Voice of the Martyrs CANADA
PERSECUTION & PRAYER ALERT

"Our prayers can go where we cannot.... There are no borders, no prison walls, no doors that are closed to us when we pray."
~ Brother Andrew
Founder of Open Doors

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Last week's *Persecution & Prayer Alert* report featured the case of a Nigerian Christian who was sentenced to 14 years in prison under seemingly false charges. Since the report was initially published, new information has come to light that raises questions about some of the details and circumstances surrounding the arrest and conviction. Due to the uncertainty associated with the incident, we have retracted the report and removed it from our website. Despite this, we encourage continued prayer for all those involved.

LIBYA: Egyptian Christian Killed by Kidnappers

Sources: Open Doors, International Christian Concern

Milad Malak was a deacon at his church in northern Egypt. In September, he and two Muslim friends travelled to Libya seeking work to support their families. While there, they stayed with other Egyptian migrant workers. On the morning of October 4th, the workers were kidnapped by men allegedly associated with the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The families of all the abducted workers paid the demanded ransom. Consequently, Milad's friends were eventually released and returned to Egypt where they received medical treatment. Unfortunately, despite the ransom funds having been provided on his behalf, Milad was forced to remain in captivity.



A Coptic church building.
Photo: VOMC

According to his friends, the captors demanded that the Christian man renounce his faith and instead embrace Islam. Despite enduring torture, he refused. Milad's sister, Madonna, was later informed of a statement he had made to the persecutors: "Even if you cut me into pieces, I would never renounce my faith." When the militants realized that their unyielding hostage was not willing to abandon his Christian faith, they killed him.

Milad's family, who are residents of Egypt, appealed to the Egyptian government for assistance in returning his body home. Finally, on October 28th, family and friends were able to gather and honour the life of the Christian young man. "He was faithful to Christ till his last breath," stated a family friend. Considering that believers in this North African nation

often face enormous pressures to abandon their faith, Libya has been ranked as the ninth most dangerous country in the world for followers of Jesus. More information concerning Christian persecution in Libya, including previously published *Persecution & Prayer Alert* reports, are available at our country profile.

- ***Pray that God will greatly comfort Milad's family and friends, filling them with peace, strength and the assurance that this young man – who remained faithful to Christ until the very end – has gone on heavenward to receive the Lord's promised eternal rewards.***
- ***May Milad's unwavering faith and courageous Christian witness touch the hearts of his Muslim friends and many others in need of salvation (including the perpetrators of his martyrdom), as they themselves seek the truth of the Gospel and thus experience the transformative power of Jesus Christ.***
- ***Prayerfully uphold surviving believers throughout Libya who are faithfully following Christ despite persecution, asking the Lord to provide them protection, encouragement and sustaining grace.***

CHINA: Two House Church Leaders Detained After Police Raids

Source: ChinaAid

Ding Xing'an, who was in his forties when he came to faith in Christ during 2022, left a managerial position in Hainan Province. In addition, his wife resigned from her role there as a teacher. Together, the couple returned to their hometown of Pingxiang, where they established a house church that ministered to the special needs of senior citizens, as well as those living with illnesses or disabilities. Over time, the congregation also began attracting younger people, eventually expanding to two meeting locations that encompassed a total attendance of about 80 believers.



A house church in China.
Photo: ChinaAid

On October 18th, approximately 40 armed police officers raided both house church sites, detaining 27 Christians during the ordeal. All but two of the believers were later released. On October 20th, the families of Ding Xing'an and his coworker, Liang Youping, received notices informing them that the two church leaders were placed in criminal detention.

At the time of compiling this report, local authorities had not issued a public statement regarding the arrests, nor did they disclose any further details about the legal proceedings. It is possible that the church leaders were arrested for reportedly "illegally crossing the national border" in connection with a trip that Ding and others had made this past September to Indonesia where they attended a week-long theological training course.

Similar charges were filed against Pastor An Yankui and others for attending a conference in Malaysia during 2020. (See this report for details.) Each of these believers subsequently received prison sentences ranging from six to 12 months. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in China, go to our country profile.

- ***Pray that all the legal proceedings conducted on behalf of Ding Xing'an and Liang Youping will be done fairly and justly; and that, throughout the process, these Christian leaders will remain deeply aware of God's strengthening presence.***
- ***Also remember the families of these detained leaders during this difficult time of separation, praying that they too will be further strengthened and comforted as the Lord faithfully provides for their daily spiritual, practical and emotional needs.***
- ***Prayerfully uphold the members of their church congregation, asking God to likewise sustain these believers' faith, guide their decisions, and enable them to continue ministering boldly – so they can victoriously thrive amid the challenges of governmental oppression.***

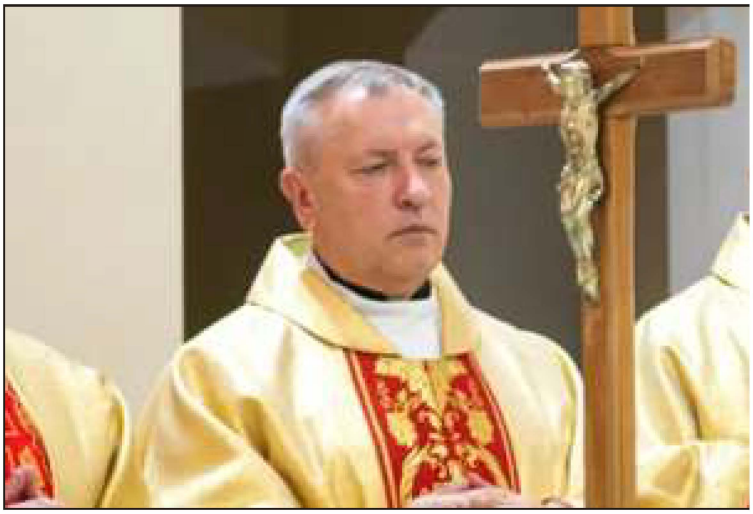
REPORT UPDATE

BELARUS: Three-Year Sentence for Arrested Priest

Sources: Katolik.life, Forum18, Belarusian Christian Democracy

On March 16th of this year, police arrested Anatol Parakhnevich, a 65-year-old Catholic priest, at his parish in Alkovichi, Minsk Region. During the time of his arrest, few details about the case were released. (See the initial report announcing his arrest.) While awaiting trial, Father Anatol reportedly suffered a heart attack during incarceration.

News sources recently reported that a closed trial was held in October without official notice. Although the Christian leader had been initially accused of treason, it appears that the court was unable to secure a conviction based on that charge. Instead, Father Anatol was convicted of "discrediting Belarus," "insulting official representatives" and/or "supporting extremist activity." As a result of these new convictions, he was sentenced to three years in prison.



Father Anatol Parakhnevich
Photo: Katolik.life

The court has since refused to release details regarding the newly applied convictions, including the specific charges under which the priest was found guilty. When officials were contacted by Forum18 for information, they stated that disclosing such details was "forbidden." According to local parishioners, Father Anatol rejects the allegations against him and intends to appeal the verdict. To review previously published reports concerning the challenges facing Christians in Belarus, go to our country profile.

- ***As Father Anatol awaits his hopeful soon release from imprisonment, pray that he will receive impartations of God's strength, comfort and grace spiritually each new day; as well as needed restoration of his physical health and preservation of his emotional well-being.***
- ***Ask the Lord to also grant this Christian leader and his legal representatives wisdom, favour and clarity throughout the appeal process, praying that the information required for them to present a strong defence will be readily available.***
- ***Continue to prayerfully remember other church leaders in Belarus who have been imprisoned by governing authorities, as well as congregations undergoing different forms of persecution, asking God to also greatly encourage and equip them to remain steadfast in their faith.***

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