

Prayer Diary: Eritrea

24-30 September 2023



Pastor Tesfay Seyoum

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 prisoners have died, and 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 Serwa prison near Eritrea's capital, Asmara.

Sadly, Pastor Seyoum died in hospital on 9 April after suffering from a brain tumour, leaving behind his 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 Eritrea's 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.

Find out more at csw.org.uk/eritrea