

PRAY FOR THOSE BEING PERSECUTED AROUND THE WORLD TODAY

Around the world today Christians are being persecuted for their faith. More than 70 million Christians have been martyred for their faith since 33 AD.

This year an estimated 160,000 believers will die at the hands of their oppressors and over 200 million will be persecuted, arrested, tortured, beaten or jailed.

In many nations it is illegal to own a Bible, share your faith, change your faith or allow children under 18 to attend a religious service.

NATIONS WHERE CHRISTIANS ARE FREQUENTLY PERSECUTED INCLUDE:

Afghanistan	Cyprus	Maldives	Sri Lanka
Algeria	Egypt	Mauritania	Sudan
Azerbaijan	Equatorial Guinea	Morocco	Syria
Bangladesh	Ethiopia	Myanmar (Burma)	Tajikistan
Bhutan	India	Nepal	Tibet (China)
Brunei	Indonesia	Nigeria	Tunisia
Chechnya	Iran	North Korea	Turkey
Chiapas	Iraq	Oman	Turkmenistan
China	Kuwait	Pakistan	United Arab Emirates
Colombia	Laos	Qatar	Uzbekistan
Comoro Islands	Libya	Saudi Arabia	Vietnam
Cuba	Malaysia	Somalia	Yemen

TURKEY

THREE EVANGELICALS MURDERED

Apr 19, 07. Three evangelical Christians were brutally murdered in Turkey, April 18.

Necati Aydin (35), Ugur Yksel (32) - both Turks - and the German Tilmann Geske (46) were found tied up and their throats slit in the small Zirve Publishing House in Malatya, Central Turkey. A fourth person escaped by jumping out of a window and was seriously hurt. Turkish police have arrested five 19 and 20-year-old suspects.

According to press reports the Muslims have admitted the crime. The paper *Hurriyet* quoted one of the suspects with the words: "May this be a lesson to the enemies of the faith."

Zirve Publishing House specializes in Turkish Christian literature and distributes the "Jesus" Film. Geske, who was married and father of three children worked as an interpreter for Zirve.

Aydin, married and father of two children, was one of the directors of the Publishing House and also in charge of a small evangelical church in Malatya. Recently Aydin held lectures in Germany and urged Christians to relate the Gospel to Muslims "in a loving way."

The Turkish Islamic Union in Germany has denounced the murders as an "abominable act."

The German public has reacted with sorrow and outrage to the news of the multiple murder. German politicians have also denounced the murders. Some are questioning the efforts to integrate Turkey into the European Union, as long as religious freedom seems to be impaired.

The EU Commission also denounced the assassination but said it was too early to speculate about possible repercussions for the negotiations with Turkey. - ASSIST News Service

UZBEKISTAN

WAVE OF PERSECUTION

Pastor Dmitri (David) Shestakov has been found guilty of "incitement to religious hatred" and has been sentenced to four years' deportation to a prison colony. Pray that the Lord will intervene in the situation and that this faithful and courageous Christian will be allowed to go free.

Pray that the current wave of persecution against Christians in Uzbekistan will cease and that they will be allowed to worship together and share their faith without harassment or punishment from the authorities. As in so many countries where Christians are persecuted, many different kinds of charges are made against Christians in Uzbekistan, when clearly all that they are doing is to live as Christians and follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

IRAQ:

CHRISTIANS FLEE FORCED CONVERSIONS

On April 14, several Iraqi Christians fled from their homes in the Dora district of Baghdad in response to a fatwa issued by an amir (independent Muslim prince or ruler). According to an April 18 report from *Compass Direct*, the fatwa was enforced by militants who told the believers they would be killed if they did not convert to Islam within twenty-four hours. The fleeing Christians were prevented from taking any personal belongings with them.

Six of the displaced Christian families have since relocated to a church in another area of the city. Several families have also relocated to the northern Kurdish region of Iraq. The cross on the top of St. John the Baptist Chaldean church in Dora has reportedly been removed by militants.

Ask God to protect and provide for the displaced Christians.

Pray Iraqi Christians will not give in to fear but stand firm in the faith

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, (cowardice *and* timidity), but of power and love and of a sound mind - (discipline *and* wise discretion).” (2 Timothy 1:7)

Pray for peace and security in Iraq and the establishment of a government able and willing to protect the religious freedoms of all Iraqis.

For more information on the persecution facing Christians in Iraq, go to www.persecution.net/country/iraq.htm.

PAKISTAN

CHRISTIAN GIRL RAPED BY MUSLIMS

A 12-year-old Christian girl, Shaheena Masih, was kidnapped and raped by four Muslim men on Easter Day in the city of Lahore, Punjab province, Pakistan, according to an April 23 report from the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance.

Shaheena stayed home from an Easter prayer service at a local church, Kings Revival Church, in order to take care of her ailing father. At approximately 10: 00 a.m., her father asked her to go out and get him some juice. On her way to a shop, she was kidnapped by four armed men who placed a handkerchief on her mouth until she was unconscious and flung her into a car. The men took her to a factory and locked her in a room, where she was repeatedly raped by the four men over the span of two days. During one of the attacks, one of the perpetrators reportedly said to the others, "Don't hesitate to rape a Christian girl. Even if she will die, no one will get us. Her poor parents cannot pursue us." They eventually left Shaheena at a brothel run by a Muslim lady, who later dropped her off on a street near her home.

One of the attackers, Mohammed Safdar, was caught by police after they raided the factory. Under interrogation, he implicated the others. Only after pressure did the police register a case against the attackers. They are now being pressured to drop the charges and Shaheena's family has been threatened if the case proceeds.

Ask God to give Shaheena healing from the emotional and physical scars of the assault. Pray that authorities will prosecute the offenders to the full extent of the law. Pray for Shaheena and her family as they will struggle with the ability to exhibit God's love to their persecutors.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN CHARGED WITH BLASPHEMY

According to an April 23 release by All Pakistan Minorities Alliance, on April 13 Sattar Masih was preparing for his wedding the next day when some Muslim men came to his home in Kotri, Pakistan with a piece of paper containing his picture and a hand-written note containing comments that criticized Mohammad. Sattar denied that he had written the note. When copies of the note were found posted outside a local mosque, Muslims demanded that he be arrested.

Police took him into custody and tortured him in an effort to gain a confession. The next day he was charged with blasphemy under Section 295A and C. His uncle, Mushtaq Masih, was also arrested even though he clearly could not have written the note since he is illiterate. Local Christians believe the pamphlet was part of a conspiracy to incriminate Sattar.

Pray that the truth will be revealed and that Sattar and Mushtaq will be freed. Pray for emotional strength for Sattar and his fiancée during this trying time.

For more information on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, go to www.persecution.net/country/pakistan.htm.

INDIA:

HINDU EXTREMISTS TARGET CHRISTIAN STATE OFFICIAL

Ap. 07. One anti-Christian incident a day is reported in Andhra Pradesh.

Hindu extremists in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh have brought the incidence of Christian persecution to an unprecedented high, including a slander campaign against the state's chief minister, Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, a Christian.

Sam Paul, public affairs secretary of the All India Christian Council, said at least one anti-Christian incident occurs per day. Paul believes that the rising number of attacks on Christians is linked to a campaign against Chief Minister Reddy by Hindu extremist groups.

"Hindu extremists are accusing the chief minister and the state government ruled by the Congress Party of having a 'Christian' agenda," Paul said. They are trying to ensure that "the chief minister is branded as a supporter of Christian missionaries trying to convert Hindus by the use of force and allurements."

CHRISTIANS ARRESTED FOR PRAYING

Police in Andhra Pradesh state arrested five Christians for praying for the sick and distributing Christian literature in Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad, the state capital, on April 14. The Hyderabad police arrested the five, four of who were identified only as Charan, Rajeswari, Sunita and Mary, after some junior doctors objected to their visit and complained to the police.

The Christians were from Tarnaka area of Hyderabad. The police took the Christians into custody and later released them. The All India Christian Council (AICC) condemned the arrest of the Christian visitors, calling it against the India Constitution, which gives religious freedom to people of all religions.

ANTI-CONVERSION BILL IN H.P.

In December 2006 the government of Himachal Pradesh passed an anti-conversion bill to stop missionaries, their activities and evangelism within the state. Anti-gospel activists are becoming stronger. Please pray that this situation will change and that God's servants may stand firm in His service.

KASHMIR. CONVERT SHOT DEAD

Pray for the family of Mr. Basheer Tantray, a Muslim convert who has been shot dead for accepting Christ, in Jammu in the Kashmir area.

Pray for Pastor Hatey Singh Gundiya and Pastor Gokul Gundiya who were both severely beaten while waiting to board a bus in Jhabua.

ORISSA

Apr 17. Four pastors were arrested by the local police in the Cuttack district of Orissa state after local Hindu militants saw them distributing Christian literature and accused them of forcibly converting Hindus. The four pastors -- Pran Ranjan Mali, Santosh Kumar Majhi, Jason Badra and Roshan Lima -- were released on bail the following day.

TAMIL NADU

On April 20, church members in Velakkudi village, Tamil Nadu dismantled their make-shift church building when a group of villagers, incited by a militant group, threatened them at knifepoint. Pastor Durai Peter and his congregation have been previously targeted by militant groups who claim that the church services are a disturbance. They also claim that the church's presence has rendered a "god" in their local temple inactive. The Christians now meet on an open plot of land.

BANGALORE

On April 22, two pastors were beaten and jailed after twenty to twenty-five members of the Sangh Parivar Hindu militant group disrupted a prayer meeting the pastors were leading in a local believer's home in Rajanukunte village, Bangalore. At approximately 8:00 p.m. the militants surrounded the house where twenty Christians were meeting and verbally abused Pastor Jayaseelan and Pastor Daniel. When the police arrived, the pastors were ordered to accompany them to the local police station. On the way, the militants attacked again, beating and verbally harassing the pastors and four Christians who were accompanying them. The militants accused Pastor Jayaseelan and Pastor Daniel of forced conversions. At 3:00 a.m., a magistrate sent them to the central prison.

Ask God to heal those injured in these attacks. Pray that Christians in India will trust God to enable them to proclaim the Gospel even while suffering.

“At my first defence no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Master stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Master will deliver me from every evil attack, and

will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.” (2 Timothy 4:16-18)

For more information on persecution in India, go to www.persecution.net/country/india.htm.

CHINA

MASS ARRESTS OF CHURCH LEADERS

Ap 07. Roughly 30 major house church leaders were arrested when they met with four American Christians in Xinjiang Province in western China. Eight of the Chinese have been released. Six of them have been given criminal detention for 30 days. The four Americans, at last report, are being held at a hotel. They may be put on a plane for home and told not to return.

This crackdown pattern may continue in the run up to the Beijing Olympics.

Pray for courage and encouragement. When you see a church leader get arrested, when you think about the possibility of three years in very difficult conditions in a labor camp, I think it would be easy to get discouraged. - China Aid Association & VOM report

CHINA. BELIEVERS BEATEN & IMPRISONED

On the morning of February 7th police raided a Christian house in Shanghuang, Jiangsu Province. The Christian couple who live there, Tan Jianwei and his wife Qin Qing, were holding a prayer meeting. The police, who were accompanied by officials from the Suyang Religious Bureau and the National Security Protection Squad, entered the house. They proceeded to take photographs of all the Christians present and asked them to write down their names. Those who refused to comply were beaten. The police then searched through Tan Jianwei's house and confiscated his Christian books, without leaving a record of what had been taken. Pray for these Christians who long to meet together to pray and worship the Lord without fear of violence or interference from the police.

Pray for Hua Huiqi and his 77 year old mother, Shuang Shuying, imprisoned for their faith, that they will know God's strength and that God would pave the way for an early release.

Praise the Lord and give thanks for the release of Liu Fenggang after his prison ordeal and pray for his improved health as he has a heart condition and diabetes.

THREE CHRISTIANS WIN APPEAL

Praise the Lord. In what is believed to be the first case of its kind, three Christians in China won an appeal against their 10-day prison sentences. They argued that the punishment was illegal and this was upheld by the Wendeng Intermediate People's Court. Thank the Lord for this and pray that it may set a precedent for other cases where Christians are punished for practicing their faith.

LAOS:

CHRISTIAN FAMILIES FORCE TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES

Constant threats and pressure from authorities have forced five families to leave Nam Heang village. These families are in addition to four that left in February. According to VOM sources, the families recently accepted Christ and are being forced to leave their homes and belongings because of their faith. Their greatest needs are rice and materials to build housing.

Pray God will encourage them, protect them, and provide for their needs.

“He has made His wonders to be remembered; YHWH is gracious and compassionate. He has given food to those who fear Him; He remembers His covenant forever.” (Psalm 111:4-5)

PASTOR BEING HELD INDEFINITELY

Pastor Van Thong and 11 other local pastors were arrested on November 26, 2006, for attending meetings organized by Christian leaders from the West. Van Thong is the head of Lao Evangelical Church in his province. He has been denied visitors and is being held indefinitely.

Also pray for Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang and his church which has been raided by police who arrested 17 people and demolished part of the family's church/residence. Pray also for believers in tribal areas who continue to experience strong opposition for their faith.

VIETNAM

CHRISTIAN LAWYERS FACE TRIAL

Nguyen Van Dai, a 38-year-old member of the main Hanoi congregation of the legally-recognized Evangelical Church of Vietnam (North), or ECVN (N), since 2000, was arrested on March 6 for accusations relating to his defense of religious freedom, including disseminating "alleged infractions of religious liberty [to Vietnam's enemies abroad]."

Dai is one of Vietnam's few human rights lawyers and is a member of Advocates International, an organization which brings together Christian human rights lawyers from many countries. He defended the "Mennonite Six" in 2004-2005.

Also arrested in early March was Dai's colleague, Le Thi Cong Nhan, who faces similar accusations. Both are due to be tried on May 11 for defaming the communist state of Vietnam. It is expected that the trial will be nothing more than a charade.

Authorities have prohibited Dai's wife, Khanh, from visiting him and she has not been provided with any legal papers. By law she should have received a copy of the arrest order at her husband's March 6 arrest citing the reasons for his "temporary detention." Her home phone and cell phone services have been cut. Police have reportedly been trying to incite neighbours against her.

www.persecution.net/country/vietnam.htm

INDONESIA

ISLAMIC MILITANTS JAILED FOR BEHEADING CHRISTIAN GIRLS

Apr 07. An Indonesian court handed down a 20-year jail sentence to an Islamic Militant convicted of plotting the 2005 beheadings of three Christian girls on Indonesia's volatile Sulawesi island. Two other militants involved in the crime were sentenced to 14 years.

Judges sentenced Islamic militant Hasanuddin to 20 years in prison for masterminding the grisly beheadings of the three teenage Christian schoolgirls three years ago, buying the machetes used to kill them, and leaving a handwritten note at the scene promising more killings to come.

During his trial, Hasanuddin admitted to planning the beheadings as revenge for the deaths of Muslims during sectarian violence that plagued the Poso region from 1999 to 2000.

A terrorism expert and author of several books on terrorism in Indonesia, says the jail terms for the three Muslim militants were unlikely to appease Christians in Poso who were hoping for the death penalty. He noted that it is unlikely Hasanuddin will serve his full sentence. "You also have to realize when they say 20 years over here, 20 years doesn't necessarily mean 20 years. There's appeals and so forth and sentences are cut."

According to intelligence gathered by the Indonesian government, the International Crisis Group, and other terrorism experts, Hasanuddin was The head of the regional terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) for the Poso district.

CHRISTIAN LEADER MURDERED

Indonesia. Rita Aryanti Kupa 43, witnessed the brutal murder of her husband, Pastor Irianto Kongkoli in October last year. He was a prominent Christian leader. Please pray for Rita and her three children; daughters Gemala 18, Geraldine 16 and son, Galathea 5.

CUBA

PASTOR RELEASED BUT FORBIDDEN TO PREACH

After being held for more than four months at the La Villa Marista Detention Center, Pastor Carlos Lamelas was unexpectedly released when his family went for their weekly 15 minute visit. However, he has been forbidden to preach in public on this Island nation that many Cubans refer to as a prison with bars of water.

KENYA

RADIO STATION THREATENED

Christians at a Nairobi Church were threatened with another attack on the Christian radio station Hope FM, seven months after a raid on the station on church property leaving one person dead.

NIGERIA

CHILDREN ABDUCTED

Christian leaders say abduction of Christian boys and girls for conversion to Islam has become a common phenomenon in majority-Muslim Sokoto state. Beginning in November of last year, 13-year-old Victor Udo Usen, went missing.

On February 20, news that young Victor was spotted in a Muslim neighbor's house jolted his family. Victor's mother, Esther Udo Usen ran to the house where her son had been seen and met him as he was making frantic efforts to escape. "I quickly held his hands and dragged him along with me towards our house. But within a twinkle of an eye, I heard shouts of 'Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar [God is great]!' I was shocked as I saw a large number of Muslims rushing towards us." She said. Please pray for this family.

NIGERIA:

NORTHERN CHRISTIANS WARY OF NEW MUSLIM PRESIDENT

Clerics unimpressed by Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, but his opponent was more hardline.

Christians fear that persecution especially in predominantly Islamic northern Nigeria will increase following the election on Saturday (21 Ap) of Muslim Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as president.

As governor of Katsina state in northern Nigeria, Yar'Adua imposed sharia (Islamic law) and presided over a system of deliberate denial of land for building churches, as well as government agencies that arbitrarily closed some churches, Christian leaders told this correspondent.

Major political parties in Nigeria nominated only Muslims from the north as part of an unwritten agreement among leaders that the presidency would alternate between north and south. The Rev.

Bulus Polit of the Evangelical Church of West Africa in Jos told us that between the two Muslim presidential candidates, Yar'Adua's opponent was the more hard-line Muslim who would have presented greater problems to Christians in the country.