



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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"Today, as in the time of Pilate, Christ the Saviour is accused. Once again there is mocking and scorn, slander and noisy jubilation. But He remains yet, and His glance embraces sinners with unending compassion."

~ Georgi Petrovich Vins

KAZAKHSTAN: Three Pastors Sentenced

Source: Forum 18

Three self-exiled pastors have been sentenced to terms up to five years for leading the New Life Pentecostal Church in the city of Almaty. The sentences were announced on November 1st, when the court rejected their latest appeal. The founding pastor, Maxim Maximov, faces five years in prison, while his wife Larisa Maximova, and ministry colleague Sergei Zaikin, each face four years. All three pastors intend to appeal the conviction at the Supreme Court.

The charges involve "causing psychological harm," as well as alleged involvement in illegal associations. In at least one case, however, the time frame for the accusation was before the victim was even born. The three pastors have fled the country and are presently living in the United States, though they would like to return to their homeland.

The New Life Church was originally founded in 1991 under the former Soviet Union and officially registered in 2012. Despite its legal status, the church has faced repeated attacks by the state-controlled media over the past few years. Though all charges were against the three individuals, five properties belonging to their church -- including the main worship building -- have been confiscated and placed under a restraining order.

Some governing authorities have offered alternatives to resolve the issues. In November 2018, another church leader, Pastor Ivan Kryukov, was approached by police who suggested that all these legal problems could be dismissed if the church gave monetary compensation. A few months later, the church leaders were told that their collaboration with the secret police would

settle any issues. Offers like these have been declined by the pastoral team due to the injustice of their situation. For more information on the challenges facing Christians in Kazakhstan, go to www.vomcanada.com/kazakhstan.htm.

Please intercede for these three exiled church leaders, as they spend extended time away from their homes and church, only to be threatened with imprisonment if they return. May their congregation members find ways of meeting together for worship and encouragement. In the meantime, pray that the courts will provide a just and equitable ruling.

CHINA: Christians Interrogated for Online Book Purchases

Sources: ChinaAid, International Christian Concern

After having arrested the owner of an online Christian bookstore, Zhang Xiaomai, Chinese authorities are now conducting nationwide investigations relating to purchased books from the company. The Wheat Bookstore has been distributing Christian literature, including Bibles, to people across China.

Customers are being invited to "tea sessions" with local authorities who are requesting they bring any purchased books to the police station where these resources may be confiscated. In other cases, search warrants have been obtained to permit the raiding of homes and the resulting removal of any purchased books.

The bookstore staff has sent a notice to its customers warning them of potential visits by police and offering suggestions. Christians are being advised to delete their order records and hide any books they may have purchased. To learn more about persecution in China, and review the ministry's previously posted reports, check www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

As Chinese authorities endeavour to block the distribution of Christian materials to the millions of spiritually needy believers in the country, pray that opportunities will be found to provide these oppressed followers of Christ the tools required for ongoing encouragement, growth and evangelism. Also intercede for Zhang as he contends with this legal matter, as well as those of his customers who may be subjected to police raids and confiscation.

SRI LANKA: Officials Demand Worship Activities to Cease

Source: NCEASL

On the morning of October 23rd, a police officer, along with the district's governmental leaders, arrived at the Hokma Bible Centre in Deniyaya to question the pastor about the legality of this place of worship. The authorities demanded that all worship activities cease until authorization is received from the Divisional Secretariat, and for the local police to be informed of any church functioning in the area. An hour later, the pastor received a phone call asking him to come to the police station and make a legal statement. The accused refused to comply without the consultation of his lawyer.

The Hokma Bible Centre has operated in this location since 2007. The pastor had previously a letter of consent from the Divisional Secretariat in relation to an electricity bill that was issued in the name of the church. The recently imposed legal action against the church comes less than a week after a committee from a local Hindu temple submitted a petition to the authorities in opposition to the church. For additional reports on the hardships being encountered by Christians in Sri Lanka, go to www.vomcanada.com/srilanka.htm.

Please remember this church leader and his congregation in your prayers, as they work with their legal advisors on how to wisely respond in this situation. Despite the newly imposed challenges, pray that God will give them opportunities to reach out to their neighbours with the message of the Gospel. May Sri Lanka's governmental authorities be mindful of their need to treat all religious groups fairly and seek the best interests of the country's citizens by encouraging unity and harmony.

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit VOMC's prayer wall at www.vomcanada.com/prayerwall.htm.

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If you would like to encourage someone to read or receive this weekly prayer alert, please use our online form at www.vomcanada.com/pnpforward.htm and help spread the message of the persecuted church around the world.

For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review the list of options at www.vomcanada.com/take-action.htm.