

## **Prayer Items, March 2011**

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6

### **SRI LANKA—Pastors Attacked in Sri Lanka—VOM Canada**

James 1:12

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Two pastors were attacked recently in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. In early January, a pastor and his family discovered an intruder in their home in Galle district. The man shouted threats at the pastor and began to assault him. After hearing the screaming, the pastor's elderly landlord arrived to help. The intruder then attacked the landlord before running away. Later, the pastor and his landlord lodged a complaint against the attacker with local police. The attacker was arrested, but he was later released with a severe warning after apologizing to the pastor and his landlord. On Jan. 23 in the city of Middeniya, Hambantota district, assailants broke the windows of an Assemblies of God church while the pastor and his family were inside. The pastor and his family were previously targeted in July 2008, when assailants set their house ablaze after threatening the pastor and his church. Pray that the witness of pastors and their families in Sri Lanka will draw unbelievers to Christ. Pray that these pastors will look forward to their crown of life in heaven as they persevere in these trials.

### **LAOS—Christian Widow Evicted by Son—VOM Sources**

James 1:27

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

A 50-year-old Christian widow was evicted from her son's house recently because she refused to renounce her faith in Christ. The woman and her teenage daughter had lived with her son and his family in a mountain village for many years. The woman's son is not a Christian, and he told his mother to renounce her faith in Jesus or he would kick her out of the house. When the woman refused, her son forced her and her daughter to leave. They had no possessions and nowhere to go, so they took cover from the chilly weather in the jungle at the edge of their village. Local Christians who learned of the women's predicament came together to build them a small bamboo hut, but they still lack basic necessities. Thank the Lord for this woman's faith. Pray that her faith will remain strong while she and her daughter endure this trial. Ask God to provide for her needs and to soften her son's heart toward the Lord.

### **CUBA—Persecution Increases on Church Leaders—Christian Solidarity Worldwide**

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Pastors and Christian leaders in Cuba are reporting a shift in how the government treats Christians. The

government appears to have moved away from higher profile forms of oppression, such as threatening to shut down or destroy churches, and is now focusing pressure on church leaders. Church leaders both within and outside of the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC) report receiving frequent visits from state security agents and Cuban Communist Party (CCP) officials. The CCC is an umbrella organization representing Protestant churches. These visits and meetings seem to have the intent of intimidating church leaders and making them aware that they are under close surveillance. Pray that church members will not be intimidated by government informants in their meetings. Pray that those under pressure will not yield to fear and that they will trust the Lord.

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1–3

### **CHINA — Government Plans Increased Regulation of Christian Worship — VOM Sources, China Daily Newspaper**

Hebrews 13:18

Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.

The Chinese government is planning to tighten regulations on Christian worship this year, according to a report in an English-language newspaper in China. China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) has announced that it will "guide Protestants worshiping at unregistered churches into worshiping at government-sanctioned ones." A VOM source in China confirmed that during a detention in 2010, police told him they would stop being "nice" in 2011. The newspaper report also stated that "SARA will strengthen regulation of foreign nationals' group religious activities in China and resist foreign infiltration under the pretext of religion." This new policy could mean increased persecution of Christians in China, especially those who worship in unregistered churches. Christians faced similar pressure from the government before the 2008 Olympics, when Christians were detained, forced from their homes and put under house arrest. Pray that Chinese Christians are spiritually prepared for this fresh wave of persecution and that it will not intimidate new believers.

### **ETHIOPIA — Muslims Warn Christians to Convert, Leave or Die — VOM Canada**

1 Timothy 4:10

For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Muslims in the city of Besheno posted notices on the doors of Christians' homes warning them to convert to Islam, leave the city or face death. Three Christian leaders were forced to flee the city and two Christians were forced to convert to Islam. Other Christians have been harassed and physically abused since the notices were posted. The Christian community in Besheno consists of only about 30 believers, and Christians there have been targeted by Muslims for many years. Evangelist Kassa Awano remains in critical condition after Muslims attacked him on Nov. 29, 2010. A few days after the attack, nearly 100 Muslims surrounded a vehicle carrying Christian leaders who were on their way to negotiate for peace with Muslim leaders. Two men, Tesema Hirego and Niggusie Denano, were seriously wounded in the attack, and the other Christian leaders suffered minor injuries. On Jan. 2, Muslims assaulted Temesgen Peteros with a knife after he testified against the Muslim attackers in court. Pray

that God will enable Christians in Besheno to share the gospel boldly and lovingly. Pray that their persecutors will come to know Christ's love through the lives of the Christians.

### **INDONESIA — Mob Attacks Churches Over Court Decision — Release International**

Psalm 122:6

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

“May they prosper who love you.

A Muslim mob in Temanggung, Indonesia, attacked three churches last week after a Christian convicted of blasphemy received a sentence they thought was too lenient. About 1,500 Muslims threw stones at police and chanted “kill, kill” as they broke courthouse windows and burned vehicles. The rioters then targeted several churches in the area. The Indonesia Bethel Church, two kilometers from the courthouse, was badly burned, damaging part of a kindergarten on the property and six motorbikes. The Temanggung Pentecost Church was also burned as the mob chanted “burn, burn!” The Church of St. Peter and Paul was vandalized, and its leader, Pastor Saldhana, was badly beaten, according to Release International. *Release* also reported that a church-run orphanage and medical center were destroyed in the violence. Pray for the congregations and Christian workers affected by the violence, and pray that peace will be restored in Temanggung, Central Java.

In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”

But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?”

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” John 4:31–38

### **TURKMENISTAN—Christians Fined for Meeting Privately—Forum 18 News Service**

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

A group of Protestant Christians who have been meeting in a private apartment were heavily fined recently, most likely on charges related to unregistered religious activity. The Christians were meeting in Turkmenabad, in eastern Turkmenistan, on Jan. 22 when their meeting was raided by police. Seventeen Christians were fined, and two children who were present were forced to stand in front of their school to face public insult. The group is most likely being charged under the section of Administrative Code that prohibits “support for or participation in the activity of a religious group or religious organization not officially registered in accordance with the legally established procedure.” Locals told Forum 18 that the fines are equal to one or two months’ pay for those in an average state job. “I don’t know how these people are going to pay the fines,” one said. Victims of persecution in this former Soviet republic are often afraid to make their stories known, fearing government reprisal. Pray that these believers will remain firm in their faith. Pray that God will provide them with the funds to pay their fines and that their testimonies will cause the police and the judge in the case to seek after God.

## **CHINA—Pastor Blocked from Travel—China Aid Association**

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Authorities in southwestern China recently prevented a prominent house church leader from traveling to Hong Kong for an evangelical training conference. Wang Yi and three other church members were stopped by plainclothes police at the airport in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on their way to the conference. All four were taken to the police station, but only Wang was detained. The other three were able to continue on to the conference. After Wang was released several hours later, he returned to the airport to continue his trip, but he was again detained. Pray that God would grant boldness and tenacity to Christians in China.

## **INDIA—Christians Suspect Cover-up in Pastor's Death—VOM Canada**

Philippians 4:7

...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

A pastor whose house was targeted by Hindu militants during anti-Christian violence in 2008 was recently found dead in Kandhamal, Orissa state, India. Police initially claimed that Pastor Saul Pradhan, 45, froze to death, but his relatives suspected murder. Officials have since detained two members of a radical Hindu group, Marda Pradhan and Baiju Mallick, in connection with his death. On the evening of Jan. 10, two Hindu men came to Pastor Pradhan's house and asked him to come with them. The next day, Pastor Pradhan's wife and a few villagers found his body lying near a pond in the jungle. His pants were torn, his mouth was bloody and his arms and legs looked twisted. Despite the battered state of Pradhan's body, police claimed they had little reason to suspect foul play. The officials also claimed that there were no injury marks on Pastor Pradhan's body. They refused to file a report of suspected murder and accused the pastor's family members of "spreading rumors about murder in hopes of receiving compensation from the government" for the August 2008 attacks in the region. Praise God for Pastor Pradhan's life and witness. Ask God to fill his loved ones with the peace that surpasses understanding in the midst of their grief. Pray that those responsible for Pastor Pradhan's death will be brought to justice and will come to faith in Christ.

## **AFGHANISTAN -- Jailed Christian Refuses to Deny Faith -- VOM Contacts**

Imprisoned Afghan Christian Shoaib Assadullah was recently offered his freedom if he would deny his faith, but Shoaib stood firm, according to VOM contacts. Shoaib has been in prison since Oct. 21, when he was arrested for giving a New Testament to a man in Mazar-e-Sharif, in Northern Afghanistan. Shoaib had expected to receive the death penalty when he was sentenced on Jan. 4, but international pressure forced the attorney general to intervene. The court has stated that Shoaib will be in prison for at least six more months, and some believe doctors are forcing mind-altering drugs on the 26-year-old Christian. Throughout his ordeal, Shoaib's faith has remained strong. He said he has placed his life completely in the hands of Jesus. "Without my faith, I would not be able to live," he said. Shoaib has requested prayer for his family's salvation. Pray also that international pressure will force the Afghan legal system to release Shoaib quickly, along with Said Musa, another Christian imprisoned in Afghanistan. Praise God for Shoaib's strong faith.

## **BHUTAN -- Possible Status Change for Christians -- VOM Canada**

At its December meeting, the authority that regulates religious organizations in Bhutan discussed allowing a Christian organization to register in order to represent its community. This would be the first time in history that Bhutan has recognized and given rights to its mostly underground Christian population. Government officials in Bhutan currently recognize only Buddhism and Hinduism as official religions. Therefore, only these two communities have the right to openly practice their beliefs and operate houses of worship. Non-Buddhist and non-Hindu religious practices were banned in 1969 and 1979, respectively. Sources indicate that the government's willingness to recognize Christians is partly aimed at bringing the Christian community under religious regulation. The government is likely to register only one Christian organization, expecting it to represent all Christians in Bhutan. Thank the Lord for this positive step. Pray that God will move in the hearts of authorities and make them open to hearing the name of Jesus.

## **NIGERIA -- More Killed in Ongoing Plateau Violence -- Release International and Christian Solidarity Worldwide**

Midnight raids on two villages in Plateau state have claimed the lives of eight people amid continuing religious tension in central Nigeria. Sources report that the raids occurred in the villages of Farin Lamba and Fan. Two men, a woman and a baby were killed in the attack on Farin Lamba. According to villagers, the attackers wore military uniforms. In response, protesters demanded the removal of the Special Task Force charged with keeping peace in the area. The force is accused of either turning a blind eye to attacks on Christians or even instigating the attacks. This is the fifth recorded attack on Christian villages in the area within two weeks. At least 13 people were killed during raids on villages in the area in January. Continue to pray for Christians in Nigeria. Pray that their Muslim neighbors will recognize the difference between followers of Jesus and those who are simply non-Muslims, and that they will want to know Christ, too. Pray that God will move government officials to provide protection and equality for Christians.

## **China Aid Association**

**Here are updates of some major persecution cases ChinaAid has been following:**

### **Gao Zhisheng**

Christian human rights attorney Gao Zhisheng was kidnapped over 740 days ago. He resurfaced briefly in the March of 2010 (to read the recent AP report of his interview, just made public after he failed to resurface and which documents ongoing, increasingly cruel torture, go to <http://www.chinaaid.org/2011/01/ap-exclusive-missing-chinese-lawyer.html>), but disappeared in April and has not been heard from since. The Chinese embassy has repeatedly rejected the petition to free Gao, signed by nearly 150,000 people worldwide. His whereabouts are still unknown. Bob Fu recently called for Gao's release at a press conference with Congressman Frank Wolf on January 18, 2011. Visit [FreeGao.com](http://FreeGao.com) for more.

### **Alimujiang Yimiti**

In far western China's Xinjiang region, authorities sentenced Uyghur Christian Alimujiang to 15 years

in prison on trumped up charges of leaking state secrets. In a welcome development last December, Xinjiang's People's High Court agreed to review the case. No decision has yet been announced. ChinaAid continues to support Alimujiang's family and to fund his legal defense, and will continue to do so until he is free. Visit [FreeAlim.com](http://FreeAlim.com) to learn more about his case.

Dr. Fan Yafeng - Dr. Fan, a leading advocate of constitutional democracy and the head of Christian Human Rights Lawyers of China, the Shengshan (Holy Mountain) Culture Research Institute and the Shengshan (Holy Mountain) Church, remains under house arrest since his return home from police detention on December 18, 2010. During his arrest he was tortured for several days. Nineteen Beijing lawyers have written a letter protesting the torture of Fan and Gao.

### **Chen Guangcheng**

Last week, ChinaAid received a breathtaking hour-long video about Chen Guangcheng, the blind self-taught human rights lawyer who exposed 130,000 mass forced abortions and forced sterilizations in Linyi County, Shandong Province, in 2005. Chen was released at the end of a four-year jail term on September 9, 2010, but has since been under daily house arrest.

The video shows Chen, his wife and daughter living in miserable conditions, cut off from all outside contact, and detained illegally in their home. Chen describes being monitored daily by three shifts of agents with each shift consisting of 22 people.

Chen and his wife Yuan speak with unfailing spirit and brave hearts to expose their inhuman treatment from the Chinese government. He thanks supporters from around the world, and he indicates that he will never stop fighting for justice and rule of law.

Since its release, the video has received more than 33,000 hits on YouTube.

Soon after the video's release, ChinaAid learned that Chen Guangcheng and his wife were beaten by the police for releasing the video. They were beaten so severely that they were unable to move from their bed, and they were denied the right to go to the hospital for medical care.

"By taking further brutal action against this family," said Bob Fu, "the Chinese government has not only shown total contempt for the rule of law in China, but also its determination to continue this absolute wrong path toward more disregard of its own citizens' basic rights and freedom. We call for the leaders of the free world, especially the US and the European Union, to take immediate steps to help this family before more tragedies occur."