



Voice^{of the}
Martyrs

PERSECUTION
& PRAYER
ALERT

Persecution & Prayer Alert

Voice of the Martyrs Canada
www.vomcanada.com

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*"The only way to learn strong
faith is to endure great trials."*

~ George Müller

IRAN: Christian Tortured During Pre-Trial Detention

Sources: Article18, Middle East Concern

In June 2024, five Christian converts in Iran were arrested because of their faith. More than a year later, on July 16th, these believers were convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison for allegedly promoting "propaganda." Little information is available about the five detained Christians, and only three of them have been identified thus far. The charges stem from their attendance at Biblical training courses in Türkiye, as well as their involvement with house churches and online Christian events in Iran.

One of the convicted believers, Morteza Faghanpour-Saasi, received an additional 17-month sentence for allegedly insulting Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. Disturbingly, it has been revealed that Morteza was subjected to torture by prison officials prior to his trial. The physical abuse took place when officers attempted to pressure the believer to sign a statement renouncing his Christian faith in exchange for a reduced sentence.

On September 17th, after reviewing the cases of all five imprisoned followers of Jesus, authorities presiding over the court of appeal ruled to uphold the original sentences. To access previously published reports concerning Christian persecution in this highly restrictive Persian nation, visit www.vomcanada.com/iran.htm.

- *Pray that these five imprisoned believers – along with the many other Christians who are presently suffering for their faith in Iran – will receive divine protection and the strength to endure, while awaiting vindication from the country's judicial authorities.*
- *In the meantime, may God's love, peace and grace be powerfully reflected in the lives of these detained believers, so that their prison guards, court officials and fellow*

inmates would also discover the blessed hope that is available through faith in Jesus Christ.

- *Pray for the continual growth and impact of ministries that are reaching into Iran, asking the Lord to equip their facilitators with wisdom, courage and the resources needed to further spread the Gospel message.*

PAKISTAN: Fake Facebook Account Sparks Blasphemy Allegations

Sources: International Christian Concern, Pakistan Christian Post, Agenzia Fides

"No Christian in Pakistan, fully aware of the devastating consequences, would intentionally publish or write anything that could be perceived as blasphemous against Islam." This statement by Father Lazar Aslam was made in response to recent allegations against a young Christian man, Asher Bhatti, whose case has sparked widespread concerns among religious freedom advocates.

On September 16th, a Muslim bookstore owner named Muhammad Umair discovered a Facebook account containing statements that were perceived as being derogatory towards the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The Facebook posts also featured inflammatory comments from Asher's uncle who lives in Thailand, further exacerbating the situation.

At around the same time, Asher also discovered the account, which had been falsely created in his name without his knowledge or consent. The young Christian man promptly reported the impersonation to Pakistan's national cyber-crime agency, informing them that the account was created by his uncle, Samuel Paul. According to Asher, Samuel had been threatening and accusing him – alluding that his faith was causing serious trouble for their family. Allegedly affiliated with a militant Islamic group, the opposing uncle has also made attempts to extort money from Asher's parents who are presently living in the United Kingdom.

Despite Asher's efforts to clear his name, Muhammad Umair filed a police complaint against the believer, accusing him of blasphemy. Since police investigations are continuing, Asher has not been arrested. In the meanwhile, public demonstrations have called for his immediate detention. Due to these threats, the young man has been forced to go into hiding.

Sadly, Asher's case is not an isolated incident. According to Nasir Saeed, director of **CLAAS-UK**, "This is yet another tragic example of how Pakistan's blasphemy laws are being grossly misused." Such accusations have resulted in the imprisonment of hundreds of individuals, many of whom are innocent. Other reports addressing the persecution of Christians in Pakistan are available at www.vomcanada.com/pakistan.htm.

- *Pray that truth and justice will prevail in Asher's case, and that those responsible for the threats and false accusations will be held accountable.*
- *Ask our Heavenly Father to protect Asher and the members of his immediate family from danger, providing each of them peace, courage and comfort in the midst of this difficult situation.*

- *Pray that Pakistan's blasphemy laws will be repealed, so they can no longer be misused to target innocent individuals – including those who represent religious minorities.*

INDONESIA: Blasphemy Legislation to be Updated in January

Sources: International Christian Concern, The Christian Post, Global Pluralism Monitor, USCIRF

Indonesia's blasphemy law has been enforced since 1965, despite multiple unsuccessful attempts to remove the legislation. Although the country is home to the world's largest Muslim-majority population, the national government has long sought to maintain a religiously diverse society. Even so, incidents of religious intolerance and persecution have often occurred on a local level.

While the most recently made revisions to the nation's criminal code had been passed in 2022, they are scheduled to take effect in January 2026 when the newly elected president assumes office. These newly added regulations were intended to reflect the current digital environment. However, the wording of amendments pertaining to the country's "apostasy" and "blasphemy" laws remains unclear. According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, "the language included is intentionally vague, allowing for broad interpretation and application." Human rights advocates have expressed concerns that this ambiguity could enable local authorities and militant groups to misuse the law against religious minorities.

An Indonesian Christian named Andreas acknowledges the importance of regulating hate speech, but he points out that certain aspects of the law disproportionately favour Islam as the majority religion of the country. Nevertheless, he remains optimistic that the new regulations won't lead to rampant abuse, as witnessed in countries like Pakistan. "The situation [here] is very different," Andreas reasons. To review further information on the challenges facing Indonesia's Christians, go to www.vomcanada.com/indonesia.htm.

- *Pray that all levels of the Indonesian government will uphold religious tolerance by resisting pressure from militant groups and promoting policies that honour the rights of all citizens.*
- *As a result, may the country's local authorities act justly and courageously to ensure religious minorities are protected from discrimination and persecution.*
- *Please continue to remember Christians throughout Indonesia, praying that they will be filled with the love of Christ and empowered to live out their faith boldly and compassionately.*

The "Persecution & Prayer Alert" is a ministry of:
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