

***"Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those  
with whom He is pleased!"***

~ Luke 2:14 ESV

### **INDIA: Christmas Services Cancelled**

Sources: LiCAS News, The Express Tribune, Release International, India Today, International Christian Concern

As the debate on proposed anti-conversion laws continues in the Indian state of Karnataka, pressure and violence have been increasing against churches. On December 20th, the proposed bill was approved by cabinet members and will be tabled in the assembly very soon. If ultimately passed, those convicted of performing "mass conversions" would face a minimum sentence of three years. Furthermore, under the proposed requirements, those wishing to convert must give one month's notice and risk the loss of governmental benefits.

Emboldened by the legislation, militant Hindu nationalists have been issuing threats against Christians and disrupting their church services. As a result, many churches in the Belagavi District have cancelled plans for Christmas services. For Pastor Yellappa, the head of an independent church in Gokak, the choice was forced upon him. Threats made against his landlord forced the eviction of the pastor from his home, where the church regularly met for worship. "In the last nine years, I was attacked a number of times and arrested three times," he reflects, "but I never thought a situation would come where I would have to shut down the church."



Police have responded to the growing tension by restricting church meetings, allegedly because of safety concerns. According to Archbishop Joseph D'souza, Christian groups in the Belagavi District are not being allowed to meet, shutting down any possibility of Christmas celebrations. To read previous reports on the persecution of Christians in India, or to view featured podcasts/documentaries, go to our [country report](#).

***As Christians in Karnataka endeavour to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ – who is described in the Scriptures as the "Prince of Peace" – may they experience His wonderful peace not only within their hearts but also in their communities. Pray that the Lord's loving conviction will come upon those who are opposed to the Gospel, so they may receive His gift of salvation – and the resulting peace – in their lives as well. Ask Him to guide the decisions of the state's legislators, providing them greatly needed wisdom and discretion, to ensure the passing of laws that will ultimately lead to the fair treatment of all India's people.***

### **MOZAMBIQUE: Pastor Kidnapped and Killed**

Sources: International Christian Concern, Daily Mail

According to military sources, militants belonging to a group loosely linked to ISIS kidnapped a pastor and then decapitated him. The victim's remains were later given to his widow to deliver to the police. Although reports confirm that the attack took place on December 15th in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, the pastor's name has not been disclosed by the authorities.

This horrific act is the latest tragedy to take place amidst a four-year-long insurgency which has caused much devastation throughout the country. Even though members of this terrorist group refer to themselves as "al-Shabab," they are not associated with the Somali group of the same name. In March, the perpetrators carried out a series of other attacks in the area, boasting that they had killed dozens of security personnel and Christians, including Westerners from what they termed the "crusader nations."



Photo: Wikipedia / F Mira (cc)

***Please prayerfully uphold this grieving widow, asking God to comfort her anguishing heart and provide her needed healing from the trauma she was forced to endure. Additionally, pray that the transformative work of God's Spirit will move in the hearts of people throughout the country of Mozambique. In the process, may He also touch the hearts of those in darkness who are persecuting the church, leading them to the "Light of the World" as our Saviour is aptly referred to in the Gospel.***

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## **KYRGYZSTAN: Draft Law Further Restricts Church Registration**

Source: Forum18

If adopted, a draft law prepared by the State Commission for Religious Affairs would continue to ban any worship meetings and religious education from operating without state permission throughout the country of Kyrgyzstan. In addition, this potential new law would make the registration of small religious communities very difficult, if not impossible.

According to the proposed legislation, a minimum of 200 adult members all living within the same region is required when applying for registration as a religious community. The members of each church community will then be required to gather in person for an official meeting so full personal details can be recorded and notarized.

Religious communities would also need to obtain registration for any facility used for worship, whether it be owned or rented. However, there are concerns that the extensive registration process will prevent landlords from fulfilling the commission's excessive demands. Zhanara Askar kyzy, a Christian lawyer who is diligently working to oppose the new legislation, argues that under these new rules, it would be impossible for some religious groups to meet in rented premises. For such cases are further complicated by mandates requiring the meeting address to be the same as the legal address of the organization – a condition not feasible for churches renting a facility only a few hours each week.

A further consequence of the proposed law is that any private religious training would be banned. The law declares, "Teaching religious disciplines on an individual basis outside a religious educational institution is prohibited." On a positive note, the new law would remove a ban on the distribution of religious publications in public places. For more on the challenges facing Christians in Kyrgyzstan, go to our [country report](#).

***Ask God to grant the concerned lawyers and religious leaders wisdom and discernment as they present their arguments before parliament, particularly as they address aspects of the proposed law that would hinder church groups from gathering together for worship. May the judicial legislators debating this potential law clearly consider the ramifications of the new requirements and come to a reasonable and equitable decision. While this subject is being deliberated in court, pray that the churches in Kyrgyzstan will discover innovative ways to effectively reach out to others in their communities with the powerful, life-transformative message of Christ.***

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Parliament building in Bishkek  
Photo: Wikipedia / Adam Harangozó (cc)

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