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Release Women Email - February 2020

Hello Friend

Give up chocolate or take up prayer!

Ash Wednesday this week is the beginning of the Christian season of Lent, a period of reflection and preparation as we lead up to Easter Sunday and remember the glorious resurrection of Christ and God's gift of salvation to us all. Lent is also often a time when we think about giving something up, such as chocolate or cake and biscuits.

This year, Release Women would again like to encourage you to consider 'taking up' something rather than giving up something; not a new hobby or an improved fitness regime, but our Lenten initiative, **40x40x40**.

During the **40 days** of Lent, could you commit to spend **40 minutes** in silence, in prayer and reflection for your persecuted family? In addition, could you commit to give **40p** each day to help to give your persecuted sisters the tools they need to live for Jesus Christ? Full details are available on our website [here](#) and resources are available to support you to do this [here](#). These funds will help to support women in the Strength to Stand groups in Egypt and Pakistan.

A poster for the "40x40x40" Lenten Initiative. At the top, it says "RELEASE WOMEN LENTEN INITIATIVE - 2020" in a small black box. Below that, the text reads "An invitation to take part in **40x40x40** with Release Women during Lent!". The central image shows a group of women in headscarves, some with their hands raised in prayer. Below the image, there is a small paragraph of text: "Is **40x40x40** a new command about how many times we should forgive a brother or sister if they sin against us? No, although maybe it should be! **40x40x40** is a Lenten initiative, suggested by Release International volunteer Margaret, which Release Women is keen to support. The hope that you will be keen to get involved too!" Another paragraph follows: "During the **40 days** of Lent, could you commit to spend **40 minutes** in silence, in prayer and reflection for your persecuted family? In addition, could you commit to give **40p** each day to help to give them the tools they need as they live under oppression and persecution?" A third paragraph says: "If just one of you takes up this initiative, **40 prayers** will have been offered for the persecuted and **£40** will have been raised. So if **100** of you take up the challenge, that's **4,000 prayers** and **£4,000** (that's a difference that will make to our persecuted family)." The bottom of the poster includes a thank you note: "Thank you, Margaret, for your wonderful suggestion. The pray that you will all be inspired to take part and make a difference." and a link: "Download an All Poster with more information here." At the very bottom, it says "Click here to return to main Release Women page." and "© 2020 Release Women UK Ltd".

There are also many other sisters and situations around the world in need of our prayers. We share a couple of them here to inspire you take up this initiative and to start praying!

Release's partner in Central Asia has asked for prayer for the development of a women's ministry in a country where Christians face oppression. They have long had the desire to encourage women to meet together so they can discuss family, marriage and women's issues in a Christian context. At last, there seems to be an opening for this and a potential leader, a pastor's wife, has been identified. She will attend a seminar in March, along with others, as a starting point for this ministry.

Middle East Concern shares the story of Mary Mohammadi, below, for prayer. Mary has been very open about her Christian faith and has been campaigning for the legal rights of Christian converts in Iran and the freedom to attend a Christian place of worship.

Mary, aged 21, was arrested on January 12 in Tehran while protests were underway following the downing of Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752 over Iran. For several weeks her whereabouts were unknown and her friends and family were becoming increasingly anxious. The Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) has now verified that Mary is being held in Qarchak prison in Varamin and has been mistreated. She was badly beaten upon arrest and also while being taken to Vozara detention centre, handcuffed back to back with another woman.

At the detention centre she was forced to sit on the ground in the yard in front of the toilets. Later she faced three interrogators and was given 30 questions to respond to. She refused to comply without a lawyer present. During the first 24 hours following arrest she was denied food. Female officials forced Mary to strip and sit and stand several times in front of them. She was later transferred to Evin Prison, Tehran, and charged with 'disrupting public order by participating in an illegal gathering'. Despite bail being authorised (at the equivalent of more than US\$2,000), the prosecutor refused to allow Mary's conditional release. Her case was moved to the public criminal court.

We hope that many of you will take up the **40x40x40** initiative but above all we hope that you will pray for our sisters mentioned above, whatever you may or may not give up for Lent.

Thank you for your prayers.

Blessings

Release Women team

Please **CLICK** on the red button if you prayed.