



***"It is wonderful that we may share in Christ's suffering; it is more wonderful still that He shares in ours. Truly His name is 'Emmanuel,' 'God With Us.'"***

~ John Stott

### PAKISTAN: Christian Brothers Charged with Blasphemy

Sources: British Asian Christian Association, Morning Star News

Shail Masih and his twin brother Rahil were celebrating at a village fair on August 26th. Along with many other community members, the 18-year-old Christian brothers went on a carnival ride and threw fake currency notes into the crowd. Unfortunately, it was discovered that some of the slips of paper thrown by the participants contained Quranic verses. It was assumed by those present that the young Christian men were the ones responsible, leading to the arrest of their mother and grandfather.

The arrested family members were released from custody when the twin brothers arrived at the police station. The complainant, Ghulam Mustafa, alleged that Shail and Rahil were making TikTok videos while throwing the scraps of paper. However, as the brothers are illiterate and come from an impoverished family, they would not have known what was written on any of the papers. One report suggests that either they or someone else may have inadvertently torn pages from a Quranic booklet.

The brothers have since been arrested and charged with blasphemy. While many blasphemy charges in Pakistan result from personal or business disputes, sometimes issues can arise as a result of ignorance or illiteracy. For more details on the problems encountered by Christians in Pakistan, go to our [country report](#).

***Pray that the truth will come to light in this legal case, so these unassuming young men can be released from custody. In the meantime, please remember their Christian family in your prayers, asking our Heavenly Father to provide His peace, strength and encouragement, as well as divine protection, while they deal with the aftermath of the accusations. May followers of Christ throughout Pakistan, who are frequently subjected to various forms of severe oppression because of their faith in Christ, continue to hold steadfastly onto their identity as children of God.***



A village fair in Pakistan.  
Photo: Wikimedia / Sarwanmemon.muet (cc)

### MEXICO: Christians Face Expulsion and Extensive Property Loss

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, El Universal Oaxaca, Christian Daily

In November 2023, community leaders of San Isidro Arenal, a town located within Oaxaca State, mandated that Roman Catholicism will be the only religion permitted in their community. Following this decision, 13 evangelical families began to experience threats and violence from those opposing them. A month later, three of the families were forcibly expelled and took refuge in the Playa Vicente Municipality of Veracruz State.

On August 6th, the situation escalated when the families remaining in the community had their lands and livestock confiscated. The victims' homes and fields were destroyed, and their church building was set on fire. A group of four evangelical Christian leaders arrived at the community ten days later to provide needed assistance to those who were affected by the vandalism. However, upon their arrival, the visiting leaders were attacked by a mob, stripped, beaten and detained for over six hours.



Evangelicals protesting in Oaxaca.  
Photo: CSW

Even anyone in the community who merely expresses support for the affected families is at risk of danger. On August 18th, Lucia Antonia, who is not a member of the church, was ordered to leave the community for demonstrating support for the victims.

The Roman Catholic archbishop of Oaxaca has distanced the Roman Catholic Church from the situation, denouncing "competition for parishioners" and stating that all people must respect each other. On August 20th, the secretary of the state government claimed that the issue had been addressed, denying the possibility that further violence and forced displacement could take place.

The next day, however, while most of the threatened community members were in meetings with state officials, their homes were looted and destroyed. Additionally, three women who remained in the community while the others attended the meeting were forcibly taken away, only to be left abandoned on a roadside a few hours away from their homes.

In tribal areas of Mexico, such as those located within Oaxaca State, aspects of Roman Catholicism have frequently been combined with traditional indigenous religions, resulting in a syncretistic religious system comprised of conflicting rituals and practices. Those who don't comply with the imposed tribal beliefs frequently face rejection from members of their communities. For further details, and/or to read previously published reports relating to Christian persecution in various areas of Mexico, go to our [country profile](#).

***Pray that God will divinely intervene in this situation so that each one of these victimized villagers can rightfully retain their homes and possessions. In the meanwhile, as they await justice, may they be provided greatly needed practical assistance, comfort and protection. Ask the Lord to especially minister in spiritual ways throughout the region of Oaxaca State, strengthening the faith and community relations of His people despite the opposition they have endured. Ultimately, may peace, equity and harmony be restored so that the members of each tribal village can enjoy the benefits and blessings of a thriving community.***

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### **SRI LANKA: Church Building Pelted with Stones; Worshipers Restricted Access**

Source: NCEASL

The Jesus Jeewamanai Revival Church in the town of Polgahawela has been the target of attacks perpetrated by disgruntled members of the community who oppose their place of worship. On July 7th and 11th, stones were thrown at the church building. Then, on July 14th, before the Christians' Sunday services were scheduled to begin, villagers blocked the road leading to the building in order to prevent the congregants and their pastor from accessing the facility.

As a result, an official complaint was issued with the local police about the obstruction. The officers requested that the church members cancel their services that day and ordered those blocking the road to disperse from the area. The next day, the pastor attended a meeting at the police station to further discuss the issue. He brought along with him another pastor, a church worker, as well as the landlady of the building in which the congregation regularly meets. Also present at the meeting were five opposing Buddhist religious leaders and about 40 villagers. Throughout that time, approximately 200 additional villagers gathered outside the police station in protest of the church members' activities.



A group of Christians praying together.  
Photo: VOMC

The opposing villagers and their Buddhist leaders demanded that all worship services be permanently stopped. When the pastor responded by stating that he and his church members were acting within their constitutional rights, the police concurred. A request was then made by the opposing villagers, stating that anyone from outside the area should not be permitted to gather at the church. However, this condition was rejected by the pastor. In the end, the church members were told to limit the total number of people attending their worship services while further information was being sought by the authorities.

Much of the opposition encountered by churches in Sri Lanka comes from local villagers who are often provoked by Buddhist leaders in their communities. To learn more about the hardships experienced by followers of Jesus in Sri Lanka, go to our [country report](#).

***Pray that appropriate action will be taken to protect the religious freedoms of our Christian brothers and sisters from the Jesus Jeewamanai Revival Church. As these believers endeavour to reach out to those of the community around them with the "Good News" of God's salvation, may they be empowered with His wisdom, strength and compassion – responding to their opponents with love and grace. As a result, may the hostile members of their community come to understand the truth of the Gospel and willingly turn to faith in Christ.***

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