

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, July 20, 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.

July 6, 2010 - PAKISTAN – Release partner rescues Christian family from mob

A Release partner intervened to rescue a Christian family when an angry mob accusing them of blasphemy surrounded their home in Lahore.

Yousaf Masih and his wife Suria Bibi, with their daughters and son-in-law, were snatched to safety yesterday, as an ugly scene developed outside their home in Punjab's capital.

Summoned by mosque loudspeakers, hundreds of angry Muslims began protesting when one of Yousaf's neighbours accused the family of blaspheming against the Koran. The family managed to seek refuge at a relative's home – and made an emergency call for help to a Release partner.

A rescue team had to track down the stricken family at considerable risk to themselves. Their vehicle was reportedly chased but they escaped unharmed.

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According to our partner, the accusations followed the discovery that the family, who live in poor, rented accommodation, had made a temporary roof for their bathroom out of a 'banner' which, unbeknown to them, bore a Koranic verse.

Yousaf, Suria and another son-in-law, Zahid, have now been charged with blasphemy under Section 295B of Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

(Source: Release partner)

- *Ask God to protect this Christian family, who are now in hiding.*
- *Pray for justice for Yousaf, Suria and Zahid. Pray that all charges against them will be dropped immediately, avoiding long, drawn-out legal proceedings.*

July 8, 2010 - MOROCCO – Church anxious as officials expel yet more foreign Christians

The Moroccan authorities have expelled eight more foreign Christians, much to the distress of the country's small Christian community.

In this, the third wave of deportations since March, eight Christians were summoned to police stations on June 25, accused of 'threatening public order', then told they had 48 hours to leave the country. One of them, a Lebanese woman who was recently diagnosed with cancer, was forced to leave behind her husband and six-year-old daughter.

This brings to 128 the number of foreign Christians deported from Morocco since March. Christians are said to be living in fear, especially because the Christians expelled recently included foreigners married to Moroccans.

In March, all 16 overseas workers at the Village of Hope children's home were thrown out of the country with just a few hours' notice and were forced to leave behind the 30 orphaned children in their care. The children, who are Moroccan nationals, consider these foreign Christians to be their adoptive parents.

Release sources say that, despite citing public order offences, officials are in fact cracking down on what they perceive as Christian 'proselytising'. Some of the expelled Christians who were able to obtain official deportation papers are launching appeals through the Moroccan courts.

(Sources: Compass Direct, Village of Hope)

- *Ask God to comfort and strengthen all the families divided by deportations.*
- *Pray for a change of heart in the Moroccan authorities so this 'purge' of foreign Christians will end.*

July 9, 2010 - NIGERIA – Further attacks on northern Christians leave at least seven dead

At least seven people have been killed in fresh attacks on Christian communities in Kaduna and Plateau states.

Release partner Stefanos Foundation reports that seven Christians were killed and five others injured when militant Fulani Muslims raided Kizachi Dawai Chawai village in Kaduna on July 3.

The gunmen, who were dressed in military uniforms, surrounded the village and started shooting indiscriminately, according to village chief Yakubu Dawai. The dead included a primary school teacher and mother of six. Five Christian homes were burnt down.

The next day, assailants armed with guns and machetes invaded Ganawuri community near Jos in neighbouring Plateau State. Three Christians are feared dead. A spokesman for the Nigerian military said the attackers were suspected Fulani Muslims from Kaduna.

Christians in and around Jos have been fearful of more violence since raids on three villages on March 7 left up to 500 people dead, including many women and children (*Prayer Alert, March 16, 2010*).

Stefanos Foundation reports that *Boko Haram* militants, who attacked Christians in Bauchi and Maiduguri last July (*Prayer Alert, August 11, 2009*), have threatened further attacks on Jos.

(Sources: ASSIST News Service, International Christian Concern, Stefanos Foundation)

- *Ask God to comfort Christians affected by these latest attacks. Pray that they will know God as their 'ever-present help in trouble' (Psalm 46:1).*
- *Pray that the Nigerian authorities will ensure that the military carry out their full responsibilities and protect Christian communities from further attack.*

July 13, 2010 - IRAN – Family visit confirms fears for Christian in solitary confinement

An Iranian Christian has won his fight to be allowed to visit his son in prison – but is now deeply concerned about the 29-year-old's health and well-being.

Ali Golchin has been held in solitary confinement in Tehran's Evin prison since he was arrested in his home town of Varamin on April 29. After weeks of appealing to the authorities, his father was finally allowed access to Ali on June 17 – though they were allowed only ten minutes together.

Ali's father told Release sources that he was distressed to find his son 'crying uncontrollably' and in obvious pain. Ali, who is a chemical analyst, said he had twice been sent to the prison health centre due to 'weakness and severe stomach aches'. Farsi Christian News Network (FCNN) reports that its sources inside Iran believe Ali has been ill-treated during interrogation sessions.

The Iranian authorities have still not charged Ali with any offence – and nor has a defence lawyer been appointed to his case. FCNN reports that Ali's wife has been told not to attend church and that, if she wants to negotiate with the authorities about Ali's release, she must first become a Muslim.

(Source: Farsi Christian News Network)

- *Pray for Ali's immediate release. Ask God to strengthen him and his family.*
- *Pray that God will touch the hearts of Iranian officials charged with detaining Christian prisoners of faith such as Ali.*