



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"Perhaps the question should not be:
'Why are others persecuted?' Perhaps the
better question is: 'Why are we not?'"*

~ Nik Ripkin

INDONESIA: Three Churches Closed Over Permits

Sources: World Watch Monitor, Voice of America

Authorities on the Indonesian island of Sumatra closed three churches on September 27th, stating that they lack the necessary permits. Church leaders, however, argue that the closures relate instead to restlessness among majority Muslims because of the rapid growth of churches in the area.

According to an anonymous source, protest rallies had been planned by the "Islamic Defenders Front" for September 28th, with plans for 1,000 protesters in front of the three churches. It is believed that the churches were sealed to prevent this demonstration. Church groups have issued statements urging the government to not give in to pressure but to respect religious freedom.

A spokesman for the Jambi district denies that the action was influenced by pressure. He added that if the churches file the necessary documentation, permits would be issued within a week. However, the pastor of one of the affected churches in the village of West Kenali claims they have been worshipping there since 2004 and had fulfilled all the building permit requirements. Despite all past efforts to develop good relations with local authorities, the permits were still not granted.

For more reports on the difficulties facing Christians in Indonesia, along with informative video documentaries, go to our website at www.vomcanada.com/indonesia.htm.

Intercede for these Christians in Indonesia, asking God to help them demonstrate the love and peace of Christ to their neighbours, despite the opposition they face. Pray that the governing authorities will respect the rights of all citizens and, therefore, allow the churches to re-open

without the risk of further protests. May the message of the Gospel continue to spread throughout the region, bringing many more to a saving knowledge of Jesus as Lord.

URGENT UPDATES

PAKISTAN: Supreme Court Reserves Decision on Asia Bibi

Sources: Mission Network News, World Watch Monitor, Deutsche Welle

A final appeal of the death sentence against Asia Bibi was heard by Pakistan's Supreme Court on October 8th. The court has reached its decision but chosen to not release it yet, warning the press against releasing any information until the decision is officially announced.

Asia Bibi has been imprisoned for nine years on charges widely seen as false. Many believe fear of further violence from Islamist militants has been a major reason why she has not been released. More details on Asia's case can be found on our website at www.vomcanada.com/pk-asia-bibi.htm.

The reason for the court's delay has not been given, but there are huge difficulties facing the country with whatever decision made. The court could rule to uphold the conviction and death sentence. That would leave Asia with only an appeal directly to the president. If that decision was made, the international pressure against Pakistan would be substantial, since Asia has been widely seen as innocent.

If Asia is found innocent and released, she and anyone supporting her face the threat of death. In 2011, the governor of Punjab, Salmaan Taseer, and a federal minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, were both assassinated for expressing their support. Asia and her family would also face imminent danger from those who are convinced that she is guilty. Fleeing the country could mean danger for her elsewhere, as well as violent protests within the country. One militant group has threatened: "If there is any attempt to hand her over to a foreign country, there will be terrible consequences."

A third option could mean suspending the death penalty, changing it to life imprisonment which, in Pakistan, is 14 years in total. That would mean five more years of unjust confinement in prison, which may not prevent the repercussion of violent protests by militants who continue to call for Asia's death.

Pray for wisdom and justice on behalf of the judicial authorities of the court and those governing in Pakistan as they seek the best way and time to release the decision. May Asia and her family rest in the knowledge that they are in the Almighty Lord's hands and, though the situation may seem humanly impossible, "nothing is impossible with God" (Matthew 19:26).

TURKEY: Upcoming Hearing and Appeal in Brunson Case

Sources: Middle East Concern, Reuters, World Watch Monitor

In the next hearing, which is to be held tomorrow, October 12th, Pastor Andrew Brunson is scheduled to answer to charges related to terrorism and espionage. If convicted, Pastor Brunson could face up to 35 years in prison. The case has resulted in international strain, including U.S. sanctions and tariffs against Turkey.

In a further development, Pastor Brunson's lawyer filed an appeal to the Turkish Constitutional Court, the highest court in the country. This appeal, which was filed on October 3rd, calls for his release from house arrest. For more information on the case against Pastor Brunson, visit

www.vomcanada.com/turkey.htm.

Through your prayers, please bring Pastor Brunson before God's Heavenly Throne, petitioning for the accused Christian leader to be cleared from all charges and justly released. Pray for his lawyers and others acting on his behalf that they would also be imbued with wisdom, guidance and favour from on high as they serve as advocates in this case.

BURMA: Released Pastors Ordered Not to Pray

Sources: Barnabas Fund, Radio Free Asia

On September 27th, we reported on how Chinese-backed rebels were pressuring churches in the Wa region of Shan State (www.vomcanada.com/my-2018-09-27.htm). Reports indicate that the rebels released 100 pastors on October 5th, but only after forcing them to sign an agreement that they would only pray in their homes and not in churches. The seven who refused to sign are still being detained, along with more than 100 others.

In another incident, militants seized more than 40 students from Bible study classes on September 25th. These students have reportedly been forced to become soldiers with the group and photos have been released showing the students in uniform.

The United Wa State Army has seized control of the Wa region, demanding independence. Ethnically and historically, the Wa people have strong connections to neighbouring China, and there are strong indications that the Chinese government has been influential in the actions of the rebels.

Pray for the pastors who were forced to sign this agreement, as well as those still in captivity. Ask God to grant needed strength for all the Wa believers caught in the midst of these great challenges. May His assuring presence give them the comfort and courage to continue reaching out with the message of Christ.

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.