



## **Persecution & Prayer Alert**

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada  
www.vomcanada.com

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*"Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good will to men.'"*  
~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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### **NIGERIA: Churches Issued Threatening Letters**

Sources: Open Doors, Barnabas Fund, Sahara Reporters, Morning Star News

Churches in the northern Nigerian state of Zamfara have received threatening letters that warn of violence if they do not stop meeting for worship and permanently close their facilities. Along with threats of imminent attacks, the letters issued an ultimatum demanding that churches in the state close within the next three years. It is believed that these threatening messages were sent from an Islamic militant group, though no specific details have been made available. The letters were copied to police and security forces.

The threats targeting the Christian community in Zamfara State are considered to be credible. In response, a special police squad has been created to patrol the church properties and protect the worshippers. Additionally, Christians have been instructed to intensify security measures in all places of worship, along with pastors' homes and other church-owned facilities. The Christian Association of Nigeria in Zamfara State has directed all their churches to discontinue any worship activities after 5 p.m. for the next three months.

One Christian leader in the area has spread the warning to believers in other northern Nigerian states as well. As indicated in a previously posted prayer alert report, a similar letter of threat was sent to Christians in Plateau State late October (see [www.vomcanada.com/ng-2021-12-02.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/ng-2021-12-02.htm)).

*Prayerfully uphold all the Christians who are being affected by these recent threats – whether in Zamfara State or other areas of Nigeria. May the Lord provide these believers inner peace and protection during such times of uncertainty. Ask Him to also be with the officials assigned*

*to the special police squad, as they investigate the identity of the potential attackers – directing them to the very militants responsible for sending the threatening letters so further violence can be prevented. May God's continued comfort and strength rest on the many Nigerians who have lost dear loved ones in recent years due to targeted attacks of persecution.*

### **INDIA: Nationalists Demand Cancellation of Church Services**

Sources: Barnabas Fund, AsiaNews, Hindustan Times

Churches in the Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh, India, are voicing concerns after the Hindu nationalist group *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* issued a document demanding the cancellation of all meetings held "for conversions and activities of this type." On November 22nd, hundreds of Hindu activists attended a rally to condemn what they allege are mass conversion activities by Christians among tribal people in the district.

Madhya Pradesh is governed by the Hindu nationalist BJP party, which enacted more stringent anti-conversion legislation in early 2021. District authorities have stated that all events for the purpose of conversion are to be banned, prompting churches in the area to cancel various services. Throughout the past month, many churches have cancelled Sunday prayer meetings due to false allegations that their Christian gatherings are promoting conversion activities.

"Our members are facing atrocities but, instead of providing protection, the administration is supporting the organization," states a concerned spokesperson for the Roman Catholic archdiocese. The government, however, denies these claims. The Jhabua district magistrate counters this concern by issuing the following statement: "There is no ban on organizing prayer meetings. If someone has any issue, or members of the Christian community are feeling unsafe, they can file a complaint."

As Christmas approaches, concerns of heightened persecution against Christians are valid. Since Christianity typically becomes more prominent in society during the holidays, followers of Jesus around the world may be at greater risk of targeted acts of violence. "People don't like that some people are Christians and celebrating the birth of Jesus," explains a believer identified as Erik. "So they want to deter that as much as possible."

At Christmastime in 2008, horrific violence broke out against Christians in the Kandhamal district of Odisha State, leading to mass destruction and killings. In 2018, at least 18 incidents were reported in four different Indian states. For further information, and/or to review reports on more recent incidences of persecution, go to [www.vomcanada.com/in-2019-01-03.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/in-2019-01-03.htm).

*In light of the opposition their congregations are presently facing, may the church leaders in Jhabua receive God's wisdom so they can determine the best course of action going forward. Additionally, pray that the country's governing authorities will represent all citizens fairly by ensuring their right for 'freedom of belief' without the risk of threat or violence. May this Christmas season be a time when the people of India will come to understand the true meaning of "peace on earth," as proclaimed by God's angelic messengers (Luke 2:14).*

## **KAZAKHSTAN: Parliament Debates New Religious Restrictions**

Source: Forum18

On October 6th, amendments to Kazakhstan's religious laws were approved by the Parliament and then passed on to the Senate. The legislation added new restrictions to religious events conducted outside a building of worship owned by a registered religious organization. Already, any religious community not in receipt of an official state registration is presently being banned, and the process of obtaining such registration has proven to be very difficult. Under the new amendments, any activity taking place at a different location from that of the registered place of worship will require approval at least ten business days in advance, along with a detailed explanation of what the event is to entail. The approval of these religious events rests with local officials who could withhold permission for many reasons.

Along with the onerous registration approval process, the probability of arbitrary denials, and additional restrictions on events, there is now this further concern that the legislation applies to any meeting held at a location not owned by the religious organization. As a result, members of churches congregating in rented facilities are concerned that their meetings will now fall under these new restrictions and, therefore, require permission for each individual church event.

On December 2nd, the Senate approved the legislation, adding new amendments. Restrictions against onetime religious events remained in effect. The amended approval process now requires precise details, including the date and time, how many people will be involved, travel routes and number of vehicles needed, and whether loudspeakers are to be used. Senate amendments clarified that such approval is not required for regular meetings held in facilities not owned by the organization, such as rentals.

The amended legislation has recently been returned to Parliament for approval. While thankful for some of the clarifications, religious leaders remain concerned over these newly stipulated requirements and how they are actually to be enacted. "Much will depend on the instructions of religious affairs authorities and the discretion of local or national officials," states a legal specialist. For more information on the challenges encountered by Christians in Kazakhstan, and/or to review previously posted reports, go to [www.vomcanada.com/kazakhstan.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/kazakhstan.htm).

*As Kazakhstan's politicians finalize the details of this new legislation, pray that God's wisdom will be operating among them, steering and guiding their decisions in favour of our Christian brothers and sisters. In the process, may all restrictive legislation be overturned, allowing churches the freedom to rightfully honour God and gather together for worship. Also prayerfully uphold the country's Christian leaders as they endeavour to effectively lead their congregations and reach out with the Good News of Jesus – the 'Gospel of Peace' – in their communities.*

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