



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"Lord, help me feel the hurt that others feel
When life inflicts some bitter pain,
And use me in some loving way to heal
The wounds that may through life remain."*

~ D. DeHaan

CHINA: Opposition From Many Fronts

Source: ChinaAid

Sources in China have indicated that the persecution facing Christians at this time may be the worst since the radical actions of the Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong. Crosses are being torn down around the country and the central government has insisted on obtaining control of churches. A policy of Sinicization has been instituted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), in its attempts to eliminate what is perceived as foreign influence and make everything fit under its concept of Chinese culture and beliefs.

A blatant example of Sinicization was found in an official textbook featuring a story from the Bible, specifically referencing a passage recorded in the book of John. In the original text, Jesus speaks to the woman caught in adultery and says, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (8:11 ESV). When this story is recounted in the official *Professional Ethics and Law* textbook, it instead reads, "When everyone went out, Jesus stoned the woman himself and said, 'I am also a sinner.'" The textbook used the story to show how the law is powerless if only those without sin enforce it. Consequently, the implication of the textbook lesson is that wrong behaviours committed by judicial officials should be tolerated, reflecting the values of the CCP.

Online censorship is also strongly enforced in China, blocking access to websites and materials that do not comply with CCP values. This has led some organizations to utilize alternate ways to distribute Christian materials. Recently the online bookstore of the officially sanctioned Christian Council of China and the country's Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) churches updated the titles and descriptions of their books. The Chinese character for Christ was replaced with "JD" or completely removed. The word "Christians" was covered with coloured blocks. References to

"Jesus" became "YS" and the "Bible" became "SJ." Other religious terms were frequently covered as well, in order to keep any obvious references to Christianity from being blocked by online filters.

The Christian Council of China and the TSPM churches were given special sanction in 2001 to print and distribute the Bible within China. However, the online content censorship, as well as the imposed restrictions for selling the Bible in regular bookstores, demonstrates that even in cases involving permission there are hurdles due to the strong controls of the CCP. To learn more about the mounting difficulties being experienced by Christians in China, go to www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

Please prayerfully uphold our Chinese brothers and sisters in Christ as they endure ongoing opposition from the CCP. Pray that those being monitored by the government will be strengthened by the ministry of God's Spirit -- His wonderful love, peace, protection and provision. Ask the Lord to grant wisdom to all who are seeking creative ways to work around the governmental restrictions in order to share the Good News of Jesus. Pray that despite this era of growing oppression, the pure unadulterated Word of God will spread throughout China so millions more will come to faith in Him.

PRAISE REPORTS

NIGERIA: Kidnapped Pastor Released

Sources: Morning Star News, Church in Chains

On October 19th, Rev. Polycarp Zongo from the Church of Christ in Nations went missing, along with two Christian women. Ten days later, it was discovered that the three Nigerians had been kidnapped by militants from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). This faction is a breakaway from the formerly reported Boko Haram terrorist group.

In a YouTube video that was released on October 29th, Rev. Polycarp recounted how he had been travelling from Jos to the city of Gombe when suddenly stopped by armed men. In the video, the reverend appealed to the Nigerian government and fellow church leaders to do whatever possible to secure their safe release. To date, the identities of the women have not been disclosed.

We are thankful to report that Rev. Polycarp was released the next day, after negotiations were held. However, no further details were available at the time of compiling this report, nor has any other information since been released, concerning the two women who were abducted with him. For additional reports revealing the atrocities committed against Nigeria's Christians, as relayed by many credible international news sources, go to www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm.

Praise God that Rev. Polycarp was released so swiftly and without harm. May the two women who were abducted with him be likewise delivered and safely reunited with their families. Please pray for the protection of other Christians in Nigeria's Plateau State as they faithfully

serve the Lord in the midst of persecution. Ask that there will be an outpouring of His healing power and heavenly justice upon all those whose lives have been devastated by the militant violence. May the God of justice, peace, and reconciliation also move powerfully in the hearts and minds of those who vehemently oppose Christ so they will be dramatically transformed into His likeness.

PAKISTAN: Hope for Young Teen Forced into Marriage

Sources: International Christian Concern, Pakistan Christian Post, Geo News

According to Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, the Sindh High Court has ordered that Arzoo Raja, a 13-year-old Christian girl, be recovered by police and moved into a shelter. This comes almost a month after she was abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, and married against her will to a 44-year-old Muslim neighbour.

This recent update comes as a positive development for Arzoo's parents and the legal team fighting to have her returned to her family. According to their lawyer, Arzoo will be brought before the court on November 5th and will have her age determined through medical testing prior to the hearing. In the interim, Ali Azhar, her alleged kidnapper, has been arrested and charged with abduction, forced conversion, and marriage to a minor.

On October 13th, Arzoo was abducted by Azhar from her family home in Karachi. The girl's parents reported the incident to local police but were informed two days later that their daughter had converted to Islam and married Azhar. The parents have since challenged the validity of the marriage, claiming that it violates the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act. However, on October 27th, the High Court of Sindh ruled in favour of the marriage, applying an interpretation of Sharia law which allows for underage marriages.

For more information on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, including reports of similar incidents involving young teens, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

With thanksgiving, we praise God for this positive court action, resulting in the rescue of Arzoo from her captor and the provision of a safe shelter. Pray that God will render justice by delivering this young teen girl from the unlawful marriage. In the meantime, may Arzoo experience the Lord's reassuring love and peace, along with needed healing from the repercussions of the horrific incident. Please remember the many other Christian girls in Pakistan who have been victimized in similar situations. While advocating both legally and spiritually for those contending with such injustices, may our Heavenly Father rescue the lost souls in this divided country by conveying to them His life-changing message of salvation.

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