

"Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers."
~ J. Sidlow Baxter

AFGHANISTAN: Taliban Orders Strict Sharia Punishments

Sources: Open Doors, BBC

When the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, they promised moderation and justice for all. Regrettably, they have demonstrated something very different, as the rights of women, freedom of the news press, and fair treatment of religious minorities have been brutally repressed. In a recent development, Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada ordered all judges to impose strict Sharia punishments for crimes committed within the country. While the exact list of applicable crimes has not been defined, expected punishments include amputations, public lashings and executions by stoning.

For Christians, the increased enforcement of Sharia law brings renewed fears. Taliban officials have declared that there are no Christians in Afghanistan, implying that every person who doesn't adhere to the teachings of Islam is regarded as an apostate. The traditional punishment for apostasy under Sharia law is death.



Haibatullah Akhundzada
Photo: Wikipedia

Such a severe penalty for Christian converts in Afghanistan is not unique to Taliban rule. Back in 2006, an Afghan convert named Abdul Rahman faced calls for his death. Thankfully, due to issues with the investigation, Abdul was able to flee to Italy, where he was granted asylum. However, the recently renewed requirement to impose Sharia punishments is expected to increase the severity of penalties inflicted on Christian converts.

So, even in these present times, the country of Afghanistan remains to be one of the most difficult places on earth to live for committed followers of Christ. To learn more about the hardships experienced by Afghan Christians, go to our [country report](#).

Please prayerfully uphold believers in Afghanistan whose lives are in imminent danger because of their faith in Christ. May they be greatly encouraged by the reassuring presence of the Lord, the promised "Prince of Peace." Pray that God will work miraculously in this nation, bringing about positive changes – politically on a national level and spiritually within the hearts of individual lives – for nothing is impossible with Him.

PAKISTAN: Young Domestic Worker Sexually Assaulted

Source: CLAAS-UK

A Christian girl in Pakistan who worked as a domestic servant is still awaiting justice three months after she was raped at her employer's home. Even though the incident was reported to police, no action has been taken to arrest those responsible.

Samreen, who is from Faisalabad, Punjab, worked for a Muslim woman named Nasreen. On September 25th, Samreen was folding laundry while her employer went to the market. During that time, Nasreen's husband Ameen, and his cousin Waqas, came into the house and attempted to rape the young woman. Samreen managed to get away from the men, complaining to Nasreen upon her return. Instead of supporting the girl, however, the employer sided with her husband.

With the apparent approval of Nasreen, Ameen and Waqas tried a



second time to assault the girl. This time, they pushed Samreen into a bedroom where they both proceeded to rape her. After the ordeal, Samreen eventually returned home to tell her family what had happened. Although an official complaint was made against those responsible, there have been no arrests to date. In the meantime, the abusers continue to threaten Samreen and her family, demanding that the Christians withdraw their accusations.

Samreen's family happens to be very poor, which is commonly the case for Christians in Pakistan. Sexual molestation, forced marriages, along with other horrific crimes, are far too common for victims belonging to a religious minority. Frequently ignored by the authorities, such crimes are not always reported because of the repercussions that tend to take place, not only by the perpetrators themselves but also by other militant members of the community. For further accounts of persecution against followers of Jesus in Pakistan, including those specifically involving innocent girls, go to our [country report](#).

In the wake of this devastating incident, please pray for greatly needed emotional healing on behalf of this young Christian woman. Ask the "God of all comfort" to also minister His peace and hope to Samreen and her family as they continue to await justice. May the authorities deal justly by holding those responsible for this horrific attack accountable and by ensuring the legal protection of Pakistan's vulnerable young women and girls.

CHINA: Stricter Controls for Social Media Interactions

Sources: ChinaAid, CNN

Starting on December 15th, Chinese Internet users can be held liable for merely "liking" a social media post that the government considers harmful or illegal. The new rules are part of the recently imposed guidelines published by the Cyberspace Administration of China, mandating that all service providers carefully monitor comments and reactions – both digitally and through "speech review teams." Any so-called "bad information" is to be reported to the Internet Information Department.

Those who post information deemed illegal or harmful will be subjected to a variety of penalties – ranging from warnings, forceful deletion of content, suspension of accounts, or other measures. The scrutinized "content" not only includes written comments but also applies to emojis and other methods of reacting.

In response to the new rules, a spokesperson for ChinaAid commented, "The promulgation of the new regulations will narrow the already limited space for Chinese citizens to speak on the Internet, and the freedom of speech of Chinese citizens will be severely suppressed." For more information on the challenges facing believers in China, go to our [country report](#).

In light of these heightened Internet restrictions, pray that our Christian brothers and sisters throughout China will use spiritual discernment, giving careful consideration when addressing the daily issues presented on various social media sites. May they have wisdom on how to best respond in any situation. Additionally, please uplift in prayer all the evangelists in China who are endeavouring to share the Gospel in their communities and beyond. May they not be discouraged by the increased government interference but rather further inspired to seek innovative ways to conduct ministry outreach and discipleship, wisely seizing every God-ordained opportunity to proclaim the "Good News" of Jesus.

