

"Please pray for China. Pray for God to use our testimonies and see our willingness to suffer for the Gospel. The Gospel is so precious and our lives are so brief."

~ A statement from the
Early Rain Covenant Church

CHINA: Anniversary Conference Leads to Further Charges

Sources: ChinaAid, Church in Chains

On December 9th, 2018, police in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, began a coordinated attack against members of the Early Rain Covenant Church. This has resulted in the detainment of more than 100 church members – several of them convicted of a variety of charges – and mounting pressures being imposed upon the church during the ensuing years. For more information on the initial attack, go to [this report](#).

Since the crackdown began, members of the church have been unable to meet together in person. Instead, they have held small group gatherings in homes and participated in online meetings. On the fourth anniversary of the incident, members of the church organized an online event, which was initially hosted by Elder Li Yingqiang. As the event commenced, an archival video was played featuring their detained pastor, Wang Yi. In the middle of the video, Elder Li suddenly interjected: "The police are already here. They are knocking at my door. I'll be gone soon." After praying with everyone, he was taken to the police station where he was accused of "disturbing social order."



Elder Li Yingqiang and his family.
Photo: ChinaAid

After Elder Li's arrest, Dai Zhichao, one of the church's preachers, took over hosting the conference. However, he happened to be summoned to the police station that evening and was later charged for "organizing activities in the name of a banned social organization." Even though he was released several hours later, Elder Dai has been under residential surveillance since September 29th – with orders that he is prohibited from leaving his home. The authorities have now informed Elder Dai that he will be monitored for a longer term.

Despite the interruptions that took place when governing officials arrested the two elders, more than 1,000 people attended the online anniversary event which lasted almost eight hours. The conference featured testimonies from several of the church members. Videos were also presented welcoming home Elder Qin Defu, a church member who was released from prison that very day, after having completed his four-year sentence. (A report on Elder Qin's case is available for [review here](#).)

Praise God for the persevering members of the Early Rain Covenant Church, whose lives have served as ongoing testimonies of His grace and faithfulness in the midst of intense persecution. While we also give thanks that Elder Qin has recently been released from prison, please continue to pray for those who remain in detainment, including Pastor Wang Yi. May all charges against Pastor Wang, Elder Li and Elder Dai be dropped. Furthermore, pray that the members of their church will no longer be subjected to harassment from governing authorities because of the recent anniversary conference nor any future online gatherings.

INDIA: Christians Expelled from Tribal Village

Sources: Church in Chains, VOMC International Ministry Contacts

On December 4th, a group consisting of 13 Christian families were expelled from their home village in rural Chhattisgarh because they refused to deny their faith. The families, comprising a total of 66 individuals, were summoned to a village council meeting in the town of Mungwal. The villagers opposing these families tried to pressure them to deny their faith in Jesus Christ, mandating that they return to their former tribal religion.

When the believers refused to recant their faith, the other villagers angrily beat them. Entire families were then expelled from the village, including children and the elderly. The ousted Christians, who were forced to leave all of their belongings behind, have since gone to live with relatives in other villages. Though the incident was reported to the local police, no action has been taken. For additional reports addressing the persecution of our Christian brothers and sisters in India, go to our [country report](#).



Some of the expelled believers.
Photo: Chhattisgarh Progressive Christian Alliance

The situation in Mungwal is part of a series of recent incidents that have altogether affected 150 families in various tribal villages throughout Chhattisgarh. *Closer to the Fire* podcast host Greg Musselman recently interviewed Nitin Sardar, the director of Dinabanthu Ministries, to address various recent incidents of persecution. To view this informative interview, and to learn more about the challenges facing fellow believers in India, see [this video](#). (Discussion on the case specifically relating to the 13 expelled families, along with footage of the actual attack, begins at 25:18 in the recorded interview.)

Please lift up these expelled believers in your prayers, asking the Lord to minister healing, consolation, provision for their daily spiritual and practical needs, as well as divine guidance, so their families will experience a promising future. Despite the difficulties they've recently endured, may their faith in Christ remain strong, enabling them to be shining lights of His transformative love wherever they're presently residing. May the Lord give them opportunities to share the Gospel with their new neighbours, praying that the conveyed message will resonate as truth in many receptive hearts. Additionally, intercede for the members of their former village – including those who expelled them from the community – in hopes these villagers will come to a saving faith in Christ as well.

NIGERIA: Woman Charged with Blasphemy Awaits Trial

Sources: Christian Solidarity International, Morning Star News

In May, Deborah Emmanuel Yakubu was killed by a mob after rumours spread that she had blasphemed against the Islamic prophet Mohammed during a WhatsApp group chat. To read a report on the incident, see [this page](#).

Other Nigerian Christians were understandably shaken by the news of this murder. One woman, Rhoda Ya'u Jatau, received a WhatsApp message condemning Deborah's death and proceeded to share that message with others. A group of Muslims who saw Rhoda's post accused her of committing blasphemy as well, and thereby sought to kill her. Security agents arrested Rhoda on May 20th, and the accused believer has been incarcerated ever since.

According to her lawyer, Rhoda has been accused of inciting public disturbance, exciting contempt of religious creed, and cyberstalking. Efforts to secure bail have been thwarted due to interference from governing authorities and opposing Islamic groups.



Christian women in Nigeria.
Photo: VOMC

Today, seven months after her arrest, Rhoda remains incarcerated while awaiting trial. Her husband, Ya'u Adamu, has been banned from visiting her. In fact, Ya'u, along with their five children, have been forced to relocate to another city for their safety. In an effort to gain his wife's release, Ya'u has been forced to sell all of his belongings in order to finance the required legal assistance.

Prayerfully remember Rhoda, along with her husband and children, as they continue to endure this lengthy ordeal – asking the Lord to provide protection for each member of this victimized family and all those assisting them. Pray that He will mightily intervene in Rhoda's case, using the international advocacy of other countries to ensure justice is being upheld on her behalf and that of others in Nigeria who are likewise undergoing persecution for their Christian faith.

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