



***"Let us raise our voices – not in vengeance,
but in faith. Let this act of terror be met
with even greater love and courage.
May the world remember the names and
faces of those who died not just as victims,
but as witnesses to the light of Christ."***

~ Farrukh Saif, a Christian human rights
activist for ECSPE, in response to the
June 22nd Syrian church attack.

SYRIA: Suicide Bomber Attacks Damascus Church

Sources: BBC, International Christian Concern, Middle East Concern, ECSPE

At least 20 worshippers were killed and dozens of others wounded when a lone attacker targeted the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church near Damascus on June 22nd. Approximately 350 people were inside the church building when the assailant suddenly opened fire and then detonated a suicide vest near the entrance of the church. The resulting blast not only killed those inside the building but also several people who had been standing within the immediate vicinity.

This incident marks the first major attack on a church within Syria in several years. Syrian authorities believe that the male bomber was affiliated with the Islamic State terrorist group, though it has not yet claimed responsibility for the attack. The interim government, which took power in December 2024, has condemned the bombing and promised to take appropriate action.

In the meantime, many church leaders have expressed frustration over what they perceive to be inadequate protection for the country's Christians. At the funeral for the victims, the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, John X, remarked: "We are grateful for the phone call [from Syria's interim president], but the crime that took place is a little bigger than that."

The country of Syria remains in a period of political transition after the overthrow of the authoritarian government under Bashar al-Assad. To review more reports concerning the persecution of our persecuted Christian family in Syria, visit our [country profile](#).



The Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Church after the bombing.
Photo: Middle East Concern

- ***Remember all those who are mourning the loss of their loved ones as a result of this tragic attack, praying that they would sense the nearness of God's presence, as evidenced by His abiding comfort and peace.***
- ***Also prayerfully lift up the surviving church members who sustained injuries and trauma, asking for God's healing power to be manifested in their lives – physically, emotionally and spiritually –***

leading them to full recovery.

- *Pray for the establishment of a stable government in Syria; one that will pursue peace, justice and protection on behalf of all citizens residing within the country, including those of vulnerable Christian communities.*

CHINA: Arrests of Church Leader and Four Other Christians

Sources: Open Doors Canada, ChinaAid, Bitter Winter

Pastor Huang Yizi is a well-known house church leader in China's Zhejiang Province. For more than a decade, he has encountered repeated harassment and imprisonment for his Christian faith. In 2014, the pastor was arrested and sentenced to one year in prison after publicly protesting the government's campaign to remove crosses from church buildings across the province. He was arrested again in September 2015 and held for five months in a "black jail," where he had been forbidden from contacting his family and legal representatives. In 2021, Pastor Huang reported that he was being constantly monitored by the authorities and subjected to random interrogations ([read more](#)).



Pastor Huang Yizi
Photo: ChinaAid

On June 26th, 2025, the church leader was once again taken into custody by local police and placed in detention. According to his wife, the authorities also searched the Christian couple's home and confiscated several items. At around the same time, four other believers were reportedly arrested as well. Following Pastor Huang's detention, lawyers attempted to visit the detained church leader but were denied access and told to return in 48 hours. A complaint has since been filed against the detention centre for violating the pastor's right to receive proper legal representation.

Pastor Huang has allegedly been accused of conducting "illegal business operations," a charge frequently used by Communist authorities to target religious dissidents. For other reports addressing Christian persecution in China, go to our [country profile](#).

- *Pray that Pastor Huang's legal team will be granted wisdom, favour and full access to their detained client so they can effectively represent him.*
- *During this time of incarceration, may God sustain this Christian leader with supernatural strength, endurance and hope.*
- *In addition, prayerfully uphold this imprisoned church leader's wife, asking that she too would sense the Lord's comforting presence with her daily.*
- *As Pastor Huang awaits vindication, pray that he will receive divinely appointed opportunities to serve as a testimony of the Lord's love and grace to those around him.*

REPORT UPDATE

PAKISTAN: Christian Acquitted After 23 Years

Sources: UCA News, Independent Catholic News, Barnabas Aid

In 2001, during the aftermath of the World Trade Centre attacks in New York, a Christian man in Pakistan named Anwar Kenneth published a letter defending Christianity and expressing his belief that Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was not a prophet of God. As a result of the letter, Anwar was charged in 2002 and ultimately convicted of

blasphemy – a crime that carries an automatic death sentence under Pakistani law. The imprisoned believer has remained on death row for the past 23 years.

In 2014, Anwar's legal representatives argued that he suffered from mental illness and therefore should not have been found guilty. Despite these claims, the Lahore High Court ruled to uphold the Christian man's original sentence. In March 2024, however, the Supreme Court of Pakistan acknowledged the possibility that Anwar may not be guilty under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, noting that, as a Christian, he has the constitutional right to express his religious beliefs ([read more](#)).

Following years of repeated appeal rejections from judiciaries representing the lower courts, the country's Supreme Court finally ordered an official acquittal on June 25th, declaring Anwar to be of unsound mind and thus not criminally liable under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. Finally, after more than two decades behind bars, the 72-year-old Christian man is now scheduled to be freed from prison.

As Anwar's release date approaches, his lawyer has expressed concern for the family's safety, warning of threats from militant Islamic vigilantes who consider it their duty to kill those accused of blasphemy. The lawyer, who happens to be a Muslim, has been under police protection himself after receiving threats for publicly speaking out against the misuse of Pakistan's blasphemy laws. For more details on the difficulties facing Christians in this South Asian nation, go to our [country profile](#).



Photo: Pixabay

- ***Praise God that Anwar has been acquitted after experiencing so many years of imprisonment.***
- ***Uphold this believer in your prayers as he adapts to life outside the prison walls – and reenters a world that has changed significantly during his time behind bars – asking that he and his family will receive the Lord's divine peace and protection.***
- ***May Anwar also be provided the support of a caring community of fellow believers as he begins this new chapter of his life.***
- ***Pray that Pakistan's court officials and governing leaders would consider the harmful consequences of the country's existing blasphemy laws, and thus make necessary changes to prevent further abuses and cases of injustice from taking place.***