

The Persecution & Prayer Alert
The Voice of the Martyrs, Canada
www.persecution.net
Wednesday, December 31, 2008

A weekly news digest on the Persecuted Church and how you can respond.

Tough times require tough faith. Find out more at www.persecution.net/newsletter

Subscribe to the RSS feed at www.persecution.net/pnp.xml.

In this week's edition: reports from China, India, Belarus and Tajikistan with an update from Gambia

1. Christians beaten, house churches raided during Christmas in China

There were several incidents of attacks on Christians in China during Christmas week, according to reports from ChinaAid.

On the afternoon of December 24, approximately 40 police officers raided a construction site in the village of Jingjia, Sichuan province where Christian volunteers were helping to rebuild homes destroyed in the massive May 12 earthquake. The allegedly intoxicated officers beat and swore at those present and seized Bibles, hymnals, televisions, and other items belonging to the Christians. They refused to present legal documents giving reason for the raid. One of the earthquake victims and several of the Christian volunteers were eventually taken into custody by officials.

Also on December 24, nine Christian women were arrested in Yucheng county, Henan province while leading a Christmas celebration. Five of the women were released the next day after their families paid fines ranging from 1,500 to 3,500 Yuan (approximately \$270-\$625 CAD) while the others, at last report, remained in detention.

At least two Chinese house churches were raided while holding holiday celebrations on Christmas Day. Several leaders were arrested in the raids -- two in Bozhou city, Anhui province and seven in Qitai county, Xinjiang Autonomous Region. At last report, all of these Christians were still imprisoned.

Pray for the release of those detained. Pray that Christians in China will continue to stand firm in their faith in the face of violence and intimidation (Acts 5:29).

For more information on the persecution facing Christians in China, go to www.persecution.net/china.htm.

2. Church leaders attacked in Andhra Pradesh, India

Although Christians were relieved to celebrate Christmas in relative peace and stability in Kandhamal district, Orissa, VOMC received reports of other Indian Christians who were targeted around the Christmas season. At approximately 10:30 p.m. on December 23, several pastors and prayer group leaders were attacked and severely beaten by Hindu militants while returning home from a Christmas prayer meeting near the suburb of Ramnagar in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. At the time of the report, three Hindus had been arrested for their involvement in the attack.

Ask God to grant healing and strength for those injured. Pray that the perpetrators will turn to faith in Christ and become a demonstration of God's love and mercy to others (1 Tim 1:16).

Learn more about how Christians suffer for Christ in India at www.persecution.net/india.htm. The feature article in the January edition of VOMC's monthly newsletter focuses on the persecution of Christians in Orissa, India. To subscribe, go to www.persecution.net/nlorder.htm.

3. Polish priest forced to leave Belarus

Belarusian authorities have refused to extend the visa of Father Zbigniew Grygorcewicz, a Polish priest, in an attempt to force him to leave the country, according to a December 24 report from Charter'97. Father Grygorcewicz, who ministers at the Borisov's Nativity of the Virgin Mary Roman Catholic parish, claims the refusal was related to his involvement in holding a Christian music concert in September. Authorities originally granted permission for the concert but then withdrew their support shortly before the event began. Grygorcewicz was reportedly told to be out of the country by January 1.

According to a December 23 report from Forum 18, four Catholic priests and three nuns (all from Poland) face a ban on religious work in Belarus as of January 1. These bans bring to 28 the number of foreign religious workers banned from working with local religious communities since 2004.

Ask God to give wisdom to Father Grygorcewicz and other foreign religious workers as to how to continue serving Him. Pray that the church in Belarus will continue to expand and flourish despite opposition.

For more information on the persecution of Christians in Belarus, go to www.persecution.net/belarus.htm.

4. Restrictive religion law proposed in Tajikistan

A restrictive draft religion law was sent by Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon to the parliament for approval on November 19, according to a report from Forum 18. The draft

law allegedly restricts the activity of religious organizations, limits religious education, and imposes state censorship over religious literature. If the law passes, religious organizations currently registered would be forced to re-register by July 1. However, the draft law's stringent requirements would make it difficult for some groups to continue to qualify for registration.

Pray that this law will not pass parliament. Ask God to work in the lives of Tajikistan's leaders so that they too will turn to Him.

To learn more about the persecution of Christians in Tajikistan, go to www.persecution.net/tajikistan.htm.

5. Update: Missionary couple sentenced to hard labour in Gambia

David Fulton (60) and his wife Fiona (46), British missionaries who were arrested on charges of sedition in late November in Gambia (www.persecution.net/gm-2008-12-10.htm), were sentenced on December 30 to one year of hard labour in prison and fined 250,000 Dalasis (approximately \$11,500 CAD). They had pleaded guilty to the charges in the hope that they would receive a lighter sentence. Gambia's president, Yahya Jammeh, however, is known for cracking down on any perceived criticism of him or his government. According to Glenn Penner, VOMC's CEO, "It is not a crime to criticize a government. In the 21st century, this type of repression is ludicrous. The charges brought against the Fultons say more about the government than they do about the couple." The couple has been sent to the notoriously severe Mile Two Prison to carry out their sentences. At last report, their two-year-old adopted daughter was being cared for by friends.

6. In this week's VOMC weblog (www.persecution.net/weblog.htm)

Check out some of the latest blogs by VOMC staff:

- a) In "Tough times require tough faith" Glenn Penner shares from personal experience how the testimonies of the persecuted have strengthened his faith during his fight with cancer.
- b) Glenn announces the launching of a new VOMC weblog dedicated to posting articles and research on the biblical theology of persecution in "Theology of Persecution weblog launched."
- c) Adele Konyndyk reflects on the bold joy demonstrated by many of our suffering brothers and sisters in "Echoing their brave delight."

To make comments on these and previous VOMC weblogs, go to persecutedchurch.blogspot.com.

The Persecution & Prayer Alert is a ministry of The Voice of the Martyrs, Canada.
(Mailing address: P.O. Box 117, Port Credit, Mississauga, Ontario L5G 4L5)

Tel. (905) 670.9721. Website: www.persecution.net

Contacts: Glenn Penner & Adele Konyndyk

Please do not reply to this email, as it comes from an address that is not monitored. To contact us, use our online form at www.persecution.net/contact.htm.

If you would like to encourage someone to read or receive this weekly publication, please use our online form at www.persecution.net/pnpforward.htm and help spread the message of the Persecuted Church around the world.