

Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, January 8, 2026

*"Lord, these men [may] take
away my life full of misery, but You
will give me life everlasting."*

~ Maurice Blanc
(Martyred in 1547)

NIGER: Two Slain in Christmas Eve Attack

Sources: The Daily Star, Macau Business

On the night of December 24th, Christians gathered for worship at a church in Mailo village, a community located in the Dosso region of Niger. At around 11 p.m., armed men stormed the church building and fired into the air, causing the worshippers to panic. As a result, all who had been attending the service fled – some escaping into the bush, while others sought refuge in neighbouring villages. Tragically, a husband and wife who hid in their home were pursued and killed by the assailants.

This violent incident reflects the ongoing unrest caused by rebels linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State terrorist group. The country's military has been fighting these insurgent groups for several years. Despite the terrorists' threats, relations between Christians and Muslims in Niger have generally remained amicable. To learn more about the challenges facing our Christian family in Niger, visit www.vomcanada.com/niger.htm.

- *Prayerfully remember the family, friends and church parishioners who are now left mourning the tragic loss of this dear Christian couple.*
- *Ask the Lord to also minister healing to the survivors who are trying to cope with the resulting emotional trauma of the attack.*
- *Pray that the officials' efforts to curb the violent activities of militant groups will be strengthened, bringing effective and lasting security and stability to vulnerable communities throughout the country.*
- *In the midst of the present turmoil, may God guide and empower His people in this West African nation to live as ambassadors of His peace, forgiveness and love.*

REPORT UPDATES

PAKISTAN: Update on Pastor's Death

Source: Morning Star News

A recently released report has provided further information regarding the death of Pastor Kamran Salamat. For other details surrounding the assassination of this Pakistani pastor, see VOMC's initial *Persecution & Prayer Alert* posting at www.vomcanada.com/pk-2025-12-11.htm.

According to the latest report, authorities have since filed charges against the church leader's wife, Salmina, along with a Muslim man named Najam Ul Saqib, for apparently conspiring together to kill Pastor Kamran. Najam has also been accused of hiring contract killers to carry out the assassination. While the motives behind this tragic incident appear to have changed, one fact remains: a devoted servant of God has been killed, and all those who knew and loved him continue to need prayer.

- *Pray that investigating authorities will work diligently to uncover the full truth of this heinous act, identifying the correct perpetrators and shedding light on the motives that led to Pastor Kamran's death.*
- *Ask the Lord to provide comfort and care for all those who are mourning the death of this devoted church leader.*
- *If investigators prove that Pastor Kamran's wife, Salmina, was indeed involved in his assassination, pray for her repentance – so she may experience the forgiveness and transformation that only Jesus can bring.*

IRAN: Aida Released on Bail Pending Appeal

Sources: Article18, Church in Chains

Aida Najaflou was arrested in February 2025 for "acting against the Islamic Republic." Despite suffering from multiple health issues, including a spinal fracture she sustained after a fall in late October, the 44-year-old Christian woman received limited medical care. Adding to her adversities, she was sentenced to a total of 17 years in prison this past November. (More information on Aida's case can be accessed at www.vomcanada.com/tagged-items/aida-najaflou.htm.)

In an unexpected development, Aida was released from Evin Prison on December 21st after posting bail. However, this release is temporary, pending the outcome of her appeal. During the interim, it is hoped that the injured Christian woman will be able to receive the medical care she so urgently needs. In addition to dealing with her own health concerns, one of Aida's two children has also been unwell. While the concerned mother was detained in prison, family members who were tending to her sick child encountered significant difficulties in their attempts to provide adequate care.

- *While we can praise God for Aida's temporary reprieve from imprisonment, pray that this time will result in greatly needed healing, strength and restoration for the persecuted mother and her family.*
- *Ask the Lord to not only provide the necessary medical care, but also spiritual and emotional renewal.*
- *As each member of this Christian family experiences God's healing in their lives, may His Holy Spirit advocate judicially on Aida's behalf – intervening powerfully throughout the appeal process so that her conviction will be rightfully overturned.*
- *Please remember the many other Christians who remain imprisoned in Iran because of their faith, asking that they too will experience the Lord's comfort, courage and unwavering hope in the midst of suffering.*

PAKISTAN: Haroon Shahzad Acquitted

Sources: Morning Star News, Christianity Daily, The Christian Post

In June 2023, Haroon Shahzad posted a Bible passage on his Facebook page without any commentary. Some community members were offended by the post, which eventually led to mob riots. While the authorities were able to avert the resulting violence, hundreds of Christians – including Haroon and his family – were forced to flee their village. Based on the allegations, Haroon was initially charged with blasphemy. (Further details about his case are available at www.vomcanada.com/pk-2023-07-06b.htm.)

Despite the charge against him, the 47-year-old believer was granted bail in November 2023. Yet, due to ongoing threats against his life, he was forced to remain in hiding since that time. It was only recently revealed that Haroon had in fact been wrongfully accused. Following the Muslim complainant's official retraction of the blasphemy allegation, Haroon received acquittal by the court on September 27th of 2025. Apparently, news of the decision was withheld until now for security reasons.

Reflecting on the court decision, Christian lawyer Aneeqa Maria stated: "The verdict lays bare the profound fragility of justice itself. It reveals a system in which an individual's liberty, dignity and entire future can be held hostage by a flawed process, where an accusation alone can unleash turmoil, turn lives upside down and leave families shattered."

While the miraculous turnaround in Haroon's case brings great joy for members of Pakistan's Christian community, the threat of vigilante violence against him and other accused believers remains a serious concern. Additional reports addressing the persecution of Christians in this South Asian nation may be reviewed at www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

- *Thanks be to God that the truth regarding Haroon's case has been revealed, and that justice on his behalf is finally being served.*
- *Please pray for this believer's continued safety and protection from opposing community members, asking that news of his acquittal will quell any further threats of violence.*

- *May God bring about lasting changes to Pakistan's blasphemy laws so that such unjust allegations against our Christian brothers and sisters will cease and justice will prevail.*

NIGERIA: All Remaining School Students Freed!

Sources: Al Jazeera, Church in Chains

On November 21st, people around the world were shocked by the abduction of over 300 students from a boarding school in Niger State, Nigeria. (To learn more about this kidnapping incident, see www.vomcanada.com/ng-2025-11-27.htm.)

About two weeks after the attack, Nigerian authorities announced that 100 of the children had been recovered. On December 21st, a spokesperson for the Nigerian president confirmed via social media that the remaining 130 pupils have since been released. This means that all the abducted schoolchildren were safely freed from captivity!

While there were some discrepancies in the reported number of captives, a United Nations spokesperson explained that some of the students had apparently escaped earlier. Those that had been released were taken to Minna, the state capital, for final processing. To date, governing officials have not publicly disclosed who was responsible for the initial attack nor how the captives were eventually freed.

Catholic Bishop Bulus Dauwa Yohanna referred to this most recent release of the remaining schoolchildren as "a testimony to answered prayers and the power of faith in sustaining hope amidst fear and uncertainty." While the path forward for these students will be challenging, please join us in praying that each one of them will receive strength and healing as they recover from the trauma of their captivity.

- *Praise God that these remaining schoolchildren have been safely released and are now able to return to their relieved families.*
- *Pray for each child's complete emotional and physical healing as they process the ordeal, asking God to bring comfort, peace and restoration to their hearts and minds.*
- *Intercede for an end to the ongoing violence in Nigeria – praying that God will transform the lives of the persecutors, bring stability to the region, and protect vulnerable communities from future attacks.*

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1
Tel. (905) 670-9721 - Website: www.vomcanada.com