

# RELEASE INTERNATIONAL 7x7 PRAYER ALERT

*Tuesday 19 December 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.

## **PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS NEED YOU!**

**Release International (RI) 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 RI's ministry within your church. How you develop the role depends on the amount of time you have to give. Church Reps are a vital part of the RI team. Please consider prayerfully if you can join us – and pray that many others will take on this role too. To find out more, ring 01689 823491.**

## **1. CHINA**

The relatives of three church leaders executed without their families' knowledge have expressed their grief and anger at being kept in the dark.

Xu Shuangfu, Li Maoxing and Wang Jun, who had been convicted of murder, were executed in secret – even before the verdict from their appeals court hearing was given. The three leaders of the controversial Three Grades of Servants church had claimed their confessions were extracted under torture.

Sources now claim that Xu's sister has since been detained for exposing the torture her brother suffered. The Epoch Times reports she too has been tortured severely.

The first that Xu's lawyer Li Heping knew of the executions was a call from the Intermediate People's Court of Shuangyashan asking for his address: the clerk wanted to post the 'final judgement paper' from the appeal hearing to him. When Li asked the outcome of the appeal, he was told the three men had been executed the previous week.

Confirmation for the relatives came in a call from the court, summoning them to collect their loved ones' ashes. Li Maoxing's wife told The Epoch Times: 'I have not gone to get the ashes. I can't take this any more and I don't want to go anyway.'

China Aid reports that '15 individual believers and leaders' have been executed so far in connection with the murder of 20 members of the Eastern Lightning cult between 2002 and 2004. Xu Shuangfu had also been convicted of fraud.

- **Act:** Write to China's Minister of Justice, asking her to launch an independent investigation into this case. Write to: Ms Wu Aiying, Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, No. 10, Nan Da Jie, Chaoyangmen, Beijing City, 100020, China. (Salutation: Your Excellency.)
- **Pray:** Ask God to uphold the families of the executed men with his 'righteous right hand' (Isaiah 41:10). Pray that justice will be done on behalf of their loved ones.

## **2. NIGERIA**

Believers in Nairobi have been fasting in response to the threat of an attack on their Christian radio station Hope FM.

Bishop Boniface Adoyo called the congregation of the Nairobi Pentecostal Church to action after he received a letter warning of an imminent assault on the station, which is on church property. The letter also warned that other churches would be attacked.

It is only six months since Hope FM was stormed by gunmen who killed a guard and torched part of the building. Several other staff members were injured in the May 12 raid.

Senior pastor David Oginde met government officials in Nairobi soon after the warning letter came this month, and received assurances that the matter would be investigated.

The authorities ruled out a religious motive to the May attack but its timing – 20 minutes after a programme comparing the Bible with the Koran – has made Christians wary.

- Pray for the safety of staff at Hope FM and for the Nairobi Pentecostal Church as a whole. Pray God's all-surpassing peace over them.
- Pray for Nigeria's wider church at Christmastime. Pray that they will be able to celebrate the precious gift of God's son – and share that gift in their communities.

## **3. INDONESIA**

The Indonesian authorities have stepped up security in Central Sulawesi over Christmas. Several high-ranking officials have visited the province recently, including the Vice-President and the Chief of Indonesian Police.

Christians have reportedly been advised by their leaders to keep their celebrations modest and avoid antagonising Muslims in a region where interreligious tensions run high.

Rev Simon Timorason, head of the Christian Communication Forum of Indonesia, told Mission Network News that radical Islamist groups have been monitoring churches since the end of Ramadan.

Others are more optimistic. Rev Richard Daulay of The Indonesian Communion of Churches has confidence in government promises that Christmas will be peaceful this year. 'We are sure the present government will be able to better secure the upcoming Christmas and New Year celebrations than its predecessors,' he told The Jakarta Post.

- Pray for God's protection over Christians as they celebrate the birth of His son, especially in West Java and Central Sulawesi.
- Continue to pray for the success of bridge-building efforts between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. Pray the church will lead the way in forging a new peace.

## **2. VIETNAM**

Release International (RI) is calling on the US and the World Trade Organisation to rethink their decision to welcome Vietnam into political respectability.

As the US removed Vietnam from its religious freedom blacklist, RI staff were in the country on a fact-finding mission – and found that religious persecution is alive and well. And it is still the unregistered and ethnic minority churches which are hardest hit.

They heard of the case of Moi, a Montagnard Christian who disappeared mysteriously one day and was found brutally murdered the next morning. Villagers reported that police had been harassing Moi because he had refused to join the government church.

And in the north-west of Vietnam, RI heard about a seven-year-old Hmong girl who had challenged police harassing local Christian families. When officers took her family's pigs, the girl protested – and was beaten so badly she could not walk for a week.

RI Chief Executive Andy Dipper warned that letting Vietnam off the hook could have dire consequences for Christians. 'Now Vietnam is no longer considered a "country of particular concern", could they face a fresh wave of repression and imprisonment? Will it be back to business as usual?'

- Continue to pray that the international community would hold Vietnam to account for its religious rights abuses.
- Ask God to bless and strengthen His suffering church in Vietnam over Christmas.

### **BREAKING NEWS**

A Chinese court has just found human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng guilty of 'inciting subversion'. The Christian lawyer, who has defended several high-profile believers, was tried without his family or his own lawyer knowing. He is reported to have pleaded guilty – something his relatives and supporters regard with suspicion. The verdict is yet to come. Please pray that Gao's faith will withstand this pressure: he came to Christ last year.

*Sources: Associated Press; BosNewsLife; CBS News; China Aid; Compass Direct; International Christian Concern; Mission Network News; Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan; The Epoch Times; The Jakarta Post.*

### **PRISONERS OF FAITH MINISTRY:**

Our Prisoners of Faith Ministry provides pastoral care and practical support for Christians imprisoned for their faith. An email alert is sent free monthly, highlighting an individual Christian prisoner, giving prayer points and addresses for letter-writing. To receive these alerts, please contact the office or sign up by visiting our web site: [www.releaseinternational.org/prisonersoffaith](http://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. It's an indispensable resource for church services or prayer and home groups. [www.releaseinternational.org/pages/downloads/world-update-webcast.php](http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/downloads/world-update-webcast.php)

### **Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on Tuesday 9 January 2007.**

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.

### **To stop receiving the prayer alerts or change address, please write to or telephone:**

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