

# Today's Martyrs

*Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom*

## Weekly Report – 2017-09-24 through 2017-09-30



### Australia

Fr Morgan Batt (spat upon by a supporter of same sex marriage)

Date: September 27, 2017

Location: Brisbane

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4925688/Priest-spat-sworn-street-gay-marriage.html>



### Belgium

Br. Rene Stockman (**UPDATE:** issued a statement opposing his hospital board's latest vote in favor of euthanasia "where does a board of directors of an organization that specializes in mental health care, but made up of jurists and economists, and without a single expert in the field, get the knowledge to give its opinion on such a matter? Some of them, with all due respect for their person, have never had first-hand experience with a psychiatric patient, let alone cared for one or treated one. And have they listened to the many objections that were raised exactly by these experts in the field, and which they continue to raise, or are they stuck in their ideological discourse, supported by a few enlightened ethicists and caught up in social trends...When those in charge of the Organization now openly claim to follow Jesus while distancing themselves from the vision of the Vatican, the Belgian bishops, and the General Administration of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity because, supposedly, in their eyes, they 'live far removed from reality', then they are sadly mistaken and this is more about pride, arrogance, and ideologization at the expense of the lives of those most in need of care. Let us call a spade a spade: euthanasia is still killing a fellow human being, even if it happens with the utmost due care. How in the name of God is this supposed to be compatible with our charism of charity, the charism of life?")

Date: September 12, 2017

Source: <http://brothersofcharity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Jesus-did-not-follow-the-rules-yet-to-give-life-not-take-it.pdf>



## China

Bishop Mathew Hu Xiande (aged 88, sentenced in 1958 to 7 years' forced labor; **UPDATE: died of natural causes**)

Date: September 25, 2017

Location: Ningbo, Zhejiang province

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Msg.-Mathew-Hu-Xiande,-bishop-of-Ningbo,-has-died-41869.html>



## Egypt

Bassem Abdel-Malak Fahim (aged 25, home surrounded by a mob that protested a Facebook post he made after the May 26, 2017 terror attack on Christians outside a monastery, had apologized for any misunderstanding three days earlier)

Mina Younan Samuel (aged 25, shared Bassem Abdel-Malak Fahim Facebook post, fled the village with his father days earlier)

Fr Gawargious Abdel-Saied Aziz (called for security forces to protect the Copts)

Adel Girgis (said two Copts were injured by angry Muslims)

Date: September 10, 2017

Location: Ezbat El-Sheikh Nageim village, Minya province

Adel Girgis (**UPDATE:** said “At 9pm, a great deal of Muslim villagers gathered and began to attack us. The situation was very terrible for all of us. They attacked Coptic-owned homes randomly, they hurled bricks and stones at the homes, destroying the windows and doors of these homes, destroying and looting the properties”, three Copts were injured, many shops and automobiles destroyed)

Bassem Abdel-Malak Fahim aged 25; **UPDATE:** fled the village, later posted on Facebook “I did not mean to offend any religious or public figures, but rather terrorism and terrorists, the enemies of the homeland. I deleted that post from that date, and I did not write anything after it. I affirm my love and respect for all Christians and Muslims, and everyone in my dear country”)

Date: September 14, 2017

Location: Ezbat El-Sheikh Nageim village, Minya province

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/egypt-copts-face-arrest-facebook-post-leads-muslims-riot/>



## India

Fr Michael Kerketta SJ (**UPDATE**: described a rally of 5,000 protestors to oppose the new state anti-conversion law)

Fr Amrit Tirkey (event organizer)

Date: September 23, 2017

Location: Ranchi, Jharkhand state

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Ranchi:-5,000-protest-against-the-anti-conversion-law-and-the-lands-41868.html>

### **Event: Christians from Myanmar have become refugees in India, may be deported**

Cing Dwat (aged 31, refugee since 2008 after Buddhist monks burned his home, said "We are not Muslim, we are Christians and we left our country because the Buddhist state forced us to leave. We left our education, our homes, our lives and we didn't come here out of choice. We feel insecure all the time. Our history, our culture, our identity don't matter to anybody over here")

Pu Bual (aged 60s, former government lawyer, said "I am surviving with the help of my friends. After working for 36 years, I cannot earn here because I can't be employed in the formal sector")

Ca Vang (aged early 40s, widow, husband killed in Delhi by a racially motivated mob, said "I am struggling to raise my children and I live with the burden of injustice and have no answers for my children about why their father was killed")

Thin Hnem (aged 65, refugee since 2009)

Dim Hai (aged 43, widow, refugee since 2007)

Sang Lian (aged 47, father of an 8 year old daughter, refugee since 2000, said "If the Indian government asks me to go back to Myanmar, I don't even have the money to reach the border. I have no land in Myanmar and it is not safe for us to live there anymore. I want to live in India")

Date: September 26, 2017

Location: Delhi

Source: <http://www.firstpost.com/india/watch-refugees-in-delhi-living-in-india-a-struggle-but-myanmar-is-a-threat-to-our-existence-say-chin-migrants-4082851.html>

Pastor Abraham Thomas (dragged to a police station by Hindu radicals after the radicals gave children leaflets stating 'Let us use guns to shoot all the Hindus' and photographed them, then told police that he had given them the leaflets, released but church closed, said "My church is shut down and I have not conducted any service since then. Do we as Christians ever enter a Hindu temple...levying allegations on the priest and demanding explanations from them? If not, then who gives them the right to treat us this way?")

Date: September 3, 2017

Location: Faridabad

Source: <https://barnabasfund.org/news/Newsdesk-28-September-2017>

Pastor Aryan (said "I have been facing so much trouble from the Hindu Munnani activists, and I have been targeted and continually threatened and attacked, at times I was discouraged", has been forced to move)

Date reported: September 28, 2017

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2017/09/28/icc-builds-pastor-a-new-house-after-hindu-radicals-drove-him-away/>

**Event: Two pastors were arrested on forced conversion charges, released, charges dropped**

Pastor Santok (said "We were simply sharing the gospel and had the doors open at our church for anyone who wanted to come in. We were not asking people to change their religion that is their choice. We did not give any gifts or any money that is a total lie")

Pastor J P Kalyan (guest homilist)

Date: September 10, 2017

Location: Pidal village, Haryana state

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/two-pastors-narrowly-avoid-anti-conversion-lawsuit>



**Iran**

**Event: Twenty Iranians converted to Christianity and were baptized while visiting a neighboring country, then returned home**

Hediyeh (alias, convert, said "I've been waiting for this moment for nearly nine years")

Fariborz (aged 53, alias, convert, said "This was my wish before I die...I accepted Christ when I was 43 years old. There was no way for me to get baptized in Iran because of the dangers we face. Today, my faith is complete")

Bitra (aged 16, alias, convert, said "I became a Christian after seeing Jesus in a dream [at age 12]...As I was getting baptized this morning, I felt the Holy Spirit come upon me in a new way")

Majid (alias, convert, mother, father, and sister also converted, said "It feels very good. I'm very happy. My whole family is happy")

Elahe (alias, convert, said "This was the appointed time for me to get baptized...I know God used the past 11 years to grow my faith so I could endure difficult times...Since we didn't know other believers or were part of a house church, there was nobody to help us grow in our faith. We could only grow through watching Mohabat TV and with the Holy Spirit's help to get stronger in our faith")

Afarin (assisted the recent converts, said "The moment the Iranian government discovers someone has changed their religion, they will try everything to stop the person from sharing their new faith with others")

Date reported: September 26, 2017

Source: <http://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2017/september/exclusive-20-iranian-christians-embark-on-secret-journey-to-celebrate-baptism>



## Kenya

### Event UPDATE: Four Christians were killed by al-Shabaab militants

Agnes Kimani (mother of Joseph Kinuthia, said her son was “a dedicated young man who had given up a lot to take up a teaching job at Bobo primary school. He always wanted to see the pupils excel and proceed to good secondary schools...He is now rest in the Lord, and we for God’s justice to prevail”)

Ruth Wagunyi (said "I am very bitter and worried about how I will live without [my husband]. I treasured him because he loved me and provided everything that I needed. I am still in shock from what I saw that night: blood all over, his body lying lifeless and the head a few meters away. Why did they kill my husband?")

Pastor James Marete (said “some villagers of Silini and Bobo have fled their homes and are living in Hindi town. Nobody wants to be found by the al-Shabaab at night or during the day in the farms. We have also opened our school to shelter villagers where they sleep and wake to go to the farms in company of a few police officers”)

Pastor Moses Nzayi (said “Hindi alone has about 30 churches, but you will notice that the number of members has gone down to half compared to the time before the Hindi and Mpeketoni massacres in 2014. This trend is worrying. Some pastors are almost giving up. We have persistently asked the authorities to give sufficient security to the people of Lamu west whose main occupation is farming and small-scale entrepreneurs”)

Date: September 6, 2017

Location: Bobo and Silini villages, Hindi

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2017/09/29/mourning-fear-and-faith-christians-bury-family-members-killed-by-al-shabaab/>



## Nepal

**Event:** Four Christians who were arrested on [July 21, 2016](#) on charges of witchcraft, false imprisonment, and violence for praying over a mentally ill woman, and then convicted on [December 22, 2016](#) and sentenced to 5 to 8 years' imprisonment, **UPDATE: convictions overturned, released**

Bimkali Budha (school principal)

Ganga Pariyar (wife of Ruplal Pariyar)

Lali Pun

Ruplal Pariyar (husband of Ganga Pariyar)

Date reported: September 26, 2017

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/nepali-christians-freed-9-months-after-conviction-for-witchcraft-of-praying-for-mentally-ill-woman/>



## Nigeria

Fr Evaristus Bassey (**UPDATE**: spoke in response to the introduction of legislation by Deputy House leader Umar Jibrin that would more tightly regulate and license non-government organizations [NGOs]: “Caritas Nigeria and JDPC observe that most Catholic Dioceses and Archdioceses and Christian Churches that are registered in Nigeria under the CAC are registered as Incorporated Trustees and therefore fall under the NGO categorization...Knowing fully well that his religion demands him to use his position to promote and protect religion, is this Honorable Umar’s subtle way of promoting and protecting his religion by setting up a framework in which others might be persecuted?...Jubril’s disruptive effort is highly suspicious, especially against the backdrop of such security threats as the [Fulani] herdsmen attacks which are being seen as part of a sinister agenda of domination”)

Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan (**UPDATE**: criticized the government for labeling Biafrain separatists [which he does not support] as terrorists but not Fulani herdsmen “My understanding of a terrorist is a deadly armed activist. I don’t think, merely speaking or talking or threatening [Biafrain independence] will add up to being a terrorist...The Fulani herdsmen who are armed, lethal, murderous, vicious and have been killing people in our communities, they are the ones that we are waiting for, to see what the government will do. If you recall, the bishops’ conference called on the government to treat them as terrorists”)

Date: September 28, 2017

Location: Abuja

Source: <https://cruxnow.com/global-church/2017/09/28/nigeria-catholic-group-cast-ngo-bill-attempt-promote-islam/>

Fr Lawrence Adorolo (abducted, ransom demanded)

Bishop Gabriel Dunia (said "We are holding a Mass for the unconditional release of the priest")

Date: September 27, 2017

Location: near Okpella, Edo state

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/62984-AFRICA\\_NIGERIA\\_Another\\_priest\\_abducted\\_in\\_the\\_south\\_of\\_Nigeria#.Wc5Vs1tSyM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62984-AFRICA_NIGERIA_Another_priest_abducted_in_the_south_of_Nigeria#.Wc5Vs1tSyM8)



## Pakistan

Sher Dil (son of Izhaq Masih, abducted and sexually assaulted by 7 Muslim men, forced to recite kalmas [Islamic articles of faith], threatened with death, released)

Izhaq Masih (father of Sher Dil, sanitation worker, took his son to the police to file criminal charges, the police performed their own medical exam and wrote on their report that no sexual assault occurred)

Date: September 13, 2017

Location: Attock

Source: <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/christian-boy-sexually-assaulted-police-taking-sides-with-guilty-party/>

Aasiya Noreen aka Asia Bibi (aged 52, wife of Ashiq Masih, mother of five including Isham, daughter of Soran Masih, convicted of blasphemy in 2009; **UPDATE**: has passed 3,000 days in prison, has been nominated for the European Union Sakharov Prize)

Date: September 26, 2017

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/62964-](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62964-ASIA_PAKISTAN_Asia_Bibi_nominated_for_Sakharov_Prize_2017_the_blasphemy_law_in_the_spotlight#.Wco1o7KGOM8)

[ASIA\\_PAKISTAN\\_Asia\\_Bibi\\_nominated\\_for\\_Sakharov\\_Prize\\_2017\\_the\\_blasphemy\\_law\\_in\\_the\\_spotlight#.Wco1o7KGOM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62964-ASIA_PAKISTAN_Asia_Bibi_nominated_for_Sakharov_Prize_2017_the_blasphemy_law_in_the_spotlight#.Wco1o7KGOM8)

Salman Rashid (son of Rashid Akhtar, threatened with death)

Date: September 24, 2017

Location: Sikenderabad

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6629>

Emmanuel Ghulam Masih (husband, father of 3 including one yet to be born, in hiding with his family due to his wife's conversion from Islam to Christianity)

Fr Mario Rodrigues (**UPDATE**: said "There are stories of young Muslims who intend to convert to Christianity in Pakistan; but if they did it openly, every Muslim could feel the right to kill them. For this reason, cases of conversion from Islam to Christianity are very rare and some convert in secret. When the grace of God illuminates a heart and the choice is made, a real Calvary may begin. Only Christ can give strength to face the trials and sufferings that come to light")

Date: September 27, 2017

Location: Punjab province

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/62973-](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62973-ASIA_PAKISTAN_A_woman_converts_from_Islam_to_Christianity_now_she_and_her_family_risk_their_lives#.WczuTltSyM8)

[ASIA\\_PAKISTAN\\_A\\_woman\\_converts\\_from\\_Islam\\_to\\_Christianity\\_now\\_she\\_and\\_her\\_family\\_risk\\_their\\_lives#.WczuTltSyM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62973-ASIA_PAKISTAN_A_woman_converts_from_Islam_to_Christianity_now_she_and_her_family_risk_their_lives#.WczuTltSyM8)

and <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6632>



## Sudan

Mahjoub Abotrin (church elder, arrested for his refusal to cooperate with 'church leaders' who were appointed by the government, interrogated, released, another leader was also arrested and released)

Rev Kowa Shamal (**UPDATE**: said “We cannot allow them [government-appointed committee members] to take over the church”)

Date: September 22, 2017

Location: Omdurman

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/09/sudan-detains-interrogates-elder-campaign-take-church/>



## Turkey

Andrew Brunson (U.S. citizen, husband of Norine Brunson, detained as a 'national security risk' on [October 7, 2016](#), denied access to U.S. diplomats, attorneys, and fellow parishioners; **UPDATE**: confirmed to be a hostage at a press conference by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President explicitly called for the U.S. government to exchange him for Sufi cleric and U.S. resident Fethullah Gulen)

Date: September 28, 2017

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/turkish-president-admits-us-pastor-political-hostage/>



## Turkmenistan

Vepa Bahromovich Matyakubov (aged 19, brother of Dovran Matyakubov, conscientious objector, forcibly taken to a military conscription office on [November 3, 2016](#), released; **UPDATE**: sentenced to 2 years' corrective labor, will serve his sentence at home, 20% of his salary will be withheld)

Date: February 14, 2017

Location: Boldumsaz district

Source: [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2318](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2318)



## Uganda

Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga (described how children have been abducted every week and killed or maimed as human sacrifices, said “It’s a brutal ritual that destroys the lives of our children and affects their parents mentally. We are working with the police to arrest witch doctors involved in the ritual. We are also assisting the survivors financially and with moral support”)

Date: September 26, 2017

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/09/26/witch-doctors-sacrificing-children-drought-stricken-african-country-uganda/703756001/>



## United Kingdom

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev (said at The Christian Future of Europe Conference "The modern-day decline of Christianity in the western world may be compared to the situation in the Russian Empire before 1917. The revolution and the dramatic events which followed it have deep spiritual, as well as social and political, reasons. Over many years the aristocracy and intelligentsia had abandoned the faith, and were then followed by common people...I firmly believe that a Europe which has renounced Christ will not be able to preserve its cultural and spiritual identity...The legalization of abortion, the encouragement of sexual promiscuity, and the systematic attempts to undermine family values have led to a profound demographic crisis in many European countries...Often the language of hatred in relation to Christians is used when Christians insist on their right to participate in public affairs. They enjoy the same right as much as it is enjoyed by adherents of any other religion or by atheists. However, in practice it is not like this...In modern-day Europe militant secularism has been transformed into an autonomous power that does not tolerate dissent. It allows well-organized minority groups to successfully impose their will on the majority under the pretext of observing human rights...I believe it important that Christians of Europe should stand shoulder to shoulder to defend those values upon which the life of the continent has been built for centuries, and that they should view the afflictions and dismay of Christians throughout the world as their own")

Date: September 22, 2017

Location: London

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/2017/09/23/news150374/>

Rev Gavin Ashenden (aged 63, British citizen; **UPDATE**: reported to have been consecrated as Missionary Bishop to Anglicans in the United Kingdom and Europe)

Date: September 28, 2017

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Source: <https://ashenden.org/2017/09/27/a-press-release-from-the-archbishop-of-the-christian-episcopal-church/>  
and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uGQxP7z7ys>



## United Nations

Farrukh Saif Harrison (attorney, said that Christians are loyal Pakistani citizens, “Since 1987 to 2017, so far 222 cases of Blasphemy laws have been registered against Christians. This law has been used to settle down the personal vendetta against the oppressed and persecuted Christian community...By using Blasphemy law, many Christian Colonies [ghettos] and villages were set on fire by the fanatic Muslims. Shanti Nagar, Baminwala, Koriyan, Christian Colony Gojra and Badmi Bahag are few of such places which were destroyed and ransacked by the Muslim fundamentalists”

Date: September 18, 2017

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Source: <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/christians-are-loyal-citizens-of-pakistan-pakistani-lawyer-reiterates-at-un/>

Fr Manoj Kumar Nayak (spoke on the situation in India at the UN Human Rights Council "The Government of India fails to prevent the adoption anti-conversion acts in states such as Odisha, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand and Gujarat that restricts the rights of minorities to practice, propagate and profess their religion. In addition there are documented data about the increasing of criminalization of minorities, dalits [untouchables] and adivasis [aboriginals]. There is also the increase of hate speech delivered by State officials which lead to the incitement of violence and discrimination against religious minorities, in contrary to their responsibility to protect them")

Date reported: September 23, 2017

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/62954-ASIA\\_INDIA\\_Indian\\_Priest\\_to\\_UN\\_Need\\_to\\_ensure\\_freedom\\_of\\_religion\\_and\\_the\\_protection\\_of\\_religious\\_minorities#.WckIvrKGOM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62954-ASIA_INDIA_Indian_Priest_to_UN_Need_to_ensure_freedom_of_religion_and_the_protection_of_religious_minorities#.WckIvrKGOM8)



## United States - New Hampshire

Freddy Sombah (aged 60-plus, husband of Poppy Sombah, father of Timothy Sombah, Indonesian citizen, denied refugee status, deportation halted by a Federal court)

Poppy Sombah (aged 60-plus, wife of Freddy Sombah, mother of Timothy Sombah, factory worker, Indonesian citizen, denied refugee status, deportation halted by a Federal court)

Timothy Sombah (aged 29, son of Freddy and Poppy Sombah, Indonesian citizen, denied refugee status, as a DACA applicant will be safe from deportation until 2019)

Date reported: September 27, 2017

Location: Somersworth

Source: <http://www.fosters.com/news/20170927/judges-order-a-huge-relief-for-indonesian-family>

### **United States - Michigan**

Carrie DeKlyen (aged 37, wife of Nick DeKlyen, mother of six, **died of brain cancer** on **September 9, 2017**, had decided against aggressive treatments due to pregnancy)

Life Lynn DeKlyen (aged 14 days, daughter of Carrie and Nick DeKlyen, born September 6, 2017; **UPDATE: died**)

Date: September 20, 2017

Location: Jenison

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/heartbreaking-baby-whose-mother-declined-cancer-treatment-dies>

### **United States - Tennessee**

**Event: A former church member entered a church and shot eight people, one died, two hospitalized in critical condition**

Melanie Crow Smith (aged 39, wife, mother of two, **shot dead** in the parking lot)

Pastor Joey Spann (aged 60, husband of Peggy, shot in the chest, hospitalized)

Peggy Spann (wife of Pastor Joey Spann, shot, hospitalized)

Robert 'Caleb' Engle (aged 22, church usher, grappled with and disarmed the gunman, suffered a broken nose, dislocated shoulder, and a gash on his forehead, held the gunman at gunpoint for police)

Minerva Rosa (parishioner, applied first aid to Pastor Joey Spann)

Mary Pitts (applied first aid to an elderly parishioner, said "I'm going to go home and cry")

Roger Bracey (witnessed the shootings)

Michelle Day (mother of Jeremiah Reese, witnessed the shootings)

Jeremiah Reese (aged 10, son of Michelle Day, helped barricade the door to a children's classroom with chairs, twisted his ankle)

Date: September 24, 2017

Location: Antioch

Source: <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/09/24/nashville-church-shooting-heroes-survivors-recount-tragedy/698642001/>

and <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2017/09/24/antioch-church-shooting-10-year-old-boy-helped-barricade-door-inside-building/698393001/>



## **Zimbabwe**

Rev Evan Mawarire (arrested on [September 24, 2017](#) after posting a call for non-violent protest against the government; charged in court on [September 25, 2017](#) with subversion and inciting violence, which carry a possible sentence of 20 years' imprisonment; **UPDATE:** released on bail)

Date: [September 26, 2017](#)

Location: Harare

Source: <http://www.christiantimes.com/article/zimbabwe-pastor-faces-20-year-jail-term-for-subverting-mugabe-regime/72920.htm>

## **Today's Martyrs**

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

*or write to*

**2490 Black Rock Turnpike #455**

**Fairfield CT 06825-2400**

Permission is granted to copy, disseminate and forward this document without charge or fee, provided no changes are made and full attribution is made to Today's Martyrs