

# RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, March 1, 2011

*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.*

## **February 11, 2011: CHINA – Call for prayer for persecuted Christian rights lawyers**

Two years after the arrest of Beijing lawyer Gao Zhisheng, Release is calling on supporters to pray for religious rights lawyers currently detained in China.

There is still no news on the condition or whereabouts of missing Christian attorney Gao Zhisheng who has been in custody since February 4, 2009 – except for a brief re-appearance in March-April 2010.

Dr Fan Yafeng, head of the Chinese Christian Human Rights' Lawyers Association, has been under house arrest since October 12 last year. He was taken in for questioning on December 9 and was tortured repeatedly over several days, according to Release partner China Aid.

In fact, religious rights charity Christian Solidarity Worldwide reports what it calls 'an increase in the Chinese authorities' use of house arrest to suppress human rights activists in recent months'. The charity cites the decision to award the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese activist Liu Xiaobo as the trigger for this crackdown. China Aid reports a recent increase in 'physical attacks on lawyers' by Chinese court officials.

Meanwhile, China Aid also reports that a well-known blind legal activist, Chen Guangcheng, and his wife were reportedly severely beaten this week over a YouTube video about their house arrest.

China Aid reports that state security police launched a serious attack on Chen and his wife, Yuan Weijing, at their home in Shandong province – after footage about their house arrest appeared on the internet. It reports that they were confined to their bed after the attack – and denied medical treatment.

Chen has been under house arrest since September when he was released from jail after serving more than four years and three months on criminal charges. His supporters, who include many prominent Christian lawyers, believe he was jailed because of his legal defence of human rights, which has included challenging Shandong officials' alleged use of forced abortion or sterilisation.

China Aid reports that the YouTube footage was obtained through a 'sympathetic government source'.

In the video, Chen and his wife describe their conditions under house arrest for the past five months as 'prison'. Their home is under 24-hour surveillance from police and 'thugs', and mobile phone jamming devices prevent any communication with the outside world. Most friends and family have been denied access to the home.

(Sources: BBC, China Aid, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, CNN)

- Pray that Chinese officials will end their persecution of religious rights activists and lawyers.
- Pray particularly for the release of Beijing Christian Gao Zhisheng and lawyers and activists such as Dr Fan Yafeng and Chen Guangcheng who are under house arrest.

## **February 18, 2011: INDIA – Pastor traumatised after brutal attack**

A pastor in Rajasthan has been left injured and traumatised after a brutal attack by Hindu extremists – amid ongoing anti-Christian violence in many Indian states.

Pastor Hari Shankar Ninama, 65, was stripped and beaten by at least ten men on motorbikes who seized him while he was praying for a sick child in Ambarunda village in Pratapgarh district, in north-west India.

Accusing him of forced conversion, his attackers beat him with wooden clubs and fists and threatened to kill him if he continued his evangelism. They then fled, leaving him to walk naked the five miles to the nearest police station to file a complaint.

In fact, Pastor Ninama's family have since urged police not to investigate – for fear of retaliatory attacks. Extremists have threatened to burn down his daughter Galadh's house if police prosecute, according to Compass Direct news agency.

Christians in Ambarunda are said to be living in fear of extremist attack – and Pastor Ninama's 40-strong house church have not met since the assault.

Rajasthan is one of seven Indian states which have passed anti-conversion legislation – though Rajasthan has yet to implement the law. Christians in India say that where the laws have been implemented they are frequently misused to harass them.

Hindu extremists are also continuing to perpetrate physical attacks against Christians using this pretext. So far this year, Compass Direct has reported attacks on pastors or church members in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.

(Sources: All India Christian Council, Compass Direct, Global Council of Indian Christians)

- Pray for God's complete healing over Pastor Ninama. Ask God to fill the pastor's family and his church with His perfect peace.
- Pray that the Indian Government will do more to stamp out anti-Christian violence, particularly in states where extremists are misusing anti-conversion legislation.

## **February 22, 2011: NIGERIA – Jos killings continue unchecked**

The killing spree targeting villages around Jos in Plateau state continues unchecked as at least nine more people have been murdered in the past week.

Three members of one family were killed in an attack on Kuru near Jos, while an elderly woman was beheaded and two of her grandchildren murdered in Shekan village in Jos South. Both are mainly Christian ethnic Berom villages.

Religious rights charity Christian Solidarity Worldwide reports eyewitnesses saying that men dressed in military uniform took part in the assault on Kuru – further fuelling speculation that some parts in the military may be complicit in these ongoing attacks.

The latest violence around Jos began last Thursday with what CSW describes as a targeted attack on three homes at the Federal College of Land Resources in Kuru.

Chub Job, his wife, Susan, and their daughter, Emmanuella, were killed in their home while two other children in the family looked on.

The gunmen moved on to two other houses nearby, killing a man named Gideon and an electrician called Hosea Ninzak. Gideon's son was wounded after being shot in the neck; a man named Mr Bolaji was shot in the waist but survived. Gideon's daughter, Alice, told CSW that she had told her father not to go out after the family heard gunshots – but he had insisted on going out to warn his son.

Eyewitnesses reported that the attackers used a blowtorch to set houses alight. They also set a bus ablaze but a fire extinguisher exploded inside and put out the flames.

The attack on Shekan, in which an elderly woman, two of her grandchildren and a man were murdered, followed two days later.

Meanwhile, in Bauchi state, Christian leaders now believe that religious violence in Tafawa Balewa (*Prayer Alert, February 1, 2011*) and Bogoro in late-January revealed that Islamist extremists were preparing for a large-scale assault on Christians.

Compass Direct news agency reports that the rioting – in which churches and mosques were set ablaze and a still unconfirmed number of people died – has exposed the presence of weapons caches and Islamist mercenaries in the area.

In Borno state one pastor told Release that he was very concerned about the number of Christians who were leaving the north and heading south to escape the violence.

**News update:**

Vietnamese pastor and pro-democracy campaigner Thaddeus Nguyen Van Ly has given warning that he will go on hunger strike and refuse medical treatment if he is readmitted to jail on March 15. Pastor Van Ly was released on March 15, 2010, to undergo a year's medical treatment after suffering two serious strokes which left him partially paralysed (*Prayer Alert, December 24, 2010*). He was sentenced to eight years in prison in 2007 for 'damaging national security'.

(Sources: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Compass Direct, Release partners, *The Nation* - Nigeria)

- Pray for an end to the violence in and around Jos, targeting Christian villages. Ask God to grant His peace and grace to Christians in Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro, Bauchi, scene of recent religious violence, and other northern states.
- Please pray that Vietnamese officials will now grant complete freedom to Pastor Van Ly, who has served a total of 15 years in jail, including years in solitary confinement. Ask God to heal and restore him.