

# Pray for persecuted Christians

## CHINA

Although the constitution provides for religious freedom, China's Government has consistently tried to control religious practice. All religious groups are required to register. Those who refuse are regarded as 'illegal' and sometimes forced underground. During 2011, a number of churches and Christians have continued to face intimidation, with some individuals being detained and tortured.

Pray for

- Pastor **Shi Enhao**, vice-president of the Chinese House Church Alliance, who was sentenced in July to two years of 're-education through labour'.
- Prominent Beijing human rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng**, who has not been seen since April 2010. Gao has made public statements about his brutal torture by security police in 2007 – despite being warned by officials not to do so.
- Members of **Shouwang Church**, Beijing, who repeatedly held their Sunday worship outdoors during 2011 after being barred entry to their normal venue. Police officers then arrested hundreds of church members and detained several leaders. It is believed that the church has attracted official attention because its members include many well-educated people, including human rights lawyers, former government officials and religious scholars.



## INDIA

Hindu nationalists have been open and violent in opposing the church. Several pastors have been murdered, others beaten. Churches and their congregations have been attacked or threatened. Seven Indian states have now passed anti-conversion laws.

Lord, we pray for the vast majority of Christians in India who are from lower castes, scattered across India, and often under-educated.

Give wisdom and insight to all those engaged in evangelism. Specifically, we pray that the conferences which the **All India Christian Council (AICC)** gives on basic civil rights, sensitivity in witnessing and theology of persecution will help 10,000 attendees this year.

With more than 100 serious physical assaults each year, especially in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, we pray for courage for fellow Christians.

May the micro-grants administered by AICC help provide self-sustainable income for pastors. May rebuilt houses and churches serve as a symbol of the global church's support for victims of persecution.

May the Bibles that are distributed to people who have lost their belongings in arson or other attacks give them comfort and guidance in the days ahead.

From Release partner the All India Christian Council

## PAKISTAN

The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion: proselytising among Muslims is banned. Pakistan's blasphemy laws – especially the notorious Section 295C of the Penal Code – are often used against religious minorities to settle personal scores. So the number of Christians charged is disproportionately high. Christians, especially women, face discrimination at work, in education and in the legal system.

Pray for

- Christians in prison under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. Although the death penalty for blasphemy has never been carried out, those accused often wait many years for their cases to be dismissed, putting severe emotional and financial pressure on them and their families.
- Release partner **Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan**, which gives pastoral care and practical support to Christian prisoners and their families. Pray for God's strength and guidance for all their staff.
- Release partner CLAAS (Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement) which champions the religious rights of Christians and other religious minorities. Pray for the protection of Director **Joseph Francis** (pictured) who has received death threats from militants.



For further information, news and prayer requests, visit [www.releaseinternational.org](http://www.releaseinternational.org)

## **Liturgy: Remembering the persecuted**

Invitation to worship

Leader: In You, Lord, do I take refuge

**Response: Let me never be put to shame**

L: In Your righteousness, deliver and save

**R: Be as a refuge and a strong fortress (Psalm 71:2-3)**

Almighty God, who has taught us through your Son, Jesus Christ, that those who follow Him may be persecuted: strengthen, comfort and encourage all those who suffer harassment, violence, imprisonment and even death for being followers of Jesus.

We pray for those who persecute your people; may their hearts be turned towards you through the faithful witness of those they persecute. Protect members of the families and church communities of those who are persecuted and bless the work and ministry of Release International and its partners as they support those who are suffering and seek to be a voice for persecuted Christians.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Liturgy: Closing prayer**

Lord God, heavenly Father, give us the courage of the martyrs to bear witness, without flinching, to Your great love for us.

Give us their confidence in the resurrection of Your Son, Jesus, and give us that same power and reassurance of the Holy Spirit as You give them, so that we too may fearlessly bring Your good news to a needy world.

This we ask in the name of Him who was crucified for us and who called us to take up our crosses and to follow Him, even Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

**R: Amen and Amen**

## **Benediction**

L: Christ crucified draw you to Himself, to find in Him a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven and the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you forever.

**R: Amen**

L: Let us bless the Lord

**R: Thanks be to God**