

***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we are comforted by God."***

~ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ESV

### **NIGERIA: Destructive Rampage of Militant Mob Attack**

Sources: Christian Post, All Africa, Morning Star News, Church of the Brethren

More than a hundred Boko Haram militants stormed into the town of Garkida on February 21st, causing terrible chaos, loss and destruction. According to reports, they killed two soldiers at a military checkpoint before entering the town where they spent hours ransacking, looting and killing. By the time order was restored, at least three church buildings were destroyed, along with a police station, hospital, and an unspecified number of houses. During the compilation of this report, the total number of people killed or kidnapped had not yet been determined by local officials.

Garkida is a predominantly Christian town. At the time of the attack, an annual women's gathering for the Church of the Brethren was taking place. Thankfully none of the women who attended were killed. However, buildings belonging to the Brethren, Anglican and Living Faith churches were destroyed. Many of the residents fled the town for safety and, at last report, the military was patrolling the streets.



Photo: CBN News

Christians are calling on government leaders to take decisive action against the violence they are repeatedly facing. On February 3rd, approximately five million Christians marched in protest, drawing attention to the overwhelming number of senseless murders that have taken place from years of terrorism attacks. More information on the extreme hostility that Christians in Nigeria have been forced to endure is available at our [country report](#).

***Please prayerfully uphold the many Christians of this community who have been traumatized as a result of the recent attack. Ask God to greatly comfort the loved ones of those killed and to divinely intervene on behalf of any who've been kidnapped. Pray that provision will be made available for community members who have lost their homes, churches, and/or personal belongings in the rampage. May the authorities be given wisdom, as well as needed law enforcement strategies, so they can effectively deal with the rampant violence. Last, but not least, intercede for the perpetrators that they will have a dramatic encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ who longs for their salvation and deliverance from the enemy of their souls.***

### **CHINA: Religious Funerals Banned**

Sources: Bitter Winter, UCA News, Christian Post



A Christian cemetery in Hong Kong.  
Wikimedia / Cupentradoo (CC BY-SA)

Christian funerals are being forbidden in some areas of China, as authorities begin enforcing new regulations to ensure the conducting of so-called "civilized" ceremonies. In the state of Zhejiang, funerals are only allowed to take place in government-approved church buildings. While clergy may be permitted to visit families of the deceased in homes, they are forbidden from conducting any religious ceremonies or services of prayer. If mourners do gather in a home, there can be no more than ten family members reading Scripture or quietly singing hymns.

Similar policies have been adopted elsewhere. In a village of Hunan province, officials threatened to arrest a man unless he conducted a secular funeral for his father. "My father had been a believer for several decades," the grown son explained. "He is persecuted even after

death." For more information and reports, indicating an increase of religious restrictions in China, visit our [country report](#).

**Remember those who are not only mourning the loss of dear loved ones but now must also contend with these added burdens in the midst of their grief. May the Lord of all comfort minister to each and every one of these grieving believers in meaningful ways, giving them "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding," and divine strength in their time of weakness (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 12:9; Philippians 4:7). Pray that China's church leaders will have discernment as they determine the best ways to help those under their care.**

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### IRAN: Christian Blogger Faces Abuse in Prison

Sources: Middle East Concern, Iran HRM, HRANA

Fatemeh (Mary) Mohammadi, a Christian convert and outspoken critic of the oppression being experienced by the Iranian people, has had to endure imprisonment and abuse. Initially arrested in November 2017, she was sentenced to six months in prison for her "membership in proselytizing groups," as well as her participation in Christian activity and the spreading of propaganda. Although released in the spring of 2018, Mary was arrested again in July 2019 prior to being freed on bail. In December, she was unexpectedly banned from continuing her education at the Islamic Adad University.



Fatemeh (Mary) Mohammadi  
Photo: Middle East Concern

In the wake of protests following the downing of a Ukrainian airliner, Mary was arrested again on January 12th. This time, she was severely beaten and humiliated while held at a detention centre. Since being transferred to the Qauchak prison, she has faced further mistreatment. This young Christian woman has recently been charged with "disturbing public order through attending an unlawful protest." And while her bail was set, the prosecutor refused to accept payment, leaving her in limbo and the prospect of enduring ongoing abuse in prison. To learn more about Christian persecution in Iran, see the [country report](#).

**Please prayerfully go before the Throne of our Righteous Judge, petitioning for Mary's soon release from prison and, as a result, her deliverance from further violence. May she take great comfort in knowing that the Lord is working on her behalf and that His angels are being commissioned to provide her needed protection. Also pray that His profound presence will be manifested in the courts, giving all involved in Mary's case a keen awareness of His reality. In fact, may all in Iran who are earnestly seeking truth discover the spiritual freedom and peace that comes when acknowledging God's Son, Jesus Christ, as their personal Saviour and Lord.**

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](#).

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The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:  
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