

Your daily prayer guide

CSW everyone
free to believe

prayer diary

October 2022-January 2023





Week 1: 9-15 October

We count it as a win whenever we have an opportunity to share our findings – especially with those who have a mandate to make a difference. We presented our report on indigenous religious minority women in Mexico (‘Let her be heard’) at the June session of the UN Human Rights Council, in an online event.

Among the attendees was a representative from the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN in Geneva, who thanked us for the report and said she would raise our recommendations with the relevant authorities. It was hugely encouraging to see people recognising the importance of having the women we interviewed for the report share their testimonies in their own words, that their voices may finally be heard.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/mexico



Amelia, La Cofradía, Huejuquilla el Alto Municipality.

Sunday 9 October

Give thanks for everyone who has engaged with our ‘Let her be heard’ report at the UN and in other political arenas. Pray that they will take every opportunity to act on our recommendations – from this report and all our ongoing research on Mexico.

Monday 10 October

In a briefing in March, we urged the Mexican government to carry out thorough investigations into crimes against religious leaders such as assassinations, kidnappings and threats. Pray that they would take this recommendation seriously and work to hold those responsible to account.

Tuesday 11 October

Organised criminal groups know that an effective way to destabilise a community is to target religious leaders. They do so to establish a culture of silence and terror, yet we believe God can transform their hearts. Pray for divine intervention today.

Wednesday 12 October

Religious leaders who are involved in social work are particularly vulnerable in regions which have a strong presence of criminal groups. Ask God to bless these leaders as they serve the community and reach out to those in need.

Thursday 13 October

In Baja California State, Father José Guadalupe Rivas Saldaña was tortured and murdered in May 2022. He directed the Our Lady of Guadalupe Migrant Shelter – a possible motive for the attack. Pray that his legacy and that of other murdered priests inspires more young people to reject violence, and choose a better path.

Friday 14 October

Over 18 Roman Catholic priests were killed between 2017 and 2022. The situation is likely similar for Protestant leaders, but many cases go unreported for fear of retaliation from criminal groups. Pray that the authorities would investigate with integrity, and for an end to Mexico’s extremely high levels of impunity.

Saturday 15 October

Lord Jesus, light of the world, shine into the dark corners of Mexico where violations are rife and seemingly unpunished. Sustain all who are fearful for their lives and make Psalm 18:28 their reality today: ‘You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light.’ Amen.

Week 2: 16-22 October

'A choice of exile or prison is no choice at all...' – Anna Lee Stangl, CSW's joint Head of Advocacy

Over the past year, countless religious leaders, human rights defenders, political dissidents, journalists and artists have been forced into exile by the Cuban government. This is the biggest migrant wave in Cuba's history. Join us this week as we pray for strength and protection for those who remain in the country, and peace and restoration for those who have been forced to leave.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/cuba

**Sunday 16 October**

On 25 June this year, after over 20 years of government harassment, Pastor Alain Toledano Valiente was given a 30 day deadline to leave Cuba or face the possibility of long-term imprisonment. On 24 July he arrived in the United States with his wife and two of his daughters. Pray that God would comfort Alain and his family, and that conditions will change to allow them to safely return to their homeland one day soon.

Monday 17 October

Religious leaders in Cuba are routinely and systematically targeted with fines, threats, harassment, physical attack and, in some cases, arbitrary detention. Pray for peace, protection and the strength to endure for all religious leaders who remain on the island.

Tuesday 18 October

The Cuban government is seeking to purge the country of all voices speaking out for freedom and human rights – including the right to freedom of religion or belief. Pray against this strategy, that God would frustrate the plans and soften the hearts of those in power.

Wednesday 19 October

In April, Reverend Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo was sentenced to seven years in prison on unfounded charges of 'disrespect', 'public disorder', 'criminal incitement' and 'assault'.

Pray that the Cuban government would grant Pastor Lorenzo's immediate and unconditional release, and ask God to comfort his wife Maridilegnis, and his children David and Lorena.

Thursday 20 October

Loreto Hernández García is a leader of the Association of Free Yorubas, an independent religious group. He is serving a seven-year sentence on charges we believe to be false, while his wife, Donaida Perez Pasairo, is serving an eight-year sentence. Pray for Loreto and Donaida's release and wellbeing – especially since Loreto has diabetes and hypertension, and has been subjected to severe beatings while imprisoned.

Friday 21 October

'Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust.' (Psalm 143:8a ESV). Pray this verse over Christians of all denominations, that they would know God's steadfast love as they put their trust in Him.

Saturday 22 October

Father God, we lift the nation of Cuba to you today. In the face of intensifying persecution and the forced exile of many, we ask for protection over those who speak for freedom and justice. Lord, give rest to the weary and strength to all of those working for a better and free Cuba. Amen.

Week 3: 23-29 October

'Success can be hard to measure at the UN because so much of what we do is about being committed to the long-haul.' – CSW's UN Officer Claire Denman

CSW has been advocating at the United Nations for decades, and we have been accredited since 2017. This means we are recognised by the UN as specialists in our field and holding expertise that supports the aims of the UN. With our accreditation, we can participate in various ways, including by speaking at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) sessions. We also hold side events, which run alongside the main UNHRC session and usually take the form of panel discussions. We often bring people from the countries we work on to give their first-hand testimonies.

Victories take time, but we see them every year and praise God for this.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/un

Sunday 23 October

Pray today for Dr Nazila Ghanea, who was appointed the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in July. This role is a key mechanism in the UN's arsenal for protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief, and is one with which CSW works very closely. Pray that Dr Ghanea's work would bear fruit.

Monday 24 October

Today is United Nations Day – the anniversary of when the UN Charter came into force in 1945. On this day we thank God for the good things the UN has achieved over the past 77 years, and pray that it would become even more effective in the years to come.

Tuesday 25 October

Next month, the Human Rights Council will review the human rights situations in India and Indonesia as part of the Universal Periodic Review process. CSW submitted written evidence on both countries. Pray that our recommendations for action are accepted.

Wednesday 26 October

'For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.' – Psalm 22:28. Pray that all those working and participating at the UN would be reminded of this powerful truth today.

Thursday 27 October

Today is International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day – an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our goal of a world in which everyone is free to believe. Join us today in calling on God to make that vision a reality.

Friday 28 October

Our UN Officer Claire Denman has spearheaded our work at all three Human Rights Council sessions this year, as well as at the UN General Assembly and special sessions. Ask God to strengthen, guide and smile on her today (Numbers 6:25 NLT).

Saturday 29 October

Lord God, we lift the United Nations to you today. Help CSW to work effectively at the UN, grant us opportunities to help bring meaningful change and give us wisdom in all our interactions. Amen.



Week 4: 30 October-5 November

Sri Lanka is experiencing a period of serious unrest. The present economic crisis – which has resulted in severe shortages of food, fuel and other basic essentials – has led to months of mass protests, with President Rajapaksa eventually giving in to calls for his resignation in July.

Tragically, in times of political uncertainty and economic turmoil, it is often those who are already on the margins of society that are most affected. Buddhist nationalists have long been inciting religious hatred and violence towards Christians and Muslims, and now these vulnerable faith groups face an even more challenging situation alongside their fellow citizens. The country is desperately in need of peace, stability and freedom for all.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/srilanka



Congregation in Sri Lanka.

Sunday 30 October

Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism has been on the rise, with extremist groups spreading religious hatred and violence. Pray that the country's authorities would prosecute those who perpetrate these crimes, and that vulnerable faith communities would be properly protected.

Monday 31 October

Recently, many churches have experienced regular surveillance, allegedly on the grounds of national security or public health. Stand alongside these Christian communities in prayer today.

Tuesday 1 November

Social media is frequently used by Buddhist nationalists to spread religious intolerance. Anti-Muslim propaganda was particularly rife during the 2020 parliamentary elections, while hate speech against both Muslims and

Christians increased during the COVID-19 lockdown. Pray that the country's media would seek to present the truth.

Wednesday 2 November

Today is the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. Pray for Sri Lanka's reporters, who continue to experience arbitrary arrests and have faced increased pressure since the pandemic.

Thursday 3 November

Pray today for stability for the nation in the aftermath of the resignation of President Rajapaksa. Pray especially that the new government will deal effectively with the present crisis.

Friday 4 November

The ongoing economic crisis has caused severe shortages of food, fuel and other essentials. Marginalised communities, including religious and ethnic minorities, tend to be most affected. Pray that these vulnerable groups would have equal access to the support and care they need.

Saturday 5 November

Loving heavenly Father, we lift the nation of Sri Lanka to you today, asking for stability and security. Make a way for a new season of freedom and peace for citizens of all faiths. Amen.

Week 5: 6-12 November

Every November, as one Church, we unite in prayer for persecuted Christians. The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) is a time when millions of Christians around the world stand together in prayer.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/idop

Sunday 6 November

'But we know we are in God's hands. We know that [He] is a God who fights for peace, for justice, and we are confident that we will see it in our lives.' Maridilegnis Carballo, wife of imprisoned Cuban church leader Reverend Lorenzo Rosales Fajardo.

Give thanks that God is at work today, strengthening the hearts of Christians around the world who face injustice because of their faith. Pray Maridilegnis' declaration of faith over them today, asking God to fight for peace and justice in their lives.

Monday 7 November

'But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.' 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Pray this verse over Christians who are at risk of discrimination, harassment, attack, imprisonment and persecution today. Ask God to strengthen and protect them in the face of injustice, violence and suffering.

Tuesday 8 November

'The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.' Habakkuk 3:19

Ask God to give wisdom, insight and discernment to every Christian who is at risk because of their faith today, and that he would give them hinds' feet on high places.

Wednesday 9 November

'Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."' Psalm 91:1-2

Pray this psalm of protection and deliverance over every Christian who is imprisoned or held captive today, asking the Holy Spirit to comfort them, shelter them and deliver them.

Thursday 10 November

'We love because He first loved us.' 1 John 4:19

Pray this over all Christians who are facing discrimination, harassment, or persecution for their faith. May they know the grace of God, the peace of the Holy Spirit and the compassion of Jesus as they strive to follow Him in the hardest of circumstances.

Friday 11 November

'Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.' 1 Chronicles 16:11

Pray this verse over church leaders who lead their congregations in times of unimaginable suffering. Pray for endurance, perseverance and peace as they look to the Lord for wisdom and guidance.

Saturday 12 November

Lord, we pray as one united Church for those who are persecuted. Just as we are one body and when one part suffers, every part suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), help us to be continually mindful of the privilege of practising our faith without fear, and of our responsibility to intercede regularly on behalf of the other parts of our body. We pray that freedom of religion or belief will one day become a reality for everyone, everywhere. Amen.

Join us online for a special IDOP prayer meeting at 7.30pm on Sunday 6 November.
Find out more: csw.org.uk/idop

Week 6: 13-19 November

India's religious diversity is under threat from the spread of religious intolerance, as well as government policies and laws. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological arm of the BJP that promotes a Hindu nationalist agenda, has sought to polarise Indian society by relentlessly dividing communities on religious grounds, leaving the nation's religious minorities unsettled about their future.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/india

Sunday 13 November

Earlier this year Yallam Shankar, a 50-year-old Christian pastor, was murdered by 50 masked men in a targeted attack. Pray Psalm 34:18 over his family and community as they come to terms with this grave injustice.

Monday 14 November

Today, India celebrates its national Children's Day in honour of the birthday of the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Pray for the children of India who face greater levels of vulnerability and are targeted for their beliefs.

Tuesday 15 November

Pray that the appointment of India's first president from an indigenous community, President Draupadi Murmu, would bring positive changes for all India's indigenous communities.

Wednesday 16 November

Lord, thank you for the world leaders and policymakers who are committed to pursuing justice. We pray for India's government today: transform their hearts to treat every individual and community with respect and to protect their right to freedom of religion or belief.

Thursday 17 November

In June, approximately 12,000 Christians took part in state-wide protests across Arunachal Pradesh. They were calling for a swift resolution to a dispute about a church's reconstruction, which had been ongoing for years. Pray that the government of Arunachal Pradesh will act swiftly and justly to resolve this dispute.

Friday 18 November

Fourteen years after one of the most severe outbreaks of anti-Christian violence in India's history in the Kandhamal district of Odisha state, pray for victims who are still waiting for justice. At least 90 people were killed, over 300 churches and 6,000 houses were burnt or destroyed, an unknown number of women and girls were raped, and close to 75,000 people were displaced. Many who fled have never returned, and many others are yet to receive the compensation promised to them by the government.

Saturday 19 November

Heavenly Father, we lift India to you this week. We pray your protection over all the nation's religious minorities. We pray that those in power will respect and acknowledge the right of everyone to freedom of religion or belief. Where there is unrest, bring peace, and where there is persecution, we ask for justice. Amen.

Week 7: 20-26 November

Many religious or belief communities which experience violations often share a common ethnicity and/or are indigenous groups. They also tend to experience violations of intersecting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as of 'third generation rights', such as the right to a healthy environment.

This week we are praying for women and girls, who in addition to experiencing intersecting violations alongside the rest of their communities, also face gendered abuses on account of their religion or belief.

Sunday 20 November

When Concepción's family's water supply was cut off because of their religious beliefs, she was forced to travel by truck twice a day to buy water – a task that fell mostly to her, because of cultural practices in her community. Many indigenous women in Mexico are in a similar situation: the injustices they face because of their religious beliefs can come with unique additional hardship because of their gender.

Ask God to strengthen these women and to change the hearts of the authorities to move them to restore access to water and electricity to all, whatever their religious beliefs.

Monday 21 November

Thank God for the courage that Concepción and other women displayed in sharing their experiences with us for our 'Let her be heard' report on indigenous religious minority women in Mexico. Pray that the international community and the Mexican government would listen to their perspectives and take action to restore and protect their basic rights.

Tuesday 22 November

In Pakistan, Hindu and Christian girls are regularly targeted for abduction, forced marriage and forced conversion, as are Christian girls in northern Nigeria's shari'a states. Pray that these girls will be rescued and receive justice, and for perpetrators to be held to account.



Concepción Gómez Sántiz, El Encanto village, Las Margaritas Municipality.

Wednesday 23 November

Lift up in prayer Uyghur women detained in 're-education camps' in Xinjiang, China – many of whom experience forced abortion, sterilisation, torture, or sexual and gender-based violence – asking God to heal and deliver them.

Thursday 24 November

Pray for the return of an estimated 2,000-3,000 Iraqi Yazidi women and girls who were forced into sexual slavery by the Islamic State in 2014, and who remain missing. Pray also for protection and healing for ethnic minority women in Myanmar/Burma, who are often also religious minorities, and are targeted for systematic rape.

Friday 25 November

Today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, pause to remember the women all over the world who experience violence because of their religion or belief; ask God to deliver them, protect them, and help them recover from their experiences.

Saturday 26 November

Lord, we ask for healing and justice for women and girls from targeted religious or belief communities who experience gender-specific violations. Rescue those who have been abducted; release those imprisoned unjustly; deliver those facing violence of any kind and provide for those who are being deprived of amenities. In your holy Name we pray, Amen.

Week 8: 27 November-3 December

In January 2018, Vietnam introduced the new Law on Belief and Religion. The law imposes several restrictive requirements upon religious groups, including mandatory registration with the authorities.

More than four years later, violations against some communities from every major religion or belief group in the country continue to be regularly reported. Unregistered religious groups, including those who have had their applications rejected or ignored by the authorities, are more vulnerable to harassment, arrest, imprisonment and physical violence.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/vietnam

Sunday 27 November

In June 2022, Vietnamese authorities published two draft decrees on religion which expand on the 2018 law. They are likely to tighten government control over religious affairs, including online meetings. Pray today that the government would not proceed with approving these laws.

Monday 28 November

Religious groups who are denied registration under the 2018 law are particularly vulnerable. For example, Y Cuon Nie – a pastor of the Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ – was assaulted, arrested and detained by police for five hours in December 2021. Pray for his and others’ protection today.

Tuesday 29 November

‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.’

Moses speaks these words to the Israelites in Exodus 14:13, after which God enables them to escape through the Red Sea. Pray that the God of rescue would deliver people of all faiths and beliefs in Vietnam from the dangers they are facing today.



Hmong woman. Photo: Pixabay/Patrick Hansen

Wednesday 30 November

Members of religious groups who also belong to ethnic minorities, such as ethnic Montagnard Protestants, are especially vulnerable. Ask God to strengthen and protect these groups today, hiding them from those who would seek to do them harm.

Thursday 1 December

Followers of Duong Van Minh, a religious community not recognised by the government, have suffered years of harassment and abuse by Vietnam authorities. In May, 15 ethnic Hmong followers from the Duong Van Minh community were handed prison sentences of up to four years – seemingly for attempting to attend the funeral of their community’s founder. Please pray for their immediate and unconditional release.

Friday 2 December

Last December, activist and journalist Pham Doan Trang was sentenced to nine years in prison for ‘anti-State propaganda’. She joins many other prisoners of conscience, including legal expert Nguyen Bac Truyen. Pray for their unconditional release, and for the protection of all human rights defenders in Vietnam.

Saturday 3 December

Father God, we ask for your intervention in Vietnam today. May it become a country in which freedom of religion or belief is respected alongside all other human rights, and where citizens can live without fear of government harassment or intimidation. Amen.

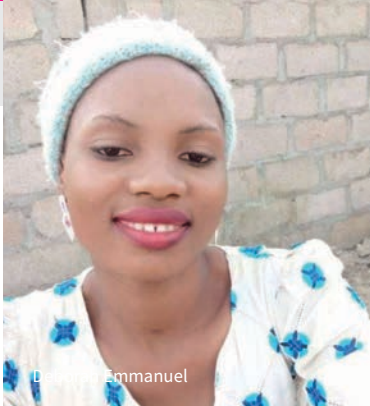
Week 9: 4-10 December

Deborah Emmanuel, a Christian student in Sokoto state, was lynched in May following an unproven blasphemy allegation. Reports suggest she had rejected the advances of a Muslim student, who later made the allegation.

This is just one incident in a seemingly unending scourge of violence that is currently affecting Nigerians of all creeds and ethnicities; in recent years tens of thousands have lost their lives.

Yet we’re not giving up. During a Ministerial side event on Nigeria in July – organised by CSW, Humanists UK and Tearfund – CSW Nigeria’s CEO, Rev Yunusa Nmadu, called on world leaders to recognise that Nigeria is facing an existential threat, and to urgently assist the government to address the critical levels of insecurity.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/nigeria



Sunday 4 December

Thank God for the life of Deborah, whose faith did not waver in the face of the threats she received. Pray for comfort for her devastated parents and siblings.

Monday 5 December

On Pentecost Sunday, a terrorist attack on St Francis Xavier Catholic Church left over 40 people dead and more than 70 injured. Pray that God would comfort the bereaved, heal the survivors physically, mentally and emotionally, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Tuesday 6 December

The attack on St Francis Xavier Catholic Church is particularly significant, as it marks the first terrorist attack in southern Nigeria. Pray that this will be the wake-up call the government and international community need to take urgent action to address this violence.

Wednesday 7 December

‘Nigerian lives are being extinguished on the slightest pretext...’ Rev Yunusa Nmadu, CEO of CSW-Nigeria, made a powerful speech at the Ministerial side event in July. Pray God’s protection over Nigeria’s civilians.

Thursday 8 December

Thank God for the tireless, courageous work of Rev Nmadu and the rest of the CSW-Nigeria team, including their volunteers and contacts in northern and central states, whose work puts them at risk, but who continue despite the dangers.

Friday 9 December

‘For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.’ – Psalm 116:8-9. Pray this verse over Nigeria today.

Saturday 10 December

Heavenly Father, today on UN Human Rights Day we ask you to transform Nigeria, where the rights of the people are being violated in so many ways. As elections approach in 2023, we ask you to raise up to high office wise people of integrity who will work hard to protect, unite and restore human rights across the nation. Amen.

Week 10: 11-17 December

'Every generation has its desperation, and every generation has its hope.' – the China Human Rights Lawyers Group.

Earlier this year we released a new report, 'China: The untold stories', which sheds light on under-reported violations of freedom of religion or belief. It reveals how the government's new measures against sharing religious content online, introduced in March 2022, have taken the already suffocating crackdown to another level – for people of all religions or beliefs.

What's more, at least 20 faith groups have been labelled *xie jiao* or 'evil cults' and banned under Article 300 – a law introduced specifically to 'legally' suppress beliefs.

Read more at csw.org.uk/UntoldStories

Sunday 11 December

People who follow the Falun Gong religious movement are just one of the groups banned as *xie jiao*, and are actively pursued by the police. 'In [the police's] eyes, Falun Gong practitioners are not human beings,' says lawyer Jiang Tianyong. Pray for their encouragement and protection today, and for the anti-*xie jiao* laws to be revoked.

Monday 12 December

An independent scholar has warned that in Hong Kong there are early signs of religious freedom being restricted via 'insidious' means. This could include 'corrupting Christian education and exerting total control on churches'. May God grant religious leaders the discernment and courage to hold tightly to the truth, no matter what lies are sown.

Tuesday 13 December

Children across China are forbidden to enter religious sites; this is monitored and enforced at some churches by government-installed surveillance cameras and loudspeakers. Pray for this ban to be lifted.

Wednesday 14 December

Pray for safety to surround China's human rights defenders as they persistently challenge violations of freedom of religion or belief. Dozens have been disbarred, harassed, evicted or even imprisoned and tortured in connection with their work.

Thursday 15 December

The demolition of mosque domes and minarets appears to be an steady trend. In June, local authorities attacked dozens of Hui Muslims who were guarding their place of worship in Yunnan province; others were detained. Pray that fear and destruction will give way to peace and restoration.

Friday 16 December

Read Philippians 4:19 and pray that God would meet all the needs of rural churches, particularly those in Yunnan province whose bank accounts have been frozen.

Saturday 17 December

Thank you, Father, that you already know and care about these under-reported or untold stories. May these voices be heard far and wide, so that the appalling violations can no longer be hidden, silenced or left unpunished. Amen.

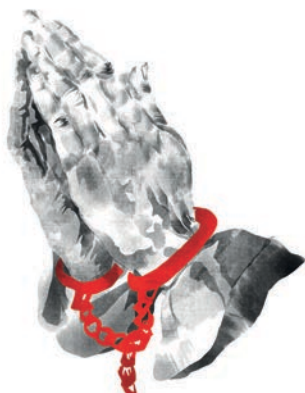


Illustration: Badiucao

Week 11: 18-24 December

'No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark...' – Warsan Shire, poet

Sadly, the cycle of refugee crises has become all too familiar in the news. There are many reasons why people are forced to flee their homes, to areas either within their countries or across borders, but a regular contributing factor is human rights violations.

This is why advocacy is so important, and why we urge international leaders to protect freedom of religion or belief for all: because when this right is being violated, our research indicates that other rights are most likely being violated also. By campaigning for change, perhaps we can prevent countries of concern from generating the next global refugee crisis.



Uriel Badillo and his wife Adelina, who had to flee their home in Mexico

Sunday 18 December

Today on International Migrants' Day, pray that people will be sensitive and understanding as they consider the myriad reasons why people leave their country of birth – often undertaking extortionate, difficult and dangerous journeys to find a better, safer life for themselves and their families.

Monday 19 December

Use Deuteronomy 31:8 to inspire your prayers for those who are forced to flee into the unknown: 'The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.'

Tuesday 20 December

Today on International Human Solidarity Day, give thanks for those who champion the rights of others and stand alongside them in their suffering. May our united pursuit of justice be stronger than any differences of ethnicity, religion or belief.

Wednesday 21 December

Matthew 2:13-15 describes how Joseph was warned in a dream to escape to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. Pray that Christian parents in dangerous situations will be similarly in tune with the Holy Spirit, supplying them with wisdom to decide whether to stay or go, and where to go.

Thursday 22 December

In some cases, people are told it is safe to return home, but the community has not welcomed them back. In other cases, people struggle to trust that conditions have truly changed, and sometimes they indeed remain dangerous.

Ask God to transform these communities with a spirit of harmony and reconciliation, creating an environment where everyone's basic rights are respected, and to bring peace to areas where it remains elusive.

Friday 23 December

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.' – Matthew 5:4

Pray this verse over everyone who is mourning the loss of their home and all they have left behind.

Saturday 24 December

God our provider, we lift up to you people of all beliefs who are in hostile environments, with little option but to leave. Go before them and be with them amid psychological trauma and indescribable loss. Settle their tired, anxious minds with your hand of blessing (Psalm 139:5 NLT). Amen.



Week 12: 25-31 December

Christmas.

A time for gathering together in community,
For giving gifts and singing carols,
For decorating homes and sharing meals...
For some of us.

A time to spend with the people we love,
For retelling the story of God with us,
For celebrating traditions and anticipating
the new year...
For some of us.

For others,
A time of increased fear and looming danger.
Of feeling even more isolated and alone.
Of missing loved ones desperately.
And longing for freedom more than ever
before...

Yet for all of us, wherever we are,
Christmas holds a hope that no-one can
snatch away.
A time to remember the light shining in the
darkness –
A light that the darkness shall never
overcome.

This week, we remember all those around the world who are facing any form of injustice for their faith, especially Christian communities who will find themselves at particular risk during the Christmas season. Pray that they would experience afresh the hope, joy, light and peace of this season, whatever their present circumstances.

Use the following verses from the Christmas story to inspire your prayers for their safety and freedom:

**‘Do not be afraid.’
(Matt 1:20; Luke 1:30; Luke 2:10)**

‘For nothing will be impossible with God.’ (Luke 1:37 ESV)

**‘I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.’
(Luke 2:10)**

**‘His kingdom will never end.’
(Luke 1:33)**

Week 13: 1-7 January

In July's prayer diary, we asked you to pray over Egypt's national dialogue – an initiative in which every Egyptian can participate and speak freely, to define the country's new priorities.

In July and August, the national dialogue's General Secretariat decided on the parameters for discussions on its Political, Social, and Economic Tracks. They agreed on the participation of all political and social forces, except for those linked to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood organisation.

While some people express enthusiasm for the dialogue, others remain sceptical. Pray that the national dialogue will start a genuine process of reform and reconciliation, and that it will definitively address restrictions to freedom of religion or belief.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/egypt

Sunday 1 January

Give thanks that a further 239 churches and places of worship were legalised last April by the government committee chaired by Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly. This means that 2,400 churches and places of worship have been granted legal status since the committee began its mandate in 2017.

Monday 2 January

While we give thanks for the improvements we have seen for Egypt's Christian community, the same is not true across wider society. Pray that the national dialogue would result in these improvements being extended to religious and belief groups that are currently unrecognised, and in equal rights for all Egypt's citizens.

Tuesday 3 January

In Upper Egypt, church construction continues to be a source of tension which can lead to sectarian violence. In many cases when Christians have received permission to renovate or build new churches, local Muslims

have blocked their attempts to do so. Pray for an end to religious discrimination and tension between religious groups in these communities.

Wednesday 4 January

So-called 'reconciliation' sessions (which take place outside of the legal system) are often used to settle disputes about new churches, as well as many other disagreements. Pray for an end to these sessions, which deprive victims of the justice they deserve by coercing them to accept a settlement, and by allowing the perpetrators to get away with their offence.

Thursday 5 January

In July last year a Christian man and his son were injured in a knife attack, believed to have been triggered by hate speech from controversial Islamist preachers. Thankfully, in this case, the family's Muslim neighbours intervened to stop the assailant. Pray for decisive efforts to be made by the Egyptian government to counteract the hate speech which fuels sectarianism and encourages incidents of violence like these.

Friday 6 January

Today is Christmas Eve in the Coptic calendar. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi made history in 2015 when he became the first serving president to attend a Christmas Mass on Christmas Eve. Give thanks for the commitments President Sisi has made towards combatting sectarianism and religious discrimination, and pray that these policies and sentiments would permeate throughout wider society.

Saturday 7 January

Lord, we give thanks for the advances in freedom of religion or belief in Egypt and pray that positive change would spread throughout the country. We pray that all those in positions of leadership would work for justice, freedom and equal rights for all Egypt's citizens, and we ask, that the national dialogue would bring peace, reconciliation and healing. Amen.



Asmara church, Radu Sighet. Photo: Reuters

Week 14: 8-14 January

The Eritrean government is responsible for a severe human rights crisis from which thousands continue to flee on a monthly basis. In a 2016 report, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea found that the authorities had been committing crimes against humanity, including the crime of religious persecution, since 1991. It also warned, presciently, that this human rights crisis could potentially threaten international security.

Recently, the Eritrean government began committing similarly severe violations in neighbouring Ethiopia. November 2022 marked two years since Eritrean troops entered the Tigray region, fighting alongside Ethiopian forces and Amhara regional militia in a brutal campaign marked by violations of humanitarian war, war crimes, crimes against humanity and possible genocide.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/eritrea

This week, we're using the words of Psalm 13 to pray for the nation of Eritrea.

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.

I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me.

Week 15: 15-21 January

‘These depraved acts must be a turning point for the international community.’ – Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

On 25 July the Myanmar/Burma army announced that it had executed four democracy activists who were accused of helping to carry out ‘terror acts’. These were the first judicial executions to take place in the country since 1990.

The international community rightly responded with outrage, but there remains an urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated action to end the human rights crisis which has arisen since the February 2021 military coup.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/burma

Sunday 15 January

Lift up in prayer the families and loved ones of the four activists who were executed last summer: Phyo Zeya Thaw, Kyaw Min Yu, Hla Myo Aung and Aung Thura Zaw. Ask God to meet them in their grief and pain today.

Monday 16 January

Thousands of innocent civilians have been arrested and detained since the coup, predominantly for peacefully protesting and calling for democracy. Pray that we would see captives freed and justice upheld across the country.

Tuesday 17 January

Christians and other religion or belief groups have been particularly targeted. Pray today for staff and congregants of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Mandalay, which was raided by armed soldiers in April 2022.

Wednesday 18 January

‘And call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.’ – Psalm 50:15

Claim this promise of deliverance for Christians and others in Myanmar today.

Thursday 19 January

As we approach the second anniversary of the coup, ask God to protect organisations like the Free Burma Rangers who are actively responding to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Pray that God would strengthen the work of their hands and shield them from those who seek to do them harm.

Friday 20 January

The military already stands accused of genocide against the Rohingya, as well as war crimes and crimes against humanity against other ethnic groups in the country. Pray that justice would prevail and that Myanmar’s generals would be held to account today.

Saturday 21 January

Father God, we continue to cry out for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar. Please protect those in the country who are bravely standing up to the oppressive military regime. Move the hearts of those in the international community to act swiftly and decisively. Amen.

Week 16: 22-28 January

Sudan has been through turbulent times since Omar al Bashir’s removal in April 2019. Nationwide demonstrations were followed by the rise of the official transitional administration, and its subsequent fall following a military coup in 2021. Ordinary citizens united in their cries for change, only to have their hopes for democratic transition thwarted at every turn, and often with violence.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/sudan

Sunday 22 January

Since the military coup in 2021, the limited advances in human rights and legal reform made under the transitional administration have been lost. There has been a systematic rollback of rights across the board. Ask God to restore Sudan’s fortunes and deliver the nation from oppressive military rule.

Monday 23 January

Hostility towards Christian communities in Central Darfur has increased since the October 2021 coup. The increasing threats and violence forced multiple churches to close last year. In each case, church leaders took the decision to close their places of worship for the safety of their communities. Pray for wisdom, courage, and strength for church leaders across Sudan.

Tuesday 24 January

Four men from central Darfur, who reportedly converted to Christianity, were arrested in June last year and charged with apostasy, despite the transitional government removing it from the criminal statute books. They were detained multiple times, were subjected to inhumane treatment, and were later charged with apostasy, with their case later being transferred to the criminal court. Pray for the safety of the men and that the unlawful case against them would be dropped.

Wednesday 25 January

In the face of increasing hostilities and a rollback of human rights, we’ve been urgently and consistently calling on the international

community to raise these cases with Sudan’s military leaders, urging them to respect, protect and fulfil these rights for every religious and belief community in Sudan. Pray that our advocacy interventions would be effective and would contribute towards lasting change.

Thursday 26 January

Give thanks for the work of Sudanese activists, human rights defenders and NGOs who continue to work together for freedom, democracy and human rights in Sudan, despite the challenges and risks to themselves and their loved ones.

Friday 27 January

‘Give me a sign of your goodness.’ Psalm 86:17
Since 2018, Sudan’s citizens have taken to the streets believing for a better future, resolving to persist until they see lasting change. Despite hopes being repeatedly dashed, they continue to stand for what they believe in. Pray this verse over Sudan, asking God to give Sudan a sign of his goodness and a better future.

Saturday 28 January

Lord, give a sign of your goodness to the Sudanese people and, as we enter a new year, renew their hope that a better future is possible. Protect those who work for justice and freedom, strengthen those who face injustice daily, and embolden a new generation of activists to believe that freedom is possible. Amen.



The church where the men charged with apostasy were arrested, which was subsequently ransacked by police



Unsplash/Saw Wunna

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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