To read images in GNU Octave version 2.1.42 (freely available online):
[r,g,b] = imread('myimage.ppm');
[r,g,b] = imread('myimage.jpeg');

writing images is similar
imwrite('newname.jpeg',r,g,b);
imwrite('newname.ppm',r,g,b);
Images can be read/written in many different formats

For C/C++ see source code for reading/writing binary ppm/pgm files