

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, May 11, 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.

CHANGES TO PRAYER ALERT

With this edition of the fortnightly *Prayer Alert*, we'd like to advise you of some changes to the service.

The disadvantages of a fortnightly system are that, by storing up prayer information ready for despatch, it can be quite dated by the time it reaches you. This also means quite a delay before you can pray for different situations. And, of course, when *Prayer Alert* arrives, there is quite a lot of information to absorb in one go.

Most of our subscribers now receive their alert by email. To remedy the shortcomings listed above, we will now be sending them prayer items one by one, as soon as they reach us (still aiming for an average of four per fortnight). That means there is less to read at one sitting, prayers will be more timely and can be more easily offered at once, and supporters can still accumulate information easily for passing on to their churches or prayer groups.

Unfortunately, we cannot offer this more frequent service by post because of the administrative burden and cost. So we would urge you, please, if you now have an email address, to get in touch with us (info@releaseinternational.org) and ask to switch to our email service.

We will continue to provide a fortnightly postal service combining the items that have been sent out by email in the intervening period, and our suggested donation of £10 per year towards costs remains unchanged. If we do not hear from you to the contrary, we will assume that you wish to continue subscribing to our postal service.

Thank you for your continued faithful prayers which are much appreciated.

1. CHINA – Jailed Uyghur pastor allowed to see family for first time in 27 months

The family of imprisoned Uyghur pastor Alimjan Yimit have been allowed to visit him in jail for the first time in more than two years.

Alimjan's wife Gulnur and other family members were allowed just 15 minutes to talk to Alimjan by phone through a glass screen at his prison in Urumqi, the provincial capital of Xinjiang. They found him 'noticeably thinner but in good spirits', according to Compass Direct news agency.

Alimjan's family have now been told they can visit him once a month. Before their visit on April 20, they had not seen Alimjan for 27 months, since he was arrested in January 2008. Alimjan's lawyers, however, have been barred from seeing him, despite having gained

permission from the Xinjiang Bureau of Prison Management. Two lawyers in Alimjan's defence team have had their annual application to renew their law licence turned down.

Alimjan, who pastored an ethnic minority Uyghur church with his wife, is serving a 15-year sentence for 'leaking state secrets' to foreign organisations – apparently for talking to visiting Christians from the US. Prior to his arrest, officials took Alimjan in for questioning, then closed down the business he worked for, accusing him of using it as a cover for 'preaching Christianity' among Uyghurs.

He was recently transferred from a prison in Kashgar to one in Urumqi. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has ruled that Alimjan's arrest and detention are contrary to international law, according to Release partner China Aid.

(Sources: China Aid, Compass Direct)

- Thank God for answering Gulnur and Alimjan's prayers that they might be able to see one another. Pray they will be allowed to talk for longer in their next visit.
- Continue to pray that the Chinese authorities will 'pardon' and release Alimjan.

2. PAKISTAN – Christian barber attacked for cutting Muslim's beard

A Christian barber from Punjab is still recovering after being brutally beaten and abused by a mob who were furious that he had cut a Muslim's beard.

Marwat Masih, who is 29 and from Gulshan-e-Bashir in Sargodha district, initially refused the teenager's request for him to cut his beard; the Christian was aware that local Sunni Muslims believe that the Koran forbids this. Marwat agreed to cut the beard only when the teenager insisted he wanted a more 'modern look' – and was about to leave for Lahore.

But, as Marwat began work, the teenager's older brother arrived. He seized Marwat, blindfolding him and taking him to a locked room in an unknown place. An hour later, he returned with seven men who proceeded to beat Marwat with clubs and abuse him. Marwat's relatives found him later than night, lying unconscious in a side street.

Compass Direct news agency reports that police have refused Marwat's family's requests to register a case against his attackers. Marwat is still bed-ridden after his ordeal.

Meanwhile, also in Sargodha, a pizza delivery man was beaten by a customer and fired by his boss – just for wearing a cross to work. Ashir Laal had just delivered a pizza to a Muslim when the man became enraged by the sight of the cross around Ashir's neck and attacked him. He is alleged also to have vandalised Ashir's delivery bike, stolen his mobile phone and thrown his cross in a bin. Later, when Ashir returned to the restaurant, his boss sacked him for wearing the cross and refused to pay his salary. Ashir's family say they will not press charges because their efforts to seek justice 'would be in vain', according to International Christian Concern.

(Sources: Compass Direct, International Christian Concern)

- Pray for God's healing and justice for Marwat Masih.
- Ask God to bless Ashir Laal with new work. Pray against the discrimination rife in Pakistan where Christians are often treated as second-class citizens.

3. INDONESIA – Mob burns down half-built centre to stop local ‘Christianisation’

Hundreds of people set fire to a building site in West Java province to stall what they see as efforts to ‘Christianise’ the local area.

The mob attacked the site in Cibeureum village in Bogor Regency, accusing Christians of building a school or a church. Instead, the site owner, the Penabur Christian Education Foundation, insists that in fact it is building an education and training centre. The work began in February and had been due for completion in August.

The centre received an official permit to build the centre in June last year – but local residents have regularly voiced opposition to the construction plan, accusing the foundation of dishonest intentions. Construction work has been suspended for the time being to avert further violence, the foundation told Compass Direct news agency.

Meanwhile, on Bangka island, western Indonesia, the Government has recognised a cathedral as a protected building, safeguarding it from demolition or alteration. This new status for St Joseph’s Cathedral Church, which is 76 years old, comes amid calls from Christians in Jakarta province for the Government to protect the nation’s historic church buildings which, they say, are too often torn down or converted for non-Christian use.

(Sources: Compass Direct, UCA News)

- Pray that God will smooth the way for Penabur’s Christian centre to be built. Pray for foundation officials as they try to work with local officials and residents.
- Thank God that officials have recognised the historic significance of St Joseph’s – and pray that they will increasingly recognise the work of the church generally.

UPDATE:

A 19-year-old Iranian man arrested in Isfahan last month (*Prayer Alert, April 27, 2010*) has been released on bail from Dastgard prison. Daniel Shahri still faces charges of ‘propagating the Christian faith’, involvement in house churches and ‘unauthorised’ internet activities. Please pray that the authorities will look favourably upon Daniel who was raised as a Christian. And continue to pray for Christians Maryam Rustampoor and Marzieh Esmaeilabad (*Prayer Alert, April 27, 2010*), who face charges of apostasy and ‘propagating the Christian faith’. It has now emerged that the women were told at a hearing on April 13 that the court needed more time to consider their case. (Sources: Farsi Christian News Network, Middle East Concern)

Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on May 25, 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 and the Evangelical Alliance.

Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington, BR5 9RT, UK

Tel: 01689 823491

General enquiries: info@releaseinternational.org

Website address: www.releaseinternational.org

Registered charity 280577