

"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."
~ Deuteronomy 31:6 (ESV)

CHINA: More Than Twenty Arrested in Shanghai

Source: ChinaAid

Authorities in the city of Shanghai seized more than 20 Christian business leaders, along with one American citizen, in the early morning of April 4th. According to ChinaAid, the arrests were directly tied to their faith and church activities.

All of those arrested were affiliated with the company *I Will* and were rounded up by security officers. Among them was Michael Yu, a pastor with Taiwanese and American citizenship. Although Pastor Yu was later released, airport security barred him from leaving China when he attempted to board a flight to Los Angeles.

Pastor Yu has regularly travelled from the United States to China in order to minister to Christian business people. There are concerns that he may be treated more harshly by authorities because of his Taiwanese citizenship. For more information on the persecution facing Christians in China, visit our [country report](#).



Pastor Michael Yu
Photo: ChinaAid

Please remember all of those presently being detained, including Pastor Yu. May the reassuring knowledge of the Lord's presence bring comfort and strength to each one of them, as well as their concerned families. Pray for God's divine intervention and advocacy on their behalf, and that Pastor Yu will be able to continue with his ministry to business leaders in China.

RECENT UPDATES

MALAYSIA: State Police Found Responsible for Disappearances

Sources: Open Doors USA, Anglican Communion News Service, National Post



Pastor Raymond Koh
Photo: World Watch Monitor

Pastor Raymond Koh disappeared on February 13th, 2017 when his car was forced to stop and he was abducted in broad daylight by masked men (see [this report](#)). On April 3rd of this year, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia released findings that placed blame for the attack on the "Special Branch" of the state police.

The disappearance of Pastor Koh is not the only such incident. On November 24th, 2016, Amri Che Mat was grabbed under almost identical circumstances. He also has never been found. Amri was a Shiite activist, a branch of Islam which has been banned in Malaysia. The commission's report states that religious activities were the reason behind both attacks.

A gold coloured Toyota Vios, owned by Special Branch officer Saiful Bahari, was spotted at the scene of both attacks. Bahari has since disappeared as well. The commission has stated that it may yet

open an investigation into other unresolved disappearances, including that of Joshua and Ruth Hilmi, Christian evangelists who went missing in late November 2016.

Pastor Koh's family, along with others, continue to push for answers. Pastor Koh's wife, Susanna, intends to give the Special Branch six months to provide answers or she may take legal action. "This is the beginning of our fight for religious freedom and human rights," she told the press after hearing the ruling. Some suspect that investigations may not begin until the national police chief, Mohamad Fuzi Harun, officially retires.

Prayerfully ask for God's leading as Susanna and others determine their next steps while also dealing with their inner pain and turmoil. If Pastor Koh and the other abducted Malaysians are alive, ask Him to sustain and protect them. Pray that the government will act upon the recommendation of the commission by enacting freedom of religion as a human right.

INDONESIA: Prison Sentences for Church Bombings

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Barnabas Fund, Benar News

A married couple has been convicted and sentenced for their part in the bombing of three churches in Surabaya in May 2018. Agus Satrio Widodo received a sentence of eight years, and his wife Damayanti received 40 months after a court found them guilty of "aiding criminal acts of terrorism," as well as criminal conspiracy.

On May 13th, 2018, six members of the same family targeted three churches in the port city of Surabaya during their early morning services. Two brothers, ages 16 and 18, rode motorcycles up to the first church to detonate their bombs. Five minutes later, their father exploded a car bomb on the grounds of the second church; and their mother blew herself up, along with her young daughters, at a third church. At least 14 people died in the attacks. For more information on these attacks, go to [this page](#).



President Joko Widodo (in white) visited one of the churches that were attacked.

The family who carried out the attack had recently returned to Indonesia from Syria. Agus Satrio Widodo was the suspected leader of *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah*, a militant group associated with ISIS terrorists. In total, more than 300 kilograms of explosives were discovered in the aftermath of the attack. Widodo and his wife were found to be hiding some of the explosives.

We encourage you to pray for the repentance and salvation of this couple who were convicted for instigating the destruction of the three churches and the resulting devastation of so many lives. May they come to understand the forgiveness, hope and peace that can only be attained through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Pray that the Indonesian authorities will remain vigilant in preventing such attacks from occurring in the future.

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit [VOMC's prayer wall](#).

The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:
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For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review this [listing of options](#).