

"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; it is the greater work."
~ Oswald Chambers

INDIA: Christians Arrested at Wedding Reception

Source: International Christian Concern

Nine pastors and a recently married Christian couple were arrested in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, on March 27th. According to witnesses, the pastor of an Assemblies of God church in the community was hosting a wedding reception at his home for his daughter and son-in-law. Militant Hindu nationalists claimed that the gathering was a conversion program and called the police. Though the pastor explained that he was simply holding a wedding reception, the authorities ignored his pleas and arrested him, along with the newly married couple and eight other pastors in attendance.

Uttar Pradesh passed legislation in November 2020 outlawing religious conversions by "misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or any fraudulent means." It is one of nine Indian states with such legislation. Regrettably, these laws have been misused by those who want India to be an exclusively Hindu nation. For additional reports on the persecution encountered by Christians in India, go to our [country report](#).

"These days are very challenging days in our state," remarked a Christian leader from Uttar Pradesh. "More than 200 churches were shut down in the last few months, and 52 pastors and Christians are reeling in the prisons across the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is challenging for Christians to gather for worship.... Today's incident of nine pastors that were sent to jail tells the bigger story of how Christians cannot gather for any purpose whatsoever."

Please uphold this newly married couple in your prayers, along with the nine pastors who have been imprisoned on false pretenses. Pray that each one of these believers will be vindicated of any charges laid against them. Intercede for the militant Hindu nationalists involved in this recent incident – as well as all those who stand in opposition to Christianity within this part of the world – in hopes they will also come to realize the truth of God's Word and turn in sincere repentance to Him through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. In general, despite the increased incidents of persecution in recent years, may the ministry of the Gospel continue to spread throughout the nation of India.



INDONESIA: Church Building Sealed

Sources: UCA News, International Christian Concern, Morning Star News

The process of establishing and leading a church in Indonesia can be onerous, particularly in areas controlled by militant Islamic groups or where there are few Christians. In an attempt to establish "religious harmony," legislation was passed during 2006 requiring all places of worship to obtain a government permit. In order to receive authorization, approval must be granted by at least 60 non-Christian residents in the area, and churches have to consist of a minimum of 90 members.

While technically required for all religions, permits are practically only enforced for non-Muslim groups. Because the approval process is quite difficult and applications may potentially be rejected, many Christians gather together without the mandated permit. For more information on the challenges facing followers of Jesus in Indonesia, go to our [country report](#).



A church in Indonesia
Photo: DayakSibiriak ([cc](#))

For the Simalungun Christian Protestant Church in Cigelas, opposition has led to the forcible closure of their church building. On both March 19th and 26th, the congregation's worship services were interrupted by local Muslims demanding an end to all church activities. When the church did not comply with the demands, local officials were notified. On April 1st, the Purwakarta regent, Anne Ratna Mustika, along with members of the police and military, sealed the church building. Regent Mustika suggested that the congregation use a different building. However, the suggested location is too far away and therefore difficult for congregants to access by means of transportation.

The church leaders acknowledge that their congregation consists of only 60 members, which is less than the required 90. However, they also state that the closure should be done through a court decision and not the actions of local leadership. "The government should tell us what requirements we should fulfill; we are of course willing to deal with the locals around our church," said Krisdian Saragih, who serves as the leader of the Purwakarta GKPS Elders Council. "We want to be part of the local community. We really want to know what they expect from us."

Please join us in praying for God to grant the leaders of this church greatly needed direction, wisdom and encouragement as they determine their next steps. May His peace prevail between Christians and Muslims in this community, and among others across Indonesia, overriding any attempts of outside activists to stir up further trouble. Additionally, pray for the Lord's intervention and mediation in regards to the sealed church building, so this congregation can continue worshipping together and reaching out to others throughout the surrounding area with the hope of the Gospel.

ERITREA: New Arrests and Prison Releases

Sources: Church in Chains, Release International

According to a recent report, 30 Christians were arrested in mid-March while gathering for worship at a believer's house in the Eritrean city of Keren. Unfortunately, no further details are available at this time. The recently arrested followers of Jesus join more than 400 other Christians who are presently being held captive in Eritrean prisons because of their faith. For other reports and ways you can pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in this East African nation, go to our [country report](#).

In an unrelated development, it was also reported that nine Christians were recently released from prison – four from the Mai Serwa prison in Asmara and five from a prison in the port city of Assab. One of the believers released from Assab was house church pastor Abenet Yemane. Pastor Abenet has been in and out of prison throughout the past 20 years because of her Christian faith and ministry.



Photo: VOMC

A year ago, Dr. Berhane Asmelash from Release Eritrea was interviewed by *Closer to the Fire* podcast host Greg Musselman about the ongoing arrests and persecution of Eritrean followers of Jesus. To view this informative video interview, visit VOMCanada.com/video/Asmelash.

Praise God for the recent release of these nine believers! As they now adjust to life outside of prison, may each of them (and their respective families) experience the Lord's protection, restoration and joy. Please remember to also pray for strength and comfort on behalf of the hundreds of other Christians who have been arbitrarily detained in Eritrea for their faith – including the 30 newly arrested worshippers. Ask the Lord to intervene in the lives of President Afwerki and the country's other governing leaders as well, so that the tyranny controlling this nation would abate. In fact, please pray that the Holy Spirit will work mightily within the hearts and minds of every Eritrean who comes into contact with a follower of Jesus – whether it be on the streets or within the country's notorious prisons.