

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2017-04-16 through 2017-04-22



China

Wang Qiaoling (wife of imprisoned human rights attorney Li Heping; **UPDATE**: wrote of increased police surveillance "The cameras are staring at me, and there are several hefty guys...tailing me...The appearance of this cluster of cameras [across the street] unnerves me, and I can't help feeling frightened because no policemen had watched me even during the [annual parliament last month], and now I'm being tracked by cameras...From this point forward, if I haven't been heard from in more than an hour, it's possible that I have been disappeared")

Date reported: April 14, 2017

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/liberty-04142017110742.html>

Pastor Xu Rongzhang (Taiwanese citizen, detained for leading worshippers in a Christian song on a Saturday, released, ID and visa held for 2 days)

Date: April 15, 2017

Location: Zhengzhou, Henan province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/04/officials-declare-singing-worship-song.html>

Pastor Li Guozhi aka Yang Hua (husband of Wang Hongwu, detained on [December 9, 2015](#) for 'illegally holding state secrets'; attorney reported that he had to be carried by prison guards to their [March 20, 2017](#) meeting, leg ulcerated, has been in great pain; **UPDATE**: health has improved, but further improvement is necessary)

Wang Hongwu (wife of Pastor Li Guozhi aka Yang Hua; **UPDATE**: visited her husband in prison with their younger son, said "We were forced to hang up only after 10 minutes of conversation. One of Yang Hua's inmates laid him on his back and carried him to the meeting room. Although he still couldn't walk, I could tell that the infections on his legs were under control, and the festering was also beginning to heal. His mental condition was good. Yang Hua cried when he saw his younger son, but we didn't cry. We were so happy and full of gratefulness and peace...Yang Hua is a new prisoner, which means that only immediate family members are allowed to visit him, and only once a month. The government is paying a lot of attention to Yang Hua. We were surrounded by police officers when we were chatting. He will stay in the [prison in Baiyun, Guiyang] for two-and-a-half months, and then he will be transferred to another prison")

Date reported: April 21, 2017

Location: Guiyang, Guizhou

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/04/pastors-condition-improving-not.html>



Egypt

Event UPDATE: A suicide bomber attacked a church during the Divine Liturgy, killing 30 and wounding 78

Ashraf Ramzy (aged 25, said “My father and I still have headaches and a buzzing sound that has been in our ears since after the attack. The microphone made a really intense noise, then I was sure something was about to happen. I even thought of leaving the prayer. It was 9:05 when the bomb exploded. I was standing next to my father behind a column, and we were ten steps away from the blast. [It was] horrific...everyone was scattering around, looking for loved ones...looking for a wife or for a son. Anyone that was far from sight could have been dead...What can we do? Are we expected to stop praying? We’re not going to stop praying”)

Ishaq Ibrahim (Coptic activist; **UPDATE:** said “the idea is that the solution isn’t in an emergency law, already existing laws could be used properly to remove discriminatory policies and hate speech...when putting the most recent attacks into context of Egypt, part of the problem is that sectarianism, whether societal or institutionalized, is not taken seriously. The state is doing nothing to fight the roots of this discrimination...There’s clearly something faulty [with government policy] if in the past six months we have seen three bombings and Christians have been displaced from their homes in Arish”)

Mina Thabet (**UPDATE:** said “There’s a huge question mark around the state’s strategy in combating terrorism. From 2011 until now, these terrorist operations have moved from the borders and hot spots like Sinai to the heart of the capital and to the cities of the Nile delta. At the same time, there’s an increase in human rights violations happening on the premise that this is for the fight against terrorism. The attackers are only gaining more confidence and expertise, and developing ways by which to kill more victims each time...Now Christians are the primary targets, but no one knows who is next”)

Date: April 9, 2017

Location: Tanta

Source: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/egypt-church-bombings-leave-copts-insecure-in-the-face-of-isis-threats>

Event UPDATE: A suicide bomber attacked the cathedral but did not get through the security checkpoint, 17 were killed and 41 wounded

Amgad Bakheet (rickshaw driver, witnessed the suicide bomber self-detonation, hospitalized with shrapnel wounds)

Naseem Fahim (father of George Naseem Fahim, church security guard, **killed**)

George Naseem Fahim (son of Naseem Fahim, took his father's place as a church security guard after his father was killed, said “I’m continuing what he started. Why worry or be afraid? He has gone to heaven, and I am ready to join him if necessary”)

Date: April 9, 2017

Location: Alexandra

Source: <http://www.copticsolidarity.org/2017/04/17/after-church-bombings-egyptian-christians-are-resigned-but-resolute-2/>

Karim Ghattas (husband of Mary, injured in the April 9, 2017 suicide bombing of the Coptic cathedral, hospitalized; **UPDATE: died**)

Mary Ghattas (wife of Karim Ghattas, injured in the April 9, 2017 suicide bombing of the Coptic cathedral, hospitalized)

Date: April 19, 2017

Location: Alexandria

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1880&A=30414>

Gamal Bishay (aged 16, son of Allam Bashay Gabriel, **throat slit** while on the way to a private school lesson)

Allam Bashay Gabriel (father of Gamal Bishay, said “They slaughtered my son because of his faith in Jesus Christ. It’s a war on Christians, and all honest people should stand up to those who are waging this war”)

Samy (cousin of Gamal Bishay, said “There are many Islamic militants in Qai who were arrested by police after the deposing of the Muslim Brotherhood President, Morsi. However, since then they have been released. Why did the government do that? Did they release them so they could then come back and slaughter us? They targeted Gamal and killed him because he is a Christian and it was a message from them before Easter, to intimidate us”)

Date: April 13, 2017

Location: Qai village, Ezbet Saida, Beni Suef province

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1882&A=30449>
and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/04/coptic-boy-16-murdered-islamic-extremists-seeking-scare-christians/>



India

Fr Masiladaikalam Jacob (described the police suppression of a Good Friday service on public land "Government officials stopped the service midway, pulled down the altar and manhandled nuns")

Date: April 14, 2017

Location: Sogandi, Tamil Nadu state

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-nuns-manhandled-at-good-friday-service/78961>

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas SFX (**UPDATE**: said following several attacks on Christians on Palm Sunday "We are distressed that people have begun taking the law into their own hands in various matters. This is not good for the country and not good for social and religious harmony. We call upon the prime minister to rein in these unruly forces and restore India's image")

Dr John Dayal (**UPDATE**: said "The rash of violence against Christians, disrupting Palm Sunday prayers speaks of a heightened impunity. We suspect a more direct collusion of police and local authorities, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan [Indian states currently ruled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party - BJP] in an aggressive competition to prove they are the most nationalist defenders of Hindutva [Hindu nationalism], cleverly disguised as a 'way of life'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the chief ministers of the states, including Yogi Adityanath of [Uttar Pradesh], cannot shrug off their responsibility and must be held accountable for...encouraging, directly or indirectly, their political and religious cadres", added that Modi's condemnation of the ISIL church bombings in Egypt "...should not blind us to this violence against a community that numbers a mere 26 million in a population of a billion and a quarter and is extremely vulnerable. Threats by government members in Parliament and state legislatures for a ban on evangelization, extra-judicial curbs on the freedom of faith and expression, and a penetration of the police and sections of the judiciary by Hindutva elements makes it a real and present danger to freedom of religion in secular India...[it] camouflages bigotry and persecution, acts as a smokescreen and helps evade international scrutiny")

Date: April 12, 2017

Source: <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/amid-rise-in-anti-christian-violence-church-wants-indian-prime-minister-mod>

Event: Christians and their political allies protested the federal government's decision to hold Digital India Day events on Good Friday, the government cancelled the event in Christian majority Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram states after two of them refused to observe it

Chief Minister [Governor] Mukul Sangma (aged 51, physician, said "I have written to the [federal] union cabinet secretary because it is necessary for me to express concern on behalf of the people, with special reference to the north-east, which has a significant Christian population. We have to be candid in asking: 'What is their agenda?' Observing Good Governance Day at Christmas [in 2015] and now Digital India Day on Good Friday. Are they trying to marginalize the minority?")

Alwan Masih (general secretary of the Church of North India; **UPDATE**: said "Our appeal fell on deaf ears. Good Friday is a sacred, holy occasion for all Christians. It will be inappropriate to have the Digital Day on Good Friday, as it will hurt the religious sentiments of the Christian community")

Date: April 12, 2017

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/04/indian-christians-protest-good-friday-launch-digital-india-day/>



Indonesia

Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama aka Ahok (blasphemy trial begun in [Jakarta](#) on [December 13, 2016](#), pled innocent; **UPDATE**: apparently defeated in his re-election bid, will remain as governor until October 2017 or he is convicted of blasphemy, said "Let's forget all of the problems faced during the campaign because Jakarta is home for us all. We will work fast, work hard to fulfill our promises and hopefully Mr Anies and Mr Sandi can continue our work. To our supporters we understand you're disappointed but it's OK because God has decided. I also lost during the gubernatorial election in 2007 and I told my supporters then 'please be patient, this is God's plan' and what do you know? In 2014 I became Jakarta governor, so you never know")

Retno Setyawati (aged 53, said "What can I do? I must accept the election results. I am afraid he [Anies] would pay more attention to his supporters and that radicalism will grow in Jakarta")

Yohanes Handoyo Budhisedjati (political analyst, said "I can understand if religious minorities are worried and afraid after his [Anies] victory")

Meydie Early (aged 27, disappointed at Ahok's electoral defeat)

Kevin Reiner Hidayat (aged 22, said "We cannot imagine what will happen to us, as radicals who support him [Anies] have also made anti-Chinese statements")

Eko Suwarno (businessman, said "We will support him and we hope he [Anies] continues what Ahok has done")

Date: [April 19, 2017](#)

Location: [Jakarta](#)

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/sectarianism-looms-as-anies-wins-jakarta-poll-in-quick-counts/78990>



Iraq

Salam Ablaha (aged 36, grocer, refugee along with his extended family of 36 since August 2014, brother abducted and ransomed in 2007, said "None of us want to go back. We're still scared of what will happen after ISIL...Before 2003, we had a perfect life. I never thought about leaving. But we're a minority. We don't have support or someone to protect us. Christians are now waiting to go to Jordan and from there to Australia. Seventy per cent of the people from Hamdaniya have already left Iraq...By 2020, most Christians will have left Iraq")

Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda CSSR (**UPDATE**: said "It's very hard to maintain a Christian presence now. Families have ten reasons to leave and not one reason to stay. This is a

critical time in our history in this land. We are desperate....We have to stay. But how many will stay? I doubt fifty, a hundred, or a thousand families will stay in the end. We will have to become missionaries")

Date reported: April 14, 2017

Location: Erbil, Kurdistan

Source: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/war-terrorism-and-the-christian-exodus-from-the-middle-east>

Jalal (said of conditions in his village "Everything is damaged. Houses have been burned by fire. There's no water, no anything. People will only return if there is some sort of promise of protection")

Date: December 2016

Location: Karamles

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20170415141513.htm>



Nepal

Fr Ignatius Rai (residence and cathedral damaged in an arson attack)

Fr Silas Bogati (**UPDATE:** noted the cathedral had been bombed in 2009, said of the latest arson attack "Nobody left anything in the church premise this time, so we don't know whether it was a personal attack or by some disgruntled organization")

Date: April 18, 2017

Location: Kathmandu

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/arson-attack-on-church-in-nepal/78977>

and <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/04/19/arsonists-attempt-to-set-fire-to-cathedral-in-nepals-capital/>



Nigeria

Event: The Christian Association of Nigeria, Southern Kaduna branch, condemned a Fulani Muslim attack during an Easter Vigil Mass "It is with heavy hearts that we now tell the world that we have again commemorated another major religious festival mourning the death of 12 of our beloved brothers and sisters that were murdered in cold blood"

John Bwankwot (signed the statement, said "[local inhabitants] are so troubled on every side that at a time when we were supposed to be celebrating the suffering, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of mankind, we were plunged into wailing, the anguish of soul, bitter cries and burying loved ones...these continuous

unprovoked attacks on innocent citizens have the potency of overstretching our peaceful nature and tolerance level”)

Pastor Michael Maikarfi (signed the statement)

Fr Alexander Yayock (presided over the funerals of "at least 10 Catholics" following the attack on the Easter Vigil Mass)

Bishop Joseph Danlami Bagobiri (**UPDATE**: blamed the governor for the continuing crisis, said “He unabashedly takes sides with the armed herdsmen [his kinsmen], thereby failing in his responsibility as a true statesman, becoming therefore a biased umpire who blames and criminalizes southern Kaduna victims as the cause of the mayhem”)

Samuel Adamu (**UPDATE**: said “Herdsmen keep on attacking us right under their [security forces] nose and nothing happens. Our people now have no option other than to defend themselves against these attacks”)

Date: April 15, 2017

Location: Asso, Jema’ a local government area, Kaduna state

Source: <https://guardian.ng/news/can-condemns-fresh-attacks-killings-by-herdsmen-in-southern-kaduna/>

and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/04/nigeria-bishop-blames-government-after-12-killed-in-easter-rampage/>

Event: At least 16 churches have been victimized by armed robbers

Pastor Dam Ngozi Iyio (said “With these attacks on churches, members are not left out as many Christians have lost their cars in church premises while worshipping. Many cars have been snatched or stolen from church compounds in Asaba and other parts of the country”)

Pastor Blossom (frightened away robbers with flashlights)

Pastor Andrew Ozobeme (said “This attack is happening every day, we are afraid it will degenerate more than this as many churches have lost their musical equipment to these hoodlums. You close from church today, even very late, the next morning, you will be surprised that robbers have broken into the church and removed all valuables”)

Pastor Bethel Onuoha (condemned the church robberies)

Pastor Dan Ohanugor (church robbed twice)

Date reported: April 19, 2017

Location: Delta State

Source: <https://guardian.ng/news/hoodlums-attack-churches-in-delta-cart-away-offerings-musical-equipment/>



Pakistan

Fouzia Sadiq (aged 32, mother of Muqadas, Saniya, and Sahil, abducted by her employer in Burj Mahalam Chak No.35, Pattoki on [July 23, 2015](#) and forcibly married and converted to

Islam; escaped from her abductor with her brother's help on [February 8, 2016](#), in hiding, accused by her abductor of stealing gold, family has been threatened by police with arrest of an innocent family member if she is not returned; recaptured by her abductor when she went to her mother's home on [March 20, 2016](#) to celebrate Palm Sunday; **UPDATE:** escaped from her abductor with the help of the British-Pakistani Christian Association, freed from her abductor in a divorce proceeding)

Dates: [October 27, 2016](#) and [March 27, 2017](#)

Source: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/miracle-divorce-for-pakistani-christian-rape-and-forced-marriage-victim>

Suvera (daughter of Rozi Bibi, abducted, forcibly married and converted to Islam)

Rozi Bibi (mother of Suvera, reported her daughter's abduction, under pressure to settle the case)

Sardar Mushtaq Gill (attorney; **UPDATE:** said "This issue needs to be tackled by authorities seriously because these cases are prevalent in Pakistan and culprits put counter pressure on the victim's family to withdraw the charges of abduction and get compromised with the abductors")

Date: [April 4, 2017](#)

Location: [Gujranwala](#)

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/gujranwala-christian-girl-forcibly-converted-after-abduction-police-reluctant-to-act/>
and <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6400>

Asia Bibi (**UPDATE:** subject of new calls for her execution in the wake of the lynching of Muslim student Mashal Khan)

Fr Emmanuel Yousuf Mani (director of the National Commission of Justice and Peace; **UPDATE:** condemned the televised "misrepresentations" made by a Muslim cleric who said that the execution of Asia Bibi [who has spent nearly a decade on death row for a blasphemy conviction] would have deterred the mob violence that caused the lynching of Muslim student Mashal Khan for similar allegations: "They should look at the reality. They should discourage people from taking the law into their own hands. The mosques should stop these provocative announcements")

Date reported: [April 18, 2017](#)

Location: [Lahore](#)

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pakistani-Imam-call-for-Asia-Bibi%E2%80%99s-execution-after-the-lynching-of-Mardan-student-40497.html>



Palestine

Fr Mario da Silva (Brazilian citizen, pastor of the only Latin-rite Catholic church in Gaza; **UPDATE:** said "The situation is very difficult. Easter celebrations did not go well. There is a lot of fear among Christians because of the attacks in Egypt. Few, Catholic and

Orthodox, have attended Mass, both. Only 50 people came to our church. As far as I know, 25 were Orthodox...There are fewer and fewer. Those who manage to get out do not come back. They seek peace elsewhere. On feast days, the church is increasingly empty”)

Date reported: April 20, 2017

Location: Gaza

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christians-celebrate-Easter-in-Gaza-amid-restrictions-and-fear-of-terrorism-40525.html>



Philippines

Fr Chito Lozada (described local reactions to a terror attack "It is natural for people to be afraid, especially because there are reports that [terrorists] are still here", added that Holy Week celebrations were not cancelled)

Date: April 11, 2017

Date reported: April 20, 2017

Location: Bohol Island

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/appeals-for-calm-after-philippine-terror-attack/78997>



Venezuela

Fr Jose Luis Arismendi (aged 35, **died from meningitis and from lack of medicine** caused by government economic policies)

Date: April 15, 2017

Location: Merida

Source: http://www.fides.org/en/news/62122-AMERICA_VENEZUELA_35_year_old_priest_dies_due_to_the_lack_of_medicines#.WPdhq_krKM8



Vietnam

Fr Peter Nguyen Dinh Thai (subjected to an attempted arrest as he prepared to celebrate Mass, people who surrounded him to protect him were pushed and shoved)

Fr Joseph Nguyen Van Than (**UPDATE:** said "I called provincial officials to tell them to intervene in the incident. Finally, the authorities left the house and Father Thai celebrated Easter Mass")

Date: April 16, 2017

Location: Muong Khuong, Lao Cai province

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/vietnam-authorities-harass-catholics-on-easter/78978>

Today's Martyrs

For more information please visit our web site at <http://todaysmartyrs.org/>

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