

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, September 13, 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.

August 30, 2011: PAKISTAN – Christian villagers homeless after elopement row

A number of Christians remain homeless months after being expelled from a Punjab village where a Christian man eloped with a Muslim woman.

Release partner Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan (SLMP) reports that all 41 Christians in Guru Chack village, Duska district, were forced to abandon their homes in March for fear of attack by local Muslims. Now they are being refused re-entry into their village, according to SLMP.

Two 17-year-old Christians arrested for alleged involvement in the elopement are still being held in Sialkot District Prison. The pair, named only as Sunny and Qaiser, deny the charges. Two other Christians accused of involvement – both of whom are 26 – are said to be in hiding.

When news of the elopement first broke, local Muslims reacted angrily by attacking and beating several Christians. They then called an 'arbitrary council' and decided to expel all seven Christian families from Guru Chack on March 18, threatening to destroy their homes unless they complied.

SLMP reports that the Christians' homes have been burgled and many assets, including livestock, stolen. Some of the Christians are now staying with relatives but others are homeless.

One Christian man, Gulfam Zia, told SLMP that Christians had lived peaceably with Muslims in the village before this incident. 'This incident changed the lives of Christians in the village entirely,' he said. His two sisters, Fehmeeda and Saima, were due to get married next month but have had to postpone their weddings because their dowries have been stolen.

Attempts to bring the burglars to justice have failed; police have refused even to register a case. In fact, SLMP reports that police were present at the council meeting where local Muslims decided to expel the Christians.

SLMP says this is yet another case of poor Christians in Pakistan being treated as second-class citizens and being denied justice. Christians in the village are poor farm labourers, working for Muslim landowners. The Release partner has raised this case with a senior police official.

SLMP is also supporting Sunny and Qaiser in jail and is providing practical and spiritual support for the poorest Christians, including Sunny's family.

(Source: Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan)

- ***Pray that the Christian families from Guru Chack can return to their homes and live in peace again with their Muslim neighbours. Pray that what has been stolen from them will be restored.***
- ***Pray that the case against the four Christians accused of involvement in the elopement will be dropped. Pray for protection and wisdom for SLMP staff, who often put themselves at risk to stand up for the rights of Pakistan's Christian minority.***

September 05, 2011: NORTH KOREA – Call to prayer for world’s worst persecutor of Christians

Release is calling a day of prayer for North Korea this Friday (September 9) and urging its supporters to join a prayer vigil outside the country’s London embassy.

The day of prayer, on North Korea’s National Day, is part of Release’s continuing *One Day* campaign, which is pressing for freedom of worship in a nation where even just owning a Bible can result in imprisonment.

Friday’s prayer vigil will be attended by North Korean defectors who have fled the so-called ‘hermit kingdom’, as well as South Korean Christians.

North Korea’s regime is widely considered to be the world’s worst oppressor of Christians. Believers have been sent to concentration camps as ‘political prisoners’ and subjected to brutal treatment in appalling conditions: torture, abuse, execution or simply being worked to death. Others are forced to worship in secret or to hide their faith completely.

Life for ordinary North Koreans remains harsh. Flooding this summer has left large areas of farmland water-logged and thousands homeless, according to news agency Agence France-Presse. The severity of the crisis has prompted the US and South Korea to send shipments of aid, despite tense diplomatic relations with Pyongyang.

About 28,000 people have so far signed Release’s petition calling for greater religious freedom in North Korea. Release CEO Andy Dipper presented an interim petition to the London embassy in July; the full petition will be presented at the end of the campaign.

(Sources: Agence France-Presse, Release International)

For a country profile of North Korea and news stories, go to:

<http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/country-profiles/north-korea.php>

Act:

- Join the prayer vigil on Friday outside the North Korean Embassy at 73 Gunnersbury Avenue, London W5 4LP. The vigil will run from 2pm to 4pm – so please arrive from 1.30pm. If you are planning to come, please let Release know in advance by calling 01689 823491 or emailing info@releaseinternational.org
- Sign our *One Day* petition calling on the North Korean Government to allow greater religious freedom at: www.releaseinternational.org/petition For a paper copy, ring Release on 01689 823491.

Pray:

- ***Please pray that Friday’s vigil will be well attended and will pass off peaceably. Pray that North Korean embassy officials will be moved by the vigil and that they will report the event to officials in Pyongyang.***
- ***Continue to pray for Christians in North Korea: that God will protect them and strengthen their faith; that North Korean leaders will repent and end their repressive policies; that one day Pyongyang will again witness a spiritual revival and that Christians in North Korea will be able to worship in freedom.***

Release has produced a special prayer guide for North Korea, included in issue 62 (July-August 2011) of Release magazine. To download a copy, go to:

www.releaseinternational.org/media/download_gallery/North-Korea-prayer-guide.pdf

September 07, 2011: NIGERIA – Family of eight among casualties of further Jos violence

Release partners say a Christian family of eight were among those killed in ongoing violence centred on Jos in central Plateau state.

Stefanos Foundation is requesting urgent prayer for the area which has been in the grip of violence for several weeks now (*Prayer Alert, August 25, 2011*). Reuters news agency said on Monday that at least 50 people had been killed in the previous week.

Stefanos Foundation reports that a couple and their six children were brutally killed in Tatu at the weekend. The village is reportedly home to many Christians who have been driven from their homes in northern Nigeria's *Sharia* states. Plateau straddles the 'middle belt' between Nigeria's north and south.

Stefanos Foundation reports that violence broke out after a number of Muslims moved into the largely Christian area to celebrate Eid, an Islamic religious festival.

The BBC says that three Muslims were also killed in the clashes – and that about 35 people were wounded and had to be taken to hospital. Two churches were also burnt down. Reuters reports that, on Sunday, a bomb planted in the marketplace of another village failed to go off because its battery was flat.

The BBC also reports that a total of 16 people died on Sunday night in attacks on the mainly Christian villages of Dabwak, 36 miles south of Jos, and Babale, six miles north of the city.

Many people are reportedly fleeing Jos amid fears for their safety. Both Christian and Muslim religious leaders have appealed for calm.

Release partners say that tensions are being fuelled by moves to drive Plateau Christians from their homes. Some local Christians have also accused military personnel of complicity in some attacks – or of turning a blind eye to violence against their communities.

(Sources: BBC, Reuters, Stefanos Foundation)

For a country profile and news about Nigeria, visit:

<http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/country-profiles/nigeria.php>

Act:

- Attend the LoveJos Conference in London on September 24, which is exploring opportunities for reconciliation and ways to help victims of violence. To find out more, please go to: www.lovejosconference.org.uk

Pray:

- ***Pray for an end to the cycle of intercommunal violence in Jos, which has claimed so many lives. Pray that Christians will stand firm in their faith and speak out for justice. Pray for wisdom for Christian leaders trying to dissuade people from retaliation while recognising their need to defend themselves.***
- ***Continue to pray for God's protection over Release partners working in the area, sometimes at great personal risk.***