

***"The door was locked by our Heavenly Father.
When it is time, it will be opened. We will pray for
them every day: may the Lord gain their souls." ~***

Xiong Meifang, a minister's wife, speaking of Chinese officials who have locked her family in their home.

IRAN: Presidential Election Brings Concerns

Sources: Release International, Mission Network News

The recent election of Ebrahim Raisi as president of Iran has led to concerns for those monitoring religious freedom in the country. The election has been discredited by many since reformers or moderates were banned from running for the position and only half of the country's eligible voters cast a ballot. (There were incidents in which various Iranian citizens tried to cast their votes for this year's June election but, while doing so, encountered attacks.) Experts say that President Raisi has been directly appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and is viewed as his intended successor.

Iran's newly appointed president is considered a hardliner. As former head of the judiciary, he was directly responsible for the imprisonment of dissidents and served on a "death committee" that ordered the execution of up to 5,000 political prisoners. Amnesty International has been calling for the new president to be investigated for crimes against humanity.



President Ebrahim Raisi
Photo: Mehr News Agency (cc)

While the constitution of Iran recognizes Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians as "protected minorities," in practise, any religion other than Shi'ism is only tolerated within very restricted confines. Persecution against Christians significantly increased in 2015 due to the perception that house churches posed a threat to national security. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is seen as betrayal – not only against the Islamic faith, but also against the state – and can be punishable by death. With Ebrahim Raisi as president, there are concerns that the persecution of Christians may intensify.

Despite opposition, the church in Iran continues to grow. It is estimated that there are presently more than one million Christians in the country. Opportunities to spread the Gospel continue to emerge, whether through personal contact or technological means. Todd Neddleton from VOM USA reminds us of this present-day reality: "Fertile soil is receiving those Gospel seeds. And it is flourishing because people have seen the true face of Islam, and they do not want that face any longer." For more details on the church in Iran, go to our [country report](#).

As the time approaches for Ebrahim Raisi to assume his new presidential role and begin fulfilling his official duties, please pray that God's Spirit will work mightily in and through his life. May he realize the value of Christianity as a means of enhancing society and, therefore, allow citizens to honour their personal convictions and freely follow the teachings of Christ. In the interim, remember our Iranian Christian brothers and sisters who for now must worship in secret, or face severe consequences for their beliefs. Ask the Lord to minister needed protection and encouragement to these believers, providing them the necessary resources for their ongoing spiritual growth and to ensure their churches will continue to thrive.

UGANDA: Pastor Killed for Reaching Out to Muslims

Sources: Morning Star News, Uganda Christian News

Security officials have arrested an imam who confessed to killing a pastor on June 11th for sharing



the Gospel with Muslims in Uganda. Bishop Francis Obo served as the senior pastor of Mpingire Pentecostal Revival Church Ministries International in the village of Odapako and was also responsible for overseeing the ministry of 17 churches in the area. He was killed after being approached by a group of Islamic militants as he was leaving a market with his wife, Christine.

According to Christine, one of the men told Bishop Obo that he was an "infidel" and accused him of blaspheming against Allah and causing Muslims to leave Islam. "Today Allah has judged you," the attacker stated prior to the slaying.

Christine was ordered by the militants to leave the area. She quickly fled home, shaking and unable to speak. Her children took her to the hospital where she was treated for shock. When she regained consciousness the next morning, she explained what had happened to her eldest son who went to the site with his siblings. Upon reaching the location, they found a large number of Christians gathered around the lifeless body of the pastor.

Police have arrested Imam Uthman Olingha, who was found with blood on his clothes and shoes. Another suspect, Jafari Kato, has also been arrested. The accused imam openly confessed to police, saying that he did not regret killing the pastor for he believed it was the will of Allah to kill any infidel who misleads Muslims.

Bishop Obo had been targeted before because of his ministry. On June 4th, his church hosted a former Islamic teacher who testified of his conversion to Christianity. Muslims passing by heard the teacher speaking Arabic and listened in. It is likely that those who overheard the Christian convert's message informed other Muslims in the area, which led to Bishop Obo's murder.

The 70-year-old bishop leaves his wife and 13 children, who are now in mourning along with the members of the numerous churches he led. To learn more about the challenges facing Christians in Uganda, go to our [country report](#).

Prayerfully uphold Christine and her children as they mourn the sudden loss of their cherished loved one. Also lift up the members of their church and those of other surrounding congregations as they too recover from the shock of losing their esteemed pastoral leader. May the militants who committed this criminal act be held responsible, with hopes that they will come to understand the love and grace of Christ which leads to sincere repentance and ultimately God's forgiveness of sin. Pray for the ongoing ministry of the Gospel among Uganda's Muslim minority and that, even in the midst of this tragedy, many will acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

CHINA: Preacher's Family Locked in Their Home

Sources: ChinaAid, International Christian Concern, Early Rain Covenant Church

Members of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Sichuan, China, continue to face harassment as authorities attempt to shut down their unregistered church. While the head pastor, Wang Yi, is serving a nine-year prison sentence, other members of the church have also encountered consistent persecution.

Since June 4th, Minister Wu Wuqing, his wife Xiong Meifang, and their children have been locked in their own home by governing officials. The fire door, which gives access to the stairs and elevator, has been chained, and guards remain posted outside the door. For the first few days, the guards would unlock the door if visitors came to see the family. However, on June 8th, the guards turned a woman and her children away, stating that since visitors are prohibited from entering



Chain-locked door at minister's home.

Photo: Early Rain Church

the residence, they will only be allowed to pass food through the fire door.

On June 12th, Hao Guiru, a member of the church, came to visit the family. He managed to get through the locks and into Minister Wu's home where he joined the family in the singing of hymns. In response, the police broke down the door to the apartment and arrested Hao. He was released later that day and shared on social media: "Brothers and Sisters, peace be with you in Jesus Christ. I have arrived home safely, thanks to God's grace and protection." Further information on the persecution of Christians in China, as well as previously published reports about the Early Rain Covenant Church, may be reviewed at our [country report](#).

Lift up the members of the Early Rain Covenant Church who have been facing ongoing harassment from Chinese authorities. Pray that Minister Wu and his family will be given the freedom to 'come and go' from their home, and that their visiting friends and extended family members would be allowed to enter. In the interim, may the Lord provide the ministering family additional encouragement during this time of confinement. Also prayerfully remember Pastor Wang Yi and other believers who are presently in prison for their faith. May they find opportunities to share the love of Christ with those around them as they await their own release from imprisonment.

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