



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you; and through the rivers,
they shall not overwhelm you; when you
walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you."*

~ Isaiah 43:2 ESV

ERITREA: Fifteen Christians Rearrested

Source: Release International

Eritrean authorities recently arrested 15 Christians during a series of raids on their houses in the capital city of Asmara. All 15 believers had been previously imprisoned for their faith -- some for up to 16 years.

Over the past year, numerous Christian prisoners in this East African nation have been released, leading to some speculation that a change in policy may be imminent. However, these recent arrests, together with that of three elderly pastors in late July, demonstrate that the persecution of Christians is still taking place in the country. (A previously posted report on the arrest of the pastors is available at www.vomcanada.com/er-2021-08-12.htm.)

All 15 of the recently arrested followers of Jesus had been released last summer, but they were apprehended again after a list of Christian contacts was discovered by the authorities. These rearrested believers were all taken to the Mai Serwa maximum security prison in Asmara. There are now an estimated 160 Christians being held captive in prisons throughout Eritrea.

VOMC's Minister-at-Large, Greg Musselman, was privileged to recently interview Kidane Gebremeskel Gedion, an Eritrean pastor who endured imprisonment for two-and-a-half years. To view their televised conversation, which was aired on the *100 Huntley Street* program, please go to www.vomcanada.com/video/100-kidane. A more extensive report and interview with Pastor Kidane may be viewed at www.vomcanada.com/video/kidane.

Continue to remember the many Christians who are presently suffering for their faith amid the inhumane conditions of Eritrea's prisons. Also prayerfully uphold their families who must endure years of separation without being permitted to visit their imprisoned loved ones or even verify their state of health and well-being. Ask God to mightily intervene on behalf of these families, stirring the hearts of the country's governmental leaders who need to realize the importance of treating all citizens justly and with respect, which includes granting them rightful freedom of religion. Furthermore, pray for the ongoing efforts of evangelists who, despite the risks of ill-treatment and imprisonment, continue to courageously share the "Good News" of the Gospel throughout the nation.

PAKISTAN: Cross Removed During Church Opening

Sources: UCA News, Info Chrétienne

The Church of the Nazarene is the only place of worship in Tibba Sultanpur, a large town located in Pakistan's Punjab province. Initially, the members of this church had been meeting in homes, but when the congregation increased in size to about 80 members, there was the need to accommodate the growth by constructing a building for corporate worship. According to Pastor Yaqoob, neighbours had been informed of the building plans in advance. Since there was no opposition to the church's plans of construction, they proceeded to erect the brick building in July.

As the church members were gathering on August 29th to worship in their new building facility for the first time, a mob began to assemble in protest. Enflamed by rhetoric from local Muslim clerics, the crowd claimed that the building was illegal. A throng of protesters surrounded the place of worship, insisting on the removal of the cross from the top of the church building. Thankfully, further destruction to the building and acts of violence were prevented by a 'stay order' that addressed any possible construction in the future. Even so, Christians are now being ostracized by others in the town's community. For more information on the persecution facing Christians in Pakistan, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Please pray for Pastor Yaqoob and the other leaders representing the Church of the Nazarene as they seek God's wisdom and direction while navigating their next steps in reaching out to their community with the wonderful message of His salvation. Despite the opposition this faithful church community has encountered, may He use their presence as a strong witness for the Gospel in a Muslim-dominated area, introducing many others of the town and surrounding areas to Jesus, our Risen Saviour, who longs to enjoy a loving personal relationship with and among all His beloved creation.

KAZAKHSTAN: Religious Worshippers Monitored and Fined

Source: Forum 18

Since the beginning of 2021, at least 20 cases have gone to court in Kazakhstan for holding religious meetings without state permission. The fines brought against them varied from three

weeks' to four months' average wages. Amendments are also presently in the works to further tighten certain religious restrictions in the country.

Places of worship are being closely monitored by authorities to determine if any laws have been contravened. A Baptist church in the city of Oral, which was previously fined, is regularly being visited by an official who sits in the back of the sanctuary to monitor the church's services, watching and writing down the names of those present. The service is also recorded, despite requests from church members to stop doing so. However, these recent arrests, together with that of three elderly pastors in late July, demonstrate. In response to the situation, one member, Nikolai Novikov, countered with this interesting perspective: "Let [the official] come and hear the Word of God."

Under proposed legislative changes, there will be new restrictions placed on all meetings taking place outside of a building owned by a registered religious community. These changes would then be added to the existing registration requirements. For further information on the difficulties encountered by Christians in Kazakhstan, go to www.vomcanada.com/kazakhstan.htm.

Pray for wisdom and discernment as church leaders in Kazakhstan, along with their congregation members, seek ways to meet the needs of their communities in the midst of the country's changing regulatory rules. May they find innovative ways to effectively reach out to those around them with the message of God's peace in these unprecedented times. May the Lord speak clearly into the hearts of the officials monitoring the church services, working by His Holy Spirit in and through their lives so that His great Kingdom purposes will ultimately be fulfilled.

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