



***"This is my comfort in my affliction,
that Your promise gives me life."***

~ Psalm 119:50 ESV

ERITREA: 44 Christians Imprisoned, Including 27 Students

Sources: Release Eritrea, Church in Chains

In early December, Eritrean security forces raided a house where 27 secondary school students had gathered together for prayer and worship. The Christian students – most of whom ranged in age from 14 to 16 years old – were taken to a police station and held in custody for a few days before being transferred to the Mai Serwa prison which is located along the outskirts of Asmara.

In a separate case, another 17 Christians were also recently arrested and sent to the Mai Serwa prison. At the time of publishing this report, no further information on this case was available. The Mai Serwa prison is the same facility where several members of a Christian musical group, known as the Mahalians, continue to be detained. (For more information about the imprisonment of these young musicians, see [this report](#).)

Dr. Berhane Asmelash from Release Eritrea believes that the recently occurring large-scale arrests of believers – and particularly Christian young people – reflect the Eritrean government's "desperate attempt to control the growth of the evangelical population in the country." Based on exponential increases in incidents of Christian persecution over the past 20 years, Dr. Berhane is concerned about the possibility that higher levels of opposition may take place in the coming year – including more arrests and harsher treatment towards believers. For additional reports addressing the imprisonment of Christians in Eritrea, and/or to view video interviews with Dr. Berhane, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***Please pray for the strength and endurance of these recently arrested Christians.***
- ***May all of our Christian brothers and sisters who are presently being detained in prisons throughout Eritrea receive peace, comfort, courage and hope from the reassuring presence of the Holy Spirit.***
- ***In spite of ongoing opposition from the government, pray for the continued growth of God's church in this nation, resulting in multitudes accepting Jesus as their personal Saviour and Lord.***



An Eritrean church gathering.
Photo: VOMC

PAKISTAN: Christian Woman Killed, Daughter Wounded

Sources: ECSPE, Pak Christian News, Pakistan Christian Post, Barnabas Aid

On January 6th, two Christian women had been returning home from work in Gujranwala when they were approached and shot by two men on a motorcycle. During the attack, Shabana and her 18-year-old daughter Misbah were both struck by bullets. The mother was instantly killed at the scene, while Misbah received a serious bullet wound to her back – requiring urgently needed hospitalization for treatment. At last report, the Christian teen remains in critical condition.

The attack sent shockwaves throughout the Christian community of Gujranwala, where residents continue to demand justice on behalf of Shabana and Misbah. While the motivation behind the attack is uncertain at this point, many fear that it could be yet another incident motivated by religious hatred. Police are investigating all angles, including the possibility of targeted violence against the Christian family.

This most recently reported incident highlights the vulnerability of Christian communities in Pakistan. Information concerning other followers of Christ who have been targeted for their faith within this South Asian nation may be reviewed at VOMC's [country profile](#).



Women in Pakistan.
Photo: Voice of America

- *Pray for Shabana's husband, Karamat Masih, as he mourns the devastating loss of his wife – as well as the serious wounding of their daughter – in the aftermath of this senseless attack.*
- *Ask the Lord to bestow His healing touch upon Misbah, resulting in the complete physical and emotional recovery of this traumatized young woman.*
- *May God guide the police as they continue to investigate the incident and work to bring the perpetrators to justice.*
- *Pray for the protection of vulnerable citizens in Pakistan, many of whom encounter discrimination, pressure and unwarranted violence because of their faith in Jesus.*

IRAN: Large Increase in Christian Prison Sentences Last Year

Source: Article18

According to a recently published report by Article18, at least 96 Christians were sentenced to prison in Iran during 2024 for a combined total of 263 years' imprisonment. This statistic indicates a sixfold increase from the previous year, in which 22 Christians were arrested for a combined total of 43.5 years.

While the report demonstrates a significant increase in the total number of Christians arrested annually, it also reveals a notable increase in the length of their prison terms. This informative report can be downloaded from [Article Eighteen](#).

As the new year commences, the situation facing Iranian Christians has not improved. More than 40 followers of Jesus were arrested just this past December for participating in Christmas celebrations. Since the detained Christians have not yet received their prison sentences, this latest number of arrested believers was not included when calculating the statistics for 2024.

The recently occurring arrests took place while the members of Iran's judiciary were boasting that Christian prisoners had been given a five-day leave from prison over the Christmas season. However, this brief furlough was not permitted for those whose convictions related to "acting against national security" – a charge commonly imposed on the country's Christians. For more reports on the persecution of believers in Iran, go to our [country profile](#).

- *Prayerfully remember the recently arrested believers, along with the many other Iranian Christians who are currently serving prison sentences because of their faith in Christ.*
- *Pray that international leaders would call attention to the persecution of Christian converts in Iran and thus put pressure on the country's governing officials to enact positive changes.*
- *In the midst of the government's attempts to suppress the Christian faith, praise God for the resilient advancements made by His church in Iran. May this continued growth in numbers also reflect the greater spiritual depth that's taking place within the lives of all those who have chosen to faithfully follow in the ways of Christ.*



A church in Iran.
Photo: Wikimedia / Tasnim News Agency (cc)

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