



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"(The apostles) left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."
~ Acts 5:41-42 (ESV)

ALGERIA: Authorities Force Church Closures

Sources: World Watch Monitor, AsiaNews, Mission Network News

Several churches throughout Algeria have been closed by authorities in recent months, resulting in calls to the government for equal treatment for Protestant Christians. Since November, six churches associated with the l'Eglise Protestante d'Algérie (EPA) have been closed, even though the EPA was officially recognized by the government since 1974. However, in 2012, the government required re-registration and has, to date, not renewed that legal status.

Places of worship for non-Muslims are required to be built for the purpose of worship only, but they require approval. Requests for approval have generally been ignored, resulting in many churches meeting in rented homes or apartments. The authorities have been closing these churches under the guise of safety concerns, although human rights observers view the action as a coordinated campaign against churches.

Along with the closures, individual Christians and pastors have also faced harassment and fines for "proselytising." In one recent case, a verdict against Nouredine Belabbes was upheld on May 16th. Having been charged for transporting Bibles, he faces a fine of \$1,100 CAN, plus legal expenses.

Pray that the Christians in Algeria will stand firm despite ongoing pressure from the forces around them. May God speak to the hearts of the government officials so that necessary approval will be given, allowing these believers to practise their faith in freedom and peace. Also pray for Nouredine and others who are facing prosecution because of their desire to reach out with the Gospel.

MAURITANIA: Penalties for Apostasy Increased

Source: The Voice of the Martyrs USA

Christians in Mauritania are concerned about recent changes to the laws regarding religious conversion. On April 27th, the Mauritanian National Assembly approved changes to increase the penalty for apostasy.

According to the new regulations, the death penalty is now mandatory for those convicted of "blasphemous remarks" or "sacrilegious acts." Further, those found guilty of "the breach of prohibitions prescribed by Allah or the facilitation of their non-compliance," or "outrage to public decency and the values of Islam," can face a prison sentence of up to two years, along with a fine.

Pray that these legal changes will not cause the Christians in Mauritania to succumb to fear, but rather to rally together with increased spiritual fervor, unity and intercession for the good of their nation and fellow citizens. Despite the new restrictions, may those seeking truth not be deterred but further encouraged to pursue a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus who ultimately reigns supreme over all.

RECENT UPDATE

EGYPT: Church Temporarily Closed to Keep Peace

Source: World Watch Monitor

Since legal changes were recently implemented -- making it easier for churches to obtain permits -- there have been several instances of Muslim villagers opposing the opening of Christian churches. On May 10th, we reported that some were confronted by angry mobs and the subsequent attempts of local officials to resolve the issues through reconciliation. (To review this previous report, see www.vomcanada.com/eg-2018-05-10.htm.)

Another such church in Beni Meinin, a village located about 90 kilometres south of Cairo, also faced violent mobs -- resulting in the arrest of several Muslims and Christians. On May 22nd, all charges were dropped. However, according to the terms of the conciliation agreement, the church has agreed to close until it receives full legal approval. Any services, including weddings and funerals, will need to be conducted elsewhere in the interim.

At last report, more than 3,500 churches in Egypt are awaiting legalization. Pray that action will be taken to further the process, enabling worship services to resume soon.

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.