

**Today's Martyrs**  
**2014-12-22 through 2014-12-27**



**China**

Zhang Shucai (described the administrative detention of 36 Christians)

Date: September 28, 2014

Location: Leibo county, Sichuan province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2014/12/sichuan-house-church-seeking-help.html>

Li Wenxi (bookseller, husband of Li Caihong and father of two, arrested and beaten in December 2012; convicted on June 17, 2013 of illegally operating a business [his bookstore], sentenced to two years imprisonment; **UPDATE**: released from prison)

Ren Lacheng (bookstore owner; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Date: December 18, 2014

Location: Xiaodian district, Taiyuan, Shanxi province

Source [with photo]: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2014/12/christian-bookstore-employee-released.html>



**Egypt**

Mina Thabet (**UPDATE**: said "People now pray in the ashes of the churches. The churches have been destroyed and praying on the streets can cause problems")

Date: December 22, 2014

Location: Fayoum

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222180945.htm>

Nora Girgis (tried to stop the burning of her church, threatened with death)

Fr Sidarous Macca (described the intricate wood carvings that were destroyed by arson, said that many Muslim neighbors donated money to rebuild the church)

Atteya Farag (church caretaker, church burnt)

Nady Khalil (director of Integral Development Action, said "For three days [the looters] were selling things in the street and people from the church were buying them back")

Dates: August 14, 2013, December 22, 2014

Location: Minya

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222034717.htm>



## India

Bishop Thomas Dabre (wrote ""We are aware of certain trends and events taking place in our beloved country. We hear of arson, burning of a church, imposition of Hindu practises and methods by means of *Ghar Wapsi* [reconversion]. Some recent events are disturbing, like moves to declare the Gita as India's national scripture, to declare 25 December, Christmas day, as Good Governance Day, or to employ pressure tactics not to call Christian priests as 'Father' but as *Acharya* or *Guruji*. They are unjust, forced attempts to imposed *sarasvati puja*. At present, the *Ghar Wapsi* campaign has created an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among Muslims and Christians...Conversion is a right enshrined in the Constitution and there can be no debate on this issue. Christians do not indulge in forced conversions. We neither practice nor recognize conversions by force, fraud and enticement. Forced conversions and their sensationalized and thus organized promotion are provocative..."")

Date: December 22, 2014

Location: Pune

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/For-Mgr-Dabre,-India-should-ensure-respect-for-the-rights-and-freedoms-of-all-citizens-33023.html>

Catholicose Baselious Pauolse II (condemned forced conversions as violations of the Constitution)

Date: December 23, 2014

Location: Kerala

Source: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/2014/12/catholicos-of-the-east-forced-conversions-will-dismantle-interreligious-harmony/>

Rev Phil Oswald (U.S. citizen, missionary, has been repeatedly targeted by Hindu nationalists in apparent entrapment attempts, has still had trouble renewing his visa)

Date: December 23, 2014

Location: Delhi

Source: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/24/world/asia/india-narendra-modi-hindu-conversions-missionaries.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/24/world/asia/india-narendra-modi-hindu-conversions-missionaries.html?_r=1)

Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao (raised concerns over several recent actions by Hindu radicals including an attempt to force Catholic schools to install a statue of the goddess Saraswati)

Date: December 24, 2014

Location: Panaji

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/Treatment-to-Christians-worries-archbishop/articleshow/45622781.cms>

Pastor Amit Kumar (arrested along with 15 parishioners while celebrating Christmas, all were released without charge 18 hours later except the pastor who was charged with 'disturbing the peace')

Liris Thomas (Alliance Defending Freedom-India, described the arrest of Pastor Amit Kumar and his parishioners)

Date: December 17, 2014

Location: Navipur, Pipraich, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh state

T Monohar (described the attack on Pastor Bhimudu Nayak and his parishioners while they were singing Christmas carols)

Date: December 13, 2014

Location: Singareny Colony, Sarurnagar, Hyderabad

Pastor Paltu Ahirwar (beaten along with another Christian by Hindu extremists)

Date: December 9, 2014

Location: Bamnora village, Chattarpur district, Madhya Pradesh state

Rev Bhupendra Kohra (**UPDATE**: said “Christians in India are apprehensive of having a peaceful Christmas amid this wave of attacks as the right-wing groups are also becoming more aggressive in their mass conversion program that is taking place in different parts of India. We are fearful but we are praying”)

Date: December 23, 2014

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2014/12/christmas-season-brings-christianity-under-renewed-attack-in-india/>



## Iran

Pastor Farshid Malayeri Fathi (aged 35 in 2014, in jail since December 2010; sentenced to six years imprisonment for "being the chief agent of foreign organizations in Iran and of administrating funds for foreign organizations"; **UPDATE**: wrote in a Christmas letter "Although the beauty of Christmas or the signs of Christmas cannot be found in this prison, with the ears of faith I can hear the everlasting and beautiful truth that: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel.' Your captive brother who is free in Christ")

Date: December 26, 2014

Location: Ervin prison, Tehran

Source [with photo]:

[http://mohabatnews.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9622:a-jailed-iranian-pastors-christmas-prayer&catid=36:iranian-christians&Itemid=279](http://mohabatnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9622:a-jailed-iranian-pastors-christmas-prayer&catid=36:iranian-christians&Itemid=279)



## Iraq

Abu Aasi (reported that Christians are being held and tortured by ISIL [Islamic State] fighters in occupied churches; **UPDATE:** added "These two churches [Bahnam Wa Sara and Al Kiama] are being used as prisons and for torture. Most inside are Christians and they are being forced to convert to Islam. ISIL has been breaking all the crosses and statues of Mary")

Date: December 14, 2014

Location: Mosul

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141220162222.htm>

Ayad Imad (aged 22, family will be leaving the country soon)

Fr Mokhlasee (spoke on the Christian exodus from the country "If it stays this way we will shrink to nothing. We believe that God wants us here for diversity in the region. Unfortunately, people are afraid of the future, and they are leaving")

Yonadam Kanna (member of parliament, **UPDATE:** spoke on the French and U.S. governments' granting of visas to Christians "It's a disaster. Violence and discrimination and corruption are kicking us out, then others are pulling us out. The international community is encouraging Christians to leave. This is destroying our community here")

Fr Miyassir (said in an Advent homily "We are becoming fewer in number. We ask God that we can keep our churches, keep our country. We have a message that people should stay in this country" but later privately admitted "Even my family is leaving")

Date: December 23, 2014

Location: Bagdad

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222200357.htm>

Fr Timotheus Issa (said "The people with families have left. The old people, some of them have stayed. All the young people have left. There are very few children here. As for me, in terms of my religious responsibilities, my job is to be father of my people here. I have to stay with these families. But personally, I'm thinking about it. I'm making my preparations...We are on the final step of the way now. Everyone wants to leave. That's it, now")

Pritcha (aged 3, refugee)

Mariam Ezzo (aged 4, refugee)

Shehed Picha (aged 6, refugee)

Sandra Nona (aged 5, refugee)

Samanta Nona (aged 2, refugee)

Fadi (aged 38, refugee)

Date: December 22, 2014

Location Dora suburb, Bagdad

Source [with photos]: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222181545.htm>

Fr Maysar Bahnam (said "The situation in our city is very difficult...We can't do anything outside the church")

Rev Andrew White (**UPDATE:** wrote on Facebook from outside Iraq "I will never forget the day in Baghdad when we had some visitors. They had come to see what it was really like for Christians in Iraq. They were so surprised by how happy the thousands of people were in our congregation. 'How can you be so happy when you are surrounded, suicide bombs, mortar's rockets and such violence.' One of our young people answered the statement: 'You see when you have lost everything, Jesus is all you have got left'")

Date: December 24, 2014

Location: Bagdad

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141224180342.htm>

Fr Thair Abdul Masih (said "The recent conditions have left us with a bit of sadness for our brethren, be they Christian or non-Christian, those who were displaced and harmed")

Fadi Rafaat (aged 27, assistant to Fr Thair Abdul Masih, said of the war's refugees "They live in misery...yet we still exchange blessings and congratulations of Christmas and the New Year. We celebrate the happiness of Christmas, but deep inside we carry the sadness of Iraq")

Date: December 26, 2014

Location: Bagdad

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141225193015.htm>

Sabrina Yousef (mother, refugee, said that the children "don't really understand what is happening in their villages" after the ISIL takeover)

Samir Bihnam (aged 46, refugee, said of Christmases past and present "It was all first-class food, and clothes. The church was beautiful and it was full of happiness. Now it is full of sadness. You can't see the friends you used to know. They are either dead or have left the country...We believe everything in the world has a beginning and an end. But not in Iraq. There is no end")

Nour Faleh (aged 12, refugee)

Theresa (kindergartner, refugee, said "I want to go back to my home")

Date: December 25, 2014

Location: Bagdad

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141225043035.htm>

Fr Nabil Yako (spoke fatalistically concerning the possibility of an attack on his church)

Samir Bassem (aged 9, refugee)

Chaeen Bassem (aged 7, refugee)

Fullah Falah (aged 9, refugee)

Amil Noaman (aged 53, refugee, said "We want to travel. Even an animal lives better than us")

Falah Saaed (aged 50, said of his 4 year old daughter "She says Daesh [ISIL] will come for us. I can't say anything, my heart breaks...We used to be like brothers with the Muslims. Then when Daesh came, they turned against us. You don't know who's your friend or your enemy")

Shema Karomi (aged 55, refugee, said "This Christmas we are not happy because of the instability in Syria and Iraq. People living in these countries are frightened for their future")

Date: December 25, 2014

Location: Bagdad

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141224235532.htm>



## **Jordan**

Milad (aged 26, mother of a 1 year old daughter, Iraqi refugee, said "We want a new life, a new future. We want to stop moving around. There is no stability here. There are no guarantees")

Hanna Massad (aged 54, Palestinian minister, said of the Iraqi refugees "You try to encourage them with a Christmas party, but they're thinking how to survive, pay rent and get food for their children. They are hurting deeply")

Rev Ala Nadim al-Alamat (said he does not think Christians should leave the Mideast, but added "But I can't just moralize at people. If I had daughters, and ISIL came for them, I would go")

Anwar Daoud (aged 59, Iraqi refugee, said "We are Christians, and we will always be Christians. We are proud. But in these 10 years it's been death, terror, killings. We were patient, but khalas, enough. There is no future in our hearts for Mosul. We just want to get out")

Date: December 23, 2014

Location: Amman

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222230513.htm>

Saif (Iraqi refugee, newlywed, said "I don't have a future in Iraq. There are other countries where they know about human rights")

Date: December 26, 2014

Location: Amman

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141225193436.htm>



## **Lebanon**

Rifaat Nasrallah (has been guarding his village from a possible ISIL [Islamic State] attack, said "We are living on a volcano...Our problem is that if these militants do a lightning attack, take our women, kill our children. That's our worry. We know that after the first blow,

they will all be killed. Even if Hizbollah arrives we have lost...This year will not be like last Christmas")

Date: December 21, 2014

Location: Ras Al Baalbek

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141221183056.htm>

Fr Paul Karam (Director of Caritas Lebanon; **UPDATE:** said "The impression is that the whole system of international aid for Syrian and Iraqi refugees is on the brink of collapse. There are no more resources, and humanitarian organizations are no longer able to cope with such an emergency")

Date: December 19, 2014

Location: Beirut

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/37007->

[ASIA\\_LEBANON Appeal of the Chaldean Bishop of Beirut for displaced Iraqi Christians#.VJkL-qsjI](http://www.fides.org/en/news/37007-ASIA_LEBANON_Appeal_of_the_Chaldean_Bishop_of_Beirut_for_displaced_Iraqi_Christians#.VJkL-qsjI)

Fr Youssef Denha (Iraqi refugee, assists with the distribution of food to the refugees, said "This is a holiday of sadness, not happiness. Daesh [ISIL] has left us with nothing")

Raghd Israel (aged 33, wife, mother of three boys and a girl all under 11 years of age, Iraqi refugee, arrived after spending months sleeping in open fields to escape ISIL, said "Islamic State is in my village, and I'll never go back to Iraq")

Date: December 24, 2014

Location: Beirut

Source [with photo]: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141223203426.htm>

Bishop Michel Kassarji (said his church was supporting 1,800 Christian refugee families and the number has been growing by 25 per week "It's very difficult...As a church, we do everything to make the people here happy, and we try to help them with their food")

Date: December 24, 2014

Location: Beirut

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141224180342.htm>



## Libya

**Event: Four Egyptian Christians abducted on August 25, 2014; UPDATE: still missing**

Jamal Matta Hakim (brother of Rafat Matta Hakim and Romani Matta Hakim, cousin of Adel Sadiki Hakim)

Rafat Matta Hakim (brother of Jamal Matta Hakim and Romani Matta Hakim, cousin of Adel Sadiki Hakim)

Romani Matta Hakim (brother of Jamal Matta Hakim and Rafat Matta Hakim, cousin of Adel Sadiki Hakim)

Adel Sadiki Hakim (cousin of Jamal Matta Hakim, Rafat Matta Hakim, and Romani Matta Hakim)

Date: December 21, 2014

Location: Sirte

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2014/12/21/sadness-overshadows-christmas-for-families-of-egyptian-christians-kidnapped-in-libya/>

Dr Magdy Sobhi Tawfik (Egyptian citizen, **handcuffed and killed** along with his wife Dr Sahar, 18 year old daughter Catherine abducted and later killed, two younger girls left behind, valuables and cash left behind on a table)

Dr Sahar (wife of Dr Magdy Sobhi Tawfik, mother of Catherine, **killed**)

Catherine Magdy (aged 18, daughter of Doctors Magdy Sobhi Tawfik and Sahar, abducted after her parents were murdered, **found dead**)

Dr Samir Sobhi (uncle of Catherine Magdy, described the murder of his niece and her parents Dr Magdy Sobhi Tawfik and his wife)

Date: December 23, 2014

Location: Sirte

Source: <http://www.copticsolidarity.org/media-news-events/news/3215-coptic-doctor-and-wife-killed-daughter-kidnapped-in-libya>

and [warning - graphic]: <http://www.mcndirect.com/showsubject.aspx?id=58736>

and <http://www.mcndirect.com/showsubject.aspx?id=58740>

and <http://www.mcndirect.com/showsubject.aspx?id=58751>



## Nigeria

Sarah Yaga (daughter of Samuel and Rebecca, abducted by Boko Haram along with over 200 other schoolgirls on [April 15, 2014](#))

Samuel Yaga (husband of Rebecca, father of Sarah and five siblings, automobile mechanic, said of Sarah's abduction "She is brilliant. She liked reading. Always she loved going to school...Every Christmas we used to be complete and happy but now one of us is not there, how can it be the same? They [Sarah's siblings] keep asking me, 'When is she coming back?' But I keep telling them to keep trusting God. Maybe He will hear us")

Rebecca Yaga (wife of Samuel, mother of Sarah and five siblings, said of Sarah's abduction "She used to tell me one day she will finish school and become somebody. She used to assist the younger ones with their homework. She loved studies. She used to fall asleep with her books in her arms")

Date: December 24, 2014

Location: Chibok, Borno state

Source [with photo]: <http://thenationonlineng.net/new/bad-christmas/>



## Pakistan

Napoleon Qayyum (rights advocate with World Vision in Progress Foundation; **UPDATE:** said that he has never seen the government so serious about prosecuting the Muslim murderers of non-Muslims as it has become with the killers of Shazad Masih and Shama Bibi, eleven suspects have been denied bail including one of the Muslim clerics accused of inciting the mob with the mosque's loudspeakers, the coroner's report confirms the married couple were still alive when they were thrown into the brick oven on [November 4, 2014](#))

Date: December 23, 2014

Location: Punjab state

Source: [https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/12/article\\_3565050.html/](https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/12/article_3565050.html/)



## Palestine

Patriarch Fouad Twal (**UPDATE:** said "We have always been moved to read in the Gospels that Mary and Joseph found no room in the inn, and that baby Jesus was born in a grotto. Today, among the millions of refugees, there are many children who desire to be able to sleep in a grotto like the one in which the Savior is born. For them it would be a luxury")

Date: December 22, 2014

Location: Gaza

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/37014-ASIA\\_HOLY\\_LAND\\_Patriarch\\_Twal\\_visits\\_Gaza\\_today\\_for\\_many\\_refugee\\_children\\_it\\_would\\_be\\_a\\_luxury\\_to\\_live\\_in\\_the\\_grotto\\_where\\_Jesus\\_was\\_born#.VJkLOqsjI](http://www.fides.org/en/news/37014-ASIA_HOLY_LAND_Patriarch_Twal_visits_Gaza_today_for_many_refugee_children_it_would_be_a_luxury_to_live_in_the_grotto_where_Jesus_was_born#.VJkLOqsjI)



## Syria

Fr Dajad Hagopian (aged 68, has refused to leave his town which has lost two-thirds of its people)

Date: December 21, 2014

Location: Derike

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141221175250.htm>

Giorgio Istifan (husband of Miriam, father of Benita, separated from his wife and daughter due to the fighting, injured in his left side by shrapnel from a mortar shell on November 8 2014, wrote "Life during the war in Syria has taught us Christians that faith is essential.

As a result of this faith, there is trust in God. Despite the length and tragedy of this war, our faith has increased and so has our trust in the Lord. With the eyes of faith, we see every day the hand of God cure all of us, and take care of our daily needs. Even though we might suffer and experience gusts of wind, it seems that in this great storm of war, we are under the protection of great powerful wings")

Miriam Istifan (wife of Giorgio, mother of Benita, educational psychologist, separated from her husband due to the fighting)

Benita Istifan (aged 18 months, daughter of Giorgio and Miriam Istifan, separated from her father due to the fighting)

Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh (**UPDATE:** helped Giorgio Istifan write his account)

Dates: December 22, 2014

Location: Aleppo

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Aleppo:-Christmas-among-Christian-families-broken-by-war,-praying-for-peace-33022.html>

Bishop Antoine Audo SJ (**UPDATE:** wrote "I will do my best to spread hope in Aleppo this Christmas, but it is hard to celebrate when your city is in ruins...It is desperately cold this winter, with no heating or electricity across the city. Every evening it gets dark early. Here in my bishopric, we light a stove, using chairs for firewood, chopping up and burning one per night. When I go to bed, it is often so cold that I struggle to sleep. But even as I lie shivering under my blankets, I remember how lucky I am compared with my brothers and sisters who have nowhere safe to rest: so many of them are in desperate need of food, health care and shelter...What gives me hope this Christmas? The compassion of people who take care of each other. The small signs of humanity as people share what little they have. The solidarity of my brothers and sisters around the world. Most of all, what gives me hope is my faith. I say prayers in the morning, and read the Word of God, and it gives me the conviction that we can carry on...")

Dates: December 23, 2014

Location: Aleppo

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222202833.htm>

Archbishop Jean Clement Jeanbart (**UPDATE:** wrote "Christians all over the world are preparing the beautiful feast of Christmas with its humble and heavenly scenes bringing joy, warmth and hope to the hearts of young and old, everywhere in our disenchanted and sad world! We also in Syria are wishing for a Christmas of joy and consolation in the midst of this shameful war which has ravaged our country for almost four years now...Truly, we are suffering greatly because of what is happening to us but with the humblest and the poorest, we wait anxiously but with patience and great hope for the Lord to bring us this year the gift of PEACE for the happiness of our people and for all the nations suffering in the world...")

Dates: December 22, 2014

Location: Aleppo

Source: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/a-christmas-message-from-aleppos-bishop-hope-for-joy-peace-70967/>



## Turkey

David Byle (U.S. citizen, co-founder of the Bible Correspondence Course, **UPDATE**: said of the suspected arson that destroyed 10,000 religious books “Our hunch is it is people who don’t like people who do the activities we do here – mainly giving out free New Testaments and explaining the Christian faith to people”, added that fire officials refused to investigate and claimed the fire was from a Christmas tree which never existed)

Date: December 7, 2014

Paul Weaver (media and IT director of the Bible Correspondence Course, said that the likely arsonist was recorded on video and was seen again on the premises a week later)

Date: December 15, 2014

Location: Istanbul

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2014/12/suspected-arsonist-sought-in-fire-at-bible-distribution-center-in-istanbul-turkey/>

Petrus (spoke about persecution "When I'm at church, I'm okay. It's life outside church that's difficult. I'm sad that I can't study our theology outside the monastery")

Date: December 22, 2014

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20141222180945.htm>



## Ukraine

Metropolitan Anatoly (condemned the desecration of seven churches since the beginning of December)

Date: December 22, 2014

Location: Sarny diocese

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/76026.htm>



## United States - New York

Rafael Ramos (aged 40, police officer, husband of Maritza, father of Justin and Jayden, **shot dead** in his patrol car along with his partner by a Muslim with a history of mental illness, was to have been commissioned a chaplain later that day)

Date: December 21, 2014

Location: New York City

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/nypd-officers-shot-and-killed-victim-revealed-as-christian-chaplain-in-training-president-of-chaplain-task-force-says-officer-viewed-job-as-ministry-131529/>

**Today's Martyrs**  
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