

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, December 1, 2009

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. CHINA – Uyghur Christian released from prison

Uyghur house church leader Wusiman Yiming has been released after serving two years' 're-education through labour' at a prison camp in Xinjiang province.

Wusiman (also known as Osman Imin) began his sentence in November 2007 after being convicted of 'illegal proselytising' and 'leaking state secrets' (*Prayer Alert, April 29, 2008*).

In fact, Wusiman's ordeal began in 2004 when he was arrested and held at a detention centre in Hotan, southern Xinjiang. There, he was reportedly beaten and chained to a metal bed, until he was released on bail. He was placed under house arrest in June 2007 and taken back into custody five months later.

Wusiman spent the past two years at a labour camp outside Kashgar, where he was forced to work up to 15 hours a day. He was finally released on November 18.

Chinese officials have recently stepped up their persecution of ethnic minority Uyghur Christians in the Muslim-majority Xinjiang province, north-west China. Several Uyghur Christians have recently been accused of having separatist sympathies – but it appears that the authorities' real focus is a clampdown on their religious activities.

Another Uyghur house church leader, Alimjan Yimit, remains in jail, almost two years after he was detained on charges of 'inciting secession' and 'leaking state secrets' (*Prayer Alert, February 19, 2008*). Officials accused Alimjan of using the foreign-owned business he worked for as a cover for 'preaching Christianity' – and closed it down in September 2007. Alimjan was detained in January 2008 and formally arrested the next month.

(Sources: BBC, Compass Direct)

- Pray for Wusiman, his wife Nurgul and their daughters as they are reunited.
- Pray for the release of Alimjan Yimit, and ask God to be with him and his family.

2. EGYPT – Violent mob launches three-day assault on Coptic communities

Several Coptic Christian communities were badly damaged when a mob looted and burned Christian property in three days of rioting in Upper Egypt.

Thousands of rioters went on the rampage in Farshoot town and the nearby villages of Kom Ahmar, Shakiki, Ezbet Waziri and Abou Shousha between November 21 and 23. The riots were apparently triggered by reports that a man from the Coptic community had sexually abused a young Muslim girl. Local Christian leaders, however, believe the raid was pre-planned, reports the Assyrian International News Agency (AINA).

The mob looted, vandalised and burned ‘more than 80 per cent of Coptic businesses’, according to AINA. Nearly 3,000 rioters reportedly surrounded the police station where the Christian accused of abusing the young girl was being held, calling for him to be killed. Unconfirmed reports suggest that seven Coptic women may have been abducted. The precise number of people injured is unknown, though one Coptic church leader Benjamin Noshi was reportedly hospitalised with a fractured skull.

‘We have never been so frightened,’ one witness told AINA. ‘The mob made wooden crosses and burnt them in the street. Our religion and our Lord were openly insulted.’

Coptic Orthodox Bishop Kyrillos of Nag Hammadi Diocese ordered all church services to be cancelled on November 22, for fear of further violence. Egypt’s minority Coptic Christians are widely discriminated against and treated as second-class citizens.

(Source: Assyrian International News Agency)

- Pray that Coptic Christians in and around Farshoot will know God as their refuge.
- Pray that politicians and security forces alike will do more to protect Egypt’s Copts.

3. PAKISTAN – Shop bombed for stocking ‘Jesus film’

A man was seriously injured when Islamist extremists bombed his shop in North-West Frontier Province – because he stocked the *Jesus* film.

Just half-an-hour before the attack, Muhammad Taos Khan received a warning letter, hand-delivered by a child to his shop in the Saleem Commercial Square in the Kas town area of Upper Dir district. ‘It is evident from the letter that I was attacked for keeping the *Jesus* film in the Pashto and Urdu languages, as well as Islamic and Christian films about Abraham, Isaac and Adam and Eve,’ Muhammad told BosNewsLife news agency.

The letter urged Muhammad and other local business people to teach the Koran instead of ‘attacking Islamic values’. Thirteen other shops were damaged in the blast. The *Jesus* film, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, is an evangelistic film about the life of Jesus, credited with leading millions of people worldwide to Christ.

North-West Frontier Province has been a battleground between government troops and militants determined to impose strict Islamic law across the region. In the Swat Valley, to the east of Dir, the Government had signed a controversial peace deal with the Taliban in February, ceding territory to the militants in return for a ceasefire (*Prayer Alert, April 7, 2009*). But, after a three-month military offensive, the Government has retaken control of Swat. The attack on Muhammad’s shop in Upper Dir district proves that the militants have not yet been expelled from the province completely.

(Sources: BBC, BosNewsLife, Campus Crusade for Christ)

- Ask God to heal Muhammad and restore his livelihood.
- Pray that Swat's Christian community will now be able to worship in peace.

4. SOMALIA – Extremists execute Christian for alleged evangelism

Islamist extremists have murdered yet another Christian after accusing him of trying to convert a teenage Muslim to Christianity.

Mumin Abdikarim Yusuf's body was found in Mogadishu on November 14, more than a fortnight after he was abducted by Al Shabaab extremists. He had been tortured and shot. Al Shabaab, which is said to have links with al-Qaeda, controls much of southern Somalia and parts of the capital and is trying to impose strict Islamic law on this divided country.

Compass Direct news agency reports that the extremists had raided Mumin's home in the Holwadag district of Mogadishu after a teenager alleged that Mumin had told him about Christianity. Al Shabaab had seized Mumin even though they had found nothing at his home to connect him with Christianity. Christians who knew Mumin have had to relocate since his murder, for fear they too may become targets. Al Shabaab are known to have killed at least 14 Christians recently (*Prayer Alert, August 25, 2009*).

Mumin had been raised as a Muslim and had reportedly not even told his parents he had become a Christian. Now his Muslim parents have been summoned to appear before an Al Shabaab court, because they 'had not reported that their son had become a Christian'.

(Source: Compass Direct)

- Pray for the safety of Mumin's family, especially his parents.
- Pray for growth in Somalia's hard-pressed underground church.

RELEASE FILMS' CHRISTMAS SCREENINGS:

God TV is screening two of Release's films over Christmas, to raise awareness of Christian persecution worldwide. *Enemies of the State?*, a 25-minute film about the resilient faith of Christians in Vietnam and Laos, will be shown on Saturday, December 19, at 7pm and on Sunday, December 20, at 1.30am. *The Remains of the Day*, a one-hour documentary about attacks on the church in Maiduguri, Nigeria, is to be screened on Saturday, December 19, at 7.30pm and on Sunday, December 20, at 2am. Please put these dates in your diary and tell your friends.

NEWS UPDATE:

Vietnamese pastor Thaddeus Nguyen Van Ly, who was sentenced to eight years in jail in 2007 for his human rights work (*Prayer Alert, April 17, 2007*), has suffered a severe stroke. Pastor Thaddeus, 63, is reported to have been left semi-paralysed. Pastor Thaddeus has now served a total of about 17 years in jail. Pray he will be healed – and released. (Source: VOM Canada)

Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on Tuesday, December 15, 2009.

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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