



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, August 20, 2020

"Indeed, all who desire to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.... But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed...acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

~ 2 Timothy 3:12-15 ESV

SYRIA: Christian Refuses to Turn Over Christian School

Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Christian Post, International Christian Concern

Radwan Muhammad is a Kurdish teacher and headmaster for a Christian school in the city of Afrin in northern Syria. He was ordered by the Sham Legion (Faylaq al-Sham) -- a coalition of Sunni Muslim groups -- to turn over the school building for an Islamic school. According to local sources, Radwan told them, "I will hand you the building in one case only: if Jesus Christ comes to earth again."

On July 30th, Radwan was detained by the group and has been accused of apostasy. Sources say that he is being held at their headquarters in Afrin and have expressed concerns for his life, fearful that he may be executed. The Sham Legion is controlled by Turkey and associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Many of the fighters are former al Qaeda and ISIS members. The city of Afrin has been under Turkish control since 2018. For more information on the difficulties encountered by Christians in Syria, go to www.vomcanada.com/syria.htm.

Please pray for Radwan's safe release and that the Christian school will be able to continue. May the Turkish authorities respect the rights of people residing in the Afrin area and restrain the agenda of militia groups under their control. Also intercede for the believers of the Kurdistan region -- bordering Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran -- who are presently facing oppression from all sides.

REPORT UPDATES

IRAN: Iranian Couple Flees After Appeal is Denied

Sources: International Christian Concern, Article18

In July 2017, Pastor Victor Bet-Tamraz was sentenced to ten years in prison. Arrested in 2014 during a Christmas celebration, he was convicted of evangelism, illegal house-church activities and "acting against national security" (see www.vomcanada.com/ir-2017-07-13.htm). In June 2017, his wife Shamiram was also arrested and received a sentence of five years.

Since their conviction, they have faced multiple appeal hearings, only to be notified of their cancellation for various reasons. The couple's latest hearing, scheduled for July 1st, was likewise cancelled. Then on July 19th, Pastor Victor was informed by his lawyer that their final appeal had been rejected. Both Pastor Victor and Shamiram received notification on August 11th that they had five days to turn themselves in to Iran's notorious Evin Prison.

Reports have recently surfaced that the couple fled the country on August 15th, the day before the deadline. Their daughter Dabrina lives in Switzerland and will not disclose their location for safety reasons. However, she assures people that they are "safe and well." The couple regrets having to leave their homeland but, considering the harsh conditions at the Evin Prison, felt it was necessary at their age. They intend to resume their attempts to clear their names from abroad with hopes of returning to Iran if the charges are dropped.

"We continue to pray and hope for their sentences to be dropped," states Dabrina. "We pray for justice -- both for my parents and for all believers suffering in prisons." To learn more about the persecution of Christians in Iran, go to www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

Praise God that Pastor Victor and Shamiram have found a place of refuge until their case is justly resolved. Pray that efforts to clear their names will be successful. Continue to prayerfully uphold the many Christians presently suffering in Iranian prisons, along with numerous others who are facing oppression and an uncertain future because of their faith in Christ.

ALGERIA: Court Upholds Church Closure Order

Source: Middle East Concern

The Spring of Life Church in Makouda is the second largest Protestant church in Algeria with about 700 members. In October 2019, it was ordered to be closed, along with two other churches (see www.vomcanada.com/dz-2019-10-17.htm). The closures happened under Ordinance 06-03, which states that permission must be obtained before using a building for non-Muslim worship.

Since the ordinance was enacted in 2006, Algerian authorities have failed to respond to any application for permission. As a result, it became common practice to rent a building and then

inform local authorities that it is being used as a place of worship. Starting in November 2017, however, authorities began acting on the ordinance by closing several churches.

In response to the closures, ten of the churches filed cases with the administrative courts. The Spring of Life Church recently received a court ruling upholding the order to close. The congregants of other closed churches are concerned that this may set a precedent for similar rules. There are also concerns that this may embolden governors to order more closures.

On the same day that the Spring of Life Church was closed, the Full Gospel of Tizi-Ouzou (the largest Protestant church in Algeria) was also forced to close. Video footage of that raid is available at www.vomcanada.com/dz-tiziouzou.html.

Prayerfully remember the church leaders represented by Algeria's various denominational groups as they seek to wisely address these mounting challenges and determine how to carry on with the work of the Gospel. May the country's governing leaders and those of the courts come to understand the importance of religious freedom, and thereby enact laws in support of such.

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.