advocating for freedom of religion or belief. As Christians we stand with everyone facing injustice because of their religion or belief.

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