

# RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, August 31, 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 18 2010 - PAKISTAN – Courts acquit Christian of blasphemy but keep two others waiting**

A 25-year-old Christian woman from Punjab has been acquitted of blasphemy after spending five months in detention with her infant son.

Rubina Bibi was cleared after a judge in Gujranwala ruled that the authorities had pressured her into making a false confession, according to Compass Direct news agency.

Rubina was arrested on March 21 after residents of Alipur Chatta accused her of blaspheming against Islam's prophet Mohammed after Rubina became involved in a row with a Muslim grocer. Her son, Yashwa, who is now 18 months old, stayed with Rubina during her detention.

The trial was held under tight security, following the murders last month of Pastors Rashid and Sajid Emmanuel, shot dead outside a courtroom in Faisalabad where they too were on trial for 'blasphemy' (*Prayer Alert, July 20, 2010*). Rubina was represented by lawyers from a Release partner which has supported her and her family throughout their ordeal.

Rubina, her husband Anjad Masih and their three young children – Yashwa, Eliza and Elena – have been forced to relocate due to the continued risk of extremist attacks upon the family.

Meanwhile, two other Christian women from Punjab continue to endure an agonising wait amid repeated adjournments of their blasphemy trials (*Prayer Alert, June 14, 2010*). Martha Bibi, on trial in Lahore, had her case adjourned yet again this month when the complainant failed to attend court. And Asia Bibi, on trial in Nankana Sahib, also had her case adjourned this month because 'the judge was on leave'. Both women, charged under Section 295C of Pakistan's penal code, were accused after disputes with work associates.

(Sources: ASSIST News Service, CLAAS UK, CLAAS Pakistan, Compass Direct, Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan)

- Thank God for the acquittal of Rubina Bibi. Ask God to protect her and her family.
- Pray that the trials of Asia Bibi and Martha Bibi will proceed quickly and lead swiftly to their acquittal. Ask God to protect these women and their families.

## **August 20 2010 – INDONESIA – Christians stand up to extremist threats in West Java**

Christians in West Java are taking a firm stand against extremist threats and refusing to give in to demands that they stop worshipping.

The congregation of the Batak Christian Protestant Church in Bekasi have declared publicly their intention to continue their weekly worship services on a plot of church-owned land in the Ciketing area, despite being attacked by extremists recently for the fifth time.

Hundreds of police turned out to protect the Batak congregation during Sunday worship on August 8 – but then reportedly offered little resistance when more than 300 members of hardline Islamist groups broke through the police cordon and attacked at least a dozen Christians.

The congregation has come under attack repeatedly since 2000 when they first started to build a church – a construction that was burnt down. Efforts to gain official permission to rebuild have so far failed. The church did, however, gain the approval of a senior local official to hold services in Ciketing in October 2009.

Interfaith tensions remain high in Bekasi. Islamist groups have reportedly joined forces to resist the 'Christianisation' of the city and urged mosques to set up their own 'paramilitary units' to enforce *Sharia* or Islamic law (*Prayer Alert, June 30, 2010*).

Hundreds of people, including many Christians, attended an interfaith rally in Jakarta last weekend to demand that the Government take a tougher line on Islamist extremists.  
(Sources: Associated Press, Compass Direct, The Jakarta Globe)

- Thank God for the courage and determination of the Batak Christians in Bekasi. Ask God to protect them and build their faith.
- Pray that President Yudhoyono will heed calls for him to take a tougher stance on extremist activity.

### **August 24 2010 - CHINA – 'Homeless' church appeals for urgent prayer as pastor harassed yet again**

A church in Guangdong province has been thrown out of rented accommodation yet again in an apparent bid by officials to force its pastor to give up his ministry.

Liangren Church in Guangzhou city had been meeting in Zhuying Garden Hotel for just one month when the authorities intervened to end the lease. This has happened 'several dozens of times' since May 2008, according to its pastor, Wang Dao.

Pastor Wang, who is currently on bail and facing criminal charges, has recently endured two days of harassment by officials threatening to evict him from his home unless he joins the officially recognised Three-Self Patriotic Church.

On August 12 and 13, he had a succession of visits from security officers, police and government officials at his home in Chengzhong village. He was eventually taken in for questioning at a local police station where he was again warned not to engage in religious activities, according to Release partner China Aid.

Pastor Wang has previously been warned he will either be exiled abroad or jailed for a long period if he continues to lead his church (*Prayer Alert, June 8, 2010*). He currently faces charges relating to 'credit card administration' – but officials have changed the charge against him four times since he was arrested on May 9. His arrest came just six days after his church issued a statement protesting against harassment by the Chinese authorities.  
(Source: China Aid)

- Pray that international pressure will force Chinese officials to end their campaign of harassment against Pastor Wang and his church.
- Ask God to give every member of Liangren Church the faith and courage they need to withstand this ordeal.