



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
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"The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation... who brought me out from my enemies; You exalted me above those who rose against me; You delivered me from men of violence."

~ 2 Samuel 22:47,49 ESV

PAKISTAN: Asia Bibi Acquitted!

Sources: Barnabas Fund, Morning Star News, UCANews, CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, Geo News

After more than nine years in prison, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled on October 31st to throw out all charges against Asia Bibi, removing the death sentence against her for blasphemy.

In their ruling, the judges noted the contradictory evidence from witnesses. An alleged confession by Asia was ruled to be coerced. Announcing the verdict, Justice Nisar declared that tolerance is a basic principle of Islam, which requires proof beyond reasonable doubt. In a further opinion released with the judgement, Justice Khosa made a strong statement against the accusers: "Blasphemy is a serious offence but the insult of the appellant's religion and religious sensibilities by the complainant party, and then mixing truth with falsehood in the name of (Muhammad), was also not short of being blasphemous." To view the full English text of the judgement, along with the supporting opinion, go to www.bit.ly/2F6GIMT.

Upon hearing the verdict, Asia reportedly told her lawyer, "I can't believe what I am hearing. Will I go out now? Will they let me out, really? I just don't know what to say. I am very happy; I can't believe it." Her lawyer assured her that she would be released within a day or two, after the paperwork is completed.

As anticipated, news of the verdict has brought riots throughout Pakistan. Major roads have been blocked, many schools were closed, and people were urged to stay in their homes for safety. Khadim Rizvi, leader of the militant *Tehreek-e-Labaik* political party, has threatened the lives of the judges and Asia's lawyer. He further promised dire consequences for government and

military leaders and international organizations working within the country. Prime Minister Khan has spoken out against the protests in a national broadcast, calling those inciting violence "enemies of the state."

The general consensus believes that Asia and her family will no longer be safe in Pakistan. Several countries have offered asylum. Meanwhile, there is also concern for the safety of other Christians throughout the country in the face of the violent protests.

Praise the Lord for this wonderful answer to prayer! Thank God for raising up judges who are willing to take a stand for the truth despite personal danger. Pray for the protection of the country's Christians, government leaders, judges and others who are under threat as a result of this case. Now that the charges have been dropped, ask the Lord to guide Asia and her family to a safe haven of greatly needed rest and restoration. Also remember the estimated 40 other citizens in Pakistan who are presently on death row or serving life sentences for alleged blasphemy.

CHINA: More Churches Being Closed

Source: ChinaAid

In a continuing campaign against unregistered churches around the country, Chinese authorities have taken action in recent weeks by shutting them down or blocking access to congregants.

On October 16th, police shut down the Guangfu Church in Guangzhou, declaring it an "unqualified venue." The church has faced opposition numerous times in the past. In July, the Religious Affairs Bureau met with Pastor Ma Ke and ordered him to join the state-run Three-Self Patriotic Movement. When the church refused, congregants were informed that they would be "overseen by the government."

Also, in Guangzhou, police have cordoned off a church which was first started in the 1950s. At that time, the pastor, Lin Xiangao, was eventually arrested and spent more than 20 years in prison. After his release in 1978, Lin restarted the church which has since grown to thousands of attendees. Despite having reached an agreement with the local religious affairs bureau, police blocked off all access to the Rongguili Church on October 14th. This action forced the Sunday school and other meetings to be cancelled.

On October 21st, a group of police officers entered the Yongfu Church in Fujian Province while the worship service was taking place. Since the service was still ongoing, Pastor Lin Kezhen asked if they would be willing to speak with him after the service. However, the officers shouted that the service was ordered to stop, and no one should be attending.

The police officers then proceeded to harass several of the Christians. When members attempted to leave, the doors were blocked while authorities gathered identification and personal information. When departing the church premises, the officers announced their intention to return the following week.

For more reports on the persecution facing Christians in China, visit our website at www.vomcanada.com/china.htm. There is also an excellent brief interview with Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid, and VOMC's Minister-at-Large, Greg Musselman, available at www.bit.ly/2JtQQbl.

Pray for the tremendous number of churches throughout China that are facing harassment and intimidation from government authorities. Uphold their church leaders, asking God to grant them wisdom when dealing with government officials and responding to their accusations. May the country's Christians be given opportunities to share the Gospel and shine the light of our Lord Jesus, even among their accusers, so that many more precious souls will come to faith in Him.

KYRGYZSTAN: Young Convert Suffers Severe Beating

Sources: Barnabas Fund, Release International

A young Christian in the village of Tamchi, Kyrgyzstan, was left fighting for his life after three Muslim men badly beat him on October 17th. The attackers cornered Eldos, a 25-year-old convert from Islam, and attempted to force him to recite the *shahada*, the Islamic creed used to signify conversion. When Eldos refused, he was viciously beaten, leaving him with a concussion, fractured jaw, missing teeth, and an eye injury.

According to reports, police stated the attack was not religious but due to the loud music the young man was playing. They claimed to have a verbal statement from Eldos to that effect, though his lawyer asserts that the assaulted young man was unable to speak at the time due to the extent of his injuries. At last report, Eldos was in hospital where he has undergone surgery to reconstruct his jaw.

May justice be done in this case, despite the apparent obstruction by the police. As Eldos now recovers from the violent assault and resulting surgery, please pray for his complete physical healing, along with needed emotional strength and comfort. Ask God to bring conviction to those responsible for the crime, that they may turn to Him for grace and forgiveness.

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.

The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of:
The Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1
Tel. (905) 670-9721 Website: www.vomcanada.com

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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.