

***"How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide Your face from me?  
...But I have trusted in Your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation."***

~ Psalm 13: 1,5 ESV

## **PAKISTAN: Conversion Attempts Lead to Murder**

Sources: Morning Star News, AsiaNews, International Christian Concern

Police in Lahore have recovered the bodies of two Christian sisters whose Muslim supervisors pressured them to convert to Islam before killing them.

On January 4th, police informed Mushtaq Masih that the decomposed bodies of his wife, Sajida Mushtaq, and her sister, Abida Qaiser, had been found in a drainage ditch, tied up in sacks. The women had been missing since November 26th. Sajida was the mother of three children, while Abida was the mother of one daughter.



Sajida, on left (Morning Star News);  
Abida, on right (Pakistan Christian Post)

After the women disappeared, a relative told Mushtaq that Sajida, who worked at a pharmaceutical factory with her sister, confided that their supervisors, Muhammad Mumtaz and Naeem Butt, had been urging both Sajida and Abida to convert to Islam and marry them. This was reported to the police, who then interrogated the two men.

Naeem eventually confessed that they had abducted, raped, and then murdered the sisters. When police notified Mushtaq that the bodies had been found, the father of three was devastated. He believes Sajida and Abida were killed because they were poor Christian workers. He is calling for justice "so others will be able to learn how women must be treated and respected, even if they are poor or belonging to a minority." A video report on this tragic event is [available here](#).

In a separate incident, which also took place in Lahore, the family of two other sisters claim that their loved ones had been forcibly converted to Islam by their employers and, as a result, are no longer permitted to see their concerned relatives.

These other sisters, Maham (18) and Anum (20) Manzoor, work as live-in cleaners at separate houses. When their aunt, Nasreen Bibi, went to pick up Maham on December 8th to take her shopping, the homeowners refused to let her visit with her niece. Later, she received a phone call from Anum's employer – who happens to be a relative of Maham's employer – announcing that both nieces had converted to Islam. The employer then threatened the aunt, demanding that she not make any further attempt to contact her nieces again.

Nasreen has been the sisters' legal guardian since their mother had abandoned them five years previous. Neither of these young women had mentioned anything to her about converting. In a December 15th court ruling, custody was awarded to the Muslim employers, accepting the claim that both women had converted to Islam.

According to a study conducted by the Movement for Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan, each year an estimated one thousand Christian and Hindu women are abducted, forcibly converted to Islam and married to their captors. Many of these women are minors. Sexual assault and fraudulent marriages are used to entrap the victims, and the authorities are frequently complicit. For more information on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, and to review previously published reports, go to our [country report](#).

***Please remember the families of the slain sisters, Sajida and Abida, in your prayers. Ask the Lord to give the grieving families wisdom and strength as they not only deal with the trauma of the situation, but also now must raise children who have lost loving mothers. Also prayerfully lift up the other two mentioned sisters, Maham and Anum, who have been prevented from seeing their relatives, along with the many other young women who've been abducted by militants and forced to live in horrific situations. Intercede for justice to be rendered in each of these cases and for the Holy Spirit's ministry to take place in the lives of all concerned, including those who are responsible for the crimes. May the perpetrators acknowledge their need for God's forgiveness and be receptive to His provision of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.***

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## **CHINA: Church Raided and Pastor Arrested**

Sources: ChinaAid, Pray for Early Rain Church



Pastor An and his family  
Photo: Facebook via ChinaAid

An Yankui, the pastor of Xuncheng Reformed Church in Taiyuan, was hosting a Bible study in his home on December 30th when approximately three dozen security officers barged in without warning. After restraining those who were attending the study, the officers searched the home and confiscated choir robes, hymnals and Christian books.

Pastor An was taken into custody, along with five Christian women. The women were later released, but An was sentenced to 15 days in jail. This is not the first time the Xuncheng Reformed Church has faced opposition from authorities. A video capturing a previous raid in

November 2020 can be viewed on the Facebook page for ["Pray for Early Rain Covenant Church."](#)

***Prayerfully uphold Pastor An and the members of his church who have been specifically targeted by authorities because of their Christian faith. Pray that these followers of Christ will shine God's bright light in the midst of governmental oppression by standing firm and serving as testimonies of His love and grace. Continue to remember the many other Christians who are presently serving time in Chinese prisons because of their unwavering commitment to the Lord who has promised to assuredly and ultimately reward them for their faithfulness.***

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## **INDIA: Increasing Pressure from Hindu Nationalists**

Sources: Release International, Mission Network News

For many years, the Hindu Nationalist organization RSS has been an influential factor in Indian politics, particularly within the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). One of the goals of the RSS is to change India from a secular democracy to a nation governed by Hindu polity. One way this is being achieved is through the passing of anti-conversion laws to prevent people from converting from Hinduism.

At least nine states have now passed anti-conversion legislation, including, as of November 2020, the Uttar Pradesh state. Under this new legislation, police have arrested four people – one of them, a Korean national. The four had been distributing aid to people affected by the COVID-19 lockdown and, according to the aid organizer, two of those arrested were not even Christians. No mention was made to the aid recipients of their need to change religion and no money was given or promised to coerce them. At last report, attempts were being made to secure bail for the detained humanitarian workers.



Pray that believers in India will not succumb to the mounting pressure against them.  
Photo: World Watch Monitor

On January 9th, one of the states that already had anti-conversion legislation in place passed newer and tighter restrictions. According to the newly implemented rules of Madhya Pradesh state, anyone wanting to change their faith must obtain official permission 60 days in advance or they could face up to ten years in prison and a fine of \$870 CAD.

The intention of these laws is to prevent conversion by bribery or coercion but, in practice, they are being used by militants to intimidate and harm religious minorities. For Hindus, however, the laws do not seem to apply. There are also numerous reports of coercion being used to convert people to Hinduism in a process called "Ghar wapsi," which translated means, "a homecoming."

According to a year-end report from Release International, it is expected that Christian persecution in India will increase during 2021 due to the growing influence of Hindu nationalism. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in India, and how you can specifically pray for them, please go to our [country report](#).

***Please lift up in prayer the numerous churches and Christian organizations throughout India that are encountering increasing pressures by governing officials and fellow community members. May the Lord give these believers and their leaders wisdom and direction as they seek to share the Gospel, and the courage to follow His leading in the midst of opposition. Pray that those who were recently arrested will be released and that all charges against them will be dropped.***