



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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"Don't look at men; trouble will come, pain will come, difficulties will come.... Look unto God."

~ Hamila Johnson, a Nigerian martyr

ERITREA: Over 100 Young Christians Arrested

Sources: Release Eritrea, Human Rights Without Frontiers, Church in Chains

In mid-April, a group of 103 young Christians, some of whom are students from the Mai-Nefhi technical college, gathered in the Eritrean capital of Asmara. Their purpose was to sing songs of praise, which they recorded to share on YouTube. However, since these believers are not members of a government-approved church, their meeting was deemed illegal.

(A music video previously produced by the same group can be viewed at this link:

www.vomcanada.com/video/mahalians.)

The authorities arrested all who were present and, according to reports, these Christians were taken to the notorious Mai Serwa prison. Since 2002, thousands of Eritreans from churches banned by the government have been sent to prison, often held inhumanely in metal shipping containers and subjected to volatile conditions and torture. Those arrested are typically held without charges against them, sometimes for many years.

Estimates vary as to the number of religious prisoners currently being detained in Eritrea. With these latest arrests, the number is estimated to be over 500. Most Christian prisoners are believed to be Pentecostal or of other evangelical denominations. For more information on the persecution experienced by followers of Jesus in Eritrea, go to www.vomcanada.com/eritrea.htm.

Pray for the safety and well-being of these young people who have been unjustly detained for their faith, asking our Heavenly Father to provide each one of them divine protection, strength and courage as they await their hopeful release from Mai Serwa prison. Please also continue to intercede for the deliverance of the many other suffering Christians who are

presently being held in Eritrean prisons – often for years without charges or proper court hearings. In the meanwhile, through the steadfast faith and testimonies of the detained believers, may the lives of many Eritreans in need of eternal salvation – including fellow prisoners, guards and judicial officials – be spiritually rescued from darkness and transformed in God's marvellous light.

NIGERIA: Total of 33 Killed in Kaduna State

Sources: Morning Star News, VOA, Church in Chains, Daily Post, Vanguard

Late in the night of April 15th, more than 200 gunmen entered the village of Runji in Kaduna State, Nigeria. By the time they withdrew from the area an hour later, 33 villagers had been killed, at least six others were left injured, and more than 40 houses had been torched. Almost half of those killed during the attack were children.

Government troops were able to intervene, killing some of the militants. Without their intervention, it is believed that the number of casualties could have been considerably higher. However, as the attackers left, they informed the surviving villagers that they would return.

According to a local Christian leader, this was the third attack on followers of Jesus in that particular area over the past week. During a mass funeral held on Monday, April 17th, Anglican Bishop Jacob Kwashi stated: "It has always been obvious and clear that the government is capable and able to stop this evil, be it the government of Kaduna State or the government of Nigeria. They're capable, they're able to stop this evil; but the truth is, Are they ready and willing to stop this evil?"

Militant attacks in Nigeria continue to spread relentlessly. According to a separate report, more than 130 Christians were killed in the states of Borno and Benue during the first week of April alone. While the violence has ethnic, political and economic elements, the attacks by various militant Islamic groups are especially concentrated around predominantly Christian areas, often specifically targeting churches and Christian villagers because of their faith. To learn more about the extreme challenges facing our Nigerian brothers and sisters in Christ, and/or to review previously posted reports addressing these concerns, go to www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm.

Prayerfully remember the families, friends and neighbours of all those who were slain in these recently occurring attacks. As the surviving villagers must now face the risk of another potentially imminent invasion, pray that the Lord will meet their emotional and physical needs – providing comfort, peace and protection from future attacks. Additionally, pray that the officials of the country's state and national governments would increase their efforts to stop the violence and bring about greatly needed peace to this troubled West African nation.

ERITREA: Burial Refused for Deceased Pastor

Sources: Release Eritrea, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Church in Chains

Pastor Tesfay Seyoum was the founding leader of the Eritrean Meserete Kristos Church. Because of his Christian faith and involvement in a non-approved religious group, Pastor Tesfay spent ten years in prison.

While imprisoned, he developed a serious brain tumour. Members of his church, along with his family, tried to arrange for the detained Christian leader to receive medical care, but their requests were denied. Eventually, prison officials sent him for treatment at a hospital in Asmara, where he died (only five days later) on April 9th.

Cultural norms in Eritrea call for burials to occur as soon as possible and to take place within the deceased person's home area. Yet, as Pastor Tesfay's family members mourned the loss of their loved one, they were forbidden from burying his body in either of the local cemeteries located within their hometown because of his evangelical faith.

The Christian leader's body was initially taken home but then had to be returned to the hospital morgue for keeping until the situation was resolved. Finally, the body of Pastor Tesfay was laid to rest at the St. Teklehaymanot Cemetery in a suburb north of Asmara on April 22nd – 13 days after his death. Pastor Tesfay, who was in his 60s, leaves behind a grieving wife and their only child. Additional information about the ongoing oppression of Christians in Eritrea, as well as related video podcasts/documentaries, are available at www.vomcanada.com/eritrea.htm.

During this time of mourning, please lift up the family members and friends of Pastor Tesfay before God's throne of grace. Pray that the Lord's abiding presence will be tangibly experienced by each one; and that His perfect peace, which transcends all understanding, will guard their hearts and minds – giving them strength to carry on.... Pray that the Gospel message will continue to spread throughout Eritrea, and that God's people will remain faithful and strong despite the government's intense opposition.

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