

***"This is my comfort in my affliction,
that Your promise gives me life."***

~ Psalm 119:50 ESV

INDIA: Christian Symbols Removed from Cemetery

Sources: International Christian Concern, Catholic News Agency, The Christian Post

A statue and crosses were removed from a Christian cemetery in Karnataka state on March 2nd by government officials after receiving complaints from non-local Hindu activists. The cemetery has been used for Christian burials for nearly 40 years without any previous problems. It has also been the location for some prayer gatherings over the years.

Recently, rumours were circulating that forceful conversions have been taking place at that location. Without consulting Christians in the area, government officials ordered the removal of the monuments. According to church leaders, the move is "a blow to the communal harmony of the people in our villages" and goes against the guarantees of religious freedom in the constitution.

The Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) came to power in 2014, resulting in increased opposition to any religion other than Hinduism. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom stated in its 2019 report that "religious freedom conditions in India continued a downward trend." For more details on the persecution facing Christians in India, go to our [country report](#).



Pray that the hope of eternity with Christ will bring comfort to Christians in India.

Pray for wisdom and discernment to be granted to the Christian leaders involved in this case as they confront the injustices of civil authorities and others in the community opposing them. May these governmental leaders recognize the importance of upholding the constitution's 'freedom of belief' for all citizens. Lift up India's many Christians who are endeavouring to reach out to the spiritually impoverished of their country with the Good News of God's salvation while contending with increased hostility and threats.

REPORT UPDATES

IRAQ: Aid Workers Released

Source: Middle East Concern



Some of the devastation from the conflict in Iraq.
Photo: World Watch Monitor

On January 20th, four humanitarian aid workers from the French organization, SOS Chrétiens d'Orient, went missing while in Baghdad. Details were limited, providing no information on those responsible nor the reasons behind the disappearance. For a previously posted report on this situation, go to [this report](#).

We are pleased to announce that the four workers have since been released. On March 26th, French authorities thanked Iraqi leaders for their assistance in conveying the release of French nationals Antoine Brochon, Julien Dittmar, Alexandre Goodarzy and Iraqi Tariq Mattoka. No further details are expected to be made available.

Praise God for the safe liberation of these dedicated Christian workers. Pray for their continued safety and for the protection of others working to provide assistance in this dangerous area. May the spiritual needs of the Iraqi people be met, as well as their basic physical needs for nutritious food, clean water and other practical necessities.

IRAN: Exile Extended

Sources: Middle East Concern, Hovsepien Ministries

On October 31st, Ebrahim Firouzi was released from prison but then faced two years of exile in Sarbaz, near the Pakistani border. Although he began his exile on November 12th, in December, he requested leave to sort out some family matters. After waiting for several days and receiving no response, he went ahead with his trip.

As a result, Ebrahim received notice on March 12th that his exile had been extended by eight months for violating its terms and an additional three months for failing to appear for a daily check-in. He was given no opportunity to appeal the decision.

In January, Ebrahim was interviewed by VOMC ministry partner, Hovsepien Ministries. In the videotaped interview, the formerly imprisoned believer candidly shares how he came to faith in Christ, as well as his experiences in Iran's prisons. To view the English edition of this interview, [click here](#).



Joseph Hovsepien interviewing Ebrahim Firouzi.
Photo: Hovsepien Ministries

Please pray for the Lord to continue ministering great peace to our Christian brother, and to his family, during this time of separation. Despite the distance between them, may they all be further strengthened and encouraged. Pray that the time of Ebrahim's exile will be shortened and that opportunities will be presented to him so he can safely share the hope that is found in Jesus Christ.

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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