

***"Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer;
from the end of the earth I call to You when
my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that
is higher than I, for You have been my refuge,
a strong tower against the enemy."***

~ Psalm 61:1-3 ESV

INDONESIA: Community Pressure Causes Church Closure

Sources: Jakarta Post, Barnabas Fund, Coconut Media

The state of religious freedom in Indonesia was brought again into the spotlight when local authorities broke up a Sunday service at the Indonesian Pentecostal Church in the province of Riau on August 25th.

The church had been meeting in a building that also served as the pastor's home since 2014. This congregation faced opposition, however, from some neighbours. A letter was sent to the church on August 7th, banning them from conducting any religious activities inside the home. Under a 2006 decree, religious buildings require the approval of community members. While passed in the name of religious harmony, this law has created significant problems for Christians and other minority religious groups.

In response to the letter forbidding the church members from meeting inside the home, the church set up a tent next to the building for worship services. In the middle of a recently held service, police entered and demanded that it stop immediately. Pastor Damianus Sinaga protested that they were praying, but an officer refused to relent. Video footage shows one woman passionately pleading with police: "Help us, we are just trying to pray and worship our God. We are Indonesian citizens, where are our rights?"

After news of the incident was released on social media – including video footage – a meeting was held on August 28th. The outcome of that meeting mandates that these Christians travel eight kilometres to the nearest established church building in order to worship.

This incident is not unique; several similar cases have taken place in recent years. More information on the challenges facing Indonesia's Christians can be reviewed by going to our [country report](#).

Remember Pastor Damianus and the members of this congregation, as they face the challenges of representing Christ within their community. Pray that those who are opposed to the church will witness the love of God demonstrated in the lives of the Christians around them. May laws be established to bring true religious harmony in Indonesia.



Photo: Twitter / SammiSoh

REPORT UPDATES

INDIA: Released After Ten Years

Sources: The Tablet, Morning Star News



Bijaya Kumar Sanaseth, journalist
Anto Akkara, and Gornath Chalanseth.

Photo: Morning Star News

Bijaya Kumar Sanaseth was convicted of the murder of a popular Hindu swami in 2008, along with six other Christians. The conviction came despite claims of responsibility by Maoist rebels. In a July 27th decision, India's Supreme Court ordered Bijaya's release, just months after another one of the accused believers, Gornath Chalanseth, was likewise freed on bail. (See the [previously posted report](#).)

Bijaya recounts the many years of separation his family experienced due to the lengthy imprisonment: "My six children were very young, with my youngest child, a girl, being one year old, and my oldest, a boy, was nine years old. Today the youngest is 12 and my oldest is 20. Nobody can give me back the years that I have lost." Since the Supreme Court had ordered his release on bail, Bijaya will not need to return unless the high court itself orders it.

Praise God for the release of these two wrongly convicted men. Please remember the other five Christians who are still unjustly imprisoned for this crime, interceding for their release as well. Pray for Bijaya's adjustment to life outside the prison, and for the re-establishment of his family relationships. May justice and restoration take place in the lives of each prisoner related to this case, and their families, even these many years later.

NIGERIA: Government Assures Leah Sharibu is Alive

Sources: The Premium Times, Morning Star News, Christian Post

More than a month ago, rumours began to spread that Leah Sharibu, a Christian teen who was kidnapped in February 2018, had been killed. At the time of that report, questions were raised about its accuracy. On August 31st, a presidential aide met with reporters, stating that Leah is still alive and that the government is working to negotiate her release. "The government is committed to her safe return, as well as all the other hostages," he assured.

Leah was kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists, along with over a hundred other students from a school in Dapchi (see [this report](#)). While the others were released, Leah was singled out because of her Christian faith. The militants refused to release her unless she denied Christ, which she refuses to do.



Leah's abductors released this photo in August 2018.

Praise God for this encouraging report that Leah is still alive. Pray for her safe return in the near future. In the meantime, please continue to uphold this brave teen and her concerned family and friends as they await rescue from this terrible ordeal. May Leah's unwavering faith not only be a powerful testimony to her captors, but also to numerous others throughout Nigeria and around the world – yielding much spiritual fruit for the glory of our Lord.

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit [VOMC's prayer wall](#).

The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:
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