



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, June 17, 2021

*"Strength of my heart, I need not fail,
Not mind to fear but to obey,
With such a Leader, who could quail?
Thou art as Thou wert yesterday.
Strength of my heart, I rest in Thee,
Fulfil Thy purposes through me."
~ Amy Carmichael*

NOTE REGARDING PREVIOUS REPORT

On May 27th, a report was released about 15 people who had been killed at a service in Adjaarara, Burkina Faso. It has since come to our attention that the incident happened at an Islamic baptismal ceremony and not a Christian service. With the compassion of our Lord Jesus, our hearts go out to those grieving the loss of the men who were killed. May the 'God of all comfort' minister in their situation.

MYANMAR: Joint Organizational Statement Released

Sources: Religious Liberty Partnership, VOMC, Jubilee Campaign

A coalition of more than 25 organizations has signed a joint statement expressing deep concerns over the violence committed by security forces in Myanmar against peaceful protesters. The global call to action follows the illegal coup d'état which overthrew the democratically elected government on February 1st. This signed statement especially spotlights how the military has been destroying places of worship in their crackdown. Religious and ethnic minorities have been targeted, resulting in an increasing number of internally displaced persons.

"We watched with uneasiness the gross violation of human rights and freedoms ensuing from the military-led coup of February 2021 and wanted to express our concern with the deterioration of

religious freedom of belief in Myanmar," explains Floyd Brobbel, CEO of The Voice of the Martyrs Canada and the newly elected Chairman of the Religious Liberty Partnership.

"This statement reflects our collective call for action, anticipating that law and order and good governance will be restored and maintained," he adds. "Further, we are encouraging the global church to pray that all citizens of Myanmar enjoy the freedom to worship openly, without abuse, and that their human rights are protected and enhanced." The statement is available for review at www.vomcanada.com/download/myanmar-rlp.pdf.

Please pray that this collaborative organizational statement will serve as an integral means of gaining the attention of the international community, as well as Myanmar's governing authorities. Also pray that proactive actions will be taken to prevent further violence from being committed against the country's innocent citizens. May the Christian communities in Myanmar find strength in unity and embolden one another to stand firm in their faith.

BURKINA FASO: Christians on Blacklist

Sources: Release International, International Christian Concern, Wall Street Journal

More than 130 civilians in Burkina Faso were indiscriminately slaughtered during an overnight raid on Yagha village on June 4th. Although no particular group has claimed responsibility for this most recent attack, government officials believe the devastating invasion was the work of one of several Islamic jihadist groups operating in the area.

While this was the deadliest jihadist attack to date in Burkina Faso, it is one of many that continue to happen each month, particularly in the northern part of the country. It is increasingly clear that Christians are the targets of the violence, as churches and their members are often attacked in the destructive raids.

A representative from The Voice of the Martyrs Poland states that the threat of violence initially affected all of Burkina Faso's citizens equally but, in April 2019, jihadists brazenly announced that they plan to focus on Christians. "They want to kick out the Christians," the representative continues. "Christians are on the blacklist. The jihadists come looking for Christians to kidnap or kill them."

Continue to pray for an end to the destructive violence perpetrated by the country's various militant groups. May those responsible for the attacks experience the transformative love of Jesus and, as a result, turn from their works of darkness and be drawn into His glorious light. Pray that God's protection and strength will be experienced by all Christians facing the threat of persecution, and that His healing and comfort will provide additional ministry to those who have been directly affected by the most recent raid.

VIETNAM: COVID-19 Outbreak Leads to Opposition

Sources: World Evangelical Alliance, New York Times, Revival Ekklesia Mission

For more than 20 years, Phuong Van Tan and Vo Xuan Loan have served at the Revival Ekklesia Mission Church in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. However, in recent months, they became the targets of major opposition and a potential criminal investigation after a COVID-19 outbreak was blamed on the church.

According to officials, Pastor Vo Xuan Loan travelled to Hanoi in late April and began experiencing symptoms two weeks later. They contend that she contracted the virus while in Hanoi. Claiming that churchgoers continued to gather in close quarters without masks, the authorities believe that more than 200 cases can be linked to this recent outbreak. Pastor Vo Xuan, however, insists that she has always asked church members to wear masks and believes she actually contracted the disease when she returned home.

As a result of the outbreak, Vietnam's evangelical community has faced nationwide opposition. The general public is now blaming Christians for the virus, since more than half of Vietnam's 7,800 cases have occurred in the past month, resulting in a significant outrage against evangelical believers. The Vietnam Evangelical Alliance has issued a call to prayer, stating that "evangelical Christians in Vietnam are severely misunderstood, discriminated against and deeply hurt." The pastors, both of whom are presently being treated in hospital, have expressed gratitude for the outpouring of care they have received.

Ask God to strengthen and protect the pastoral leaders and congregational members of the Revival Ekklesia Mission Church. May He grant wisdom and direction to Christian leaders throughout the country as they respond to the national outbreak of opposition. Pray that Vietnam's governing authorities will handle the public outrage with sensitivity, diplomacy and restraint.

REPORT UPDATE

IRAN: Christians Ordered to Prison

Sources: Article18, Middle East Concern, International Christian Concern, Church in Chains

Christian converts Homayoun Zhavah (62) and his wife Sara Admadi (42) were on holidays with friends when they were arrested by Iranian intelligence officials. As a result of their house church activities, Homayoun was sentenced to two years in prison while Sara received a sentence of eight years. At last report, they were awaiting an order to report to prison. More details are available at www.vomcanada.com/ir-2021-03-25.htm.

Homayoun and Sara received the order to present themselves to the notorious Evin Prison by June 15th. When they reported as requested, the couple were informed that they had received a 30-day reprieve. It is their hope that, during this reprieve, the Supreme Court will agree to hear their case, or at least agree to allow Homayoun to pay a fine instead of completing the prison

term, since he suffers from an advanced case of Parkinson's disease. However, if the courts permit Homayoun to return home, and mandate Sara to remain in prison, he would not have her assistance as his primary caregiver.

In a separate case, Reza Zaeemi (40) turned himself in to the Karaj Central Prison on June 2nd to start serving a nine-month sentence for "promoting evangelical Christianity." Like Homayoun and Sara, Reza is a convert from Islam.

While Christianity is an official religion in Iran, leaving Islam is illegal. Converts such as these are not recognized by authorities as being "Christians" and, therefore, they are prohibited from attending any church services. As a result, converts worship discretely in private or small house church groups. It is believed there may be as many as one million converts in Iran. For more information on the persecution of Christians in Iran, go to www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

Praise God for this short reprieve for Homayoun and Sara. Pray that God will grant strength and grace to Homayoun, Sara and Reza as these newly charged Christian converts anticipate their prison sentences. In particular, may the married couple receive a sympathetic response from the courts, allowing them to remain at home so Sara can continue caring for Homayoun's physiological needs. Please also prayerfully uphold the many other Christians currently serving time in Iranian prisons because of their faith in Jesus Christ, in hopes that they too will receive a favourable outcome as they likewise await pardon from unjust prison sentences.

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