



*"And I heard a voice from heaven  
saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the  
dead who die in the Lord from now on.'  
'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit,  
'that they may rest from their labours,  
for their deeds follow them!'"*

~ Revelation 14:13 ESV

### INDIA: Church Leader Arrested for Facebook Comment

Sources: UCA News, Catholic Culture, Matters India, The Hindu, The Indian Express

Arun Pannalal is a 75-year-old church leader who serves as president of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum. On August 7th, he was arrested after being accused of posting a comment on social media that allegedly offended the religious sentiments of Hindus. The comment was reportedly made in response to an existing Facebook post.

Acting on a complaint, police arrested the elderly Christian leader, charging him with "promoting enmity between groups, deliberate acts intended to outrage religious feelings, and intentional insult with the alleged intent of provoking a breach of peace."

Before the courts examined the case, the state's chief minister, Vishnu Deo Sai, publicly described Arun's alleged remarks as "objectionable" to Hinduism, raising concerns among observers about judicial impartiality. However, Arun's son, Vaibhav, insists that his father would not have posted such a comment and believes that Arun's identity may have been fraudulently used online.



Photo: Unsplash

Human rights experts have also voiced concerns over the charges. One advocate stated, "Arun Pannalal's real offence is that he has refused to stay silent." Following the arrest, a mob gathered outside the Christian leader's home in Raipur, but police dispersed the protestors without incident.

Accusations against religious minorities have continued to increase in various parts of India, particularly in states where the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party is in power. For additional information on the persecution of Christians in this South Asian nation, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***As Arun and his family await a hopeful safe release, pray that they will experience God's peace, strength and encouragement throughout the difficult process.***
- ***Ask the Lord to grant believers across India wisdom as they interact with others, both in person and online, so they will reflect His character and compassion within every situation.***
- ***May Christians in Chhattisgarh and throughout the nation remain faithful and courageous as they share the hope of the Gospel, trusting the Lord to guide, equip and bless their ministry endeavours.***

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## SUDAN: Clergy Targeted by Rebel Forces

Sources: Anglican Ink, International Christian Concern, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

In 2011, Sudan was divided into two nations, resulting in the founding of South Sudan. This followed years of conflict in which the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) fought for independence. After South Sudan was established, most SPLA supporters became part of the newly founded nation. However, some rebel fighters remained in Sudan, eventually forming SPLA-N, a separatist group that has continued to oppose the government in Sudan's central-southern state of South Kordofan.

Several recent incidents of persecution have taken place within the Nuba Mountain region of South Kordofan, indicating that Christian leaders are being targeted by a breakaway faction of the rebel group. On July 23rd, militants stormed the town of Dabbi. As a result of the violent raid, Pastor Adel Idris Jongool was shot. Tragically, the church leader succumbed to his injuries a few days later. This attack came only weeks after a Catholic priest, Father Youhana Al-Amin, was killed in nearby Kauda. During the assault on Father Youhana, rebel fighters entered his church and demanded medical supplies.



Members of the SPLA.

Photo: Flickr / United Nations ([CC](#))

In a separate attack, which also took place on July 23rd, at least 10 people were killed in the town of Heiban. During this incident, approximately 20 others had been kidnapped – including numerous children. Among the captives were Pastor Yaqob Ibrahim Tia, his two sons, a brother and a nephew. Thankfully, the kidnappers released all the captured victims on July 28th. However, on July 31st, Pastor Zakaria Suliman Jana was then abducted in Heiban but released the following day.

To date, no information has been provided regarding the motives of the captors, nor were there reports indicating whether the assailants had stipulated any conditions prior to the victims' release. While it does not appear as if ransom demands were made, observers speculate that the attacks may have been intended to demonstrate the group's ability to destabilize the region.

According to these recent incidents, it is evident that church leaders are specifically being targeted amid the ongoing violence within this region, and churches throughout Sudan continue to encounter opposition as civil war and instability ravage the nation. To review previously published *Persecution & Prayer Alert* reports concerning the suffering of our Christian family in Sudan, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***Although we praise God for the safe release of the recently abducted believers, please prayerfully uphold these surviving victims and their loved ones who are now needing His comfort, strength, healing and peace in the aftermath of the traumatic events.***
- ***Pray that the mourning families and friends of Pastor Adel, Father Youhana – and others who were slain during the attacks – will experience God's comforting presence and sustaining grace.***
- ***While working to ultimately bring about peace, stability and justice within this war-torn nation, may the Lord continue to strengthen His people and enable the church to remain steadfast in both faith and hope despite the present challenges.***

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## REPORT UPDATE

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## CHINA: Criminal Charges Against Church Leadership

Source: ChinaAid

On July 11th, police in the city of Yueyang, Hunan Province, conducted a series of coordinated raids on various house churches. (For more details regarding these incidents, see this previously [posted report](#).) Among the targeted congregations was the Panshi Bible Church. Although most of the arrested church members were released shortly afterwards, Pastor Huang Shi Tou, along with two other believers, remained in custody.

The three detained followers of Jesus were initially sentenced to 15 days of administrative detention. However, instead of being released at the end of that period, they were transferred to criminal detention on charges of "illegal use of information networks."



Church leaders in Yueyang, Hunan Province.  
Photo via ChinaAid

As of July 29th, Pastor Huang has been permitted to meet with his attorney. Unfortunately, at the time of compiling this report, no information was made available concerning the other two believers, Hu Hongtao and Yang Jianjun. Fellow church members have expressed concerns for all three detained leaders and their families. For example, Pastor Huang suffers from the ongoing effects of tuberculosis; and his wife, who has a chronic illness, depends on him for her daily care. Additionally, Hu Hongtao's wife, whose father has also been critically ill, is currently 33 weeks pregnant.

The use of criminal charges against leaders and other members of unregistered churches has increased within recent years, often resulting in longer detention periods and more severe penalties. Further reports addressing the challenges facing our Christian brothers and sisters in China are available at our [country profile](#).

- ***Pray that Pastor Huang, Hu and Yang – along with the many other believers who are currently detained in Yueyang or other parts of China – will be released soon, and that all the charges against them would be dropped.***
- ***In the interim, may the Lord minister in uniquely personal ways to each of these imprisoned believers, as well as their concerned family members, by meeting all of their daily spiritual and practical needs through His divinely orchestrated means of provision, healing and encouragement.***
- ***Ask the Lord to likewise continue strengthening and sustaining His church throughout China, filling the hearts of His followers with wisdom, faith and courage as they faithfully serve Him amid increasing persecution.***

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Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1  
Tel. (905) 670-9721 - Website: [www.vomcanada.com](http://www.vomcanada.com)