



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"To be a Christian means to forgive
the inexcusable because God has
forgiven the inexcusable in you."*

~ C.S. Lewis

EGYPT: Mobs Force Church Closures

Source: World Watch Monitor

For the Christian minority in Egypt, regulations and bureaucracy have caused issues for years. Across Egypt, over 3,500 churches are presently in the process of being licensed; some have waited for over 20 years. In January, the government announced that Christians will be allowed to continue meeting in unlicensed churches pending the process. But in the Luxor governorate region alone, a Coptic diocese faced the forced closure of its eighth church due to pressure from mobs. All these churches were in the process of being officially approved by the government.

In the village of El-Zeniqa, a Coptic church was forced to close its doors on August 22nd, after a large group of young Muslim men gathered to shout threats against the Christians. The mob tried to break down the front door of the church but the members had locked it from the inside and called the police. The officers were able to disperse the crowd but then sealed the building, posting security forces outside. The protests began after rumours spread that the government was about to officially recognize the church.

In the Minya governorate, similar protests have been happening against churches. In the village of Ezbet Sultan Pasha, the church was first attacked on July 13th after villagers heard of its application for legalization. Crowds returned on August 24th, pelting the church building with rocks and damaging CCTV cameras. They then moved to a house where Christians had gathered to pray, before causing damage to some of the other homes in the area. During the attack, members of the mob shouted threats against those who were gathered, proclaiming that a church would never be allowed in the village.

Intercede for peace within these villages and in the hearts of the villagers. Pray that the targeted Christians will demonstrate the love and grace of God in the midst of opposition. May

those opposing them be convicted of their sin and, as a result, turn to Christ for forgiveness. Also pray that the Egyptian authorities will take measures to expedite the church approval process, while providing these believers with the protection they need in the interim.

TIBET: Minors Banned from Religious Activities

Sources: UCANews, Tibetan Review

As a "semi-autonomous state" under the control of mainland China, Tibet has maintained a unique place for being predominantly Buddhist. However, since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has adopted stricter controls over religious activities, all religions in Tibet have been affected. Most recently, controls have been enforced prohibiting children from participating in any religious activities.

Signs have been posted on churches throughout China and Tibet, stating, "No minors." Before Tibet's school students left for summer vacation this year, a letter was sent home to their parents. Part of the letter included a notice that the students were barred from participating in any religious activities during their summer vacation.

The control of the CCP over the people is also affecting religious holidays and festivals. Celebrations demonstrating "freedom of religion" to the world are only intended as propaganda to visiting tourists, as Tibetans are specifically excluded from participating.

Pray for these Tibetan Christians as they endeavour to bring up their children in the ways of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). May God continue to bless their efforts to teach them His statutes, while also sharing the Gospel with others of their communities by revealing the truth of the Scriptures -- and the reality of the Living Christ! Additionally, please intercede for the opposing political leaders, that they too will come to realize their need for Jesus as Saviour.

REPORT UPDATE

INDIA: No Remorse Shown Ten Years After Massacre

Sources: AsiaNews, Scroll.in, The Indian Express, World Watch Monitor, UCANews

When Hindu leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati was murdered on August 23rd, 2008, rumours were started that this was a Christian conspiracy. Hindu militants stirred up mobs, creating a horrific massacre in the Kandhamal region of Odisha state (then named Orissa). The violence continued for seven weeks, killing at least 91 victims. Hundreds of villages were looted, over 5,000 houses and 300 churches destroyed, and 56,000 Christians were forced to flee -- often ending up in refugee camps. More details on the 2008 attack, including numerous reports and videos, are available at www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

Even though Maoist rebels had claimed responsibility for the assassination, seven Christians were initially convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2013. An appeal of the

convictions is pending but has not yet been heard. The very police officers responsible for arresting the Christians have since announced that the accusations against them are baseless.

On the other hand, there have been few arrests of the people responsible for the riots, and those convicted often received sentences of four to six years at the most. Manoj Kumar Pradhan, an elected member of the state legislature with the Hindu nationalist BJP party, was convicted on 14 charges and sentenced to six years in prison. However, while imprisoned, he was re-elected and released on bail after less than a year of imprisonment.

In the aftermath of the devastating Odisha disaster, Christians have struggled to find the appropriate response. Calls for justice continue.... Yet, as the years go by, this has become increasingly difficult to achieve.

During a memorial service held on August 25th, 2018, Archbishop Barwa called on his listeners to pursue peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. Unfortunately, Christians within the Kandhamal region do not sense remorse on the part of those responsible for the massacre. Some who participated in the mob attacks admit that mistakes were made but blame their involvement on the influence of outsiders. As the brother of one victim explains, "They don't feel sorry or apologize. Their heart is not clear." Bipin Nayak, a Kandhamal Christian, reflects on the situation by musing, "They have never felt the grace of asking for forgiveness."

An editorial in *The Indian Express* spells out concerns for the future of India, summing up the challenges facing the nation in the wake of the Kandhamal massacre:

"Ten years later, we need not recall the details of the violence. But we need to record the valiant battle that the victims and survivors have been engaged in to secure justice.... These ten years have seen hate and violence against Christians being routinized. Beating up of priests, breaking up of prayer meetings and carols, desecration of churches and arrests of priests, enactment of anti-conversion laws.... Our indifference to all these only indicates the normalization of what Kandhamal saw."

Even though ten years have transpired since the violent massacre and destruction, please pray for those in Odisha who are still grieving the loss of innocent loved ones. This includes the numerous children who have been orphaned as a result. VOMC continues to support two groups of children who lost one or both parents in these attacks. May the Lord continue to minister mightily in these young lives.

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.