

RELEASE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER ALERT

Tuesday, April 27, 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. NIGERIA – Plateau killings continue as Bauchi pastor and wife murdered

Tensions remain high in Jos as an ongoing spate of 'secret murders' has followed the well-publicised massacre of Christians in and around the city last month.

Plateau State Police Commissioner Ikechukwu Aduba told the Associated Press (AP) news agency that police are retrieving corpses 'on a daily basis'. These murders occur, he believes, when Christians and Muslims stray into neighbourhoods beyond their own.

A suspected bomb blast in the Dadin Kuwa area of Jos on April 12 left three young Muslims severely injured – but most of the violence reported has been against Christians.

Two Christian miners were killed last week and three others went missing in an attack by ethnic Fulani Muslims near Rim village, 18 miles south of Jos. Two people were hospitalised with gunshot wounds on the same day when about 20 Fulani men raided the nearby village of Tahoss. Earlier this month, Ishaku Sunday was attacked with a machete while grazing his cattle in the Vom area of Jos – and his friend was killed.

The Nigerian army says that it managed to avert an assault on the mainly Christian village of Bisichi, south of Jos, engaging suspected attackers in a gun battle and killing two of them, after a distress call from villagers. But church and community leaders are becoming increasingly vocal about the perceived inaction of the military amid the continuing violence.

An effort to bring both Christians and Muslims together in prayer in Jos earlier this month ended in bloodshed when 'hoodlums' disrupted an interfaith ceremony and began rioting. Three people died and several others were injured at the event, according to AP.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring Bauchi state, Islamist extremists are alleged to have abducted and killed Pentecostal pastor Ishaya Kadah and his wife Selina in Boto village, Tafawa Balewa district. Their burnt bodies were discovered in the bush on April 12, two days after they went missing, reports the Agence France Presse news agency.

The couple, members of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), had only returned to the area recently after their church was destroyed in January. Islamist extremists are alleged to have burnt down the building to target Christian refugees who had sought refuge in the COCIN compound after fleeing the violence in Jos.

(Sources: AFP, AP, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Compass Direct)

- Pray for unity and tolerance between Christians and Muslims in Jos and other areas of Plateau State. Pray for an end to the cycle of violence and revenge.
- Pray for the family and friends of Pastor Ishaya Kadah and his wife Selina.

2. IRAN – Christian man arrested for ‘insulting the Muslim faith’

A Christian man is being held in prison after being arrested by government agents and charged with ‘insulting Muslim beliefs’.

Daniel Shahri was seized by plain-clothed officers at his home in Isfahan on April 11, and is now being held at the city’s Dastgard prison. His parents, who are blind and disabled, rely heavily on Daniel for practical support and are said to be very distressed by his arrest.

Officials came with an arrest warrant from the Revolutionary Court relating to Daniel’s alleged involvement in ‘internet-related activities and the formation of a house church’, according to Farsi Christian News Network (FCNN). It was three days before Daniel’s parents found out where Daniel had been taken. He has reportedly now been charged with ‘publishing falsities and insults to the Muslim faith’.

FCNN reports that Daniel’s arrest may relate to an incident last year when intelligence officers raided a Christian meeting and seized phones of those present, including Daniel’s.

Meanwhile, Maryam Rustampoor and Marzieh Esmaeilabad, two Christians detained in Tehran in March 2009, are still waiting to hear the result of a court hearing on April 15. The women, released on bail in November after 259 days in jail, were arrested on charges of ‘anti-state activity’ and ‘taking part in illegal gatherings’. The anti-state charges were later dropped – but they still face charges of apostasy and ‘propagating the Christian faith’.

(Sources: Farsi Christian News Network, Mission Network News)

- Pray for the immediate release of Daniel Shahri. Ask God to strengthen him and his parents during this distressing time.
- Continue to pray that all charges against Maryam and Marzieh will be dropped.

3. CHINA – Hard-pressed Linfen Church fights to fend off demolition threat

A large church network in Shanxi province is fighting off the imminent threat of seeing its main church building demolished by the authorities.

The Linfen Church Network has just lodged an official appeal against a government decision in March to pull down its six-storey flagship Jindengtai (Golden Lampstand) church in Linfen City.

The imposing building has been guarded by military police since it was confiscated by the government last year – just after the destruction of its sister Linfen Fushan Church on September 13, 2009 (*Prayer Alert, October 6, 2009*). Soldiers have been stationed around the Jindengtai church, preventing church members from gathering there ever since.

The Land Resources Bureau of Raodu District told the church on March 4 this year that it planned to demolish its £1 million building, a focal point for the whole Linfen Church.

Jindengtai pastors Wang Xiaoguang and Yang Xuan have appealed against the government ruling, insisting that the church and its members contribute to social stability. Ten leaders of the Linfen Fushan Church remain in jail, serving sentences of up to seven years (*Prayer Alert, December 15, 2009*).

(Source: ChinaAid)

- Stand in prayer with the Linfen Church Network against this demolition threat.
- Write a letter of encouragement to the jailed Linfen Fushan Church leaders. See overleaf for details of names and postal addresses for nine of them.

4. EGYPT – Christian girl and father appeal to President for right to flee

A Christian teenager and her father have stepped up their fight to leave Egypt after the girl had acid thrown at her – apparently because of their refusal to turn back to Islam.

The recent acid attack on Dina el-Gowhary was just the latest of a string of assaults which Islamist hardliners have made on her and her father, Peter Athanasius – because the pair were raised as Muslims but chose to follow Christ. Dina, who is 15, left her Muslim mother to live with her father two years ago. Peter became a Christian 35 years ago.

Peter has had several *fatwas* or Islamic rulings issued against him and persecution has intensified since his failed attempt in court last year to have his Christian faith documented on his ID papers. Father and daughter have had to move home several times and Dina was forced to leave school due to persecution from staff and students. Both have been threatened and physically assaulted. Then last month, acid was thrown at Dina in the street and her coat set on fire. She was uninjured – but was traumatised by the incident.

Dina has now written to President Hosni Mubarak, asking him to allow them to leave Egypt and seek asylum abroad. The authorities refused Dina and Peter permission to leave last September 'without any legal reason' and their passports were confiscated, according to the Assyrian International News Agency.

(Source: Assyrian International News Agency)

- Ask God to bless and protect Dina and her father Peter, as they try to find a way to start a new life abroad. Pray that their powerful witness will draw many to Christ.
- Pray for President Mubarak and his officials as they consider Dina's appeal.

Our next Prayer Alert issue will be on May 11, 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.

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Writing letters of support to the imprisoned pastors of the Linfen Fushan Church

Please send a letter of encouragement to the pastors of Linfen Fushan Church in Shanxi province, China, who face long-term imprisonment and re-education through labour. The postal details of nine of them are given here. Please do not write anything that could be seen as critical of the Chinese Government or other agencies, as this may place the pastors in further danger. And **please do not mention Release International** in your letter.

Imprisoned pastors' names are given in bold.

Yang Xuan and Yang Rongli

c/o Yang Linli
Room 101, Fuyuan Central Building,
Shuiche Xiang, Xiangyang Road
Linfen City, Shanxi province, PRC

Wang Xiaoguang

c/o Wang Yichao and Liu Manying
Room 106, Building 9, Shanxi Normal University
No. 1. Gongyuan Rd, Yaodu District
Linfen City, Shanxi province
PRC 041004

Yang Caizhen, Yang Hongzhen, Gao Qin and Zhao Guoai

Shanxi Taiyuan Female Re-Education through Labour Camp
No. 28, Xindian Street, Xinghualing District
Taiyuan City, Shanxi province
PRC 030003

Zhang Huamei

c/o Yu Feng-Liu
2nd House on last row
Zhong An Ping Village, Tiantan Town
Fushan County. Linfen City,
Shanxi province, PRC

Cui Jiaying

c/o Cui Zhichao
Room #301, No. 3 Building, Home of Cement Factory
Yimin Road, Yaodu District
Linfen City, Shanxi province, PRC