

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Events – December 2017

Friday December 1, 2017



India

Archbishop Thomas Ignatius Macwan (issued a letter on [November 24, 2017](#) to various communities regarding the upcoming elections: "The forthcoming legislative elections in the state of Gujarat will affect the future of our country. We are aware that the secular and democratic fabric of our country is at stake, where human rights are violated and constitutional rights trampled. There are episodes in which churches are attacked, ecclesiastical staff, faithful or institutions are affected. There is growing sense of insecurity among minorities. Nationalist forces are about to conquer the country. The election results of the State Assembly of Gujarat can make a difference...The Bishops of the State of Gujarat invite you to organize prayer liturgies in your parishes and convents, hoping that the people who are elected will remain faithful to our Indian constitution and respect every human being without any discrimination"; accused of generating "fear" in his letter, accused on [November 25, 2017](#) of violating the Model Code of Conduct in a complaint filed with the state Election Commission; **UPDATE**: denied internet rumors that he had been arrested for his letter, said "They served me notice on the 25th and I responded on the 27th. There has been no response after that. I hope the issue is over now")

Samson Christian (said "...this is the first time the Hindu nationalists are targeting the church leader to polarize the Hindu voters...Archbishop Macwan has all the right to protect the people and ask them to pray. The complaint against the archbishop is politically motivated")

K P George SJ (said "I fully support the concerns raised by Archbishop Thomas Macwan...If every party and every leader can ask his/her followers to vote for a particular person/party, why should that right be denied to the archbishop and for his members?")

Virginia Saldanha (**UPDATE**: said "What the archbishop did is absolutely right. In no way is it campaigning or alignment with anyone. It only shows the caliber of the [Hindu nationalist] BJP and its nervousness about the elections")

Fr Dominic Emmanuel (**UPDATE**: spoke after the only Catholic cabinet minister denied that Christians had been attacked under Prime Minister Modi "K.J. Alphons has to learn to tell lies like his masters Modi and Amit Shah [the BJP president]...Don't be surprised if

K.J. Alphons, to remain on his ministerial seat, will tomorrow repeat...[the] statement that Mother Teresa's work was all a facade for conversion")

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/india-archbishop-served-notice-raising-human-rights-ahead-gujarat-elections/>



Nigeria: Gwoza, Borno state

Esther (aged 17 in 2015, alias, reported to have been abducted by Boko Haram militants in **October 2015**, father killed; rescued by the Nigerian military in **November 2016**, returned home; **UPDATE**: said "I cannot count how many men raped me. Every time they came back from their attacks, they would rape us...defile us. Each passing day, I hated myself more and more. I felt that God had forsaken me. There were times when I was so angry with God...But still I could not get myself to renounce Him. I found myself remembering His promise to never leave me or forsake me", after her return gave birth to a daughter, added "They mocked me because I was pregnant. Even my grandparents despised me and called me names. I cried many tears. I felt so lonely. What broke my heart even more was that they refused to call my daughter Rebecca. They referred to her as 'Boko'", said she has forgiven her abductors)

Rebecca (infant daughter of Esther)

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/25770/>



United Kingdom

Christians responded to year-old retweeted comments by a Scottish clergyman that called on people to pray that 4 year old Prince George would grow up to be homosexual and become King while in a same sex marriage

Bishop Gavin Ashenden (**UPDATE**: said "If you're going to pray for Prince George, pray for him to be happy...and pray for him to discharge his duty as prince, to be married and have children. It is not a kind prayer. It is not a blessing, it's more like a curse from a fairytale. I would say it is profoundly un-Christian...To use prayer as a mechanism for wishing this on Prince is an unkind and destructive thing to do. It doesn't have the prince's best interest at heart, but uses him as a gender-political football to please 1.7% of the population. What is especially odd and incongruous is the fact that it is suddenly OK to pray for someone to be gay, but totally unacceptable to pray for them to be free from being gay and to resume a sexuality that was in tune with their biology. This seems not only contradictory but hypocritical")

Susie Leafe (director of Reform, said "I was very disappointed that he [the Scottish clergyman] was prepared to bring a child in to this same-sex marriage debate. As a Christian minister he should pray for all people to come to know the love of Christ, rather than a fine young gentleman")

<https://ashenden.org/2017/12/01/the-use-and-abuse-of-prince-george-by-gay-activists/>

Saturday December 2, 2017



Bangladesh: Syleth

Fr Walter William Rozario (aged 41, assistant pastor, secondary school headmaster, brother of Premol Rozario, disappeared in [Bonpara](#) on [November 27, 2017](#), ransom demanded; **UPDATE**: recovered by police, has suffered psychological trauma and has difficulty speaking, held in custody, accused by police of being mentally ill and of having staged his disappearance, later released from custody)

Fr Subroto Purification (**UPDATE**: criticized the "absurd conference held by the police" and added "We are literally without words. What the police say does not stand up. Why would William have to do this? We were organizing the pilgrimage of the faithful to Dhaka, and he too could not wait to meet the Pope. The staging is an unfounded hypothesis, as well as the mental illness. We do not know what it is based on and we hope everything can be clarified in court")

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/63337->

[ASIA BANGLADESH The police no seizure Fr Rozario is mentally unstable](#)

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/63342->

[ASIA BANGLADESH Fr Rozario released after the seizure he will remain for a period in the Bishop s residence](#)



Pakistan: Charman, Baluchistan

Issac 'Lucky' Saleem (aged 7, son of Asalam and Noreen Masih, **killed** along with 2 others by a car bomb outside the main gate of a Christian colony [ghetto])

Khan Masih (aged 4, cousin of Issac 'Lucky' Saleem, son of Vickram and Nasreen, wounded, hospitalized, underwent surgery on his head, back, and left leg, released 4 days later)

Asalam Masih (aged 54, father of Issac 'Lucky' Saleem)

Noreen Masih (aged 48, mother of Issac 'Lucky' Saleem, said "My heart has been broken in two. My husband and I waited many years for the birth of my son and in a moment these cruel murderers have killed him and taken away my joy. They care nothing for the pain I feel. Their only desire was to murder Christians...Men in uniforms from the army and police and politicians have told me how they feel my pain, but we receive no help, nor no news of the capture of the murders. I want to ask them to their faces why they have taken the life of an innocent boy...I find it hard to sleep now, I feel old and weary, I pray to God that he will take me to heaven soon so that I can be reunited with Isaac. I cry and cry but the tears do not bring Isaac back or ease my pain")

Vickram Masih (aged 44, father of Khan Masih)

Nasreen Masih (aged 38, mother of Khan Masih)

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/young-christian-boy-of-only-7-killed-when-terrorist-bomb-struck-christian-village-in-baluchistan>

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/mother-breaks-down-in-tears-over-government-cares-little-about-death-of-my-son-by-extremists>

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-colony-attack-in-pakistan-kills-young-boy/80980>



Kuwait

Rev Shibu Mathew (aged 42, Indian citizen, husband, father of four, arrested in **Mangaf** for defending Christianity in an ecumenical debate; **UPDATE**: reported to have been released and to have left the country)

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/indian-pastor-accused-of-blasphemy-during-interfaith-dialogue-event-set-free-by-kuwaiti-authorities>



United States – Ohio: Cleveland

Jared Plesec (aged 21, Salvation Army employee, **shot dead** by a criminal, had preached the Bible to his killer before he died)

United States – Virginia: Roanoke

Purity Thomas (aged 15, student, punched in the face by an abortion supporter, treated at a hospital for a concussion)

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/salvation-army-worker-shot-dead-with-bible-in-hand-preaching-the-gospel-to-his-killer-in-ohio-208823/>

<http://www.lifenews.com/2017/12/04/abortion-activist-punches-15-year-old-girl-in-the-face-who-was-praying-at-planned-parenthood/>

Sunday December 3, 2017



Philippines: Mansalay town, Mindoro Oriental, Luzon

Pastor Lovelito Quinones (**killed** by police allegedly in a gun battle with Communists, critics say a gun was planted on his body, forensic tests showed no powder residue on his body)

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/rage-grief-sweep-philippines-after-murder-of-priest/80983>

Monday December 4, 2017



Philippines: San Leonardo town, Nueva Ecija province, Luzon

Fr Marcelito "Tito" Paez (aged 72, officially retired but still active in ministry, **shot** while driving in traffic by four gunmen on motorcycles, **died** in the hospital)

Bishop Roberto Mallari (called the shooting death of Fr Marcelito "Tito" Paez an execution)

Sr Elenita Belardo (said "The execution is a brutal act that aims to sow terror among those who oppose the militaristic and despotic nature of Duterte's government and to silence those who continue to denounce extrajudicial executions and violations of human rights")

Fr Oliver Castor CSSR (said that the government's extrajudicial killing of drug dealers and addicts has begun to expand to political dissidents "It is systematic killing directed towards a specific section of the population. The year past, the targets were drug users, this time, leftists...[It] is chillingly reminiscent of the years of Marcos martial rule")

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/63354->

[ASIA PHILIPPINES A priest killed a targeted execution alarm of rural missionaries](http://www.fides.org/en/news/63354-ASIA_PHILIPPINES_A_priest_killed_a_targeted_execution_alarm_of_rural_missionaries)

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/rage-grief-sweep-philippines-after-murder-of-priest/80983>



India: Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh state

Seven Christians were arrested on illegal conversion charges, ordered held for 14 days

Stanley Jacob (arrested)

David (arrested)

Vijay Kumar (arrested)

Amit (arrested)

Sumit Varghese (arrested)

Anita (convert, sister of Mamta Singh, arrested)

Dinesh (arrested)

Mamta Singh (convert, wife of Pradeep Singh, sister of Anita, home invaded by Hindu radicals during a worship service)

Pradeep Singh (convert, husband of Mamta Singh, home invaded by Hindu radicals during a worship service)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Seven-Pentecostal-Christians-arrested-for-%E2%80%9Cforced-conversions%E2%80%9D-in-Uttar-Pradesh-42516.html>

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/Seven-pastors-arrested-in-india-for-forced-conversion>

Tuesday December 5, 2017



Philippines

Churches have begun to prepare for government repression

Fr Oliver Castor CSSR (**UPDATE**: said "We laid down security measures, fallback positions. But we never thought it would hit us so close to home, so fast")

Fr Jonash Joyohoy (said of his church involvement in tribal areas "We are not pulling out, we are never pulling out. But we need to tighten safeguards because of the upsurge in security risks")

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/clergy-religious-plan-measures-against-duterte-crackdown/81001>



Vietnam: Hanoi

Fr John Luu Ngoc Quynh CSSR (aged 53, prevented from leaving the country to visit France for an ordination 'for the protection of national security, social order and safety')

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/vietnam-bars-another-priest-from-leaving-country/81003>



Central African Republic: Bangui

Pastor Jean-Eric Vogbia (convert, church and home in the [PK5 neighborhood of Bangui](#) destroyed by Seleka rebels on [December 5, 2013](#), eldest son [a medical student] killed, later said “We tried to contact him on the phone, but he was not reachable. At about 12 noon, my phone rang again and a voice said: ‘The boy was killed. We didn’t plan it, but as we missed you, we had to kill him’”; **UPDATE**: wife has suffered from PTSD, said “What happened was a punitive act because of my Muslim background. They wanted to silence the preacher who converts Muslims to Christianity...Each time I pass by the ruins of our family compound, now invaded by wild plants, I feel bad. But I need to overcome my anger and act with love towards my Muslim brothers and friends”)

Pastor Gilbert Bogolo (husband, father of ten, petroleum company employee, church and home in [Bangui](#) destroyed by Seleka rebels on [December 5, 2013](#); **UPDATE**: said “Maybe one day we will understand why [God] allowed us to go through this painful experience”, said his parishioners now meet in a tent “It’s not the big attendance of the old days, but the remaining members are more committed than ever. The donations we receive on Sundays are greater than ever”)

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/12/car-they-wanted-to-silence-the-preacher-who-converts-muslims-to-christians/>

Wednesday December 6, 2017



India

Bishop Vincent Barwa (**UPDATE**: criticized a call by Hindu radicals to enact the death penalty for cow slaughter)

India: Tarra village, Ranjim, Gariaband district, Chhattisgarh state

Shibu Thomas (founder of Persecution Relief; **UPDATE**: reported on an attack by RSS paramilitary members on a prayer meeting attended by 600 Christians, men were beaten,

women molested, automobiles and bicycles vandalized, said “Christians had completed 200 days of prayer under the leadership of Rev Lakhchan Sahu. At around noon, more than a thousand people from the RSS and Bajrang Dal [youth organization] stormed the prayer venue”)

Rev Lakhchan Sahu (leader of the disrupted meeting)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Hindu-nationalists-attack-a-Christian-prayer-meeting-in-Chhattisgarh-42527.html>

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/bishop-criticizes-death-penalty-call-for-cow-slaughter/80995>



Pakistan: Lahore, Punjab province

Khalid Shehzad (activist, called on the government to release statistics regarding minorities from the 2017 census "For the past 70 years, minorities have been demanding a combined distribution of country resources. Today they are downtrodden due to lack of access to opportunities. Even the five percent job quota for minorities is usually neglected")

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-minorities-demand-to-know-census-results/80997>



Iraq: Bahzani

Christians were reported as needing protection to stay in their homes

Fr Afram al-Khoury Benyamen (said "The reality is we cannot stay without the U.S. or the UN helping to protect Nineveh directly. With international protection maybe we can remain, but if it doesn't come soon...we go...ISIL is not finished in Mosul and still they can come straight here. We expect more attacks. It is like staring into the darkness...Before ISIL, everything was green. Now everything is finished, nobody gave the olive trees water. And when I see the village like this I feel there is no life here. We used to have 150 doves come to our church, too. But after ISIL, even they have not come back")

Mariam Ishaq (aged 58, said “There is no stability. Our homes are destroyed. I don’t want to leave,” Ishaq said. “But what else can we do?”)

Faiza Yaaqoub (aged 68)

Deacon Benian Abdullah (said “We are always worried about who will be our future government? Who will be the next to control us?”)

Rimon (aged 33, son of Silvia, **died of untreated cancer** in [February 2017](#))

Silvia (mother of Rimon, said “Because of this crisis we could not find him medicine. We could not get help for him to leave. And so he lost his life”)

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/05/life-after-isis-christians-say-cant-go-home-without-international-protection.html>

Thursday December 7, 2017



Congo, Democratic Republic: Semuliki, North Kivu

Fr Loris Cattani CFX (missionary; **UPDATE**: condemned the massacre of 15 UN peacekeepers, said "It is difficult to attribute the attack to a specific group because there is very little news at the moment")

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/63377->

[AFRICA DR CONGO Massacre of the Blue Helmits Was the aim to hit the UN mission carried out in order to force it to withdraw](#)



United Kingdom

Jacob Rees-Mogg (aged 48, Member of Parliament; **UPDATE**: wrote "One of the Conservative Party's clearest manifesto commitments was to lift the cap on places for Catholics at new schools. It said 'we will replace the unfair and ineffective inclusivity rules that prevent the establishment of new Roman Catholic schools, instead requiring new faith schools to prove that parents of other faiths and none would be prepared to send their children to that school'. There is no wriggle room in that sentence – yet the Department for Education, instead of implementing the policy decision, has decided to have an enquiry to decide whether to do what was promised or not...The problem with the current rules is that they limit the number of places for Catholics in new schools to 50 per cent if other, non-Catholics, wish to attend. This policy was not introduced with Catholic schools particularly in mind, but has a greater impact on them because, unlike some religious schools which attract virtually no one from outside their own community, Catholic schools are popular with non-Catholics...However, under Canon law Catholic bishops have certain obligations which mean that places cannot be preferentially offered to non-Catholics at the exclusion of Catholics")

United Kingdom: Lincoln

Daniel Courney (aged 33, U.S. citizen, convicted on [September 14, 2017](#) for use of 'threatening and discriminatory language' while street preaching; **UPDATE**: conviction overturned on appeal)

<http://www.christianconcern.com/our-issues/freedom/christian-street-preacher-cleared-of-hate-speech-conviction>

https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2017/12/jacob-rees-mogg-why-wont-the-education-department-honour-the-conservative-manifesto-pledge-on-catholic-schools.html?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Thursday%207th%20December%202017&utm_content=Thursday%207th%20December%202017+CID_8c4f02a1eef9624f291be2a8be70bd46&utm_source=Daily%20Email&utm_term=Why%20wont%20the%20Education%20Department%20honour%20our%20manifesto%20pledge%20on%20Catholic%20schools

Friday December 8, 2017



Iraq

Wahida Yaqo Hurmiz (Member of Parliament, said "Christians are facing another catastrophe in the Nineveh Plain despite the defeat of [the Islamic State] because of Shia militias who are committing many violations against our people")

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/5be824a8-c5d9-45a8-98ae-be1a72a1d632>



Russia: Sverdlovsk

Raufi (convert, Iranian citizen, monastery worker, detained on [October 18, 2017](#) after his asylum application had been rejected, deportation could result in his prosecution in Iran;

UPDATE: reported to have been released, deportation halted, asylum application resubmitted)

<http://orthochristian.com/109016.html>



Egypt

Police were reported to have prevented Christians from visiting a monastery for security reasons

Abba Pasilious (St Stephen monastery leader)

Bishop Tadrus

<http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=2043&A=33286>



Canada: Toronto, Ottawa

Mary Wagner (aged 43; **UPDATE**: arrested for entering an abortion clinic waiting room and handing out roses and pro-life literature)

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/canadian-pro-life-heroine-jailed-again-after-rescue-attempt-at-abortion-cen>

Saturday December 9, 2017



Pakistan: Kot Lakhput Jail, Lahore

Usman Masih (aged 29, husband, father, brother of Kamran Shaukat, jailed for alleged involvement in riot that followed the [March 15, 2015](#) attempted suicide bombing in Youhanabad, reported on [March 30, 2017](#) that have refused the invitation to Islam in exchange for his freedom; **UPDATE**: **died in prison**, official cause was a heart attack, body was "littered" with bruises and welts)

Kamran Shaukat (brother of Usman Masih, said "Both his daughters, aged 3 and 5, cry for their abbu [father]. We are still in shock, but we don't blame anybody. Our matter rests with God")

Rev Irshad Ashknaz (**UPDATE**: said he feared for the lives of all Christian prisoners after the death of Usman Masih "We have held several meetings with police and government officials, but nobody is listening. We are helpless and do not know what to do")

Aftab Gill (information secretary of the Christian Masiha Millat Party [MMP], arrested in [March 2015](#) for the lynching; released in [November 2015](#); **UPDATE**: said medical treatment was still being denied to imprisoned Christians on trial for the lynching case, added "It's a conspiracy to kill all Christian prisoners")

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/another-christian-martyr-dies-in-pakistani-jail>
<https://www.ucanews.com/news/another-christian-prisoner-dies-in-lahore-jail/81050>



India: Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu state

Pastor Vinod Kumar (prayer hall invaded by Hindu extremists after he ignored an order to close, at least 3 parishioners were injured)

Pastor Karthik (said "We did not do anything wrong, we just wanted to celebrate Christmas and distribute some goods to the poor")

http://www.fides.org/en/news/63380-ASIA_INDIA_Violence_against_Christians_in_Tamil_Nadu

Sunday December 10, 2017



Pakistan: Punjab province

Rev Maurice Shahbaz (Director of Prisons Mission Society of Pakistan; **UPDATE:** in summary wrote "The Christian community inside the prisons of The Punjab in Pakistan are being persecuted and denied the same religious freedom as other religions. The missionaries/Pastors/Teachers have increasingly stopped access to the prisoners, while Muslim religious teachers - including the Muslim religious teachers of jails staff - can preach and teach with no limits and Christian prisoners inside Punjab Prisons are black mailed and tortured to become Muslims by the jails staff and they have not chance to improve the education")

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6707>

Monday December 11, 2017



Australia: Strathfield

Pastor Mark Powell (cited increased anti-Christian statements by homosexual activists after Parliament passed the same-sex marriage bill, wrote "Let it be known that on the December 7, 2017 – the day in Australian Parliamentary history when "love won" – the hate campaign truly began")

Australia

Lyle Shelton (traditional marriage supporter, mercilessly attacked in social media by homosexual activists after Parliament passed the same-sex marriage bill)

Australia: Perth

James Parker (husband, father, former homosexual, conversion and ministry attacked by homosexual activists after Parliament passed the same-sex marriage bill)

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/christians-fear-retribution-for-opposing-same-sex-marriage-in-australia>

<https://www.spectator.com.au/2017/12/the-hate-campaign-begins-as-lovewins/>



Nicaragua: Managua

Auxiliary Bishop Silvio Jose Baez (said in a homily "There is paralysis due to fear. There are people who are paralyzed by fear, unable to speak or express their outrage because of injustices and abuses of civil and military authorities...Today we are unfortunately living in a society interested in the production of paralytics. There are people and groups of power committed to keeping people with mental paralysis, in which the dominant ideology tries to avoid at all costs that people think freely and make discernment with moral depth...We are getting used to the horrible and shameful physical and moral violence against women and children, inexplicable killings, arbitrary arrests, espionage and threats, irregular judicial proceedings, impunity, authoritarianism, corruption, lack of access to public information, fragility of institutions in the country, all of which produce social paralysis")

http://www.fides.org/en/news/63381-AMERICA_NICARAGUA_Bishop_Baez_Paralyzed_by_fear_we_are_getting_used_to_physical_and_moral_violence

December 2017, date unknown

Today's Martyrs

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<http://todaysmartyrs.org/events/>

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