

***"For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given;  
and the government shall be upon His shoulder,  
and His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."***

~ Isaiah 9:6 ESV

---

### CHRISTMAS: A TIME FOR 'PEACE ON EARTH'

During the Christmas season, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus, the "Prince of Peace," who came to earth to demonstrate God's will that His love, peace and joy be shared among all humankind – His beloved creation. And yet for millions of Christians around the world, Christmas is often not a time of peace and tranquility. In fact, their faith-based celebrations have frequently been marred by persecution and suffering.

While reflecting back on 2019, reports have revealed increasing incidents of opposition against Christians in various areas of the world. We think in particular of intensified government oppression in China and the ongoing problems with militant Islamic groups in western Africa and the Middle East. We encourage you to remember these persecuted believers and others around the world, praying that they will experience the *"peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,"* regardless of the circumstances they face. *"May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way"* (2 Thessalonians 3:16 ESV).

---

#### CHINA: Four-Year Sentence for Church Elder

Sources: ChinaAid, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Morning Star News

On the evening of December 9th, 2018, a coordinated attack against the Early Rain Covenant Church began, ultimately leading to dozens of arrests and the closing of the church ([see this report](#)). Over a year later, Pastor Wang Yi and others remain uncertain of the future, as they now contend with the outcome of court proceedings.

On November 29th, an elder of the church, Qin Defu, was sentenced to four years in prison. This verdict is in contradiction to the promise his family had received of Qin's conditional release, provided he accepted a state-appointed attorney. Qin was charged with "illegal business operations" because of the Christian books used by the church. His lawyer adds that Pastor Wang could be facing a ten-year sentence, in part, for his admitted involvement with the use of the Christian materials.



Attendees of Early Rain Church.  
Photo: ChinaAid

***Please remember Qin, Pastor Wang, and other imprisoned congregation members from the Early Rain Covenant Church, as they endure separation from their loved ones this Christmas season. Ask God to give each of these believers His peace, strength, provision, and anything else they need, while awaiting vindication and eventual release. Pray for the ongoing ministry of the church, that it will not only be able to meet the spiritual needs of the congregants but also continue its wonderful outreach in the community despite opposition.***

---

## EAST AFRICA: Pastor's Family Repeatedly Moved for Safety

Source: Release International



On a recent trip to East Africa, Release International representatives met with Pastor "Jabir" (not his real name) who recounted the numerous challenges he and his family experienced due to persecution. Since Jabir's conversion to Christianity, the family has been forced to move numerous times to evade danger from militants.

When Jabir came to faith in Christ, his wife and children were taken from him and he was prohibited from seeing his older child. Although he later remarried, and now has two young children, his new family are constantly on the move. The ongoing threats of danger have taken a toll on each of them, especially his wife who wakes up at the slightest sound.

Jabir presently leads a small home church consisting of about ten people, and he also travels to various areas of East Africa to provide ministry to other Christians.

***While we are thankful for Jabir's perseverance and faithfulness in ministering the Gospel amid difficulties, we ask that you please uphold him and his family in your prayers. As we reminisce on the Scripturally based Christmas story, we're reminded of the circumstances that forced the young holy family to flee to Egypt so they could escape the wrath of those wanting to kill the Promised Messiah. Even though Jabir and his family have also been forced to flee for their lives, may a sense of stability and calm reign within their hearts and minds, knowing that the Lord will always be with them wherever they go.***

---

## PRAISE REPORT

---

### TAJIKISTAN: Pastor Released Early

Sources: Forum 18, Church in Chains, Word Watch Monitor

In April 2017, Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov was arrested and charged with "singing extremist songs in church and so inciting religious hatred." In July of that year, he had been sentenced to three years in prison ([read more](#)). We are thankful to report that Pastor Bakhrom was released on December 17th, more than three months early.

During a recent interview, Pastor Bakhrom acknowledged the importance of prayer: "All these three years, I felt your prayers. They helped me to stand, they helped my precious wife and children, and they helped the members of my church...."

***Praise God for this timely release! Continue to pray for Pastor Bakhrom and his family, as they adjust to the blessed new reality of being together again. Continue to prayerfully lift up the ongoing ministry of the Gospel in this nation. And let us join with Pastor Bakhrom and his loved ones in singing praises to God this Christmas season.***



Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov and his wife (undated image).  
Photo: World Watch Monitor

*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:  
The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1  
Tel. (905) 670-9721 Website: [www.vomcanada.com](http://www.vomcanada.com)

[Sign up now](#) to receive our free monthly publication.  
You may also opt to receive inspiring teaching messages by email.  
Just [click here](#) and select "A Message from The Voice of the Martyrs."

Please do not reply to this email, as it comes from an address that is not monitored.  
To contact us, use our [online form](#).

For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review this [listing of options](#).

