

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL 7x7 PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday 15 August 2006

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

1. CHINA

More than 25 believers are still detained after thousands of Christians confronted police over the demolition of a large church in China.

RI sources say security officials clashed with peaceful protestors who tried to stop them destroying a church in Dangshan town, Xiaoshan district, in the eastern province of Zhejiang, on July 29. Eyewitnesses said police used electric stun batons to beat 'several hundred' believers, according to Compass news agency.

China Aid reports that 'several hundred trucks, four excavators and thousands of military policemen' had surrounded the building where up to 10,000 Christians were praying.

More than 50 Christians were initially detained. At the time of writing, 20 had been released; five had been told officially that they were 'criminally detained'. More than 20 people remain locked up without charge. Many have been tortured, says China Aid.

The church, which has been forced to relocate many times, had nearly been completely rebuilt on private land owned by a Christian couple. The Xiaoshan District government had reportedly declared the church 'illegal' the previous day, because it was built 'without government permission'. Compass reports that the congregation has made many formal requests to build a church but always been denied permission.

The Chinese House Church Alliance is now demanding an independent international inquiry. A short video of the demolition, posted online by China Aid, can be viewed at: <http://www.zippyvideos.com/7644564155728186/p7290032/>

Meanwhile, as 7x7 predicted on August 1, four pastors of the Chinese House Church Alliance from Sichuan province have each been sentenced to two years' hard labour. Li Ming, Wang Yuan, Li Mingbo and Jin Jirong were detained in Langzhong in June – simply because they asked police to release their fellow believers detained the previous day.

Act

- Write a polite letter of protest about the church demolition to: Secretary Xi Jinping, Party General Secretary of Zhejiang Province, at No. 1, Sheng Fu Lu, Xihu District, Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province, 310025, China. Alternatively, write to: His Excellency Mr Zha Peixin, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, 49-51 Portland Place, London W1B 4JL.

Pray

- Pray for all those injured and arrested in the event of July 29. Pray for the swift release of those being detained – and for justice for the whole congregation.
- Thank God for global media coverage of this demolition: pray that international scrutiny will prevent the Chinese authorities from harassing the church further.

2. VIETNAM

A Montagnard Christian has died in police custody in Vietnam, apparently after torture during interrogation.

The family of 49-year-old Y Ngo Adrong was originally told that he had hanged himself at a police station in Ea H'Leo District, Dak Lak province. It was only after the funeral, when the authorities refused to let relatives see the body, that police admitted causing Y Ngo's death and offered the family compensation, according to the Montagnard Foundation.

Y Ngo was reportedly summoned to attend the police station on July 13 for questioning over his involvement with a house church. He arrived at 7.30am. By 11am on that same morning, police had arrived at his village, Buon Le, to announce his death to his family.

Dozens of police reportedly prevented villagers from attending the funeral in Y Ngo's village of birth, Buon Blec – and barred his family from inspecting his wounds. Police have resolutely refused to give details of what happened in the interrogation room.

- Pray for the family of Y Ngo Adrong as they struggle to come to terms with his death in circumstances which remain a mystery.
- Pray that the Christian community of which he was a part will cling resolutely to their God through this trial of faith.

3. PAKISTAN

Christians have taken to the streets of Punjab to protest against what they see as the 'illegal' demolition of a church in Multan.

On August 3, a company called Pak-Arab Fertilizers sent in a demolition team to destroy a Protestant church. According to AsiaNews, the church was built on the firm's land – land which, the company reportedly said, was needed to 'allow the industry to expand'.

The demolition provoked uproar among local Christians. Some 150 protestors blocked the Multan-Lahore road for two hours and demanded a judicial inquiry.

Shahbaz Bhatti, chairman of the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance, immediately condemned the demolition as 'brutal'. He noted that a mosque standing close to the church was not even touched. The company retorted that there was no 'religious motive' behind the move.

The community had reportedly been given advance notice that the church would be demolished. Mr Bhatti said that an injunction to halt the demolition was being sought through the courts – but, he claimed, the company had gone ahead regardless.

Local church leader Yaqoob Masih told AsiaNews that the factory firm was now offering the Christian community compensation: 'We don't need money, we only need our church.'

- Pray that this congregation in Multan will be given a new spiritual home.
- Pray that the local authorities would intervene to defend the rights of this church even though Christians are a minority group and treated as second-class citizens.

4. INDONESIA

Muslims and Christians have come together to mark the start of the reconstruction of a church destroyed during the jihad on the island of Ambon.

They were attending a stone-laying ceremony on the site of a ruined chapel in Waai, a Christian village razed to the ground in an assault spanning several weeks in July 2000.

Waai villagers were joined by many Muslims from the nearby villages such as Tulehu and Liang, places which had declared war on Waai six years ago. AsiaNews reports that some Muslims are on the church construction committee. Muslim youths from Tulehu danced to greet the guests, and a Christian band from Waai performed Gospel songs.

During a series of raids in mid-2000, some 5,000 jihadists supported by army troops and police showered Waai with gunfire, mortars and grenades, according to the Moluccas Christian Alliance for Crisis in Moluccas. Some 78 Christians were killed: more than 9,000 people fled their homes.

- Thank God that Muslims and Christians have come together in a spirit of reconciliation to mark the reconstruction of this church in Waai.
- Pray the example of these communities would be contagious – and help end inter-religious tensions in provinces such as Central Sulawesi.

BREAKING NEWS:

Efforts to save the lives of three Indonesian Christians on death row appear to have failed. RI sources report that Fabianus Tibo, Dominggus da Silva and Marinus Riwu, convicted of masterminding sectarian violence in Central Sulawesi, were due to be executed very early on Saturday (August 12). Pray for the men's families.

Sources: AsiaNews; BBC; BosNewsLife; China Aid; Christian Solidarity Worldwide; Compass Direct; International Christian Concern; Moluccas Christian Alliance for Crisis in Moluccas; Montagnard Foundation; The Voice of the Martyrs Canada.

PRISONERS OF FAITH MINISTRY:

Our Prisoners of Faith Ministry provides care and practical support for Christians imprisoned for their faith. An email alert is sent free each month, highlighting an individual prisoner. To receive these alerts, contact the office or visit our website: www.releaseinternational.org/prisonersoffaith

RI'S NEWS WEBCAST:

RI has launched a ground-breaking online news bulletin: *World Update on the Persecuted Church*. This regular bulletin brings you face-to-face with the overcoming Church with stories, video and pictures. Visit: www.releaseinternational.org/pages/downloads/world-update-webcast.php

Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on Tuesday 29 August 2006.

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

Through our international network of missions, RI serves 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. RI is a member of the UK organisations Global Connections, the Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network.

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