

***"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
and He will make straight your paths."  
~ Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV***

### **NIGERIA: Eleven Christians Reportedly Killed**

Sources: BBC, National Post, Aljazeera, Release International

In a video released on December 26th, ISIS shows the murder of eleven Christians, claiming that it was committed in retaliation for the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader who died during a raid in Syria by U.S. special forces in October.

In the video, which had Arabic subtitles, eleven men with their heads covered are shown. The first is shot to death, followed by the beheadings of the other ten. The producers of the video claim that all of the slain victims had been captured in Nigeria's Borno State in recent weeks. The voice-over commentary contained the following announcement: "This message is to the Christians in the world. Those you see are Christians and we will shed their blood as revenge."



Image taken from an earlier video of Boko Haram captives.

A previously recorded video was also recently released featuring eleven Christians who had been taken captive, leading to speculation that these may be the same men. In the earlier video, the men pled for intervention by the Nigerian government and the Christian Association of Nigeria. At the time, they claimed that Leah Sharibu was still alive and with them ([read this report](#)).

***Pray for the concerned families and friends of all those captured by Boko Haram and other militants in Nigeria, some of whom are now faced with the uncertainty of whether their loved one is alive or not. Ask God to grant the country's authorities wisdom, assistance and guidance in their attempts to stop the rampant violence in Nigeria. Continue to remember the victims who are remaining in captivity.***

## **REPORT UPDATES**

### **BURMA: Churches Reopen in Rebel-Controlled Area**

Sources: Radio Free Asia, UCA News, Asia News, Morning Star News



A church in Shan state.  
Photo: Radio Free Asia

In September 2018, Wa rebels in the state of Shan began closing churches and arresting Christians ([read more](#)). In the process, the pro-Chinese rebels had closed more than 100 churches. In September 2019, the rebels began allowing some of these churches to reopen and, by mid-December, all but one of the 52 Baptist churches in the region had been allowed to resume ministry.

At this point, a Baptist Bible school remains closed, along with all Catholic churches and schools. Some of these Catholic properties have since been converted for other purposes, such as a police station.

While still legally part of Burma, Wa-controlled areas are essentially part of an independent state with a peace treaty signed between the United Wa State Army and the Burmese government in 2013.

Christian leaders in the area say that Wa militants predominantly follow tribal religions and are opposed to the spread of Christianity. For more information on the difficulties experienced by Christians in Burma, go to our [country report](#).

***Praise God that many of these church facilities have been allowed to reopen. Continue to pray that the remaining ministries will be allowed to resume their services in the community, and that their rights for religious freedom will be respected. Intercede for the salvation of the residents in this area who have yet to encounter Christ's transformative love, including the leaders of the Wa militants.***

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### **CHINA: Pastor Wang Yi Sentenced to Nine Years**

Sources: ChinaAid, Early Rain Covenant Church, Christianity Today

In what is believed to be the longest sentence against a house church leader in more than a decade, Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church was sentenced to nine years in prison for "inciting to subvert state power" and "illegal business operations." The charges for business operations relate to the printing and distribution of Christian books by the church.

Pastor Wang's trial was secretly held on December 26th and the verdict was announced on December 30th. Along with the lengthy prison sentence, he was also fined over \$9,000 CAD and denied all political rights for three years. "This is a pure case of unjust religious persecution against a peaceful preacher of a Chinese reformed church," reports Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid.

As for many of the remaining members of the Early Rain Covenant Church (those who have not been imprisoned), governing authorities recently mandated that these congregants meet with security officials five times a day. Despite the stringent stipulations and heavy oppression, members of the church continue to faithfully meet together, seeking to serve God any way they can. For previous reports outlining the situation of the church, as well as other cases of persecution in China, go to our [online country report](#).



Pastor Wang Yi and his wife, Jiang Rong  
Photo: ChinaAid

***Please prayerfully uphold Pastor Wang, his wife and family as they now must contend with the implications of this verdict. Pray that justice will still prevail and that this sentence will be overturned. Remember the members of the Early Rain Covenant Church as they seek ways to continue reaching out with the Gospel message in their community.***

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The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:  
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