

"It is not the pain but the purpose that makes a martyr."
~ Augustine of Hippo

CHINA: Church Plundered in Raid

Source: ChinaAid

On March 27th, Pastor Yang Jiale of the Yanjiao Abundance Church in Hebei, China, received a phone call from a government official asking him to unlock the door to the church building. Pastor Yang informed the caller that no one was in the building and no events were being held. Therefore, he didn't unlock the door.

Later that day, police forcibly pried the door open without notifying Pastor Yang, nor presenting a warrant. Officials from various government departments, together with the police, searched the building and confiscated audio speakers, guitars, communion supplies and other items. All they left behind were a few pieces of furniture. The church's landlord was also ordered to terminate the lease. When the landlord spoke up in favour of the church, he was detained for a day at the police station and interrogated until he complied.



The Yanjiao Abundance Church, empty after the raid.
Photo: ChinaAid

The small church has refused to join China's officially sanctioned Three-Self church. Since Christmas of 2020, governing authorities in the town of Yanjiao have forcibly closed ten house churches, sometimes under the guise of pandemic restrictions. Further information on the persecution of Christians in China is available at our [country report](#).

Prayerfully remember Pastor Yang and the members of his congregation as they determine God's direction for the future of their church. May these believers rest in the knowledge that the Good Shepherd will assuredly walk alongside them during this difficult time. Pray for the church property to be returned and that the congregation members will find new and creative ways to meet. Also intercede for the authorities responsible for the church raids and closures in China, asking God to convict their hearts and draw them to Christ so they can experience a meaningful relationship with the Risen Saviour.

PAKISTAN: Two Christian Nurses Accused of Blasphemy

Sources: CLAAS, International Christian Concern, Morning Star News



Maryam Lal and Navish Arooj with officers.
Photo: Morning Star News

On April 9th, Maryam Lal and Navish Arooj were directed by a senior nurse to clean up the walls of the Civil Hospital in Faisalabad, Pakistan, by removing any wall hangings or stickers found. When the Christians did as they were told, they were accused of desecrating wall hangings containing verses from the Quran. The two nurses have now been formally charged with blasphemy against Islam.

According to the complaint, the head nurse who gave the order to clean the walls, Rukhsana, claims that she saw Navish scribble on a sticker containing Quranic verses and then strip it from the wall before handing it to Maryam. Reports on the incident suggest that Rukhsana held a previous grudge against Maryam and had instigated the situation.

Another hospital worker, Muhammad Waqas, claims that he saw Navish rip up a religious sticker after being instructed to do so by Maryam. After asking the nurses to explain their actions, he was allegedly told, "Who are you to ask me?" He then attacked Maryam with a knife, injuring her arm and causing her to flee the hospital.

The police complaint was officially filed by Dr. Mirza Muhammad Ali after making inquiries from the staff. In response, mobs demanding the death of the two nurses converged on the hospital. Thankfully, a large police contingent arrived and took the two women into custody, an action that likely saved their lives.

False accusations of blasphemy are widespread in Pakistan, often motivated by personal vendettas, business dealings or religious hatred. Such accusations are highly inflammatory and frequently result in mob violence and mass protests. For more on the difficult situations facing Pakistan's Christian community, go to our [country report](#).

Please pray for justice and mercy to be extended to Maryam and Navish, and that those responsible for the false allegations will realize the error of their ways. May God grant these accused sisters-in-Christ the strength to persevere in their faith as they endure the trials ahead of them. Pray that they will have opportunities to serve as testimonies of Christ's love and grace to their accusers and captors, as well as to all whom they encounter while in custody, bringing many others to faith in Him.

SRI LANKA: Churches Face Threats and Questioning

Source: NCEASL

Churches in Sri Lanka have frequently faced harassment from community members, Buddhist religious leaders and civil authorities. To read previously published reports on some of these cases, go to our [country report](#). The following three incidents that occurred in mid-March demonstrate some of the challenges regularly experienced by Christians.

1. On March 14th, the pastor of the Assemblies of God church in Padukka was on his way to the place of worship when he was stopped by a group of villagers. The group demanded that the pastor leave the town, which they deemed a "Buddhist village," and then declared that the Christians were no longer allowed to worship in the area.



Pray with Sri Lankan believers as they seek to faithfully worship God.

- The pastor reported the incident to the local police, who called both parties to the station to give their statements. The Buddhist villagers made several false allegations, but the officer stated he had no authority to shut down the church. After learning that the church was registered with the government, he warned the villagers against harassing the pastor. However, the police did request that the church temporarily pause their activities to prevent any potential escalation of conflict.
2. Fifteen kilometres away in the city of Ranala, the pastor of Calvary Church received a phone call on March 15th from the local police station. The officer in charge demanded that the pastor stop all religious activities, claiming he had received multiple complaints. He demanded that she either conduct worship activities elsewhere or obtain a court order allowing worship services to continue in the village.
 3. Three days later, on March 18th, officers from the Criminal Investigation Department visited a home belonging to the mother of a pastor who leads another Calvary Church, one located in Padukka. In addition to asking the mother several questions about her religious activities, the officers requested her daughter's contact information, as well as that of her daughter's husband. The mother was then shown a WhatsApp message about the action being taken against the church in Ranala. The message included her daughter's name and address. Eventually, the officers left without any further ordeal.

Pray that God will strengthen and encourage Christians throughout Sri Lanka, using their passion for the Gospel, as well as their personal testimonies, to shine God's light and lead their spiritually lost neighbours to His Son Jesus, the "Light of the world." Ask the Lord to also grant wisdom to the three mentioned church leaders as they face undue pressure and harassment from opposing community members. May these pastors continue to remain steadfast in their faith, exemplify the love of God in both word and deed, and patiently persevere in prayer – mindful to also intercede for the salvation of their persecutors.