

Pray for Human Rights Defenders

12 - 18 July 2020



We're constantly humbled and inspired by the stories we hear from all over the world of human rights defenders who dedicate their lives to advocating for freedom and justice. And as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, these brave people – often from persecuted religious communities themselves – are ensuring food and medical supplies reach those most in need. This week, thank God for each of these people:

'Faith or no faith, they are human beings. If you are a human being you are born with human rights.' Nehemiah Christie, a human rights defender from India, advocates for the right of religious minorities to freely practise and propagate their religion. Despite risks to his family, he continues to make frequent interventions on behalf of victims of attacks in local police stations, and engages closely with senior officials in Tamil Nadu to raise concerns on behalf of all minorities, with or without faith, in the state.

'I've made up my mind: the most they can do is jail me. But if I stay silent, I'll regret it my whole life.' – Zhang Kai, a Christian human rights lawyer from China working on freedom of religion or belief cases. Last Thursday, 9 July, was the fifth anniversary of a crackdown when hundreds of China's human rights defenders and lawyers, including Zhang Kai, were detained, interrogated or imprisoned. He was later released, but then detained again for 48 hours. His work continues to put him at risk.

Michelle Chaudhry heads the Cecil and Iris Chaudhry Foundation (CICF, named after her parents) in Pakistan. She works to promote education and the rights of religious minorities. The CICF began a coronavirus relief programme in March, delivering parcels of food, soap, disinfectant and gloves to families in need during the lockdown.

Nguyen Bac Truyen is a Vietnamese legal expert serving an 11-year sentence on 'charges of carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the government' because of his work for persecuted religious communities, among others. He is a Hoa Hao Buddhist who last year went on hunger strike to protest the mistreatment of a fellow prisoner, a young Catholic activist named Nguyen Van Hoa.

'I dream of a Nigeria where Christians, Muslims and those of no faith will be free to believe what they want to believe...without molestation or threat to life.' Reverend Yunusa Nmadu runs CSW-Nigeria, as well as being General Secretary of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) denomination. He and his team work with communities affected by the religion-related violence that has claimed tens of thousands of lives in central Nigeria, and that continues despite the lockdown.

Heavenly Father, today we give you heartfelt thanks for the people on this page who defend the rights of those who suffer for what they believe. Many are also risking their lives to provide food and medical supplies to people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please protect them from the virus as well as from violence, and may we be inspired by their example. Amen.

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

**CSW everyone
free to believe**

CSW is a human rights organisation advocating for freedom of religion or belief, and as Christians we stand with everyone facing injustice because of their religion or belief.