

Your daily prayer guide

CSW everyone
free to believe

prayer diary

July–October 2023



Protests in London.
Photo: Unsplash/Ehimetator
Akhree Unuabona

‘Let us then approach God’s throne
of grace with confidence...’

Hmong women from Vietnam.

Week 1: 9-15 July

In recent years, Cuba has experienced a massive wave of emigration. Under pressure and threat from the Cuban government, countless religious leaders and human rights defenders have left the country to seek sanctuary elsewhere.

Those who remain are often subjected to surveillance and routinely targeted with threats, harassment, physical attack, and even arbitrary detention. Add your voice as we cry out for peace, justice and transformation.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/cuba



Loreto Hernández García

Sunday 9 July

Pray for those who have been forced to flee Cuba. Ask God to keep them safe, especially if they must travel dangerous routes, and to help them adapt to a new life. Pray particularly for those dealing with trauma from their experiences, that the Holy Spirit would bring complete mental and physical healing.

Monday 10 July

Remember in prayer the independent religious leaders, journalists, human rights defenders and others who remain in the country, whether by choice or not. They are at risk of being targeted for their beliefs, and for standing up for the rights and freedoms of others.

Tuesday 11 July

Two years ago, Pastor Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo was arrested after peacefully participating in unprecedented, nationwide protests. Today he is still wrongfully imprisoned, serving a seven-year sentence. Pray that justice would reign, that Pastor Lorenzo would be released without condition.

Wednesday 12 July

Lift up in prayer Loreto Hernández García – a leader of an independent religious group, the Association of Free Yorubas. In March, Loreto was denied permission to receive medical treatment outside prison, where he remains unjustly imprisoned following the 11 July protests. Pray that he will be granted the healthcare he urgently needs.

Thursday 13 July

‘He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.’ (Psalm 91:4) Pray this verse over all who are threatened, harassed or wrongfully imprisoned because of their beliefs – especially religious leaders.

Friday 14 July

Bring before God those in positions of power in Cuba. Ask that he would transform their hearts and minds to no longer pursue control and repression, but instead to embrace freedom and uphold human rights for all.

Saturday 15 July

Almighty God, you see the intensifying control and repression in Cuba. We pray protection over those who speak out against this crackdown on human rights, and boldly raise their voices for freedom. Lord, may their voices be heard and lead to lasting change. Amen.

Week 2: 16-22 July

‘We continue to see the incredible courage of Iranian Christians and other oppressed religious minorities – standing strong despite the real risk of arrest, detention, imprisonment and even execution. But they need our support...’ – Mansour Borji

Mansour is the Advocacy Director of Article 18, an organisation we partner with on Iran. Thanks to our UN accreditation, CSW was able to invite Mansour to speak in person during an event at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in March. He was one of the panellists who helped shine a light on the oppression of religious minorities in Iran, as part of a joint event together with the World Evangelical Alliance, Article 18, Open Doors and Middle East Concern.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/un



Mansour Borji at the UN

Sunday 16 July

Give thanks for Mansour and CSW staff who attended the UN HRC in March. Praise God for the opportunities we have within this international arena, to bring our unique, world-renowned expertise and champion freedom of religion or belief for all.

Monday 17 July

Pastor Victor Bet Tamraz and his wife Shamiram Issavi came to the UN to share their experiences. They had been forced to flee Iran or face a combined 15 years in prison for ministering to Christian converts. Pray that their testimonies will lead to greater engagement by UN experts, such as the Special Rapporteur on Iran.

Tuesday 18 July

In April, a resolution on Nicaragua was passed at the HRC. This official document allows UN experts to continue monitoring and reporting on the country’s human rights situation and to discuss it again at future sessions of the HRC. Pray that this would lead to positive progress in Nicaragua.

Wednesday 19 July

Thanks to CSW’s generous supporters, we have been able to send our UN Officer and other advocates to the UN in person. Spend

a moment giving thanks for the unique, valuable opportunities this provides, such as making new contacts, strengthening advocacy relationships, and delivering statements during council meetings.

Thursday 20 July

This month marks one year since Dr Nazila Ghanea was appointed as the new UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. Pray for boldness as she uses this mandate to bring cases of concern to the UN’s attention, and call the world to action.

Friday 21 July

Our UN Officer Claire engages with the mechanisms of the United Nations all year round, not just at Human Rights Council sessions. Pray that God would go before her in every meeting she attends – preparing hearts and minds to receive the research and analysis she will deliver.

Saturday 22 July

At the March-April session of the HRC, Claire was supported in prayer by Eloise, a fellow CSW advocate. Today we echo her words in prayer:

Heavenly Father, we put our hope in your unfailing love. Would your will be done in and through Claire during her time in Geneva. Amen.

Week 3: 23-29 July

If you’ve been supporting CSW for a long time, you may remember praying for a Uyghur Christian called Alimujiang Yimiti (known as ‘Alim’).

In March, US-based organisation China Aid reported that Alim had been released from prison after completing a 15-year sentence. He had been detained on unfounded charges since January 2008.

While we praise God for the news of his release, we remember that Alim was robbed of 15 years of his life, and that for many Christians and others in the Uyghur region, even being released from prison does not equate to true freedom.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/china



Alimujiang Yimiti

Sunday 23 July

Pray today for Alim and his family. Ask God to bless them as they resume their life together, and to keep them safe from further harassment from the Chinese authorities.

Monday 24 July

In March we also welcomed the release of human rights defender and house church leader Hu Shigen, after seven years and eight months in prison. Elder Hu suffered torture and critical illness whilst in prison, so please pray for full restoration of his health.

Tuesday 25 July

Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu continues to face severe repression. Multiple members and leaders have been detained and imprisoned, and many have been threatened with forced eviction from their homes. Ask God to remove these threats and bring assurance of his provision.



Elder Hu Shigen, before his detention in July 2015 (L) and after his release in March 2023 (R)

Wednesday 26 July

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.” (Isaiah 41:10a) Pray that imprisoned Christians in China – like Pastor Wang Yi, a leader of Early Rain Church – would know the truth of these words today.

Thursday 27 July

We have not forgotten human rights defenders like Chang Weiping, Gao Zhisheng and Zhang Zhan – all of whom remain in detention for speaking out for truth and justice. Gao’s family have had no news of his whereabouts since 2017, but it is believed he is in some form of detention. Pray in faith for their release.

Friday 28 July

Join us in praying for world leaders. Ask God to grant them the bravery to stand up to such a powerful nation as China, and to inspire them with new strategies to help the Chinese people in the face of unrelenting human rights violations.

Saturday 29 July

Father God, we believe that you are working to bring freedom, justice and democracy to the nation of China, even when we struggle to see it. We trust you and ask you to draw near to those in need today. Amen.

Week 4: 30 July-5 August

'Who will you cry to and who will you run to? After all, since the carnage of kidnapping started in Kaduna, no concrete arrests have been made.'

These are the words of Rev John Joseph Hayab, a CSW Nigeria board member and Chair of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in Kaduna State. The predominantly Christian southern part of this state saw a surge in abductions for ransom and attacks following the turbulent February-March elections. Yet even before this, violence and violations were rife in Kaduna, targeting religious and ethnic minorities especially.

Rev Hayab's words highlight the failure of law enforcement, which has allowed perpetrators to act without fearing any consequences. A lack of government intervention has also allowed the decades-long crisis of violence in central Nigeria to metastasise to states across the country, as you will note from the handful of examples below. Learn more at csw.org.uk/nigeria

Sunday 30 July

In March, the United Nations strongly condemned the 'spate of violence' and 'senseless killings' in **Kaduna State**. Give thanks for this high-level, international recognition of the actual situation in central Nigeria, which has been a long time coming. Pray that it will be a catalyst for concrete action to end the lawlessness and atrocities.

Monday 31 July

Today, on Africa's Women's Day, pray for the women from ethnic and religious communities who have been targeted with abduction, sexual enslavement, forced marriage and other brutal violations. Spend a moment in silence, remembering those who have experienced such trauma. Pray for their healing.

Tuesday 1 August

Homes, fields and foodstuffs were destroyed in militia attacks on over 23 communities in **Plateau State**, which began on 15 May. Around 130 people were killed, and tens of thousands were displaced. Pray that security agencies will begin to respond firmly to ensure justice and safety for all, regardless of creed or ethnicity.

Wednesday 2 August

At least 400 people were killed in attacks by Fulani militia in **Benue State** within a three-week period in April. This included

children, pregnant women and people who were sheltering in a local school, having been displaced by earlier violence. Pray that God would comfort the families of those who were killed, and that all who were forced to flee yet again would find a safe place of refuge.

Thursday 3 August

'Guard my life and rescue me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.' (Psalm 25:20) Call on the Lord to protect church leaders, as well as their wives, children and congregations. They are being specifically targeted in several states, and many have been abducted or killed.

Friday 4 August

A secondary school in **Oyo State**, southern Nigeria, was invaded by over 20 Fulani assailants wielding knives and machetes. Pray for the emotional and physical recovery of the students and teachers who were injured. Ask God to remove the threat of further attack, that students across Nigeria would be free to learn without fear.

Saturday 5 August

Lord of all nations, we pray for Nigeria's leaders and authorities in the wake of these violent incidents, which surged after the elections. May they go beyond simply expressing condolences, and work decisively to bolster security and bring the perpetrators to justice. Amen.

Week 5: 6-12 August

'Resolutions that violate religious freedom are passed without any thought.' - Peter Jacob, executive director of the Centre for Social Justice

In January the National Assembly of Pakistan voted without debate to make the country's controversial blasphemy laws even more stringent. The new laws increase punishment for insulting the Prophet Mohammed's companions, wives and family members from three years to 10 years imprisonment, along with a heavy fine.

Many fear that these laws will make life even more difficult for Pakistan's already vulnerable religious and sectarian minority communities.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/pakistan

Sunday 6 August

Blasphemy laws are often used as a weapon of revenge against both Muslims and non-Muslims, for example to settle personal disputes. Pray for all those falsely imprisoned on blasphemy charges. Pray that the charges against them would be dropped, and that they would be released without condition.

Monday 7 August

Pakistan is going through an extremely challenging time, due to political unrest. Mass arrests of politicians and protestors are taking place, along with enforced disappearances of journalists and bloggers who criticise the actions of the state. Pray that vulnerable communities in particular would be kept safe from violence and hostility.

Tuesday 8 August

At least 124 Christian and Hindu girls were abducted, forced to marry and convert in 2022 alone. Pray urgently for their safe return, as well as for strong practical measures to protect women and girls of all religious communities. Pray for an end to impunity for perpetrators of such crimes.

Wednesday 9 August

'You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.' (Isaiah 25:4a) Pray that Christians in Pakistan would find refuge and shelter in the Lord today.

Thursday 10 August

At least 84 people were killed in a terrorist attack on a mosque in Peshawar in January this year. Ask God to comfort those who are grieving, and to reveal his healing power to those recovering from their injuries.

Friday 11 August

Today is National Minorities Day in Pakistan. Pray for all faith-based communities who continue to face discrimination and persecution. Ask God to silence the voices of those responsible for hate speech, which often stirs up violence against religious minorities.

Saturday 12 August

Lord God, we know that nothing happens without you seeing it. We pray that every person in Pakistan would know your justice, and that you would raise up righteous leaders who would stand up for the marginalised and the oppressed. Amen.



Photo: CSW/Saad Sarfraz Sheikh

Week 6: 13-19 August

Many of us will remember seeing the devastating images on the news in February, after parts of Syria and Turkey were rocked by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake. Over 59,000 people were killed and 121,000 others were injured in the earthquake and aftershocks.

For the people of northern and western Syria, the earthquake added to a humanitarian crisis in a region which has endured years of heavy bombardment by the Syrian government and backed by Russia.

Even as people try to rebuild their lives, reports have emerged that the Syrian and Turkish governments are blocking and delaying humanitarian aid from reaching the region.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/syria



City streets after the war, Daraa, Syria.
Photo: Unsplash/Mahmoud Sulaiman

Sunday 13 August

Please continue to pray for those in Syria and Turkey still dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake. Ask God to comfort those who are grieving, to shelter those who lost their homes, and to heal those still recovering from their injuries.

Monday 14 August

The earthquake led to the suspension of sanctions on the Syrian regime in order to assist with humanitarian efforts. Pray that this does not impede efforts to hold President Bashar al-Assad to account for violence and violations against his own people.

Tuesday 15 August

Pray that the international community would also hold other regimes, like those of Russia and Turkey, responsible for their part in the past 12 years of conflict and human rights violations in Syria.

Wednesday 16 August

'The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.' (Psalm 145:9)

Pray that the people of Syria would know God's goodness and compassion in every difficulty they are facing today.

Thursday 17 August

In December 2022, CSW received multiple reports of the vandalization of Yazidi cemeteries during a Yazidi religious festival. The Yazidi community remains highly vulnerable, particularly in areas under Turkish control where Islamist groups operate with impunity. Pray for their protection.

Friday 18 August

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the abduction of two senior Syrian clergy: Archbishop Boulos (Paul) Yazigi of the Greek Orthodox Church, and Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church. Pray for answers and closure, as their whereabouts remain unknown to this day.

Saturday 19 August

In Jeremiah 33 we see a promise of restoration to the land of Judah – that it would once again be filled with sounds of joy and gladness. Lord, we want to see your restoration in Syria today. Out of the rubble of the earthquake and the years of conflict, we pray for hope and justice to rise. Amen.

Week 7: 20-26 August

Last October, a group of Christians were gathered to pray at a home in Sukma District, Chhattisgarh, when a mob burst in and assaulted them, demanding that they abandon their faith.

The next morning, the victims tried to file a First Information Report, which is required to open a police investigation, but were verbally abused and turned away. When they returned to the police station a second time, they were beaten by two police officers – one of whom had been involved in the initial attack while off duty.

It is extremely worrying that those who are meant to uphold the law are complicit in these attacks on Christians – both in their own homes and as they seek justice.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/india



Minasi and Santabati saw their church attacked on five occasions, including 2008. Photo: Marcus Perkins/CSW

Sunday 20 August

Pray for decisive legal action against the police officers who were involved in these incidents in Sukma District. Ask God to eradicate discrimination and violence from India's police force, and instead cultivate a fair legal system for all.

Monday 21 August

The Station House Officer in Sukma District claimed that he was under orders not to register First Information Reports for incidents of Christian oppression in the district – an extremely worrying claim in itself. Pray that no-one would be denied justice because of their religion or belief.

Tuesday 22 August

Today is the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. Reflect on Revelation 21:4 (NLT) as you pray: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

Wednesday 23 August

At the time of writing, violence in India's Manipur state has just entered its second month. Pray for all who have been displaced, injured, or lost loved ones in the unrest, which

began on 3 May between Kuki and Meitei ethnic communities. There have been more than 4,000 cases of arson, and hundreds of houses and churches have been destroyed so far.

Thursday 24 August

The Kuki people in Manipur are a predominantly Christian tribal community. Many have lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods since clashes broke out, and are living in constant fear. Pray for provision and protection from further attack. Pray also that those spreading hate and misinformation about the Kuki community will stop.

Friday 25 August

This week marks the anniversary of the widespread violence against Christians in the Kandhamal District of Odisha in 2008. At least 90 people died, 5,600 homes were burned and approximately 300 churches were destroyed. Ask God to comfort those who are still awaiting justice, 15 years on.

Saturday 26 August

Thank you, Lord, that you are a refuge for the oppressed and a stronghold in times of trouble (Psalm 9:9). We pray protection over India's religious minorities, and for an end to the targeted violence against Christians, Muslims and Dalits. In your mighty name, Amen.



Week 8: 27 August-2 September

Tuesday 30 August marks the International Day for the Victims of Enforced Disappearance.

Enforced disappearance is a severe human rights violation, and a common tactic of the Chinese authorities. Before politically sensitive periods, local government officials routinely round up human rights defenders, house church leaders, Falun Gong practitioners and dissidents, and detain them incommunicado.

They are often held in some form of detention, such as Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location (RSDL). This is essentially a form of enforced disappearance in which a person is held in a secret jail – their wellbeing and whereabouts remain unknown.

The cases below are just the tip of the iceberg. It was estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000 people were held either in RSDL or *liuzhi* detention (secretly detained by the Chinese Communist Party's private police force) in 2021.

We invite you to spend a couple of minutes in prayer each day:

For those who are missing in China and across the world. Pray for protection, freedom, and the encouragement that they are not forgotten.

For their families, friends and communities. Pray for comfort; for information on the whereabouts of missing loved ones, and ultimately their safe return.

Gao Zhisheng has been detained repeatedly since 2006, targeted for his work as a human rights lawyer, which frequently involved defending religious minorities. His family has had no news of his whereabouts since he was taken from his home in Shaanxi, northwest China, on 13 August 2017. Gao is believed to be in some form of detention and may be at high risk of torture and death.

Prominent human rights lawyer **Tang Jitian** was disappeared on his way to attend an EU International Human Rights Day event in Beijing on 10 December 2021. He was missing for over a year, before re-appearing in January 2023. There were no charges against him; police simply placed him in a secret jail, without even a notice of RSDL. Tang is still not able to speak publicly about what happened to him.

Gulshan Abbas is a retired Uyghur doctor who disappeared from her home in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in 2018. Her family endured two years of complete silence before hearing that she had started serving a 20-year prison sentence on unfounded terrorism charges. It is understood that Gulshan is being punished for her sister's human rights advocacy in the United States.

Photos (L-R): Gao Zhisheng; Pastor Aarón Méndez Ruiz, Mexico; Ziba Murat, daughter of Gulshan Abbas; Pastor Raymond Koh, Malaysia.

Week 9: 3-9 September

'My name is Surraya, which means brightest star. My father named me this because he was delighted by my birth and wished me a future as bright as the brightest star. Unfortunately, he did not know that I would end up with a life that foresees no future.' – Surraya, a refugee from Afghanistan

The unfolding tragedy in Afghanistan means that countless people are fleeing the horrors there – yet even in a different country, they are not safe or settled. But with your support, we're working to change that. Read more on p.6 of Response.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/afghanistan

Sunday 3 September

Earlier this year we screened our new documentary about Afghan refugees, *Leave No One Behind*, in the UK Parliament and in Brussels. We also launched an accompanying in-depth report. Thank God for each MP, MEP and civil society organisation representative who attended or received a copy of the report.

Monday 4 September

Pray that the decision-makers who watched the film would be unable to get the stories they heard out of their heads. Pray that even now, months later, they would be looking for ways they can use their influence to make a difference. Strong, decisive action by the international community is the key to transforming the situation for these refugees.

Tuesday 5 September

Give thanks for the courage of every Afghan refugee who shared their story with us. Ask God to provide everything they need in terms of housing, healthcare, employment, and education for their children – as well as emotional and spiritual support.

Wednesday 6 September

On p.6 of Response you'll read Surraya's story. Pray that she and her family would swiftly be granted refugee status in Pakistan, and that the harassment by the local police would stop completely.

Thursday 7 September

Millions of religious and ethnic minorities are still in Afghanistan, despite the dangers they face from the Taliban. Pray that they would have wisdom about whether to leave the country, and how. Pray for their safety in the meantime as they practise their faith in secret.

Friday 8 September

Women and girls in Afghanistan have been banned from working as well as attending schools, colleges and universities. Pray for the authorities to have a change of heart about this enormous injustice.

Saturday 9 September

Lord of all compassion and comfort, we lift up to you Afghanistan's people – those who have fled, and those who have stayed. Provide for all their needs, we pray, and grant them a safe and peaceful permanent home. Amen.



Boy sitting on destroyed tank overlooking Kabul city

Week 10: 10-16 September

'Unfortunately, the plight of Christians in Myanmar has worsened in the past year, having deteriorated ever since the military took control in February 2021...' – Jim Shannon MP

'For the Rohingya, it has been more than five years of pain, trauma, grief and displacement—five years in camps far from home, robbed of their livelihood, their education, their peace of mind and their future.' – Rushanara Ali MP

These statements were made in April during a parliamentary debate on the human rights crisis in Myanmar/Burma. They highlight the impact that the present crisis is having on the country's religious and ethnic groups – though they in no way paint a complete picture of the suffering currently being experienced in the nation.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/burma

**Sunday 10 September**

Thank God for the UK parliamentary debate in April, which gave much-needed attention to the human rights crisis in Myanmar. Several MPs spoke out boldly against the injustices currently taking place in the country. Pray that their calls for swift and decisive action from the international community would be heeded.

Monday 11 September

'The targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and places of worship, is absolutely grotesque and appalling, and must cease immediately' – Andrew Mitchell MP. Since the coup in 2021, the military has carried out indiscriminate airstrikes on civilian populations. Pray for an immediate and miraculous end to these atrocities.

Tuesday 12 September

'He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind...' (Psalm 146:7-8) Pray this verse of encouragement over the people of Myanmar.

Wednesday 13 September

Pray for the release of Reverend Dr Hkalam Samson – one of Myanmar's most prominent

Christian leaders – who was handed a six-year prison sentence in April. Reverend Samson is an outspoken voice for human rights, so we believe these unfounded charges are an attempt to silence him.

Thursday 14 September

Myanmar's military government is cracking down on armed resistance groups, which are fighting back against the oppressive regime. Pray that the military would cease targeting vulnerable communities, that there would be no need for civilians to take up arms to defend themselves.

Friday 15 September

Today, on the International Day of Democracy, pray for a return to democracy in Myanmar. In March the military regime banned 40 political parties, including that of Aung San Suu Kyi – the country's democratically elected leader who is currently serving a 33-year prison sentence.

Saturday 16 September

Loving heavenly Father, deliver the people of Myanmar from violence and destruction. We ask for protection for those courageously standing up to the oppressive military rule. Pour out your justice, freedom and peace on this land, we pray. Amen.

Week 11: 17-23 September

So many of the countries and communities you pray for every week are desperately yearning for peace. For an end to war and violence. An end to fear and uncertainty. An end to suffering and injustice.

The Psalms offer a wonderful source of consolation and encouragement. They give us words to pray in both lamentation and praise – reminding us that the God of peace is still sovereign, even when trouble surrounds us. Let the words of the Psalms inspire your prayers this week, as we remember all those who are prevented from living and practising their faith in peace.

**Sunday 17 September**

Pray Psalm 46 over Sudan. In April 2023, the country was once again thrown into turmoil when violence erupted between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. Civilians have borne the brunt of the fighting, with hundreds killed, thousands forced to flee, an appalling rise in sexual and gender-based violence, and attacks on houses of worship and clergy.

Monday 18 September

Reflect on Psalm 91 as you pray for an end to the conflict in India's Manipur state. Violence broke out on 3 May between the Meiteis (a predominantly Hindu community) and the Kukis (a tribal community who are predominantly Christians). Pray that India's leaders will find a sustainable solution to bring lasting peace and trust between communities in the region.

Tuesday 19 September

Almost daily we hear of attacks and abductions by armed groups in Nigeria's northern and central states, and now these kinds of attacks are occurring in southern states. Pray through Psalm 3, that God would be a shield around the people of Nigeria and deliver them from every source of violence.

Wednesday 20 September

In November 2016, the Colombian Congress approved a peace agreement which brought an end to a 52-year armed conflict between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Army of the People (FARC-EP). However, the agreement still hasn't been fully implemented and a number of other illegal armed groups remain active. Pray that all actors in the conflict will commit to the peace agreement and its promises.

Thursday 21 September

Today on the International Day of Peace, reflect on this verse as you pray for the nations: 'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!' (Psalm 133:1)

Friday 22 September

Save North Korean Refugees Day is on 24 September, followed by the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on 25 September. Read Psalm 121 and remember all those forced to leave their homelands because of their religion or belief. Ask God to keep them from all harm.

Saturday 23 September

Give thanks that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, ruling over every nation. (Isaiah 9:6) Pray that the power of his peace will be felt today by every Christian facing injustice for their beliefs.

Week 12: 24-30 September

September marks the month that democracy died in Eritrea, as reform-minded government officials were detained incommunicado, the free press was shut down and independent journalists were also jailed indefinitely.

Today the human rights situation remains bleak – a far cry from the nation its citizens dreamed of when they voted joyfully and overwhelmingly in favour of independence 30 years ago.

As you read through the paragraphs below, pray this verse from Psalm 80, a song of lament and a plea for deliverance:

*Awaken your might; come and save us.
Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.*

Tens of thousands of Eritrean prisoners of conscience continue to be detained without charge or trial in over 300 sites across the country, where conditions are life-threatening. Among them are around 400 Christians and 27 Jehovah's Witnesses. Some of these prisoners have died while many have been tortured.

*Awaken your might; come and save us.
Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.*

Pastor Tesfay Seyoum was a popular Christian leader who was unjustly imprisoned for his Evangelical beliefs. He spent the last ten years of his life in the notoriously overcrowded and unsanitary Mai Sera prison near Eritrea's capital, Asmara.

Sadly, Pastor Seyoum died in hospital on 9 April after suffering from a brain tumour, leaving behind a wife and daughter. He was still a prisoner while hospitalised.

*Awaken your might; come and save us.
Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.*

To add to the family's grief, the pastor was denied a burial place in his hometown in accordance with local tradition, on the justification that his Evangelical beliefs were opposed by the government.

Pastor Seyoum was finally buried on 22 April in a different part of the capital, 13 days after his death. This also went against Eritrean cultural norms, as burials are meant to take place as close to the time of death as possible.

We lament that Pastor Seyoum continued to experience discrimination even after his death, and that many other prisoners of conscience are still held unjustly and inhumanely. Lord, hear our prayer for freedom, justice and restoration:

Awaken your might; come and save us. Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. Amen.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/eritrea



Pastor Tesfay Seyoum

Week 13: 1-7 October

Maria Concepción began 2023 in hospital, following a cruel attack linked to her religious minority identity.

As a staff team around the world, we prayed urgently for Maria, knowing she was in intensive care and showing little improvement. Members of her Baptist church had even cleared a plot of land for her burial, as hope for her survival was dwindling.

Mercifully, Maria Concepción pulled through. Today she walks with the help of her son and a cane; her recovery is nothing short of miraculous. Yet her experience is just one example of the severe and ongoing violations of freedom of religion or belief in Rancho Nuevo, Huejutla de los Reyes, Hidalgo State.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/mexico

Sunday 1 October

Give thanks for Maria Concepción's recovery – truly an answer to prayer. Ask God to strengthen her daily as she continues to heal, both physically and emotionally. Pray specifically for her persistent back pain to ease.

Monday 2 October

Despite ample evidence of serious human rights violations in Rancho Nuevo since at least 2015, Hidalgo state officials have failed to intervene. Such inaction nearly cost Maria Concepción her life. Pray that Mexican authorities will do everything in their power to protect religious minorities and bring Maria's attackers to justice.

Tuesday 3 October

'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.' (Psalm 46:1) Pray that this would be true for Maria Concepción and others who are suffering because of their faith, often at the hands of the leaders of their own communities.



Maria Concepción

Wednesday 4 October

Give thanks for our Latin America team, who have been supporting Maria Concepción since the attack. Pray for God to sustain their efforts in research and advocacy, so that voices like Maria Concepción's may finally be heard by people in power.

Thursday 5 October

Mexico's Law of Uses and Customs allows indigenous communities to govern themselves according to their traditional customs, as long as they do not infringe on fundamental rights. In practice, however, freedom of religion or belief is often violated without any consequences. Pray that this law will be properly implemented.

Friday 6 October

Pray for understanding and peaceful coexistence between the religious majority and minority groups in indigenous areas of Mexico. Pray that community leaders would understand their responsibility to uphold the rights of everyone to practise a religion or belief of their choice.

Saturday 7 October

Father God, draw close to Maria Concepción – one of many indigenous women who suffer terrible ordeals because of their religious identity. Restore them with the hope that change is possible in their communities and across Mexico. 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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