



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, June 7, 2018

*"Love your enemies and pray
for those who persecute you,
so that you may be sons of your
Father who is in heaven."*

~ Jesus (Matthew 5:44b-45a)

CHINA: Underground and Official Churches Targeted

Source: ChinaAid

As of the end of May, almost 100 house churches in the central Chinese province of Henan have been shut down. Along with those closures, authorities have taken action against the official Three-Self Patriot Movement churches, demanding that all crosses be removed from their buildings.

According to a member of an official church, after orders were received to remove the crosses, they chose to remove them on their own, rather than face demolition by government crews. "No one dares defy the orders," he stated.

For house churches not yet closed, officials have ordered that any religious decorations be covered or removed. If this is not done, the symbolic emblems will be removed forcibly. Churches have also been forbidden to allow the singing of hymns. Guards are posted at some locations to keep members out, and authorities are not allowing more than five people to meet together at a time without permission.

Since changes were made to the "Regulations for Religious Affairs" in February 2018, the government has tightened its grip on religion. For more reports on the challenges Christians are experiencing in China, go to www.vomcanada.com/china.

As church members face pressure from governing authorities, pray that they will look to their divine Master for guidance and strength. Also ask the Lord to grant Henan's church leaders wisdom and the ability to stand firm in their faith, despite calls to compromise. May the unwavering faith of these Christians demonstrate the grace of God to all those around them.

TANZANIA: Church Faces Order to Close

Sources: Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin, Morning Star News

A Pentecostal church in Kisauni, which is located in Zanzibar (a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania), has been facing pressure from local Muslims about its presence in the community. The annoyed community members lobbied the local authorities, who complied and issued the church a notice of closure.

The complaint was that the services were too loud, even though the church did not use loudspeakers, as customarily done at the local mosque. In fact, the congregants had not faced any problems until their new building was completed in February.

Despite the order, a decision was made by the church leadership to resist the closure, as demonstrated by the filing of an official objection and the continuance of worship services. On May 6th, police officers walked into the service and arrested the lead pastor, Bishop Daniel Kwileba Kwiyeya. When his daughter attempted to intervene, she was also taken away. Both were released later that day with no charges.

This is not a unique situation in Zanzibar. In January 2018, a bulldozer arrived and destroyed a church in Zanzibar Town without warning. Additionally, in March, authorities ripped down a temporary church structure in Kiwengwa.

Please remember the churches in Zanzibar, as they face these difficulties. As for the recent notice of closure in Kisauni, pray that God will mediate on behalf of the church members and leadership, granting them wisdom in the process. May Christians throughout the country serve as agents of God's love and peace to their neighbours -- including those who oppose them -- through their consistent witness of Christ.

PRISONER UPDATE

VIETNAM: Sentences Upheld

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, The 88 Project

A 12-year sentence against Pastor Nguyen Trung Ton was upheld under appeal on June 4th, along with the sentences of three other human rights defenders. He was previously imprisoned in 2011 on charges of "anti-state propaganda," and had been kidnapped and beaten in February 2017 (see www.vomcanada.com/vn-2017-03-16.htm).

Arrested again on July 30th, 2017, Pastor Nguyen was convicted in April 2018 of "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the government." As part of a group called The Brotherhood for Democracy, he had been involved in supporting prisoners and their families, as well as advocating for democracy.

Many organizations and governments around the world have been working on behalf of the pastor and his colleagues. Despite these pleas, the Vietnamese appeal court upheld the original sentence, meaning that he will not be eligible for release until 2029. Please remember to uphold Pastor Nguyen in your prayers. Also pray for his wife, Nguyen Thi Lanh, and their two children.

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.