



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"...Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

(Daniel addressing King Nebuchadnezzar)

~ Daniel 3:17-18 ESV

SPECIAL NOTE OF APPRECIATION

This week celebrates 20 years since The Voice of the Martyrs Canada first started its automated email service by providing the *Persecution & Prayer Alert*. Three years prior this being implemented, Glenn Penner (who was serving as VOMC's Communications Director at the time, and then later on as Chief Executive Officer) had been asked by some friends of the ministry if he could email them specific ways to pray for the persecuted church. Word got out and, by 2001, the number of people receiving this information had grown to the point that the emails could no longer be done manually. So, on August 1st of that year, a new website was launched, including the opportunity for online donations, purchasing of catalogue resources, and the automated email service. Since that first day, more than 1,000 *Persecution & Prayer Alert* emails have been sent out to thousands of faithful prayer supporters around the world.

We know that many of you have devotedly prayed with us throughout these two decades. As Floyd Brobbel, VOMC's present Chief Executive Officer, wrote: "Thousands have responded weekly to remember their persecuted brothers and sisters in prayer. Although the impact of this global prayer movement cannot be measured on this side of heaven, we continue our service of intercession in obedience and faith in the Lord who sustains and strengthens His people." May God richly bless each of you for your faithfulness!

INDIA: Pastor Forced by Police to Flee

Source: Morning Star News

A pastor in northern India and his family were forced to flee after he experienced torture and threats from police. Pastor Sanjay Kumar Bharati was taken into custody on June 13th – along with his wife, children, and several members of their church in Shyampur, Uttarakhand – after authorities received a complaint that they were violating COVID-19 protocols. However, all of the interrogation questions asked by the police centred on the ministry of the church and conversions to Christianity.

As soon as Pastor Sanjay entered the police station, the officers began to beat him. While whipping him with a belt, they hurled insults at the pastor and accused him of giving financial incentives for people to convert to the Christian faith. Although Pastor Sanjay and his family moved to the village 12 years ago, the police called him an outsider and argued that he came to the area to lure community members into religious conversion.

Although the other detained believers were released from police custody, before Pastor Sanjay was allowed to leave, an officer ordered him to move out of the village. Following the incident, his landlord asked him to vacate the home where he and his family had been living, and no one else in the village was willing to rent any accommodations to them. Pastor Sanjay was also warned that if the authorities received one more complaint against him, he would be jailed. Concerned Christian leaders have urged the threatened family to leave the village for their safety and helped them move to an undisclosed location more than 900 kilometres away.

The church led by Pastor Sanjay had previously reached 150 members, but due to ongoing opposition, the numbers dropped to 50. After this incident with the police, a village meeting was conducted in which all the church members were threatened to stop attending the fellowship or be ostracized. Even though he has now left the village, Pastor Sanjay has continued to receive calls from members of the church who are facing intense pressure to abandon their faith in Christ. For more on the persecution of Christians in India, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Prayerfully uphold Pastor Sanjay, his wife and their three children as they readjust to this sudden forceful relocation. While this Christian family settles into their new home and community, may they experience a time of healing, spiritual refreshment and divine direction for future ministry opportunities. In the process, ask God to continue using this faithful pastor to provide greatly needed wisdom, guidance and encouragement to the members of the church in Shyampur, as they contend with intensified societal pressure. During this season of oppression, may these persecuted believers be strengthened by the assurance of God's ongoing presence and the fulfillment of His wonderful promises.

PAKISTAN: Christian Medical Worker Forced to Decline Promotion

Sources: Mission Network News, Morning Star News

In recent months, a number of healthcare workers in Pakistan have faced opposition because of their Christian faith. In April, two nurses were charged with blasphemy after following instructions from their supervisor (see www.vomcanada.com/pk-2021-04-15.htm). In another instance, a nurse was accused of blasphemy by her co-workers for no apparent reason and subjected to abuse (see www.vomcanada.com/pk-2021-02-11.htm). The latest reported case involves a Christian man who had been threatened and assaulted after receiving a promotion to a leadership position at his place of employment.

After working for six years at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre in Kirachi, Riaz Gill was promoted to the position of deputy director on April 8th. However, this action led to death threats from his colleagues, who refused to work under the leadership of a Christian. After persistent pressure from fellow staff members, Riaz officially withdrew from the position on June 16th. However, his resignation was not sufficient to appease the hostile opponents, who by this time wanted him removed completely from the hospital.

On June 23rd, two doctors and their aides entered Riaz's office and began breaking furniture and manhandling the believer. Even though three officers were present at the scene, they merely looked on while the abusers continued to attack him. Finally, hospital security staff intervened and removed the assailants from the office. The aggressors then turned on the director of the hospital, who was thankfully able to lock his door in time. From outside the current director's office, the aggravated doctors continued to demand that Riaz's employment be terminated immediately.

While police reports have been filed, no arrests have been made. Riaz continues to face harassment and threats. Speaking of his co-workers, he says, "It seems that the entire Muslim staff had turned against me and were protecting the attackers."

Please pray for the protection of Riaz, along with his family, and other staff members at the medical centre who are at risk. May God's conviction come upon the antagonists, helping them to realize the importance of treating fellow medical workers with fairness and respect, regardless of one's religious affiliation. As the attacked Christian man continues to demonstrate the love of Jesus to all who cross his path, may the Lord work in the hearts of his opposing co-workers, leading them to accept Riaz as a valued colleague and work alongside him in harmony. Pray that the authorities will take the necessary steps to ensure that such discrimination does not continue in the workplace.

PRAISE REPORT

BELARUS: Christian Worker Released from Custody

Source: VOMC Contacts

In the previous week's *Persecution & Prayer Alert*, it was reported that Maria, the wife of a ministry training centre director, was suddenly arrested in Belarus on July 9th for unknown reasons. We are pleased to announce that shortly after the published report, Maria was released from custody.

Over the years, Maria has been actively involved in the ministry of her church and the training/retreat centre her husband oversees. In the past, she has also raised concerns about the corrupt nature of the current political regime of Belarus. While the exact reason of her arrest remains unknown, Maria is thankful to be released, referring to her freedom as "God's miracle." For now, she has left the country until the political situation settles.

Praise God that this faithful Christian worker is safe and free. In the midst of great political uncertainty, may His Holy Spirit continue to mediate on her behalf, also providing Maria and her family great peace of mind and consolation. Pray that the political situation in Belarus will improve substantially, and that freedom of speech and belief will be permitted for all citizens of the country. May Maria and her husband's ministry through the training centre be able to continue and thrive, serving as a tremendous blessing to many in their community and beyond.

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