

***"If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."***

~ John 15:18-19 ESV

### **MEXICO: Christian Woman Severely Beaten**

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Christian Post

Since 2015, members of the Great Commission Baptist Church in the community of Rancho Nuevo, Hidalgo State, have been prohibited from accessing their land to cultivate crops. On December 21st, Maria Concepcion Hernández-Hernández was physically assaulted for merely viewing her plot of land after being asked by a neighbour to remove two trees from the property. When local leaders were informed that the Christian woman had gone to her land, she was ambushed and brutally beaten.

Upon hearing of the attack against Maria, Pastor Rogelio Hernández Baltazar from the Great Commission Baptist Church attempted to intervene, but he too was physically assaulted. The pastor was then detained by the local community leaders and further ordered to turn over the deeds for ten plots of land owned by church members, but he refused to do so.



A rural area in Hidalgo, Mexico.  
Photo: Flickr / David Cabrera ([CC](#))

Following the attack, Maria filed a complaint with the prosecutor and the human rights commission. When she later began to vomit blood, the injured Christian woman was admitted to hospital and subsequently reported to be in critical condition. Maria's family was warned by local authorities that if she succumbed to her injuries, they would not be allowed to bury her body in the community. Though the identities of her attackers are known, there have been no charges laid at the date of this report.

While religious freedom is guaranteed in the Mexican constitution, indigenous communities are generally given lenience to govern according to their traditional customs. Since 2015, local authorities have attempted to force church members to participate in local ritualistic festivals, often requiring unwilling Christians to give financial donations towards the funding of these events. Evangelical believers who don't comply have been fired from their jobs, blocked from burying their dead, and arbitrarily detained or beaten. Since 2018, children belonging to religious minority groups have also been barred from attending local community schools.

Many of the indigenous communities in Mexico practise "traditionalist Catholicism," which is a combination of Roman Catholic beliefs mixed with traditional Aztec rituals. In September 2021, two families who attend another Baptist church in Hidalgo State were threatened with expulsion unless they denied their faith and paid the fine levied against them. For more reports addressing persecution in Mexico, go to our [country report](#).

***Pray for Maria's full recovery, asking the Lord to minister His healing touch upon her both physically and emotionally. Also prayerfully uphold other Christians in this community who are experiencing ongoing harassment and persecution. May God intervene in each situation, providing guidance to the state authorities who need to take action against local governing leaders of communities like Rancho Nuevo where the rights of religious minorities are being denied. Pray that the opposing community leaders will open their hearts to the convicting presence of the Holy Spirit so that they would come to a point of repentance and the resulting joy of God's forgiveness and salvation, in addition to the many blessings that take place when living in unity with fellow members of the community.***

## INDIA: Mob Violently Protests Alleged Conversion Activities

Sources: Hindustan Times, The Hindu, TwoCircles.net, VOMC International Ministry Contacts

Hundreds of villagers converged on a Catholic church in the Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on January 2nd. Spurred on by accusations of alleged religious conversions, the crowd entered the church building armed with wooden sticks and iron rods. Significant damage was done to the church and presbytery. Several police officers, including the district superintendent, were injured when they attempted to intervene.

The violent incident followed a meeting organized by leaders in the tribal community over allegations that members of the church were performing religious conversions. While appeals for a peaceful protest were made during the meeting, anger among the crowd escalated until there was a mob consisting of over 1,000 people, intent on committing destruction. Charges have been laid against five individuals, including a leader of the Hindu nationalist BJP.



Property damage in the church.  
Photo: VOMC Source (screenshot)

Since anti-conversion legislation has been introduced in various states throughout India over the years, it has been used as a catalyst for violence and persecution. For more details on the challenges being encountered by our Christian brothers and sisters in India, and/or to view related informative podcasts, go to our [country report](#).

***Pray for God's strength, wisdom and courage to be imparted in the lives of Christians residing within this district, as well as those in other areas of India who regularly face violence and discrimination because of their faith in Christ. As the country's church leaders seek the Lord's wisdom, may He honour that desire by mediating on their behalf and faithfully guiding them concerning their ministries. Additionally, pray for His intervention in the political decisions of India's governing leaders so that the people of this South Asian nation will be allowed to freely express their divergent opinions and religious beliefs in a peaceful and collaborative manner.***

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## REPORT UPDATE

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### CHINA: Verdict for Zhao Weikai

Source: ChinaAid

In a previously posted "Persecution & Prayer Alert" report, we included Li Xin's appeal for prayer, requesting that the court hearing relating to the case of her husband, Zhao Weikai, would soon take place. At the time of that report, Zhao had been detained since July 2021 without a conviction. For more details, go to [this page](#).

On December 30th, Li finally received a notice announcing the court's decision. Zhao, who was convicted of "illegally holding materials promoting terrorism and extremism," has been sentenced to two years in prison and additionally fined. The charges against him stem from materials seized by authorities during a raid on the Christian couple's home in 2021. These confiscated items included video documentaries on the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest and the Xinjiang protests that took place in 2009.



Zhao Weikai with his family.  
Photo: ChinaAid

While Li was not allowed to attend her husband's trial, which was held on December 15th, others who were present reported that he looked well. However, since Zhao suffers from liver disease, there are continued concerns regarding the Christian man's health as he now begins to serve his prison sentence.

***Pray for the improvement of Zhao's health as he awaits vindication legally, asking the Lord to administer loving care and peace to this convicted believer during his time of incarceration. May the efforts of Zhao's lawyers to file an appeal against the court's decision be done with wisdom and discernment. Furthermore, please prayerfully remember Zhao's family, who also need God's comfort, provision and peace during this difficult time of separation.***

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