

***"Little children, you are from  
God and have overcome them,  
for He who is in you is greater  
than he who is in the world."  
~ 1 John 4:4 ESV***

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**We apologize for not sending out the *Persecution & Prayer Alert* last week. Due to technical difficulties, we have been forced to make changes to the system used for sending emails. Please bear with us as we work through these changes over the next few weeks.**

*The September 17 email featured a video excerpt of an interview with Dr. Berhane Ashmelash about the release of prisoners in Eritrea. To view the full interview, [click here](#).*

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### **PAKISTAN: Beaten for Refusing to Convert to Islam**

Source: CLAAS

Anika Shehzad, an 18-year-old Christian teen, worked as a domestic servant in Ferozwala, Pakistan. She comes from a poor family and took on the job to help support them. However, after a few days, Anika began to face pressure to convert to Islam. The more she resisted, the more the employers pressured her, until she could no longer work in the home.

When Anika informed the family that she would be leaving, they were infuriated. They beat her and later told Anika's family that she had stolen money. With the help of their pastor, she was taken for medical treatment. Anika's parents, concerned about the situation, approached her former employers. The Muslim family then turned against them and accused Anika's father of also stealing money and gold from them.



Christians in Pakistan are frequently illiterate and poor.

Consequently, they are often forced to take risks such as sending their young daughters to work for wealthy Muslim families that are opposed to Christianity. In situations involving employers with militant mindsets, sexual harassment, torture, and other forms of abuse are not uncommon. For further information on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, go to our [country report](#).

***Please pray that the Lord would watch over Anika and her family during this time of persecution. May they experience God's blessings and provisions as they continue to stand firm in the Christian faith despite the threats of their opposers. Also remember the many other young women who, like Anika, remain vulnerable to assaults on their well-being. May the Lord minister to them in special ways, so they can be testimonies through their steadfast endurance and faith. Additionally, pray that the presence of our Almighty God would be experienced by Pakistan's authorities, so that true justice will be upheld and protection granted for all who are vulnerable targets of such victimization.***

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## PRAISE REPORT

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### VIETNAM: Pastor Released After Four Years in Prison

Sources: USCIRF, The Christian Post, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission



Pastor A. Dao  
Photo: USCIRF

On September 18th, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom announced that Pastor A. Dao had been released from prison after being incarcerated for over four years. This decision came 11 months before his expected release.

Pastor Dao, who headed the Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ, was an ardent advocate for his people as they frequently faced oppression from the Vietnamese authorities. He was arrested on August 18th, 2016, and then sentenced in April 2017 to five years' imprisonment for allegedly "helping individuals to escape abroad illegally." During interrogation, he was reportedly tortured in an effort to extract a confession. His wife explained that the prison guards had been using other inmates to beat him.

In making this announcement, USCIRF Commissioner James W. Carr stated, "I hope this release is a sign that the Vietnamese

government is serious about improving religious freedom conditions." To learn more about the challenges facing Christians in Vietnam, go to our [country report](#).

[Click here](#) for a video edition of this report.

***Praise God for this unexpected release! May the Lord's peace rest on both Pastor Dao and his wife, Nguyen Thi Tuoi. As Pastor Dao now adjusts to life outside of prison, pray that he will find safety and receive needed healing from the horrific abuse he endured while imprisoned. May his release be a hopeful indication that the authorities in Vietnam will indeed come to respect the religious rights and freedoms of all people.***

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## REPORT UPDATE

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### CHINA: Update on John Cao

Source: ChinaAid

In a recent letter from prison, Pastor John Cao was able to report that he is in good health and his blood pressure is now normal. While missing family and friends around the world, he asked his mother to pass along greetings, stating that he has not stopped interceding for the health, peace and faith of others.

Pastor Cao had been actively involved in helping children along the border of China and Myanmar when he was arrested in 2017 for "organizing an illegal border crossing." His wife and sons are presently in the United States. John's mother has attempted to visit him, but says she is no longer allowed because of pandemic restrictions.

***Please continue to lift up Pastor Cao and his family members in your prayers. May the Lord provide him the physical, emotional, and spiritual strength needed during his time in prison. Ask God to protect Pastor Cao and, through the Holy Spirit, serve as his Helper and Comforter. Intercede for Pastor Cao's opposers; that their hearts may be enlightened to the truth of His Word, receptive to the conviction of their sin, and responsive to the love and salvation of 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](#).



John Cao  
Photo: Ben Cao