



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, November 4, 2021

*"Within the shadow of Thy throne, still
may we dwell secure. Sufficient is Thine
arm alone, and our defence is sure."*

~ Isaac Watts

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH November 7th, 2021

Each year, churches around the world gather to pray with and for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering because of their faith. Globally, an estimated 260 million believers live in places where they face high to extreme forms of persecution. Various organizations, including The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, have joined together for the purpose of encouraging churches to commit to a time of dedicated prayer – whether it's to take place on this designated Sunday or another time that's better suited for each congregation.

For more information, free downloadable resources, as well as suggestions on how you can specifically pray, visit www.idop.ca. We also encourage you to read the articles provided on this website to gain a deeper understanding of persecution and the various challenges Christians encounter as a result of opposition.

CUBA: House Church Denied Reopening

Source: VOM USA

Following an ease of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the Cuban government announced that churches could begin meeting again in person as of Sunday, October 10th. However, two days before the restrictions were scheduled to be lifted, a house church led by Amparo Gallo received word that they would not be allowed to meet. The house church, located in the city of Santa Clara, presently has approximately 1,000 members.

Although the reasons for this exception were not made clear, churches in Cuba (particularly unregistered churches) are frequently faced with restrictions instated by the government. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in Cuba, go to www.vomcanada.com/cuba.htm.

Pray for wisdom on behalf of Amparo and other church leaders in Cuba as they endeavour to honour God amid the ongoing restrictions. May the governing officials lift the unnecessary restrictions against Christians in the country, allowing them to freely and safely resume attending worship services. Please also pray that God's Word will continue to spread throughout this island nation, leading many more to faith in Christ.

REPORT UPDATES

INDIA: Christians Protest Proposed Legislation and Pastor's Arrest

Sources: The Hindu, Church in Chains, Barnabas Fund

Hundreds of Christians in India participated in a peaceful rally on October 25th in protest against proposed anti-conversion laws, as well as a recent mob attack on a church that resulted in the arrest of the pastor.

The rally was organized following a mob attack by Hindu nationalists who had forcibly entered the Bairidevarkoppa Church in Hubballi, Karnataka, accusing the Christians of participating in alleged religious conversions. The mob of militants formed a demonstration that ended up blocking a highway, in their demand that Pastor Somu Avaradhi be arrested. (For more details on the incident, see www.vomcanada.com/in-2021-10-28a.htm.)

It is believed that the Hindu nationalists were emboldened by a statement issued on September 28th in which state government officials announced their intent to introduce new legislation restricting religious conversions. Several other states in India have laws similar to those being considered in Karnataka. Although the proposed laws aim to forbid conversions by "force, fraud or allurement," on many occasions, such laws have been abused by militants who falsely accuse those practising Christianity.

During the recent protest, the concerned Christians marched through the town, ultimately arriving at the government buildings in Hubballi. A memorandum addressed to the state's Chief Minister was then presented to local governing officials, calling on the government to ensure the protection of churches and the safety of Christians, in addition to the release of Pastor Somu. Previously posted reports addressing the various difficulties encountered by Christians in India are available at www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Ask the Lord to provide greatly needed wisdom and direction to the political leaders of Karnataka as they consider the implications of these legislative changes. May they take into serious account how such laws have been terribly abused by those opposed to Christianity in other parts of the country. Also prayerfully uphold the state's church leaders, as they endeavour to provide their congregations guidance and encouragement during this very

challenging time. May God's truth and justice prevail for every believer in India who has been falsely accused of forced conversions – including Pastor Somu.

PAKISTAN: Sentence Appeal Meets Ongoing Delays

Source: Church in Chains

Pakistani pastor, Zafar Bhatti, has been in prison since July 2012 after being charged with allegedly sending blasphemous text messages. Five years later, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for blasphemy – a charge based on allegations he continues to deny. In June of this year, an appeals court upheld the pastor's sentence, despite conflicting evidence. For more information on the circumstances surrounding his case, go to www.vomcanada.com/pk-2021-07-01a.htm.

In the latest ruling of the appeals process, a judge decided on October 18th not to hear Pastor Zafar's case but rather send it back to a lower court to be heard again. This recent ruling has been viewed as another means of causing unnecessary delay to the legal proceedings concerning the accused Christian. Pastor Zafar's lawyers are now considering taking his case to the Supreme Court. For additional reports on the case of Pastor Zafar, and/or to review news accounts of other believers in Pakistan who are suffering for their faith, visit www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Please prayerfully uphold Pastor Zafar as he continues to endure imprisonment due to the ongoing delays. In addition to sustaining this long-suffering pastor with renewed strength as he awaits vindication, may God provide him many wonderful opportunities to testify of Christ to those around him – whether they be prison officials or fellow inmates. Also, in the interim, ask the Lord to grant Pastor Zafar's lawyers wisdom as they consider their next move, with hopes that the courts will rule favourably on his behalf. During this prolonged period of separation from loved ones, may Pastor Zafar and his family and friends be filled with God's peace, comfort and encouragement.

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1
Tel. (905) 670-9721 Website: www.vomcanada.com