

Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"May the persecution on earth
not only fail to tear apart God's
household, but instead become a vessel
to refine the church and reveal the
mighty power of the resurrection."*

~ A statement from the
Early Rain Covenant Church

ETHIOPIA: Orthodox Villages Attacked by Militant Muslims

Sources: VOMC Contact, Open Doors, Addis Standard, Al Jazeera

For more than 1,400 years, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has coexisted with Muslim communities in a unique truce with only occasional tension between them. (This long-standing relationship traces back to the year 615, when the King of Aksum granted asylum to a group of early Muslims.) Any subsequent religious opposition in Ethiopia has primarily been between adherents of one of these two religions and those belonging to other groups, including evangelical Christians. In recent months, however, there has been a troubling shift. Militant Islamic groups have reportedly begun targeting Orthodox Christian communities, particularly in areas of the country that are now primarily Muslim.

In late February, armed Islamic attackers carried out coordinated assaults in the East Arsi zone. More than 20 Orthodox Christians were killed, including a priest who was murdered inside his church building. Homes, churches and other buildings were looted and destroyed. In March and April, additional attacks were reported.

Beginning on May 30th, several more villages came under attack. Local reports suggest that as many as 40 people may have been killed in these attacks, and hundreds of others displaced. During the most recently occurring assaults, a century-old church building in Teleta Gebriel was reduced to ashes. According to local sources, the attackers had given advance warning of their plans. It appears that members of the Orthodox church were specifically targeted and, according to reports, dozens of them had been forcibly converted to Islam.

One Ethiopian source described the violence as "very disturbing," noting that this is the first time he has heard of such widespread intense attacks against Orthodox Christian communities. While the exact cause of the violence from Islamic groups remains unknown, various factors may have contributed. In

2022, an ambush by unidentified armed men killed 20 Muslim worshippers in the northern region of Amhara. In addition, several militant groups in neighbouring Somalia – including the al-Qaeda-affiliated organization, al-Shabaab – remain active within the region. To review more details on the persecution of Christians in Ethiopia, and/or to watch informative video reports, go to www.vomcanada.com/ethiopia.htm.

- *Pray that God will minister greatly needed peace to the members of these targeted communities, putting an end to the violent attacks by softening the hearts of the perpetrators, so that fear and hostility will give way to understanding, tolerance and reconciliation.*
- *Uphold those who are mourning the recent loss of their loved ones, as well as the victims who have lost homes and livelihoods, praying that they would experience God's caring presence, comfort and provision in the midst of their sorrow.*
- *Ask the Lord to specifically provide the displaced victims with protection and shelter, guiding them to places of safety and raising compassionate support to meet their practical and spiritual needs.*

REPORT UPDATES

CHINA: Further Raid Against Early Rain Covenant Church

Sources: ChinaAid, Voice of the Martyrs Korea.

The Early Rain Covenant Church has experienced significant and sustained governmental pressure, particularly since a major raid took place in December 2018, resulting in a nine-year prison sentence against Pastor Wang Yi. Despite ongoing opposition, the church has remained steadfast in its commitment to continue gathering for worship and ministering in the community.

On June 14th, congregation members faced their latest challenge when dozens of police officers and governing officials stormed the venue during a Sunday morning gathering. Church leaders report that 33 believers were detained, including Elder Yan Hong and Elder Wu Wuqing. After several hours of interrogation, all the detained members were released. However, the following day, the two mentioned elders were sentenced to 14 and 15 days of administrative detention.

According to Dr. Bob Fu of ChinaAid, "This raid is another stark reminder that the Chinese Communist Party continues to treat peaceful Christian worship as a threat to state control." Previously posted *Persecution & Prayer Alerts* concerning Christian persecution in China, including those specifically addressing the earlier actions taken against the Early Rain Covenant Church, are available at www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

- *May God further empower these long-suffering church members by His Holy Spirit so they will courageously persevere in the midst of opposition.*
- *Also pray for the continual protection, strengthening and empowering of their imprisoned church leader, Pastor Wang Yi, and now also the recently detained elders.*
- *Remember the many other congregation members who have been affected by this most recent raid – including the children who were present during the detainment interrogation – asking the Lord to calm every anxious heart with comfort, reassurance and a deep sense of His abiding presence.*

- *Pray that, through these temporary earthly trials, the Early Rain church family would increase in both love and unity, watching over one another with utmost care and standing firmly together with enduring faith and hope.*

IRAN: Enforced Disappearance of Christian Convert

Sources: Amnesty International, Middle East Concern, Open Doors

Mary Mohammadi was initially arrested at the age of 19 after converting from Islam to Christianity at a house church meeting. The young Christian woman was subsequently imprisoned for six months in Tehran's Evin Prison. Following her release, she was convicted again in 2020; this second time, receiving a suspended sentence – along with 10 lashes – on charges of "disturbing public order." Despite the ongoing persecution from Iranian authorities, Mary has remained steadfast in her faith. In 2023, she was honoured with the St. Stephen's Award for Persecuted Christians in recognition of her courage and selflessness.

In a recent disturbing turn of events, Mary mysteriously disappeared in late February while travelling from Tehran to Ahvaz. All communication with her family and friends was cut off, and authorities have refused to answer any questions regarding her whereabouts. According to information obtained by Amnesty International, she was initially held by the Ministry of Intelligence before being transferred to an undisclosed location on April 2nd.

Sadly, Mary's situation is not uncommon. Iranian authorities frequently refuse to disclose the whereabouts of detainees, leaving families in distressing uncertainty and raising serious concerns about the potential abuse of imprisoned victims. More information on the difficulties facing Christians in Iran may be reviewed at www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

- *Pray that Mary's whereabouts will be made known, and that she would be safely released from enforced captivity.*
- *In the interim, may the Lord strengthen, protect and encourage this young Iranian woman throughout every moment of her incarceration, allowing His light to shine brightly through her dedicated Christian life, so that the hearts of all those around her – including Iran's officials and prison guards – will be touched by His tremendous love for them and His provision of eternal salvation.*
- *Also prayerfully uplift Mary's family and others who are facing similar uncertainties in Iran, asking that they too would be comforted and sustained, in hopes that justice, compassion and meaningful change will take place in their war-torn nation.*

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