

"You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you."

~ C.S. Lewis

LIBYA: Imprisonment for Leaving Islam

Source: VOMC Contacts

Over three months ago, at least ten Libyan Christians were arrested for converting from Islam to Christianity. Two other believers, one from Nigeria and one from Pakistan, have also been arrested because of their association with these Libyan converts. All twelve arrested believers are being held on charges of proselytism (considered "instigating division" by governing officials) which carry a maximum sentence of death.

Islam remains the dominant religion in Libya and forms the basis for the country's legal system. While there is no law explicitly prohibiting religious conversions, some Muslim leaders have argued that leaving Islam is an act of apostasy, which happens to be punishable by death. For more information on the severe persecution of our Christian brothers and sisters in Libya, go to our [country report](#).



Please pray with us that these believers will be released from custody and set free of all charges. Ask the Lord to touch the hearts of the officials responsible for their arrests – as well as those representing the country's other levels of governance – bringing about a favourable outcome for these faithful followers of Jesus and others facing similar charges. May God direct Libya's leaders, leading to a political and legal system that provides all believers protection from unjust accusations and grants them the freedom to gather for worship without the threat of imprisonment and life-threatening sentences.

CHINA: Churches Mandated to Promote Communism

Source: ChinaAid

On July 3rd, a banner displaying the Communists' symbolic 'hammer and sickle' was raised next to the Shinian Christian Church in Zhejiang province, China. According to a pastor in the area, the Taizhou Religious Affairs Bureau sent notices to local churches mandating that all religious venues must put up large signs with the following wording at their entrances: "Love the Chinese Communist Party, love the country, and love the religion," as well as "Uphold the principle of developing religions in the Chinese context."

What is unusual about this demand is the fact that the notified churches are not part of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and thus there is no legal grounds for displaying the signs. However, according to a local pastor, officials are implementing religious persecution as a means of gaining political influence and promotion.



A 'hammer and sickle' symbol was placed next to Shinian Christian Church's sign.
Photo: ChinaAid

Since Christianity is flourishing in Zhejiang province, governing officials are increasing measures to control it. This has brought about demands that religion must "develop in the Chinese context," an ideology also known as "Sinicization." Christians who do not adhere to this process by adapting their beliefs to socialist values frequently encounter harsh persecution. Due to current trends, it is anticipated that religious oppression in the region is likely to escalate over the next few years. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in China, and/or to review previously posted reports, go to our [country report](#).

As the church leaders in Zhejiang province deal with the increased expectations being placed on them, pray that they will receive God's divine wisdom and guidance. In spite of attempts by CCP officials to Sinicize the Christian faith, may the Gospel message remain untainted so many more people throughout China will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Please also remember the many believers who are presently suffering for their faith, asking the Lord to grant each one of them the strength and grace to continue faithfully serving as His courageous witnesses.

INDONESIA: Seal Removed from Church Building

Sources: Morning Star News, VOI, Kilat.com

Christians in Ciracas, East Jakarta, were jubilant when local officials removed the seal from the door of their church building on June 26th, three months after it was forced to close. The officials had claimed earlier that the congregation's legal permits and other requirements were incomplete, leading to the closure of the GKI Palsigunung church building on March 20th.

During the month of March, just prior to the closure, the church was forced to move to a new area after flooding drove the congregants from their previous worship site. Upon finding a new location, they obtained the required number of signatures from nearby residents – a government prerequisite for establishing a place of worship in the community – and applied for the necessary permits. However, because the local neighbourhood leader, as well as the head of the Citizens Association, refused to sign the application, the church building was forcibly sealed.



Apparently, some officials had understood that the building was to be used as offices and not as a place of worship. Now that the authorities have reopened the church, one provincial leader stated that concessions will be made to allow worship in the building while the final paperwork is being completed. It is hoped that the revisions to the application will be completed soon, allowing the building to be legally used as a place of worship. One member of the church expressed her hopes that the church will not be forced to close again.

Places of worship in Indonesia frequently encounter obstacles when attempting to conduct services, particularly from local governments. Strict permit requirements are in place for churches, and the arduous permission process can take years to complete. Sometimes local officials also attempt to ban religious gatherings in local homes. More about the persecution of Christians in Indonesia is available at our [country report](#).

Praise God that these church members have gained access to their new building! Pray that the permit process will be completed promptly and efficiently, allowing these believers to resume their worship activities without encountering any further difficulties. Continue to pray for the many other churches in Indonesia that are experiencing opposition from local groups wanting to prevent the advancement of the Gospel, asking the Lord to minister renewed strength, peace and encouragement to His persevering followers.

Important Note: Due to technical difficulties in sending the previous week's *Persecution & Prayer Alert*, some recipients did not receive the sent reports. These reports may be [reviewed here](#). For your future reference and convenience, please know that VOMC's most current weekly postings are also routinely made available on the ministry's website. Thank you for joining us in prayer on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ who are being greatly strengthened and encouraged as a result!