



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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*"Prayer enables us first
inwardly to overcome the enemy, and
then outwardly to deal with him."*

~ Watchman Nee

CHINA: Bible College Graduation Raided

Sources: ChinaAid, Church in Chains

The Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, China, has faced particularly harsh opposition by Chinese Communist Party officials over recent years. Despite the ongoing oppression they've encountered, members of this church remain determined in their efforts to continue reaching their community for Christ and training others of their congregation for evangelism. To read previously published reports on the various challenges experienced by this faithful fellowship of believers, go to www.vomcanada.com/early-rain-covenant-church.htm.

As part of their ongoing ministry efforts, the church operates a Bible college known as the Workers' College. On October 28th, the college held a graduation ceremony in a hotel conference room which was attended by more than 30 church members. While the ceremony was taking place, over 20 officers from various departments of the government interrupted the service, declaring that the gathering was "illegal." Nine of the believers who had been present at the ceremony were taken to police stations for interrogation. Although some of these Christians – including Elder Li Yingqiang – were later released; at last report, five church members are remaining in detention.

Please join us in prayerfully upholding the members of the Early Rain Covenant Church. One of their representatives issued the following prayer request: "Pray that the Lord would watch over each of [our Christian] brothers and sisters who were taken to the police station and give them courageous hearts...to see the Eternal Saviour in the midst of persecution and fire. Pray also for mercy on our nation and government officials, who continue to persecute the Lord Christ and His church, not realizing that this is the only way of life that can save them from [eternal] death."

CUBA: Pastors Detained for Organizing Religious Freedom Conferences

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Marti, Instituto Patmos

In the early hours of October 31st, Alejandro Hernández Cepero, who serves as the pastor of an independent church in Cuba, was taken from his home by state security officers and detained. Another pastor, Luis Eugenio Maldonado Calvo, had been summoned to appear before the authorities that same day, and was subsequently also taken into custody.

Both pastors were instrumental in organizing roundtable meetings in various parts of the island nation for the purpose of discussing religious freedom. These meetings were to include representatives from a wide variety of religious and ethnic groups. The first session was held on October 3rd in Havana and Santiago de Cuba. The second session was scheduled to take place the day the two Christian leaders happened to be unexpectedly detained.

The two pastors were reportedly released later that day, after the time had passed for the scheduled meeting in which they were both supposed to participate. For more reports on the persecution of Christians in Cuba, go to www.vomcanada.com/cuba.htm.

While we can praise God that these two pastors have thankfully been released from custody, please pray for their ongoing efforts to encourage religious freedom in this Communist nation. May the Lord continue to equip church congregations throughout the country in their endeavours to faithfully fulfil Christ's Great Commission by proclaiming the Gospel message. Pray that those in Cuba who are opposed to Christianity will eventually come to understand that acknowledging Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour is the only way to receive God's provision of eternal life.

PRAISE REPORT

INDIA: Positive Court Ruling on State Anti-Conversion Law

Sources: The Hindu, NDTV, Scroll.in

A recent ruling by the Allahabad High Court has brought encouraging news to Christians in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. This court decision may help to more precisely determine who is legally qualified to file a grievance under the state's anti-conversion law, as well as provide some beneficial legal guidelines on what constitutes "allurement."

In January of this year, Pastor Jose Papachen and his wife Sheeja were sent to jail after a leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party accused the couple of luring people to Christianity. Although the two believers appealed the decision, their application for bail was denied in March. Fortunately, following a ruling issued by the high court on September 6th, in which the judge determined that the accusations against them were not in contravention of the legislation, the two Christians were released on bail.

The court ruled that "accusations of alluring people to convert" can only be filed by the person being targeted or by a family member of that person. Therefore, a third party cannot file the accusation, as was done in the case against Pastor Jose and Sheeja. The court also determined that distributing a Bible and imparting "good teachings" are not considered to be acts of "allurement for religious conversion."

In his ruling, Justice Shamim Ahmad observed: "Providing teaching, distributing [a] Holy Bible, encouraging children [to receive an] education, organizing [an] assembly of villagers and performing *bhandara* [providing a free meal], [and] instructing villagers not to enter into [an] altercation [nor] to take liquor, do not amount to allurement under the 2021 act."

Christians in the Uttar Pradesh state have frequently been targets of vindictive neighbours and militant community members who use false accusations of forcible conversions against them. While the recent encouraging ruling only relates to this particular case, and specifically applies within this Indian state, Christian leaders are hopeful that it may serve as a precedent in determining future allegations. For more details on the difficulties faced by Christians in India, and/or to review previously published reports, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Praise God for the wisdom demonstrated by the court's presiding judge after his consideration of the presented legal arguments. Pray that the judge's equitable ruling will help to prevent other similar cases from being filed against our Christian brothers and sisters in Uttar Pradesh state, and potentially throughout the entire country of India. Now that a favourable verdict has been determined, may the Lord protect Pastor Jose and Sheeja as they return to their community and adjust to life following the ordeal.

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