

Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"In light of the cross, one is free
to rediscover another's humanity and
imitate God's love for them."
~ Miroslav Volf*

ETHIOPIA: Church Attack Forces Pastor and Wife into Hiding

Source: Steadfast Global

The Voice of the Martyrs Canada has partnered with Steadfast Global to provide small loans to pastors and other Christian workers so they can establish sustainable businesses in support of their ministries. Among the recipients of this project is Pastor Paul, along with his wife Mary. (Their given names were changed for the purpose of this report due to security concerns.) This couple has been faithfully ministering within a Muslim-majority community in southern Ethiopia. As part of their ministry outreach, Pastor Paul and Mary leased space in a compound where they set up a shelter composed of poles and zinc sheets so they could hold worship services with local converts.

On July 29th, a mob suddenly stormed into the compound, forcibly dismantling the shelter before stealing its structural materials. Although police were present at the time of the attack, they did nothing to intervene. Instead, the authorities arrested Pastor Paul and physically assaulted him while in custody. The church leader was later released without charge. Thankfully, Mary was unharmed during the incident.

The Christian man who had leased the space to Pastor Paul was detained by police following the raid. Soon after the landowner's release, he terminated his rental agreement with the church. For their safety, Pastor Paul and Mary have gone into hiding as they recover from the attack and discern their next steps.

Prior to this incident, the pastor was asked if he had any concerns for his own safety, considering the history of violence against Christians in the area. His response was unwavering: "We are not afraid. We will live for Christ, and we will die for Christ." To review reports on previous incidents of persecution in Ethiopia, go to www.vomcanada.com/ethiopia.htm.

- *Ask the Lord to grant Pastor Paul and his wife Mary full healing and restoration following this recent attack, also praying that this ministering couple will receive His guidance and provision as they seek direction for the future.*
- *Praise God for faithful servants across Ethiopia who are reaching out with the "Good News" of the Gospel, even in the face of opposition.*
- *Pray for future opportunities to proclaim the message of God's forgiveness and salvation in communities where the hope of His shining light is needed most.*
- *Also intercede for the spiritual growth and protection of the converts who had been meeting with Pastor Paul, praying that their faith would deepen and remain strong despite adversity.*

INDIA: Pastors Arrested and Assaulted

Sources: ECSPE, Release International, Christian Daily

On July 20th, six pastors were arrested after a mob disrupted a church service in Bhilai, a city located within the Indian state of Chhattisgarh. The assailants chanted Hindu slogans and accused the pastors of engaging in forcible conversions. As the mob grew increasingly vocal, shouting obscenities and threatening violence, Pastor Baksh locked the church doors to protect his congregation members.

When police officials eventually arrived, they demanded that the church members open the doors. However, rather than addressing the mob, the authorities detained nearly 40 Christians, transporting them by bus to the local police station. While there, officers pressured Pastor Moses Logan to provide the names of five Christians, with the intent of pressing charges against them. The pastor refused, insisting that any charges should be directed at those who verbally threatened to attack the church. Despite his protest, Pastor Moses and five other church leaders were charged and transferred to a jail in the nearby city of Durg. While most of the other detained Christians were released, several women also received charges of "forced conversions."

During their imprisonment, all six church leaders were interrogated by prison guards. When the jailer discovered that the detained men were pastors, he ordered them to be beaten. Pastor Moses, who was ill at the time, was spared the physical violence. However, the other believers suffered brutal beatings with wooden batons, resulting in deep lacerations. Thanks to the efforts of local Christians, who were able to raise enough money for bail, the six pastors were released on July 21st. However, the charges against them remain.

In light of this attack, an unnamed ministry partner in India shared: "North Indian pastors and [ministry] workers live in fear. The right to practise your faith is under assault now." He urges followers of Jesus around the world to pray for the church in India, as militant Hindu groups continue to target Christians. For further information, visit www.vomcanada.com/india.htm.

- *Pray that the physical wounds suffered by these pastors will heal quickly and completely, and that all false charges against them and the other accused members of this congregation would be dropped.*

- *Lift up believers throughout India who are facing increasingly aggressive opposition, praying that they would be filled with wisdom, discernment and courage as they navigate these challenges.*
- *Intercede for those who are opposed to the Gospel in this South Asian nation, in hopes that they will be receptive to the Holy Spirit's conviction of their sinful ways, and thus experience miraculous transformation through the love and saving grace of our Lord Jesus.*

CHINA: Detained Pastor's Family Faces Harassment

Sources: ChinaAid, Bitter Winter

Since 2021, Pastor Chang Shun of the Maizhong Reformed Church in Fuyang City has encountered ongoing harassment from Chinese authorities. Unfortunately, all his appeals, in response to the multiple administrative detentions and fines he received over the years, have been unsuccessful. In 2023, Pastor Chang's church was officially banned by the government. Most recently, the harassed church leader was detained on June 29th during a raid by law enforcement officers. In this latest occurrence, he was taken into custody alongside Elder Ma Tao on suspicion of "organizing illegal gatherings." Several visiting friends and family members of Pastor Chang were also detained. Authorities forcibly relocated the visiting individuals, loading their belongings onto trucks and sending them back to their hometowns with strict orders not to return to Fuyang.

Since the raid, Pastor Chang's wife, Li Yunyan, has suffered ongoing police intimidation. Surveillance cameras were installed at the door of the couple's residence, and a tracking device was placed on her car. In addition, the lock on their front door had been changed without notice, and the water supply to their home was cut off. The Christian woman also reports often being followed when she leaves her residence. Li is particularly concerned for the safety of their two young children and has expressed growing unease over the constant surveillance. In an open letter, Li calls on Christians around the world to pray for her family's situation. Reports on other incidents of persecution in China are available at www.vomcanada.com/china.htm.

- *Pray for God's protection and peace over Pastor Chang, Elder Ma and the other church members who were detained because of their faith in Christ.*
- *Additionally, please prayerfully uphold Li and the many other followers of Jesus in China who are experiencing harassment and intimidation from Communist authorities, asking that these believers and their loved ones would also be divinely shielded from harm and further encouraged to continue trusting in Him.*
- *May the testimonies of faithful believers shine brightly amid the country's spiritual oppression, leading many more seekers of the truth to recognize God's Light – as ultimately revealed through the miraculous life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus.*