



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, April 20, 2023

***"Praying for others is the best thing for our souls:
it enlarges our hearts and deepens our concern....
Praying for others is the best thing for the church:
it is the fuel for spreading the Gospel."
~ J.C. Ryle, Author of "Do You Pray?"***

Notice of adjustment: In the April 13th "Persecution & Prayer Alert," a report was provided regarding several arrests that had taken place at a wedding reception in Uttar Pradesh, India. It has come to our attention that the official arrest date inferred by a secondary news source was inaccurate. In fact, the event happened in November of 2022, as originally published in our December report of that previous year (www.vomcanada.com/in-2022-12-08.htm). We apologize for recently republishing the information with the incorrect date of occurrence. Nevertheless, your prayers on behalf of these Christians, and others dealing with the repercussions of India's misused anti-conversion legislation, are both greatly needed and appreciated.

UZBEKISTAN: Easter Worship Services Raided

Sources: Forum18, Church in Chains

While members of the Baptist church in Karshi, Uzbekistan, were gathered for worship on Easter Sunday, April 9th, police broke open the door and forced their way inside. Using electrical prods, they incapacitated some of the attendees while others cried and prayed. Ten members, including young people, were taken to the police station where they were held in custody until mid-afternoon. The detained believers were released after records of offence were drawn up against them.

Church members say that the raid followed their attempts to rent local halls for a presentation of the Christian faith to commemorate Easter. Visiting German musicians were to be involved in these services, but all rental attempts were blocked. The next day, police raided another worship service in the city of Denov, where the musicians from Germany were performing. The authorities claimed that the meeting was illegal and forced those who were present to disperse.

While the music group had intended to visit other various locations of the country, there were concerns that the arrests may have taken place due to the presence of the travelling team.

During the Second World War, the German-speaking Council of Churches [for] Baptists was exiled to Siberia and Central Asia (this includes Uzbekistan). During the time of Soviet rule, church registration was used to control and persecute Christians throughout the former USSR. Because of this history, as well as theological reasons, this group of churches refuses to abide by the registration requirements. To learn more about the persecution of Christians in this Central Asian country, go to www.vomcanada.com/uzbekistan.htm.

Ask the Lord to provide Christians who are encountering opposition in Uzbekistan ongoing wisdom, guidance and strength. May they remain faithful to Christ, as they presently face potential punishment. In the meantime, please intercede on their behalf, praying that there will be no ramifications from the recent incidents, and that any formal charges brought against them will be dismissed. Also pray that each of the officials responsible for the raids would be convicted of their own personal need for eternal salvation and the forgiveness of sin, to the point of fully surrendering to the powerful message of Jesus' death and glorious resurrection by placing their faith in Him.

NIGERIA: At Least 35 Killed During IDP Camp Raid

Sources: Open Doors Canada, Daily Post, The Peoples Gazette, Channels, Leadership

On Friday, April 7th, a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) was raided by militant forces believed to be members of the Fulani tribe. The camp in Benue State, Nigeria, houses approximately 30,000 people, mostly Christians who have been forced to flee their villages due to previous attacks.

The militants surrounded the village at around 7 p.m. and began indiscriminately killing anyone they encountered. While the statistical information provided by the above-mentioned news sources vary, at least 35 people, including pregnant women and children, were slaughtered during the attack. Of the numerous surviving victims who sustained injuries, more than 50 of them were reportedly transported to hospital.

While the violence plaguing Nigeria has ethnic and political elements, Christians are often specifically targeted by militant Islamic groups seeking control. For more information on the violence perpetrated against Nigeria's Christians, and/or to view available video reports, go to www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm.

Please prayerfully uphold the tremendous number of surviving inhabitants still residing in this Nigerian refugee camp, especially the family members and friends of those who have been recently killed, asking God to surround each one of them with His comforting presence during their time of mourning. Additionally, ask Him to minister physical healing to the many who were injured during the attack and psychological healing to all who have experienced so much trauma in their lives due to the ongoing persecution. May these displaced villagers be able to resettle in safe locations where they are shielded from future violence. Further, pray that the

leaders of the camp, as well as the country's governing officials, will ensure greatly needed measures are taken to protect those who are vulnerable.

REPORT UPDATE

IRAN: Retrial Ordered for Sara and Homayoun

Sources: Article18, Church in Chains

Sara Ahmadi and Homayoun Zhavah, a Christian couple who had been detained since last August, were informed on April 9th that their third application for a retrial was accepted by Iran's Supreme Court. The first two applications, both filed in 2021, were rejected.

The Iranian believers were convicted in November 2020 because of their membership with a house church. Homayoun, who suffers from advanced Parkinson's disease, was sentenced to two years in prison, and his wife Sara to eight years (see www.vomcanada.com/ir-2021-03-25.htm for more details).

After their conviction, these Christians were told to await an order to report to prison. After months of waiting, they were summoned to the administrative office of Evin Prison in August 2022. Believing they were going to collect their confiscated personal property, Sara and Homayoun went to the prison, only to be unexpectedly taken into custody. They have remained in prison since (www.vomcanada.com/ir-2022-08-25.htm).

Sara and Homayoun's case will be reviewed by Tehran's appeal court on May 9th. Due to Homayoun's serious health condition (prior to their arrests, Sara was his caregiver), relatives and friends have been very concerned for the couple. They are hopeful, however, that the retrial will bring about positive results.

Remember to pray for Sara and Homayoun as they patiently remain in prison, asking the Lord to strengthen them – in spirit, soul and body – and to provide for all of Homayoun's medical needs. May God's Holy Spirit also work deeply in the hearts and minds of the judges, so that this Christian couple will be justly acquitted and released from prison. Also intercede on behalf of the many other followers of Jesus who are presently serving time in Iranian jails because of their faith. May they too experience the sustaining comfort and strength of their loving Heavenly Father, knowing that He is trustworthy and faithful.

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