ACAT (Harrow) - prayer case of the month *(May 2023)*

3 May is the UN World Press Freedom Day. Please pray as you feel led for local radio journalist and history teacher **Mancho Bibixy** who is serving an 18-year prison sentence in Cameroon.



In November 2016, **Mancho Bibixy** stood in an open casket at a crowded roundabout in Bamenda, a city in the English-speaking region of Cameroon. Using a loudspeaker, he denounced the social and economic marginalization of his Anglophone community, at a time when discontent was brewing following a new requirement for all schools and courts to use French. He was already known for documenting human rights violations in North-West Cameroon, as well as for taking care of young people in difficult family situations and being a Manchester United fan. After that day, “BBC”, as he is popularly called, emerged as one of the leaders in the movement for equal rights in this Francophone-dominated country.

Following this peaceful protest, armed soldiers violently seized him at night, without a warrant, at a friend’s house. They beat him up and hooded him. In May, the Yaoundé Military Court sentenced **Mancho Bibixy** to 15 years in prison in an unfair trial for “terrorism”, “secession”, “rebellion”, “inciting civil war”, and “spreading false information through social media” – all of these charges originating from the coffin stunt. To those who know him, he was punished for passionately speaking out for equality and non-discrimination in a society that strictly controls freedom of expression. In 2019, the UN declared his detention arbitrary and called for his release.

**Mancho Bibixy** shares a small cell with 15 inmates in Kondengui central maximum-security prison in Yaoundé and has no proper access to hygiene facilities. He has limited contact with his family – a wife, two children and another eight he was taking care of – in Bamenda. Tortured, ill-treated and in poor health, his sentence was increased in 2021 after he complained about poor prison conditions – and he was subjected to further torture. But he has thanked ACAT supporters for messages and cards which have encouraged him.

Updates: RUSSIA: **Vladimir Kara-Murza**, journalist, author and filmmaker, and former pupil of the John Lyon School in Harrow and who was our prayer case in November 2022, has just received a 25-year prison sentence for ‘high treason’ because of his outspoken criticism of the war in Ukraine.

Good news from IRAN!: House church leader Pastor **Youcef Nadarkhani,** our prayer case for December 2018, who was re-arrested in 2017 and sentenced to a further 10 years detention, was released at the end of February.