



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"When Christ calls a man,
He bids him come and die."*

~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

IRAN: Christians Detained and Questioned

Sources: Middle East Concern, Mohabat News

Four Christian men were detained on April 19th in separate raids throughout Dezful in southwestern Iran. They have been identified as Ismail Narimanpour, Mohammad Ali Torabi, Alireza Vark Shah and Hojjat Lotfi Khalaf.

While in custody, the men were reportedly beaten and questioned about their political beliefs. They were asked about their opinions on the Islamic Revolution and whether they would be participating in upcoming presidential elections. On April 21st, after signing an agreement to immediately report to the Intelligence Office when summoned, the men were temporarily released. It is believed that they had not been incarcerated because of the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Iranian prisons.

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada will be co-hosting a free webinar featuring Dr. Hormoz Shariat of Iran Alive Ministries on the evening of May 27th, providing you and others of your church an opportunity to learn more about what God is powerfully accomplishing throughout Iran, even in the midst of the global pandemic and political oppression. For more details about this upcoming webinar and to register, go to www.digitalconsultants.ca/voiceofthemartyrs.

Continue to remember these Iranian Christians and others in your prayers, as they boldly persist in spreading the Gospel throughout their nation, despite the opposition they encounter. Pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of all those currently detained for their faith in Christ, asking the Lord to protect, comfort and strengthen them. May He give His followers in Iran the courage to stand firm in their beliefs, even when suffering for Christ.

REPORT UPDATES

LAOS: Detained Pastor Confirmed Alive and Released

Sources: Barnabas Fund, Mission Network News

On March 15th, 2020, Pastor Sithong Theppavong was approached by authorities who demanded that he agree to no longer hold worship services at a small church in Savannakhet Province, Laos (see www.vomcanada.com/la-2020-04-23.htm). When Pastor Sithong refused, he was arrested without charge. Earlier this spring, those familiar with his situation were concerned that he was no longer alive since there had been no news of his whereabouts. (To read this previously posted report, visit www.vomcanada.com/la-2021-02-11.htm.)

More than a year after his original detention, Pastor Sithong finally stood trial for "creating disorder" by holding church services without permission. On April 6th, 2021, he was convicted and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. He was also given a fine of \$522 CAD. However, since Pastor Sithong already spent more than a year in prison, it was determined during the recent hearing that his sentence has been fully served, resulting in his release.

In reference to the release, a Laotian Christian states: "We have prayed for Pastor Sithong for more than a year now. We're very excited that he's still alive.... He may have been sick and frail in prison, but now he'll be very happy to be able to serve God again."

Praise God that Pastor Sithong survived his time in prison, and that he has been freed and reunited with his family. Please pray for his complete healing, both physically and emotionally, as he now reintegrates into his community. Further, ask the Lord to provide him continued ministry opportunities and, in the process, equip and embolden this persevering pastor as he seeks to compassionately and effectively reach the people of Laos with the message of the Gospel.

PAKISTAN: Christian Man Tortured Into False Confession

Source: Morning Star News

On February 13th, Haroon Ayub Masih and his friend Salamat Mansha Masih were accused of blasphemy after reading the Bible out loud at a public park in Lahore, Pakistan, and then offering a Christian book to a Muslim man. Haroon and his family escaped into hiding, but Salamat was arrested (see www.vomcanada.com/pk-2021-03-04.htm).

During the two months Salamat spent in prison before seeing a judge on April 16th, he faced severe mental and physical torture. His family members were not allowed to see him until the day of his court appearance. One week afterwards, his loved ones were finally able to speak with him for the first time. During the visit, they learned of the repeated death threats he faced and that, due to the severity of the torture, he succumbed to a confession of the blasphemy charges and the authorities' forceful coercion for him to disclose the names other Christians in his Bible study circle. The police also questioned him about the whereabouts of Haroon.

Salamat's lawyer has been unable to convince the court nor senior police officials of the gravity of the illegal actions that are taking place in the prison. Salamat's bail is being sought, but the chances of success are considered very slim. For additional reports on the challenges facing Christians in Pakistan, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Please prayerfully uphold Salamat as he withstands physical and mental abuse because of his faith in Jesus Christ. Pray that God will provide him needed protection, as well as the grace and strength to overcome this season of suffering. Through the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit, may Salamat experience an even deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus. And while awaiting deliverance from imprisonment, may he seize opportunities to minister to fellow inmates and even the very officers who have tortured him. Also pray for the continued protection of Haroon. May God's justice and truth ultimately prevail for both of these Christian men.

PAKISTAN: Death Threats Against Released Christian Teen

Source: Church in Chains

On March 1st, Nabeel Masih's lawyer successfully argued that there was no evidence of blasphemy committed by the teenage Christian, resulting in his release from a prison in Pakistan on March 18th (see www.vomcanada.com/pk-2021-03-18.htm). He was then swiftly taken into hiding for his protection from militant crowds demanding his death.

It was anticipated that Nabeel's release would lead to his full acquittal once the paperwork was completed. However, court delays have exacerbated the danger of his situation. On March 22nd, lawyers argued that, for his safety, Nabeel should be excused from attending hearings. Instead, the judge ordered that the case be moved to a court in Nabeel's immediate home area, where risks to his safety would be the greatest. Subsequent appeals of the judge's decision have been unsuccessful.

Legal counsel has also called for police protection because of the many threats facing this young Christian. On behalf of Nabeel and his family, the British Pakistani Christian Association has been providing assistance towards the cost of lawyers, security personnel and living expenses. They will also be purchasing protective vests for those involved.

Pray that the courts will act quickly and justly, providing a full acquittal for this Christian teen. In addition, ask God to provide Nabeel and his family the courage, peace and safety measures needed to protect them from harm and harassment. Even in his youth, may the character of Christ be demonstrated through the life of this young man, serving as a powerful witness to all those around him. All the while, through the effectual workings of the Holy Spirit, may the hearts of many respond in faith to Christ.