



Voice of the
Martyrs

PERSECUTION
& PRAYER
ALERT

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Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"Behold, the eye of the Lord is on
those who fear Him, on those who
hope in His steadfast love."*

~ Psalm 33:18 ESV

CANADA POST SERVICE DISRUPTION

As the strike involving Canada's postal workers continues to take place during what has become a crucial time for many ministries throughout the country, please join us in praying for an expedient resolution to the service disruption.

IRAN: Twelve Christians Face Trial

Sources: Article18, Middle East Concern, Barnabas Fund

On November 26th, 12 Christian converts faced trial in Nowshahr, a northern Iranian city located along the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. The believers were charged with "propagation of the religions that [conflict with] Islam" and "collaborating with foreign governments." In the indictment, the prosecutor stated that the 12 individuals had identified themselves as Christians. The indictment further explained that because the accused followers of Jesus had formed groups to teach Christianity, they were guilty of religious propagation.

These 12 believers had been among a group of more than 20 Christians who were previously detained by Ministry of Intelligence agents in Nowshahr and one of its neighbouring cities, Chalus, last Christmas. Although all 12 of these believers were later released on bail, three of them were rearrested in September and then detained for nearly two months before being freed on November 17th. While in custody, the three rearrested Christians – Jahangir Alikhani, Hamed Malamiri and Gholam Eshaghi – were subjected to torture and asked to write letters renouncing their faith in Jesus.

The same day that the three Christians were released, Javad Amini – another one of the 12 converts – was detained, along with two unnamed women. After posting bail, all three were released on November 27th, the day after the trial. The court session took place in Javad's absence and, at the time of publishing this report, no information has been released regarding the outcome of the trial. For more details on the various challenges being encountered by Christians in Iran, visit our country profile at www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

Pray that God will intervene in the court case against these believers, working in the hearts of the country's officials so that justice would prevail. Throughout the process, may the Lord minister to each one of these accused Christians, providing them the reassuring peace and confidence they need through His abiding presence. On behalf of the many other followers of Jesus who are currently being imprisoned in Iran, pray that God's grace, strength and encouragement will also sustain them as they await their hopeful soon release. In general, may the Gospel message continue to spread throughout this Middle Eastern country, leading multitudes more to faith in Christ.

PAKISTAN: Court Permits Believer's Christian Identity

Sources: Morning Star News, VOM Australia

On November 16th, a district judge in Kasur, Punjab, overturned a ruling that had previously barred Sufyan Masih from reverting back to Christianity after allegedly converting to the Islamic faith. Sufyan's lawyer believes that the judge who presided over the initial court hearing had previously ruled against the Christian man due to a fear of receiving backlash from Muslim militants.

Sufyan worked as a labourer at a brick kiln owned by Asif Ali. According to the 24-year-old believer, Asif registered Sufyan as a Muslim under the name "Muhammad Sufyan" without his knowledge in an effort to enslave him. Being illiterate, Sufyan did not understand what had been written on his behalf, and thus placed his thumbprint on the form, which turned out to be a declaration of conversion to Islam.

Sufyan's lawyer, Sumera Shafique, believes the district judge's recent ruling will be helpful in other cases of forced religious conversions. She shares that many other Christians have faced similar issues, which are often perpetuated by illiteracy.

In the most recent episode of VOMC's *Closer to the Fire* podcast, host Greg Musselman and his ministry colleague, Stephen Wesley, discuss their recent trip to Pakistan. While there, the team members visited a brickyard where they met enslaved Christians who are dealing with situations similar to what has recently been experienced by Sufyan. To view this informative video, visit www.vomcanada.com/video/pk-embattled.

Praise God for this positive court ruling! Pray that Sufyan and other believers throughout Pakistan will be encouraged in their faith, and that more court officials will likewise rule with courage and justice – leading to equality for all Pakistani citizens. May the country's

governing leaders also ensure that believers throughout this nation (who are often treated as second-class citizens) will receive greater access to improved educational and career opportunities, as well as safety in their homes and workplaces. As a result, may all enslaved Christians be able to break free from indentured slavery so they can contribute to their communities in ways that will be beneficial to all.

NIGERIA: Numerous Christians Killed in Benue State

Sources: Morning Star News, Truth Nigeria, TG News

During two separate attacks on November 24th and December 1st, Fulani herdsmen killed 48 Christians in the Nigerian state of Benue, which is considered the north-central part of the country. These attacks are just two recent examples of the horrific dangers believers must deal with in this West African nation.

On November 24th, 18 Christians, including women and children, were on their way to church services in Azege village when they were suddenly gunned down by armed attackers. On the following weekend, other villages in the areas of Logo and Katsina-Ala were also attacked. During the December 1st attack, the assailants fired sporadically, killing many innocent villagers, while others died from machete wounds. By the end of the massacre, which lasted for several hours, at least 30 community members had been slain, several others injured, and the crops and properties of many were burned.

Following the violence, a local pastor highlighted the terror felt by nearby residents: "The attackers are killing innocent people at will, destroying property, and inflicting grievous injuries. We couldn't sleep yesterday; many are in hospitals, and others are fleeing. The threat is overwhelming."

While ethnic and economic elements are often important factors behind the ongoing violence in Nigeria, militant Muslims frequently target Christians specifically because of their faith. For additional reports on the suffering of Nigerian believers, visit www.vomcanada.com/nigeria.htm.

Pray that the comforting presence of God's Holy Spirit will rest on all those who are now mourning the sudden loss of their loved ones as a result of these recent attacks. Also prayerfully uphold the many other believers throughout this West African nation who've been affected by the violence perpetrated by those opposing their Christian faith, asking the Lord to provide His followers greatly needed protection, healing and restoration. May He also grant wisdom and direction to the country's governing leaders as they strive to put an end to the ongoing brutality, so that lasting peace and stability can be achieved in this troubled nation.

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