



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain."

~ 1 Corinthians 15:58 ESV

PAKISTAN: Teen Girls Kidnapped for Forcible Marriages

Sources: Christian Post, International Christian Concern, Independent Catholic News, OpIndia, The Siasat Daily, AsiaNews, Church in Chains

On April 28th, 14-year-old **Maira Shahbaz** (also referenced as "Maria") had been abducted at gunpoint by Mohamad Nakash and his two accomplices while she was walking to her home near Faisalabad. She was then forced to convert to Islam and marry her abductor. The teen girl's parents challenged the validity of the marriage but Mohamad presented a marriage certificate falsely stating that Maira was 19 years old. The kidnapper has also issued death threats against Maira and her family if they continued to pursue this action.

On July 30th, a court ruled that Maira should be allowed to stay in a women's shelter until the Lahore High Court was able to hear her case. However, on August 4th, the High Court judge ruled that the conversion and marriage were legal. She was ordered to remain with Mohamad and "be a good wife." The court disregarded her birth certificate and baptismal certificate, which indicated her true age. Following this ruling, Maira was reportedly in tears. A friend and advocate stated, "With this ruling, no Christian girl in Pakistan is safe."

According to the most recent reports, Maira has managed to escape her captor and is now in hiding somewhere in the Faisalabad area, along with her mother and siblings. The police have reportedly been ordered by the courts to ensure her security.

On July 22nd, 15-year-old **Saneha Kinza Iqbal** was kidnapped on her way to church by Saeed Amanat, a 30-year-old married man with four children. Saeed is a security guard at a hospital in

Faisalabad where Shaneha's mother was admitted for treatment in June. During this time, he became familiar with the young girl, finding out where she lived.

When Shaneha did not return home after prayers that morning, a neighbour confirmed seeing Saeed in a vehicle with her. Although the girl's family reported the incident to police, the officials refused to take any action. Shaneha's brother, Waseem Morris, then went to Saeed's home where the abductor's father promised that Shaneha would be returned, but a few days later he changed his mind. On July 28th, the kidnapper phoned the young girl's family, threatening them if they took any further action.

While Shaneha's fate is not known at this point, her family is concerned that she will be forcibly converted to Islam and married, similar to the situations facing Maira and another young teen girl, Huma Younus, whose case was previously reported by VOMC earlier this year (see www.vomcanada.com/pk-2020-02-20.htm). Despite the efforts of Maira's family to have action taken, police refused to cooperate with them until August 19th.

Please lift up Maira, Shaneha, Huma, and other previously abducted Christian girls, to the Lord in prayer, asking Him to mightily intervene by rendering His justice in each of their cases. Ask that He will also provide needed help and consolation to their distraught families. Pray that God's ministering angels will surround each of these girls, their loved ones, and all who courageously advocate on their behalf, with divine protection. May His Holy Spirit's conviction be upon the abductors, and all who encourage such crimes against vulnerable teen girls, bringing to light the seriousness of their wrongful actions so they will acknowledge their need for repentance and endeavour to do what is right.

ETHIOPIA: Christians Targeted in Violent Outbreaks

Source: Steadfast Global

The Oromia region of Ethiopia is in the midst of turmoil as separatists spread dissent against the government. The murder of prominent singer Hachalu Hundessa on June 29th set off the civil unrest, leaving hundreds dead.

During the third week of August, a violent outbreak took place in a predominantly Muslim village of Senbete Sinkile. In the attack, which was perpetrated by a youth wing of separatists known as the Qeerroo, it appears that Christians in particular were targeted. While there were no fatalities resulting from this attack, a number of people were injured and damages were done to a church and the homes of various Christians in the village. A number of victims were forced to flee, despite flood conditions, seeking refuge in the mainly Christian city of Awassa.

Back in the month of June, the town of Shashamene had also faced terrible violence and destruction at the hands of the Qeerroo. The homes of two pastors were burned to the ground and anything not burned was then vandalized. One of the pastors, Mesfin, said that the imam from the nearby mosque stood by and laughed as his house was being burned. This pastor's motorcycle was also completely destroyed by the attackers.

The wives of the two pastors owned small businesses to supplement their families' modest incomes; those buildings were set on fire as well. VOMC partners have been able to provide financial assistance to these pastors' families, equipping them to continue ministering to the needs of others in their village. For more on the difficulties facing Christians in Ethiopia, go to www.vomcanada.com/ethiopia.htm.

Pray for each person who was victimized by these recent incidents of violence, asking for God's comforting presence to be tangibly sensed in their lives. In the process, may they also receive needed healing of the trauma and devastating loss that resulted from the attacks. Pray that those who were forced to flee their homes will experience God's wonderful provision and restoration. Overall, may His Spirit of peace come to the region -- and into the hearts of individuals -- so differences can be resolved and a sense of unity be established in these Ethiopian communities.

REPORT UPDATE

CHINA: Close Monitoring of Pastor's Wife and Son

Sources: ChinaAid, The Voice of the Martyrs Korea

Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church is presently serving a nine-year prison sentence. He was arrested, along with his wife, in December 2018. While Pastor Wang's wife, Jiang Rong, was released on bail, the authorities have barred her from interacting with family, friends, and church members. She is being constantly monitored by security agents and essentially has no freedom of movement.

When Pastor Wang and Jiang were originally arrested, their young son, Joshua Shuya Wang, went to live with his grandparents. He has since been reunited with his mother but is also restricted from interacting with others. Each day, he is taken by a police vehicle directly to a public school where he is being indoctrinated. It is believed this government intimidation is a response to Pastor Wang's refusal to compromise his faith while in prison.

Since the church's closure, the property is now being rented out for the operation of area businesses without permission from the church. Previous reports relating to the Early Rain Covenant Church are available at www.vomcanada.com/early-rain-covenant-church.htm.

Remember to uphold Pastor Wang as he faithfully serves his sentence, asking the Lord to keep him safe while in prison and minister to his daily practical and spiritual needs. Pray that God's protection, provision and encouragement will also sustain his wife Jiang and their young son Joshua -- granting each member of this ministering family a steadfast endurance in the midst of governmental oppression. While awaiting Pastor Wang's release, may God honour this faithful servant's unwavering testimony by using it as a means to reach fellow prisoners, guards and governing officials with the Gospel.

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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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.