

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, September 28, 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.

Sept 15 2010 – INDIA – Christians arrested after false accusations of ‘desecrating temples’

Hindu nationalists have falsely accused five Christians of desecrating Hindu temples, prompting their arrest.

In fact the Hindu activists had completely destroyed the Christians’ modest church in Patagunta village, Andhra Pradesh, the day before they took their complaint to the police.

Police officials immediately took pastors Dhanraj and Jyothi Kumar and the three other unnamed Christians into custody, according to Release partner All India Christian Council (AICC). Officers have refused to say where they are holding the pastors but the three others are being held at Tavanampalli police station.

The Hindu nationalists accuse the Christians of destroying idols and other valuables in several temples. The AICC is calling for the immediate release of the detained Christians and police action against the Hindus who attacked the Patagunta church.

Meanwhile, Christians in Orissa have made progress in their fight for justice following Hindu nationalists’ campaign of violence against them in 2008. A legislator from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been found guilty of involvement in the murder of Bikram Nayak, a 30-year-old Christian attacked by a mob in Budedi village.

A judge in Fast Track Court II in Kandhamal sentenced Manoj Pradhan to six years’ imprisonment for ‘culpable homicide’ and fined him about £215 for setting houses ablaze. Pradhan was arrested as a primary suspect in the violence in late-2008 but was released on bail after winning a seat in the 2009 state assembly election, having run his election campaign from jail.

(Sources: All India Christian Council, Compass Direct)

- Pray for the immediate release of the five Christians in Andhra Pradesh accused of desecrating temples. Pray that justice will be done in their case.
- Thank God that a court in Orissa has risked the wrath of the ruling BJP by convicting one of its members, Manoj Pradhan. Pray God’s peace over the family of Pradhan’s victim.

Sept 16 2010 – INDIA – Curfew imposed after Christians protest over arson attack on church

Officials in the town of Malerkotla in Punjab have imposed a curfew after thousands of Christians staged demonstrations over an arson attack on a church.

Tensions in the town were high after a mob set fire to furniture and valuables inside a Church of North India (CNI) building in a mainly Muslim area late on September 12. Soon afterwards, large numbers of Christians gathered outside the Christian Medical College demanding that officials act swiftly to find the culprits.

Release partner All India Christian Council (AICC) reports that church leaders then gave officials an ultimatum: unless the culprits were arrested by 4pm on September 13, Christians would stage further, larger protests.

When local officials admitted they had not yet made arrests, thousands of Christians demonstrated at the main road junction in Malerkotla, blocking the traffic.

Tensions in the town remain high. Church leaders are now calling on the local administration to cover the cost of repairs to the fire-damaged church. A fact-finding team from AICC has been given official permission to visit Malerkotla.

AICC is one of many Christian organisations campaigning against a Bill introduced by the Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) which Christians fear would restrict the flow of foreign aid to Indian non-government organisations.

The Foreign Contribution Regulation Bill would require NGOs such as AICC to register every five years and would ban all 'political' organisations from registering at all, offering no clear definition of what the word 'political' might mean in this context. The Bill has been passed by Parliament but still requires the President to sign it before it can pass into law.

(Source: All India Christian Council)

- Pray for calm to be restored in and around Malerkotla. Pray that the arsonists will be found and peaceful relations between different faith groups restored.
- Pray that India's President Pratibha Devisingh Patil will not sign the BJP's Bill without first requiring major amendments to be made to its text.

Sept 22 2010 – INDONESIA - Church elder critically injured in stabbing amid licence row

The elder of a West Java church at the centre of a licensing row is in a critical condition after being attacked.

Hasian Sihombing was on his way to the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) in Bekasi city on Sunday when he was stabbed in the chest and stomach by a motorcyclist, according to Compass Direct news agency. Church leader Luspida Simanjuntak was also hurt: she was attacked by a second motorcyclist wielding a wooden block as she tried to help Hasian. Eyewitness reports suggest up to eight people were involved in the attack.

A church member told Compass Direct that the culprits are believed to have taken part in recent protests against the church, which is facing stiff opposition from Islamist hardline groups. On August 8, some 300 protesters broke through a police cordon to attack church members worshipping in a field in the Ciketing area of Bekasi (*Prayer Alert, August 20, 2010*).

The congregation have been forced to meet outdoors since June when officials sealed the private dwelling which had previously housed them. They have been battling for years to gain official permission to rebuild after a church they constructed in 2000 was burnt down. Tensions between Muslims and Christians in Bekasi have been exacerbated recently by Islamist hardliners calling for Muslims to wage war on what they call the 'Christianisation' of the city (*Prayer Alert, June 30, 2010*).

Since the attack on Hasian and Rev Simanjuntak, Bekasi's mayor Mochtar Muhammad has reportedly offered the church the choice of two sites in the city where they could relocate.

Meanwhile, another HKBP church in Bekasi regency has won a major victory in its bid to be allowed to worship in freedom. Rev Palti Panjaitan's HKBP church is celebrating a court ruling this week ordering local officials to allow them to establish a place of worship. A local decree forbidding the church to engage in Christian activities in Jejalan village led to the church closure in January, after officials apparently caved in to pressure from Islamist groups. The congregation has been worshipping outdoors ever since.

(Sources: Compass Direct, *The Jakarta Post*)

- Pray for the swift recovery of Hasian and Rev Simanjuntak. Pray that their church will find a secure, permanent home soon.
- Pray that the regent of Bekasi will heed the recent court ruling in favour of Rev Panjaitan's church and issue an official permit so it can establish a place of worship.