



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, August 2, 2018

*"God will judge us not according to how much
we endured, but how much we could love."*

~ Richard Wurmbrand

CHINA: Remembering John Cao

Sources: China Aid, The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

The communist rule of China, which began in 1949 with Mao Zedong, set the stage for what is known to be one of the world's worst countries for persecution in the past century. Christians, among other religious groups, have faced house arrest, imprisonment, torture, and even death, for their refusal to subject themselves to government control. Even churches that do agree to be state-monitored and registered are not exempt due to the severe restrictions imposed upon them.

The situation for Christians across China, the fourth largest country in the world, varies depending on location. Pastor John Cao, a Chinese pastor from North Carolina, has worked hard at the border between China and Myanmar to establish 16 schools which are providing educational resources to more than 2,000 children. In 2017, the Chinese government accused him of "organizing an illegal border crossing," in what many believe is an unjust framing because of Cao's religious beliefs as a Christian.

For almost a year, Cao and his co-worker, Jing Ruxia, were imprisoned without trial. On February 9th, 2018, Jing was released after a sentencing. Cao, however, was handed a seven-year sentence and fined about \$3,000 USD.

Today, Cao remains imprisoned and separated from his wife, Jamie, and his sons, who are living in the United States. On August 2nd, the advocacy organization, ChinaAid, is launching a petition for his release. Please join us in signing the petition: www.vomcanada.com/johncao.htm.

Remember Pastor Cao as he faithfully serves as a witness while imprisoned, seizing this opportunity to minister to both the prisoners and guards until his hopeful release. Pray that the international pressure placed on the Chinese government will bear positive results -- causing officials to free him, along with many others who are incarcerated for their faith.

ENCOURAGING PRISONER UPDATES

ERITREA: 35 Prisoners Released!

Sources: World Watch Monitor, Mission Network News, Asmarino Independent

In a surprising move, 35 prisoners of faith were released on bail from the Mai-Sirwa prison on July 17th and 18th, after serving more than four years. The 11 women and 24 men, all members of unregistered Christian churches, were mostly young people not in leadership positions. Although all of them had signed a statement four and a half years ago, promising to no longer attend meetings at unregistered churches, officials continued to hold them in detention without cause.

It is unknown why they were released at this point. Greg Musselman, Minister at Large for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, speculates that it could have something to do with Eritrea's move to rebuild its relationship with Ethiopia. "Regardless of the motivation, it's a good thing," he explains. "We pray that many more followers of Jesus will soon be released from prison and reunited with their families."

Hundreds of Christians remain imprisoned in Eritrea for their faith; some for as long as 20 years. Prison conditions in Eritrea are often horrendous, leading to permanent disability or death for those being held. For more information, visit www.vomcanada.com/eritrea.htm.

Praise God for the release of these 35 prisoners! May they have the strength to continue standing firm in their faith, despite governmental opposition. Remember the many other believers who are still suffering in Eritrean prisons, praying that they will know the presence of God in a tangible way -- experiencing true freedom in Christ deep within their hearts -- while awaiting release from imprisonment.

TURKEY: House Arrest for Andrew Brunson

Sources: Open Doors, BBC, World Evangelical Alliance

In a story that carries strong political overtones, American pastor Andrew Brunson was transferred from prison to house arrest on July 25th, despite a rejected appeal only days before. It was speculated that the move had taken place in an effort to diffuse tensions between the United States and Turkey over Pastor Brunson's arrest and imprisonment.

It is certainly an answer to prayer that he is no longer in prison. Yet the fact remains that he is still restricted and faces charges carrying very harsh penalties. David Curry from Open Doors USA affirmed, "While we are cautiously optimistic based on what we heard...there are still troubling factors. These trials can go on for a long time, and he's not been totally vindicated." For more information on Pastor Brunson's case, see www.vomcanada.com/tr-2018-04-05.htm.

Following his release, the house arrest sentencing had been appealed, but was rejected on July 31st. In response, the U.S. government issued sanctions against Turkey's Justice Minister and Interior Minister on August 1st, saying that the two men "serve as leaders of Turkish government organizations responsible for implementing Turkey's serious human rights abuses." Continue to remember Pastor Brunson during this time of uncertainty, praying that he will be freed and fully vindicated.

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. Another effective way to serve the persecuted is through volunteering: www.vomcanada.com/volunteer.htm.

The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:
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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.