

# RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

*Tuesday, February 16, 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.

## **PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS NEED YOU!**

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

### **1. LAOS – Long-suffering Christians driven out for refusing to deny Christ**

An entire Christian community in Laos have been thrown out of their village at gunpoint for refusing to deny Christ.

All 48 Christian adults and children from Katin village in Saravan province were forcibly expelled and had their homes and belongings confiscated after about 100 officials, including police, and villagers surrounded their worship service.

After guns were pointed at their heads, the 11 Christian families were forced to walk nearly four miles away from Katin – then were left by the side of a road. Police now stand guard at the entrance to the village, to prevent the Christians from returning.

The Christians have reportedly been sleeping in the woods since their expulsion last month, with no food or equipment and only a small stream for water. Some of their homes have reportedly been destroyed in their absence.

Local officials have since visited the group and tried again to force them to renounce their faith, promising to let them return home if they relent. But the Christians have refused.

This is just the latest in a long string of abuses against Christians in Katin. A Christian called Pew was asphyxiated in July 2008 when villagers poured wine down his throat. Four days later, officials detained 80 Christians, including children, in a school compound and deprived them of food to try to force them to renounce their faith. And in June 2009, livestock was confiscated from all Christian families for ignoring official demands that they deny Christ.

Despite this intense and ongoing persecution, several households in Katin accepted Christ last year, according to Compass Direct news agency.

(Source: Compass Direct)

- Ask God to supply all the needs of these long-suffering Christians now living rough.
- Pray that the powerful witness of these Christians will inspire other villagers.

### **2. ERITREA – Christian dies in custody after ‘beating with iron rod’**

Another Christian has died in prison in Eritrea – after refusing to make the prison chief a cup of coffee.

Hana Hagos Asgedom, 41, reportedly died at the Alla Military Camp near Decamhare town shortly after she was beaten with an iron rod for resisting the order. Mission Network News reports that a Christian would have interpreted this order as a sexual advance. The official cause of Hana's death was a heart attack.

The true extent of her suffering has become clearer. Hana, a member of Asabe Rhema Church, was held for three years at Wi'a Military Camp, near the Red Sea port of Massawa. Last year, she was moved to Alla, where she was forced to choose between renouncing her faith and being held in solitary confinement. Hana chose the latter.

She died on January 24, the eleventh Christian known to have died in custody in Eritrea since October 2006. It is feared many more such deaths may have gone undocumented.

(Sources: Mission Network News, Open Doors)

- Pray that Hana's family will know God's comfort and His love.
- Continue to pray that the Eritrean Government will release the 2,000-plus Christians detained arbitrarily for their faith.

### **3. INDIA – Orissa officials 'remove' Christian refugees during EU visit**

Orissa officials stand accused of 'cleaning up' an area which was home to scores of Christian refugees hours before a European Union delegation was due to visit.

The advocacy group the All India Christian Council (AICC) alleges that the authorities forced almost 100 survivors of anti-Christian violence to leave a market in the town of G. Udaigiri, Kandhamal district, just before the EU team was due at the scene. The homeless Christians had been living in the market since the closure of some of the refugee camps set up when extremist violence spread across Orissa in late-2008.

The EU delegation, which toured Kandhamal district on February 4-5, visited refugee camps and met with church leaders, government officials and human rights campaigners.

BosNewsLife news agency reports that the families were forced to leave when market officials and 'uniformed men' locked the pump of the nearby well and told them to 'get out'.

The Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Raphael Cheenath, insists that 'at least 4,400 families' are still living in makeshift shelters or the ruins of their former homes. 'Contrary to the claim of government sources, normalcy has not returned in Kandhamal,' he said.

In a memorandum to the EU, refugees expressed their hope that the Indian Government would step up its efforts to rehabilitate them and pursue justice on their behalf. So-called 'fast-track' courts set up to try those involved in the violence have so far handed down 89 convictions – and 251 acquittals, according to the archbishop.

(Sources: AsiaNews, BosNewsLife, Christian Today, Compass Direct)

- Pray that EU delegates will be rigorous in their pursuit of the truth.
- Pray for the many Christians still living as refugees, too scared to return home.

### **Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on March 2, 2010.**

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

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