

***"The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great Light;
Those who live in the dark land,
The Light will shine on them."
~ Isaiah 9:2 AMP***

CHINA: Teachers Forced to Deny Religious Beliefs

Sources: ChinaAid, International Christian Concern

Authorities in Wenzhou City have recently mandated that all teachers must sign a "Public Pledge Form." The document forbids educators from professing any religious beliefs and also demands that they agree not to engage in any practice or propagation of religion. Along with these enforced requirements, they must also support Marxist socialist principles.



Photo: Shutterstock / hxdbzxy

While these conditions do not reflect any change in policy, this mandate is only one of the many ways governing officials are increasing their opposition towards Christians in Zhejiang Province. Other

policies have included the large-scale cross removal campaign from buildings and properties, banning minors from attending churches, and expelling Christian teachers from schools. For more information on the heightened challenges facing Christians in China, and to review previous reports, go to our [country report](#).

Please pray that despite the implementation of this unconstitutional document, the youth in China will be given opportunities to hear the message of Christ in their homes and communities – enabling them the privilege of experiencing a personal and meaningful relationship with their Creator God. Remember the Christian teachers who are trying to cope with the present demands and the prospect of losing their employment positions because of their faith. Ask our Lord to encourage these educators and their families, providing for their every need during this time of instability and uncertainty.

INDIA: Intervention Rescues Captured Pastor

Sources: Morning Star News, International Christian Concern



Pastor Shelton Vishwanathan
Photo: Morning Star News

Pastor Shelton Vishwanathan was sharing his faith in the village of Tiryani on October 5th when six Hindu militants demanded that he stop. He agreed and was about to leave the area when they grabbed the keys to his scooter, along with his cell phone, and began to beat him. The last thing he remembered was the threat to offer him as a sacrifice to their god. When he regained consciousness, he found himself locked in a dark room.

For several days, Pastor Shelton shouted for help, but no one answered. He was left without food and water throughout this time. Finally, an elderly woman living nearby heard his cries. She agreed to unbolt the door on the condition that he would not disclose her identity to anyone. The kind lady then let him out and gave him needed food and water.

After returning to his home in Sheohar, he learned that his family had searched extensively for him; yet, in fear for their lives, sold some furniture and fled to his wife's hometown in Nepal. Neighbours offered him food and a meagre offering of money, along with an old cell phone through which he was unable to reach his wife for weeks. Finally, with the help of other Christians, the couple finally made contact, and Pastor Shelton was able to pay for his family to return home on November 28th.

When the situation came to light, legal advocates encouraged him to file charges against his attackers. However, he has chosen not to pursue the case since he has faced opposition several times in the past. He has also been forced to leave his home, as the landlord is concerned of reprisal. Through the assistance of fellow Christians, he has been able to rent another home. It is his intent to continue distributing evangelistic tracts among India's spiritually destitute.

"I am overjoyed to see the Lord's hand in every situation over the past two months," Pastor Shelton exclaims. "My family, who thought I must have been lost and died, returned to see me alive. We give thanks and praises to the Lord." Additional reports on the persecution of Christians in India are available at our country report.

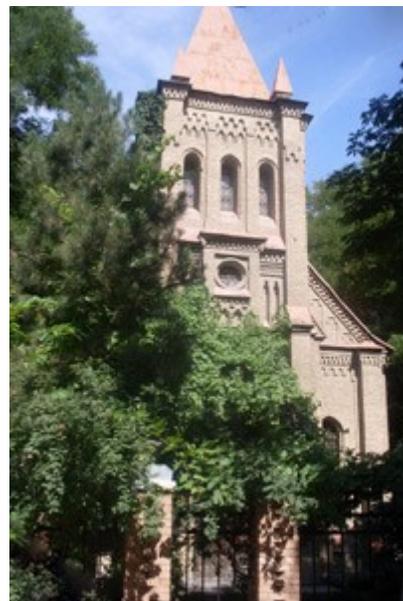
Join us in thanking God for the kindness of the dear elderly woman who courageously released Pastor Shelton from captivity, and for all those who provided assistance to him so he could be reunited with his loved ones. Pray that full restoration will be experienced by this targeted family, sheltering and protecting them as they continue to faithfully extend the love of Christ to others in their community and the surrounding areas. May their ministry yield much fruit, leading many to the faith for the glory of God and the furtherance of His Kingdom.

UZBEKISTAN: Registration Applications Denied

Source: Forum 18

Although religious communities in Uzbekistan would like to obtain official permission (to exist), as required by the state, all their applications have been blocked. Protestant churches, Shia Muslim communities, along with groups of other minority religious affiliation, have not only had their registrations denied, but now they are being subjected to subsequent fines, torture and other punishments.

In the case of one registering church, the members were called to the local police station after submitting their application. During the meeting, they were interrogated about their Christian faith and then demanded by officials to renounce their beliefs. Some churches have chosen not to register at all, since the process has only resulted in reprisals by the government. Considering this, those belonging to the Catholic and Russian Orthodox denominations have no plans to register any new churches.



A Lutheran church in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
Photo: Wikipedia / Bobyrr ([cc](#))

A new federal religion law has been introduced to ease a few of the requirements. For example, the minimum number of members required has been reduced from the current amount of 100 down to 50, and no longer is there the need to obtain approval from local authorities. However, as all other controls on religion will remain the same, there are few expectations that the new law will bring about any real substantial change. To read further about the difficulties inflicted on Christians in Uzbekistan, go to our [country report](#).

Please prayerfully uphold before God's Throne of grace the many church leaders in Uzbekistan presently facing threats of punishment and intimidation by governing officials. Pray that these opposing officials will recognize the importance of granting freedom of belief to all its citizens and, therefore, take more positive steps to abolish their repressive policies and practices. May all the churches encountering pressure because of the present untenable situation sense His boundless love, affirmation, wisdom and guidance, so they can not only overcome these trials but even flourish while navigating through the midst of them.