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“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’
If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; . . .” **John 15:20**

Dear Friends,

How would you respond if you were arrested for something that you believed was perfectly legal? If your holidays were interrupted by religious police, knowing that they have no jurisdiction over your affairs, would you be kind and gracious?

That is exactly what happened to Min Choon Lee in January when enforcement officers from the Jabatan Agama Islamic Selangor (JAIS), the Islamic religious authorities, raided the offices of the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM) and arrested him.

Religious Freedom Under Attack

Malaysia is a predominantly Muslim nation. A little less than ten percent of the population is Christian. Those believers have, however, used the Bahasa (Malaysia’s official language) word “Allah” to refer to the Christian God since 1629 in the Alkitab Bible. It has only been in the past seven years that extremist Muslim groups pushed to ban the use of “Allah” by non-Muslims. Many believe that the efforts are mainly for political reasons.

The controversy arose in 2007 when Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar banned the Roman Catholic Church Malay version of a weekly periodical, “The Herald,” from printing “Allah.” The church challenged the ban in the courts. Lower courts ruled that non-Muslims were banned from using the word. In 2010, the High Court of Malaysia briefly reversed the ban, resulting in mob violence against churches, temples and even a convent school.

In April 2011, the Attorney General and other federal ministers met with BSM President Min Choon Lee and other evangelical Christian leaders to discuss the issue and came up with a 10-point solution. In that ruling by the federal government, BSM was allowed to continue to publish the Alkitab Bible for distribution without restrictions in East Malaysia, while for West Malaysia, the Bibles were required to have a cross and the words “penerbitan Christian” (Christian publication) on the cover. BSM made sure that all of its Bibles were fully compliant with the 10-point solution.

JAIS, the Islamic religious authorities, are granted power under the Malaysian constitution to govern the affairs of Muslim citizens. They do not, however, have jurisdiction to police the affairs of non-Muslims. Until this year, they have not tried. That all changed on January 2.

Without any warning, JAIS sent 20 enforcement officers to the BSM offices that day during the lunch hour. Although the offices were closed, they demanded entry. Sinclair Wong, the office manager, called Min Choon, who advised them to keep the doors closed until his arrival. What followed was unprecedented. The JAIS officers ransacked the office, seized 320 Malay and Iban Bibles, and arrested Lee and Wong. During the incident, Min Choon contacted friends to alert the press, and video-taped the actions of the JAIS officers.

“Right from law school, we were taught that Islamic authorities only have jurisdiction over Muslims. But when I saw this bunch of thugs trying to force their way in, seizing our property and arresting me, I was utterly shocked and surprised that something like this could happen in Malaysia,” Min Choon said.

A Christ-Like Response

As a lawyer, Min Choon knew what his rights were, yet they were seemingly meaningless. I asked him about the incident:

When I was younger, an incident like this would have drawn a powerful reaction from me. I would rail against the authorities in press conferences and articles and use the legal process to decry the abuse of power. I was credited with arguing the first successful religious liberty litigation in 1988 in the Supreme Court. Since then, I had served the churches with legal advice and representation in court in various instances of infraction of their religious rights. I had the reputation of a fierce fighter for the Church.

When I was arrested, I felt angry. Who wouldn't? But I thought of my position as a lay church pastor, chairman of the country's only Bible society and leader of the Christian lawyers. I asked a question which served me in good stead on many a tricky situation: "What would Jesus do?"

The answer was obvious. When I was released, a big group of reporters was waiting for me outside the gates of the police station. By God's grace, I was able to contain my emotions and answered the reporters' questions without invective. I called for Christians to remain calm, to demonstrate Christian virtues of love and forgiveness and to wait for the authorities to resolve this problem.

Having been put in a situation where the whole country was looking at me, I knew that there was a duty of me to show an example to Christians on how to respond to a situation of persecution. I could so easily lead Christians along the wrong path of hatred and retaliation. Years of fellowship with God's people taught me about love, forgiveness and trusting God to work out His plans. Very important were my years of association with Advocates International, the worldwide fellowship of Christian lawyers. I remembered how Sam Ericsson, the late founder of AI, always telling us that he accomplished more with an open hand stretched out in friendship rather than a closed fist raised in anger.

Min Choon is grateful for your continued prayers for this ongoing struggle for religious freedom in Malaysia. The Bibles seized during the raid are not yet returned. We'll make sure to keep you informed of the situation.

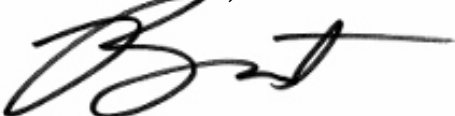
Advocates International in 2014

The first half of this year's travel schedule provides some encouraging and challenging meetings. In March I travel to Barcelona for the ERLF and then Ottawa for the RLP Consultation. In April I travel to South Africa, Swaziland and possibly Mozambique. In May, the Global Council meets in Munich in conjunction with the *Christ und Jurist* 2014 Congress. Your prayers for these trips are a great encouragement. Thanks.

Enclosed is a new Advocates prayer calendar. Please continue to join with us each day as we pray for each Advocates region in turn. Many of our advocates, like Min Choon, face daily persecution and are fighting for the Body of Christ through the law. Sometimes that includes an arrest.

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

Grace and Peace,



Brent McBurney
President and CEO

PS. Nick Vyssotski, Sam's Russian "son," wanted you to know that he and his family are headed to Ukraine to work with aging out orphans and kids in prisons. His employer, Dell, has a volunteer separation program "that is an opportunity to live out our faith—that intersection of vertical and horizontal dimensions that Sam so often talked about." Please keep Nick and Morgan and their three kids in your prayers as they prepare to move to Ukraine for a four-month test period.



PRAYER CALENDAR – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2014

Mondays: Advocates Africa

- Please pray for peace in Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Nigeria. These three countries, among others, have seen a radical increase in violence and uncertainty in the past month alone. Boko Haram in Nigeria continues to terrorize Christians with no signs of slowing down.
- Please continue to pray for **Advocates Africa's** representation at the African Commission for Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). The next Ordinary session is scheduled for 28 April – 12 May 2014.
- Please pray for all of the Christian lawyer fellowships and advocates across the continent that their witness for Jesus will remain strong through the practice of the law.

Tuesdays: Advocates Asia & Oceania

- **Advocates Asia** is now planning the 12th AA Conference to be hosted by **Indonesia Christian Legal Society (ICLS)** for the first time. The exact dates have not yet been set, but likely to be in November. Please pray for Tarigan Saudaranta, Tony Budidjaja and Pat Talbot as they lead the **ICLS** team who will be hosting the conference.
- Global Council member **Mark Mudri** asks that we pray for **Australia** for the following: tensions with Indonesia over spying; same-sex marriage challenge in the high court; prostitution and euthanasia issues in the state parliament; and wisdom for our advocates who are fighting these battles.
- Please continue to pray for **Min Choon** and his colleagues in Advocates Malaysia as Christians face increasing pressure from the Muslim majority.

Wednesdays: Advocates Europe

- **Latcho Popov** asks that we pray for unsettled region: Wars in Syria and unrest throughout Middle East; Russian interference in the matters of Ukraine, Belarus and Bulgaria through oligarchy and monopolies; pretention of Turkey about part of the land in Bulgaria and Greece and even further into the Balkans.
- Please pray for a peaceful resolution to the ongoing political crisis in Ukraine. Pray also for advocates of the **Christian Lawyers Association of Ukraine** as they educate pastors and others in ministry on their rights and obligations. Pray too for their efforts to open a new legal training school.
- In March 2014, the **European Religious Liberty Forum** is scheduled to take place in Barcelona and Latcho will co-chair, encourage, and equip the religious liberty experts from Europe, particularly from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Turkey.
- In May 2014, **Advocates Europe** in co-partnership with **Christ und Jurist** will be hosting the annual meeting of the Global Council of AI in Munich:

*"The German Christian Lawyers' Association **Christ und Jurist** is looking forward to welcoming German and international guests to their Conference on the topic **Truth** which will take place May 16th-18th in Munich. Please pray that many lawyers respond to the advertisement and take part in the Conference. Pray that God may reveal His truth in His Son Jesus Christ to all those who ponder the topic Truth at the Conference. May He bless and protect all the participants and speakers."*

Thursdays: Advocates Latin America (FIAJC)

- Please continue to pray for God's direction as **FIAJC** members elect the new FIAJC President. May the Lord raise someone who is willing to dedicate the necessary time and energy to assume this great responsibility and has a broad perspective on the many important challenge that we face in Latin America.
- Please pray for God's provision to carry out the important projects we would like to develop in Latin America.
- Please continue to pray for our dear sister Esplendida Navarrete and her sons, who appreciate our prayers for consolation, strength and provision from God now that Xavier Velez was promoted to Glory.

Fridays: Advocates North America & Caribbean

- **Advocates Caribbean** asks us to join with them in praying for the following:
“In this region the gay rights movement is gaining ground and is being supported by the human rights organizations. Murders and other serious crimes of violence is on the rise, for example, 9 in 10 days. Violence and crimes against children are also increasing. Please remember us in prayer in these areas. We long for the day when we would wake up to no violence.”
- **Christian Legal Fellowship** in Canada continues its search for a new Executive Director. AI Global Council member and AI Board Chair, Ruth Ross, is serving as the Interim ED during the search. Please continue to pray with us for the Lord to raise up the right leader for CLF.
- **Christian Legal Society** asks us to pray that they continue to grow in attorney chapters and legal aid clinics, that the Lord give them wisdom to deal with the religious liberty issues, and that they glorify the Lord in the legal profession.

Saturdays: Advocates Global Council & Board Members

- **Global Council: Exec. Committee:** Chairman, Min Choon Lee* (Malaysia); Vice Chair, Teresa Conradie* (South Africa); Secretary, Gregory Vijayendran (Singapore); Treasurer, Ruth Ross* (Canada); At-Large, Latchezar Popov (Bulgaria); At-Large, Mats Tunehag (Sweden); **Members – Africa:** Dr. Bankole Sodipo (Nigeria); Mike Chibita (Uganda); **Asia:** Robin David (India); Dongsub Sim (South Korea); **Europe:** Nicolas Duval (France); **Latin America:** Gerardo Amarilla (Uruguay); Nina Balmaceda* (Peru), Daniel Varela (Paraguay); **Middle East:** Botrus Mansour (Israel); **North America/Caribbean:** Justice Alice Soo Hon (Trinidad & Tobago); **Oceania:** Mark Mudri (Australia).

*Also AI board members

- **AI Board:** Chairwoman, Ruth Ross; Vice-Chairman and Treasurer, Sam Logan; Nina Balmaceda, Matt Bristol, Teresa Conradie, Timothy Klenk, Min Choon Lee, Peter Rathbun, Roger Sherrard, and Ken Starr.

Sundays: Advocates Staff & Family

Please pray for Romi Kobayashi; Brent McBurney, his wife Elizabeth, son Ian and daughter Sarah Louise.