



Voice of the
Martyrs

PERSECUTION
& PRAYER
ALERT

Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

Thursday, October 31, 2024

*"As long as this church is still proclaiming
the Gospel – as long as God's Word is still
in the mouths and hearts of our brothers and
sisters – this church cannot be destroyed."*

~ Pastor Wang Yi
Early Rain Covenant Church

CHINA: Preacher of Early Rain Church Faces Harassment

Source: ChinaAid

Since December 2018, the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, China, has been subjected to repeated raids and ongoing oppression from Communist Party authorities who seek to shut down the influential unregistered church. Though the church's pastor, Wang Yi, is serving a nine-year prison sentence, members of the church continue to boldly reach out with the Gospel message.

One church member, Preacher Wu Wuqing, has experienced persecution several times. In June 2021, he and his family were locked in their home and prevented from leaving or having any visitors. Since confining the church leader to his home had failed to dissuade him from continuing his Christian activities, the authorities blocked the family – along with numerous other church members – from entering their apartment complex in 2023. Additionally, following numerous raids on his church gatherings, Preacher Wu has been repeatedly detained. After a 14-day detention in February 2024, his wife simply stated: "14 days is nothing. We are so happy to gather today, and when [my husband] returns in 14 days, we will gather again."

More recently, Preacher Wu's family has been pressured to move out of their rental home. On July 30th, water and electricity were cut off in an effort to force the harassed Christians to move. The utilities were eventually restored in late September, only to be cut off again on October 17th. While these believers were initially able to restore the power and water (which had been turned off manually), only a few hours later, the wires to their home were then cut.

It is clear that the intention of this harassment is to force the church leader and his family to relocate. Preacher Wu has asked church members to pray for his family and remove any anger from their hearts. He wrote: "When you pray for our family, you are acknowledging that we are suffering for the sake of our faith, and you are suffering with us! May God have mercy on us and graciously help us!" For further details on the ongoing persecution of the Early Rain Covenant Church and its members, go to www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

Despite the repeated harassment they have received from local governing authorities, pray that Preacher Wu and his family will maintain a forgiving and gracious attitude toward their oppressors. May the preacher's family, along with other members of the Early Rain Covenant Church, continue to minister the love of God and the wonderful hope He provides through His Word to those in their community and throughout China. Also pray for ongoing strength, encouragement and protection on behalf of Pastor Wang and the many other Christians in China who are presently serving time in prison for following the teachings of Jesus.

CHINA: Pastor John Cao and Colleague Detained for Conducting Baptisms

Sources: ChinaAid, Church in Chains

On March 4th, Pastor John Cao was released from imprisonment in China after serving a seven-year sentence. Since his release, the pastor has longed to return to the United States, where he holds permanent residency, in order to reunite with his wife and family there. However, the Chinese government has prevented Pastor John from leaving the country by withholding his ID card and passport. (See www.vomcanada.com/cn-2024-08-29.htm for more information.)

Despite this opposition, Pastor John is faithfully continuing his ministry activities. Recently, this Christian leader paid a visit to Preacher Chang Hao in Zhenxiong. While there, he participated in the baptism of 13 new believers. Since Preacher Chang is not an ordained pastor, he requested Pastor John's assistance out of respect for church tradition. However, just as the outdoor service was concluding, over 20 police officers intervened.

The 30 attending Christians – most of whom were elderly citizens – had then been taken to the police station for interrogation. While Pastor John and the other believers were finally released after midnight, Preacher Chang received a 12-day detainment for organizing an illegal religious gathering.

Altogether, Preacher Chang has received more than 20 "administrative detentions" due to his alleged illegal religious work. In May 2024, he was released from prison after serving a one-year sentence for allegedly "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." When he was younger, Preacher Chang's hands were badly burned in a factory fire, leaving him unable to hold objects. However, his injuries have not prevented him from leading a small rural church and courageously spreading the Gospel message.

Praise God for the ongoing determination of Preacher Chang Hao, Pastor John Cao and the many other faithful believers throughout China who are sharing the message of Christ's love with those around them in spite of the growing pressures they encounter. May these resilient

followers of Jesus receive ongoing encouragement and the assurance that His presence will always remain with them. Please also prayerfully lift up the recently baptized believers as they now live out their commitment to following in the footsteps of Jesus. Finally, pray that Pastor John will be able to leave the country soon, allowing this long-suffering believer to finally be reunited with his wife and family.

PAKISTAN: Teen Girl Released from her Abductors

Sources: Morning Star News, The Christian Post

On September 12th, 16-year-old Diya Iftikhar was abducted from her family's home by three men who are well-known for their opposition to Christians. In a video message to her parents four days later, Diya stated that she had converted to Islam and married Ghazaal Jutt, one of her kidnappers. (To review a previous report on this incident, see www.vomcanada.com/pk-2024-10-03.htm.)

Thanks to the assistance of a Christian organization, Diya's parents were able to file a court petition requesting the custody of their daughter. When the judge noticed Diya's anxiety and fear during the October 24th hearing at the Jaranwala Sessions Court, all other civilians were ordered to vacate the courtroom. Once she was alone, the young teen was able to tell the court that she had been converted and married against her will, and that she wished to return to her family. Consequently, custody was awarded to Diya's parents.

After the court ruling, Diya and her parents were escorted from the court by police due to concerns that they could be attacked. Since the victim and her abductors live in the same village, the family may need to move to a safe house for their protection.

Kidnappings of this kind are far too common in Pakistan. Asher Sarfraz from Christians True Spirit described the situation by stating, "Diya is one of the few girls who gathered the courage to expose their abductors in court." Additionally, even when these types of cases go to court, judges frequently ignore evidence and documentation.

Pakistan is one of several nations in which Christian women and girls experience added persecution and violence. This year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church – which is scheduled for this Sunday, November 3rd – will be focusing on the plight of women and girls who often silently endure great hardships for the name of Christ. To receive more information about this upcoming event, visit www.idop.ca.

Praise God that the judge overseeing Diya's case was able to perceive her plight and provide greatly needed rescue from her abductors, making it possible for this teenage girl to be safely reunited with her parents. As Diya and her family now recover from the trauma of the ordeal, ask our compassionate Lord to minister His healing, peace and restoration in each of their lives. Pray also that necessary measures will be taken to protect the members of this family from Diya's captors and any other hostile members of their community.

PAKISTAN: Bail Granted for Woman Accused of Blasphemy

Source: Morning Star News

In August of this year, two Christian sisters were accused of blasphemy when a Muslim man claimed to find ruined pages of the Quran amongst garbage, stating that one of the sisters had discarded them. Both sisters denied his allegation, believing that the pages were purposely placed there by the man himself because of the personal vendetta he had against them. (More about the situation is available at www.vomcanada.com/pk-2024-08-15.htm.)

When Saima, a widowed mother of two, was taken into custody, her sister Sonia managed to flee the village with her family after the allegations had surfaced. Sonia is presently living in hiding with her three children. Although the investigating officer did not find her guilty during his inquiry, Sonia remains in grave danger from those who may impose their own forms of punishment upon her. Furthermore, the charges against her have not been fully dismissed.

In an unusual court decision, Saima was granted bail on September 10th. For security reasons, news of her release was withheld until she was able to find safety. Like her sister, Saima and her family remain in danger from militant vigilantes.

The lawyer representing the two women is filing an application to have the charges dropped. At last report, the court filing is pending. For more reports addressing the persecution encountered by Christians in Pakistan, go to www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

Praise God that Sonia and Saima are not being detained in prison at this time. Pray that God will guide their lawyer as he works to build his case, so that all charges against these Christian women will be dropped. May these two sisters – along with the many other Christians in Pakistan who are in danger simply because of their faith in Christ – be protected from those seeking to harm them. Throughout the process, may they also receive renewed courage, hope and strength from the Lord.

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
Voice of the Martyrs Canada, P.O. Box 608, Streetsville, Ontario, L5M 2C1
Tel. (905) 670-9721 Website: www.vomcanada.com