Today’s Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Events – May 2019

Wednesday May 1, 2019

Venezuela: Sucre barrio, San Cristobal

Fr Jario Clavijo (attempted to stop a National Guard attack on his church as Mass ended)

Bishop Mario del Valle Moronta Rodriguez (UPDATE: reported “[Mass was ending] when two [members of] the GNB [the National Guard] entered the church on a motorcycle. The pastor came down from the rectory in order to stop them, in the attempt to dialogue, a horde of 40 GNB arrived trying to enter. The pastor, Fr Jairo Clavijo, stopped them, and after them a general arrived by the last name of Ochoa who started arguing with the pastor, in hardly respectful terms. Not content with the outrage, the GNB threw tear gas canisters inside the church. They were unable to evacuate the sacred precinct where there were a good number of faithful including quite a few elderly people. A nun fainted...This incident is extremely serious and is an attack on the Catholic Church. I blame the aforementioned General Ochoa as well as the military authorities in the region for this despicable incident which by itself speaks of the intentionality of the attackers who don't have the least respect for human dignity and don't even show any fear of God”)


Thursday May 2, 2019

Nigeria: Dong village, Plateau state

David Musa (aged 26, killed by Fulani Muslims)

Nuhu Ako (aged 42, church youth leader, UPDATE: described the killing of David Musa “We heard the sound of gunshots around the stream west of Dong village, where you're now talking to us. We rushed there to find out what happened and found again the killing of a
member of our community... We are farmers and have not been able to continue with our vocation because of these attacks. We and our elders and church leaders have met several times with these herdsmen to understand what is prompting them to attack us without finding any real reason for such acts against us. [T]hey would impress it on their people to end such attacks on us, but it appears they only do this in order to perfect their plans to attack us the more... The destruction of our houses [in Nzerivoh] was carried out right in the presence of soldiers who were brought to the village to protect us. Instead, we have been forced to escape to Dong community, and here, too, the herdsmen are now attacking this community. We do not know where to run to since the whole of this area is under attack”

Kadzai Prince Peter (catechist, said “We have tried to embrace all these Fulani people, to live with them. We’ve been kind to them: we gave them our land to stay on and to graze their cattle. Unfortunately, they’ve been killing our members. The way they attack us is terribly bad. We tried to make peace with them, but this has not worked as they keep attacking us. They still kill our members. So, we don’t know what else to do. We as Christians see the herdsmen as our brothers and cannot send them away, but, unfortunately, these Fulani herdsmen do not appreciate our hospitality and are killing us and forcing us out of our lands. We just buried one of our members killed by the herdsmen a moment ago”)

Silas Jacob (aged 42, catechist, described a Muslim attack in Nzerivoh village, Plateau state on October 13, 2017; UPDATE: later said "...last Saturday [April 27], the herdsmen ambushed two of our people and killed them. And just while we were still mourning the two, one of us was again killed yesterday [May 2] in an ambush again by the herdsmen. This is very disheartening. These attacks on us are being carried out in the presence of soldiers, and yet the Nigerian government has not done anything to end these unprovoked attacks on us... We have parishioners who have no places to sleep, food to eat, and even medical supplies for health needs. Truly, those of us who have survived these attacks are suffering")

https://morningstarnews.org/2019/05/three-christians-killed-in-ambush-attacks-near-jos-nigeria/

United States - Pennsylvania

Archbishop Charles Chaput (UPDATE: released the following statement: "Over the past few days, videos have gone viral on social media featuring State Representative Brian Sims aggressively harassing young and elderly women who were peacefully praying outside of a Planned Parenthood Clinic in Philadelphia. These videos, which Representative Sims took himself, have rightly sparked broad outrage and garnered much attention in the press. His actions were unbecoming of an elected official... There is much bitter irony that he claims to be a champion for the rights of all women yet he trampled on the rights of others and disgracefully shamed them in public. It was particularly disdainful that he offered a bounty for the identity and home addresses of three young ladies in order to encourage protests at their homes... Representative Sims spoke often of shame and there
was plenty of that to be found in his actions, which demonstrated a complete disregard for civility and basic human decency...


Sunday May 5, 2019

Switzerland

Dabrina Bet-Tamrez (Iranian citizen, daughter of Shamiram Isavi and Pastor Victor Beth Tarmez, sister of Ram-eil, has been working with the UN Human Rights Council to overturn the Iranian conviction of her parents and brother on national security and illegal religious activities charges, recently had to move after Iranian MOIS agents published her Swiss address and photo on social media and encouraged Iranian men in Switzerland to 'visit' her)

https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/14164/iran-targeting-christians

Monday May 6, 2019

Netherlands

Chen Yan (Chinese citizen, asylum applicant, detained in an immigration facility on or before April 2, 2019 after documenting Chinese persecutions, at risk of deportation to China; UPDATE: released)


Tuesday May 7, 2019
India: Khunti

Fr Alphonse Aind SJ (aged 48, middle school principal in Kochang village, Jharkhand state, 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: convicted on conspiracy charges, church officials continue to insist the charges are fabricated)


United States – Colorado: Highlands Ranch

Kendrick Ray Castillo (aged 18, son of John Castillo, student, shot dead in his school while attempting to disarm another student, the armed student was motivated by anti-Christian sentiments)


Wednesday May 8, 2019

Bangladesh

Church security has increased after the Sri Lankan Easter church attacks

Bangladesh: Tejgaon, Dhaka

Fr Kamal Corraya (said "In the past there were three agents in front of the main door of the church, now there are ten. After the massacres in Sri Lanka, we gathered with the members of the parish council and decided to increase surveillance, especially during Sunday masses", parishioners have been asked to not bring large bags to church)

Bangladesh: Chittagong

Fr Jermon D’Rozario (said of steps taken at the cathedral "In addition to policemen, there are sometimes agents of the [elite] Rapid Action Battalion to guarantee our security")

Bangladesh: Narikelbari

Fr Loton Gomes (attended a meeting of about 92 clergy with law enforcement, said "there are many small Protestant congregations in the area, in addition to the Catholic churches. Police gave us some useful tips, like installing video surveillance cameras, increasing the
number of guards and avoiding large bags. We must be suspicious of people we do not know and who might try to avoid the request for identification by the agents"


Pakistan

Aasiya Noreen aka Asia Bibi (aged 48, wife of Ashiq Masih, mother of five including Isham, daughter of Soran Masih, convicted in 2009 of blasphemy; the Supreme Court on October 31, 2018 issued a ruling that overturned her conviction on the grounds that she had been denied presumption of innocence, ordered her immediate release; UPDATE: left the country for Canada)

Pakistan: Lahore

Fr James Channan OP (UPDATE: condemned the terror attack on a Sufi shrine "This is another sad example of religious terrorism. The terrorists are doing everything to create fear among the faithful and block them in living their religious practices. This explosion in the holy month of Ramadan is terrible. In this month of fasting, mosques and shrines are always crowded with faithful. We want to express our solidarity with the government, the security forces and the families of the victims")

https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/asia-bibi-is-free-at-last

Thursday May 9, 2019

Netherlands

Chen Yan (Chinese citizen, asylum applicant, detained in an immigration facility on or before April 2, 2019 after documenting Chinese persecutions, at risk of deportation to China; released on May 6, 2019; UPDATE: reported that her husband and brother had been interrogated in China over her 'illegal actions' and that her son was in hiding there)

https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/husband-brother-of-human-rights.html
Saturday May 11, 2019

**China: Xiamen, Fujian province**
Pastor Yang Xibo (UPDATE: government agents told him of their plan to shut his church)
https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/authorities-harass-banned-church.html

**Turkey**
Arthur (aged 13, son of Alia, tricked into converting to Islam on television)
Alia (mother or Arthur, said “Arthur is a naive 13-year-old boy. A Syrian friend of his told him: ‘Come, we’ll talk on live TV. They will give us toys, and we will eat with the stars’. And my son went with him. He's a child, he made a mistake, but he did not convert...We are Armenians and Christians. If I had known [what would happen], I would have been with my son”)
Garo Paylan (aged 47, Member of Parliament; UPDATE: championed Alia’s legal suit against the producers of the television show)

Sunday May 12, 2019

**China: Xiamen, Fujian province**
Pastor Yang Xibo (government agents told him on May 11, 2019 of their plan to shut his church; UPDATE: congregants at a service were identified using facial recognition cameras that had been installed at the church entrance and were later interrogated by their employers or residential committees)

**China: Xiangtan, Hunan province**
Huang (church elder, forced by police to stop a worship service)
https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/authorities-harass-banned-church.html
Pakistan: Okara
Fr James Bahadur (100 year old cemetery vandalized, more than 30 tombs destroyed, stated "It is very sad to see that some people attacked our Christian cemetery, they broke crosses and damaged graves. It is an offense to our faith, our religious feelings are hurt, the guilty must be arrested...This action of vandalism has spread terror in the city and our people are afraid. It is an act carried out by fundamentalists to sow hatred among people of various faiths...")

Burkina Faso: Dablo
Fr Simeon Yampa (aged 34, killed at Mass along with five others by jihadists, church burned)
Bishop Theophile Nare (wrote "Fr Simeon Yampa was a humble person, obedient and full of love, he loved his parishioners")

India: New Delhi
Gornath Chalanseth (father of four, imprisoned for the August 2008 murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati; UPDATE: granted bail by the Supreme Court)
Anto Akkara (journalist; UPDATE: stated "This bail order is a landmark and huge victory in the fight for justice for Kandhamal’s seven innocents. This bail order of the Supreme Court,
led by the ADF legal team, will be the first step towards acquittal of the innocent Christians languishing in jail for a decade for a crime they never committed")

Bhaskar Sunamajhi (husband of Debaki, father of one; **UPDATE:** still in prison)
Bijay Kumar Sunseth (husband of Pabitra Sanseth, father of six; **UPDATE:** still in prison)
Budhadeb Nayak (husband ofNilandri, father of five; **UPDATE:** still in prison)
Durjo Sunamajhi (husband of Gumili, father of five; **UPDATE:** still in prison)
Munda Badmajhi (husband of Bandigudali, father of four; **UPDATE:** still in prison)
Sanatan Badmajhi (husband of Badusi, father of four; **UPDATE:** still in prison)


**Egypt:** Al-Wahda district, Shubra al-Khaymah city, Qaliubiya province

Fr Makad Saad (shot dead in front of his church reportedly by another priest over a declined loan)


**Niger:** Dolbel

Fr Nicaise Avlouke (injured in the hand and leg during an attack on his church)


**Tuesday May 14, 2019**

**China:** Xiamen, Fujian province
Pastor Yang Xibo (congregants at the May 12, 2019 service were identified using facial recognition cameras that had been installed at the church entrance and were later interrogated by their employers or residential committees; **UPDATE**: wife interviewed by government agents, told them she supported her husband)

https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/authorities-harass-banned-church.html

Nicaragua: Esteli

Bishop Juan Abelardo Mata Guevara (shot at by pro-government paramilitaries at a police checkpoint in Nindiri while in his vehicle on July 15, 2018, escaped injury; **UPDATE**: said "We have said several times: this regime does not have the political will to reach an agreement for the good of the country. For the regime, the people are only the small group that supports it. It has its own program: to remain in power at all costs and create a scenario that will allow it to continue acting in political life...[President Daniel Ortega] has no intention of seeking a peaceful solution to the socio-political crisis that the country has been experiencing for a year")

http://www.fides.org/en/news/66024-AMERICA_NICARAGUA_Bishop_Mata_Guevara_dialogue_is_blocked_no_political_prisoners_have_beenReleased_there_is_no_will_to_resolve_the_crisis

**Wednesday May 15, 2019**

Pakistan: Chak no 68 EB Dogra wale Tehsil Arif Wala Pakpattan, near Lahore

Two Christian families were beaten and driven from their homes by a mob after mosque loudspeakers broadcast "These Esai [Christians] have committed a blasphemy by saying bad words against Islam. All the lovers of Islam must gather together and force these demonic creatures out of this village", saved from the mob by some Muslim women and a Muslim attorney

Naveed Masih (aged 25, mason, son of Shukantila and Farzand Masih, punched in the eye by a Muslim after he had asked the man to stop shouting profanities into his phone while standing in front of the Christian home, told 'You filthy chura have dared to even speak to me a Muslim and have defiled me, just wait and see what I will do to you", filed a police report, later beaten by the mob)
Shukantila Masih (aged 60, wife of Farzand Masih, mother of Naveed, Hameed, and Tanveer, and three unidentified daughters, said "This was a horrifying moment for my whole family and other Christians. We felt totally helpless. In our panic we started to get ourselves ready to flee our homes and get far away from the village, however, we were all too slow. In no time we start to hear Muslims gather outside our home - even the children. The violent mob surrounded our home and all of them had weapons including guns - which were being shot in the air, sticks, axes, poles and farming tools. Even the small children had weapons, we feared for our lives. The mob began shouting outside our home they asking for our family to exit our home and receive divine retribution for our sin. It did not seem very divine - we just saw raging evil violent people ready to kill us")

Farzand Masih (aged 63, mason, husband of Shukantila, father of Naveed, Hameed, and Tanveer, and three unidentified daughters, beaten)

Hameed Masih (aged 23, mason, son of Shukantila and Farzand Masih, beaten)

Tanveer (aged 16, mason, son of Shukantila and Farzand Masih, beaten)

Sultan Masih (aged 30, beaten)

Gulfam Masih (aged 25, beaten)

https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/telephone-call-anger-leads-to-blasphemy-charges-for-innocent-christian

United Kingdom

Several public figures of many religious backgrounds signed an open letter stating that a definition of 'Islamophobia' adopted by the Labour Party and the Mayor of London threatened civil liberties, the letter stated "...We are concerned that allegations of Islamophobia will be, indeed already are being, used to effectively shield Islamic beliefs and even extremists from criticism, and that formalizing this definition will result in it being employed effectively as something of a backdoor blasphemy law..."

Pastor Ade Omooba (UPDATE: signatory)
Baroness Caroline Cox (signatory)
Lord David Alton (UPDATE: signatory)
Bishop Gavin Ashenden (UPDATE: signatory)
Bishop Emeritus Michael Nazir Ali (UPDATE: signatory)
Tim Dieppe (Christian Concerns; UPDATE: signatory)
Wilson Chowdhry (British Pakistani Christian Association; UPDATE: signatory)

Australia

Israel Folau (aged 30, husband of Maria Tuta’ia, top-ranked professional rugby player, told by Rugby Australia on April 11, 2019 that it would move to void his AU$4m contract after he posted on Instagram Bible quotes that listed particular sins as risking damnation, including homosexuality; spoke at an Easter service on April 21, 2019, broke down when he said "For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"); UPDATE: contract voided, said “I am deeply saddened by today’s decision to terminate my employment and I am considering my options. As Australians, we are born with certain rights, including the right to freedom of religion and the right to freedom of expression. The Christian faith has always been a part of my life and I believe it is my duty as a Christian to share God’s word. Upholding my religious beliefs should not prevent my ability to work or play for my club and country”)


Burkina Faso: Bobo-Dioulasso

Fr Fernando Fernandez SDB (Spanish citizen, stabbed to death by a former cook)
Fr Germain Plakoo-Mlapa SDB (Togolese citizen, stabbed, hospitalized, out of danger)


China: Xiamen, Fujian province
Pastor Yang Xibo (wife interviewed by government agents on May 14, 2019, told them she supported her husband; **UPDATE**: interviewed along with his wife by government agents, issued a corrective order that was later posted on the church gate)

https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/authorities-harass-banned-church.html

**Nicaragua: Managua**

Cardinal Leopoldo Jose Brenes Solorzano (aged 70, roughed up by pro-government paramilitaries in Diriamba on July 9, 2018; **UPDATE**: condemned police violence committed in front of the cathedral against people protesting the death of a North American in prison)


**Sunday May 19, 2019**

**China: Xiamen, Fujian province**

Pastor Yang Xibo (interviewed along with his wife by government agents on May 18, 2019, issued a corrective order that was later posted on the church gate; **UPDATE**: church raided by officials, ordered closed, fined US$3,622, said “We will appeal, the government will convene a hearing, and we will persevere in walking according to legal procedures”)

https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/historic-churches-face-banning.html
https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/authorities-harass-banned-church.html

**Monday May 20, 2019**

**Sri Lanka: Negombo**
Pastor Anton Kyanq (reported that as many as 60 Pakistani Christian and 100 Pakistani Ahmadiya Muslim asylum seekers were illegally evicted from their homes and fled to the police station for refuge during anti-Muslim rioting following the April 21, 2019 Easter church bombings, began collecting food and other essentials for them)


Thursday May 23, 2019

China: Xiamen, Fujian province

Pastor Yang Xibo (church raided by officials on May 19, 2019, ordered closed, fined US$3,622, said “We will appeal, the government will convene a hearing, and we will persevere in walking according to legal procedures”; UPDATE: choir members blocked by police from entering the church for practice)

https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/historic-churches-face-banning.html
https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/05/authorities-harass-banned-church.html

May 2019, date unknown

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