

# RELEASE INTERNATIONAL 7x7 PRAYER ALERT

*Tuesday, March 24, 2009*

*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.*

## **PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS NEED YOU!**

**Release wants to recruit volunteers from around the UK and Ireland to represent the needs of persecuted Christians to their churches. Could you be a Church Rep? Your core role would be to receive and disseminate information, and encourage prayerful support for the ministry within your church. How you develop the role depends on the time you have to give. Church Reps are a vital part of the Release team. Please prayerfully consider if you can join us – and pray that many others will take on this role too. To find out more, ring Gene on 01689 823491.**

### **1. CHINA**

Communist officials in Xinjiang province will decide the fate of Uyghur Christian Alimjan Yimit, detained for the past 14 months despite a judge dismissing his case.

A high-level government committee in Xinjiang is now reviewing Alimjan's case – ten months after a trial judge ruled last May there was 'insufficient evidence' to convict him of 'endangering national security'. The judge ordered his case be sent back to Public Security Bureau (PSB) prosecutors.

This news coincides with a report from China Aid which suggests that the case of another Uyghur Christian, Pastor Lou Yuanqi, is becoming a mirror image of Alimjan's. Pastor Lou, who was arrested in May 2008, was tried in December on charges of 'using superstition to undermine the law'. It has now emerged that, at his trial too, the judge ruled there was 'insufficient evidence' against him – and his case was sent back to the PSB.

Pastor Lou, who suffers from hepatitis B, remains at the Huocheng County Detention Centre. His wife, children and congregation continue to meet, believing that the best response to Pastor Lou's imprisonment is to share the Gospel with more people.

Ethnic minority Uyghur Christians have suffered intense persecution from officials in Xinjiang province in north-west China over the past year. Most Uyghurs are Muslim.

Meanwhile, the wife and two children of Beijing lawyer Gao Zhisheng have managed to escape the PSB's tight surveillance and flee to the US, with the help of China Aid among others. Gao, a Christian, was seized by Chinese security forces in February (7x7, February 24, 2009) and has not been seen since.

His family are very worried about him: he was tortured when he was detained in 2007 and has spoken publicly about this abuse, despite death threats warning him to keep quiet.

(Sources: China Aid, Release International, The Voice of the Martyrs Canada)

- **Pray** for the release of all three men. Ask God to comfort their families.

- **Write** to the Chinese authorities expressing polite concern for the plight of Uyghur Christians Alimjan Yimit and Lou Yuanqi – and for lawyer Gao Zhisheng. Write to: Ms Wu Aiyang, Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, 10 Nan Da Jie, Chaoyangmen, Beijing, 100020, China. Or email: [minister@legalinfo.gov.cn](mailto:minister@legalinfo.gov.cn)  
Please do not mention Release International in your letters or emails.

## 2. VIETNAM

Concern is growing for a Vietnamese Christian who has not been seen since officials seized her in the Central Highlands a year ago.

Puih H'Bat, an ethnic minority Montagnard and a mother of four children, ran into trouble by leading prayer meetings in her home in Ploi Bang village, Gia Lai province.

Police raided one such meeting at Puih's home on April 9, last year. Officers tried to force all 20 Christians present to sign documents agreeing to join the government-sanctioned Evangelical Church of Vietnam. They all refused. Two days later, at 4am, the police arrested Puih and took her into custody.

Puih's plight has now reached the attention of the European Commission (EC) which says it is 'closely monitoring' her case. EC sources suggest that Puih H'Bat has been convicted of the 'destruction of the unity of the people's solidarity' and sentenced to five years in jail, according to news agency BosNewsLife. Security officials have reportedly told Puih's family she is in T-20 prison in Pleiku – but have not allowed them to visit her.

Puih's four children are currently being cared for by her elderly mother. Puih's estranged husband has fled to the US.

(Sources: BosNewsLife; International Christian Concern; Montagnard Foundation)

- Pray for Puih H'Bat's immediate release.
- Ask God to fill Puih's family with His perfect peace.

## 3. PAKISTAN

The courts have dismissed blasphemy charges against a Christian rights activist from Islamabad – but he remains in jail as investigators decide if there is a case to answer.

As 7x7 has reported (*7x7, February 10, 2009*), angry crowds gathered around the courthouse where Hector Aleem was to be tried for allegedly sending a text message insulting Islam's prophet Mohammed.

A court judge in February threw out the blasphemy charge because the offending text message was sent from an 'unlisted phone number'. But a lower court has ruled that Hector could be charged with 'abetting blasphemy'. It is alleged that the sender of the text had previously had a long chat with someone on Hector's number.

It is believed Hector, who has been at Adiyala jail in Rawalpindi since January, may have been framed due to his work lobbying for Christians' rights. Hector has recently become involved in a dispute between local Christians and the Rawalpindi Water and Sanitation Agency, which wants to demolish their church, reports Compass Direct news agency.

Meanwhile, two Christians, Walayat Masih and Mushtaq Masih, have been charged with blasphemy after an incident in Malukay, 55 miles from Lahore. A Release partner says

Muslims accused the Christians of 'defiling' the Muslim statement of faith during a ceremony in a graveyard. Islamists have threatened to kill local Christians.

(Sources: Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, Compass Direct)

- Pray that all charges against Hector, Walayat and Mushtaq will be dropped.
- Ask God to protect these men and their families from extremist reprisals.

#### **4. INDIA**

Brutal attacks were launched on three church leaders in the space of four days – just as Indian Christians demanded tougher penalties for anyone attacking their community.

In the most recent assault, on March 11, Pastor Erra Krupanamdham was beaten by Hindu militants who attacked him in Medak, Andhra Pradesh, fracturing his back and ribs.

Two days earlier, militants armed with rods and hockey sticks burst into the home of Pastor A.K. Wilson in Uttam Nagar, New Delhi, and accused him of converting people to Christ by force. The mob beat him and ordered him to leave the area on pain of death.

And on March 8, a man detonated a crude bomb in a church in Rohtas district, Bihar state, and shot at the pastor. Pastor Vinod Kumar was seriously hurt but survived and his assailant was seized by members of the congregation before he could do more harm. The suspect later said he had wanted to kill Pastor Vinod to stop him bringing people to Christ.

Meanwhile, Christians of all denominations have signed a memorandum directed at all political parties in the run-up to the federal elections, tabled to run from April 16 to May 13. Churches are calling on all parties to defend religious freedom, ensure greater security and political representation for religious minorities and not allow violence to go unpunished.

(Sources: AsiaNews, Compass Direct, The Voice of the Martyrs Canada)

- Pray for the fast recovery of all three pastors.
- Thank God for Christians taking a bold stand against discrimination and violence.

#### **ERITREA DAY OF PRAYER: MAY 24**

Please join Release in a day of prayer for Eritrea on Sunday, May 24 – and encourage your church to get involved too. We are asking our supporters to collect signatures for our petition calling on the Eritrean Government to respect the religious rights of its citizens. Also, you could incorporate prayers for Eritrea into your Sunday service. For more information and to download our petition, visit [www.releaseinternational.org/current](http://www.releaseinternational.org/current)

#### **Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on Tuesday, April 7, 2009.**

This prayer alert is part of our 7x7 initiative to encourage prayer and action for seven years from 2002 for seven countries where Christians have faced intense persecution: China, Indonesia, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Sudan and Vietnam.

Through our international network of missions, we serve persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world by supporting pastors and Christian prisoners, and their families; supplying Christian literature and Bibles; and working for justice. Release is a member of the UK organisations Global Connections, the Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network.

Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT, UK

Tel: 01689 823491

General enquiries: [info@releaseinternational.org](mailto:info@releaseinternational.org)

Website address: [www.releaseinternational.org](http://www.releaseinternational.org)

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