

**"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."**

~ Isaiah 41:10 ESV

### INDIA: False Claim Sets Off School Attack

Sources: Morning Star News, Indian Express, The Free Press Journal

On December 6th, hundreds of people gathered at St. Joseph School in Ganj Basoda, Madhya Pradesh, to protest the alleged religious conversion of eight students. Shouting Hindu slogans, the rioting mob vandalized nearby vehicles, as well as the building where the students were busy doing their schoolwork. When the crowd began to throw stones near the classroom where grade 12 students were writing their government exams, school officials were forced to stop the exams and move the students to safety.

The protest was instigated by video footage on YouTube showing the baptism of eight children. Hindu nationalists claimed that the footage was proof that poor Hindu children were being converted to Christianity. The video stated that by "sprinkling a few drops of water on the children, their culture and identity were changed within two minutes." The report further claimed that the school was "under the grip of the conversion mafia." Contrary to those allegations, none of the eight children shown in the video were Hindus, as all of them had come from Catholic homes, nor did they attend St. Joseph School.



Hindus make up over 90 percent of the population in Madhya Pradesh.  
Photo: Flickr / Omkar Todarmal (cc)

There were no reported injuries in the attack and, at last report, five of the rioters have been charged with vandalism. To review other reports addressing the difficulties facing Christians in India, go to our [country report](#).

***Prayerfully intercede on behalf of the country's Christian leaders, asking that they be granted wisdom and guidance whenever subjected to the allegations and threats of any person or group that opposes them for sharing the Gospel. Pray that the militants who participated in the recent mob violence will take responsibility for their actions by acknowledging the error of their ways. Through the Lord's abounding love, grace and mercy, may they come to a point of sincere repentance. Finally, pray that many more in India who are searching spiritually for truth will come to salvation in Christ through the faithful witness of His committed followers.***

### CHINA: Government Issues New Internet Restrictions

Sources: ChinaAid, Bitter Winter

After Chinese President Xi Jinping lamented that social media and the Internet are being used throughout the country to proselytize for religion, it was recently announced that new restrictions will soon be implemented; measures that would severely impede Chinese citizens' access to religious content. These new measures are scheduled to take effect on March 1st.

With the increased restrictions, only those who've obtained an "Internet Religious Information Service License" will be permitted to post religious content online. However, the license will only be made available to five authorized religious groups whose messaging content will be strictly monitored. Their sermons and teachings may only be permitted to broadcast after evaluation to ensure the messaging is not intended for proselytization but rather sufficiently promotes the government's socialist values.



President Xi Jinping  
Photo: Voice of America

The new restrictions state that religious colleges and universities may only provide material to their own students, and any attempts to spread religious content to minors will result in the termination of licenses. Any individual or organization that does not have a license may not disseminate any religious content or even allude to religion. Furthermore, all images and content related to religious ceremonies, such as worship or baptismal services, are to be strictly prohibited.

Opposition to unregistered religious groups has been escalating over recent years throughout China. The increase of such highly restrictive measures, including the forthcoming Internet policies, can be used as an added tool to impose legal action against those who do not actively promote the agenda of the Chinese Communist Party. For more on the persecution of Christians in China, go to our [country report](#).

***Pray for the continued boldness of believers in China who are seeking to follow in the footsteps of Christ amid these repressive governmental policies. May God's Holy Spirit guide the hearts and minds of each believer as they determine the best means of fulfilling Christ's Great Commission, and thus ultimately obeying Him by reaching out to others with the Gospel message. Ask the Lord to also touch the hearts of President Xi Jinping and his advisors so they will realize the futility of their opposing ways, grant religious liberty to all citizens, and allow believers the freedom to share their faith.***

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## REPORT UPDATE

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### PAKISTAN: Teenager Safely Returns Home

Sources: Dawn, Samaa, Morning Star News

In October 2020, Arzoo Raja was abducted from her family home in Pakistan, forced to convert to Islam, and then married against her will to the perpetrator of the crime – all this occurring when she was only at the age of 13. Her concerned Christian parents took legal action against her abductor and, ultimately, the courts nullified the young teen's marriage because of her age. However, due to the coercion and pressure she continued to receive from her kidnapper and others, Arzoo initially did not want to return home. So, instead, she was placed in a shelter. While any access to the attacker was forbidden, visits with her family and others were permitted only when requested by Arzoo. Previously posted information on this case is [available here](#).

After spending a year at the shelter, Arzoo petitioned the court to allow her to move back into her family's home. On December 22nd, the Sindh High Court ruled that she could return to her parents. Any contact with her attacker, who has been charged under the country's marriage and rape laws, continues to be forbidden. However, the perpetrator had previously been released on bail and observers believe that the charges against him may likely be dropped.

The court ruling relates only to custody and not to Arzoo's alleged conversion to Islam. The teenager told the court that she converted to Islam of her own free will. Therefore, her parents were required to sign an agreement stating that Arzoo would be allowed to practise Islam without interference and that she is free to adopt her own life choices. The teen will be brought for meetings at the police station every three months until she turns eighteen to ensure that she is being treated well and in accordance with the court order.

The lawyer representing the teen's parents has stated that if, in the future, Arzoo wishes to return to the Christian faith of her family, she should legally be free to do so. However, depending on the court ruling, along with the reporting requirements, there are concerns that this legal option may not be made available to her.

***Praise God that Arzoo has safely returned home and is now reunited with her loving family. Considering the trauma she was forced to endure, please continue to intercede for her physical, emotional and spiritual healing. Pray that Arzoo will triumphantly overcome the ordeal and no longer feel pressured by any former threats of her captor, so she can freely make decisions in her best interest. May God guide her parents as they seek to determine how to begin rebuilding their family in the face of this life-changing situation.***



Arzoo (second from the left) and her abductor, Syed Ali Azhar (far right), with police in Karachi, Pakistan.  
Photo: Sindh government