



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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*"Against the persecution of a tyrant,
the Godly have no remedy but prayer."
~ John Calvin*

IRAN: Overseas Conversion Leads to Prison Sentence

Sources: Article18, Human Rights in Iran

For some time, an Iranian woman named Laleh Saati lived in Malaysia and, while there, she was baptized as a Christian. Not wanting to return to Iran, Laleh applied for asylum, but the process continued to drag on without resolution. Frustrated with the delay, as well as missing her elderly parents, she returned to Iran in 2017.

Since her return, Laleh had been summoned for interrogation by intelligence agents multiple times. Then, on February 13th of this year, the Christian convert was arrested at her father's home in Ekbatan Town, a suburb of Tehran. Photographs and videos of her baptism and Christian activities in Malaysia were presented as evidence against her.

On March 16th, the 45-year-old believer was brought before a judge who asked her why she risked returning to her home country, given that she had "done such things [Christian activities] outside of Iran." She was then sentenced to two years' imprisonment, followed by a two-year travel ban for "acting against national security by connecting with 'Zionist' Christian organizations."

This case clearly demonstrates that Iranian authorities are able to obtain information on the activities of asylum seekers in foreign countries and use that against them. While most Western countries acknowledge the dangers faced by Iran's Christians, asylum claims are often rejected if the judge questions the genuine nature of a religious conversion. For more information on persecution in Iran and the difficulties experienced by our Christian brothers and sisters in this Middle Eastern country, go to www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

Remember Laleh in your prayers as she faces this two-year prison sentence. Pray that she will receive the comfort, courage and spiritual strength needed to continue standing firm in her faith. May God soften the hearts of the Iranian authorities involved in Laleh's case, allowing this Christian woman to be freed of all charges and thus released from prison. Also uphold Laleh's parents during this painful time of separation, asking that they too would tangibly sense the Lord's comforting presence with them.

MYANMAR: Baptist Pastor Killed by Unknown Assailants

Sources: UCA News, Radio Free Asia, VOMC Contact, Democratic Voice of Burma

On March 18th, three armed men entered a computer shop run by Pastor Nammye Hkun Jaw Li from his home in Magaung township. There, the men shot the pastor twice in the stomach and, when he did not immediately die, they also shot him in the head. At the time of publishing this report, the identities of the gunmen and the reason for the assassination are not completely evident. The pastor leaves behind a grieving wife and three children.

The slain Christian man was a well-known community leader who often participated in anti-military protests. He was also involved with a community-based anti-drug organization called Pat Jasan. The community has witnessed significant unrest because of military activity in the area. Additionally, there have been several reports of local Christian leaders being killed or arrested by members of the military junta. However, in this particular case, it is believed that Pastor Nammye was attacked due to his activities in fighting drug cultivation and distribution.

Hundreds of innocent people in Myanmar have been killed or displaced due to the ongoing violence. Military forces also commonly target Christians. For more reports on the dangers threatening believers in this Southeast Asian country, go to www.vomcanada.com/myanmar.htm.

Please prayerfully lift up Pastor Nammye's wife and children as they mourn this terrible loss, asking our Heavenly Father to comfort them with His presence and provide for all of their emotional, spiritual and practical needs. In the midst of the ongoing violence, pray that followers of Jesus in this war-torn region will serve as agents of His love and peace. Furthermore, intercede for those responsible for this attack who have yet to be identified and brought to justice, in hopes of them realizing the seriousness of committing such a crime and leading them to sincere repentance. May the message of God's saving grace spread throughout the country and bring many more people to faith in Christ.

PAKISTAN: New Look at Evidence Against a Long-Imprisoned Christian

Sources: Morning Star News, AsiaNews

In 2002, Anwar Kenneth received a court verdict sentencing him to death, purportedly for defending Christianity in the days following the September 11th attacks on the New York World Trade Centre. He had written a letter in which he defended his Christian faith and, as a part of that, expressed his belief that Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was not a prophet of God.

Anwar was consequently convicted of blasphemy for allegedly insulting Muhammad – a conviction that carried a mandatory death sentence. The Lahore High Court upheld the verdict in June 2014. However, in a significant move that took place on March 12th of this year, the Supreme Court of Pakistan sought opinions on whether the letter Anwar had originally sent falls within the definition of blasphemy. Lawyer Abdul Hameed Rana argued that Anwar, as a devout Christian, had the right to express his religious beliefs, which do not accept Muhammad as a prophet. The lawyer also indicated that the letter did not contain any derogatory language which could be interpreted as blasphemy.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws have been used against religious minorities for many years. While a death sentence for blasphemy has never been carried out, some accused believers – including Anwar – have spent many years in prison under the threat of death. To learn about other cases of persecution against followers of Jesus in Pakistan, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Please join us in praying that Anwar will finally be acquitted after all these years. As he awaits the court officials' decision, pray that this long-suffering believer will continue to trust in the Lord who promises to uphold all those who steadfastly cling to Him (Psalm 63:8). Prayerfully remember the many other Christians who are likewise serving time in Pakistan's prisons due to similar false accusations. May this recent development in Anwar's case serve as an impetus towards meaningful societal change, resulting in the resolution of challenges posed by the country's current blasphemy laws.

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