



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, December 5, 2019

*"I have said these things to you,
that in Me you may have peace. In the
world you will have tribulation. But take
heart; I have overcome the world."*

~ John 16:33 ESV

BURKINA FASO: Fourteen Killed in Church Attack

Sources: International Christian Concern, Barnabas Fund, LeFaso, Christianity Today

Fourteen church members, including five boys, were shot to death on December 1st. The attack happened in the small town of Hantoukoura in eastern Burkina Faso. The church had gathered together for worship when gunmen entered, ordering all the men and boys out of the building. They were forced to the ground, had their heads covered, and then killed one at a time.

At last report, no group has claimed responsibility. However, the region has seen a recent rise of Islamic militancy, and this incident is reminiscent of other similar attacks in recent months. The state governor is encouraging vigilance and has pledged the support of the military to track down those responsible.

Please uphold in prayer the loved ones of all those who were slain during this recent attack, asking for the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be evident to them in ways that far surpass their understanding. May the Lord also minister to the surviving members of this traumatized congregation, proving to be their ever-present help and strength in times of trouble. Pray that others in the community will witness the love and grace of God mightily at work, even in the midst of this horrible tragedy, so that they too will realize their need for His salvation and the assurance of eternal life.

ETHIOPIA: Evangelical Church Not Allowed

Source: World Watch Monitor

Authorities in the town of Debarq (also spelled Debarq) have told an evangelical fellowship group that they are no longer permitted to meet. The town, which consists of 25,000 citizens, is considered holy by members of the dominant Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and religious leaders have put on pressure to prevent any other religious group from being established. Another church was burned in 2008 and, over time, most evangelical believers have moved to the city of Gondar, located about 80 kilometres to the south.

In early November, police broke up a gathering of the Ethiopian Fellowship of Evangelical Students. A number of the students were arrested and then pressured to sign an agreement that they will never gather together again in Debarq. Seven of the group's leaders were detained for three days before they were finally released, but only after signing similar statements.

While Ethiopia's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, ethnic and religious divisions can place heavy influence in areas dominated by either Islam or the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For more information on the challenges facing evangelical Christians in Ethiopia, go to www.vomcanada.com/ethiopia.htm.

Despite pressures from the town's opposing Orthodox and civil leaders, may the Gospel message continue to be made known among the community of Debarq, especially to those who are longing for a more meaningful relationship with the Lord. Ask Him to grant wisdom and direction to the evangelical leaders of the banned student group, so they can meet for worship without any further hindrance or opposition. Also prayerfully remember Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a born-again Christian, as he seeks to peacefully unite a country that's been fragmented by many divisions.

PRAISE REPORT

INDIA: Five Released from Prison

Sources: Christian Post, Morning Star News

In 2008, the Indian state of Odisha (formerly known as Orissa) erupted in religious violence after the assassination of a popular Hindu swami. Though Maoist rebels claimed responsibility, blame was quickly placed on Christians in the area. In the days and weeks that followed, hundreds of Christians were massacred and thousands displaced due to mob violence. Over the years, the Voice of the Martyrs Canada has been providing support for many children whose parents were killed in the attacks.

Seven Christians were arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, despite overwhelming evidence of their innocence. During the past few months, however, those convictions have begun to be overturned by the courts. In May 2019, Gornath Chalanseth was released. In July, he was joined by Bijaya Kumar Sanaseth, leaving the other five accused men in prison after 11 years.

We are pleased to report that the remaining five Christians were granted bail by the country's Supreme Court on November 26th. According to Indian law, while all seven have been released on bail, they remain free unless the high court orders their detainment in the future. Vijayesh Lal from the Evangelical Fellowship of India declared, "This is like a Christmas gift for them." At the same time, he describes this as "a small success," since their names have not yet been cleared and those responsible for the original crimes remain at large.

Praise God for the freedom that has finally been granted to these innocent men! As they reintegrate back into their communities after so many years of imprisonment, pray that the transition be smooth and that they will be well received. Also pray for the restoration and blessing of their families, asking the Lord to recompense them for all the years of separation. Despite the extensive time gap, may the Lord continue to guide the judicial authorities in the courts so that the truth will be upheld.

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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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.