

***"Prayer is a strong wall
and fortress of the church; it is
a goodly Christian weapon."
~ Martin Luther***

ALGERIA: Church Leader Convicted in Absentia

Source: Middle East Concern

Pastor Youssef Ourahmane is the vice president of the Église Protestante d'Algérie (EPA), an association consisting of more than 45 Protestant churches. Along with this leadership role, he also serves as a senior pastor who oversees a number of churches and Bible schools.

In March, Pastor Youssef held a small three-day gathering with a few Christian families. The compound where they met contains a church building that had been sealed by the government in 2019. Due to his hosting of the Christian gathering, Pastor Youssef was charged with holding an unauthorized religious assembly. The accused pastor was not informed of any court hearing nor a verdict until just recently and, consequently, he was not able to defend himself. As a result of the hearing, the church leader was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, along with a fine.

Pastor Youssef has since appealed the verdict, and the subsequent hearing date is scheduled for November 19th. The EPA has faced an ongoing campaign of opposition by the government in recent years, and today only a handful of churches remain open. There are at least ten ongoing court cases against Algerian Christians at this present time. For more details on the persecution of Christians in this North African nation, go to our [country report](#).



Pastor Youssef Ourahmane
Photo: Middle East Concern

Please pray for the upcoming appeal hearing, asking that Pastor Youssef and his legal advisors will receive guidance, direction and peace, as well as the right words to say in response to these charges. May God touch the hearts of the court officials so they will rule in Pastor Youssef's favour. Further, pray that the government's campaign of opposition against churches in Algeria would cease, allowing our Christian brothers and sisters in this country to safely meet for times of worship and fellowship.

PAKISTAN: Christian Parents Charged with Blasphemy

Sources: Morning Star News, Kross Konnection, Eurasia Review

Shaukat Masih and his wife Kiran live in Lahore, Pakistan, with their three children, ages thirteen, nine and seven. The Christian couple has been accused of desecrating the Quran after loose pages fell from the rooftop of their house, even though they were not home at the time of the incident. As a result of the accusations, the couple has been detained. Without family members available to look after their three school-aged children, the accused parents arranged for the children to stay with another Christian family in the area.

Shaukat and Kiran are uncertain how the Quran pages could have fallen from their rooftop. A local Muslim man spotted the pages on the street by their house and began investigating. After being approached for an explanation, Kiran mentioned to him that perhaps her children had unintentionally thrown something down without realizing its significance. She then gave him access to their home.

When the man went up to the rooftop, he discovered a bag containing pages of the Quran tucked behind a water tank. In addition to threatening physical violence against the family, he immediately called the police. The man also called for others to join him, resulting in attempts to physically harm the Christians. Although the police were able to intervene, and thankfully diffuse the situation, they then took the couple into custody.

The lawyer representing the accused couple is confident that they will be found innocent, since there is no evidence that they committed a deliberate act of desecration. Shaukat was at work at the time and Kiran had been at a neighbour's house, returning home only after hearing the commotion. She claims that the bag containing the pages had been given to her by a Muslim employer to sell to a scrap vendor.



The three children are reportedly very upset about the situation and face various challenges. The eldest child, Sarar, suffers from a disease known as rickets, while nine-year-old Sundas is mentally handicapped. The youngest, Ruby, clearly misses her detained parents. For other reports on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, go to our [country report](#).

Prayerfully remember Shaukat and Kiran during their detention. May this Christian couple receive greatly needed peace through the presence of God's Holy Spirit, confidently entrusting Him with the outcome – especially as it concerns their children. Please also pray for Sarar, Sundas and Ruby during this difficult time of separation from their parents, asking that they would be granted comfort, provision and protection by their loving Heavenly Father. May the judicial officials dealing with this case realize that there are no valid charges against Shaukat and Kiran, and thus release the couple so they can soon be reunited with their children.

PRAISE REPORT

ERITREA: Approximately 50 Believers Recently Released!

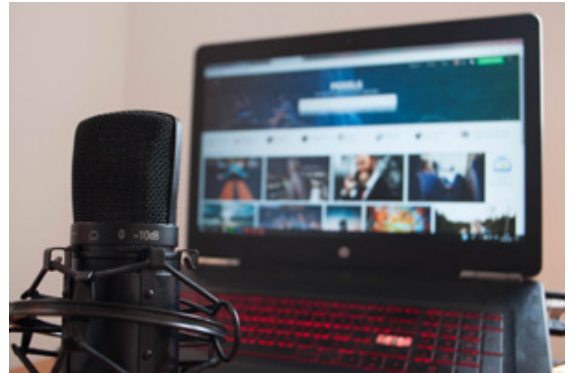
Source: Church in Chains

In April, a group of 103 young Christian musicians were arrested in the Eritrean capital of Asmara. They had gathered to sing songs of praise, which were to be shared on YouTube, but the young Christians were deemed by the government to be involved in an illegal religious gathering. For more information on this incident, see [this page](#).

In Eritrea, those arrested for religious reasons seldom receive formal charges or face trial. Rather, they are frequently detained under brutal conditions without any news of their location being released to their families. For more information on other cases involving our suffering Eritrean family in Christ, including informative videos about the challenges they experience in this repressive East African country, go to our [country report](#).

We are thankful to report that Dr. Berhane Asmelash from VOMC's partnering organization, Release Eritrea, recently announced that about half of the young people who were detained have been released from custody! No further details on the situation were available at the time of publishing this report.

Praise God for the release of these musically talented Christian young people! Pray that they will experience complete recuperation from their time of detention. Continue to pray for the young believers remaining in custody, along with the hundreds of other arrested Christians who are presently imprisoned in Eritrea because of their faith. Just as Paul and Silas sang praises during their imprisonment (Acts 16), pray that – despite the horrific circumstances – our imprisoned Eritrean brothers and sisters in Christ will also be able to sing songs of sacrificial praise to God. While doing so, may the ushering of His presence through their music stir the hearts of fellow prisoners and guards who have yet to accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.



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