

Your daily prayer guide

CSW everyone
free to believe

prayer diary

October 2023-January 2024



Rev Dr Jeremiah M Gido (Chair) and Rev Yunusa Nmadu (CEO), CSW Nigeria



‘God was faithful then, and he will be faithful now.’

We meet weekly as an advocacy team to bring before God all sorts of prayers and requests. It is so important that we commit ourselves and our work into God’s hands, especially as we hear first-hand accounts of suffering on an almost daily basis.

In these moments, we can take hope from the times we’ve seen our prayers answered – from the big breakthroughs of justice, to the simple knowledge that God is with us wherever we go.

We wanted to share with you three stories of hope from three of our advocacy teams.

May these stories encourage you and show you the difference that your prayers can make. Our God listens and moves in power; we trust in his faithfulness.

CSW’s Advocacy Team.

Iran:

‘Pastor Behnam Irani was released from one of Iran’s most notorious prisons in October 2016, after serving a six-year prison sentence. CSW has been supporting Pastor Irani and his family for years, including Behnam’s daughter Rebecca.

‘Rebecca’s childhood dream was to become a dentist, but training is expensive and logistically difficult for Iranian refugees living in Turkey. Earlier this year – after many years of praying – Rebecca received a full scholarship to study dentistry.’

China:

‘Wang Shunping is a Christian preacher from China’s south-western Yunnan Province. In August 2022 he was detained, along with four others, for providing Bible and music lessons for young people. We asked you to pray that they would be set free, and in May all five were released on bail.’

Nicaragua:

‘In June 2023, CSW met with a community of indigenous Miskito Nicaraguan refugees living in Costa Rica. The families asked our team to pray for them, particularly for one child who had been unwell for 16 days. For three days the child didn’t eat or drink anything; his mother was desperate. Later that day, as the group shared lunch, the child ate a tortilla and some chicken, and began to play and laugh with the other children. The group praised God together for this answer to prayer!’

Week 1: 8-14 October

The Communist Party of Vietnam routinely violates the civil and political rights of its people. There is little or no space for the voice of civil society.

Many human rights defenders in Vietnam risk their own safety and freedom to stand up for victims of human rights violations, including the right to freedom of religion or belief. The Vietnamese government regularly condemns those speaking out for justice to long sentences in prison, where they can face dire conditions and brutal mistreatment.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/vietnam



Nguyen Bac Truyen and Bui Thi Kim Phuong

Sunday 8 October

Praise God that, after six years in prison, Nguyen Bac Truyen has been released! As you'll read on p.2 of Response, Truyen had been serving an 11-year sentence, targeted for using his legal expertise to defend the rights of others. Keep him in your prayers as he and his wife begin their new life in Germany.

Monday 9 October

Three men who were sentenced alongside Nguyen Bac Truyen in 2018 remain in prison. They are Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton, Pham Van Troi and Truong Minh Duc. Cry out to God for their immediate release.

Tuesday 10 October

Updates on Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton's health are concerning. He suffers from the long-term effects of COVID-19 and an eye disease which has caused a near total loss of vision. Authorities at Gia Trung Prison continue to deny him adequate medical treatment. Ask God to bring healing.

Wednesday 11 October

'Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust.' (Psalm 143:8a ESV) Pray this verse over Pastor Ton and other Christian prisoners of conscience in Vietnam. May they know God's steadfast love as they put their trust in Him.

Thursday 12 October

Prisoners of conscience are often detained far from home to prevent family visits. Journalist Pham Doan Trang is currently serving a nine-year sentence for peacefully advocating for human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. She is detained in An Phuoc prison, 1500km from her home. Ask God to comfort Trang and other prisoners held far from their loved ones.

Friday 13 October

Bring those in positions of power in Vietnam before the Lord of all justice and grace. Pray that God would soften the hearts of prison authorities, police officers and government officials, that they might relent from cruelty and set those wrongly imprisoned free.

Saturday 14 October

Almighty God, we bring before you those imprisoned unjustly in Vietnam. Thank you for their work courageously speaking out for human rights. Would you protect them, provide for them, and bring them peace. Transform the hearts of oppressors and break the chains of those imprisoned. Amen.

Week 2: 15-21 October

'The same security arrangements have been ongoing for 20 years. Unless there is a drastic change in command and control, it is effectively an official death sentence on us.' - The Most Reverend Benjamin Kwashi, the Anglican Archbishop of Jos

Successive Nigerian authorities have failed to protect vulnerable Christian communities from terrorist groups for over a decade. The situation worsened significantly under the last administration, and is likely to deteriorate even further. For example, 629 people were murdered by non-state actors between 29 May and 13 July, and abductions for ransom continue to occur.

CSW receives reports of violence on an almost daily basis, and there are legitimate concerns that the relentless killings in the country's northern and central states may bear the hallmarks of atrocity crimes.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/nigeria



Reverend Yunusa Nmadu

Sunday 15 October

In July the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief published an updated version of its seminal report on the crisis in central Nigeria. Pray that the report's recommendations would be taken forward, not only by the UK government but also by the international community.

Monday 16 October

Praise God for the appointment of Reverend Yunusa Nmadu as full-time CEO of CSW-Nigeria. Ask the Lord to protect and guide Reverend Yunusa and the team as they continue to bring vital support and comfort to vulnerable communities across the country, and to raise awareness of freedom of religion or belief violations.

Tuesday 17 October

Earlier this year, Nigeria held elections that were marred by irregularities and violence. At the time of writing, the Supreme Court is set to hear challenges regarding the declared result and the eligibility of Bola Ahmad Tinubu, after five Appeal Court judges controversially ruled in his favour while discarding legal precedent. Pray for justice and impartiality to prevail.

Wednesday 18 October

'The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.' Pray that Christians in Nigeria would see the truth of Psalm 46:7 in action in their lives today.

Thursday 19 October

Sixteen children taken from the Du Merci orphanages in December 2019 remain in a Kano State government orphanage, despite the acquittal of the Du Merci co-founder, Professor Solomon Tarfa, earlier this year. Pray that the family would soon be reunited.

Friday 20 October

Today marks the third anniversary of the Lekki Toll Gate massacre, in which Nigerian security forces opened fire on peaceful demonstrators who had gathered to protest the notorious SARS police unit. Pray that those still waiting for justice would receive it, and everyone behind the massacre would be held accountable.

Saturday 21 October

Dear Lord, we ask you to deliver the nation of Nigeria from all whose hearts are set on injustice and violence. Protect the vulnerable and expose those who use power for their own gain. Move the hearts of the international community to greater action, we pray. Amen.

Week 3: 22-28 October

'...your prayers, your advocacy, your support, they make it possible for Christians in Iran to keep standing strong in their faith. This is the body of Christ – this is what we do for each other.'

These are the words of a Christian woman from Iran who was forced to flee, writing to churches beyond her home country, and to CSW supporters in particular. Dabrina continues her exhortation: 'Pray, pray, and pray! Every prayer is heard – and God reveals to Christians in prison that you are praying for them.'

Find out more at csw.org.uk/iran



Dabrina Bet Tamraz

Sunday 22 October

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus declared that he was sent to 'announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the burdened and battered free...' (Luke 4:18 MSG)

Reflect on this verse and pray for all who are unjustly incarcerated in Iran, including prisoners held because of their religion or belief. May the 'burdened and battered' be set free.

Monday 23 October

Earlier this year, CSW, along with our partners Article 18, Middle East Concern and Open Doors, published a report highlighting the plight of Iranian refugees in Türkiye. Pray for all Iranians forced to live in exile, especially the refugees in Türkiye who are waiting for resettlement in a third country.

Tuesday 24 October

Today is United Nations Day. Please pray for the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, who monitors, investigates and reports on human rights abuses in that country. Pray too for the CSW Press and Public Affairs Team, who spearhead our work at the UN.

Wednesday 25 October

Many Iranian refugees and asylum seekers in Türkiye are living in 'survival mode', facing challenges such as xenophobia, discrimination, exploitation, denial of healthcare, lack of employment, and the threat of forced return.

Pray for their emotional wellbeing and practical needs.

Thursday 26 October

13 September marked a year since the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in police custody. Her death sparked widespread protests for justice and reform, triggering a campaign of repression by the government that has become increasingly brutal. Pray for an end to the repression and for the calls for reform to be heard.

Friday 27 October

Today is International Religious Freedom Day, and so we take the opportunity to pray for all religious and belief minorities in Iran. For Christians, Baha'is, Sufi Dervishes, Sunni Muslims, and atheists, who all experience discrimination and harassment.

Saturday 28 October

'I want to come out of this dark tunnel and go somewhere safe. Türkiye is not safe for me.' – Esmail Falahati, an Iranian refugee.

Lord, you spoke light into existence; you alone can banish the darkness. We pray this truth over the people of Iran; for those who remain under oppression, and those who were forced to flee but are still incredibly vulnerable. May your light dawn on their situations, dispersing the darkness and delivering them. Amen.



Week 4: 29 October-4 November

'This is what the Lord says: do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place'. (Jeremiah 22:3)

India is home to over 1.4 billion people – one-sixth of the world's population. While many religions are represented, almost 80% of the population is Hindu. Since coming into power, the government has promoted Hindu nationalism, and religious minorities are facing increasing injustice because of their religion or beliefs.

Yet countless reporters, journalists, lawyers and activists refuse to let darkness have the last word. Their extraordinary courage is the living embodiment of God's command in Jeremiah 22:3.

Doing 'what is just and right' often means speaking truth to power, which can make them a target for harassment, imprisonment or worse.

Father Stan Swamy is one of those. The Jesuit priest was detained in October 2020 – falsely accused of terrorism. In reality, he was targeted for his human rights activism.

Sadly, he contracted COVID-19 and passed away in July 2021 as a result of cardiac arrest, while still in police custody.

Throughout this week, pray protection over all those whose commitment to truth and justice will not let them stay silent – even when that puts them in danger.

- Pray that other activists will not be discouraged by what happened to Father Swamy, but instead would be inspired by his example of courage.
- Pray that the Lord will raise up others to stand in the gap for the Adivasis in Jharkhand and in many parts of India; an oppressed people whom Father Swamy stood up for.
- On 2 November, this Thursday, the world marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. Pray for that future day we look forward to, when anyone who tries to silence a journalist or activist will be held accountable for their actions.



Father Stan Swamy

Week 5: 5-11 November

'At this moment I would like to call on all the parishioners, all believers: please pray for those who need it. In Nicaragua we need prayer – to reinforce faith, to reinforce hope of the people who have lost it, to see the release of political prisoners...' - Jhoswel A. Martinez

This stirring call to prayer comes from Jhoswel, a Nicaraguan Christian whose message will be shared on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. We hope you'll join us on Sunday 5 November to stand in solidarity with people like Jhoswel who are facing injustice for their faith.

Find out how you and your church can get involved at csw.org.uk/IDOP

While Sunday is the official day of prayer, you can continue praying throughout the month. Whenever you can, take a few minutes to pray:

- For the people who have bravely shared their stories for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Pray that their words will impact those attending and stir us all to action.
- That the prayers offered during IDOP and beyond will be answered – bringing freedom and justice to many.
- For strengthening and rekindling of faith for Christians around the world. Jhoswel highlights that many Nicaraguans 'want to go back to church, but cannot because of fear'.
- That Christians in Nicaragua and beyond will feel uplifted and surrounded in prayer by the global Church. May they know the comfort, peace and strength of God – now and always.

Nicaragua at a glance

Over 328,000 Nicaraguans fled the country in 2022, as the government escalated its crackdown on independent voices.

Religious leaders are seen as a potential threat due to their influence in society, and even preaching about unity or justice can be seen as critical of the Nicaraguan government.

Several religious leaders were among over 222 political prisoners forced into exile and stripped of their citizenship in 2023, while others remain unjustly imprisoned.

**IDOP
ONLINE
2023**

International Day of Prayer
 Sunday 5 November | 7:30-8:30pm
csw.org.uk/IDOP

evangelical alliance
 Open Doors
 voice

Jhoswel, Nicaragua

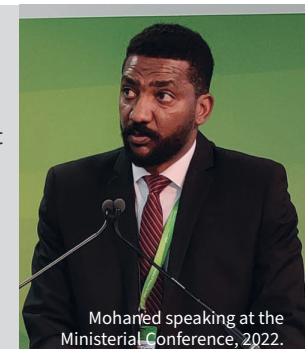
Week 6: 12-18 November

'In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.' (Romans 8:26)

When faced with a situation that seems overwhelming, we sometimes feel that we don't know what to pray. Nevertheless, the Bible reassures us that we are not alone, even in our sense of helplessness against so much misery and grief. The Holy Spirit is our helper, interceding for us before the throne of God.

Moreover, God is still at work, even in the darkest of times. Let this knowledge encourage you as you pray for Sudan this week.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/sudan



Mohamed speaking at the Ministerial Conference, 2022.

Sunday 12 November

Sudan is still in crisis after fighting erupted between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces in April. Both armed factions launched the 2021 coup and are now competing for control. According to the Kenyan president, the conflict already shows 'signs and vestiges of genocide.' Pray for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, and for the beginning of civilian-led transition to democracy.

Monday 13 November

Civilians are bearing the brunt of the conflict between the RSF and SAF. Pray for an end to the targeting of medical staff, hospitals, human rights defenders, humanitarian workers, and places of worship – some of which have been seized for military use.

Tuesday 14 November

There have been reports of a significant spike in conflict-related sexual violence targeting women and girls, particularly in Khartoum and Darfur, who cannot access medical or psychological support. Ask God to heal the survivors, to deliver others from similar trauma, and bring perpetrators to justice.

Wednesday 15 November

On 14 May, suspected RSF fighters attacked the Al-Masalma Coptic Church in Omdurman. They looted and vandalised the premises, called the priests and workers 'Egyptians',

'sons of dogs' and 'infidels', and told them to convert. Four men were shot, while another was stabbed; thankfully all five survived. Pray for an end to attacks on places of worship and the safety of clergy and laity.

Thursday 16 November

Mr Radhouane Nouicer is the UN's designated Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan. Pray that he would work proactively and effectively to monitor, document and report on human rights violations since the coup, and to formulate a strategy to end the conflict.

Friday 17 November

Give thanks for CSW's Sudan Consultant, Mohamed Elnour. After being forced to flee Sudan, where he was the lead lawyer in several high-profile cases involving freedom of religion or belief, Mohamed continues to be a powerful advocate for the Sudanese people in key international arenas.

Saturday 18 November

We bring the situation in Sudan before the Lord of heaven and earth, who makes wars cease to the ends of the earth, who breaks the bow, shatters the spear and burns the shields (Psalm 46:9). We pray specifically for protection for civilians, for a just and lasting peace, for accountability for perpetrators of atrocities, and for the miracle of a democratic transition. Amen.

Week 7: 19-25 November

In certain regions of Mexico, indigenous communities hold legal autonomy to govern themselves according to their traditions and customs. Like many traditional communities, there is a strong sense of group identity. In many cases, this has led to discrimination, harassment and violence against those who do not subscribe to, or wish to conform to, the majority religion in a particular community.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/mexico



Juana Custodio Bernabe

Sunday 19 November

Juana Custodio Bernabe lives in Guerrero. Because she and her family converted away from the majority religion, the village authorities encouraged farmers to graze their cattle on her cultivated land – trampling and eating Juana’s livelihood. Pray for miraculous provision, and an end to such injustices.

Monday 20 November

When Juana’s husband complained to the local authorities, he was told that no action would be taken to defend their rights because his family changed their religion, and because the cows belong to members of the majority religion. Pray that families like Juana’s would no longer be punished for belonging to the religious minority.

Tuesday 21 November

In some areas of Mexico, community leaders have connections to criminal groups, which further increases the vulnerability of religious minorities. Pray for protection over the vulnerable and those who fight corruption and violence.

Wednesday 22 November

Religious minorities in indigenous communities are often denied basic services such as education, electricity, and water. Women are also sometimes denied prenatal healthcare. Pray for these situations to be rectified, that people of all religions or beliefs would be treated equally and with compassion and dignity.

Thursday 23 November

CSW works to inform local and national authorities of violations of freedom of religion or belief, and to seek justice. Pray for opened eyes and softened hearts amongst those in positions of authority, that they would respond and take effective action to bring change.

Friday 24 November

On several occasions, our reports of incidents involving serious violations of freedom of religion or belief have been met with surprise by state, national and international authorities; they were not previously aware that these issues existed. Pray that our advocates and researchers would be spurred on and protected as they bring unseen violations to light.

Saturday 25 November

Next week marks one year since Maria Concepción, a Protestant Christian, was attacked in Hidalgo State. Today, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we continue to pray that the perpetrators – who nearly cost Maria Concepción her life – will be made to account for their actions.

Week 8: 26 November-2 December

‘My life is in your hand,’ sings a group of young Eritrean Christians in a worship video on YouTube. It is a beautiful, uplifting song about praising God, who knows all our cares and concerns. These words are particularly powerful given that they are sung in the face of severe repression, which has been ongoing for more than 20 years.

Sadly, in April this year, 103 of these young Christians were arrested while trying to make another worship video to share online. Their case is emblematic of the past two decades in which countless Eritreans have been held arbitrarily and indefinitely in inhumane conditions, many of them because of their beliefs.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/eritrea



Prayer and protest for Eritrea, 2020

Sunday 26 November

Give thanks that 51 of the 103 Christians were released in early September. However, as we go to print, the remaining 52 are still being held in Mai Serwa prison – a facility which is infamous for its extremely unsanitary conditions, overcrowding and inhumane treatment of prisoners. Pray urgently for their freedom.

Monday 27 November

Gospel singer Helen Berhane was held in Mai Serwa prison between 2004 and 2006. Praise God that Helen is free and is now a powerful voice for those who are still suffering in Eritrea. She is also helping victims of violations committed by Eritrean forces in Ethiopia’s Tigray region. Pray that God would continue to bless Helen and surround her with his favour as with a shield (Psalm 5:12).

Tuesday 28 November

Among those unjustly detained in Eritrea are numerous prisoners of conscience. Some have been detained for decades because of their political or religious beliefs. May the light of hope shine in the darkness that surrounds them and banish despair. May God strengthen them and set them free.

Wednesday 29 November

Pray for protection, provision and deliverance for Eritrean refugees in Sudan and Ethiopia. Eritrean women and girls in Khartoum are

particular targets for sexual and gender-based violence. In late April over 3,500 refugees were seized and forcibly returned from Sudan by Eritrean troops, and in June at least 400 Eritreans were rounded up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and forcibly returned.

Thursday 30 November

‘The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord is enthroned as King forever. The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.’ (Psalm 29:10-11) Pray this reassurance over those living under oppression.

Friday 1 December

Give thanks for an answered prayer: the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea has been renewed for another year. This role is vital for monitoring, documenting and reporting on the human rights violations in Eritrea, and keeping the situation on the UN’s agenda in order to hold the government accountable.

Saturday 2 December

Father God, you hold Eritrea in your hand. Though years have turned into decades, you have not abandoned the prisoners of conscience. May they know that people all over the world are praying for their freedom, and for an end to the suffering of the Eritrean people. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.



Week 9: 3-9 December

Around the world, countless people display extraordinary courage every day when they speak up against injustices they see. We call these people Human Rights Defenders (HRDs).

Some are religious leaders; some are community leaders; some are lawyers. Some have become HRDs by default because of injustice experienced by a family member, rather than actively choosing this path. We are reminded of Judges 6, when the Lord called Gideon to rescue his people from oppression: *'Am I not sending you?'*

Though Gideon didn't feel much like a 'mighty warrior', the Lord reassured him: *'Go in the strength you have... I will be with you.'*

Saturday 9 December:

International Human Rights Defenders Day

Throughout this week, especially on Saturday, pray for a fresh outpouring of strength, capacity and courage for the people pictured on this page.

Pray also for the HRDs whose work puts them in so much danger that they must remain anonymous for security reasons. We cannot share their names with you, but we entrust them to God's merciful care.

Several HRDs have asked to receive cards and letters – including John Dayal, Rev Yunusa and Maridilegnis. Could you write someone a message of hope in your prayer time this week? All the details you need are in Connect & Encourage: [csw.org.uk/ConnectEncourage](https://www.csw.org.uk/ConnectEncourage)

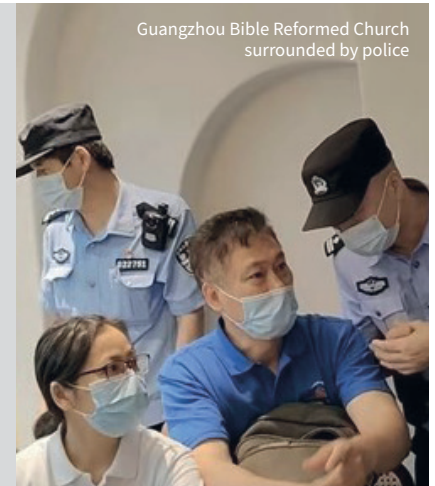
(L-R) Maridilegnis Carballo, Cuba; Nguyen Bac Truyen, Vietnam; John Dayal, India; Rev Yunusa Nmadu, Nigeria.

Week 10: 10-16 December

This week marks the 75th anniversary of a ground-breaking global pledge: the UN Declaration of Human Rights. We celebrate that this declaration enshrines freedom of religion or belief for all people. However, the Chinese Communist Party continues to crack down on these fundamental freedoms, more and more.

Religious groups are harassed in the name of Sinicization – the campaign to bring all religious doctrine and practice in line with CCP doctrine. We pray for Christians, Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan Buddhists and members of other religious groups who are affected by the pressure of Sinicization, and the extreme deterioration of human rights protections.

Find out more at [csw.org.uk/china](https://www.csw.org.uk/china)



Sunday 10 December

Today on Human Rights Day, pray that the universal rights enshrined 75 years ago will be upheld and protected in China. Pray that people of all religions or beliefs would be granted equal dignity, justice, and freedom in all its fullness.

Monday 11 December

During a Sunday service on 7 May, the congregation of Guangzhou Bible Reformed Church found themselves surrounded by police and officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau. Pray for them and other churches which experience intense monitoring and government surveillance.

Tuesday 12 December

Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu continues to be harassed, as do other churches whose leaders signed a joint statement in 2018, calling on the government to respect freedom of religion or belief. Pray that their voices calling for freedom and respect would be heard, and for their safety.

Wednesday 13 December

Pastor Wang Yi was unjustly arrested, five years ago, alongside over 100 members of Early Rain. Keep remembering him in prayer

as he remains serving a nine-year sentence. There are reports that he has been held in solitary confinement and been denied family visits and adequate medical care.

Thursday 14 December

Several pastors and preachers of unregistered 'house' churches have been targeted with false allegations of fraud over tithes and offerings. Ask God to set the captives free, including Li Jie of Linfen Covenant House Church. Lie Jie was among those who signed the house church leaders' joint statement in 2018.

Friday 15 December

'Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' Many brave individuals have been prosecuted, disappeared or disbarred for living out these words from Proverbs 31:9. May God guard those who take on the vital work of defending others.

Saturday 16 December

Lord our creator, thank you for the intrinsic, inalienable freedoms you have given all of us. Thank you that you see everywhere they are being infringed upon in China, and these violations will not go unpunished. Be quick to hold the perpetrators to account. Amen.

Week 11: 17-23 December

'Everyone tells me they are praying...but I do not receive a hug from anyone.'

Marta Perdomo is a Christian whose two sons, Jorge and Nadir, are unjustly imprisoned. They were sentenced to eight and six years respectively, for taking part in the peaceful protests of 11 July 2021.

Marta told us of the 'immense loneliness' she has experienced since then. She and her husband were asked not to attend their church, where they served as leaders, after the government threatened the pastor. They tried to attend other churches, but those leaders were threatened too. Stand in solidarity with Cubans like Marta and her family this week.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/cuba



Marta Perdomo

Sunday 17 December

'The Bible says to remember the prisoners, as if you were prisoners together with them,' said Marta, referencing Hebrews 13:3. Pray today specifically for Jorge and Nadir, who have been denied religious visits and materials while in prison.

Monday 18 December

Today on International Migrants Day, pray for peace and restoration for those who have fled Cuba, seeing no future for themselves on the island. More than 300,000 Cubans have left since 11 July 2021 – the biggest wave of emigration Cuba has ever seen.

Tuesday 19 December

Pray for religious leaders who have been forced into exile, including Pastor Alaín Toledano Valiente, Pastor Enrique de Jesús Fundora, Reverend Yordanys Díaz Arteaga and Reverend Carlos Sebastián Hernández Armas. These church leaders had no choice but to leave or face lengthy, unjust prison sentences. Pray for them and their families as they adjust to life in a new country.

Wednesday 20 December

On International Human Solidarity Day, stand with Marta Perdomo in prayer. Pray that she will no longer be blocked from attending religious services, which is part of a strategy to isolate her and stop her speaking out

about her sons' imprisonment. May she find a safe, loving, and courageous community to surround and uplift her.

Thursday 21 December

Loreto Hernández García and his wife, Donaida Perez Pasairo are serving 7 and 8 years in prison respectively because of their role within the independent religious group, the Association of Free Yorubas. Pray for their health, asking God to sustain them daily, and that they will soon be freed.

Friday 22 December

Thank you for your continued prayers for Pastor Lorenzo, who remains unjustly imprisoned since 11 July 2021. Pray that God would continue to minister to the pastor, his wife Maridilegnis and their two children. Pray for comfort and strength, particularly over Christmas.

Saturday 23 December

Father God, would you renew and refresh all in Cuba who are hoping and praying for their circumstances to change. Thank you for every advocate and human rights defender working in this nation. We recognise their bravery in standing up for the rights of others, often at huge personal cost, and ask you to protect them. Amen.

Week 12: 24-30 December

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

(John 8:12)

All this week, pour yourself into the certain knowledge of the coming of Christ into the world.

Thank God that the Incarnation, and everything it means to humanity, inspires millions around the world to dedicate their lives to Christ – even when they face terrible injustices because of their beliefs.

Light a candle one evening this week. If it's safe to do so, turn off the other lights in the room, and spend some time looking into the flame and meditating on how the light pushes back the darkness. Give thanks for the coming of Christ, the Light of the World.

Pray for people around the world whose belief in Christ puts them in danger, and pray that the light of justice would continue to push back the darkness of injustice.



Week 13: 31 December-6 January

Despite the turbulent situations we've heard about and worked on this year, we can see evidence of God's goodness and grace throughout 2023. We are especially thankful for your continued support in praying, campaigning and giving. Thank you!

So let us step into 2024 with a posture of praise – remembering Paul's encouragement in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:

'Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

Sunday 31 December

A key moment this year was the launch of Leave No One Behind, our documentary and report about religious minority refugees from Afghanistan. Remember them in prayer, giving thanks that their voices were heard in UK Parliament, in Brussels, and in churches across the country.

Monday 1 January

Happy New Year! Give thanks today for the gift of a new year – a fresh expanse of time and opportunities to make a difference. Pray for wisdom as we fill our calendars and commit our plans to the Lord.

Tuesday 2 January

We are delighted that so many people have used Connect & Encourage this year. Thank God for every letter sent to someone facing

injustice for their beliefs. May these messages arrive at exactly the right moment, speaking words of hope and strength into their lives.

Wednesday 3 January

Twenty-one wonderful volunteers joined CSW at the Big Church Festival in May, talking to festival-goers about freedom of religion or belief for all. Praise God that over 900 people added their name to our open letter, calling for action to free Reverend Dr Samson in Myanmar/Burma.

Thursday 4 January

'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.' (Psalm 24:1) Praise the Lord for all he has made and all he has provided. Reflect on how you might use your time and talents for good in the year ahead.

Friday 5 January

Our Press and Public Affairs Team work hard to draw public attention to the situations we're shining a spotlight on. Give thanks for every blog, press release, radio interview, podcast, and other media they've produced this year.

Saturday 6 January

Lord, we praise you for your faithfulness in 2023. You are sovereign, unchanging and unwavering in your promises. Please continue to bring justice and draw close to those in need in 2024. Amen.

Week 14: 7-13 January

On 18 July, Christian human rights defender Patrick George Zaki was sentenced to three years in prison. Sentences handed down by the Emergency State Security Court are final; they cannot be contested, though they must be ratified or rejected by the president.

The very next day, Mr Zaki was pardoned by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. This was wonderful news – a hopeful indicator of the president's personal commitment to improve human rights in Egypt.

However, we must not forget the ordeal of injustice Mr Zaki experienced for more than three years: his arrest in Cairo Airport in February 2020; the 22 months held in pre-trial detention; the unfounded charges of 'spreading fake news inside and outside Egypt'. All this in connection with his peaceful human rights work.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/egypt

Sunday 7 January

Today is Coptic Christmas Day. Ask God to protect Coptic families as they gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus, Emmanuel. May they feel afresh the blessing of God with them.

Monday 8 January

Thank God that Patrick George Zaki was pardoned in July. Pray that he will be able to resume his life without further disruption or fear. Mr Zaki is a researcher at one of a few human rights organisations still functioning in Egypt: the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.

Tuesday 9 January

President Sisi also pardoned lawyer Mohammad Al Baqer, who was arrested in 2019 while representing pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel Fattah. Mr Baqer had been sentenced to four years in prison for 'spreading fake news and undermining national security'. May justice reign for those facing similar unfounded charges because of their religion, belief, or their human rights work.



Wednesday 10 January

Mr Zaki is one of several human rights defenders who have been detained without trial for longer than the legal limits. He was held in pre-trial detention for 22 months (February 2020-December 2021). Pray that this practice would end.

Thursday 11 January

Pray for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained on excessive charges in relation to their human rights; including freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of expression.

Friday 12 January

'There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.' (Proverbs 23:18) Pray that Egyptian Christians will be strengthened with hope and encouraged by the certain promises of God, even amid persecution.

Saturday 13 January

Lord, pour out your hope over Egypt. We particularly remember those held for excessive, unspecified periods in pre-trial detention, including Christians and those standing up for human rights. May the year ahead bring positive transformation for people of all religions or beliefs. Amen.



Week 15: 14-20 January

Protests following economic crisis, 2022. Photo: Groundviews

Below is a brief insight into freedom of religion or belief in Sri Lanka. Find out more at csw.org.uk/srilanka

Why not try something new this week? Ask a friend or small group to join you in prayer, sharing these four prayer points between you.

1. Pray for marginalised and vulnerable faith-based communities.

Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities continue to face harassment, intimidation and constant surveillance from the state and authorities.

Pray that the government would work to promote acceptance and tolerance among all faith-based communities in society.

2. Pray for churches facing challenges.

One of the factors driving intolerance against Christians is the fear that Christianity will grow to threaten the dominance of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists. Christians cannot freely profess or share their faith, and some have been wrongly accused of forcefully converting people.

Some churches face difficulties in renewing their registration, which is required to open a bank account and operate legally. There are also reports of the authorities trying to evict churches and claim their land.

3. Pray for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

The PTA continues to be used as an excuse to target religious minorities. Muslims in particular are targeted with arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions.

Now the Sri Lankan government is planning to replace the PTA with the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), which could further empower the authorities to violate human rights with impunity. Pray that they would heed the warnings of those who have voiced concerns.

4. Pray for economic stability.

You may remember the news from 2022, when Sri Lanka was plunged into turmoil by economic crisis. Amid spiralling food prices, fuel shortages and power cuts, the entire cabinet except the president and prime minister resigned.

In July 2023, the BBC reported that 'while life may seem to have returned to normal, in reality people are still struggling...Things are more expensive than ever before.' Pray especially for religious minority communities, who may feel these challenges even more severely.

Week 16: 21-27 January

The UN estimates that one third of the population of Myanmar/Burma is in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. But the military – which seized power on 1 February 2021 – has restricted access to much-needed aid across the country.

Almost three years since the coup took place, the military continues to carry out airstrikes and other attacks on civilian populations, particularly in the country's ethnic minority areas.

Meanwhile, nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees continue to live in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh. As long as the military holds power, they have no possibility of safe return.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/burma



Si Ta Public Hospital, destroyed by airstrikes in Kachin State. Photo: Free Burma Rangers.

Sunday 21 January

Please pray for an end to the airstrikes and all other attacks on civilians. Pray that a comprehensive and co-ordinated global arms embargo will be implemented – leaving the military unable to continue its campaign of violence.

Monday 22 January

Pray that the Lord would expose any international business ties that are funding and resourcing the junta and its leading generals. May those ties be severed and any loopholes or workarounds they may be exploiting, closed.

Tuesday 23 January

Thank God for the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Tom Andrews. Ask God to grant him wisdom and energy as he continues his vital work. This includes keeping the ongoing crisis in Myanmar on the Human Rights Council's agenda.

Wednesday 24 January

'The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.' (Deuteronomy 28:7) Pray that the people of Myanmar would see the military scattered today.

Thursday 25 January

Reverend Dr Hkalam Samson is currently serving a six-year prison sentence on charges of unlawful association, defaming the state, and terrorism. In reality, he has been targeted because he is a vocal human rights advocate. Pray for his immediate and unconditional release.

Friday 26 January

The Free Burma Rangers carry out vital humanitarian work in Myanmar's ethnic minority areas, such as Karen and Shan states. Ask God to protect them and multiply the work of their hands.

Saturday 27 January

Lord God, as next week marks the third anniversary of the coup in Myanmar, we ask once again for breakthrough. May we see more action from the international community, and ultimately a swift end to the military's tyranny. 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.

T +44 (0)20 8329 0010

🐦 @CSW_UK

f /CSWUK

csw.org.uk

PO Box 99

New Malden

Surrey, KT3 3YF

United Kingdom

Registered Charity No. 281836