



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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*"Blessed are you when others revile
you and persecute you and utter all kinds
of evil against you falsely on My account.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is
great in heaven, for so they persecuted
the prophets who were before you."*

~ Matthew 5:11-12 ESV

DR CONGO: Church Attacks Result in Fatalities and Kidnappings

Sources: Open Doors, Barrons, Al-Mayadeen, Voice of America

Members of the Eglise Message du Temps church are calling for "fervent prayer" after being struck by an attack on January 30th. The church is located within the community of Baeti in the northeastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The attackers have been identified as members of a militant group associated with ISIS.

According to the community's mayor, a total of eight people were killed in the attack – five of whom had gathered inside the church for worship when the invasion took place. At least 30 other congregation members were reportedly kidnapped, including the church's pastor and his wife. The couple's two children were included among those who were tragically killed.

Only two weeks prior to this incident, a bomb exploded inside a Pentecostal church in Kasindi, a town located along the border neighbouring Uganda. That attack occurred on January 14th during the believers' Sunday morning worship service. The militants claimed that 20 Christians were killed in the blast; however, at last report, the death toll stood at 14, with at least 63 people wounded. A Kenyan suspect has since been detained by the authorities.

Since 2021, a rebel group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) has launched attacks throughout the region, resulting in a "state of siege" for the residents. While the violence centres around the group's efforts to establish an Islamic state, Christians have frequently been targeted

in the conflict. Unfortunately, the terrorism of this militant group, which started in Uganda, has now spread into neighbouring DR Congo. Recent reports indicate that the rebels are particularly active in the DR Congo's Kivu province. More information on the persecution of Christians in this war-torn nation is available at www.vomcanada.com/drc.htm.

Please prayerfully uphold our African Christian brothers and sisters in the DR Congo as they mourn the loss of loved ones who were slain during these recent attacks. May the victims' family members and friends tangibly sense our Heavenly Father's love, peace and comforting presence with them. Also remember the survivors who were taken captive by the rebels, praying that they will be divinely protected and released unharmed. In the midst of the ongoing violence, may God mightily intervene in the hearts and minds of people throughout the country – including the militants of the attacks – so that lasting peace will reign in the region.

SRI LANKA: Acts of Vandalism Disrupt Pastors' Convention

Source: NCEASL

Pastors from the Foursquare Church recently gathered at their denominational campground in the Puttalam District of Sri Lanka for an annual convention. At around 1 a.m. on January 25th, a group of unidentified individuals entered the camp and began vandalizing the property.

Windows from four vehicles, including a bus and two vans, were smashed. In addition, a bottle containing gasoline was ignited and thrown into the bus. When conference attendees heard the ruckus and rushed to the scene, the perpetrators immediately fled the area. A police investigation into the incident is presently underway.

This is not the first time the property has been targeted by militants. During the construction of the camp facility, opponents threw stones at the building site and burned down the workers' huts. To review previously posted reports addressing the violence perpetrated against our Christian brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka, go to www.vomcanada.com/srilanka.htm.

Pray that these pastors and their congregations will be granted wisdom, as well as the necessary provisions, as they now deal with the aftermath of the vandalism attacks. May the same apply to other Christians in Sri Lanka who have faced similar opposition because of their faith. Ask the Lord to ensure the country's believers are kept safe and secure whenever they gather for worship and teaching, attend conventions, and/or participate in discipleship programs. May these believers receive the practical support and spiritual encouragement they need so they can continue faithfully serving as "lights" amid the darkness around them.

PAKISTAN: Blasphemy Charges Dropped Due to False Accusations

Sources: CLAAS-UK, Morning Star News

A 72-year-old Christian man in Faisalabad was arrested and charged with blasphemy on February 10th after being accused of tearing a copy of the Quran. The case against Younis Bhatti

(also known as Bhagat) was filed by Sosan Fatima, a woman who had previously attended the Brethren house church founded by the Bhatti family. Having allegedly converted to Islam, Sosan claimed that she was reading the Quran at her home when Younis forced his way into the house. Purportedly, he then grabbed the Islamic scriptures from her and tore its pages, assaulting her during the incident.

Further investigation into the case has revealed that the allegations against the accused man had been fabricated following a dispute over land. Younis is well known for helping Christian families that were displaced as a result of the August 2023 riots in Faisalabad (see this report at www.vomcanada.com/pk-2023-08-24.htm). He had kindly allowed Sosan and her husband to live in a house on his land for free. A few months ago, Younis informed the couple that he wanted to accommodate another family on the property, and that he was willing to build a wall between the two residences. However, Sosan strongly opposed this plan, not wanting to share the property.

According to residents in the area, Sosan was a regular churchgoer, and her claim of becoming a Muslim was made strictly in an attempt to entrap Younis in her plot. Thankfully, her deceit has come to light. All charges against Younis have since been dropped and, in an unexpected move, the authorities have filed charges against Sosan for making false accusations.

The tensions between local Muslims and Christians had initially escalated after news of the accusations spread throughout the community. Following the horrific mass violence that took place in Faisalabad last August (which, incidentally, was also triggered by allegations of blasphemy), local Christians feared that the situation would repeat itself. However, with the truth now coming out, tensions are easing and life within the bustling city is gradually returning to normalcy.

The misuse of blasphemy charges has been prevalent in Pakistan over the years. Nasir Saeed, who serves as the director of CLAAS-UK, commended the police for the discernment they demonstrated during their investigations. He highlighted the numerous instances in which similar allegations were used for vendettas or personal gain. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, and/or to view podcast reports, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Praise God that the truth concerning this case has been revealed, and that this elderly believer was justly vindicated. Pray for the many others presently facing false accusations, asking that their hearts be filled with courage, strength and peace. Likewise, may justice prevail in the lives of these persecuted Pakistani followers of Jesus, so they too can be rightfully vindicated. Overall, may there be a dramatic change of attitude among the country's general populace, so that the blasphemy laws will no longer be wrongly used as a way of achieving personal gain.

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