



Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada

www.vomcanada.com

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"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference."

~ Max Lucado

RUSSIA: Missionary Detained Under Questionable Charges

Source: Voice of the Martyrs Korea

Ms. Park Tae-yeon is a recently retired Korean missionary who served in Russia as a children's ministry worker with Child Evangelism Fellowship. At the age of 69, she decided that it was time for her to retire and return to Korea. Reflecting on her 33 years of ministry, the Christian woman described herself as "married to Russia."

On January 15th, Ms. Park's departure from Russia was unexpectedly blocked when authorities arrested her for alleged immigration violations. Subsequently, a Russian media report published on January 23rd referenced an investigation into children's religious camps in Khabarovsk which were being operated by a Korean citizen – camps that authorities claim to have shut down. Representatives from Voice of the Martyrs Korea believe that the immigration-related charges are a pretext to prevent Ms. Park from receiving proper legal counsel and to shield the Russian government from international scrutiny amid its ongoing crackdown on religious freedom.

Thankfully, Ms. Park was able to meet with a representative from the Korean consulate on February 3rd. She was briefly placed under house arrest before being transferred the next day to a detention centre for foreigners, since her visa had expired in the time since her initial arrest. Efforts are now underway to ensure the detained missionary receives appropriate legal representation.

Voice of the Martyrs Korea has initiated a petition calling on the Russian government to release this faithful servant of God from detention. To view the petition and add your voice to these concerns, go to www.vomkorea.com/en/petition-2026.

In recent years, the state of religious freedom in Russia has significantly deteriorated, particularly for those not associated with the Russian Orthodox Church. For a list of additional reports regarding the situation in Russia, go to www.vomcanada.com/Table/Resources-News-Articles/Russia.

- *Please pray for Ms. Park's swift release from detention, asking God to open every necessary door – spiritually, legally and politically – so this retired ministry worker can return home to her family in Korea as initially planned.*
- *As she awaits timely legal support and consular representation, may this faithful servant experience the Lord's comforting presence and strength, along with encouraging reminders of His promised intervention.*
- *Despite the Russian government's shutdown of the camps, pray that the Lord will make a way for the children in Khabarovsk and throughout Russia to receive further ministry and discipleship; while, at the same time, presenting evangelistic opportunities that will enable the Holy Spirit to reach many more young hearts with the truth and hope of the Gospel.*

IRAN: Christian Convert Re-Arrested

Sources: HRANA, Article18

In January 2025, 41-year-old Ghazal Marzban was detained in Tehran's Evin Prison after being sentenced to six months' imprisonment and 74 lashes. The charges against her included "propaganda against the regime" and "appearing in public without a hijab." Ghazal, a Christian convert from Islam, had initially been arrested in November 2024 while participating in protests against government oppression. She was released from prison in 2025 after serving two months of her initially sentenced term.

For unknown reasons, the Christian convert was recently arrested again. On January 14th, two hours after being taken into custody, she contacted her husband to inform him that she was being held by the Ministry of Intelligence. Since that phone call, no further information has been provided regarding Ghazal's condition, whereabouts, or the charges being brought against her. Her arrest comes amid an intensified crackdown on widespread protests in Iran, compounded by an ongoing Internet blackout and reports that thousands of protestors have been killed by security forces.

Ghazal, who is a law graduate, has faced severe restrictions since converting to Christianity. Authorities have prevented her from taking the bar exam and repeatedly pressured her to leave the country. In addition, her husband, who is also a Christian convert, has been unable to access medication to manage his Parkinson's disease – deepening the family's hardship in the wake of her disappearance. Previously published reports concerning the persecution of Christians in Iran are available at visit www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

- *Lift up Ghazal before God's throne of grace – along with all those who are likewise being detained or living under threat because of their Christian faith – praying that He will mightily protect, sustain and strengthen them.*
- *Additionally, please remember Ghazal's husband in your prayers, asking the Lord to grant him greatly needed comfort, courage and strength as he endures this season of uncertainty while also struggling with his physical health.*
- *Intercede for the country of Iran as a whole, so that God's peace, justice and restoration may prevail in the midst of government-inflicted violence and civil unrest.*

RUSSIA AND OCCUPIED UKRAINE: Unregistered Churches Face Opposition

Source: Forum18

In both Russia and areas of Ukraine that are currently occupied by Russian troops, unregistered churches have been experiencing increasing pressures. Officials have forced some congregations to close, while threatening others with penalties if they continue to gather for worship.

In the city of Rostov-on-Don, Pastor Oleg Volkov was recently fined for "unlawful missionary activity" due to his involvement with an unregistered church. Prosecutors have since sought to ban the church itself because its members refuse to undergo state registration.

Courts have issued bans on at least ten congregations belonging to the Council of Churches Baptist denomination. Despite these restrictions, many believers continue to meet, often in private homes. However, a new bill has been introduced by Russia's parliament which would outlaw public worship services and any religious ceremonies in residential buildings. Debate on the bill is scheduled for May 2026. If passed, the legislation would directly affect many congregations. More information on the oppression of Russia's Christians can be accessed at www.vomcanada.com/Table/Resources-News-Articles/Russia.

Similar actions have occurred in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine. On January 25th, Russian police and military officers raided worship services in Krasnodon, as well as those of a church located in a nearby village. The officers ordered all men to stand while they recorded the identities of everyone present. One church leader, Pastor Rytikov, was taken to the police station for interrogation, where officials warned that if his congregation continued to refuse registration, police would disrupt every future service.

For many years, official registration has been rejected by groups such as the Council of Churches Baptist due to concerns over governmental control. For further reports addressing the challenges experienced by churches in occupied Ukraine, go to www.vomcanada.com/Table/Resources-News-Articles/Ukraine

- *Continue to pray for followers of Christ in Russia and Russian-occupied Ukraine who are being subjected to intense opposition, asking God to spiritually strengthen them,*

protect their gatherings, and provide His divine wisdom for every decision they must make.

- *May the Holy Spirit move mightily within the hearts and minds of Russia's governing leaders, prompting meaningful changes in policies and attitudes towards religious freedom.*
- *Pray for the churches' ongoing outreach efforts, asking that – despite the present challenges – multitudes more will powerfully encounter the truth of the Gospel and, as a result, experience God's saving grace.*

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