

*"I am convinced that it is through  
your prayers that I was able  
to survive all the trials I faced."*

~ Author Helen Berhane  
Former Eritrean prisoner

### NIGERIA: More Than 170 Worshippers Taken Hostage

Sources: International Christian Concern, BBC, Reuters, Truth Nigeria, New York Times

On the morning of January 18th, Christians were gathered for worship in the village of Kurmin Wali, Kaduna State, when armed assailants stormed the community. The attackers raided three church buildings in the village: two congregations of the Cherubim and Seraphim Movement Church, as well as a fellowship belonging to the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA). While over 170 people were taken hostage, some of them later escaped. At the time of publishing this report, at least 163 of the kidnapped victims remain missing – all of whom are being held by their abductors presumably in an unknown location.

Initial reports from government sources denied any knowledge of the attacks, raising questions by the press about whether they had actually happened. However, confirmation was later provided by both government representatives and church members. According to a spokesperson from the ECWA, gunmen had burst into the church building shouting, "Allahu Akbar," then warned the targeted congregants that anyone who made an attempt to flee would be killed. The captives from all three congregations were subsequently gathered together and marched into the forest. Although no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, the perpetrators are believed to be militant Islamic Fulani herdsmen.

These recent attacks are part of a larger pattern of violence affecting communities across Nigeria. One woman, Afiniki Moses, whose family paid for her ransom, had just been released on January 15th from a separate kidnapping incident. To her dismay, Afiniki's husband and two children were abducted during the latest occurring attack only three days after her release.

Following the most recent abductions, the state governor visited the village of Kurmin Wali and pledged to establish a military base, as well as a hospital, in the area. He announced to news reporters: "When we met [the villagers], I affirmed that we are with them and...we will not let any of them down." As the affected families await news of their abducted loved ones, they are hoping the governor will be able to keep his word. To review more reports addressing the persecution of Christians in Nigeria, visit our [country report](#).



Photo: Unsplash

- **Pray for the protection, endurance and safe return of all those still in captivity, asking God to sustain them physically, emotionally and spiritually as they await their rescue.**
- **Please also uphold their concerned loved ones who are waiting with uncertainty by praying that they will experience the Lord's comfort, strength and provision.**
- **Additionally, ask the Lord to heal all those who have lost loved ones or suffered repeated trauma as a result of the ongoing violence in Nigeria.**
- **May the Nigerian authorities follow through on their commitments, providing effective security and support for vulnerable communities, so that the cycle of terror and fear will be abated.**

## REPORT UPDATES

### CHINA: Newly Arrested Members of Early Rain Covenant Church

Sources: ChinaAid, Human Rights Watch, International Christian Concern, Reuters

The Chinese government's ongoing campaign against unregistered church networks has resulted in the recent arrests of seven additional members of the Early Rain Covenant Church on January 6th. Those detained include Pastor Dai Zhichao, Elder Li Yingqiang and his wife Zhang Xinyue, Deacon Jia Xuewei, along with three other church members: Ye Fenghua, Liang Zhongyuan and Brother Lin (whose full name is being withheld for security reasons).

On January 21st, ChinaAid confirmed that formal charges have now been formally issued against Elder Li and Brother Lin. Both believers were accused of "inciting subversion of state power." This is the same charge under which the church's lead pastor, Wang Yi, was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment during December 2019.

Rev. Dr. Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid, condemned the continued use of national-security charges against the country's Christians. "The use of 'inciting subversion of state power' against pastors and church members whose only 'crime' is peaceful worship represents a grave abuse of China's criminal law," he stated. "This case illustrates once again how the Chinese Communist Party weaponizes national-security charges to criminalize faith, silence conscience, and intimidate religious communities."

Further information addressing the various challenges encountered by believers belonging to the Early Rain Covenant Church has been made [available here](#). To watch an informative video-recorded interview with Dr. Fu concerning the ongoing crackdown on China's unregistered churches, go to [this page](#).

- ***Pray that each one of these detained believers will experience the nearness, peace and comfort of the Holy Spirit, and that their faith would remain strong despite the pressures they are presently facing.***
- ***Continue to intercede for the members of the Early Rain Covenant Church and other unregistered congregations across China, asking God to provide for their spiritual and practical needs as they continue to proclaim the Gospel amid an atmosphere of increased opposition.***
- ***Pray that justice will prevail, all charges based on false allegations or political agendas would be dropped, and the international advocacy efforts presented on behalf of our persecuted Christian family in China will be duly considered and fulfilled.***



One of the Early Rain Covenant Churches.

Photo: Chengdu Early Rain Covenant Church via ChinaAid

### ERITREA: Over 100 Christians Released from Prison

Sources: Open Doors UK, Church in Chains, The Christian Post

More than a hundred Christians were among groups of prisoners released from Eritrean detention centres during the months of November and December in 2025. Despite many of them having spent years in captivity under harsh and arbitrary conditions, none of the recently freed individuals had ever been formally charged with a crime.

At least 144 Christian prisoners were listed in various release reports between November 18th and December 20th. Some of them spent their terms of detainment at the Mai Serwa prison – one of Eritrea's most notorious detention facilities. Known for its inhumane treatment and cramped living conditions, this particular prison uses metal shipping containers as makeshift cells – exposing prisoners to the extremities of Eritrea's arid desert climate.



Shipping containers in Eritrea.

Photo: VOMC

Most of the recently listed releases are believed to be conditional, requiring prisoners to sign documents confessing to the "crime" of participating in religious activities banned by the government. The majority of those whose freedom has been confirmed include young people who were imprisoned for one to five years. Among them were members of a worship music group known as the Mahalians, whose arrests took place in April 2023. (Details on the arrests of these young people can be [reviewed here](#).)

Regrettably, these recent releases did not include the seven prominent church leaders who have been imprisoned for more than 20 years. Their continued detention remains a source of deep concern for the Christian community – both inside and outside the country. To learn more about the suffering of believers in this East African nation, go to [VOMCanada.com/Eritrea.htm](#).

- ***Although we can be thankful for the release of these Christian prisoners, please pray that they will receive healing, restoration and renewed hope after experiencing years of unjust suffering.***
- ***Continue to remember the hundreds of believers who remain imprisoned without any charge, asking the Lord to protect each one of them, sustain their faith, and make a way for their safe release.***
- ***Pray that the governing authorities of this East African nation would yield to international pressure, end their oppressive policies, and come to rightfully grant our Eritrean brothers and sisters in Christ the basic religious freedoms that have long been denied.***

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