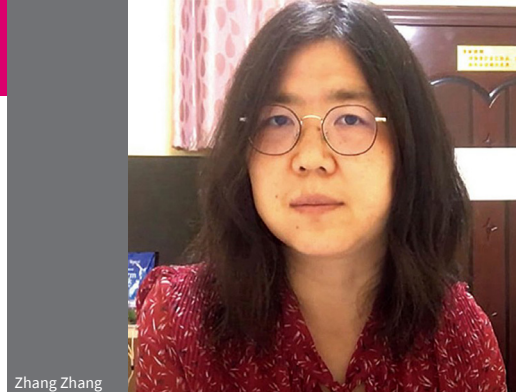


Prayer Diary: Those held captive at Christmas

21-27 December 2025



Zhang Zhang

‘Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison...’ (Hebrews 13:3a)

This week we joyfully remember the birth of the Lord Jesus – our saviour who sets the captives free! This is a freedom we share with countless Christians around the world. It’s a joy that unites us as one, global Church. Yet we must not forget those who are unable to celebrate in freedom and safety. Please join us in praying for those who cannot be with their loved ones this Christmas, because they are unjustly detained.

Sunday 21 December: Jorge and Nadir, Cuba

After peacefully protesting on 11 July 2021, Jorge and Nadir were given eight- and six-year prison sentences respectively. Both have been consistently denied the right to receive religious visits in prison, and are not allowed any religious materials.

Monday 22 December: Dennis Albert, Pakistan

37-year-old Dennis was arrested in April 2024 while working as a rickshaw driver. He was falsely accused of blasphemy, with one of the charges carrying a punishment of life imprisonment if convicted. His bail application was rejected, and although his lawyer plans to file an appeal, Dennis will likely spend Christmas in jail, away from his loved ones. He is a devout Catholic with a strong faith.

Tuesday 23 December: Zhang Zhan, China

Inspired by her faith, citizen journalist Zhang Zhan bravely reported on the COVID-19 pandemic in China. She paid with her freedom – serving a four-year sentence, during which she staged a hunger strike and became critically ill.

Just months after her release, Zhang Zhan was unjustly detained once again in August 2024, seemingly for continuing to advocate for human rights. Having awaited trial for over a year, on 19 September 2025 she was sentenced to four years in prison once again.

Wednesday 24 December: North Korea

Three South Korean missionaries are serving life sentences in North Korea: Pastor Kim Jung-wook, Pastor Kim Kook-kie, Pastor Choi Chun-gil. All three were charged with spying for South Korea and have been held incommunicado for more than a decade.

Thursday 25 December: Eritrea

Seven Eritrean church leaders have been detained arbitrarily for over two decades now:

Rev Haile Naizge, Dr Kuflu Gebremeskel, Rev Million Gebreselassie, Dr Futsum Gebrenegus, Rev Dr Tekleab Menghisteb, Rev Gebremedhin Gebregiorgis, and Rev Kidane Weldou.

They are imprisoned without charge or trial – held incommunicado and indefinitely in a maximum-security facility simply on account of their faith. Some have lost loved ones while in prison, including wives and parents.

Friday 26 December: Hakob Gochumiyan, Iran

‘I am Hakob, a citizen of Armenia. Since 15 August 2023, I have been in an Iranian prison for my faith for the unfounded reason of preaching and teaching Christianity.’

Hakob has two young children and a wife, Elisa. She was arrested alongside him during a family visit to Iran, while having dinner at a friend’s house. They were placed in solitary confinement in the notorious Evin Prison and interrogated. Hakob told us of the ominous threats that were made, and that he was denied a lawyer and translator. While Elisa was later released on bail, Hakob remains serving a 10-year sentence.

Saturday 27 December: Leah Sharibu, Nigeria

Now 22 years old, Leah is still held captive by terrorists who abducted her from school in February 2018. She was the sole Christian among 110 girls who were taken by members of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The surviving girls were returned home a month later, but Leah was not among them because she had refused to renounce her faith. Thank you for remembering Leah, her mother Rebecca, her father Nathan and younger brother Donald, and all who love and miss her.

Lord Jesus, Emmanuel, we remember _____ and their loved ones today. May they know you are with them this Christmas time and always. As we rejoice that you came to set captives free, we pray that the chains of the unjustly imprisoned will be broken. Lord, lead them out of captivity for good! Amen.