



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"You (God) keep him in perfect
peace whose mind is stayed on
You, because he trusts in You."
~ Isaiah 26:3 ESV*

NIGERIA: Christmas Attacks Involved Executions

Sources: BBC, CNN, Garda, Vanguard, Release International

Two separate attacks have led to kidnappings and at least twelve deaths in Nigeria over the Christmas season. In both cases, Islamic militant groups were responsible for the assaults.

On Christmas Eve, at least seven people were killed when Boko Haram militants raided a mostly Christian village in Borno State. The terrorist fighters rode into the village of Pemi on trucks and motorcycles, shooting indiscriminately. Several homes were burned, along with a medical dispensary and a church building. At least seven villagers died, and as many as seven were reportedly abducted, including the pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Brethren.

Pemi is located approximately 20 kilometres from Chibok, the town where over 200 schoolgirls were kidnapped six years ago. A spokesman for the Chibok region believes that Pemi was specifically targeted because of its Christian population. "Since 2018, virtually every two weeks, Boko Haram has been attacking Chibok, killing and abducting people," Nkeki Mutah reports. "They want to wipe Chibok out from the surface of the earth."

Additional incidences took place on December 24th in the town of Garkida, northeast Nigeria, where the kidnapping of eleven Christians took place. Reports indicate that five vehicles transporting the insurgents entered the town, leading to an onslaught of looting, burning and shooting. The next day, a video was released showing five of the kidnapped community members being executed.

A splinter group of Boko Haram, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) has claimed responsibility. In the video posted online, the assailants declare, "This is a warning to Christians in all parts of the world and those in Nigeria." Before each young man was shot from behind,

they were given the opportunity to state their names: Uka Joseph, Sunday, Wilson, Joshua Maidugu and Garba Yusuf. Each of the young men's last words included the declaration: "I am a Christian." Greg Musselman has prepared a video report on this tragedy, leading us in prayer for the grieving families and community members of these five martyred believers. You can view the report at www.vomcanada.com/video/pemi.

As you remember the courage and faithfulness of these martyred Christians, please also prayerfully uphold their families and friends during this time of mourning. May the lives and words of the young men serve as ongoing testimonies to their attackers, bringing conviction to their hearts and ultimately leading them to faith in Christ. Pray that Nigeria's governing authorities will wisely and diligently work to thwart any potential future attacks planned by the various militant groups -- achieving needed safety, peace and stability throughout country.

PAKISTAN: Facebook Post Leads to Hundreds Fleeing

Sources: International Christian Concern, Morning Star News

On December 22nd, a lay pastor in the Charar area of Lahore shared a faith-based post on Facebook that some local Muslims considered blasphemous. When he realized the response, Pastor Raja Waris apologized, and it appeared that the issue was resolved. However, word spread throughout the community and hundreds of Muslims began protesting, demanding that Pastor Raja be beheaded.

In the midst of these demonstrations, it was revealed that some of the protestors planned to set fire to the homes of Christians. Hundreds of threatened community members fled the area for safety. On December 28th, Pastor Raja was handed over to police custody where he remains. At last report, no charges have been laid.

Police were deployed to Charar and the displaced Christian families have since been able to return to their homes after receiving assurances that there will be no violence committed against them. For more information on the persecution frequently faced by Christians in Pakistan, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Please pray for the safety of Christians residing in Charar, asking the Lord to minister His peace not only in their troubled community but also within their anxious hearts. May His Holy Spirit mediate on behalf of Pastor Raja, providing him mercy and vindication among his accusers and safe release from detainment. Pray that the demonstrators will be touched by God's wonderful love, cease from their protests, and take positive steps to promote unity among all of Pakistan's various people groups.

NORTH KOREA: Balloon Launches Officially Banned

Sources: VOM Korea, Mission Network News, Christian Post

Since 2005, The Voice of the Martyrs Korea (VOMK) has used balloon launches as an effective way of getting Bibles into North Korea. Recent surveys indicate that an increasing percentage of

North Korean defectors have also been given access to the Scriptures. Many of those Bibles may well have come through VOMK, whose distribution outreaches sent approximately 600,000 Bibles into the country over the years. It has been the only major organization supplying religious materials across the border.

As a result of negotiations between the officials of both Korean countries, the South Korean government has recently passed a law that will make it illegal to send any "anti-North Korean materials" across the border through the use of balloons. While the ministry of VOMK had used this method to send God's Word across the border, most other organizations have been sending politically motivated or culturally based materials. The ban is scheduled to take effect this March. Once in place, violators could face fines or up to three years of imprisonment.

Dr. Eric Foley, Chief Executive Officer for VOMK, spoke with VOMC's Greg Musselman about what this could mean for the ministry and how they plan to respond in the months to come. Watch the condensed version of their conversation at www.vomcanada.com/video/nkballoons1. A full-length version of the interview is available at www.vomcanada.com/video/nkballoons.

May God impart greatly needed direction and wisdom to the leadership of VOMK in the months to come, as they navigate how to best reach Koreans who are desperately in need of hope and help. May He bless all their efforts to share His Word and provide ministry to those living under such horrendous restrictions. Pray that this pending law will be rescinded or modified to allow them to legally continue sending out the Scriptures via balloons. In the meantime, may the Lord inspire them with other innovative ways to provide ministry, initiating what may even be "a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19).

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