

"...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death."

~ Philippians 3:10 ESV

COVID-19 and the Persecuted Church

Sources: New York Times, BBC, Morning Star News, International Christian Concern, Church in Chains, VOMC Contacts

As people around the world struggle to adapt to the global challenge of COVID-19, the burden is far greater for the downtrodden and oppressed. Below are some instances where Christians face increased difficulties because of their faith.

In an attempt to stem the spread of the virus, Indian authorities have ordered everyone to return to their home villages. For huge numbers of migrant labourers, this has left them without food or shelter. In slums where large families are packed together in small shelters, the concept of "social distancing" is impossible. Many of India's Christians are among the poorest segments of the population and may face further rejection because of their faith.

Similar problems are being experienced in refugee camps around the world, such as the case concerning Syrian and Iraqi refugees who are now in Lebanon. As world economies plummet, those on the peripheries are frequently neglected. Within the refugee camps, Christians are also frequently neglected when humanitarian aid is distributed.

In Pakistan, organizations have been providing food aid to those hit hard by the lockdown. However, on more than one occasion, when people show their identification to receive this provision, they have been refused unless they are Muslim.

On March 28th, two pastors were falsely charged with holding worship services in contravention of isolation orders. In one case, the pastor was simply explaining to some of his members that they must leave when police barged in and arrested him, claiming he was holding a service. On the same day, another other pastor was conversing with others living on the church premises when police climbed over a locked gate and accused them of having a worship service.

As The Voice of the Martyrs Canada seeks to fulfill its mandate to meet the needs of Christians in the midst of such suffering, projects are being established to assist those who are being neglected. Present targets are centering on Christians in India and refugee camps in Lebanon. In a short video clip at VOMCanada.com/covid-aid, VOMC's CEO, Floyd Brobbel, explains some of the ways the ministry is endeavouring to meet these challenges. To view the full interview, go to VOMCanada.com/covid-response.

We covet your prayers in the midst of this ordeal. If you believe God is calling you to help by contributing towards these projects, you can give to our [Relief & Development Fund](#).

Please remember the many around the world who are suffering from this disease, as well as the thousands who have lost loved ones as a result of infection. In addition, pray for Christians who are being denied humanitarian aid or medical treatment because of their faith in Christ. May God's healing, comfort and provision be made available to each one during these uncertain times.



Ask God to provide in areas where discrimination overrides people's needs.

NIGERIA: Dozens Slain in Ongoing Violence

Sources: Intersociety-NG, International Christian Concern, The Christian Post, Morning Star News



Pray that the Lord will draw Fulani herdsmen to the knowledge of His forgiveness and grace.

Human rights organizations monitoring the ongoing violence taking place against Christians in Nigeria are now raising concerns of an imminent genocide. More than 50 believers have been killed in the month of March and over a dozen more during the first week of April. Since the beginning of 2020, at least 410 Christians have been murdered. Most of the violence was perpetrated by jihadist Fulani militants. For more details on the suffering facing Nigeria's Christians, go to our [country report](#).

In one recent incident, the predominantly Christian village of Ancha had its eighth attack in three years on March 31st. According to one witness, militants entered the village during the night, then began shooting and burning houses. Three victims were slain in that attack. "We are in great distress here," laments Ishaya, a Christian survivor. The next day, the village of Hukke was also raided. Seven Christians were killed and 24 houses were

destroyed. Various other villages were invaded on the same day.

Prayerfully lift up these Nigerian believers who are under the threat of relentless attacks without any warning or provocation. Ask for God's mighty intervention in the midst of this turmoil and for His presence to provide greatly needed comfort to those experiencing pain – including the families and friends of all those who have been slain in the attacks. Also uphold Nigeria's governing authorities who need wisdom and help from on high as they continue in their efforts to restrain these militants from causing further suffering, destruction, and loss of innocent lives. Ultimately, may God's love, righteousness, and peace prevail.

PRAISE REPORT

IRAN: Two Prisoners Released

Source: Middle East Concern

In the endeavour to deal with the COVID-19 crisis, Iranian authorities released thousands of prisoners in mid-March to stop the spread within the country's prisons. It was noted, however, that many Christians detained for their faith were not included. We are pleased to report, however, that two Christian prisoners have gained their freedom.

Rokhsareh (Mahrokh) Ghanbari, who was initially charged in December 2018, appeared in court on July 27th of the following year for alleged "propaganda against the system." (To review a previously posted report, go to [this page](#).) In October 2019, she was sentenced to one year in prison. We are thankful that although Mahrokh was granted temporary release on March 2nd, prison officials informed her on April 2nd that she no longer needs to return.



Rokhsareh (Mahrokh) Ghanbari
Photo: Middle East Concern

In March 2019, Amin Khaki was sentenced to 14 months in prison for alleged propaganda against the regime. While Amin was also temporarily released on March 2nd due to COVID-19 concerns, he received notification on April 6th that he would not have to return to prison.

Both Mahrokh and Amin were required to pay a \$3,000 USD security deposit when released in March. However, it is expected that this money will be returned to them. For more on the persecution of Christians in Iran, visit our [country report](#).

Praise God for the recent release of these two believers! Remember them in your prayers as they readjust to life outside of prison in the midst of these unprecedented times. Pray for the various Gospel outreaches that are going into Iran, whether they be conducted through satellite television broadcasts, ministries available via the Internet, or other forms of evangelism. As a result, may multitudes place their hope and confidence in the Risen Saviour.

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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