

MAY 2018

“When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;” – Revelation 6:9

Dear Friends,

How many Christians are killed for their faith? Over the past several years, and once again at this year’s Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) Consultation in Washington, D.C., how we answer this question was at the top of the agenda.

The simple answer is: “It depends.” It depends upon how a “Christian” is defined. It depends how you categorize the circumstances of their death. It depends on how you count them.

Different groups provide different statistics, which result in a wide range of numbers. Some report numbers at the low end of the scale (3,066 in 2017), based solely on direct evidence, and occasionally on indirect evidence. The high end of the scale is a dramatic number (90,000 from mid-2016 to mid-2017), and thus is widely quoted. Such numbers are based upon highly pragmatic estimates, averaged over a ten year period, and defines certain fatalities extremely broadly.

Members of the RLP, which include Advocates International, strive to demonstrate integrity in all of our communications and we appeal for a cautious and wise use of figures, rejecting any exaggerations, oversimplifications or misrepresentations of figures about Christians killed for their faith. Such abuse would jeopardize our credibility in all respects. We warn the Christian community against sensationalism and urge better motives for walking alongside the persecuted.

As a member of the current RLP Leadership Team, it’s an honor to serve as the Secretary for this collaborative effort of 40 Christian organizations in over twenty countries focused on international religious liberty. Some of the members are actively engaged on the ground directly helping the persecuted. Other members focus more on advocacy. Advocates, with our network of Christian lawyer fellowships in 128 nations, provides legal help when and where needed, through attorneys and other legal professionals.

At the Consultation, we heard from the US Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback, as well as a number of Congressmen. Most importantly, we heard from and prayed for a number of pastors from countries facing more extreme persecution. Our agenda included Women and Persecution, multi-faith and multi-

government coalitions, and our ongoing efforts to fight apostasy laws. Please pray with us for the ongoing work of the RLP and its member organizations.

Please also continue to pray with us for our Advocates in Nepal as they move forward with their efforts to overturn the new Anti-Conversion Law set to take effect in August 2018. The AFN legal team are filing a writ of petition to the Supreme Court of Nepal to declare the law as voidable because it is inconsistent with the Constitutional right to religious freedom and against the norms of international law and treaties to which Nepal is a signatory. Unfortunately, the government appears to be moving forward with threats against believers, and arrests have already begun.

Another dire situation relates to the upcoming trial in Turkey of American Pastor Andrew Brunson, arrested in October 2016 in the aftermath of the failed coup, and accused of aiding the enemies of President Erdogan. The trial, scheduled for April 16, was postponed by the judge until May 7, and Brunson was returned to prison to await the trial. Despite high-level interest from the US Government, including attendance at Monday's hearing by Ambassador Brownback, as well as a U.S. Senator, the Turkish government refuses to relent unless their own demands for extradition of a political foe are met. Please pray with us for the innocent Pastor Brunson's health, safety, and his unconditional release.

Please also pray for this month's Christian lawyer conference in Auckland, New Zealand, on May 18-19. They are expecting over 130 attendees, including from Australia, Fiji and other Pacific islands, and the theme is Micah 6:8:

He has told you, o man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

Finally, thanks for continued prayers for the planning for the **50 Nations—1 Fellowship** conference in Berlin in October 2018. We are hoping to see every nation in Europe represented, and the Global Council will be holding its annual face-to-face meeting there also. Thank you again for your prayer support for all the work of Advocates on all six continents, and for your ongoing financial support, which allows us to remain engaged in our efforts on behalf of those persecuted for their faith.

May the Lord bless and keep you in His perfect . . .

Grace and Peace,



Brent M. McBurney
President & CEO

