



## Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada  
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*"We are the followers of Jesus.  
If He says, 'Forgive your enemies,'  
then we forgive them."*

~ Walter Masih, a Pakistani believer whose  
wife and daughter were murdered in 2009

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### **VIETNAM: New Regulations Bring Tighter Restrictions**

Sources: Christianity Today, Morning Star News, Government Religious Committee of Vietnam

With the release of Decree 95, which took effect on March 30th, Vietnamese governing officials declared that the new regulations they were instituting would ensure freedom of belief for all people within the country, enhancing the responsibilities of individual agencies and organizations. The decree expands on the "Law on Belief and Religion" that was implemented in 2018, which outlines additional policies and procedures regulating religious activities in Vietnam.

In the view of the country's spiritual leaders, however, the new decree has added regulations that will further restrict religious freedoms. Two of the most significant changes revolve around financial reporting and the rights of local officials to suspend religious activities for unspecified "serious violations."

The decree requires that all finances and in-kind goods be reported within 20 days of receipt. Yet this rule is impossible to follow for many religious communities, since they are often not registered due to the government's stringent registration criteria. As a result, the requirement to report income, as well as expenditures, may be onerous for many churches throughout the country.

A third of the policies presented in the Decree 95 document focus on suspending religious activities for various violations. Such infractions include "infringing on the morality of our indigenous culture" and "using religion for personal aggrandizement." The use of such vague terminology could allow local Communist authorities to shut down any group considered a threat to the authoritarian government in Vietnam.

For Christians in Vietnam, how the new rules will actually play out is yet to be seen, as not all religious regulations have been strictly enforced in the past. As one local church leader states, "In Vietnam everything is open; everything is negotiable." Despite the new regulations, Hien Vu from the Institute for Global Engagement is confident that the country's pastors and church leaders will remain steadfast and resilient. "They are used to these restrictions," he explains. "We'll deal with it when it comes; but we'll do whatever God calls us to do." For more reports on the challenges facing Christians in Vietnam, go to [www.vomcanada.com/vietnam.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/vietnam.htm).

*On behalf of church leaders throughout Vietnam, pray that God will grant them wisdom as they deal with the outcome of the newly implemented regulations. May their ministries not in any way be thwarted by the potential challenges, but rather further thrive due to the help and guidance provided by our Heavenly Father. For believers who have been arrested or otherwise persecuted for their faith in Jesus, ask the Lord to impart to them His sustaining grace and strength so they will remain resilient amid opposition. Also, pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit upon the citizens of this country in general, leading all those who view Christianity as "a threat" to acknowledge their need for repentance and salvation through Christ.*

## REPORT UPDATES

### **NIGERIA: Chibok Victim Recovered Ten Years After Kidnapping Attack**

Sources: Open Doors UK, The Guardian, People, BBC, Punch

The Nigerian army announced on April 18th that one of the schoolgirls who had been abducted from the town of Chibok more than a decade ago has been safely rescued. The statement issued by the military provided a photo of Lydia Simon, who is five months pregnant, along with the three children whom she gave birth to while in captivity. No further details were given surrounding Lydia's rescue, other than the fact that she was found in the community of Ngoshe. At last report, the young woman was yet to be reunited with her family.

On April 14th, 2014, a total of 276 girls were abducted by Boko Haram militants while at their secondary school in Chibok, a predominantly Christian town in Borno State. While many of the students have either escaped or been freed over the years, it is believed that approximately 90 victims remain missing today. Since many of the recovered girls were forcibly married to their captors, they may be at risk of the cultural stigma associated with their pregnancies or having borne children during captivity. While speaking at a 10th-anniversary service, Yana Gala – whose daughter is one of the 90 girls still missing – is more concerned about their safe return. "My hope and prayer is that the God [who] doesn't fail will bring back our own children," she says. "Even if they have children now, no matter the condition they are in, we want them that way."

The attack on Chibok is just one of many kidnapping incidents perpetrated by militant Islamic groups in Nigeria. To view previously published reports on this attack, and/or to learn about the other challenges Nigerian Christians encounter, go to [www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm).

*Praise God for the rescue of Lydia and her children, along with the other young women who have been recovered over the past ten years! As they re-adjust to their daily lives, pray that each one of them will receive emotional, physical and spiritual healing. As for the Chibok schoolgirls who remain missing and separated from their families, pray that the Lord will provide them ongoing grace and protection, as well as the help they need. Wherever these young women are located, may they continue to sense His unfailing love and presence in their lives. Please also prayerfully uphold their concerned families as they anxiously await news of the missing girls' rescue and well-being. May they too experience God's strength, comfort and hope.*

### **PAKISTAN: Murder Victim's Family Members Face Threats**

Source: Morning Star News

On November 9th, a 20-year-old Christian student named Farhan Ul Qamar was killed in his family's home by a man known for his hatred towards Christians and Jews. The attack is believed to have occurred as a result of religious tensions escalated by the violence in Gaza. For details on Farhan's murder, go to [www.vomcanada.com/pk-2023-11-29.htm](http://www.vomcanada.com/pk-2023-11-29.htm).

After the attack, Muhammad Zubair confessed to the killing, though he claimed to have mistaken Farhan for one of two brothers who had earlier expressed support for Israel. In court, however, Muhammad later retracted his confession. Since the incident, the family members of the murdered student have faced threats, demanding that they drop all charges against Muhammad.

On March 18th, six men held the Christians at gunpoint, warning that they would all be killed unless a settlement is reached and the accused killer is released. Thankfully, another family member living nearby was able to call the police who subsequently arrested the intruders. However, local authorities released the men after warning them to not intimidate the family again. Though shaken, and despite ongoing warnings to drop all charges, the family is determined to pursue justice for Farhan.

*In the midst of the threats against Farhan's family members, may the Lord provide each of them His divine protection. And as they continue to grieve the tragic loss of their precious loved one, pray that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard their hearts and minds. Ultimately, may the Lord's mercy and justice prevail, not only in Farhan's case, but also in the lives of other potentially hostile community members. Keeping this in mind, please intercede for all those in this South Asian country who desperately need a revelation of God's tremendous love for them. As a result, may they seek to live in peace and harmony with Him and the members of their communities.*