

Your daily prayer guide

CSW everyone
free to believe

prayer diary

April-July 2023



Bishop Rolando Álvarez (centre), Nicaragua.
Photo: DIVERGENTES



Unsplash/Namso Ukpanah

I must have written nearly 90 weekly prayer emails since I started working at CSW two years ago. Some are easier to write than others, but what a privilege it is that people from all over the world have entrusted us with their stories and asked us to pray for them in the middle of the storm.

And what a privilege to be an encourager to thousands of praying people like you!

Whenever I write a prayer email or a section of the Prayer Diary, I'm always stirring myself to pray as much as anyone else. And what really stirs my faith is to look back on two years' worth of prayer requests and see that change *is* possible because it *has* happened.

One of the first prayer updates when I joined CSW was about the adjournment of Professor Tarfa's trial in Nigeria. At that point he was still facing a series of false charges, having already spent months in pre-trial detention.

How wonderful to know that he has now been released – acquitted of every false charge!

You can read more on page 2 of Response, and you'll see that this isn't the end of the story. But it is encouraging to know that each time we sent an update – every time the trial was delayed, or the professor's health began to deteriorate – there were so many people who heard and were ready to respond in prayer.

Now we are all sharing in this family's joy!

As you pray through this Prayer Diary, you'll hear about other people who, like Professor Tarfa and the Du Merci children, are facing injustice and trauma that no one should ever have to experience.

I hope Professor Tarfa's long-awaited acquittal reminds you that even though Nigeria's wider situation remains extremely concerning, God is still bringing change, both for the individual, as well as for communities around the world.

Thank you for taking them into your hearts, sharing their stories with your churches and remembering them in prayer.

Rachel
Communications Coordinator

Week 1: 9-15 April

'It is finished.'

These were the last words uttered by Jesus before dying on the cross (John 19:30). With these words, the Son of God breathed his last breath and gave up his spirit. These words mark the darkest moment in all human history.

'It is finished.' Words of sorrow and despair.

Yet, at the same time, they signal an entirely new beginning. With his resurrection on that first Easter Sunday, Christ won the victory over death and darkness – paving the way for everyone to be reconciled and restored.

'It is finished' have now become words of victory, of life, of hope, of restoration, of freedom and of peace. Death does not have the final say; Jesus does.

As we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord this Easter, may we be filled with fresh faith that God can bring mighty victories from what looks like defeat. The ultimate battle has already been won.

With this confidence, join us in praying:

- For Christian communities around the world who are prevented from attending Easter services, or are unable to celebrate freely and safely. May they be filled with the joy of the resurrection and strengthened with hope for change.
- That Christians imprisoned for their faith would know the risen Lord Jesus as their comforter and companion. Pray also for the unconditional release of everyone unjustly imprisoned in connection with their religion or belief.
- For the safety and protection of faith communities in countries like Nigeria, who are particularly at risk of attacks during this Easter season.



A church in Youhanabad, Pakistan
Photo: CSW/Saad Sarfraz Sheik

- For healing and restoration for the survivors of previous Easter attacks, and for those whose loved ones were killed. We think especially of Sri Lanka in 2019, and Pakistan in 2015 and 2016.
- That God would bring unprecedented transformation wherever freedom of religion or belief is being violated. (You may want to focus on the countries featured in Response magazine.)

Week 2: 16-22 April

'Although we would like to see total victory, we know that you have been praying for this. He looks a little different to us, better. Step by step.' – Maridilegnis Carballo, wife of Pastor Lorenzo.

Be encouraged that your prayers are being answered, step by step, for Pastor Lorenzo and his family. The Cuban pastor is now in a minimum-security prison which is closer to home, so his wife and children can visit more often. Yet Pastor Lorenzo shouldn't be imprisoned at all. The independent church leader is serving a seven-year sentence for peacefully protesting on 11 July 2021.

Since these protests, the government crackdown has only intensified, and Cuba is experiencing the biggest wave of emigration in decades.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/cuba

Sunday 16 April

Last year we recorded 657 violations of freedom of religion or belief – more than double the 272 we documented in 2021. Pray that Cuban authorities would end their repressive rollback on human rights, which has affected both registered and unregistered religious groups.

Monday 17 April

We recorded this staggering jump in violations of freedom of religion or belief, despite all of CSW's documenters being forced into exile over the course of the year due to continuing threats and harassment. Pray for more documenters to take up the work of investigating and exposing injustice, and for their safety.

Tuesday 18 April

Many religious leaders have been forced to leave Cuba under threat of imprisonment – including Alain Toledano Valiente, Yordanys Díaz and Carlos Sebastián Hernández Armas.

Pray for God's provision as they adjust to life in a new country, far from close family members and their friends.



Maridilegnis, David and Lorena

Wednesday 19 April

In Genesis 28:15, God spoke this encouragement over Jacob: 'I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land...' Ask God to watch over those who have been forced into exile because of their beliefs. Pray that they will one day be able to return to their homeland in freedom.

Thursday 20 April

Continue to pray for Pastor Lorenzo's unconditional release from prison. Praise God for the improvement Maridilegnis has seen in her husband's condition so far: 'Now he does not have to wear a uniform. The colour of his skin has improved because before his skin was a strange colour from lack of sunlight.'

Friday 21 April

Give thanks that Pastor Lorenzo's family have been able to bring him hot food and even some recordings of Christian songs. Yet the ongoing separation, grief and worries are a heavy burden to bear. Pray that Pastor Lorenzo will be granted regular visits home, and that God would sustain them all with a daily blessing of peace.

Saturday 22 April

'The Lord is in control and even though years pass, we are in His hands.' – Maridilegnis

Father God, thank you that Cuba remains in your hands. Transform this nation into one of freedom and justice, where freedom of religion or belief is upheld for all. Amen.

Week 3: 23-29 April

In December we published our 'Belief and Belonging' report – a unique exploration into the specific challenges faced by religious minorities in indigenous communities in Vietnam, India, Mexico and Colombia. Our research has shown that those in remote areas of Vietnam who are both ethnic and religious minorities often suffer the most severe abuses of their right to freedom of religion or belief.

The violations perpetrated by the Vietnamese authorities include pressure to recant religious beliefs, forced eviction, beatings, torture, imprisonment, threats, confiscation of religious materials and damage to religious buildings. Some have been denied access to education – another clear violation of their human rights.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/vietnam

Sunday 23 April

Praise God for all who shared their stories for the 'Belief and Belonging' report. Give thanks for all who worked with us to carry out this important research, to shine a light on the specific violations faced by religious minorities in Vietnam's indigenous communities.

Monday 24 April

Members of religious minority groups from indigenous communities, such as ethnic Montagnard Christians and Khmer Krom Buddhists, are especially vulnerable to harassment and abuse from the authorities because of their religious beliefs. Ask God to protect these groups from all harm.

Tuesday 25 April

Last December, a Khmer Krom Buddhist community in southern Vietnam received a letter from the authorities, ordering them to demolish their religious hall. So far, this demolition has not been carried out. Pray that this order would be revoked, and that no other indigenous community would face threats of demolition to their places of worship.

Wednesday 26 April

Churches in Christian ethnic minority communities and their followers have

experienced being monitored, harassed, fined, and having their practice restricted or prohibited. In some cases, followers have been arrested. Pray that fear and intimidation would give way to peace and harmony.

Thursday 27 April

A number of Christians from the Central Highlands region, including church leaders, have been forced to leave the country due to the severity of the human rights violations perpetrated against them. Pray for comfort and provision for those who have been forced into exile.

Friday 28 April

Give thanks for the opportunity to share our 'Belief and Belonging' report with the UK FoRB Forum. Pray that it would continue to be read widely, inspiring policymakers to take concrete action to protect the rights of indigenous peoples in Vietnam.

Saturday 29 April

Father God, we lift up the communities in Vietnam who are especially vulnerable because of both their religious and indigenous identities. Cause those in power to cease every form of harassment against them, and instead choose to respect and uphold freedom of religion or belief for all. Amen.



Sharing our report with the UK FoRB Forum.

Week 4: 30 April-6 May

To this day, no one has been held accountable for an attack on an elderly Christian woman in the village of Al-Karm, which happened nearly seven years ago.

On 20 May 2016, Mrs Suad Thabet was brutally beaten and stripped in public by a mob after her son was accused of having a relationship with a divorced Muslim woman. In January 2023, the three men accused of attacking Mrs Thabet were acquitted by the Court of Appeal of the charges levelled against them.

This latest verdict is final; it cannot be appealed. It indicates that religion-related impunity remains deeply rooted in Egypt, even in its highest court.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/egypt

Read through Psalm 82, in which God condemns unjust judgements and champions the cause of those who are treated unfairly. Use the verses to inspire your prayers:

- For an end to sectarian violence and the pervasive culture of impunity.
- For religious communities who are denied justice, places of worship, or other fundamental rights.
- For wisdom for those in authority, that they would be impartial and treat all citizens equally.

Psalm 82

God presides in the great assembly;
he renders judgment among the 'gods':

'How long will you defend the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?

Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

'The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing.
They walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

'I said, "You are 'gods';
you are all sons of the Most High."

But you will die like mere mortals;
you will fall like every other ruler.'

Rise up, O God, judge the earth,
for all the nations are your inheritance.

Week 5: 7-13 May

In a world of so many crises, and with so much disinformation and misinformation, it can be a challenge for the stories we tell to receive the attention they deserve. And yet every year, we meet more and more journalists, podcasters, radio hosts and others who want to learn more about our work.

This is hugely encouraging! It means that more people might hear and respond to what is happening to religious and belief communities around the world, including those you read about in Response. It means we can increase awareness with the hope that injustice will no longer be ignored.

Sunday 7 May

Thank God for the long list of journalists, parliamentarians, supporters and policy makers who have signed up to receive our press releases. Pray that the list would grow longer every day, and that all who have ears to hear would listen.

Monday 8 May

Give thanks for all the media outlets, websites and radio stations that help us draw attention to the cases and countries we work on. Ask God to bless our relationships with these organisations, and to stir up a passion for freedom of religion or belief for all in their readers and listeners.

Tuesday 9 May

Pray for an outpouring of wisdom, energy and creativity on our Press and Public Affairs Team. Ask God to give them new and exciting initiatives and opportunities to share CSW's research and reports with larger and broader audiences – particularly those who will take action for justice.

Wednesday 10 May

'The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.' (Psalm



Kiri Kankhonde at a speaking engagement

37:30) Pray today that God would give all CSW spokespeople tongues that speak wisdom and justice during every media opportunity we have.

Thursday 11 May

In many of the countries we work on, such as Cuba and India, there are journalists and researchers who bravely continue to report on human rights violations and stand up for justice at great risk to themselves and their families. Ask God to protect them today.

Friday 12 May

Unfortunately, some of the situations we are advocating for do not receive as much media attention as they deserve. Pray that many more people would see these situations and not remain silent.

Saturday 13 May

Lord God, you see and care about every story of injustice – even those that are untold, unheard or unseen. Thank you for equipping CSW with words and media opportunities to bring these situations to light. We pray for increase – not for CSW's glory but for your glory, and for the good of those whose stories are being told. Amen.

Week 6: 14-20 May

‘Nicaragua has become a prison state...’
– David, an exiled defender of freedom of religion or belief

Over the past five years, President Daniel Ortega has cracked down on all critical voices as he consolidates power.

Religious leaders, especially those the government views as critical of its actions, have been a particular target. One of them told CSW that even preaching about unity or justice, for example, can be considered criticism of the government and therefore treated as a crime.

Several religious leaders were among the 222 political prisoners removed from prison on 9 February – but stripped of their citizenship and expelled to the United States. Then on 15 February a further 94 political prisoners, including nine religious leaders, had their citizenship removed; most were already in exile. Others, like Bishop Rolando Álvarez, remain unjustly imprisoned in Nicaragua.

Read more on p.7 of Response, or visit csw.org.uk/nicaragua

Sunday 14 May

Lift up in prayer the political prisoners who were released from prison, but forced into exile with their citizenship removed, including Roman Catholic priests and lay leaders. Ask God to help them as they navigate an uncertain future in an unfamiliar land – with a different language and far from their families.

Monday 15 May

Among those expelled from Nicaragua was Pastor Wilber Alberto Pérez – a Protestant pastor who was falsely convicted of selling illegal drugs. In reality, he was targeted for promoting the campaign ‘Christmas without political prisoners’ in 2020, and was held for a prolonged period in solitary confinement with no natural light. Pray for his emotional and physical recovery.

Tuesday 16 May

Give thanks for courageous Nicaraguans like Bishop Álvarez, another human rights defender, who refused to be exiled to the US and the next day was handed an unjust 26-year sentence. He is being held in solitary confinement in a punishment cell with very little light. Pray that his sentence would be overturned, and that the chains of all political prisoners would break.

Wednesday 17 May

Confidential sources told CSW that paramilitaries threatened three priests who mentioned Bishop Álvarez in their prayers on the Sunday following his sentencing. Pray protection over all who call for the freedom of Bishop Álvarez and other political prisoners and support them in prayer, that this would not be treated as a crime.

Thursday 18 May

The infamous El Chipote prison has been described by human rights activists as a ‘torture centre’. Two Catholic priests are currently held there: Father José Leonardo Urbina Rodríguez and Father Manuel Salvador García Rodríguez. Pray for increased scrutiny on such facilities – that it would be impossible for anyone to be held in inhumane conditions.

Friday 19 May

Political prisoners are not allowed a Bible or other religious literature in prison. Pray that this will change, and ask the Holy Spirit to inspire unjustly imprisoned Christians with verses like Ephesians 3:16-21, which speak of God’s power and love.

Saturday 20 May

Mighty God, who sees every heart, we pray for President Ortega, his wife and Vice-President Rosario Murillo, and the whole of the Nicaraguan government. Change their hearts, that they would end the crackdown on independent voices, and instead work to uphold the fundamental freedoms of all. Amen.

Week 7: 21-27 May

Since March 2021, at least 24 leaders and workers from unregistered Protestant churches have been detained on suspicion of fraud – often for simply receiving tithes and offerings. At the time of printing, 17 remain in pre-trial detention on unjust fraud allegations.

Zhang Kai, a human rights lawyer, explains the Chinese government’s logic: ‘If a church is not registered with the government, it is illegal, which means the pastor is fake, which means tithes and offerings they receive are fraudulent.’ Yet there are legitimate reasons why a church may not wish to register, while others have in fact been blocked from registering with the authorities.

This week, pray for the wellbeing of the people and churches below, and for their freedom. And please also hold in your prayers those of other religions or beliefs who are also facing injustice.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/china

Sunday 21 May

Church of Abundance, Xi’an
Three church leaders have been held in secret detention over fraud allegations since August 2022. They are Pastor Lian Changnian, his son Pastor Lian Xuliang and preacher Ms Fu Juan. They were denied access to their lawyers for six months. On 22 February 2023, their spouses revealed that all three were subjected to torture and mistreatment in custody.

Monday 22 May

Golden Lampstand Church, Linfen
Two pastors and ten of their colleagues were detained after police raided a baptism service in August 2021. Five were released on bail, but seven were formally charged with fraud in March 2022, including Pastor Wang Xiaoguang and his wife Pastor Yang Rongli. They are still awaiting trial.

Tuesday 23 May

Linfen Covenant House Church (‘Shengyue Jiayuan’)

Police have pressured church members to write reports on their leaders, and several church leaders and staff members have been detained for alleged ‘fraud’. Three were formally arrested and are still detained: Li Jie, Han Xiaodong and Wang Qiang.



Li Jie
Photo: China Aid

Wednesday 24 May

Today is the Catholic World Day of Prayer for the Church in China. Use 2 Thessalonians 3:3 to inspire your prayers for churches amid the ongoing crackdown on freedom of religion or belief.

Thursday 25 May

Green Pastures (‘Qingcaodi’) Church, Deyang
Elders Hao Ming and Wu Jiannan were formally charged with fraud in December and reportedly face over ten years in jail. Early Rain Covenant Church, which planted Green Pastures, also continues to experience harassment.

Friday 26 May

Chen Lijun – a house church preacher in Henan Province – faces fraud allegations after purchasing a small number of Christian books online. He has been criminally detained since August 2022, and was fined the equivalent of approximately £12,000.

Saturday 27 May

Lord, we lament at the scale of human rights violations in China, targeting people of many different religions and beliefs. Today we pray specifically that even independent or unregistered churches would be free to receive gifts and offerings without being accused of ‘fraud’. Amen.

Week 8: 28 May-3 June

With instability and insecurity at unprecedented levels, many were hoping that February's general election would be an opportunity for change; an opportunity to elect leaders who would work to contain the decades-long crisis of violence, and protect Nigeria's vulnerable ethnic and religious communities who are intensely targeted.

Unfortunately, the elections were marred by irregularities, with credible reports of rigging, fraud, violence and voter intimidation. At the time of writing, the results of the presidential election – which, oddly, were declared at 4.00am – are being disputed in court on the grounds that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had breached electoral law on several counts.

Visit [csw.org.uk/nigeria](https://www.csw.org.uk/nigeria) for our latest updates and analysis.

No matter the outcome, our prayers for Nigeria remain the same: we want to see this nation transformed. Below are two prayers, inspired by Luke 17:5-6.

***'The apostles said to the Lord,
'Increase our faith!''***

Lord Jesus, we also cry out:
'Increase our faith!'

Increase our faith that change is possible in Nigeria. Help us to never lose hope, but to pray persistently for an end to instability, division and violence.

Increase our faith that you will transform Nigeria into a place where everyone would be free to choose, change or practise their religion or belief, without fear.

Increase our faith as we pray for Nigeria's leaders, that they would be agents of reconciliation, understand the importance of freedom of religion or belief, and promote and protect this human right for all.

Amen.

[Jesus] replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

Almighty God, thank you that it is your power which brings transformation and victory, even if our faith is small.

Uproot the violence targeting religious and ethnic minorities in particular, which has spread across the country.

Plant seeds of change – especially in the hearts of those in power and those who seek to violate human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Cultivate the work for reconciliation, healing, freedom and justice that is already being done. Protect and bless the workers, including the CSW Nigeria team, for your glory and the good of the nation.

Amen.

Week 9: 4-10 June

'Obviously any democracy thrives when the press is allowed to do their job. That has become an extremely dangerous mission in India over the last few years.' – Madhu*, Indian journalist

Civil society is the space where social movements are organised, where governments can be held to account, and where people can support issues such as freedom of religion or belief. That's why we're so concerned when there's a crackdown on civil society, such as is happening in India right now.

Read more about what civil society means and why it's important on p.10 of the April 2023 issue of Response.

Sunday 4 June

Thank God for Madhu's courage as she continues to report on human rights violations in India despite the very real danger this brings in a country where journalists are being arrested on false charges, prevented from going abroad, or even killed.

Monday 5 June

Thousands of civil society organisations in Nicaragua were stripped of their legal status in 2021 and 2022. This includes faith-based groups and non-profit organisations, many of whom supported vulnerable communities. Pray that this vital work will be able to resume without hindrance or government interference.

Tuesday 6 June

Faith-based organisations, such as the Du Merci orphanages in Nigeria, are a key part of civil society, often providing vital services that the state cannot provide. Yet governments sometimes see this as a threat, and try to shut them down. Pray that this attitude would change.

Wednesday 7 June

We rejoice that Professor Tarfa, the co-founder of the Du Merci orphanages, was acquitted of all charges this January after three years in



Mercy Tarfa with children of Du Merci orphanages

prison. But 16 of the children are still in the state-run orphanages they were forcibly taken to while the professor was in prison, where they continue to face pressure to convert. Pray urgently for their safe return.

Thursday 8 June

'Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God.' (Proverbs 14:31) Thank God for the work of civil society exposing and holding to account those who oppress the poor and needy.

Friday 9 June

Ask God to protect members of civil society all over the world as they carry out their crucial work. Their work upholds and defends human rights, including everyone's right to freedom of religion or belief, but often makes them a target for their government.

Saturday 10 June

Lord, we recognise that the work of civil society is your work – it is bringing your Kingdom of justice, of peace, of love and compassion on earth. Uphold, strengthen and protect these brave people we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Name changed for security reasons*

Week 10: 11-17 June

'My only vision would be of an India where everyone is free of fear to express her or his feelings, thoughts, experiences, and opinions.'

These are the words of Indian journalist and human rights activist John Dayal. At present, John's vision of India remains far from becoming a reality. The Indian government continues to promote a Hindu nationalist narrative, emboldening perpetrators of communal violence while cracking down on those who criticise its harmful policies and rhetoric. Muslims, Christians and other religious minorities remain highly vulnerable, particularly in tribal communities.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/india

**Wednesday 14 June**

Pray for restoration and justice for Christians from the Adivasi community in Odisha. In February, a mob damaged a community hall used for worship, took away livestock and burnt down around 40 homes. The hall had been newly built for them by Dr Christie Solomon, using donations he had received from well-wishers.

Thursday 15 June

Give thanks for courageous individuals like John Dayal, who still speak up for human rights in India, despite the risks. May God protect and re-energise them today. May he raise up even more human rights defenders who will speak truth to power.

Friday 16 June

Pray for God's intervention in the hearts of the Indian government. Ask that those responsible for hate speech and intolerance would be removed from power, and that those tasked with protecting the nation's vulnerable communities would do so loudly and honourably.

Saturday 17 June

Dear God, thank you that no part of the vast and diverse nation of India is unnoticed by you. Give peace and comfort to the marginalised and the oppressed, and change the hearts of those set on violence and division. Amen.

Week 11: 18-24 June

Since the military coup over two years ago, the situation in Myanmar/Burma has become desperate.

More than 20,000 people have been arrested and imprisoned as part of an extensive crackdown on activists, political leaders, journalists, and anyone else the military regime perceives as a threat or critic. At the time of writing, over 16,000 of them are still in prison.

Almost daily military air strikes have taken the lives of nearly 3,000 people and displaced over 1.3 million people, many of whom are living in makeshift camps in the jungles.

Christian-majority states are intensely targeted in airstrikes and artillery attacks. New regulations in Christian-majority Chin state require Christians living in areas under martial law to register seven days before attending worship services. It is unclear how long the new rule will stay in effect, or how the military would respond if the Chin people chose to continue attending church without following it.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/burma

Join us in praying for Myanmar/Burma this week, using the prayer below (adapted from the Iona Community liturgy for healing for an international situation).

Lord Jesus, we come to you with the wounds of our world.

We think of Myanmar and the dark places where evil roams, where your people suffer and cry aloud for mercy from the oppressor, for justice for their people.

We place before you the suffering places of the world, places of war, of famine, of disasters, of darkness. We place before you the nation of Myanmar/Burma. Take these, your people, to your heart, Lord Jesus, at this time of their need.

We give thanks that in the darkest places of the earth there are sparks of light: that your love in the heart of your people is present, in every small, good deed, in restraining the hand from doing evil, in helping those in need at cost to oneself, in sacrifice and respect for all life.

We give thanks for the countless unknown witnesses who have served you in the darkest situations. We give thanks for those places where you have raised a champion with courage to challenge injustice. Enter each place with your healing touch, through the unsung heroism, the anonymous act, in the goodness of strangers.

Jesus Christ, who ate with the wealthy and provided food to the poor, enter Myanmar, and bring justice, and peace.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Week 12: 25 June-1 July

We are absolutely delighted that Pastor Nadarkhani was released on 26 February, along with others, as part of a general amnesty. Thousands of you have been praying and campaigning for him for over a decade.

Read more of his story on page 2 of Response.

His release occurred against a background of protests across Iran, which erupted following the death of 22-year-old Zhina 'Mahsa' Amini, and which are being brutally suppressed. We are praying that this season of turmoil will result in an improvement in the country's human rights climate, including an end to the repression of the right to freedom of religion or belief, and greater freedoms for Iranian women and girls.



Pastor Nadarkhani

Sunday 25 June

Praise God that our prayers for Pastor Nadarkhani's release have been answered. Pray for him and his family as they recover from their collective ordeal. Pray also for the pastor's safety; that he would be free from further harassment and intimidation.

Monday 26 June

Today is the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. A significant number of Iranians of all religions or beliefs have suffered unimaginably while in detention, with several female – and male – detainees reporting psychological and physical torture, and sexual violence. Pray for healing and justice for victims, and accountability for the perpetrators.

Tuesday 27 June

Close to 20,000 people have been detained since the recent protests began, and many more are serving prison sentences because of their religion or belief, peaceful opposition or human rights work. Pray Isaiah 42:7 over all who are still unjustly imprisoned.

Wednesday 28 June

Pray for an end to unjust trials and detentions, especially for those targeted for standing up for human rights. Pray that the Iranian judicial system – which falls

dramatically short of international fair trial standards – would be transformed into a system that respects the rule of law, and dispenses justice.

Thursday 29 June

National security-related charges are regularly levelled against religious minorities, especially converts from Islam. Pray for an end to this, and for the Iranian authorities to respect the right to freedom of religion or belief, as a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Friday 30 June

Pastor Matthias Haghejad was re-arrested just after Christmas in 2022 on the same unfounded charges as in 2014, but was later granted a furlough. His wife, Anahita Khademi, was also arrested, but charged and released on bail three weeks later. Ask God to protect and deliver those imprisoned or facing trial on unjust charges.

Saturday 1 July

Heavenly Father, we pray that what you commanded in Zechariah 7:9 would be seen Iran: that the courts would begin to 'administer true justice' and the authorities would 'show mercy and compassion' towards every citizen, regardless of their creed or gender. Amen.

Week 13: 2-8 July

Sometimes there are local solutions to human rights violations: courts, state prosecutors, police or law enforcement agencies. But in many of the countries CSW works on, the rule of law is often broken, skewed or non-existent.

Thankfully, our pursuit of justice extends further. We are able to raise cases within multilateral arenas like the United Nations or European Union. We can call on powerful decision-makers in the international community to exercise the pressure required for change and hold perpetrators to account. And at the UN, our accreditation means we have the ear of the people best placed to make a difference for those facing injustice for their beliefs.

While these arenas are not perfect, they do a lot of good and we should not let the challenges overshadow what they can achieve when they work well. Pray with us for CSW's work at the United Nations, European Union and other international arenas.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/our_work_region_internationalarenas

Sunday 2 July

As we are commanded in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, pray for the diplomatic and political leaders who represent their nations in international arenas: for the wisdom, integrity and the resources they need to work effectively for human rights.

Monday 3 July

The UN Human Rights Council meets three times a year, and we are in the middle of the current session. Pray 2 Corinthians 9:8 over CSW's UN Officer, as well as other advocates who will be giving evidence of the human rights violations uncovered by our research.



Tuesday 4 July

Pray for EU diplomats and other officials working on EU foreign policy – both in Brussels and in embassies around the world – for their safety, wisdom and courage.

Wednesday 5 July

On this day last year, the UK Government began hosting the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief. Pray that the impact of our activities there would continue to reverberate, and that we would see more national governments actively working together on freedom of religion or belief.

Thursday 6 July

We met politicians from around the world at the Ministerial. Pray that they would remember the powerful testimonies they heard at our side events and be moved to action. We know that change does not happen overnight, so it is important that we continue praying in the years following events like this.

Friday 7 July

In Daniel 1:9 we read that God had given the king's chief official both 'favour and compassion' for Daniel. Pray for CSW advocates working in international arenas, that our cause would find favour and respect in the eyes of authorities.

Saturday 8 July

Lord, thank you for everyone working to promote and protect the right to freedom of religion or belief in international arenas. Give them courage and strength and bless the work of their hands to bring about justice. Amen.

Our manifesto #13

We believe **in the power of
prayer to bring change.**

CSW everyone
free to believe

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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