

**"God didn't promise days without pain,
laughter without sorrow, or sun without rain.
But He did promise strength for the day,
comfort for the tears, and light for the way."
~ Author Unknown**

NIGERIA: Fatalities During the Christmas Season

Sources: Morning Star News, International Christian Concern

As a local church was about to begin their service on Christmas Day in Angwan Aku, Kaduna, Fulani militants entered the village on motorcycles. Shooting sporadically, one Christian was killed. Before leaving, the attackers also kidnapped 53 other villagers.

Prior to this incident, in the days leading up to Christmas, militants attacked the villages of Mallagum and Kagoro, also located in Kaduna state. Forty Christians were killed in Mallagum on December 18th and an additional three in Kagoro on December 23rd. For those remaining in these predominantly Christian villages, life has been completely disrupted. "The lucky survivors have become refugees in their land," stated one resident. "Mass graves litter the community and the countryside." The assailants were heard to shout the Islamic declaration of *Allah akbar* (God is greater) while wreaking havoc on the villages.



Coffins of slain Christians in Mallagum.
Photo: Morning Star News

Nigeria continues to be the nation where more Christians are killed for their faith than any other. While some of the country's violence and kidnappings arise for illicit financial gain, Christians are frequently targeted because of their faith. For more information on the persecution facing Christians in Nigeria, go to our [country report](#).

Please prayerfully remember the grieving families and community members of the many Christians killed in these recent attacks, as well as those who have been abducted or are recovering from other incidents of persecution. Ask the Lord to minister greatly needed comfort and help to His suffering Nigerian people, replacing their uncertainties and fears with inner peace. May He also give wisdom to the members of the country's political leadership, urging them to make this concern of violent persecution a priority. As elections are taking place in February (for a new president and other governing representatives), pray that the Lord will guide the selection process – raising up those who will bring about peace in this divided nation.

INDONESIA: Conflicting Responses to Christmas Celebrations

Sources: Morning Star News, Detikcom, AsiaNews

Christmas Day of 2022 became a historic one in Indonesia as the country's president, Joko Widodo, visited two churches. The unannounced visits made by the Muslim president that day marked the only times he officially attended Christian services. Speaking to the congregants at the Cathedral of Bogor, he called for peace between differing religions. "Together, let us foster tolerant relations," he announced to all those who were present. His gesture was in line with an emphasis of tolerance that was being promoted by the Indonesian Ministry for Religious Affairs during the holidays.

Regrettably, this attitude of acceptance wasn't conveyed by citizens residing in other areas of the country. The Batak Christian Church encountered opposition from approximately 20 community members when they attempted to hold a worship service at a



President Joko Widodo

home in Cilebut Barat, located south of the capital of Jakarta. In North Sulawesi, the Ratatatok Adventist Church was also stopped from hosting a time of worship at a home located in the village of Buyat Selatan on December 24th. Opposing villagers claimed that these congregations did not meet the requirements for the homes to be considered places of worship.

According to the police chief who was investigating the incident in the village of Buyat Selatan, in order for a Christian group to conduct services within various places of worship, there must be at least 90 congregants in attendance and they must receive approval from 60 area households representing different faiths. Yet, even when such onerous requirements have been met, militant Islamic groups frequently intimidate and pressure Christians who attempt to gather. Since 2018, the Setara Institute has recorded 298 incidents of religious conflict perpetrated by those opposing houses of worship. To learn more about the challenges experienced by persecuted believers in Indonesia, go to our [country report](#).

Praise God for the honourable efforts made by President Joko Widodo and those representing the Indonesian Ministry for Religious Affairs to promote religious tolerance in the country. May these efforts continue to further encourage peaceful relations among the differing faith groups represented within each community, ultimately fostering harmony among the citizens of the country at large. Pray that the Lord will honour the desire of Indonesian Christians to meet together peacefully for worship by making a way for them to do so without hindrance or opposition.

INDIA: Ministry Leaders Appeal for Pastors' Release

Sources: UCA News, Human Rights Watch

A group of pastors in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh is appealing for the release of 30 fellow pastors who are being detained in prisons around the state. According to Pastor Jitendra Singh, General Secretary of the Pastors' Association of Uttar Pradesh, all of the detained church leaders have been falsely charged under the state's anti-conversion legislation which was enacted in February 2021.

"We want justice for the pastors who have been victims of persecution by Hindu nationalists," explained Pastor Singh. The association has also called on the police commissioner of Kanpur city to protect pastors and churches from harassment. The commissioner has assured them that he would take note of their grievances.



Governing leaders in India are facing increasing international pressure to protect the rights of minority groups throughout the country. In a report that was released this past November, the United Nations Human Rights Council specifically addressed its concerns regarding the mounting problems taking place in this South Asian nation. Additional information on the persecution of India's Christians is available at our [country report](#).

Pray that new governmental and judicial measures will be taken to protect the rights of Christians in India. Specifically ask for the rightful vindication of the imprisoned pastors, as well as other believers who have been unjustly charged for reaching out to those in need with the compassion of Christ. While the pastors await release from imprisonment, may they receive God-ordained opportunities to share the eternal hope of the Gospel to fellow prisoners and prison officials alike – adding more names to the Lamb's "Book of Life" (Revelation 21:27; 20:15).

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