



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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*"We are still living in a broken, fallen world.
One of the sure signs of the Holy Spirit at work
in us is when we are filled with compassion,
love, forgiveness and grace to all."
~ "My Daily Journey with Christ"*

INDONESIA: Suicide Bomber Family Attacks Three Churches

Sources: World Evangelical Alliance, Release International, New York Times

A series of coordinated church bombings in the city of Surabaya has resulted in as many as 28 fatalities and the wounding of 50 victims; some critically. The attacks were carried out on the morning of May 13th by members of a single family.

Dita Futrianto, a local leader for a militant Islamic group known as Jemaah Ansharut Daulah, dropped off his wife and two daughters, ages 9 and 12, at the Diponegro Indonesian Christian Church. All three female accomplices had bombs strapped to them which exploded in the courtyard outside the church.

The instigator of the initial suicide bombing attack, Dita, then crashed his bomb-laden car into the Surabaya Centre Pentecostal Church where it exploded. At the same time, his two sons, ages 16 and 18, rode motorcycles into the Santa Maria Catholic Church and detonated the explosives they were carrying. The police later disabled three remaining bombs that were still in the family's home.

These suicide bombings are considered the deadliest in Indonesia in more than a decade. It is also the first known instance where children were used in such a horrific way. It has been reported that the family had been living in Syria and was inspired by the ISIS terrorist group.

Please remember the surviving members of these three churches -- and Christians throughout Indonesia -- who are now facing the aftermath of this devastation and the resulting pain. Ask for healing on behalf of those still in hospital, as well as emotional healing for the many others who've been impacted. Pray that the Indonesian authorities will be effective in preventing any further attacks.

CHINA: Increasing Pressure on House Churches

Source: ChinaAid

Authorities in China have been continuing their campaign against Christianity, targeting unregistered house churches. In recent days, at least two churches in Beijing have been raided by authorities who pressured landlords to cancel the leases.

On May 6th, several dozen officers from the Public Security Bureau entered a church service. While the service was allowed to continue, officials took pictures of those present. Two days later, the landlord revoked their lease.

During a regularly scheduled Bible study at the Holy Love Fellowship on April 20th, authorities disrupted the meeting and questioned those present. Xu Yonghai, a church elder, says that it is becoming harder to find a place to rent due to the governmental pressure on landlords.

Action against China's Christians has been taking various other forms as well. On May 8th, authorities met with nine members of the Huaqiu Church in Guizhou. The Religious Affairs Bureau personnel warned the church members against having any foreign connections and told them to join the government-approved Three-Self Church or face further repercussions.

As Christians in China continue to face opposition from many different directions, pray that they will have wisdom to know the appropriate ways in which to respond. May God strengthen and encourage these Chinese believers, so they will stand firm in Christ and continue the spread of the Gospel.

PRISONER UPDATE

PAKISTAN: Chief Justice to Hear Asia Bibi's Appeal

Sources: World Watch Monitor, Pakistan Today, The Express Tribune

There is a mixture of hope and scepticism among Pakistani Christians with the latest development in the case of Asia Bibi who was sentenced to death for blasphemy in 2009. The Chief Justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, Mian Saqib Nisar, stated on April 21st that Asia's appeal would be heard soon and that he will personally preside over the case. Another time, he mentioned that all appeals before the Supreme Court would be decided by July.

This case has been a flashpoint over the past number of years. Those who have taken up Asia's cause have faced threats on their lives. The most prominent were the deaths of a federal government minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, and Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer. Both were assassinated in early 2011 for their outspoken criticism of Pakistan's blasphemy laws and support for Asia Bibi.

In anticipation of problems, the Chief Justice has ordered police protection for Asia's lawyer. Pray that the case will proceed quickly and justly, and for the protection of all involved -- including the Chief Justice. For more information on Asia and other cases of persecution in Pakistan, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.

If you would like to post a prayer of praise or petition on behalf of our persecuted family around the globe, visit VOMC's prayer wall at www.vomcanada.com/prayerwall.htm.

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If you would like to encourage someone to read or receive this weekly prayer alert, please use our online form at www.vomcanada.com/pnpforward.htm and help spread the message of the persecuted church around the world.

For information on additional ways to support members of the persecuted church overseas, review the list of options at www.vomcanada.com/take-action.htm.