

# Today's Martyrs

*Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom*

## Weekly Report – 2018-02-18 through 2018-02-24



### **Bolivia**

Archbishop Jesus Juarez (signed a statement following two attacks with explosive devices that killed 12 and injured at least 60, one attack was against a religious procession “We lift up our prayers for the victims and express our solidarity with relatives of those who have died in the two explosions...We call on the authorities to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation and to take measures to prevent these lamentable incidents”)

Dates: February 10 & 13, 2018

Location: Oruro

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/bolivia-bishops-call-for-thorough-investigation-of-explosions-in-oruro-80657>



### **China**

**Event: A church building was auctioned off by the local government, the listed owners were notified the same day**

Pastor Su Tianfu (**UPDATE**: notified, said “This afternoon, court personnel, policemen, and community workers knocked on my door and gave me the ruling regarding the [three sites]. To me, the ruling is actually a secret auction...”)

Deacon Zhang Xiuhong (church board chairwoman, detained in late [July 2015](#); reported on [August 7, 2017](#) to have been released, said her faith had become stronger and that she had shared her faith with many prisoners; **UPDATE**: notified)

Liang Xuewu (notified)

Date: February 11, 2018

Location: Guiyang, Guizhou province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/02/officials-auction-church-to-pay-fine.html>

Mr Chen (reported on the closure of a church for alleged fire code violations, 30% of the parishioners were foreign workers)

Date: February 5, 2018

Location: Shenzhen, Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/02/authorities-close-shenzhen-church.html>

**Event: Christians have been warned to not display poetic couplets on their homes for Chinese New Year**

Fr Peter (saw village cadres prohibiting Christians from displaying couplets, said "The village cadres were yelling on the streets as they delivered circulars to every Catholic family. I asked one of them, 'When was Article 36 of the Chinese Constitution rewritten to restrict religious freedom?' He just turned and walked away...The situation is tenser this year and religious policy has been tightened too")

Date reported: February 22, 2018

Location: Xuliang, Bo'ai county, Henan province

Fr John (said Christians in his area had received verbal warning to not display couplets)

Date reported: February 22, 2018

Location: Puyang diocese, Henan province

Thomas (said he expected his province would now have its turn with a religious clampdown)

Date reported: February 22, 2018

Location: Henan province

Fr John (said "no study classes for Catholics are allowed and especially those for minors should absolutely be prohibited...Catholic churches are victimized indirectly" but Protestant churches appeared to be the main target due to their higher number of baptisms)

Date reported: February 22, 2018

Location: Anyang diocese, Henan province

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/religious-freedom-takes-another-hit-in-china/81601>

Sui Muqing (human rights attorney, **UPDATE**: has been ordered to surrender his law license for allegedly disrupting court order)

Date reported: February 22, 2018

Location: Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/02/lawyer-forced-to-return-license.html>



**Congo, Democratic Republic**

Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya (**UPDATE**: signed a statement with his fellow bishops "Why so many deaths, injuries, arrests, kidnappings, attacks on parishes and ecclesiastical communities, humiliation, torture, intimidation, desecration of churches, prohibitions to pray?...The national and international community is witness to a series of campaigns of intoxication, discredit and defamation aimed at weakening the moral strength of the Church...in the Grand Kasai, in North and South Kivu, in Ituri, the presence of assailants who sow death and desolation makes one think of a set up plan of

occupation and Balkanization. At this stage of the electoral process one has the right to ask: who benefits from destabilizing the Country?")

Date: February 17, 2018

Location: Kinshasa

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/63783->

[AFRICA DR CONGO The Bishops A campaign of defamation of the Church underway while the Country prepares to vote](http://www.fides.org/en/news/63783-)



## India

**Event:** Thirteen tribal Christians were arrested in [January 2016](#) on forced conversion charges;  
**UPDATE: sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment**

Balu Kesu (husband of Bhuri, visually impaired, sentenced)

Bhuri (wife of Balu Kesu, visually impaired, sentenced)

Date reported: February 17, 2018

Location: Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh state

Source: <http://www.persecution.in/node/4544>

Shibu Thomas (**UPDATE:** released a report stating that Hindu persecution of Christians has doubled in the last year, said "It is a new trend to accuse Christians of serious crimes...is a clear indication that those opposed to Christians want to portray them as serious threats to the nation's safety and security...In 99 percent of cases, they bring false witnesses and charge victimized Christians with serious offenses like sedition. When victims reach for police help, they find themselves accused of violations. 'It is you who have done it,' police say. This is a dangerous sign. Unfortunately, the police are in league with fanatics and elected members support their actions")

Pastor Anil Andrias (said "Christians are not safe anymore in India under the current situation. Christians' struggles will certainly multiply if the ruling dispensation retains power after the 2019 general election...They threaten believers and their leaders with measures like social boycotts if they practice Christianity")

Date: February 20, 2018

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindu-attacks-onchristians-double-in-india/81570>

Francis Xavier Pereira (aged 55, taxi driver, arrested on [July 15, 2017](#) for the recent wave of cross and cemetery desecrations; **UPDATE:** acquitted on 11 of the 19 counts, said "[Chief Minister] Parrikar said he was under pressure from Center [New Delhi] to nab the culprit and ordered me to accept the cases. He promised my nephew a government job and money to me. He also promised that the courts would release me in two or three months")

Fr Savio Fernandes (**UPDATE:** said "The [diocesan] fact-finding team sticks to its earlier demand for an impartial investigation into the desecration of the crosses")

Fr Loiola Pereira (said "It was clear that a game was on because the arrested man is over 55. Not even a 25 year old would be able to commit such monumental destruction in a single night. It had to be a collective effort")

Date: February 20, 2018

Location: Goa

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/probe-call-as-court-acquits-accused-in-go-a-cross-vandalism/81593>

Rev Paul Msiza (South African citizen, President of the World Baptist Alliance, denied a visa to enter the country for the 150th anniversary celebration of Christianity in the Garo Hills region, had been blacklisted after a prior visit when he was placed under surveillance and accused of visa violations)

Vincent H Pala (politician, said the banning of Rev Paul Msiza would cost the Hindu nationalists votes in the upcoming state election "This could cost the BJP and its allies dearly")

Date: February 21, 2018

Location: Meghalaya state

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/visa-row-in-india-threatens-state-poll-backlash/81600> and <http://www.bwanet.org/news/news-releases/499-african-installed-president-of-global-baptist-body>

Asharam (husband, father of three, beaten by Hindu radicals in front of his home, hospitalized, unable to work due to the beating, in hiding with his family)

Date: January 3, 2018

Location: Javanga village, Chhattisgarh state

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2018/02/22/icc-provides-relief-assistance-persecuted-christian-india/>

Bishop Chacko Thottumarickal (**UPDATE**: signed a petition to the government along with leaders of other faiths that expressed concern over the rising interreligious violence in the state and nation)

Date reported: February 21, 2018

Location: Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh state

Source: <http://india.ucanews.com/news/religious-leaders-demand-action-against-extremist-groups-in-mp/36672/daily>



## Indonesia

Basuki Tjahaja Purnama aka Ahok (former governor, sentenced on [May 9, 2017](#) to 2 years' imprisonment on blasphemy charges despite the court ruling there was no evidence of guilt and the prosecutorial recommendation of a suspended sentence, detained; **UPDATE**: appealed his conviction)

Date: February 2, 2018

Location: Jakarta

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/jailed-former-jakarta-governor-seeks-conviction-review/81577>



## Iraq

Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda CSSR (**UPDATE:** said “Having faced for 1,400 years the slow-motion genocide that began long before the ongoing ISIL genocide today, the time for excusing this inhuman behavior and its causes is long since past...The harsh truth to this question is that without an end to this persecution and violence there is no future for religious pluralism in Iraq or anywhere else in the Middle East for that matter...So few of us are left, some estimate 200,000 Christians or less. While it is true that our numbers are small, the apostles were much smaller...We forgive those who murdered us, who tortured us, who raped us, who sought to destroy everything about us. We forgive them in the name of Christ. We say this to our Muslim neighbors, learn this from us. Let us help you heal. Your wounds are as deep as ours...We pray for your healing”)

Date: February 15, 2018

Location: Georgetown University, Washington DC, United States

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/archbishop-of-erbil-christians-in-iraq-are-scourged-wounded-but-still-there-62878>

and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INt\\_N-9KatE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INt_N-9KatE)



## Kenya

**Event: Al-Shabaab militants attacked a school dormitory, killing 3 Christians**

Seth Oluoch Odada (husband of Caroline, teacher, **killed**)

Caroline (wife of Seth Oluoch Odada, **killed**)

Kevin Shari (teacher, **killed**)

Fr Alfred Murithi (later said “I have never seen so much fear among the teachers. Many of them want to leave, but I have heard the headteachers are stopping them. I think the attackers wanted to cause fear and disrupt learning in this region. We have been questioning the overall motive. We think it’s senseless...Those [teachers] who are in towns say they encounter less challenges, but those in rural areas say they are not welcomed and treated as outsiders by the community”)

Fr Peter Kariuki (later said “They have been killing Christians or non-Muslims who can’t recite their prayers”)

Date: February 17, 2018

Location: Qarsa, Wajir county

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/02/suspected-al-shabaab-militants-kill-three-christians-northeast-kenya-sources-say/>  
and [warning - graphic]: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/02/kenya-engaged-couple-killed-together-fellow-primary-school-teacher-suspected-al-shabaab-attackers/>



## Mexico

Bishop Salvador Rangel Mendoza (**UPDATE**: issued a statement condemning criminal violence after a parochial school was closed following the murder of parents and a sister of one of the nuns)

Date: February 16, 2018

Location: Chilapa, Guerrero state

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/63763-AMERICA\\_MEXICO\\_Escalation\\_of\\_violence\\_the\\_nuns\\_flee\\_a\\_school\\_closes](http://www.fides.org/en/news/63763-AMERICA_MEXICO_Escalation_of_violence_the_nuns_flee_a_school_closes)



## Nigeria

Rev Biri Gado Sunday (described a [January 24, 2018](#) Muslim attack on his village following the funeral of a parishioner murdered the day before “After the burial, when I was in the room, one of my members came and said, ‘Kai, Reverend, see these Fulani.’ So as I came out and went and stood in that place, watching at them down there. In fact, they were in groups. But our people here did not know of their gathering. It was around 2:00 p.m. They started [gathering] around 2 p.m...Then, later on, they started exchanging gunshots, Fulanis and the youth. When it was around 4 – 5 p.m., it got worse. It was getting scary so I had to leave...At about 5:20 p.m., I saw the Fulani chasing these youth in my direction. I even called the youth Chairman, telling him that we need security people. If [we do not receive help], our church may be burned down. He tried to get to the security, but there was no response [from the military checkpoint a mile away or the base five miles away]...approximately 17 houses were burned down, with at least 12 belonging to members, although there could easily be more. [They also] killed three people, a bus driver and two others [who] were just passing, and are not residents of the community...See those ashes, they are my books!”; **UPDATE**: described another attack "...we were about to have our service, then they killed three people again. They ambushed them")

Date: February 11, 2018

Location: Zanwra village, Jebu-Miango, Plateau state

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2018/02/20/fulani-militants-burn-village-including-pastors-home/>



## Pakistan

Patras Masih (aged 17, son of Inderyas Masih, cell phone lost then used to post blasphemous content to his Facebook account, went into hiding, a mob of more than 3,000 gathers to demand his lynching and the burning of Christian homes if he was not arrested, 800 Christian families fled their homes and received word they had been looted, surrendered to police to save his family and neighbors)

Inderyas Masih (father of Patras Masih, sanitation worker)

Date: February 19, 2018

Location: Dhair village, Shahdara town, Lahore, Punjab province

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/blasphemy-allegation-against-christian-results-in-riots-in-shahdara-lahore>

and <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/pakistani-christian-patras-masih-accused-of-blasphemy-in-lahore/>

and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/02/pakistan-800-christian-families-flee-neighbourhood-blasphemy-accusation/>

and <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/1000-families-forced-to-flee-their-homes-after-a-fourth-teenager-has-been-arrested-for-blasphem>

Bishop Emmanuel (under pressure by Muslims to leave his community after he helped accused blasphemer Patras Masih evade a lynch mob and surrender to police)

Pastor Sanfia Bashir (said after accused blasphemer Patras Masih evaded a lynch mob and surrendered to police "Police have been stationed [at his church] for a reason. I have been asked to stay alert. We are obliged to obey the laws of our country. I was in constant touch with the victim's family on the phone and only followed the legal procedure in handling this case")

Date reported: February 22, 2018

Location: Dhair village, Shahdara town, Lahore, Punjab province

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/protestants-face-pakistan-protest-for-helping-blasphemer/81609>

Aleeza Ashraf (aged 18 months, daughter of Ashraf Masih and Shamim Bibi, injured with shrapnel in her abdomen and left foot during the [December 17, 2017 Quetta, Balochistan church attack](#); as of [January 7, 2018](#) had developed multiple gangrene infections, left foot amputated, transferred to a hospital in Karachi, in danger of death; as of [January 13, 2018](#) had received several surgeries to remove infected tissue including a colostomy, condition stable; **UPDATE**: requires additional surgery to reattach her intestines and reverse the colostomy)

Date: February 19, 2018

Location: Karachi

Source [warning - graphic]: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/quetta-bomb-victim-aleeza-recovering-well-but-needs-operation-to-connect-intestine-to-bowel>

Sabir Masih (cousin of Amir Masih, hit in the head when he attempted to intervene in a quarrel between his cousin and the owner of a rickshaw stand, **died**)

Amir Masih (rickshaw driver, cousin of Sabir Masih, witnessed the killing of his cousin)

Date: February 17, 2018

Source: <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/pakistani-christian-sabir-masih-killed-over-400-rupee/>

**Event: A Christian church was attacked by Muslims who mistook a roof construction crew as voyeurs**

Pastor Samson Ashiq (described the cause of the attack "One of our faithful had climbed onto the roof of the church with some workers to build a cross on the building, which is quite new. According to some Muslims, young Christians were spying on Muslim homes, dishonoring their families. At that point a quarrel broke out. I apologized to the members of the Muslim community, explaining that this was a misunderstanding. And I did not expect an aggression", signed a document forgiving the attackers)

Faysal Inayat (injured, said "We were in church for the Sunday liturgy when some Muslim men blocked the church gate with motorcycles. They did not allow people to go home and harassed some women outside the church gate")

Date: February 11, 2018

Location: Malir district, Karachi

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/63761-ASIA\\_PAKISTAN\\_Attack\\_on\\_a\\_church\\_Christians\\_forgive\\_the\\_aggressors](http://www.fides.org/en/news/63761-ASIA_PAKISTAN_Attack_on_a_church_Christians_forgive_the_aggressors)

Usman Masih (arrested on **May 25, 2016** on blasphemy charges after he filed a criminal complaint against a gang of Muslims and Christians who had beaten him; **UPDATE**: acquitted, released)

Date: February 16, 2018

Location: Ferozewala, Punjab province

Source: <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/pakistani-christian-usman-masih-acquitted-from-blasphemy-case/>

Ashiq Masih (husband of imprisoned Christian Aasiya Noreen aka Asia Bibi, father of five including Isham, **UPDATE**: said "We believe in Jesus Christ and we turn to Him by putting Asia's life in his hands. We are sure that the Lord will listen to us, also thanks to the Pope's prayer and to the prayers of all the faithful in the world...Asia Bibi confides in the Pope's prayer and asks the Holy Father to pray for her and for her liberation. She lives her imprisonment with great faith and entrusts herself to the Lord every day")

Isham (**UPDATE**: accompanied her father)

Joseph Nadeem (Renaissance Education Foundation executive director, **UPDATE**: said "the lawyers are taking care of the appeal and we are awaiting a date for the hearing, which let us hope happens as soon as possible. This family lives the drama of the imprisonment of

an innocent wife and mother. We have full confidence in the rule of law and the Pakistani judiciary. We are convinced that we can prove to the Supreme Court Asia Bibi's innocence")

Date reported: February 23, 2018

Location: Vatican City

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/63799->

[ASIA PAKISTAN Asia Bibi s family at the Vatican The Pope will pray for us and with us](http://www.fides.org/en/news/63799-)



## Russia

### **Event: An Islamic State supporter opened fire on worshippers as they left a church, killing 5 and wounding 4**

Fr Pavel Kalikin (church rector, husband, father, said "We had finished the liturgy and were beginning to leave the church. A bearded man ran towards the church shouting 'Allahu Akbar' - 'God is greatest' - and killed four people [a fifth died later]. He was carrying a rifle and a knife", pulled parishioners into the church during the shooting, added "I saw through a window how the killer was pulling on the door handles and broke inside. He had a completely crazed, glazed-over look. Meanwhile, the church workers closed the remaining rooms downstairs. We asked everyone to lie on the floor in the church. The sacristan climbed the bell tower and started ringing the bells. The bells probably scared the killer and he started leaving, still shooting. We saw him leave the church property, walking along the fence, still shooting. The police met him there. A shootout began. The killer was killed")

Dr Lyudmila Georgievna Scherbakova (cardiologist, cousin and housemate of Vera Gavrilovna Morgunova, **shot dead**)

Vera Gavrilovna Morgunova (retired government administrator and unofficial ombudsman, cousin and housemate of Dr Lyudmila Georgievna Scherbakova, **shot dead**)

Nadezhda Sergeevna Terliyan (parish pilgrimage coordinator, retired physical education teacher, **shot dead**)

Irina Sosikovna Melkomova (alms collector, hit the shooter with her alms bags, **shot dead**)

Vera Sergeevna Blinnikova (wife of a disabled husband, **shot dead**)

Sergei Anatolievich Presnyakov (had been escorting his elderly mother from the church to their automobile when the shooting began, ran toward the shooter to draw his fire, shouted "Shoot me! Are you scared? You can only shoot at old women?")

Archbishop Varlaam (gave permission for the five women to be buried on the cathedral grounds as martyrs)

Hieromonk John Anisimov (said this was the first terror attack on a church in the area)

Date: February 18, 2018

Location: Kizlyar, Dagestan

Source: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/four-killed-in-dagestan-shooting-russian-authorities-1814212>

and <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/five-women-shot-dead-outside-church-in-dagestan-immediately-after-rite-of-forgiveness/>

and <http://orthochristian.com/110856.html>

and <http://orthochristian.com/110968.html>

Anatoly Shalyapin (detained for 48 hours for membership in a banned organization, released, under travel restrictions)

Sergey Voykov (detained for 48 hours for membership in a banned organization, released, under travel restrictions)

Date: February 7, 2018

Location: Belgorod

Source: [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2355](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2355)



## **Tanzania**

Pastor Charles Madama (church building demolished by a bulldozer sent by the local government, personal items including musical instruments destroyed, said “It came to us as a big surprise when the bulldozer pulled down the church building without prior notice, and we lost everything. This is a calculated move here in Zanzibar of total disregard and disrespect to Christianity. It has been extremely difficult for us as a church to assemble for worship...We lack money to appeal our case in court. But we know that church cases in Zanzibar have been thrown out, and we are very sure that even if we go to court, it will be dragged for many years, and in the end we might not get justice...At the moment it a very difficult time for the church leadership in keeping the church members intact. We do request prays at this trying moment, so that God may give us a place to worship. We are like orphaned children”)

Date: January 7, 2018

Location: Zanzibar Town

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/02/church-building-demolished-zanzibar-tanzania/>



## **United States - Michigan**

Pastor Jeremy Schossau (received death threats for having hosted a sexual identity workshop for teen girls)

Date reported: February 5, 2018

Location: Metro City

Source: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/man-charged-misdemeanor-threatening-pastor-lesbian-youth-counseling-workshop-218652/>

Bishop Michael Olson (issued a statement with the other bishops of the state defending Catholic Charities in a lawsuit brought by a same sex couple who had been denied an adoption “Catholic Charities of Fort Worth's International Foster Care program is an outreach that is faithful to the Church's mission to care for the poor and vulnerable. This mission is entrusted to the Church by Christ...It would be tragic if Catholic Charities were not able to provide this help, in accordance with the Gospel values and family, assistance that is so essential to these children who are vulnerable to being mistreated as meaningless in society”)

Date: February 20, 2018

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/texas-bishops-support-catholic-charities-in-wake-of-gay-adoption-lawsuit-40613>

## **Today's Martyrs**

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

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