

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Events – February 2019

Friday February 1, 2019



Myanmar: Rakhine state

Pastor Tun Nu (aged 41, convert, husband, father of three, abducted from his home by 5 armed men on [January 19, 2019](#); **UPDATE**: reported to have been **killed**)

<https://www.persecution.org/2019/02/05/kidnapped-pastor-killed-myanmars-rakhine-state/>

Saturday February 2, 2019



Syria: Aleppo

Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh OFM (aged 47; **UPDATE**: said of his home "It is a wounded city, with broken wings. Its economy is destroyed and must be rebuilt almost from scratch. There is a widespread feeling of sadness and bitterness. When we are asked how things are, we usually reply that the war has just begun, because now the wounds are beginning to emerge in all their depth...The deepest wounds concern the human being, the heart and the soul of many children raised during the war which show evident psychological fragility...As Christians we are always threatened with disappearing, in Syria as in the whole Middle East. The community lives suspended between heaven and earth, we are hung on the Cross, in suffering, in bitterness. Eight years ago we entered a tunnel that, even today, it does not seem to have an end...")

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Fr.-Ibrahim:-Syria,-a-football-at-the-feet-of-the-international-powers-46152.html>

Sunday February 3, 2019



India: Ishgar village, Uttar Pradesh state

Fr Rocky Shah (diocesan spokesman, **UPDATE**: condemned an arson attack on a shrine with a statue of Mary the mother of Jesus)

Bishop Basil Bhuriya (said "[I] "visited the Grotto [shrine] around 9.30 pm, the same day, it was very sad to witness the scene, police were guarding the place, I said prayers at the Grotto and consoled our people who were present. There are nearly 4,000 Catholics in this Parish. A case has been registered against unidentified persons")

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Statue-of-Mary-set-on-fire-in-Madhya-Pradesh-46195.html>

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/politics-suspected-in-burning-of-marian-statue-in-india/84451>



Ukraine: Gnezdichno village, Ternopil province

Fr Stephan Balan (injured in a brawl led by supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate during a church takeover, beaten by police, said “I think they’re waiting for the official registration of the charter, then there will be an official storming. I counted 95 people today — people that never come to church. Our parishioners, who are always in church, numbered more than 60”)

<http://orthochristian.com/119124.html>

Monday February 4, 2019



Iran: Esfahan

Sina Moloudian (aged 26, convert, arrested without warrant in his home on [January 23, 2019](#), Bibles and CDs seized; **UPDATE**: released on bail)

<http://mohabatnews.com/en/?p=4156>



Ukraine: Dubno, Rivne province

Bishop Pimen (said that several of his priests had received summons to report to Security service offices for interrogation and that it was clear that they were looking for incriminating information against those who remained loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate)

<http://orthochristian.com/119195.html>

Wednesday February 6, 2019



Russia: Oryol

Dennis Christensen (aged 46, Danish citizen, husband of Irina, arrested on [May 25, 2017](#) for 'continuing the activities of a banned extremist organization', ordered held for 2 months pending trial; detention extended on [July 20, 2017](#) to November 23, 2017; denied bail on [November 20, 2017](#), detention extended to February 23, 2018; **UPDATE**: convicted, sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment)

Irina Christensen (wife of Dennis Christensen, said "It is terrible, a 6-year jail sentence for believing in God. I couldn't believe that such a thing could happen in Russia")

Yaroslav Sivulsky (said "The sentence causes only great regret. They have convicted a man who has committed no crime. It is sad that in Russia it has again become a crime to read the Bible, to keep its commandments, and to talk about your faith with other people")

<https://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/jailing-of-jehovahs-witness-triggers-warning-of-a-crackdown-on-russian-minorities/60647.htm>

http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2450



France: Nimes

At least 10 churches were desecrated within 2 weeks

Bishop Robert Wattebled (denounced a church vandalism attack in which the tabernacle was opened and consecrated hosts were scattered on the ground, and a cross was drawn on the wall with feces, wrote "The sign of the cross and the Blessed Sacrament have been the subject of serious injurious actions. This act of profanation hurts us all in our deepest convictions")

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/02/15/eucharist-desecrated-and-statues-smashed-in-series-of-french-church-attacks/>



United States – Iowa: Des Moines

Jake Estell (member of the Business Leaders in Christ at the University of Iowa, the organization prevailed in Federal court against the banning of the group by the University, said “We are grateful the court protected our rights today—to let us have the same right as all student groups to express our viewpoints freely on campus”)

Kristina Schrock (InterVarsity Graduate Christian Fellowship president, brought suit in Federal Court on [August 6, 2018](#) against the University of Iowa in [Iowa City](#) after it decertified all student groups that had restrictions on officers including adherence to an article of faith; **UPDATE:** thanked the court when it ruled in favor of Business Leaders in Christ, her Fellowship's suit is still pending)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/02/11/judge-rules-in-favor-of-christian-club-kicked-off-iowa-campus/>

Thursday February 7, 2019



India: Chapar village, Sultanpur district, Uttar Pradesh state

Rev Ranjit (prayer service in his home attacked by 25 Hindu radicals, Bibles burned)

Rakesh (seriously injured)

Mukesh (seriously injured)

Bhanu Pratap (seriously injured)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christians-beaten-during-prayer-in-Uttar-Pradesh-46210.html>



Ethiopia

Adane (aged 25, alias, convert, police officer, reported to have been arrested after admitting he was a Christian and refusing to return to Islam, dismissed from the police, relocated to another area of the country)

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2019/02/ethiopia-ethnic-somali-christian-police-man-forced-to-relocate-after-talking-about-his-faith/>



Egypt: Nawasir village, Esna, Luxor province

Marnia Milad (aged 18, disappeared)

<http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=2338&A=37542>



United States - Alabama

Pastor Alan Cross (criticized the state prison system for not allowing Muslim clergy to attend to a Muslim prisoner who was about to be executed)

United States - New York: Manhattan

Cardinal Timothy Dolan (**UPDATE:** responded to an attack on him by Governor Andrew Cuomo over his criticism of the governor for passage of a new abortion bill
"Today...Governor Cuomo linked me with the 'religious right'...This is something new from the governor. He did not consider me part of the 'religious right' when seeking my help with the minimum wage increase, prison reform, protection of migrant workers, a welcome of immigrants and refugees, and advocacy for college programs for the state's inmate population, which we were happy to partner with him on, because they were our causes too. I guess I was part of the 'religious left' in those cases...The governor also continues his attempt to reduce the advocacy for the human rights of the pre-born infant to a 'Catholic issue', an insult to our allies of so many religions, or none at all...")

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/10/opinion/alabama-domineque-ray-death-row.html>
<http://cardinaldolan.org/index.php/hiding-behind-labels/>

Friday February 8, 2019



India: Jharkhand state

Fr Alphonse Aind SJ (middle school principal, arrested on [June 22, 2018](#) on fabricated charges of organizing the abduction and rape of five social activists by six Pathagadi tribal gunmen after the gunmen had seized his automobile, denied bail; **UPDATE**: still in jail)

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-priest-bailed-in-rape-case-must-stay-in-jail/84475>



Pakistan: Lahore

Senator Kamran Michael (**UPDATE**: arrested on corruption charges)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/7038>



Syria: Damascus

Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem II (aged 55, targeted by a suicide bomber dressed as a priest during a [June 19, 2016](#) Pentecost [Eastern calendar] commemoration of the Assyrian genocide in [al-Wusta district, Qamishli](#), escaped injury when the bomber was stopped by security and set off his bomb, 3 security guards were killed and 5 wounded; **UPDATE**: reported to have held a reception for diplomats who have been returning to re-open their embassies)

Cardinal Mario Zenari (apostolic nuncio [Vatican ambassador]; **UPDATE**: reported to have attended the reception)

[http://www.fides.org/en/news/65535-ASIA SYRIA Embassies re open in Damascus Cardinal Zenari good sign](http://www.fides.org/en/news/65535-ASIA_SYRIA_Embassies_re_open_in_Damascus_Cardinal_Zenari_good_sign)

Saturday February 9, 2019



Pakistan: Lahore

Pakistan: Lahore Shafaqat Emmanuel (aged 40, husband of Shagufta Bibi, father of two, handicapped, arrested on [July 27, 2013](#) for allegedly sending a blasphemous text message; confessed sending the blasphemous text message after being tortured and told by the police that his wife would be tortured; moved to the jail hospital with multiple bed sores which are reportedly more than 3 inches deep, will require surgery if he survives;

found guilty at trial on [April 4, 2014](#), sentenced to death; **UPDATE**: still imprisoned on death row)

Shagufta Kauser (aged 40, wife of Shafaqat Emmanuel, mother of two, school worker, arrested on [July 27, 2013](#) for allegedly sending a blasphemous text message; forced along with her children to watch the torture of her husband by the police; found guilty at trial on [April 4, 2014](#), sentenced to death; **UPDATE**: still imprisoned on death row)

Pakistan: Rawalpindi

Zafar Bhatti (aged 49, husband of Nawab Bibi, unemployed due to health reasons, illiterate, arrested on blasphemy charges on [July 23, 2012](#) for allegedly sending 3 blasphemous text messages to extremist Islamic cleric Molvi Abrar Ahmed; convicted in Rawalpindi on [May 3, 2017](#), sentenced to life imprisonment; **UPDATE**: appeal underway, said "I've been suffering in jail for over 5 years for something I did not do. The isolation and hardship of jail has caused me to develop diabetes. I was arrested under questionable circumstances, and despite there being no evidence found against me I am still in the jail...There are many security concerns within jail but I still stand firm in the faith. I believe God will provide justice to me soon")

Nawab Bibi (aged 70, wife of Zafar Bhatti, housemaid, abused by her employer, hospitalized due to poor health, released)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/7039>

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/falsely-accused-zafar-bhatti-awaits-appeal-of-life-sentence-for-blasphemy>



France: Dijon, Cote-d'Or

At least 10 churches were desecrated within 2 weeks

Fr Emmanuel Pic (church vandalized, tabernacle opened and consecrated hosts scattered, altar cloth stained, missal book torn, said "Nothing of value has been broken, but it is the intent that is very shocking. This is what characterizes profanation...[The damage attacked the] heart of the Catholic faith")

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/02/15/eucharist-desecrated-and-statues-smashed-in-series-of-french-church-attacks/>



Colombia: Caucasia, Antioquia state

Pastor Leider Molina (aged 24, **shot dead** while leaving his church after a service)

<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2019/02/another-colombian-pastor-killed-leaving-the-church-terrified/>

Tuesday February 12, 2019



India

Dr. John Dayal (All India Christian Council; **UPDATE:** reported that the government has cancelled the licenses of 15,000 foreign charity NGOs since 2014, said "Every Indian government, but especially the current one led by the Hindu nationalist BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], has been hostile to international organizations and media scrutiny...[because they investigate the] real situation, such as extreme poverty, suicides among farmers, rape, human rights violations and civil liberties, and above all religious freedom...India does not usually grant a visa to United Nations special envoys to investigate human rights. It is very hostile to them. This is especially true when Western governments raise questions about the treatment of Christians, Muslims and Dalits...[this] weakens the voice of India's own human rights community, which needs access to domestic and international media to amplify its voice, [but] the truth in the end will come to the fore and the human rights community will find alternative ways to speak out and put the spotlight on what is happening...the lives of millions of beneficiaries who receive aid from the West are at risk. What started as mere suspicion towards groups headquartered in New York or Europe has morphed into full blown paranoia")

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Since-2014-the-Modi-government-has-cancelled-the-licence-of-15,000-foreign-NGOs-46231.html>



Ukraine: Kulchin village, Volyn province

Archpriest Oleg Tochinsky (diocesan secretary; **UPDATE:** described an attack on a church by members of the Kiev Patriarchate in which a police seal was broken and doors removed)

<http://orthochristian.com/119323.html>



Sweden: Uppsala

Pastor Micael Grenholm (wrote against the government asylum test 'Am I a Christian" which only 60% of Swedish citizens could pass, one application was denied asylum because he could not explain Halloween, another was deported over a minor mistranslation of the Our Father, wrote in particular “Most people agree that the questions converts face are too hard and do not really say anything about whether someone's faith is genuine or not. Several questions display a secular bias and an ignorance of what true Christian faith is about...This is a full-blown catastrophe. Genuine Christians are being deported to countries where Christians are persecuted simply because Swedish government officials are incompetent and hostile towards Christianity”)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/regional-news-details/1132>

Wednesday February 13, 2019



Egypt: Nawasir village, Esna, Luxor province

Marnia Milad (aged 18, disappeared on [February 7, 2019](#); **UPDATE**: returned home by police)

<http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=2338&A=37542>



Ukraine: Boryspil Airport, Kiev

Archimandrite Gideon Kharon (U.S. citizen, forgave the arsonists who attacked his monastery on [January 25, 2018](#); issued a statement on [February 3, 2018](#) regarding ultranationalist threats against the Tithes Monastery of the Mother of God, Kiev; **UPDATE**: detained upon re-entry to the country after returning from the United States where he had testified to Members of Congress on the situation in the country, passport seized and then declared lost, denied access to attorneys, Members of Parliament, and medication, stripped of his Ukrainian citizenship and deported under armed escort, said “They didn’t let me into Ukraine, arguing that my citizenship has been canceled, that it’s invalid, although just 15 days ago I flew out without any problems or any kind of court decision...It’s just such religious and political pressure and lawlessness that’s happening in Ukraine today”)

<http://orthochristian.com/119347.html>

Thursday February 14, 2019



India

Sr Concilia Baxia MC (arrested along with an orphanage staffer on human trafficking charges in [Ranchi, Jharkhand state](#) on [July 5, 2018](#); **UPDATE**: still in jail, has been denied bail)

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas SFX (**UPDATE**: visited Sr Concilia Baxia in jail, said "It was an emotional heartbreaking visit...The poor sister suffers from diabetes and varicose veins. Uprooted from her daily routine, left to suffer alone, all of us, her co-sisters, Superiors, Bishops, priests and all who know her and are convinced of her innocence can only look up to heaven in helplessness and hope, as every attempt to even get bail for her has been brusquely rejected by our judiciary at various levels sometimes in a matter of minutes...Many like her are languishing in jail as under trials waiting for the slow churning of the wheels of justice which often appear to be spun by money power, political clout, massive media propaganda and even blatant manipulation of evidence")

http://www.fides.org/en/news/65564-ASIA_INDIA_A_sister_of_Mother_Teresa_in_prison_the_Church_calls_for_justice

Friday February 15, 2019



China: Chengdu, Sichuan province

Family members of Christians who had been detained were reported to have been arrested on charges of 'illegal gathering' after they had assembled outside a police station to get information about their loved ones

Xu Miaozhuang (wife of Elder Su Bingsen, detained)

Xiao Hongliu (wife of Deacon Tan Defu, detained)

Lu Lingzhi (wife of Dai Zhichao, detained along with her child)

Shen Bing (husband of Li Xiaofeng, detained)

<https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/02/spouses-child-of-arrested-house-church.html>



India: Sarwada, Jharkhand state

Fr Masih Prakash Soy (reported on Hindu demands that a bust of a German missionary who had advocated for tribal peoples be removed from in front of a church: "The controversy is a ploy of the ruling BJP to divide tribal people")

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindus-oppose-german-missionarys-statue-in-indian-parish/84523>



Burkina Faso: on the road from Lome

Fr Antonio Cesar Fernandez SDB (aged 72, **shot dead** in a jihadist attack, two other priests escaped)

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/65583->

[AFRICA BURKINA FASO The Rector Major of the Salesians May the blood of Fr Antonio Cesar be the seed of Christians faithful followers of Jesus and of young vocations at the service of the Kingdom](http://www.fides.org/en/news/65583-)

Monday February 18, 2019



Ukraine: Malinkovka and Slavyansk

Archbishop Mitrophan (**UPDATE**: detained at a police checkpoint on 'suspicion of separatism', denied an attorney, released after a crowd had gathered in support at the police station)

<http://orthochristian.com/119413.html>

Tuesday February 19, 2019



Pakistan: Chanan village, Gujrat district

Shazia Bibi (wife of Bashir, mother of eight, domestic worker, employer reported to have pressured her to convert to Islam, quit her employment, employer assaulted her and her

husband in their home and abducted four of her children and placed them in a madrassah [Islamic school] to be converted, joined her children, told they would not be released unless they converted, released after an approximate payment of US\$1,430 was made to the employer)

Bashir (husband of Shazia Bibi, father of eight)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/7043>



United Kingdom: London

Liz Parsons (Head of Advocacy for the prolife group Life, reported to have said after a court ruled that the July 2018 closure of the group's exhibit at a municipal fair constituted an illegal breach of contract: “Lambeth’s agreement to settle this matter through a payment of damages is a victory for common sense and freedom of expression...In a climate where the prolife voice is being shut down by local authorities across the country, we want to be clear that we are going nowhere...For almost five decades we have stood firm in our provision of support for women and advocacy for the life of the unborn...The stall at Lambeth sought to educate people about the unborn baby and advertise our care services for pregnant women, including those who are homeless or in need of emotional and practical support...We must, and will challenge any organization which tries in any way to impede this important work”)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/02/19/london-council-pays-damages-to-pro-life-charity/>

February 2019, date unknown

Today's Martyrs

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

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