



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

~ Philippians 4:6-7 ESV

CHINA: Christians Arrested After Church Raid

Source: ChinaAid

On the morning of March 16th, agents from the religious affairs bureau, along with public security officers, raided the Renai Reformed Church in Guiyang, taking more than ten Christians into custody.

Over the years, the church of less than a hundred members has faced ongoing harassment from Chinese Communist Party agents for refusing to join the government-sanctioned Three-Self Church. In September 2018, they lost their facility after being banned from meeting for worship services. Subsequently, the congregation began holding services in restaurants and hotels where they were raided at least three more times.

After hearing of the most recent raid, the church's leader, Elder Zhang Chunlei, went to the police station, along with several other Christians, to negotiate with the officers. The authorities then arrested him. While some of those detained were released later in the day, at last report, Elder Zhang and some of the other church members have not been released. Additional reports on the persecution of Christians in China are available at www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

Please prayerfully lift up Elder Zhang and the other believers who are currently being detained by the authorities. Pray for wisdom and strength for all members of the Renai Reformed Church as they seek creative ways to continue their ministry in the face of relentless opposition. In general, continue to remember the many Christians who are being persecuted for their faith in China, asking that God would not only minister to these believers and their families, but also shine His light through them, ultimately leading many more to faith in Christ.

IRAN: Prison Summons Expected Soon

Sources: Middle East Concern, Article18, International Christian Concern

Iranian believers request prayer for Christian converts Homayoun Zhavah (62) and his wife Sara Admadi (42), who are anticipating an order to serve prison sentences because of their house church activities.

The couple were on holidays with friends when arrested by intelligence agents. While their friends were released after questioning, Homayoun and Sara were detained and eventually sent to the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran. Homayoun, who suffers from advanced Parkinson's disease, was released after a month. Sara was held for over two months, during which time she underwent solitary confinement, as well as severe psychological abuse.

Homayoun was sentenced in November 2020 to two years in prison, while Sara was given eleven years. On appeal, Sara's sentence was reduced to eight years. On March 14th, their case was sent to the government department responsible for enforcement, which means that they may be summoned to serve their sentences at any moment. Their lawyer insists they have not engaged in any activities against national security; their only "crime" is membership in a house church. For further information on the challenges encountered by those seeking to serve Christ in Iran, and to view previously published reports, go to www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

Please pray that God will empower, encourage and protect Homayoun and Sara during this difficult time. May He give Homayoun the physical healing and strength needed for the sentencing ahead, and provide emotional healing to Sara from the trauma of psychological abuse she previously endured in prison. Ask God to work mightily in the hearts of the Iranian authorities so they would stop persecuting Christians for the peaceful practise of their faith and extend mercy to this faithful couple by overturning the charges against them.

REPORT UPDATE

ALGERIA: Sentence Upheld After Appeal

Sources: Middle East Concern, Morning Star News

In February, it was reported that a Christian man named Hamid had been sentenced to five years in prison for sharing a cartoon on Facebook (see www.vomcanada.com/dz-2021-02-04.htm for more details). On March 22nd, a judge in Oran, Algeria, heard his appeal and upheld the sentence along with a fine of almost \$1,000 CAD.

During the appeal hearing, Hamid's lawyer, Farid Khemisti, told the judge that the father of four young children received the heavy sentence because he was a Christian. "I expected, at the worst, six months in prison," Farid said. The sentence is the maximum available for insulting Islam. It has

not yet been determined if the sentence will be further appealed. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in Algeria, go to www.vomcanada.com/algeria.htm.

Pray for God's wisdom and guidance to be granted to Hamid and his lawyer as they determine the appropriate next steps. Also ask the Lord to give this brother in Christ and his family strength in the days ahead, as well as opportunities to boldly share their faith with others, while awaiting his hopeful release from prison. In the meantime, may judicial officials and fellow prisoners -- especially those who oppose Christianity -- witness the grace and love of God through Hamid's life and come to accept Jesus as their own personal Saviour and Lord.

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