

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."
~ Jesus in Luke 4:18 ESV

PAKISTAN: Worker Tortured to Death

Sources: CLAAS, UCA News, Pakistan Center for Law and Justice, Morning Star News

After a hard day's work in the fields on February 25th, Saleem Masih went to the well to rinse off. The Muslim landowner, however, was furious and accused him of polluting the water. Sher Dogar insulted Saleem, referring to him as a filthy Christian, and vowed to teach him a lesson.

Dogar, along with others, dragged Saleem to the farm where they chained him up and began to torture him. The abuse continued for hours until he eventually fell unconscious from the pain. The next morning, police arrived at Saleem's home and told family members to come to Dogar's farm where they found Saleem still in chains. After pleading with the landowner, the family was finally able to free Saleem and take him to the hospital for treatment.

After receiving initial treatment from doctors at the local hospital, he was taken to Lahore due to the severity of his internal damages. Sadly, Saleem remained in a coma until he succumbed to his injuries on February 28th at the hospital.

Despite clear evidence, Saleem's family is not hopeful that those responsible will be brought to justice, even though a police report has been filed. The perpetrators are quite influential in the area and, even while Saleem was still chained up, police were pressuring the family to settle the matter out of court. A memorial service was held in the village of Baguyana on March 2nd, attended by Christians throughout the area. For more details on the persecution facing Pakistan's Christians, visit our [country report](#).

Please remember the family and friends of Saleem in your prayers. May they find comfort and peace, despite the terrible circumstances. Pray that justice will be served and that those responsible for this horrific attack will be convicted. Whether judicial conviction is obtained or not, may the perpetrators respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and receive the forgiveness and salvation that only Jesus Christ, the Risen Saviour, can provide.



Funeral for Saleem Masih.
Photo: Facebook / PCLJ

INDONESIA: Protests Force Church to Close

Source: VOM Contacts



Ask God to provide wisdom as Indonesian believers seek ways to gather in fellowship.
Photo: World Watch Monitor

The New Testament Christian Church in Central Java was meeting for worship on February 16th when protesters entered the building and demanded that the church service stop. As the demonstrations continued, police arrived to mediate. The pastor received permission to finish the service and meet with the opposing community members later.

That afternoon, the pastor met with the protesters, along with police and Islamic leaders from the Indonesian Clerics Council, who insisted that the building not be used for Christian activities. Even though the pastor did not sign an official agreement, the church was ultimately forced to close. Further information on the persecution experienced by Christians in Indonesia is [available here](#).

Pray that the Lord will uphold the faith of these believers and

that they will be able to continue meeting together. Ask Him to give wisdom to the church leaders as they endeavour to handle the situation, while seeking alternate ways to effectively minister to the members of their community. Despite the opposition, may the message of the Gospel be spread throughout the area – touching the hearts of even those opposing them.

REPORT UPDATES

IRAN: Hearings of Accused Christians Delayed

Source: Middle East Concern

In last week's *Persecution and Prayer Alert*, we wrote about Mary Mohammadi who was arrested and facing abuse while incarcerated. We are thankful to report that as of February 26th, she was released on bail. Although a court hearing had been scheduled for March 2nd, it was postponed indefinitely, apparently due to concerns about the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

In another case, an appeal hearing for the sentencing of five believers has been delayed for a third time. The initial court hearing for the combined cases was scheduled for September 3rd ([read more](#)). That hearing was postponed when the judge failed to appear. Another hearing was scheduled for November but had been postponed because the courthouse was "too crowded."

In the latest hearing, which took place on February 24th, the court failed to bring Hadi Asgar, one of the defendants, to court, resulting in another postponement. A new judge has now been appointed to oversee the appeal – one whom a family member has described as "more reasonable and sensible." No date has yet been scheduled for the next hearing.



Fatemeh (Mary) Mohammadi
Photo: Middle East Concern

Praise God for Mary's recent release on bail. As this young Christian woman awaits a future hearing, may she receive needed healing from the abuse endured while imprisoned and, throughout the process, experience His abiding peace. Also intercede for the five other believers who now must wait for yet another hearing. Ask the Lord to mediate on their behalf, granting them favour and the opportunity to shine His light for all to see. In both of these cases, pray that the matters will be quickly and fully resolved.

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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the persecuted church overseas, review this [listing of options](#).