

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2017-04-23 through 2017-04-29



China

Zhang Rongxian (wife of Pastor Zhang Fei, detained and questioned for 15 hours after a police raid on a church service, fingerprinted and blood drawn)

Pastor Zhang Fei (husband of Zhang Rongxian, said that the church's landlord begged that services stop after the police said the services were illegal)

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Shenzhen, Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/04/pastors-wife-interrogated-for-15-hours.html>

Paul (underground church leader, expressed concern that a major development project will be used to suppress the church "It is hard to say how this far-reaching project will affect the church but 'maintaining stability' is always something we can expect under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party")

Date reported: April 26, 2017

Location: Hebei province

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/underground-catholics-ruffled-by-mega-project-in-chinas-north/79035>

Pastor Paul Wang (U.S. resident, seminar on "Reformation and Life Change" interrupted by government agents)

Date: April 25, 2017

Location: Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/04/virginia-pastor-summoned-by-chinese.html>

Zhang Lingmei (disappeared into police custody when Christians attempted to prevent officials from installing video surveillance cameras in their church, two other Christians were severely injured)

Date: April 21, 2017

Location: Wenzhou, Zhejiang province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/04/christians-report-spine-neck-injuries.html>

Fr Shen Yanjun (underground priest, Mass interrupted by police, attempt to arrest him failed)

Date reported: April 27, 2017

Location: Qinshan, Wudalianchi

Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin (underground bishop, detained by police on [April 12, 2017](#);
UPDATE: reported to have been allowed to return home)

Date reported: April 27, 2017

Location: Wenzhou, Zhejiang province

Bishop Vincent Guo Xijin (aged 59, detained on [April 6, 2017](#) for 20 days to 'to study and learn';
UPDATE: still missing)

Date reported: April 27, 2017

Location: Fuan

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Police-raid-at-the-underground-Catholic-Mass-in-Heilongjiang-40593.html>

Li Heping (husband of Wang Qiaoling, civil rights attorney, disappeared on [July 10, 2015](#);
UPDATE: convicted of 'subversion of state power' in a secret trial, sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment and 4 years' suspended sentence, will likely be released soon but will remain subject to arbitrary arrest)

Wang Qiaoling (wife of Li Heping; reported on [April 14, 2017](#) to have written of increased police surveillance at her home in [Beijing](#) "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"; **UPDATE:** received a call from her husband in which he said he had been freed, refused to come for him due to fears she would be arrested, he replied he understood before the line was disconnected)

Date: April 28, 2017

Location: Tianjin

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/04/prominent-human-rights-lawyer-sentenced.html>
and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christian-human-rights-lawyer,-Li-Heping,-sentenced-to-three-years-of-jail-40606.html>



Congo, Democratic Republic

Fr Richard Muembo (seminary rector, described the attack on the seminary "We never thought that we would become the target of attacks. It happened because militia loyal to the late tribal leader Kamwina-Nsapu wanted to set up their headquarters on the premises of the seminary. We declined and tried to find a peaceful solution through dialogue. Unfortunately, the local authorities chose a military solution to end the conflict. This led the rebels to attack our seminary on Saturday, 18th February. Thankfully, since we had noticed that the situation was becoming very dangerous, we had already gotten the seminarians out. The 77 seminarians, ranging in age from 21 to 27 and originally from seven different dioceses in the country, have suffered terribly. They had to flee for two days, taking only what they were wearing with them. They were taken in by families and

had to stay with them for three weeks until they could be moved, which, in some cases, was only possible with the help of the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo [MONUSCO]. The media was informed of this”)

Date: February 18, 2017

Location: Malole

Source: <http://members4.boardhost.com/acnaus/msg/1492645937.html>

Fr Richard Muembo (seminary rector; **UPDATE**: spoke on the continuing civil conflict and its relation to ore extraction “Anyone who uses modern technology nowadays is in some way using the blood of the Congolese people. Looters from all over the world come here to exploit the country...The Catholic Church is highly respected in this country because it has never let itself be co-opted by any political group. Now attempts are being made to embroil the Church in the conflict...Schools have been closed, hunger reigns, parts of the population are hiding in the jungle...We dream of an end to this pointless war”)

Fr Apollinaire Cikongo (seminary teacher and bishops' conference secretary, said “We have also heard of superstitious rituals. They recruit children and adolescents, give them a potion and a ritual bath, and let them believe that they cannot be harmed by bullets, that they are immortal. And so they commit barbaric crimes, just as if they were under the influence of drugs”)

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Malole

Source: <http://members4.boardhost.com/acnaus/msg/1492648150.html>



Egypt

Victor Fayeze (injured in the [April 11, 2017](#) church bombing, hospitalized; **UPDATE**: died)

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Tanta

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1884&A=30485>

Erini Elisha (teenaged girl, abducted, family told that she will be forced to wear an explosive vest into a church if they do not stop trying to recover her)

Date reported: April 28, 2017

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1887&A=30538>



Ethiopia

Biruk (alias, son of Tutu, beaten in January 2017 for refusing the invitation to Islam; **UPDATE**: home destroyed in an arson attack)

Tutu (alias, widow, mother of Biruk, husband's remains disinterred by Muslims in 2015 and left on a roadside; **UPDATE**: home destroyed in an arson attack)

Date: March 20, 2017

Location: Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/04/ethiopian-state-considers-restricting-christian-activity-church-buildings/>



Greece

Metropolitan Chrysostomos (protested the government's removal of the name 'St Andrew' from the city hospital, wrote "As you know, the holy apostle Andrew the First-Called is the founder of the Church in Patras and the patron of our city. Our city is inseparably linked with his name. The apostle Andrew is the breath and life of Patras. [He taught and worked miracles here. Patras is the place of his burial, his precious head, and his cross, on which he suffered martyrdom] In short, to change the name of the hospital is to deny the city's history itself. In this regard, we believe the hospital should be returned to its historical name. This decision will correct this injustice and greatly delight the residents of our city")

Date: April 28, 2017

Location: Patras

Source: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/conflict-between-greek-orthodox-church-and-state-growing-govt-renames-st-andrews-hospital/>



India

Event: Seven Catholic bishops met with the new Chief Minister [Governor] of their state, Yogi Adityanath, who was the founder of a Hindu youth organization responsible for the April 7, 2017 church invasion and who has been an opponent of Mother Teresa

Bishop Gerald John Mathias (said "We assured him of our prayers for the success of his work as the head of the government of the largest Indian state. We also expressed some concerns, calling for security and protection of our minority, especially in its places of worship. We also asked the eminent chief minister to investigate people who take the law into their own hands")

Date: April 21, 2017

Location: Uttar Pradesh state

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Uttar-Pradesh:-bishops-call-on-new-chief-minister-to-defend-persecuted-Christians-40560.html>

Event: A bishop, two priests, a nun, and two lay people who were accused of illegal conversions in May 2009 were acquitted due to lack of evidence

Bishop Emeritus Mathew Vaniakizhakkal (acquitted, said the case was "part of a motivated campaign against the church for its role in helping weaker sections of society")

Fr Jolly Kannukodan (acquitted, said "The court has vindicated our stand. We had tough time going for bail and other proceedings, from police station to trial court and then to the high court. From day one we have been telling the investigators that this was a fake case aimed at discrediting the Catholic Church", added that they do not plan to bring a defamation suit against their accusers because "Christ has taught us to love even our enemies")

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Madhya Pradesh state

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/catholics-exonerated-of-conversion-charges-in-india/79015>

and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Madhya-Pradesh:-After-eight-years,-bishop-absolved-from-charge-of-forced-conversion-40580.html>

Event: Three elderly missionaries with a total of 150 years' experience in the country may be forced to leave after denial of their visa renewals

Fr Ignacio Zuazua SJ (Spanish citizen)

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Gujarat state

Fr Aurele Brys SJ (Belgian citizen)

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Jharkhand state

Sr Laurel Judith Seaton MC (Australian citizen)

Date: April 24, 2017

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/elderly-foreign-missionaries-in-india-may-be-deported/79009>

Event: A Communist state government demolished a hilltop cross, the Chief Minister [Governor] issued an apology

Varghese Vallikkat (bishops conference official, said "The demolition of the cross has pained the entire Christian community"

Fr Jose Karivelickal (said officials did not consult with Christians prior to the cross demolition "This is wrong. The government should have dealt with the issue more carefully")

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Pappathshola hills, Kerala state

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/cross-bulldozed-in-communist-led-kerala/79013>



Kazakhstan

Ivan Yantsen (aged 70; **UPDATE**: home raided by police during a worship service, fined US\$729)

Dates: April 16 and 18, 2017

Location: Temirtau

Source: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2275



Lebanon

Bishop Daniel Kourie (chairman of a commission which has been investigating the 2013 abduction of Syrian Bishops Boulos al-Yazigi and Yuhanna Ibrahim, said that as far as he knew "the two bishops are still alive")

Date: April 22, 2017

Location: Beirut

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Beirut-Bishop-Kourie-says-the-two-bishops-abducted-in-Syria-in-2013-are-still-alive-40553.html>



Madagascar

Fr Lucien Njiva OFM Cap (**shot dead** during a robbery)

Deacon Jeremy (aged 26, wounded)

Fr Eric Franck Randriamiandrininarivo (reported on the murder of Fr Lucien Njiva)

Date: April 22, 2017

Location: Ambendrana Antsohihy

Source: [The flag of Nigeria, consisting of three vertical stripes of green, white, and green.](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62165-<u>AFRICA_MADAGASCAR_Capuchin_father_killed_in_attack_on_friary_deacon_wounded#.WQNYmfnyuM8</u></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Nigeria

Fr Samuel Okwuidegbe SJ (aged 50, abducted along with two others;
released)

Fr Rigobert Kyungu Musenge SJ (reported on the abduction of Fr Samuel Okwuidegbe)

Date: April 18 and 22, 2017

Location: on the road between Benin City and Onitsha

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/62137->

[AFRICA NIGERIA A Jesuit kidnapped in southern Nigeria#.WPtW6vkrKM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62137-)

and <http://www.fides.org/en/news/62160->

[AFRICA NIGERIA Jesuit abducted on 18 April released#.WP9lfPkrKM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62160-)



Pakistan

Event: Twenty-one armed Muslims attacked a Christian ghetto, several Christians severely beaten, police have made no arrests

Afaq Masih (teen, son of Pulus Masih, cell phone snatched by a Muslim, got into a physical altercation with the thief, the altercation triggered the attack on the Christian ghetto)

Date reported: April 22, 2017

Location: Phul Nagar, Kasur district, Punjab province

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/phul-nagar-armed-assailants-attack-christians-neighborhood-torture-residents/>

Maria (aged 14, daughter of Bushra Bibi, abducted at gunpoint from her home, money and jewelry worth US\$600 taken but the shouts of men outside the home indicate her abduction was the primary motive; **UPDATE:** returned to her family)

Bushra Bibi (mother of Maria, Tahmur, Hanook, and Kiran, said after Maria's abduction "Every day I am without my daughter I feel like dying. These men will do terrible things with Maria, she is so alone and vulnerable. I asked the men to take me and leave my children but they stole my eldest child from me. The police first refused to register a crime now they are doing little to retrieve my daughter. I just want her back safe and sound I fear I will be like many other mothers who never see their daughter again. The thought of this is filling me with despair. I have been praying for a miracle and plead with other Christians to pray for Maria")

Tahmur (aged 13, son of Bushra Bibi, threatened at gunpoint during their home invasion)

Hanook (aged 12, son of Bushra Bibi, threatened at gunpoint during their home invasion)

Kiran (aged 11, daughter of Bushra Bibi, threatened at gunpoint during their home invasion)

Boota Masih (brother of Bushra Bibi, uncle of Maria, said "No action has been taken in order to recover our daughter")

Shahab Masih (grandfather of Maria, Tahmur, Hanook, and Kiran, said "Let my voice be heard in front of the Chief Minister [Governor] of Punjab")

Date: April 15, 2017 and reportedly April 26, 2017

Location: Gaggo Mandi, Vehari district, Punjab province

Source: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/14-year-old-christian-girl-abducted-from-parents-home-at-gun-point>

and <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/gaggo-mandi-fir-registered-against-richling-for-sexually-assaulting-a-christian-teenage-girl/>

and <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/gaggo-mandi-teenage-christian-abductee-recovered-from-richlings-custody/>

Rani Mughal (church damaged in an arson attack, filed a court petition after police refused to file a report)

Kashif Sohail (social worker, said there were no injuries in the arson attack)

Date: April 14, 2017

Location: Lahore

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/lahore-vandals-torch-church-torched-after-congregants-marked-good-friday/>

Prof Anjum James Paul (**UPDATE:** met with the Chairman of the National Commission for Human Rights to discuss the case of abducted teenage girl Sana John Shahid)

Fr Sarfraz Simon (attended the meeting)

Date: April 26, 2017

Location: Islamabad

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/islamabad-nchr-hears-case-of-christian-victim-of-forced-conversion/>

Ansar Masih (aged 21, son of Nasreen Bibi, brother of Samina Bibi, abducted by the family of a Muslim woman he had befriended, stripped, beaten and tortured until unconscious, dumped at his family's home, hospitalized, moved to a specialized burn unit, said "I am still traumatized by the attack and am too scared to leave my home. The men hurt me so bad, they kicked, me punched me, bit me, spat at me, hit me with bars and then burnt me after I first watched them heat the poles they had beaten me with in their fireplace. I was simply a friend of Jameela we did not have any physical affair, but this family simply hate Christians and have enacted such brutality on me because to them I am just like rubbish. I lost consciousness during the burning and then found myself in hospital. I am still in pain and will be scarred for life but at least I am alive. God preserved my life and I will stay forever indebted to him")

Samina Bibi (aged 30, sister of Ansar Masih, filed a police report after her brother was abducted and tortured, police have detained only one assailant)

Nasreen Bibi (aged 50, mother of Ansar Masih, said "My son's life is precious to me, he has undergone brutality the likes of which I have never seen before. I am still shocked by the violence that he has survived and thank God that he is recovering. The men that hurt him so bad deserve to be punished and I am praying God will bring justice into this situation as it happens to so many young Christian men")

Date: April 1, 2017

Location: Sheikhpura, Punjab province

Source [warning - graphic]: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/christian-man-burnt-with-hot-rods>

Aasiya Noreen aka Asia Bibi (aged 52, wife of Ashiq Masih, mother of five including Isham, daughter of Soran Masih, still incarcerated on a 2009 blasphemy conviction and death sentence; **UPDATE**: application for an expedited hearing by the Supreme Court rejected by the Chief Justice)

Joseph Nadeem (Renaissance Education Foundation executive director, said of the Supreme Court decision to not expedite the case of Aasiya Noreen aka Asia Bibi, said "This is very unfortunate. Her husband became quiet when he heard the latest developments. We shall again apply for the hearing and keep struggling for justice. There are many factors at work behind the slow pace of judiciary. Her case has been in the doldrums due to huge pressure. There will be a strong reaction if Bibi is freed, opposing groups have made it matter of honor and ego")

Naeem Shakir (civil rights lawyer; **UPDATE**: said "Our plight is that the socio-political atmosphere of the country has no space for discussion on blasphemy laws. The judges know what is happening outside as non-state actors show their strength on the roads demanding death for [Asia] Bibi. The sensitivity surrounding blasphemy laws has made it a political tool to threaten and put down others. The state has a weak narrative regarding this law and its functionaries usually try to evade questions regarding its misuse...Such atrocities have become routine. The plight of Bibi has had a dampening effect on minorities. Their grief cannot be addressed because of religious retrogressive and extremist groups. Islamists consider her freedom a defeat for their movement")

Date: April 26, 2017

Location: Islamabad

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/asia-bibis-plight-blamed-on-pakistans-islamists/79081>



Philippines

Bishop Arturo Bastes (publicly supported a case filed at the International Criminal Court which accused President Duterte and 11 others of crimes against humanity, said "It is our hope that this move will inject fear into the hearts and minds of the accused officials so that they will eventually and sincerely put a stop to these merciless killings [of persons involved in the illegal drug trade]")

Date reported: April 27, 2017

Location: Sorsogon

Source: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/04/28/philippine-bishop-backs-case-against-duterte-in-international-court/>

and <http://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-bishop-backs-complaint-against-duterte/79062>



Sudan

Azhari Tambra (aged 28, husband of Mona Matta, father of three, church security guard, home ransacked by a mob and police, was not present at the time)

Mona Matta (aged 27, wife of Azhari Tambra, mother of three aged 6, 4, and 2, home ransacked by a mob and police, detained with her children, release after 10 PM, prevented from re-entering their home)

Date: April 24, 2017

Location: Omdurman

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/04/police-mob-attack-synod-guards-quarters-arrest-family-omdurman-sudan/>



Tajikistan

Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov (arrested by the NSC secret police on charges of 'extremism', condition unknown)

Date: April 10, 2017

Location: Khujand

Source: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2276



Uganda

Pastor Christopher James Kalaja (husband, father of six, home, barn, and church destroyed by 9 Muslims, said “As they were approaching, they were shouting ‘Allah Akbar’ and immediately started cutting down the trees on my farm, and thereafter pulled down the church building. I then took off for the sake of my life...My outreach to Muslims has led to all these fights that I have been receiving from the Muslims. These people have been hunting for me since the early '80s. And as a result, they even managed to kill my mother by poisoning, and after the death of my mother, they went ahead and killed my livestock. They are provoking me to leave the area”)

Date: March 27, 2017

Location: Nakabale village, Kaderuna sub-county

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/04/muslim-extremists-destroy-pastors-farm-church-building-eastern-uganda/>



United Kingdom

Tim Farron (Member of Parliament, under attack for refusing to agree that homosexual behavior was not a sin and for saying "We are all sinners")

Date: April 19, 2017

Location: London

Source: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2017/04/21/the-outrage-at-tim-farron-could-have-serious-consequences-for-christians-in-politics/>
and <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/19/absolute-disgrace-tim-farron-fire-refusing-answer-asked-gay/>

Bishop Philip Egan (**UPDATE:** said in a homily "In our world, two dangerous ideologies are mounting. Just as in the 20th century it was Communism versus Fascism, so in the 21st a new battle is brewing. On the one side is fundamentalism, religion without reason. It breeds fanaticism, violence, terrorism, to cause disruption and to force upon others its extremist views. This is a tragic reality in the volatile nations of the Middle East. It now threatens the West also. On the other side is secularism, reason without religion. Its champions seek to privatize religion, driving it out of the public domain. Egged on by Stonewall [a homosexual activist group] and by others, secularists are on the rise in local government, in education, in the media, in the social services, in the BMA, in the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, in the European Court of Justice, and in many other institutions too. Hell-bent on burying the Christian patrimony of this land, they propose Orwellian changes to our language and place ever more draconian restrictions on religious expression, even on what we wear. Both fundamentalism and secularism are extremes. They are totalitarian. They are destructive of the human person. They pose a grave threat to human happiness and to a healthy society...this is now having lethal consequences for the weakest, for the unborn child, for the handicapped, the elderly, the dying. This is why this Easter, as Christians, it's time we said, 'enough is enough!'. We need to rise up to the challenge. We need to roll back the agenda. We need to revive and celebrate our Christian history, art and architecture, music and literature, liturgy and ethics")

Date: April 15, 2017

Location: Portsmouth

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/uk-bishop-teach-kids-bible-in-state-schools-to-combat-totalitarianism>



United States - Alabama

Karleigh (aged 11 months, daughter of Danetris Caves, shot in the foot during an altercation at a church fair, released from the hospital)

Danetris Caves (mother of Karleigh, said "They really didn't know she was shot or grazed or whatever, but they know a bullet came her way where her stroller was and the stroller was flipped over. It is our first time coming out to a fair. You know, her first Easter, first birthday all in just two weeks and this happens? Just keep praising God because He's the reason that she's still here")

Date: April 15, 2017

Location: Birmingham

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/mother-praises-god-baby-shot-church-carnival-survives-180885/>

United States - Michigan

Pastor Derek Hagland (shouted down while giving an invocation at a town meeting)

Date: April 20, 2017

Location: Gaylord

Source: <http://christiannews.net/2017/04/25/prayer-at-michigan-town-hall-gathering-drowned-out-with-shouts-of-separation-of-church-and-state/>

United States - New York

Cardinal Timothy M Dolan (aged 67, **UPDATE**: called the position of Democratic National Committee chair Tom Perez that the party will exclude its anti-abortion members from public office “disturbing” and “intolerant” and called on Democrats to “challenge their leadership to recant this intolerant position”, added "now the DNC says that to be a Democrat – indeed to be an American – requires supporting that extreme agenda [of unrestricted abortion]”)

Date: April 26, 2017

Source: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/04/28/cardinal-dolan-slams-democrat-pledge-to-support-only-pro-abortion-candidates/>



Vietnam

Event: A local Communist party is opposing the efforts of a cathedral to stop rude actions by foreign tourists

Nguyen T (church leader, complained of tourists at the cathedral "They come to the shrine to show off their cameras and take pictures. They talk and laugh loudly. Such behavior negatively affects the church's sacredness and its parishioners")

Maria Nguyen (wrote to her bishop to complain of the actions of tourists at the cathedral including threats against worshippers)

Mai (said "Chinese tourists come into the church, speak in a loud voice, go here and there. Some turn their back to the altar, put their chin on the table, and sit down")

Date reported: April 22, 2017

Location: Nha Trang

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Catholics-outraged-by-bad-mannered-Chinese-visitors-in-Nha-Trang-cathedral-40545.html>



Zambia

Archbishop Telesphore Mpundu (issued a statement along with the other Catholic bishops which read "...Our country is now all, except in designation, a dictatorship and if it is not yet, then we are not far from it. Our political leaders in the ruling party often issue intimidating statements that frighten people and make us fear for the immediate and future...")

Date: April 23, 2017

Location: Lusaka

Source: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2017/04/27/zambias-bishops-our-country-is-becoming-a-dictatorship-in-all-but-name/>
and <http://www.catholiczambia.org.zm/images/24042017.pdf>

Today's Martyrs

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

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