

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Events – January 2018

Monday January 1, 2018



Egypt

Imad Gad (former Member of Parliament and political analyst, **UPDATE:** opinion column dropped from Al-Watan newspaper after he wrote "...In our country, where poverty, ignorance, disease and superstition are rampant, it is quite different [than Europe]. We have a vague constitution, confused about the relationship of religion to the state. At the same time, we have laws with ambiguous clauses that intentionally enter the subject in a maze and do not resolve the situation on specific issues. The church building law, which was issued a year ago to arrange the process of building and reforming churches, finds that the approval of the building or the reform 'after reference to the authorities concerned' and it is no secret that the concerned parties concerned the security authorities, The National Security Apparatus, which continues to work according to the principles laid down by the President of the Faithful and within which the Agency works with all its might to deepen the wounds of the Christians in the country and prevent the march towards building a state of citizenship")

Egypt: al-Omraneya, Giza

Fr Rafik Greich (Church spokesman; **UPDATE:** said "We can be attacked and this can happen at any time" after two Coptic brothers were shot dead in a liquor store while celebrating New Year's)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/A-bloody-New-Year-in-Egypt-as-two-Coptic-brothers-killed-42724.html>

<https://www.copticsolidarity.org/2018/01/01/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%89/> - with translation

Tuesday January 2, 2018



India: Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala state

Bishop Vincent Samuel (visited eight women including one nun who were hospitalized after being beaten by police during a protest over a cross demolition)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Kerala,-protests-against-a-demolished-cross:-eight-wounded,-including-a-nun-42728.html>



Turkey

Pastor Andrew Brunson (U.S. citizen, husband of Norine Brunson, detained as a 'national security risk' in **Izmir** on **October 7, 2016**, denied access to U.S. diplomats, attorneys, and fellow parishioners; ordered held on **December 9, 2016** on 'terrorism' allegations from a 'secret informant', attorney denied access to the allegations; as of **August 25, 2017** four new charges have been added by prosecutors including 'gathering state secrets for espionage, attempting to overthrow the Turkish parliament and government, and to change the constitutional order'; confirmed to be a hostage at a **September 28, 2017** press conference by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President explicitly called for the U.S. government to exchange him for Sufi cleric and U.S. resident Fethullah Gulen; **UPDATE:** sent a letter to his wife and supporters: "I am deeply grateful to all who have prayed for me. This trial – time in prison – has stretched me far more than I ever would have imagined. I have been very weak, had many doubts, felt very alone. I know that God's grace is sustaining me, even when I do not feel that grace, and I know that the prayers of God's people are surrounding me and giving strength. One of my big fears has been that I will be forgotten in prison. Thank you for not forgetting! It is a great encouragement to know there are people praying for me – it reminds me that I am not alone, and that I need to stand firm, with my face pointed in God's direction always. Thank you for standing with me in this most difficult time. Many blessings to you. Andrew")

<http://meconcern.org/2018/01/02/turkey-imprisoned-us-pastor-grateful-for-prayers/>



Nigeria: Anchuna village, Kaduna state

Yohanna Kukah ('traditional ruler', brother of Bishop Matthew Hassah Kukah and Samuel Kukah, abducted from his home)

Samuel Kukah (described his brother's abduction)

Nigeria: Lagos

Sr Roseline Isiocha (abducted in [Igouriakhi, Edo state](#) on [November 13, 2017](#); **UPDATE**: still in captivity)

Sr Aloysius Ajayi (abducted in [Igouriakhi, Edo state](#) on [November 13, 2017](#); **UPDATE**: still in captivity)

Sr Frances Udi (abducted in [Igouriakhi, Edo state](#) on [November 13, 2017](#); **UPDATE**: still in captivity)

Archbishop Alfred Martin (said at a press conference “Today is the 48th day that the [six] sisters have been in the hands of the kidnappers. It has been a big source of worry and concern knowing that they are women...It is disheartening that the security agencies have not been able to get the sisters out. We still do hope that the security agencies would do much more than is being done now to ensure that the sisters are released”)

Nigeria: Gidan Kuran village, Kano state

Amina Isa (aged 40, mother of five, separated from her husband after he converted to Islam in 2012 to gain employment, arrested in [May 2017](#) along with her 21 year old daughter after they were accused by her husband of abduction after she enrolled her younger children in a Christian school, released on bail; **UPDATE**: daughters aged 6 and 15 were reported to have been abducted and pressured to convert, said "Because of their refusal to convert too, we have been threatened, beaten, and subjected to all forms of indignities by my husband and his Muslim collaborators...They've constantly been threatened, beaten, and harassed. In fact, at one time, [the oldest daughter, whose name is being withheld for security reasons,] had to take her younger siblings and go into hiding, but both have been traced and captured by the officials and are currently being held against their will in a location undisclosed to me...Right now, my daughters are in the custody of these Muslim officials and are being forced into Islam, while at the same time, we are being tried on false charges. All this is to force us to recant. We can never stop being Christians, and we are confident that the God we serve can never abandon us in our trying moments")

Rev Ayuba Hassan (Christian Association of Nigeria, **UPDATE**: reported to have said “We’ve been able to accompany her [Amina Isa] to the court a number of times. We pray that she’ll be able to get justice from the court”)

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/archbishop-is-the-nigerian-government-looking-for-missing-nuns-98615>

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-mother-daughters-abused-for-refusing-to-convert-to-islam-after-father-becomes-muslim-for-job-212387/>

<https://morningstarnews.org/2018/01/mother-daughter-in-nigeria-pressued-to-convert-to-islam-accused-of-kidnapping/>

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/01/nigerias-new-year-begins-with-attacks-on-christians/>

Wednesday January 3, 2018



China

Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin (underground bishop in [Wenzhou](#); detained on [May 18, 2017](#);
UPDATE: released)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msgr.-Peter-Shao-Zhumin-of-Wenzhou-freed-after-7-months-42737.html>

Thursday January 4, 2018



India St Mary's Post Graduate College, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh state

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas SFX (**UPDATE:** commented after 900 radical Hindu ABVP students attempted to invade a Catholic college and consecrate it to a Hindu deity: “The Madhya Pradesh police assured church authorities full police protection. The priests who manage the College, however feel that the situation is potentially very dangerous as over 900 activists were expected to gather in violation of police orders. There was already an aggression earlier on 30 December [2017] despite the presence of 20 policemen. We need to pray more...Calm has returned to the place now as only policemen on watch have remained in the area. We thank once again the Union Home Minister Rajnath Singhji and the Madhya Pradesh police force. And a big thank you for your prayers. The Fathers and Sisters and other personnel are in a state of shock. Do continue to pray for them”)

http://www.fides.org/en/news/63506-ASIA_INDIA_Hindu_radicals_attack_a_Catholic_college
<http://www.persecution.in/node/4514>

Friday January 5, 2018



Nigeria: Sambisa Forest, Borno state

Solomi Pugu (daughter of Pugu Yah, abducted by Boko Haram from [Chibok, Borno state](#) on [April 14, 2014](#); **UPDATE**: reported to have escaped from captivity, rescued by the Nigerian military)

<http://www.persecution.org/2018/01/05/chibok-girl-rescued-from-sambisa-forest/>

Saturday January 6, 2018



India

UPDATE: Two Christians who were arrested in 2009 for the murder of Hindu leader Laxamananda Saraswati returned to prison after having been granted a two week Christmas parole, the other five were not granted parole

Gornath Chalanseth (returned to prison)

Bijay Kumar Sanseth (returned to prison)

Durjo Sunamajhi (not granted parole)

Bhaskar Sunamajhi (not granted parole)

Budhadeb Nayak (not granted parole)

Munda Badamajhi (not granted parole)

Sanatan Badamajhi (not granted parole)

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/01/india-kandhamal-christians-back-in-jail-after-temporary-christmas-release/>



Iran: Tehran

Shamiram Isavi (wife of Pastor Victor Beth Tarmez, mother of Ram-eil, bodily searched during the [December 26, 2014](#) police raid on her home; **UPDATE**: sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment on national security charges, appeal underway)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6755>



Nigeria

Sr Veronica Ajayi EHJ (aspirant, abducted in [Igouriakhi, Edo state](#) on [November 13, 2017](#);

UPDATE: released)

Nigeria: Channel One settlement, Tswarev district, Logo local government area

Fulani Muslims attacked several villages

Evangelist Kwaghkighir Ukende

Iana Kpenger (**killed**)

Mnenge Ayaibo (**killed**)

Nigeria: Toradi village, Logo local government area

Verinumbe Jam (**killed**)

Pinega Mbavuur (**killed**)

Nigeria: Tse-Kimbir village, Logo local government area

Kwaghve Baaki (aged 70, **killed**)

Terhemen Kwaghve (**killed**)

Suushater Kwaghve (aged 7, **killed**)

Ioryue Tsehamba (**killed**)

Zahemen Tsavkuleve (**killed**)

Ahemba Shaku (**killed**)

Cephas Hough (said “The herdsmen went from house to house, shooting sporadically and killing six Christians”)

Nigeria: Logo local government area

Mlahaga (**killed**)

Terhile Tyozho (**killed**)

Joseph Anawa (reported on the killings)

Richard Nyajo (LGA chairman, said that the casualty figure is higher than reported as many women and children are missing and unaccounted for: “Thousands of people have been displaced. Corpses of those killed have been evacuated to morgues in hospitals in Katsina Ala and Gboko. We are still taking records of the victims”)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2018/01/muslim-fulani-herdsmen-launch-large-scale-attacks-benue-state-nigeria/>

Sunday January 7, 2018



Pakistan: Quetta, Balochistan

Aleeza Ashraf (aged 18 months, daughter of Ashraf Masih and Shamim Bibi, injured with shrapnel in her abdomen and left foot during the [December 17, 2017 Quetta, Balochistan church attack](#); **UPDATE**: developed multiple gangrene infections, left foot amputated, transferred to a hospital in Karachi, in danger of death)

Shamim Bibi (mother of Aleeza Ashra and Rimla Ashraf, injured with shrapnel in the abdomen during the [December 17, 2017 Quetta, Balochistan church attack](#), hospitalized; **UPDATE**: still hospitalized, unable to travel to care for Aleeza Ashraf, said "Aleeza is innocent, she has done no wrong. She does not have the ability to speak or to cause anyone any harm. At such a young and vulnerable age she has lost her right foot and has suffered pain that no child should have to go through. Aleza was born healthy and in a loving family and we will support her whatever condition she ends up in. However at the moment unless she survives through this terrible time we may not see her alive for much longer. Please pray for her and ask our great God to save her life")

Rimla Ashraf (aged 18, sister of Aleeza Ashraf, travelled to Karachi with her sister to care for her in the hospital)

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/Quetta-Church-bomb-survivor-of-one-year-needs-urgent-care-to-save-life>

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/aleeza-arrives-safely-at-agma-khan-hospital-and-begins-treatment>



Kenya: Ijara

Esther Boniface (teacher, said "This is the second Sunday we are remaining indoors and worshipping from our homes. The churches are closed and nobody is allowed to gather in any public place. The tension is even too high for non-locals who live in rented houses. These houses have been a target for al-Shabaab because most of the non-locals who have come here to work are Christians...Many schools have also closed down with others merging and having police officers guarding day and night to make sure that nobody plants improved explosive devices [IEDs] in the school compound or inside classes")

Pastor John (alias, said "Christians are a minority group here and the head of security has warned us of meeting in churches. There are escalating fears that the Somali terror group is planning to attack churches in Ijara, after the recent raiding of police stations. We have been avoiding our church premise for two weeks now for fear of being attacked and this is a big discouragement to us")

<http://www.persecution.org/2018/01/11/fear-and-tension-in-garissa-remain-after-al-shabaab-attack/>



Nigeria

UPDATE: Five nuns abducted in Igouriakhi, Edo state on November 13, 2017 were freed

Sr Roseline Isiocha EHJ (released)

Sr Aloysius Ajayi EHJ (released)

Sr Frances Udi EHJ (released)

http://www.fides.org/en/news/63528-AFRICA_NIGERIA_Kidnapped_religious_sisters_released

Monday January 8, 2018



Ukraine: Monastery of the Kiev Caves

Metropolitan Pavel Lebed (monastery abbot, monastery disrupted by 30 nationalists with fireworks, met with the nationalists at the gate, joined by seminarians who sang Christmas songs, the nationalists left, later said "The young men came in balaclavas and masks, with video cameras and political posters, in order to provoke disorder and fights, hoping for a violent response. But I came out to them and they apparently didn't expect this, supposing that the monks are scared by their aggressive actions. I came up to them and invited them to come to church and pray on that holy Christmas day. Of course they refused, although several of them were taken aback")

<http://orthochristian.com/109872.html>



Nigeria: Sokoto

Bishop Matthew Hassah Kukah (**UPDATE**: decried in a homily the “cries of shrill Islamization across the land...These cries arise when those in power use religious affiliation and blatant nepotism as means of access to power”)

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/nigerian-bishop-condemns-cries-of-shrill-islamization-26987>

Tuesday January 9, 2018



China: Linfen, Shanxi province

Yang Rongli (sister of Pastor Yang Xuan, arrested on [September 24, 2009](#) while guarding her church construction site, later sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment and fined US\$4,392; released from prison in [2016](#), placed under police surveillance; **UPDATE**: said "the police surrounded the Golden Lampstand Church. Patrol wagons guarded the church. Workers smashed the church's glass. At this point, excavators are digging into the church, but we are not allowed to enter or watch. The village head and the police from the local police station warned all the believers against entering the church. Now, we really have no idea what is going to happen", the church was then demolished in a controlled explosion)

<http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/01/bomb-destroys-persecuted-church.html>

[http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Linfen:-Christians-in-tears-watching-destruction-of-their-church-\(video\)-42807.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Linfen:-Christians-in-tears-watching-destruction-of-their-church-(video)-42807.html)

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-officials-demolish-yet-another-church-in-shanxi/81225>



Egypt: Biba, Beni Suef

Adly Younan Riad (aged 48, jeweler, **shot dead** in his car in front of his home, jewelry taken)

<http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=2062&A=33550>

<https://www.copticsolidarity.org/2018/01/14/coptic-jeweler-killed-in-beni-sweif/>

Wednesday January 10, 2018



India

Sajan K George (Global Council of Indian Christians president, **UPDATE**: objected to an RSS paramilitary leader's condemnation of Christianity as responsible for environmental destruction because it has no "reverence for nature", said "The GCIC considers as

irresponsible Gurumurthy's comments against Christianity, which is instead deeply committed to giving voice and caring for God's creation")

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Hindu-radical-accuses-Christianity-of-destroying-the-environment-42794.html>

India: Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh state

Three Nepali Christians were arrested on charges of insulting religious beliefs

Indra Bahadur Tamad

Shukra Rai

Mekh Bahadur

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Three-Nepali-Christians-arrested-in-Uttar-Pradesh-for-spreading-Christianity-42816.html>

Thursday January 11, 2018



Pakistan

Christian leaders responded to the abduction, rape, and murder of 7 year old Zainab and to police inaction following her abduction

Bishop Joseph Arshad (**UPDATE:** said the church "condemns the rape and murder of Zainab, a seven-year-old girl...the prevalent mindset cannot be beaten by academic education alone. People should be re-educated about human dignity")

Fr Morris Jalal (**UPDATE:** wrote "the cancer of pedophilia is spreading fast, it is not a new phenomenon. Media has only focused on this evil recently. Easy availability of porn on internet has further aided such mindset. Children attending private tuition of Quran in neighborhood are soft targets. Suffocation in society has created psychos")

Rojar Noor Alam (Caritas program director, said "people in Pakistan are shocked and grieved. Every parent can see their child in the eyes of this child, whose innocence was violated, beyond redemption. Ignoring abuses in madrassas helps produce deranged rapists...I hope one day to see all madrassas in Pakistan transformed into happiness centers, with libraries for children, where dancing, painting, and music are taught. We should let children know that the True God lives here and that God is but unconditional love and happiness")

Michelle Chaudhry (president of the Cecil & Iris Chaudhry Foundation; **UPDATE:** said she was "beyond horrified...[we must] ensure the safety and protection of our children...accountability is essential, those responsible must be punished in order to prevent such incidents from recurring...We at The CICF stand for a terror-free society,

where every child is safe and protected, where childhood is allowed to evolve into progressive adulthood”)

Christian leaders reacted to the [January 4, 2018](#) placement of their country on a religious persecution watch list by the U.S. government

Bishop Leo Paul (said "I am not sure if this measure by the U.S. would actually help Pakistani minorities, or if it could create more problems for them”)

Nadeem Anthony (attorney, said “Religious minorities of Pakistan are ‘with’ their country. If Pakistan puts its best and sincere efforts to change this, then we can get our name off this list. The only issue is sincere effort. If we want it, then this would happen. We have seen more than 100 houses of Christians set on fire on a mere accusation, and not a single person is convicted. If that would remain the same, then how can we stop other countries accusing us of human rights violations?”)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pakistani-Church-condemns-the-'brutal'-rape-and-murder-of-a-7-year-old-girl-42802.html>

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/For-Pakistani-activists,-a-%E2%80%9Crape-culture%E2%80%9D-places-no-value-in-children-42806.html>

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/01/pakistans-place-us-watch-list-create-problems-minorities/>



Nigeria

Yohanna Kukah ('traditional ruler', brother of Bishop Matthew Hassah Kukah and Samuel Kukah, abducted from his home in [Anchuna village, Kaduna state](#) on [January 2, 2018](#); **UPDATE**: released)

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/nigerian-bishop-condemns-cries-of-shrill-islamization-26987>

Friday January 12, 2018



Eritrea

Fr Mussie Zerai (reported to have spoken in [Rome, Italy](#) on the government's enforcement of laws banning private medical and social work "Beyond the economic damage to individual religious confessions those who pay a high price is the population who no longer has serious and efficient structures to turn to. In Xorona, for example, they closed the only dispensary in operation that was run by Catholics. In Dekemhare and Mendefera,

the authorities have banned the activity of Catholic medical centers by stating that they were a duplication of state ones. In reality, public facilities do not work: they do not have medicines, they cannot operate because they do not have suitable equipment and often not even electricity")

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/63552->

[AFRICA ERITREA Clinics and schools closed the regime prohibits Christian social activities](#)



Syria: Damascus

Archbishop Samir Nassar (**UPDATE:** bedroom reported to have been destroyed by a mortar shell, had just left the room prior to the impact, wrote in an email “Thank you Lord for this new beginning. My life belongs to you”)

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2018/01/12/syrian-archbishop-avoids-death-by-seconds-after-bomb-lands-on-bed/>



Chile: Santiago

Four churches were attacked with explosive devices, one was defused by police

Fr Fernando Ibanez (said young people shouted obscenities at his church hours before the attack, added “I heard the dog bark, and from my window I saw the flame. I woke up and told the parish priest, Father Cristian. The neighbors were screaming, shouting at us, and all I could do is bring the hose out and begin to put the fire down”)

<https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2018/01/12/bomb-threats-issued-pope-francis-ahead-chile-visit/>

Saturday January 13, 2018



Pakistan: Karachi

Aleeza Ashraf (aged 18 months, daughter of Ashraf Masih and Shamim Bibi, injured with shrapnel in her abdomen and left foot during the [December 17, 2017 Quetta, Balochistan](#)

church attack; as of **January 7, 2018** had developed multiple gangrene infections, left foot amputated, transferred to a hospital in Karachi, in danger of death; **UPDATE:** received several surgeries to remove infected tissue including a colostomy, condition now stable)

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/child-survivor-of-quetta-church-bomb-attack-aleeza-is-in-a-more-stable-position-but-requires-prosthe>



Egypt: Souq al-Khamis area, El-Arish, Sinai

Bassem Shehata Haraz (aged 27, brother of Usama, **shot dead** after he admitted he was a Christian)

Usama (brother of Bassem Shehata Haraz, witnessed his brother's murder)

Archbishop Michael Antoun (reported on the death of Bassem Shehata Haraz)

<https://www.copticsolidarity.org/2018/01/14/%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B7%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9/> - with translation

<https://www.copticsolidarity.org/2018/01/14/%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B7%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%B1%D8%A4%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%8A%D8%AF/> - with translation

Sunday January 14, 2018



India: Namli, Ratlam, district, Madhya Pradesh state

Fr Maria Stephen (**UPDATE:** reported to have responded to Hindu nationalists allegations that a Catholic school suspended 20 students for citing a patriotic slogan: “The charge is totally baseless and false. The school has not rusticated [suspended] anyone”, added that the students were corrected for mocking a national song, the school has sought police protection)

<http://mattersindia.com/2018/01/catholic-school-seeks-police-protection-in-mp/>

January 2018, date unknown

Today's Martyrs

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

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