



"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed."

~ 1 Peter 4:12-13 ESV

TOGO: Pastors Targeted by Militant Islamists

Source: The Voice of the Martyrs USA

Multiple pastors in northern Togo have encountered persecution from militant Islamic groups crossing over from neighbouring countries. In April 2024, assailants attacked a village where Pastor Gbendja Félidja had been serving. While the pastor and several villagers were able to flee to safety, five people were killed during the violent raid. The Christian leader eventually returned to the village that summer and resumed his ministry activities in the community. On February 7th, however, armed militants invaded the village once again; this time, they forcefully entered Pastor Gbendja's home. During the invasion, the church leader was tragically shot and then stabbed to death, leaving behind seven adult children.



Pastor Patrice Kokouvi

Photo: VOM USA

Another pastor in the same region continues to minister despite receiving ongoing threats within his community. For the past three years, Pastor Patrice Kokouvi's crops have been repeatedly destroyed by opposing villagers. When asked if he had reported the damages to the police, Pastor Patrice replied, "If I go to the court system, perhaps [the villagers] will never want to know Jesus." Even though he still faithfully serves the community, this pastor is now residing on the outskirts of the village for the safety of his family.

- ***Pray for comfort on behalf of Pastor Gbendja's family, friends and church members as they mourn the tragic loss of this beloved Christian leader.***
- ***Please also remember Pastor Patrice and his family in your prayers as they minister the love of Christ to those in their village, asking that these faithful***

believers would be divinely protected and strengthened.

- ***In general, pray that God would provide greatly needed protection, wisdom and guidance to Christians throughout Togo who are at threat of violent opposition from militant Islamists as well as practitioners of vodun (commonly referred to as voodoo).***

PAKISTAN: Christian Man Charged for Alleged Facebook Posts

Sources: Pakistan Christian Post, Morning Star News

On March 17th, Pakistani federal agents took 24-year-old Arsalan Gill into custody on accusations of blasphemy. The charges allege that the Christian believer was responsible for sharing blasphemous content in Facebook groups. His arrest takes place amid a rising number of cases involving entrapment, whereby organized militant groups specifically target members of the country's religious minorities.



A sweeper in Pakistan.

Arsalan was arrested when he returned home from his job as a sweeper in Mughalpura, Lahore. The young man's family members were able to speak with him briefly the next day. During one of the conversations, Arsalan explained to his brother Suleman that an unknown person had added him to two Facebook groups without his knowledge, and that he had no idea what type of content was shared on those pages.

Religious rights advocates believe that the accused follower of Jesus is most likely another victim of organized groups that are deliberately deceiving Christians in order to have them charged with blasphemy. (More information about this concerning trend is [available here](#).)

Pastor Imran Amanat with LEAD Ministries Pakistan has issued a warning to the country's Christian youth, advising them to exercise extreme caution when using social media platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp. "These platforms have become fertile grounds for malicious individuals to exploit unsuspecting victims, particularly young Christians, and trap them in false blasphemy cases," he cautioned. To review other reports addressing the challenges facing Christians in Pakistan, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***Please uphold Arsalan in your prayers as he faces these accusations, asking that this detained young man and his family would be sustained by God's peace, strength and comfort.***
 - ***May the Lord also provide Arsalan and his family with the necessary financial resources so they will be equipped to overcome the legal challenges ahead.***
 - ***Further, pray that God will work in and through members of the government commission, a political group that has been established to investigate these anti-Christian "vigilante groups," in order to bring about justice for Arsalan and our many other accused Pakistani brothers and sisters in Christ.***
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PAKISTAN: Guilty Verdict for Christian's Killer

Sources: Morning Star News, ICR Canada

On November 9th, 2023, a follower of Jesus named Farhan Ul Qamar was killed in his family's home by a man who is well-known in the community for his hatred towards Christians and Jews. It is believed that the violence may have been instigated by a minor disagreement that took place the day before the attack. (For more details on the incident, see [this report](#).)



Slain victim: Farhan Ul Qamar
Photo: Morning Star News

In the months following the murder, Farhan's family faced repeated threats to drop all charges against the perpetrator, Muhammad Zubair. This Muslim man is a known repeated offender who has long evaded justice due to his family's influential status.

On March 27th, more than a year after Farhan's death, a judge in Pasrur, Punjab, found the accused guilty of murder. The conviction is considered a rare occurrence, since crimes against Christians are frequently neglected in Pakistan. Muhammad was sentenced with the death penalty, along with a fine that is equivalent to about \$2,500 CAD. As the convicted man was being led from the court room, he showed no remorse. Rather, he hurled threats at Farhan's family, declaring that they would never be allowed to live in peace.

It is expected that Muhammad will appeal the sentence, and that the appeal process may take several years. The lawyer for Farhan's family, Lazar Allah Rakha, anticipates that pressure will be put on the victim's family to pardon the accused. In light of these concerns, he is calling for the police to maintain added security measures.

Following the court ruling, some human rights advocates described this case as a significant milestone in the fight for justice on behalf of persecuted Christians in Pakistan. However, followers of Jesus throughout the country continue to suffer violence and injustices for their faith. Previously published reports on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan may be reviewed at our [country profile](#).

- ***Praise God for the legal advocacy that's taken place in Farhan's case.***
- ***In addition to ministering great peace and comfort to each of these grieving family members, may the Lord shelter them from harm and any further harassment.***
- ***Pray that God will dramatically transform the heart and mind of Muhammad Zubair, convicting him of his need for salvation and leading him to faith to Jesus Christ.***