



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of
all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction,
so that we may be able to comfort those
who are in any affliction, with the comfort with
which we ourselves are comforted by God."
~ 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 ESV*

EGYPT: Charges for Religious Insults

Sources: Morning Star News, Ahram Online, Egypt Independent

A young Christian was arrested on November 11th after Facebook comments allegedly insulting Islam came to light. The comments had been made in the midst of a heated online exchange and, in the process, were widely shared by others.

Youssef Hany, who is 18 years old, could face up to five years in prison. On November 14th, a court in Ismailia ordered his release on bail after he apologized and stressed that he respected Islam. An unnamed Muslim woman was also arrested as a result of the online exchange for allegedly insulting Christianity. Media attention, however, has centred on Youssef.

In response to his case, a spokesperson for the Coptic Orthodox Church has publicly rejected any religious insults. Offending all religions is completely unacceptable, the spokesman stated, since it causes disunity among people and in society as a whole. For more on the challenges encountered by Christians in Egypt, go to www.vomcanada.com/egypt.htm.

Pray for equity and justice to prevail among the judiciary as this case proceeds. May they respectfully uphold the fundamental freedoms of belief and speech for all citizens. Pray that Youssef's testimony and sincere apology will serve as stepping-stones toward greater tolerance and understanding between the country's Christian and Muslim communities. May God's people be granted wisdom and favour as they passionately share the Gospel and seek to live in harmony with all (Romans 12:18), mindful to clothe themselves with compassion, kindness,

humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12). Finally, ask our Heavenly Father, who is the God of reconciliation, to reign with His peace over this divided nation.

REPORT UPDATES

MALI: Missionary Executed in Captivity

Sources: World Watch Monitor, Christianity Today

In January 2016, Beatrice Stockli was kidnapped in Timbuktu. The militant group, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), has claimed responsibility, stating that Beatrice had "declared war against Islam in her attempt to Christianize Muslims" (see www.vomcanada.com/ml-2016-06-30.htm for more details). Six months after her arrest, and again a year later, videos were released showing that she was alive.

In early October 2020, the transitional government in Mali negotiated a prisoner-hostage swap with the AQIM, resulting in the release of several hostages. Regrettably, an elderly French aid worker who was released reported that Beatrice had been killed only one month before. The reasons and circumstances are unclear at this point. The Swiss government has condemned the execution and pledges to uncover the details of her death and return the missionary's remains to her family.

Please intercede for the family and friends of Beatrice as they mourn the loss of their loved one. Pray that they will experience God's comfort and strength, as well as the assurance that Beatrice has gone on to her real home in heaven where she will be rewarded for her faithfulness. May our Christian brothers and sisters in Mali be so inspired by her courageous dedication to the Lord that they will likewise seize every opportunity to share the Good News of the Gospel. Ask God to surround them with His presence and safety, shielding them from any malicious actions of their opposers, as they fulfill the Great Commission -- reaching even those who were responsible for this missionary's death.

PAKISTAN: A Healing Journey Ahead for Arzoo Raja

Sources: Morning Star News, Daily Pakistan, British Pakistani Christians, Herald Malaysia

On October 13th, Arzoo Raja was abducted from her family home. She was forced to convert to Islam and marry her kidnapper, even though she was only 13 years old. On November 5th, a court ordered that her age be determined and, in the interim, she be moved to a shelter. (More information on this incident is available at www.vomcanada.com/pk-2020-11-05.htm.)

In the latest developments, a court nullified her marriage, determining that she was too young to marry. When asked if she wanted to return to her home or to the shelter, she replied neither. The court then ordered that she be returned to the shelter for her protection and education. Only those whom Arzoo permits can visit her, but with certainty not her kidnapper.

Her captor, Syed Ali Azhar, has been charged with the sexual assault of a minor. The marriage officiant, two witnesses, and two lawyers have all been charged for their part in solemnising a child marriage. The courts also ruled that Arzoo is to stay in the state-run shelter until the age of 18, since she does not wish to return home.

The family's lawyer believes that the young girl is reluctant to come home due to the "consistent brainwashing" she had received from her kidnapper and some other community activists. Human rights workers are concerned that without her parent's moral support, pressure will continue from the family of her kidnapper and other militant Islamic activists. A video has been released, demonstrating the devastating impact the situation is having on Arzoo's parents. To view the video, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPQuLXSYIU4.

While we can be thankful for the court's swift dealings with the perpetrators in Arzoo's case, pray that similar decisions of justice will be made in other cases involving the forceful abduction and marriage of minors throughout Pakistan's judicial system. As this young teen now wrestles with the aftermath of her devastating situation, may the Lord administer needed healing both emotionally and spiritually; and, in the process, restore the close relationship she had with her loving parents. Also pray for Arzoo's physical healing, as she has recently tested positive for COVID-19 and is presently in isolation. May the Lord's comforting peace rest on every member of this broken family, knowing that He will replace their every tear and the ache of their hearts with renewed hope and encouragement for the future (Jeremiah 29:11).

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