



"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

INDIA: Arrests for Alleged Conversion Activities

Sources: UCA News, Church in Chains, Christian Today, News Nation Bharat, Dainik Bhaskar

Multiple Christians were recently arrested by authorities in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, resulting in charges of coercive religious conversions. In each case, allegations against the Christians by Hindu nationalist groups led to sudden police raids.

On February 22nd or 23rd (the exact date varies according to sourced reports), Pastor Vijay Singh and three other believers were arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Raebareli district. According to local press reports, the Christians were accused of organizing "a big game of religious conversion" in which candy and pencils were allegedly given to children in an attempt to lure them into converting to Christianity.



Christians in India.
Photo: VOMC

In a related incident, police also raided the residence of Pastor Anil in a different village of Raebareli district, but the church leader was not home at the time. Unable to find the pastor, the authorities instead detained his son before later releasing him. On the afternoon of February 25th, Pastor Anil was located and subsequently arrested by police. Thankfully, the church leader was granted bail that same evening.

A similar raid occurred in Hargaon, a village in the district of Sitapur, when police invaded a worship gathering on February 23rd. During the incident, Pastor Surest Chand and his wife Nutan Kumari were arrested, along with four other worshippers. The believers were charged with conducting "unlawful religious conversions" in what local reporters described as "a big case." The Christians were accused of luring people to their faith with money and possessions. According to eyewitnesses, various religious materials – including Bibles – were seized as evidence of alleged conversion activities. Though the Christians were taken into custody, some have since been released on bail.

Anti-conversion laws are frequently used in several Indian states to intimidate followers of Jesus and shut down unwanted Christian activities. Often, the accusations have no factual basis. For more details on the persecution of Christians in India, go to our [country report](#).

- ***Pray that God will work powerfully within the hearts and minds of India's authorities so that each one of these recently detained believers will be justly declared innocent.***
- ***May our Christian brothers and sisters who continue to be held in custody tangibly sense the reassuring presence and empowerment of God's Holy Spirit.***
- ***Ask the Lord to also minister His peace, protection and comfort to the accused believers' family members as they cope with this time of uncertainty and fear.***
- ***Additionally, pray that the accusers would be convicted of their wrongful allegations and, as a result, come to a point of repentance and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.***

CHINA: Pastor Tried for Organizing Illegal Gatherings

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, ChinaAid, VOM Australia, Release International

On August 9th, 2024, a preacher named Ma Yan was arrested in the Chinese city of Yinchuan for "disrupting social order" and given a ten-day detention. Immediately following his release, Ma was arrested again for "organizing illegal gatherings." The accusations stem from a small gathering of Christians that took place in a hotel on August 9th.

After Ma continued to be held in custody without trial, the church leader's wife, Shu Hang, filed a lawsuit against the Jinfeng District Branch of the Yinchuan Public Security Bureau in response to the charges against her husband and his prolonged detention. The documents were taken to the court office on November 4th, where staff members accepted Shu's formal complaint and files of evidence. However, when her lawyer requested written proof of receipt, the court officials refused. Instead, Shu and her lawyer were told to return to their homes and wait for a response from the court office which they never received.

Finally, on February 10th, the young preacher went to trial. According to sources, Ma pleaded guilty because the charge of "organizing illegal gatherings" carries a lighter sentence and does not attract the same moral stigmatization as other charges commonly used against Christian leaders. The final verdict is unknown, but the prosecutor recommended a sentence of nine months in prison.

In the 2025 *Persecution Trends* report, VOMC's ministry partner, Release International, stated that the year ahead is likely to result in an increased number of arrests and imprisonments for Christians in China, as Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials continue their attempts to infiltrate churches with the government's ideology. To access other reports about the persecution of Christians in China, visit our [country profile](#).

- ***Please pray that Ma will experience God's strength, courage and protection as he continues to serve time in prison because of his faith in Jesus.***
- ***May the Lord's abiding peace and comfort rest on this Christian leader's wife, as well as the believers who attended the church gathering he had previously overseen.***
- ***Ask our Heavenly Father to divinely intervene in the lives of the country's governing officials, leading CCP members to personally discover the reality and love of Jesus Christ.***
- ***Continue to prayerfully remember the many Christians throughout China who are endeavouring to faithfully share the Gospel message despite the opposition they may encounter.***



Ma Yan
Photo: ChinaAid

REPORT UPDATE

OCCUPIED UKRAINE: Orthodox Priest Transferred to Russian Labour Camp

Source: Forum18

In May 2023, Orthodox priest Kostiantyn Maksimov was taken captive by Russian occupation forces in the Zaporizhzhia Region of eastern Ukraine. In March 2024, it was announced that he had been accused of reporting the location of Russian air defences and put on trial for espionage. On August 2nd, the church leader was found guilty and sentenced to 14 years in a forced labour camp. For more details on Father Kostiantyn's case, see [these reports](#).

Although Father Kostiantyn appealed the ruling, his sentence was upheld in November 2024. At the time, concerns were raised that the priest may be transferred to a prison camp in Russia – an action that would violate the



Father Kostiantyn Maksimov
Photo: Center for Civil Liberties

Geneva Conventions. According to these international laws, prisoners from an occupied territory must be detained within that territory. On February 11th, those concerns were realized when Father Kostiantyn was transferred to a labour camp in Russia's Saratov Region, which is located more than 1,000 kilometres from his home.

All Protestant and non-Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox churches have been declared illegal in occupied areas of Ukraine, and the occupying Russian forces have implemented many of the religious restrictions currently found in Russia. For previously published reports on the challenges facing Christians in these regions, see our [country profile](#).

- *Ask our Heavenly Father to provide Father Kostiantyn with greatly needed physical and spiritual endurance as he continues to be detained in captivity.*
- *In addition to interceding for this Christian leader's immediate release, please also pray for the cessation of Russian aggression so that the people of Ukraine can live in peace.*
- *May followers of Jesus in Russia and occupied regions of Ukraine who are suffering under the dictates of repressive policies receive guidance, protection and courage as they share the Lord's love and the hope that He alone provides while residing in these very difficult and dangerous areas.*

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
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