



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

~ John 15:18-19 ESV

NIGERIA: Leah Sharibu Held Captive for Three Years

Sources: International Christian Concern, USCIRF, Baptist News

On February 19th, 2018, Islamic jihadists from Boko Haram swept into Dapchi town, Yobe State, in northern Nigeria. In this particular incident (one of numerous abductions), the militants kidnapped 110 girls, most of whom were Muslims, from Dapchi's Government Girls' Science and Technical College. (To review one of VOMC's past reports on Leah's situation, go to www.vomcanada.com/ng-2018-08-30.htm).

A few weeks later, on March 21st, the jihadists returned 104 of the girls to their families. Five girls had died, and one, Leah Sharibu (then 14 years old), was retained as a prisoner because she "refused to cooperate" by renouncing her Christian faith and converting to Islam. Today, three years later, Leah is reportedly alive but remains in captivity.

Please remember to prayerfully uphold Leah and other surviving Christians who were abducted in separate incidences and, to date, are still being held captive by Nigeria's terrorist groups because of their faith in Jesus. Pray that these Christians will remain strong in the Lord, serving as courageous witnesses within the camps. In addition to encouraging one another in the faith, may they also have opportunities to minister to the spiritual needs of their captors. In addition, please remember the distraught families of the abducted Christians as they desperately await word of their loved ones' safe release from captivity, asking God to fill them with His peace and comfort. On behalf of the nation as a whole, pray that the Lord will

raise up leaders who are committed to the governance of peace, justice and protection for the benefit and blessing of all Nigeria's citizens.

ALGERIA: Christians Facing Two Years' Imprisonment

Sources: Mission Network News, Morning Star News

Along with the issuance of a substantial fine, a court in Algeria has sentenced Pastor Rachid Seighir and Nouh Hamimi to two years in prison. These Christians are being accused of "shaking the faith" of Muslims for having made Christian literature available at the bookstore they managed. The men found out about the February 27th ruling when a notice was slipped under the door of their church building.

The Christian bookstore has faced legal problems for many years. In 2008, Pastor Rachid was convicted of similar charges but acquitted on appeal. In 2017, the state governor ordered the store to close. While that decision was reversed the following year, the authorities refused to allow the Christians to reopen the shop.

When the Oratoire Church, where Pastor Rachid serves in leadership, was also ordered to close in late 2019, he acknowledged that many ministry opportunities had come about as a result. "Everyone has heard of the church and is talking about it too," he added. (To review a previously posted report, see www.vomcanada.com/dz-2020-01-23.htm.) Pastor Rachid believes that the recent conviction took place in retaliation for the previous acquittals. The two Christians have since appealed their convictions and sentences.

Pray that Pastor Rachid and Nouh will seize opportunities to display the light of the Gospel to those around them in the midst of these difficulties. Ask the Lord to intervene in future court rulings, not only granting these two believers rightful freedom but also allowing the Oratoire Church and bookstore to reopen. In general, please lift up all of Algeria's persecuted believers in your prayers, asking that they will be given the wisdom and strength to respond with overcoming faith and perseverance.

MYANMAR: Day of Prayer for Peace

Sources: Free Burma Rangers, BBC

The nation of Myanmar, also referred to as Burma, has dominated the news in recent days, following a recent military coup. On February 1st, the military seized control just as a new session of parliament was set to open. Thousands of citizens have risen up in protest, but the military has reacted with extreme force, resulting in the deaths of many civilians. In the midst of the fierce oppression, and at the risk of their lives, the people of Myanmar are continuing in the outcry for a return to democracy.

While the country is predominantly Buddhist, there are large groups of Christians, particularly within the Chin and Karen tribal groups. For them, violence is not new; it has been a part of their lives under both elected and military governances. In some cases, Christians have found

themselves in areas controlled by Chinese-backed rebel organizations that oppose the Gospel. Other times, the opposition has come from government officials or Buddhist groups. For more on the persecution facing Christians in Myanmar, go to www.vomcanada.com/burma.htm.

A Day of Prayer for Burma has been declared to take place on March 14th. The people of Myanmar, particularly those among the ethnic tribal groups, are calling on Christians around the world to join them in prayer for their nation during this time of upheaval. Their requests are included below....

Please pray with us that the dictators opposing democracy will either have a change of heart or be removed from their positions of power, and that all political prisoners will be released. May the people of Myanmar be granted the establishment of a democratic society that is truly representative of all people. Until then, intercede on behalf of those who are enduring attacks from the military, asking that these citizens will obtain the advocacy and assistance they need. May the message of forgiveness and reconciliation become a reality to all -- including the country's dictators, as well as members of the military and police forces.

INDIA: Persecution Sanctioned by Authorities

Sources: Morning Star News, Evangelical Fellowship of India

Persecution in India comes from many sources. Religious disagreements among family or neighbours can escalate to violence, or Hindu leaders may openly oppose the spread of the Gospel in a community. While such incidents may be reported to the police, legal assistance does not always result. In many instances, police may even join in the harassment of Christians.

On February 7th, armed Hindu militants disrupted the worship services of two churches in the Madhya Pradesh state. The attackers beat congregation members and then persuaded the police to arrest more than 20 Christians on the allegation that they were taking part in "forcible conversions."

The police, aware of the planned attacks beforehand, arrived at the villages before the violence began. However, they did nothing to prevent the damages done to church buildings or the physical assaults committed against the congregants. Pastor Malsingh Meda from the village of Bhamdakhapar was arrested along with 21 members of his church. Also arrested was Pastor Dilipsingh Vasunia from Jambukheda village. Both were released on bail, pending trial.

On February 21st, local police joined with militants to disrupt a prayer meeting in the Ambedkarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh. They verbally abused the pastor and warned that he would be arrested and jailed on religious conversion charges if he conducted church services again.

Six days later, a Christian man, Prakash Narayan, was detained along with his family in Kallur village, Karnataka, where they were visiting another Christian family. Some local villagers complained to police that the family had been involved in religious conversions. Following an

interrogation session, Prakash and his family were released after they signed a statement affirming that their visit was not connected with any conversions.

These are just a few of the recent incidents involving the police. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in India, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Remember these believers in India who are encountering ongoing harassment from family members and neighbours, as well as governing authorities. May those in power recognize their responsibility to equally represent all citizens in what is constitutionally to be a democratic nation. Pray that all Christians facing opposition will respond with words and actions that reflect the love and grace of God, ultimately bringing many more to faith in Him through Jesus Christ.

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