



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, July 16, 2020

*"We are afflicted in every way, but
not crushed; perplexed, but not driven
to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed."*

~ 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 ESV

CHINA: Hundreds of Crosses Removed

Sources: ChinaAid, Bitter Winter, Christian Post

In the early morning of July 7th, more than 100 security personnel arrived at the Aodi Christian Church and Yinchang Christian Church in Wenzhou. They came with cranes and removed the crosses from atop the church buildings. Door locks were also broken, and some church property was destroyed. When church members tried to intervene, they were physically assaulted, resulting in several injuries. The elderly among them were not exempt from mistreatment, for a senior man in his 80s was disrespectfully pushed to the ground.

The demolition orders are representative of many similar state-sanctioned operations. In the state of Anhui, crosses were removed from at least 250 government-approved churches during the first four months of 2020 alone. "All Christian symbols are ordered to be removed," declares one state employee. Similar action is being taken against symbols of other religions as well.

The ongoing crackdown against Christians in China has been described as the most intense in decades. If you have not yet watched VOMC's video interview with Bob Fu of ChinaAid at www.vomcanada.com/china-videos/video/cn-interview-bobfu.html, we encourage you to do so.

Please continue to lift up China's Christians in your prayers, asking God to minister His grace, healing, spiritual encouragement and renewed hope in the midst of the government-imposed restrictions and the resulting harm it has caused so many. May He also work in the lives of state authorities and members of the security forces, so that they too will become keenly aware of the Lord's presence and sovereignty. Overall, pray that the continued outreach of churches throughout the country will be mightily used to bring multitudes from all walks of life to a saving faith in Christ.

IRAN: Seven Iranians Sentenced

Sources: Iran Human Rights Monitor, Middle East Concern, Article18, Mission Network News, Morning Star News

Seven Iranian Christian converts were sentenced on June 21st for "spreading propaganda against the state." The evidence used against them included possession of Christian books and symbols, holding home church meetings, and being in contact with Iranian "evangelists" abroad. All seven intend to appeal their sentences.

The sentences varied widely. Brothers Sam and Sasan Khosravi received a one-year prison term, followed by two years in exile. They have also been banned from resuming their work in the hospitality sector. Habib Heydari also received one year in prison but with no additional penalties. Pooriya Peyma received a 91-day prison sentence; the minimum required to ensure a criminal record. Sam and Sasan's wives, Maryam and Marjan, received fines of three to four months the average wage in salary. Maryam was also given a lifetime ban from working at any national institution -- a severe blow after two decades of service at a local hospital. Finally, Pooriya's wife Fatemeh was also fined.

Thankfully, new changes to Iran's criminal code were not applied in these cases. The recent amendment would have meant that those found guilty of "propaganda contrary to Islam" or "deviant psychological manipulation" could be labelled as 'members of a sect.' Such membership may result in more severe terms of imprisonment, fines, or even death. Additionally, these new changes target online ministries and virtual church meetings.

The new wording of the law appears to be an attempt to make such charges sound less religious in hopes of quelling international outrage. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in Iran, go to www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

Remember these seven Christians in your prayers as they face the challenges posed by these sentences, including their painful separation from loved ones and fellow believers. As their appeals are presented before the courts, may the Holy Spirit mediate on their behalf -- at the same time, working in the hearts of the country's governmental and judicial authorities. Intercede also for the many other followers of Christ who are serving time in prison or living in exile because of their faith. May their lives serve as vibrant testimonies for Christ wherever they happen to be located, assured that His presence will always be with them.

PRAISE REPORT

SUDAN: Apostasy Laws Abolished

Sources: Release International, BBC, Mission Network News, Barnabas Fund

After more than 30 years of Islamist rule, Sudan has passed a series of legal reforms. Two major changes involved the abolishment of public flogging and the repeal of apostasy laws for those leaving Islam. Other regulations relate to the consumption of alcohol, female mutilation, and the opportunity for women to travel with their children without having to obtain permission from their husbands.

"We will drop all the laws violating human rights in Sudan," claims Justice Minister Nasredeen Abdulbari, signalling that other changes may yet be coming. He further states that these changes are a way of safeguarding the rights of non-Muslims, who make up approximately three percent of the population. These changes reflect significant steps forward in the continuation of reforms announced this past April (see www.vomcanada.com/su-2020-04-16.htm). For an overview on the persecution encountered by Christians in Sudan, including access to previously posted reports, go to www.vomcanada.com/sudan.htm.

Praise God for these encouraging changes to Sudan's legal system! Pray that these reforms will truly be a major step towards freedom of religion for all citizens. As the changes are being implemented in Sudanese society, and gradually in the lives of the people, continue to pray for Christians who still encounter opposition from their leaders and neighbours. May these believers be encouraged by the fact that though positive reforms are a 'work in progress,' they will eventually achieve greater freedoms and enhanced unity.

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.