

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, August 17, 2010

Prayer support is crucial to those who suffer for their faith in Jesus. Please use these alerts to prompt your own prayers, and to facilitate prayer in your church and other Christian meetings. Please also send it on to other Christians. This information can also be reproduced in church magazines and news bulletins, provided the source is acknowledged.

August 5 2010 - PAKISTAN – Masked gunmen kill five Christians

A dozen masked men gunned down five Christians as they came out of their church building in Sukkur in Sindh Province two months after a banned Islamic extremist group sent church leaders a threatening letter, relatives said.

Pastor Aaron John and church members Rohail Bhatti, Salman John, Abid Gill and Shamin Mall of Full Gospel Church were killed as they left the church building after meeting to discuss security in light of threats they had received, said the pastor's son, Shahid John.

'As we came out of the church, a group of a dozen armed gunmen came and opened fire at us,' said Shahid, who survived a bullet in his arm. Besides Shahid, five others were wounded in the attack.

In May church leaders received a letter from Islamic extremist group Sip-e-Sahaba (formerly Sipah-e-Sahaba until it was banned) warning the Christians to leave the area, said Kiran Rohail, wife of the slain Rohail Bhatti. Sip-e-Sahaba and Sunni Tehrik extremist groups are both linked with an area *madrassa* (Islamic school) whose students had been threatening the church since 2008, Christian sources said. They added that the manner of the attack on July 15 indicated that the gunmen had been trained.

Pastor John and Bhatti had reported the threats of the past two years to police, but officers at the local station did not take them seriously, relatives said. Police also declined to register a First Information Report when church leaders reported the threatening letter of May. An independent government source confirmed the shootings, adding that local Islamist pressure had prevented media from reporting on them.

(Source: Compass Direct)

- *Ask God to comfort the families and community of the victims.*
- *Pray that the gunmen will be brought to justice.*

August 10 2010 – NORTH KOREA – Underground church leaders executed

Three leaders of an underground house church in North Korea have been executed and 20 of their Christian associates jailed, according to sources inside the reclusive nation.

North Korean police raided a house in Kuwal-dong in Pyung-sung county, Pyongan province, and arrested all 23 believers who had gathered for a 'religious function', according to the news agency, AsiaNews.

Three 'ringleaders' were tried, sentenced to death and executed soon afterwards. The other 20 were reportedly sent to prison camp No. 15 in Yodok. The arrests and executions happened in mid-May – but news of them has only just emerged from the so-called 'hermit kingdom'.

The events have also been confirmed by North Korea Intellectual Solidarity, a group of North Korean defectors based in Seoul committed to raising awareness of injustice and promoting reform in their homeland.

AsiaNews reports that the 23 Christians had come to faith after some of them travelled to mainland China on business and came into contact with the church there.

North Korea's totalitarian regime permits only one religion: the cult worship of President Kim Il Sung and his son, the current ruler, Kim Jong Il. Christians can be killed simply for owning a Bible.

(Sources: AsiaNews, Daily NK, North Korea Intellectual Solidarity, Release International)

- *Pray for Christians in North Korea, forced to worship in secret and living in fear of their lives.*
- *Pray for the families of the three house church leaders who were executed recently.*
- *Pray too for the swift release of the other 20 believers held in one of North Korea's notorious prison camps.*

August 12 2010 - AFGHANISTAN – Growing threat to Christians

Concern is rising for Afghanistan's small Christian community, following the recent murder of ten aid workers in the country.

The latest attack on workers for the International Assistance Mission highlights a growing danger not only to Christian relief workers but also to Afghans who have embraced the Christian faith.

The medical workers shot dead in Badakhshan province were reportedly accused by the Taliban of trying to spread Christianity – a potential threat now facing the whole Afghan church.

Believers are also said to be living in fear of a government crackdown on Christian activity, with the forced closure of two church-based organisations recently and government searches of offices connected with Christian activity. Conversion from Islam is still widely considered as apostasy in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Government recognises only one church, the Community Christian Church of Kabul. Other gatherings of Christian believers exist but most meet in homes.

Release CEO Andy Dipper worked in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2005, during the rise of the Taliban. Calling for prayer for Christians in Afghanistan, he says: 'The Christian community have a vital part to play in the building of the nation, inspired by God to serve, driven with passion to love, and selflessly focused on those more needy than themselves.'

(Sources: BBC, International Christian Concern, Release International)

- *Pray God's protection and peace over Christians living and working in Afghanistan.*
- *Ask God to multiply His church in Afghanistan and pray that His people will be allowed to play their part in building and shaping this nation.*