



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"Christian martyrdom is not about standing up for one's beliefs. It's about proclaiming, in word and deed, the Lord's forgiveness and love for His enemies, in faithfulness to [His] command. It's about the Lord and His enemies, not about us and ours."

~ Rev. Dr. Eric Foley, Chief Executive Officer
The Voice of the Martyrs Korea

INDIA: Five Arrested at Family Celebration

Sources: Matters India, AsiaNews, Persecution Relief, Radio Veritas Asia

Bibha Kerketta made her vows to become a nun six months ago and came home in early June to celebrate with her family and friends in Balachhapar, a village located in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh. However, as people gathered at her mother's home on June 6th, a group of Hindu militants barged into the house, accusing the Christians of conducting a healing service and insulting other religions.

Despite denials and explanations from those present, the mob questioned the nun and her family about why they had converted to Christianity. The aggressors also tore apart a Bible and snatched away other religious items. When police were called to investigate the disturbance, the authorities arrested Bibha, along with her mother and three others who were present. The Christians were held in the Jashpur prison until their bail hearing. On June 13th, the magistrate granted bail to each of these detained believers.

Anti-conversion legislation is commonly used as an excuse by militant Hindu groups to create problems for Christians and other religious minorities. For more information on the persecution of followers of Jesus in India, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Please pray that all charges against these recently arrested believers will be dropped and that any ongoing animosities within their community would be resolved, allowing Bibha and her family to gather peacefully without fear of further attacks. Despite the hatred and anger directed towards them by the accusatory militants, may these Christians – as well as others encountering persecution throughout India – be examples of Christ by demonstrating His love and mercy in the face of opposition.

NIGERIA: Hundreds Killed Amid Ongoing Violence

Sources: Church in Chains, Morning Star News, Release International

Nigeria is considered one of the most dangerous places on earth to be a Christian because of ongoing violence from terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and Fulani militants. Having been a problem primarily in the northern and central areas of the country, persecution has also recently begun infiltrating into the southern region. Two areas where violence has been particularly rampant are Benue State and Plateau State. Since mid-May, hundreds of innocent villagers were killed and tens of thousands displaced, mainly due to Fulani attacks.

In the Mangu area of Plateau State, more than 200 Christians lost their lives in a 48-hour killing spree that took place between May 16th and 17th. Spreading across as many as 30 villages, militants armed with assault weapons and machetes killed their fellow Nigerians indiscriminately while burning homes, churches and other buildings.

In Benue State, dozens of Christians have also been killed. On May 24th, several communities were raided, resulting in the destruction of entire villages and dozens of fatalities. Additional villages within this state were attacked on June 3rd and 4th, resulting in a total of 46 deaths.

Speaking of the recent attacks, Anglican Archbishop Ben Kwashi issued a call for prayer: "We as Christians in the Middle Belt [of] northern Nigeria are asking for concerted prayer because the devastation is beyond human ability to bear. Please also pray that the church will preach the Gospel of salvation."

In response to the ongoing bloodshed, The Voice of the Martyrs Canada is facilitating various International Ministry projects in Nigeria. One of them involves partnering with Christian Faith Ministries to establish a refuge for women and girls who have been affected by the violence. To learn more about this project, and how you can support your Nigerian family in Christ, visit www.vomcanada.com/video/marashouse.

Pray that God's peace, comfort and strength will fill the hearts of believers in Nigeria, especially those who are mourning the loss of loved ones due to the recent attacks, as well as the many surviving victims who now must cope with the trauma they experienced. Ask the Lord to provide wisdom and guidance to Nigeria's leaders at all levels of governance, so that appropriate action can be taken to put a stop to the violence. As requested by Archbishop Kwashi, pray that the message of the Gospel would continue to spread across the nation so that many more Nigerians will receive God's gift of eternal salvation – including the perpetrators.

PRAISE REPORT

INDIA: Anti-Conversion Law to be Repealed

Sources: The Guardian, The Hindu, Matters India, USA Today

In the state elections held in Karnataka on May 10th, the secular Indian National Congress party won a majority of seats over the former ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Moving quickly on election promises to reverse the "unconstitutional decisions" that were previously made, the newly elected government plans to introduce legislation that will repeal the state's "Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act," widely referred to as the anti-conversion law. The new bill will be introduced in the upcoming assembly session, beginning on July 3rd. The new government also plans to reverse the previous changes made to school textbooks that had promoted aggressive Hindu nationalist (Hindutva) ideologies.

Members of the BJP have condemned the planned legislation. One opposing politician accused the new government of having an "anti-Hindu agenda" through which the alleged "conversion mafia" intend to wipe out Hindus. On the other hand, Christian groups in the state have responded with relief. A representative of the Syro-Malabar Church announced in a press release that the decision "deserves appreciation by all those who stand for democracy and human rights." Catholic Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore expressed "deep gratitude and satisfaction," stating that Christians in Karnataka wished to "continue to serve all people, regardless of caste and creed, especially the poor and marginalized."

Karnataka is one of nine Indian states to have anti-conversion laws. These laws, which claim to prevent coercive religious conversions, have been consistently abused by those who oppose any religion other than Hinduism. For more details on the ways in which our Christian brothers and sisters in India have been affected by this legislation, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Praise God for this small yet essential step towards religious freedom in Karnataka. Pray that the legislation will pass quickly, and that this decision would also provide an incentive for other states to take into consideration the numerous cases in which their anti-conversion laws have been terribly abused. In the process, may Christians throughout the country consistently demonstrate their commitment to extend love and grace to all people, thus proving that such restrictive legislation is unnecessary.

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