

"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

~ Deuteronomy 31:8 ESV

INDIA: New Anti-Conversion Legislation

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, International Christian Concern, The Hindu

The Indian state of Himachal Pradesh passed new legislation on August 30th to prevent any religious conversion that may come about through force, fraud or inducement. According to the new law, when someone intends to convert to a religion, they must give the district magistrate and appropriate religious leaders one month's notice. Those found guilty of converting others under the new law could face up to seven years in prison.

While forced conversion is rightly opposed, laws such as these have been used against other means of conversion, particularly when converting away from Hinduism. The unspecified term "inducement" is frequently used against Christians. Militants have often attacked Christian leaders and then, when facing the legal repercussions, falsely claimed that these followers of Christ were involved in conversions. For more information on the difficulties facing India's Christians, go to our [country report](#).

Uphold the Christians in Himachal Pradesh as they face this potential new threat. May anyone who seeks to share the reason for their hope in Christ be granted God's wisdom, direction and protection. As for church leaders and others presently experiencing legal ramifications for proclaiming the Gospel, ask the Lord to encourage them and mediate on their behalf. Despite the hurdles Christians throughout India may encounter, pray that many others in their communities will come to faith in Him.



One of the few churches in Himachal Pradesh.
Photo: Wikipedia / Kniptang (c)

BELARUS: New Fines for Unregistered Worship

Source: Forum 18



On July 18th, criminal prosecutions for unregistered religious activities in Belarus came to an end. Although this would be good news for those who have faced prosecution in the past, it was replaced with fines up to five weeks' the average pay under the Administrative Code.

The abolition of relating criminal punishment is welcomed for there will no longer be people detained or facing criminal records for their involvement in religious worship. However, the change to summary fines means that the courts are no longer involved; along with that, there will be less ability to appeal the decisions of governing officials.

In recent years, the number of convictions for religious activities has dropped. And in the eight weeks since the new fines came into effect, there are no known cases where citizens have been charged. Nevertheless, concerns remain among churches and human rights advocates. To learn more on the persecution of Christians in Belarus, [click here](#).

Prayerfully remember the leaders of unregistered churches in Belarus as they navigate the new regulations and how these changes could potentially affect future ministry opportunities and community outreaches. Pray that the governing authorities will realize the importance of permitting freedom of religion in their nation and, therefore, cease prosecuting those who peacefully meet to worship.

PAKISTAN: Interview with Asia Bibi

Sources: The Telegraph, Church in Chains, Release International

"I, Asia Bibi, daughter of Salamat Masih, believe in Jesus." So begins a video testimony of the Pakistani woman who was formerly sentenced to death for blasphemy but now living in an undisclosed location in Canada. Grateful for the opportunity to begin building a new life for her reunited family, Asia is calling out to the world to remember others still being imprisoned for their faith.

In the video, Asia, who remains a proud Pakistani, expresses remorse for having to leave her homeland and beloved elderly father. Even while in Canada, however, her life is still under threat by those seeking to punish her for alleged blasphemy.

The U.S. State Department estimates that there are presently 77 others in prison under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. One such person is Zafar Bhatti, who has been trying to appeal a life sentence since his imprisonment in 2012. On September 12th, his hearing was delayed for the eighth time and rescheduled to take place on October 10th. (A previously posted report on Zafar's case can be [found here](#)).

When Asia Bibi came to Canada in May 2019, she joined her daughters who had been granted temporary asylum. As the long-suffering Christian mother looks toward the future, she intends to move to an undisclosed European nation. Once settled, she hopes to continue the healing process after all the damage caused by years of detainment in prison. "My whole life suffered, my children suffered," she recounts. "This had a huge impact on my life."



Photo: World Watch Monitor

To hear Asia's testimony in her own words, view [this video](#). For previous reports on her case, as well as information about many others suffering for their faith in Pakistan, visit our [country report](#).

Please pray for ongoing healing to take place in the lives of Asia and her daughters, and for their continued protection wherever they are located. While contemplating their future plans, may the Lord go before them, using His Word as "a light unto their path" (Psalm 119:105). Also remember to intercede for others, such as Zafar, who are presently being detained in prison for their faith -- joining in the prayer vigil of loved ones desiring their release.

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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