

## Week 4: Pray for Futsum Gebrenegus (Eritrea)



Rev Dr Futsum Gebrenegus is an Eritrean Orthodox priest and psychiatrist who was arrested and imprisoned in November 2004 because of his leadership role in a Bible study renewal movement within the Eritrean Orthodox Church that attracted thousands of young people. He was Eritrea's only psychiatrist and was the senior doctor at St Mary's Psychiatric Hospital in the capital, Asmara.

Dr Futsum served as a deacon in the Eritrean Orthodox Church from childhood, was later ordained priest and became one of the organisers of the renewal movement centred on the Medhane Alem (Saviour of the World) church in Asmara along with Rev Dr Tekleab Menghisteab and Rev Gebremedhin Gebregioris.

On 19 November 2004 Dr Futsum and Dr Tekleab went to a conference organised by the Ministry of Health at which they were both scheduled to make presentations on their research. Security forces arrested them as they entered the venue and Rev Gebremedhin was arrested the same day. Following their arrests the government closed down the church in which they had served all their lives and the congregation was forced to disperse.

Dr Futsum is imprisoned incommunicado in Asmara's maximum-security Wengel Mermera interrogation centre along with Dr Tekleab, Rev Gebremedhin and several senior pastors. Patriarch Antonios of the Eritrean Orthodox Church protested about the arrests of Dr Futsum and his fellow priests and accused the government of interfering in church affairs; he was deposed in 2006 and put under house arrest until his death in 2022.

Dr Futsum is a close friend of Dr Berhane Asmelash, Director of Release Eritrea. They were in the same Bible study group in Eritrea and were both members of a Medical Doctors Christian Alliance. Dr Berhane reports that Dr Futsum worked hard to improve mental health in Eritrea and that "everyone loved him".

### Family

Dr Futsum is a widower with three sons, one of whom lives in Eritrea. Dr Futsum's wife died of cancer during his imprisonment and he was not permitted to see her before she died nor to attend her funeral. His father also died during his imprisonment and he was not allowed to attend his funeral either. Dr Futsum's elderly mother was recently seen receiving medical treatment in South Africa. He also has several brothers and sisters.

### Latest News

In late 2023 it became known that Dr Futsum was in good health. He is being held in a room with several other senior pastors.

## Prayer Diary

<b>Sunday</b>	Pray for good mental and physical health for Dr Futsum.
<b>Monday</b>	Ask God to refresh Dr Futsum and encourage him.
<b>Tuesday</b>	Pray for his release and that his mother would see him again.
<b>Wednesday</b>	Pray for good fellowship with other Christians in the prison.
<b>Thursday</b>	Ask God to bless Dr Futsum's sons and give them hope.
<b>Friday</b>	Pray for Dr Futsum's witness to other prisoners and guards.
<b>Saturday</b>	Pray for freedom for all Christians to meet in Eritrea.

