



Voice ^{of the}
Martyrs

PERSECUTION
& PRAYER
ALERT

Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"[Christians] are unknown, yet are condemned; they are put to death, but it is life that they receive. They are poor, and enrich many; destitute of everything, they abound in everything. They are dishonoured, and in their dishonour find their glory."

~ From the "Epistle to Diognetus"
Unknown 2nd-Century Author

NIGERIA: Dozens Killed in Christmas Week Attacks

Sources: Release International, International Christian Concern, Morning Star News

Nearly 50 Nigerian Christians were killed in a series of attacks that took place during the week of Christmas. On Sunday, December 22nd, believers in a village located within Nigeria's Plateau State had gathered to celebrate the season by singing carols. As they were leaving, a group of armed Fulani militants opened fire, killing 14 of the attending Christians, including a pregnant woman and a one-year-old child.

In a series of separate attacks, Christmas Day became a nightmare for five other Christian communities in the state of Benue. Invaders entered the villages of Anwase, Ubutu, Tse Azege, Nyiev-ya and Ityuluv, setting fire to homes and killing approximately 33 people. In the wake of the devastating raids, which resulted in several deaths and the destruction of many properties, the members of these communities have been left reeling. One resident from Anwase stated that the assault "left the community in shock and mourning."

These attacks are reminiscent of the violence that took place in Plateau State during the 2023 Christmas season, resulting in the fatalities of more than 140 citizens. For further reports concerning the suffering of our Christian family in Nigeria, visit VOMC's country profile at www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm.

- *Pray for greatly needed peace, comfort and encouragement on behalf of all those who are mourning the loss of their loved ones as a result of these brutal attacks.*
- *Ask the Lord to also minister to believers otherwise affected by the violent raids – meeting the spiritual, practical, physical and emotional needs of those who were injured, or have lost their homes, properties and/or livelihoods..*
- *May Nigeria's governmental forces take increased action against the horrific destruction caused by militant groups, bringing an end to the reign of indiscriminate terror across large areas of the nation.*

INDIA: Hindu Nationalists Disrupt Christmas Celebrations

Sources: International Christian Concern, Evangelical Fellowship of India, Morning Star News

A wave of violent incidents marred Christmas celebrations across India, even as Prime Minister Modi extolled the virtues of "love" and "harmony" in his Christmas speech and social media posts. The recently occurring acts of violence against followers of Jesus, which took place in at least ten states across India, were particularly instigated by Hindu nationalist groups in their determination to rid the nation of Christian influence.

While the southern state of Kerala is generally known for its communal harmony, right-wing activists attacked a government-operated school in Palakkad during the Christmas celebrations, leading to widespread protests. Elsewhere in Kerala, a manger scene was destroyed.

In Punjab, a Pentecostal pastor had been attacked for allegedly attempting to convert Hindus. In Rajasthan, teachers and students in schools celebrating Christmas were also assaulted. Additionally, in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, protestors barged into a house where Christians had gathered for worship and demanded that the believers stop the service.

Other recent incidents perpetrated by Hindu militants around the country include: harassing a food delivery employee who was dressed as Santa Claus, destroying a statue of Mary (the mother of Jesus), and chanting loudly to drown out the sounds associated with Christmas festivities. In multiple cases across the nation, worship gatherings were also disrupted by protestors.

One of the most violent incidents that occurred during the Christmas season involved two women and a man who were severely beaten in Odisha for alleged conversion activities. The women were then tied to a tree and forced to chant the names of Hindu gods.

In the aftermath of this sudden surge in attacks, more than 400 Christian leaders and 30 church groups submitted an urgent appeal to India's president and prime minister calling for "immediate and decisive action" to curb this type of mob violence and deal with systemic concerns, including anti-conversion laws and escalating anti-Christian hate speech. The December 31st letter stated that "rising hate speech, especially from elected officials, has emboldened acts of violence against Christians."

In 2024, the Religious Liberty Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India recorded more than 720 incidents of violence targeting Indian Christians. For more details on the concerning challenges experienced by followers of Jesus in this South Asian country, and/or to access previously posted written and video reports, visit www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

- *Pray that appropriate action will be taken by India's governing leaders to quell the divisive demands of violent nationalist groups and establish lasting sectarian harmony.*
- *Prayerfully uphold the many believers throughout the nation who are continuing to faithfully gather together for worship despite the opposition and threatening risks, asking the Lord to provide them His divine protection and peace.*
- *Ask for God's wisdom to be granted to Christian leaders and advocates in their endeavours to raise a voice on behalf of Indian believers who have suffered terrible injustices and abuses for their faith in Jesus.*

REPORT UPDATE

IRAN: Christian Leader Released from Prison

Sources: Church in Chains, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

In 2012, Matthias Haghnejad was among three Christian leaders who were charged with "spreading corruption on earth" and "action against national security." As a result, he was sentenced to six years in prison. In December 2014, the Christian man was thankfully acquitted of all charges. For more information on this earlier situation, visit www.vomcanada.com/ir-2015-01-08.htm.

Despite the positive news of Matthias' acquittal, unfortunately it was not the end of his ordeal. In January 2022 – three weeks after being re-released from prison (where he served an additional three years on a separate charge) – the Christian leader's acquittal relating to the 2014 charges was overturned, and he consequently had been forced to serve his former sentence. In the summer of 2023, the believer was then transferred to a prison located 1,600 kilometres away from his family.

We are thankful to report that Matthias was recently released on December 14th after completing his sentence. Regrettably, another court case against him remains pending, dating back to December 2022 when the Christian leader had been arrested – along with several other church members – during his short furlough from prison.

- *Praise God that Matthias was recently released from prison.*
- *Pray that the Lord will grant this Christian leader peace, guidance and the provisions he now needs to integrate back into Iranian society.*
- *Please remember to prayerfully uphold the numerous other followers of Jesus who are continuing to serve time in Iranian prisons because of their faith.*
- *In general, pray for renewed courage, strength and perseverance on behalf of Iranian Christians across the country, so that they will remain steadfastly committed to following Christ in all circumstances.*

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
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