



Persecution & Prayer Alert

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, November 23, 2023

*"I weep for my people!
O Lord, arise and let our
enemies be scattered!"*
~ Nigerian survivor Mercy Waziri,
quoting from Psalm 68:1

REPORT UPDATES

NIGERIA: Abducted Student Safely Returns Home!

Sources: Open Doors, The Christian Post, Sahara Reporters

More than two years ago, 121 students were abducted by Fulani militants from the Bethel Baptist High School in Maraban Rido, Kaduna State. Almost three weeks after the incident, on July 24th, 2021, 28 of those students were unexpectedly released (see www.vomcanada.com/ng-2021-08-05.htm for details). Since then, other groups of students have gradually been recovered as ransom demands were negotiated. With each payment, some of the children were allowed to return home, and then more money was demanded for the next group of hostages. Over the ensuing two years, more than \$400,000 CAD was paid to the captors. Finally, only one student remained in captivity – a young boy named Treasure Ayuba, who had just turned 12 years old when he was captured.

Although rumours initially claimed that Treasure had chosen to stay with his captors, it was later revealed that the militants intended to forcibly convert the Christian boy to Islam. Thankfully, the abducted student was recently able to escape. Walking through the night, Treasure eventually found a group of hunters who took him to his hometown. Arriving at his home on November 2nd, he was met by his surprised family, who had no idea that he had even escaped. They were overjoyed to have him safely home!

The president of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, Rev. Dr. Israel Akanji, shared his appreciation for Treasure's safe homecoming on social media: "Thanks be to our unfailing God. Thank you also very much for your prayers and support." As with each of the students who had been held captive, trauma care is needed for Treasure as he now resumes living back at home. There have also been some concerns for his physical health, which is presently being assessed.

Praise God that that Treasure was able to miraculously escape his captors, which means that all of the abducted Bethel Baptist High School students have thankfully now returned safely home. Ask the Lord to minister ongoing healing to this traumatized boy and his family as they deal with the aftermath of his abduction and two-and-a-half years in captivity. Please pray for God's hand of protection over all the children of Nigeria, asking that measures would be taken to put a stop to the mass kidnapping of students. Additionally, continue to remember our other Christian brothers and sisters who presently remain in captivity, as well as their concerned families and friends who are anxiously awaiting news of their whereabouts.

BELARUS: Church Appeals Liquidation Orders

Source: Forum18

On October 6th, the court proceedings to determine the future of the New Life Church in Minsk, Belarus, officially began. After years of harassment by various government departments, legal action was taken to liquidate the church organization. For more details on this troubling situation, go to www.vomcanada.com/by-2023-10-12.htm.

On October 17th, a ruling was made ordering the liquidation of the church, even though the religious organization had previously been approved by the government. In the aftermath of this verdict, which has ruled to revoke the church's registration, any activity conducted by the Christians could now lead to prosecution and imprisonment.

The church has appealed this ruling to the country's Supreme Court. Consequently, the liquidation decision does not take effect until after the appeal has been heard. In the meantime, the New Life Church continues to meet online and in borrowed facilities.

May God give wisdom to Pastor Vyacheslav Goncharenko and the other leaders of this persevering church community as they determine the best approach for the continuance of their ministry activities in the days to come. In the meantime, pray that a favourable decision will be made by the Supreme Court concerning their church organization. Whatever the outcome, may the Gospel message continue to spread exponentially throughout this Eastern European nation, leading many more spiritually seeking souls to faith in Christ.

NIGERIA: Security for Christians Reportedly Improving

Sources: Release International, Morning Star News, Punch, Daily Post

When the Nigerian presidential elections took place in February of this year, many human rights experts expressed concerns that it would lead to increased violence due to religious divides in the

country. However, VOMC's partnering agency, Release International, recently reported that apparent improvements to the nation's security situation have been made during the past year. In fact, according to the latest statistical information, incidents of violence and kidnappings have declined in comparison to those that occurred during the first half of the previous year.

While the numbers may have improved, the security situation for Christians in many areas of Nigeria remains tenuous. Attacks continue to take place across the country, which often lead to murders and kidnappings. On November 11th, Pastor David Musa was kidnapped from his farm in the Obajana area of Kogi State. The terrorists initially demanded 20 million naira (over \$33,000 CAD) for his release.

As the members of his church were unable to raise that amount, the kidnappers agreed to accept one million naira, provided that other items such as poultry, alcohol and cell phone cards were included in the deal. In keeping with the renegotiation arrangements, two church members met with the abductors to exchange the ransom for Pastor David. Sadly, the transaction abruptly concluded when the armed men called the pastor to come back. For, as he turned to walk towards them, they shot and killed him.

In another case, Pastor Joshua Amako Maraya was killed, and his wife kidnapped, when their home in Damakasuwa, Kaduna State, was raided on the night of November 17th. Church members are calling for prayer on behalf of the surviving members of the family, including the release of the pastor's wife. In remembrance of the slain church leader, one member of the congregation recounts the words that Pastor Joshua had preached prior to his abduction. "The Rev. Maraya always encouraged us to preach the Gospel with courage and without reservation. He said: 'The message of the Gospel is for Jesus, so don't fail to preach it because of fear. Preach it, whether they like it or not.'"

Militants from various groups continue to cause havoc in Nigeria, and Christians have frequently been a primary target. For more details and reports addressing the violence perpetrated against followers of Jesus this West African nation, go to www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm.

Please prayerfully uphold the grieving families and congregation members of the two recently slain pastors, asking the Lord to minister greatly needed peace and comfort to every one of them during this difficult time of loss. Also continue to remember our other persecuted Nigerian brothers and sisters in Christ who are likewise in need of His empowerment so they can persevere in their faith with renewed strength, seizing every divinely appointed opportunity to share the Gospel message with those in need around them. Last, but not least, pray that the apparent reduction in violence would continue, leading to greater security for all Nigerians.

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