

Week 6: Pray for Twen (Eritrea)

Arrest and background Twen (34) has been in prison for twelve years because of her Christian faith. She has suffered beatings and torture and – like most Christian prisoners in Eritrea – has never been charged, tried or had access to a lawyer. Twen spent time imprisoned in a shipping container with gospel singer Helen Berhane. She nursed Helen when she was very ill, and even took punishment in her place. Twen is a key women's leader in prison and cares for the other women prisoners.

In January 2005, not long after Twen had come to faith in Christ, she was arrested for holding a New Year vigil with Christian friends at an underground church prayer meeting. She was sent to Mai Sirwa Prison. In 2006, she was joined by a large group of Christians who had been arrested at a wedding in the capital, Asmara.



Twen and the women from this group who refused to sign papers stating they would no longer engage in Christian activities were sent to one of Eritrea's harshest prisons, Wi'a, on the Red Sea coast. Hundreds of prisoners died in Wi'a prison as a result of the extreme heat and appalling sanitary conditions, and it was closed by government order in 2009, after a meningitis outbreak caused the death of approximately fifty Christian prisoners.

Surviving prisoners, including Twen and her group, were relocated to Me'etr prison, in the remote northwest. It has about 80-90 prisoners, mainly Christians, and is run like a labour camp, with prisoners forced to work very hard. Food is inadequate and the climate is harsh (very hot and dry most of the year).

Family Twen's family home is in Asmara, where her parents live. Me'etr prison is in the middle of nowhere, with no town nearby and no public transport links, so her family members are unable to visit. They are Roman Catholics, and Twen was a member of a Catholic renewal group before she was arrested – many of Eritrea's Christian prisoners belong to Orthodox and Catholic renewal groups.

Latest news Twen remains in prison because she refuses to renounce her faith. She and a group of twelve Christian women who have also been in prison for up to twelve years have been told that if they renounce their faith in Christ they will be released immediately. All have steadfastly refused to do so.

Prayer Diary

Sunday	Ask God to protect and encourage Twen.
Monday	Pray for her release.
Tuesday	Pray for other long-term Christian prisoners, struggling with faith and health.
Wednesday	Pray for prisoners' families, especially those raising children alone.
Thursday	Pray for protection for the underground church.
Friday	Ask God for new church leaders, as most are in prison or have fled.
Saturday	Pray that the Eritrean government would end its repressive policies.