

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, December 6, 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.

November 17, 2011: INDIA – Pastor summoned to *Sharia* court for ‘forced conversions’

Christians in Kashmir have appealed for government officials to intervene in the case of a church pastor facing a summons from a local *Sharia* court.

Pastor Chander Mani Khanna from Srinagar in Indian Kashmir has been summoned by a local Muslim *mufti* (religious leader) to appear before his *Sharia* or Islamic law court – and answer allegations of converting Muslim children by offering bribes.

Pastor Khanna denies the claims – and does not recognise the authority of local Muslims to ‘put him on trial’ in an Islamic court. His supporters are concerned that if Pastor Khanna resists calls for him to appear, a *fatwa* may be issued against him.

The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), which is supported by a Release associate ministry, claims that the charges against Pastor Khanna arose because the pastor failed to get a local Muslim’s son into the Christian school of his choice.

The GCIC has written to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to intervene on behalf of Pastor Khanna, who leads All Saints Church (part of the Church of North India). It also reports that police have questioned and beaten seven new Christians recently baptised by Pastor Khanna, who are from a Muslim background.

The GCIC reports that tensions between Muslims and Christians in Kashmir have been rising since last year when a US pastor burnt copies of the Koran in public.

Meanwhile, in Hassan district of Karnataka state, two groups of Christians were attacked by Hindu nationalist extremists at the weekend and arrested by police on suspicion of ‘forcible conversion’, reports GCIC. On Saturday, six members of the Ministry of Bethel Church, including a four-year-old boy, were detained by police – although four, including the child, were later released. And on Sunday, a pastor and three Christians in Arkalgud were arrested by police after extremists raided their church.

For more news and a country profile about India, [click here](#)

NEWS UPDATE:

Iranian pastor Yousef Nadarkhani is said to be in ‘deteriorating health’ as he awaits a final ruling on his death sentence for ‘apostasy’. Sources close to the church leader from Rasht say he has suffered ill-treatment, including ongoing pressure to recant his faith, reports Compass Direct news agency. Last month, prison officials reportedly gave Pastor Yousef Islamic literature aimed at discrediting the Bible. Pastor Yousef is still

waiting on Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, to rule on whether or not he should be executed. He was given the death sentence in September 2010 – a ruling that judges upheld in September 2011, citing the pastor's 'Muslim ancestry' to substantiate the apostasy charge (*Prayer Alert, September 28, 2011*).

(Sources: AsiaNews, Compass Direct, Global Council of Indian Christians)

- Ask God to protect Pastor Khanna and his family in Indian Kashmir. Pray that local Muslims and Christians in Srinagar will recommit themselves to living together in peace, respecting each other's religious rights.
- Continue to pray God's peace and comfort over Pastor Yousef, his wife and two young sons in Iran. Pray that Ayatollah Khamenei will grant Pastor Yousef clemency and authorise his release from jail immediately.

November 22, 2011: PAKISTAN – Evangelist shot dead by suspected extremists

The family of an evangelist shot dead in Karachi say they believe he was killed for his faith.

According to Release's partner Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan (SLMP), the family is reluctant to pursue the case with police because of fears for their own safety.

Jameel Saawan was killed by an unidentified gunman as he opened up his cosmetics shop in the Gulshan-e-Iqbal of the city's commercial district on the morning of November 16. The gunman fled on a waiting motorbike.

One of Jameel's sons, Zahid, told Compass Direct news agency that his father was well known locally for sharing the Gospel with local Muslims, which he did every day after work. He was also widely respected as a vocal supporter of the Christian community. He had reportedly received threats after speaking of plans to set up a welfare organisation for poor Christians in Karachi two years ago. 'We firmly believe that my father was killed because of his preaching of the Bible, because there is no other reason,' Zahid said.

SLMP is also requesting prayer for a Christian housemaid, Shamim Bibi, 16, who has been accused of stealing a gold ornament from her wealthy employer's house in Lahore – an allegation she denies. Shamim's employer pressurised the police to arrest her but after an investigation they declared her innocent and released her. However, the initial report against her remains active and unless it is officially cancelled by the police she can still be arrested.

For more news and a country profile about Pakistan, [click here](#)

NEWS UPDATE:

A Christian pastor in Indian Kashmir summoned to appear before a *Sharia* or Islamic law court for alleged 'forced conversions' has now been arrested by police. Pastor Chander Mani Khanna from Srinagar had had the summons from a local Muslim *mufti* (religious leader) to answer allegations of converting Muslim children by offering bribes (*Prayer Alert, November 18*). Pastor Khanna apparently attended the *Sharia* court where YouTube footage of a baptism he had conducted was presented as evidence of 'forced conversions'. Much to local Christians' dismay, he was then arrested by police on suspicion of 'promoting enmity' between different religious groups and of 'acts intended to outrage religious feelings'. Kashmir does not have anti-conversion laws.

(Sources: AsiaNews, Compass Direct, Sharing Life Ministry Pakistan)

- Ask God to bless and comfort Jameel Saawan's wife and children. Pray that all those who have heard the Gospel through Jameel will reflect on his life and death and come to know God's love for themselves.
- Pray for justice for Shamim Bibi: her accuser is powerful and influential.
- Pray God's wisdom and protection for Pastor Khanna, his family and local Christians.

November 24, 2011: NIGERIA – Two girls killed in night raid

Four people were killed and six people injured in a raid last weekend on a Christian village in Bauchi state in central Nigeria, according to Release partner Stefanos Foundation.

A gang armed with machetes launched a night-time attack on Gargari village in Bogoro local government area. The injured included a two-month-old baby and 45-year-old Bebecca Zakka who lost her two daughters aged seven and ten in the raid.

Stefanos also reports that three young Christian men were shot dead by suspected militants in an attack on Rakwok village, near Jos in Plateau state, on Sunday. Stefanos reports that security forces were mobilised to protect Rakwok villagers from further attacks.

(Source: Stefanos Foundation)

- Ask God to comfort and strengthen villagers in Gargari and Rakwok, especially those who were injured or bereaved. Thank God that security forces, who have been accused of complacency or complicity in previous incidents, are being seen to be protecting Rakwok from further attack.

November 28, 2011: SRI LANKA – Hardliners make new push for anti-conversion laws

Buddhist nationalists in Sri Lanka have caused concern among Protestant Christians by renewing their calls for anti-conversion laws.

The *Jathika Hela Urumaya* (JHU) party, which has been pushing for legislation banning 'forced conversion' since 2004, renewed its campaign in a press statement this month. It called on the Government to re-introduce to Parliament the JHU'S Prohibition of Religious Conversions Bill and 'ban fundamental Christian groups in the island'.

Sri Lankan Protestants – and especially evangelicals who are a particular target for discrimination and even persecution – fear that the law outlined in the Bill would be used to limit their church activities.

Release sources inside Sri Lanka say Christians are also concerned about a loosely worded circular from the Ministry of Religious Affairs issued in September which stipulates that building or maintaining places of worship 'must be sanctioned by prior approval of the Ministry'. They say that some existing churches have already been informed they are 'illegal' and must close because they do not have state approval.

According to our sources evangelical churches in particular are facing increased pressure from the state, with 'indiscriminate closure and threats'. Their applications to register formally are 'routinely rejected' – and there is evidence that planning permission is even being denied for non-church buildings if the applicant is a Christian individual or organisation.

For more news and a country profile about Sri Lanka, [click here](#)

(Source: Release sources in Sri Lanka)

- Pray that the JHU's bid to introduce anti-conversion laws in Sri Lanka will fail. Pray that officials will end discriminatory policies which limit the activities of some Christians. Ask God to bless and protect evangelical Christians, a particular target for discrimination. And pray for all those working for religious freedom in Sri Lanka.
- EGYPT – As parliamentary elections start today, please pray for protection for Christians who fear that the current climate of intimidation, violence and instability could lead to fewer Christians voting, thus affecting their representation in Parliament. Pray that those elected will fight discrimination and uphold religious freedom.

November 30, 2011: NIGERIA – Militant attacks spread

Release partners report that Islamist militant group *Boko Haram* has launched fresh attacks on churches in Yobe – while militants continue their attacks on Christian villages in Plateau.

Stefanos Foundation says eight churches were destroyed in Geidam in Yobe state on Saturday. Police headquarters were also attacked in a series of bombings and gun attacks. This follows a familiar pattern in attacks by *Boko Haram* who target security forces and Christians in their campaign to establish strict *Sharia* (Islamic law).

Stefanos also reports that its own staff were caught up in an attack on a Church of Christ of Nigeria congregation in Barkin Ladi town, Plateau state, last Wednesday. Four Christians died in the raid.

'Fulani Muslims were shooting at Christians from the hills and then police moved in in armoured cars to defend the village,' said a Stefanos spokesman. 'Villagers and police were being fired on from all sides. We had to withdraw for our own safety. We later saw houses being set on fire.'

Compass Direct news agency is reporting that at least 45 ethnic Berom Christians were killed in Plateau in the week leading up to last Monday. Their attackers were reportedly Fulani Muslim herdsmen and military.

Compass said that these 45 casualties included nine Christians killed in a further assault on Barkin Ladi last Thursday and 26 killed in nearby Kwok village on the same day. Churches in Barkin Ladi were very poorly attended on Sunday as so many Christians have fled the area.

For more news and a country profile about Nigeria, [click here](#)

(Sources: Compass Direct, Stefanos Foundation, *Vanguard* – Nigeria)

- Ask God to comfort all those bereaved, injured or affected by recent attacks in Yobe and Plateau. Pray that Christians in those states will know God as their rock and their Saviour.
- Thank God for recent reports from Stefanos that, in some areas at least, police and security forces are protecting Christian villages from attack. Pray that this will

continue and will help persuade the many Christians fleeing the area to return home as well as deter militants.