

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2015-11-29 through 2015-12-05



Australia

Fr Rahal Dergham (parish web site hacked by ISIL, replaced with written threats and beheading videos, said "We have our families still under the threat of ISIL and the majority has been hurt, displaced or raped. I don't think at this stage we have any fear. We've lost everything. They feel a big loss has happened. We're always hoping that at one stage ISIL would be defeated and we would be back to our towns and churches and monasteries and villages and properties, and business as usual. People have lost hope")

Date: December 4, 2015

Location: Concord, New South Wales

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/isis-hacks-website-of-an-australian-church-posted-a-threatening-message-for-christians/>



China

Deacon Zhang Xiuhong (arrested for 'illegal business operations', church bank accounts totaling US\$15,660 frozen)

Date: July 2015

Location: Nanming district, Guiyang, Guizhou province

Pastor Su Tianfu (**UPDATE**: accused by officials of illegally modifying a business location for use as a house church, threatened with daily fines of US\$2,030)

Date: November 17, 2015

Location: Nanming district, Guiyang, Guizhou province

Pastor Yang Hua (**UPDATE**: house church raided, said "there were more than 30 personnel from the Municipal Planning Bureau, Urban Management Bureau and [a local] police station. Some were in plainclothes, and they did not show identification...While I was preaching, they tried to raid the church but were stopped by some church members. Later, they took some video footage of the pantry and library for evidence, and a verbal dispute happened between them and our church members", church ordered to stop meeting and pay a fine of US\$15,650)

Date: November 29, 2015

Location: Nanming district, Guiyang, Guizhou province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/12/guizhou-pastor-investigated-for.html>
and <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/12/officials-raid-guizhou-house-church.html>



Cuba

Rev Alain Toledano (said "There is a witch hunt against churches in Cuba at this time, mainly against the churches of apostolic and prophetic ministry. The communists have intensified in their hatred and persecution of the church following the Pope's visit to Cuba and the re-establishment of relations with the United States...I request constant intercession on behalf of the churches in Cuba. In our case, this would be the second time that the racist communists have attempted to evict us from our house, throw us out on the street and demolish our temple, only now their diabolical hatred and fury is directed at other congregations too")

Date: December 2, 2015

Location: Santiago de Cuba

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/witch-hunt-against-churches-in-cuba-despite-us-relations-151464/>



Egypt

Fr Sulaiman Botros (presided at the funeral of Wasfy Bakhit Gad Mikhail and Sabry Bakhit Gad Mikhail, said "They were targeted and killed because they are Christians. They kept the faith and refused to deny the Lord Jesus Christ. They are our Church's Martyrs. We are proud of them. They aren't dead but have been saved by God in Heaven. They have entered into glory and there are in a better place than all of us. They've got their crown in heaven and they are with Jesus now, no more pain for them, only joy and peace...We pray for their family to be strengthened by the power of The Holy Spirit and the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, May God comfort all of them")

Date: November 26, 2015

Location: Awald Ali village, Monshaa Center, Sohag province

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2015/11/28/two-egyptian-christian-brothers-executed-in-libya/>

Shenouda Bakheet (**murdered**, two Christians arrested by police after the perpetrators fled)

Date: November 29, 2015

Location: Bani Ahmad el-Sharqiya village, Minya province

Source: <http://www.mcndirect.com/showsubject.aspx?id=65169>



Libya

Wasfy Bakhit Gad Mikhail (aged 37, husband, brother of Sabry and Fahmy, Egyptian citizen, construction worker, abducted, **shot dead**)

Sabry Bakhit Gad Mikhail (aged 31, husband, father of one son, brother of Wasfy and Fahmy, Egyptian citizen, construction worker, abducted, **shot dead**)

Fahmy Bakhit Gad Mikhail (aged 27, husband, Egyptian citizen, brother of Wasfy and Sabry, construction worker, reported on the murder of his brothers)

Dates: [November 6 and 9, 2015](#)

Locations: [Abu Shaalh, Misrata and Wadi Kiam area near Al Khums](#)

Mina F (Egyptian citizen, construction worker, said "We are 16 Christians...We hope to return home to Egypt, but there isn't any safe way to return. None of us can travel to Egypt by the road because ISIL have controlled Sirte and they can take us captive during our trip by microbus. There isn't any flight from Misrata to Egypt, the only flight is from Tripoli only and the way from Misrata to Tripoli is very hazardous also. After the killing of the two Christian brother, we are afraid to go out to our work. and there is a situation of fear among all of us. Pray for us")

Date reported: [November 28, 2015](#)

Location: [Abu Shaalh, Misrata](#)

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2015/11/28/two-egyptian-christian-brothers-executed-in-libya/>



Nigeria

Archbishop Matthew Hassah Kukah (**UPDATE**: spoke on the origins of Boko Haram “A hypocritical elite continues to believe that it can claim the benefits of democracy but use it only to consolidate its hold on power. This is what has laid the foundation for what is now Boko Haram...We must locate the current crisis of Boko Haram within the context of the inability of the northern Muslim elite to live by their own dubious creed of being Muslims. They preached Sharia Law but only for the poor. They preach a religion that encourages education, yet their own people are held in the bondage of ignorance. They did not wish to live by the same standards, so they decided to live their own Islam in the capitals of the world away from the prying eyes of their own people. Boko Haram began as a revolt against this mendacity, subterfuge and hypocrisy. Now, I hear Muslims in northern Nigeria hiding under the cover of the facts by saying: ‘These Boko Haram people are not Muslims. They do not represent us’. Well, first, they are your own children. You must take responsibility for what has made them what they are today and to

the rest of society. They claim they have been inspired by the Quran and no other holy book. They say they want to build an Islamic state. So, they are Muslims. After all, from the debates of the Constituent Assemblies of 1979, 1988, and 1995 and beyond, did their fathers and grandfathers not stage walkouts, demanding Sharia Law? The promise to institute Sharia has become the most potent tool for political mobilization and organization. Till date, the tactics may have changed, but the essence has not. Rather than face the tough questions of how and why over 15 million children in the northern states are on the streets; how and why the northern states are falling behind on almost every index of development, the northern Muslim elite continues to live for just the moment, with no plans for tomorrow...Should we pretend that a society that allows the forced marriages of its young daughters could frown on the idea of a group kidnapping and forcing young girls into sexual slavery? Islam must have an honest look at the mirror and have an internal discussion...It is my considered view that northern Islam has to confront the realities of taking its religion into the modern world of democracy seriously. Muslims in northern Nigeria cannot accept democracy and reject the inclusive nature of its philosophy as it is the case today”)

Date: November 30, 2015

Source: <http://newswirengr.com/2015/11/30/bishop-kukah-says-northern-elites-should-stop-pretending-theyre-behind-boko-haram/#>

Nigeria

Mercy (aged 21, father likely killed during a Boko Haram attack, captured, beaten, forced into an Islamic marriage of which she said “Every single day came with tears and fears for the unknown”, described the murders she was forced to watch “I witnessed constantly how Boko Haram members killed innocent people. Christian men who were captured and brought to the camp were killed for refusing to deny their faith - the fulfilment of the Bible played out in front of my eyes, as people died for their faith in Christ. But others, including me, could not endure the torture and gave in to their demands”, after 5 weeks was the sole survivor of a Nigerian Air Force bombing of the house in which she was kept, hospitalized with a broken leg, now a refugee)

Date: June 2014

Location: Gwoza, Borno state

Source [with photo]: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/12/4143468/>



Norway

Event: Five children were seized and placed in foster care after the oldest sang about Jesus at school

Marius Bodnariu (husband of Ruth, father, charged with 'Christian indoctrination')

Ruth Bodnariu (wife of Marius, mother, charged with 'Christian indoctrination')

Date reported: December 4, 2015

Source: <http://www.charismanews.com/world/53633-government-seizes-children-over-christian-indoctrination-charges>



Pakistan

Event: Seven Christian brick kiln workers were stopped by police at a routine traffic stop, police became belligerent when they discovered they were Christians, police seized their small wages as alleged drug money, beat them, and jailed them

Allah Rakha (aged 47, father of Asif and Khurram, said "We pleaded with them for mercy explaining we were just poor bricklayers returning to our homes at Chack 226. We told them that our employer could explain where we obtained our money, but they still beat us with their batons extremely severely. Even when we cried and lay on the floor they continued to beat us, filled with hatred that we were Christians with some money. We were put in a cell and despite our severe wounds they provided no medical aid and we sat in pain, bleeding, our wounds open to infection. I led everyone in prayer believing God would release us just as He did with Paul. God answered our prayers after a couple of hours when police staff allowed us to call our community leaders Irfan Masih and Riaz Masih who were able to act as guarantors for us enabling our release and return home...When we all eventually arrived home our women wept as they saw our wounds. They tended to us and helped us recover, however we have all been badly traumatized and have not yet been back to work. We hope to start back on Monday if our employers have not already given our work away. The police officers have not yet returned our money and we do not know if we will ever get our wages back. We are already poor but this attack destroys our already hard to manage finances. I have seven children, two daughters and five sons. Two of my sons work with me in the brick kilns to feed our family, none of my children ever went to school as we could not afford it. Our lives have been worthless but we thank God for them even then")

Asif (aged 25, son of Allah Rakha)

Khurram (aged 17 son of Allah Rakha)

Sittar Masih (aged 38)

Naeem (aged 25)

Tariq Masih (aged 30)

Nadeem Masih (aged 28)

Irfan Masih (obtained legal counsel for the seven brick workers and their release from jail)

Riaz Masih (obtained legal counsel for the seven brick workers and their release from jail)

Akmal Bhatti (**UPDATE**: appointed as attorney for the seven brick workers)

Date: November 21, 2015

Location: Sumandri

Source [warning - graphic]: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/police-beat-poor-christian-brick-kiln-workers-during-discriminatory-stop-and-search>

Javed Williams (owner of a Christian television station that was destroyed by arson, refuted police statements that a short circuit caused the fire because all expensive electronics such as cameras were not found and so were stolen before the fire was set)

Sarfraz Williams (brother of Javed Williams, said that all of their resources were invested in the television station)

Date: November 24, 2015

Location: Karachi

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/gawahi-tv-arson-police-says-fire-caused-by-short-circuit-christians-confident-of-deliberate-vandalism/>

Parwasha (aged 8, niece of Iftikhar Masih, abducted, stripped naked, and beaten by a Muslim family in retribution for her uncle's relationship with a female member of their family, police have refused to file charges)

Iftikhar Masih (uncle of Parwasha)

Date reported: December 1, 2015

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pakistan-christian-girl-beaten-left-naked-muslim-family-attackers-151348/>

Mary Javed (wife of Javed Sahotra, teacher with 27 years' seniority, accused by one parent of teaching Christianity to Muslim students and beating them when they did not agree, denied the charges)

Date: November 2015

Location: Pakpattan district, Punjab province

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=5716>



Palestine

Ekram Juha (director of the mayor's office, commented on the Palestinian Authority's decision to limit the 2015 Christmas celebrations due to the dozens of recent deaths of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli security forces during attacks: "I'm truly disappointed...[Palestinians] have a difficult situation but we've lived with this situation for many years and celebrations have gone on. This is the place where Jesus was born and if you limit Christmas celebrations here you are limiting something spiritual and holy. I can understand limiting celebrations elsewhere, but not here in Bethlehem")

Date: December 1, 2015

Location: Bethlehem

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/88350.htm>



Syria

Archbishop Samir Nassar (**UPDATE:** wrote ""Since 2003 [the Iraq war] and especially since 2011 [the Arab spring] the exodus of Christians from the east increases. Some reports give only ten years for the page to turn concerning Christianity in the Middle East. This seems to be a pessimistic view, but observed experience shows an alarming and growing emigration...The subject of daily discussions is how to leave. Go anywhere and in any way, even if it means taking dangerous risks. A family just sent their twelve-year-old son away with a caravan of fugitives. A twelve-year-old child has not returned. Will he later be able to invite his family to join him? Will he find a safe place? Given the military stalemate, an increasingly distant peace, and to avoid Military Service, in order to escape an absurd war that has lasted too long, young people are the greatest number of those who leave...What is the future a Church without young people? It is the fatal end of apostolic Christianity in a Biblical Land which becomes a hostage of violence and intolerance in the name of a radical faith that neither supports pluralism nor accepts differences...The Christians of the East face an almost suicidal choice. Living under the shadow of Islam remains a choice quite difficult to assume. Living in the shadow of Islam requires a return to the early centuries of the Church, which highlights the hidden life of Jesus in Nazareth")

Date: November 28, 2015

Location: Damascus

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151128151856.htm>

Fr Elias Sharbak (stabbed by a man during a church celebration when he attempted to prevent the man from throwing a grenade, a 5 year old child died and over 30 people were injured from the grenade explosion)

Date: November 27, 2015

Location: Lattakia

Source: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/?p=45234>
and <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/88411.htm>



Uganda

Patrick Ojangole (aged 43, husband, father of 5 children aged 16 to 7, foster father of 10, **stabbed to death** for Christian activities)

Date: December 2, 2015

Location: Kashebai area

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/suspected-hard-line-muslims-in-eastern-uganda-kill-christian-in-sword-attack/>



United States

Jan Markell (Olive Tree Ministries, spoke on her ministry's YouTube channel being suspended for a video interview with the author of the book *Killing Christians: Living the Faith Where It's Not Safe to Believe*, channel was reinstated after media inquiries)

Date: December 1, 2015

Source: <http://www.charismanews.com/us/53530-reports-youtube-cuts-the-cord-on-christian-channel>

United States - California

Arlen Verdehyou (widower of Bennetta Betbadal)

Bennetta Betbadal (aged 46, wife of Arlen Verdehyou, mother of three, health inspector, **shot dead** at a Christmas party in an Islamist attack, had fled Iran in 1987 to escape Islamic extremism)

Jennifer Thalasinis (widow of Nicholas Thalasinis)

Kevin Ortiz (newlywed, health inspector, church youth group leader and video technician, shot five times in an Islamic attack, hospitalized)

Michael Wetzel (aged 37, husband of Renee, father of six, health inspector, **shot dead** in an Islamic attack)

Nicholas Thalasinis (husband of Jennifer, health inspector, **shot dead** in an Islamic attack)

Renee Wetzel (widow of Michael Wetzel)

Tin Nguyen (aged 31, engaged, daughter of Vanessa Nguyen, health inspector, **shot dead** in an Islamic attack)

Vanessa Nguyen (mother of Tin Nguyen)

Date: December 2, 2015

Location: San Bernardino

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151203202247.htm>

and <http://www.charismanews.com/us/53625-shot-5-times-this-ag-member-miraculously-survives-san-bernardino-shooting>

and <http://www.charismanews.com/us/53624-san-bernardino-victim-fled-islamic-persecution-only-to-die-by-it-in-us>

and <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-shooting-victims-20151204-story.html>

United States - Colorado

Officer Garrett Swasey (aged 44, husband of Rachel, father of Elijah and Faith, church co-pastor, **shot dead** by an assailant at a Planned Parenthood clinic along with two others)

Rachel Swasey (widow of Officer Garrett Swasey, mother of Elijah and Faith)

Elijah Swasey (son of Officer Garrett and Rachel Swasey)

Faith Swasey (daughter of Officer Garrett and Rachel Swasey)

Date: November 27, 2015

Location: Colorado Springs

Source [with photos]: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/police-officer-killed-at-planned-parenthood-was-pro-life-christian-pastor>

United States - Colorado

Rita Tamur (aged 19, Iraqi refugee, friend of the family that recently drowned off Greece, said "It is hard to understand how they were able to escape the horrors of ISIS yet still end up dying this way", other girlfriends have disappeared "I pray for the young girls in Iraq. I want them to have an opportunity for freedom")

Fr Andre-Sebastian Mahanna (Lebanese native, had a gun held to his head by Palestinian terrorists when he was a two day old baby, now assisting Christian refugees)

Date reported: December 3, 2015

Location: Denver

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151203050612.htm>

United States - District of Columbia

Rev Andrew White (former Vicar of Bagdad, Iraq, said "On a day after those events in California yesterday, those awful, terrible events, we realize that the destruction of religion is not just over there [in the Middle East], it's here where you are. What we are seeing going on, what we saw in Paris, what we saw yesterday in California, is, as far as I am concerned, the beginning of the third world war. It's unlike any concept of war we may have had before. Society is falling apart. It's not just Iraq that is broken - it is society")

Date: December 3, 2015

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/what-we-saw-in-san-bernardino-paris-is-beginning-of-a-third-world-war-vicar-of-baghdad-argues-151589/>

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