



Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada

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"Hope is called the anchor of the soul because it gives stability to the Christian life. But hope is not simply a wish; rather, it is that which latches onto the certainty of the promises of the future that God has made."

~ R.C. Sproul, referencing Hebrews 6:19

INDIA: Pastor Injured in Brutal Mob Violence

Sources: International Christian Concern, Morning Star News, The Indian Express, NDTV, The Independent

Pastor Bipin Bihari Naik had just gathered with other believers for prayer in the village of Kandarsinga, Odisha State, on January 4th when a group of men burst into the home where the meeting was taking place. The men dragged the pastor outside and began to violently assault him. When Pastor Bipin's wife attempted to intervene, she was threatened with similar treatment.

The attackers accused the church leader of carrying out religious conversions among local Hindus and subjected him to more than two hours of physical abuse. During this time, he was forced to walk barefoot on thorns while being beaten and paraded through the village.

The mob eventually took Pastor Bipin to a local Hindu temple, where his head was shaved, his hands were bound, and he was forced to drink drain water mixed with cow dung. While cow feces hold religious significance for many Hindus, forced consumption is used as a form of humiliation. The assailants also attempted to coerce the abused Christian into reciting Hindu chants while forcing him to bow before an idol.

During the prolonged ordeal, Pastor Bipin thought that he would not survive the attack. Thankfully, his recollection of verses from the Bible gave him strength to endure until the authorities arrived and took him to the police station. While the police initially refused to file a complaint, a report was eventually registered against the attackers, who are believed to be

associated with a militant nationalist Hindu group. However, a counter-complaint was also filed against the pastor for allegedly participating in forcible conversions.

In the aftermath of the incident, Pastor Bipin and his family have faced further hardship. Their landlord of eight years asked the Christians to vacate their home, forcing the family to temporarily return to Pastor Bipin's native village of Khamar. Speaking to reporters, his elder brother, Udaynath James, stated, "I don't think my brother will be able to gather the courage to visit the village [of Kandarsinga] again." For more information on the difficulties experienced by Christians in India, go to www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

- *Pray for the Holy Spirit to heal the physical and emotional wounds that were inflicted on Pastor Bipin during the attack.*
- *Prayerfully uphold the members of his family and congregation who witnessed this distressing event, asking that they may also be freed from the horrific trauma of the assault and find strength in the Lord's reassuring presence.*
- *Intercede for the villagers in Kandarsinga – including those who are opposed to the truth of the Gospel – that they would receive opportunities to experience the love of Christ and ultimately turn to Him in faith.*

MEXICO: Pastor Expelled for Not Participating in Syncretic Rituals

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Christian Daily International

In parts of rural Oaxaca State and other regions of southern Mexico, the dominant religion is a syncretism of Roman Catholicism and traditional indigenous beliefs. The resulting ritual-based belief system is a significant part of community life in many villages.

In the community of Santiago Malacatepec, Pastor Mariano Velasquez Martinez had been serving local residents alongside his wife and infant child. In November 2025, he was asked to take on a community leadership position. He accepted on the condition that he would not be required to participate in rituals associated with the community's traditional religious practices.

During a local festival on January 15th, Pastor Mariano was ordered to light candles and kneel in prayer before an image of St. James. When he refused to comply, a complaint was made to village authorities. Two days later, the pastor was bound with ropes and detained for five days. He was then brought before an assembly where he was formally expelled from the village. After being forced to sign a document acknowledging his expulsion, he has since expressed concern that it will be used to falsely suggest that he left the community voluntarily rather than under coercion.

The pastor and his family are temporarily living with relatives in Oaxaca City. In September 2025, a state law was instituted to prohibit forced displacements and establish potential prison sentences for those responsible. A formal complaint has been submitted to the state authorities on behalf of Pastor Mariano and his family.

While religious freedoms are enshrined in Mexican law, indigenous communities frequently operate under local governance systems. In such settings, attempts to enforce religious uniformity have resulted in harassment, exclusion and displacement for Christians and other individuals whose beliefs differ from community norms. To access additional reports addressing the persecution of believers in Mexico, go to www.vomcanada.com/mexico.htm.

- *Pray that God would provide wisdom and guidance for Pastor Mariano, his family and all those who are advocating on his behalf.*
- *Ask the Lord to reveal the truth to state authorities regarding the illegal nature of Pastor Mariano's displacement from the village, despite the expulsion document that he was forced to sign.*
- *May the Lord make a way for this displaced family to peacefully return to their home and practice their faith without opposition.*
- *Intercede for those who are opposed to the Scripturally based beliefs of this dedicated pastor, praying that they will be convicted by the Holy Spirit for their wrongdoing, brought to repentance, and realize the need to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.*

NICARAGUA: Christians Released Amidst Ongoing Oppression

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, OSV News, Zenit, Crux

In recent months, Nicaragua's dictatorial government led by President Daniel Ortega has arbitrarily detained or deported Christians and shut down numerous non-profit organizations. (To read about some of the recent challenges, go to www.vomcanada.com/news-articles/nicaragua.) On July 17th, 2025, Pastor Rudy Palacios Vargas was among a group of Christians detained by police. No arrest warrants or charges were issued, and family members had not received any information on the believers' whereabouts for six months. Tragically, one of Pastor Rudy's detained companions, Mauricio Alonso Petri, died while in custody.

On January 10th, Pastor Rudy was released from detention, along with five surviving friends and family members. The Christians were instead placed under house arrest and currently remain under surveillance. Although their movements are restricted, they have been able to reunite with family members who were concerned about their welfare. Authorities provided no explanation for the release of the remaining detainees.

Despite this positive development, the repression of Christian activities continues. On January 24th, parishioners from the Catholic Diocese of León had planned a door-to-door outreach as part of a community ministry initiative. However, police shut down the planned event, ordering the church members to "do your work inside." This order followed similar door-to-door ministry efforts carried out the previous week. Martha Patricia Molina, a Nicaraguan lawyer who has been documenting religious opposition in her country, stated, "As soon as authorities realized [the outreach] was something positive, they banned it."

- *While we can thank God that Pastor Rudy and the other released believers have been able to rejoin their families, pray that continued healing and restoration will take place in the aftermath of their incarcerations.*
- *Also prayerfully uplift the grieving family and friends of Pastor Rudy's fellow detainee, Mauricio, who tragically died in custody, asking the Lord to minister greatly needed comfort, strength and peace in each of their lives.*
- *Pray that the Holy Spirit will mightily work in the hearts and minds of the country's governing authorities, facilitating the Christians' full release from house arrest and surveillance so that they can live in freedom – without any oppressive conditions.*
- *Remember Christians throughout Nicaragua who continue to face threats, intimidation and repression for their faith, asking God to provide them the encouragement, empowerment and fortitude they need to testify of His greatness and faithfulness.*

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