

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2018-07-15 through 2018-07-21



Canada

Brother Ronald Brown (church sponsored teen conference on sexuality cancelled by the local government-owned civic center after objections were raised to the speaker list and the conference name 'LGBT: Let God Be True', said the controversy over the name “shows that something is amiss in society...Is there a patent on that acronym?...Our teaching is based on the word of God, and whatever the word of God says, that’s what we’re going to be expounding...We see ourselves, the church, as a hospital, right? That’s where people who are sick and in need of help come”, has threatened a lawsuit if the cancellation is not reversed)

Date reported: July 13, 2018

Location: New Westminster, British Columbia

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/church-may-sue-city-for-pulling-venue-on-lgbt-let-god-be-true-teen-con>



China

Senior Pastor Jin Mingri (church building landlord evicted the church under government pressure on [June 14, 2018](#), the church web site was earlier shut down by the government;

UPDATE: church gate padlocked by the government, parishioners were denied entry to retrieve belongings)

Pastor Wu Hongfei (has been "continuously insulted" by government agents)

Date: July 5, 2018

Location: Beijing

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/07/beijing-suppresses-church-after.html>

Ni Yulan (aged 59, wife of Dong Jiqin, civil rights attorney, unable to walk without crutches due to police torture, disbarred; **UPDATE:** said after the government sent a questionnaire to all churches in the capital “control is more and more severe. They are preparing for further suppression by touching base and collecting information. This is only the start”)

Date reported: July 15, 2018

Location: Beijing

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/07/churches-across-beijing-subject-to.html>

Pastor Huang Xiaoning (**UPDATE**: reported by telephone “We had just begun when 30-40 personnel from the State Food and Drug Administration, the cultural law enforcement brigade, as well as the police came and raided the venue where we gather. We had to stop our worship. Now, I have to go with them. People from the religious affairs bureau found me to question me”, questioned and released, five or six other Christians were still in detention)

Date: July 15, 2018

Location: Guangzhou, Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2018/07/church-targeted-for-third-time-in-month.html>

Event: A registered church was demolished without warning by zoning officials, three female caretakers were roughed up and their cell phones were destroyed

Gao Rongli

Zhang Siling

Li Xiangmei

Date: July 17, 2018

Location: Liangwang, Shandong Province

Source: [http://asianews.it/news-en/Official-church-in-Liangwang-\(Shandong\)-torn-down-because-of-new-zoning-\(photos-and-video\)-44463.html](http://asianews.it/news-en/Official-church-in-Liangwang-(Shandong)-torn-down-because-of-new-zoning-(photos-and-video)-44463.html)



India

Event: A petition for the release of seven Christians falsely imprisoned for the 2008 murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati has reached 50,000

Bhaskar Sunamajhi (husband of Debaki, father of one; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Bijay Kumar Sunseth (husband of Pabitra Sanseth, father of six; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Budhadeb Nayak (husband of Nilandri, father of five; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Durjo Sunamajhi (husband of Gumili, father of five; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Gornath Chalanseth (father of four; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Munda Badmajhi (husband of Bandigudali, father of four; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Sanatan Badmajhi (husband of Badusi, father of four; **UPDATE**: still in prison)

Anto Akkara (journalist, **UPDATE**: reported on the petition results)

Date reported: July 12, 2018

Source: http://www.fides.org/en/news/64511-ASIA_INDIA_Over_50_000_signatures_demanding_the_release_of_the_7_innocent_Christians_in_Orissa

Pastor Arul Ruben (aged 37, church destroyed by arson, said “I received the call around 8 p.m., immediately asked the local pastor in Paramankeni to continue the service and rushed to Seekanankuppam. In 20 minutes I was able to reach it, but by that time, nothing was left – the fire had spread all over...[Last year] they humiliated the Christians for their non-participation [in a Hindu festival] and issued threats that the church would be destroyed if any Christian refused to contribute to the Hindu temple for the annual celebration of their deity. Even this year, they visited the Christian families and asked them to donate for the celebration, but nobody contributed. When the festival is over, just when we were glad for the peace and harmony around us, we get to see the church turn to ashes”)

Pastor Benjamin (said the locals had demanded the church property be used for a cemetery right-of-way and commercial development “Behind the church, the Hindu residents from nearby villages demanded that the church be closed down so a short-cut way can be paved for Hindus taking their deceased for cremation. They even carried the dead via the church premises to the cemetery. They stopped after the area president intervened and warned them that it is not right, and that they must avoid entering the church premises and take the long route instead...The area is in demand because of the ECR route, and random businessmen and real estate dealers constantly ask us to vacate. They told us the land can be of best advantage for commercial use”)

Date: June 11, 2018

Location: Seekanankuppam, Tamil Nadu state

Pastor David Santosham (church destroyed by arson, later said “It has been nearly two months, and police could not find the culprits. I met the sub-inspector of police recently, and he told me that the investigation is underway. We are building the church again by the grace of God. Please pray for the construction work”)

Date: May 25, 2018

Location: Puducherry, Karaikal district, Tamil Nadu state

Pastor Govrathnam Anbarasan (church destroyed by arson, later said “That week, we conducted a VBS [Vacation Bible School] program for children in the church. There was opposition from Hindu fundamentalists in Thiruvannamalai, but we continued the church services...As the roof was woven with coconut leaves, it is enough to ignite a small portion [after the children left] and the fire can spread all over easily in short time. I was visiting a believer’s family about three miles away to pray for their son...Since the past two months, we have been worshipping in open air under a tent. A relief organization had come forward promising to help, but I received nothing from them. We don’t have enough means to rebuild the church, even if temporarily”)

Date: May 5, 2018

Location: Thiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu state

P S Nehemiah Christie (**UPDATE:** said “On one side, we see the Hindu extremists barging inside the churches and attacking pastors, and the other side is what goes on behind us – in remote areas, they are burning away churches, especially those with roofs of tar sheet

or coconut leaves, so fire can be spread speedily and easily, and before anybody can notice the perpetrators, they escape from the spot...The brotherhood Tamilians share irrespective of their caste or religion is today under threat, with political figures attempting to spread hatred against Christian and Muslim minorities for their political agenda. In every case of arson, the police conveniently register it as fire accident due to short circuit, and they refuse to register the suspects' names. But in reality, it is targeted violence to create communal disharmony between the Hindus and Christians")

Date: July 16, 2018

Location: Tamil Nadu state

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2018/07/arson-attacks-hit-churches-in-tamil-nadu-india/>

Prabhakar Tirkey (president of ecumenical Christian forum Rashtriya Isai Mahasangh;

UPDATE: organized a demonstration in which 10,000 Christians formed a 20 kilometer human chain to protest anti-Christian activities, said "Catholic nuns, priests, pastors are attacked and jailed. Their institutions are searched. They are accused of every wrong that takes place in the state...It is part of an organized to plan to keep ordinary people away from Christian institutions and missionaries")

Ankita Kujur (protester, said the Hindu nationalist state government was trying to politically weaken the indigenous tribal people by dividing them into opposing Christian and non-Christian camps)

Date: July 15, 2018

Locations: Ranchi, Gumla, Simdega, Bokaro, Jemshedpur and Khunty, Jharkand state

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/thousands-protest-harassment-of-christians-in-india/82846>

Event: An entire family has been arrested on false forced conversion charges

Pastor Avianshu Kalra (husband of Ritu, son of Pardeep Gulait and Kalpana, father of a four year old son, arrested)

Ritu (wife of Pastor Avianshu Kalra, mother of a four year old son, has experienced complications in her current pregnancy, arrested, hospitalized)

Pardeep Gulait (husband of Kalpana, father of Pastor Avianshu Kalra, arrested)

Kalpana (wife of Pardeep Gulait, mother of Pastor Avianshu Kalra, arrested)

Date reported: July 17, 2018

Location: Kalka Chowk, Ambala City, Haryana state

Source: <https://persecutionrelief.org/pastor-and-family-booked-under-false-allegations-haryana/>

Ram Sudare (convert, farmer, beaten for converting while returning from his field, hospitalized, police threatened to arrest him on forced conversion charges unless he paid them a bribe of US\$15)

Pastor Anil Kumar (**UPDATE:** reported on the attack on Ram Sudare)

Date: July 14, 2018

Location: Sant Kabir Nagar, Uttar Pradesh state

Source: <https://persecutionrelief.org/christian-beaten-by-religious-fundamentalists-extortion-by-police-uttar-pradesh/>

Sr Marie Deanne MC (arrested on [July 5, 2018](#) in an illegal adoption investigation; **UPDATE:** released after questioning)

Date: [July 6, 2018](#)

Location: [Ranchi, Jharkhand state](#)

Event: Christians denounced calls by Hindu radicals that Mother Teresa be stripped of her government awards in the wake of an illegal adoption scandal at one of her order's orphanages

Sr Sister Mary Prema Pierick MC (Superior General, issued a statement alleging that the illegal act was perpetrated by an orphanage employee who hid her actions from the nuns, also stated that the scandal could have been avoided if the government child welfare agency acknowledged to the orphanage in writing that a child had been placed for adoption)

Bishop Vincent Barwa (**UPDATE:** said "The entire world knows the good work Mother Teresa did for humanity, especially the poor")

Fr Denzil Fernandes SJ (Executive Director of the Indian Social Institute; **UPDATE:** said the attackers "could not stomach the good work the nuns are continuing to do. It is their agenda to target the church")

Abraham Mathai (**UPDATE:** said at the most, the nuns are guilty of naivety and overtrusting people" and that media and police are "ridiculously and shamelessly" accusing them)

A C Michael (United Christian Forum; **UPDATE:** said that Mother Teresa had been granted honors for her merit and so "It is unfair to demand to take them away for the alleged wrongdoing of her nuns")

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas SFX (**UPDATE:** said "What has this to do with Mother Teresa and the Bharat Ratna [award]?...There has been a lapse at the MoC home. It should have never happened. The MoCs have admitted it", alleged that the investigation was a "conspiracy behind blowing up the isolated case in the MoC home to discredit the MoCs and Christians...[the scandal cannot be seen in isolation from the several incidents in which the BJP government has been hostile to the Christian community"]")

Date: [July 17, 2018](#)

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-hindus-call-for-mother-teresas-award-to-be-revoked/82851>

and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/07/baby-selling-scandal-used-to-malign-missionaries-of-charity-says-chief-minister-of-mother-teresas-home-state/>



Iran

Ram-eil Beth Tamraz (son of Pastor Victor Beth Tarmez and Shamiram Isavi, arrested without warrant by MOIS agents while fishing and picnicking with his wife on [August 26, 2016](#); released on [October 10, 2016](#) on a US\$35,000 bail; **UPDATE:** convicted of 'acting

against national security' and sentenced to 4 months' imprisonment [of which he has already served 2 months], appealed)

Date: July 8, 2018

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/07/iranian-pastors-son-jailed-for-acting-against-national-security/>



Macedonia

Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid aka Zoran Vraniskovski (aged 54, arrested on [December 13, 2011](#), at the [Bitola](#) border crossing; sentenced on [July 3, 2013](#) in [Skopje](#) to three years in prison and church property seized for alleged money laundering, charges widely viewed as resulting from his efforts to reunify the Serbian and Macedonian Orthodox Churches; released from prison on [February 2, 2015](#); retrial continued on [March 11, 2016](#), the prosecution's chief witness has disappeared, the court has continued to reschedule hearings for two months for the purpose of delay and has refused to allow the Church to use its frozen but empty bank accounts nor open new accounts; **UPDATE**: passport seized at a border crossing, prevented from leaving the country)

Date: July 9, 2018

Location: Medzitlija, near Bitola

Source: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/passport-of-archbishop-jovan-vi-of-ohrid-confiscated/>



Nicaragua

Bishop Juan Mata Guevara (shot at by pro-government paramilitaries at a police checkpoint while in his vehicle, escaped injury, tires and windows destroyed, took refuge in a house and prevented from leaving by hostile government supporters for 90 minutes, returned home)

Date: July 15, 2018

Location: Nindiri

Fr Jairo Velasquez (rectory raided by police and paramilitaries, parish and personal property taken)

Date: July 15, 2018

Fr Erick Alvarado Cole (anti-government protesters and journalists took refuge in his church after two were killed, said "They are shooting at a church. The government says it respects human rights. Is this respecting human rights?", pro-government paramilitaries prevented ambulances from arriving)

Date: July 14, 2018

Location: Managua

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/in-nicaragua-paramilitaries-attack-bishop-and-besiege-church-66759>

and <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2018/07/17/bishops-pray-for-exorcism-as-anti-catholic-attacks-continue-in-nicaragua/>



Philippines

Jennifer Taborada (aged 27, widow of Ryan, mother of Prince Junior and Princess, **shot dead** apparently for leading a diocesan support group for the widows of men killed in the government's extrajudicial campaign against illegal drugs)

Bishop Pablo Virgilio David (**UPDATE**: said after the murder of Jennifer Taborada: "I feel so, so, so, so sad that I am not able to protect my flock from the wolves. Today, in utter shame and frustration, I declare I have not been a good shepherd to my flock. The wolves, they have been prowling the streets and alleys of [the Manila suburbs of] Caloocan, Malabon, and Navotas for almost two years now. They have killed hundreds already, and I am unable to protect them with my life...I will bow in shame if the Good Shepherd will denounce me as a mere hireling who remains very safe and very secure, who can get a good night's sleep in his warm bed while his sheep are being slaughtered")

Date: July 18, 2018

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/manila-prelate-bemoans-failure-to-protect-murder-victims/82867>

and <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2018/07/19/while-i-am-tucked-up-in-bed-my-flock-is-being-slaughtered-says-bishop/>



Rwanda

Event: The government has closed over 700 churches and has introduced legislation that would require all clergy to have four year college degrees

Jean Bosco Nsabimana (asked why the government was not closing bars and nightclubs)

Bishop Evalister Mugabo (has taken steps to ally his Bible school with a university in Tanzania, said "We made this plan because we can't afford to take many pastors out of the country for study at once. We do not have enough resources, so we decided to adopt mass training from within...Most of the pastors have certificates from local Bible schools. Global missions must look at this as an emergency")

Date reported: July 12, 2018

Source: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/after-shuttering-700-churches-rwanda-proposes-strict-clergy-guidelines>



Turkey

Pastor Andrew Brunson (U.S. citizen, husband of Norine Brunson, detained as a 'national security risk' in Izmir on [October 7, 2016](#); confirmed to be a hostage at a [September 28, 2017](#) 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; **UPDATE**: denied bail, told the judge “It is really hard to stay in jail and be separated from my wife and children...There is no concrete evidence against me. The disciples of Jesus suffered in his name, now it is my turn. I am an innocent man on all these charges. I reject them. I know why I am here. I am here to suffer in Jesus’s name...My faith teaches me to forgive, so I forgive those who testified against me”)

Kristina Arriaga de Bucholz (U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom [USCIRF] Vice Chair, attorney, attended the hearing, later said “The government of Turkey continues to make a mockery of justice in its treatment of Pastor Brunson. Today I was hoping to see the judge order his complete release and put an end to the miscarriage of justice that Pastor Brunson’s entire case represents. Turkish authorities still have not provided one good reason for depriving Pastor Brunson of his liberties”)

Date: July 18, 2018

Location: Aliaga, near Izmir

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2018/07/hopes-dashed-for-release-of-pastor-andrew-brunson-as-trial-to-continue-into-october/>



United Kingdom

Pastor Richard Smith (forced to resign as mayor of his town [on or about July 4, 2018](#) after outrage over his posting of Biblical statements on his Facebook page; **UPDATE**: a vote to remove him from the Town Council was defeated)

Andrea Minichiello Williams (Chief Executive of Christian Concerns; **UPDATE**: spoke to the Town Council in defense of Pastor Richard Smith)

Date: July 11, 2018

Location: Ferryhill

Source: <http://www.christianconcern.com/our-issues/freedom/ferryhill-town-councils-special-meeting-an-observers-report>

Sr Ban Madleen (Iraqi citizen, reported on [April 2, 2018](#) to have been denied a visa to visit her ill sister in the UK on the grounds that she had not travelled from Iraq in seven years [due to the conflict there]; reapplied for a visa, again refused on [June 12, 2018](#); **UPDATE**: visa granted after the denials were raised in the House of Commons)

Sir Edward Leigh (Member of Parliament, raised the issue of the denials of a visa for Sr Ban Madleen in the House of Commons, the visa was then granted within hours)

Jacob Rees-Mogg (aged 49, Member of Parliament, **UPDATE**: raised the issue of the denials of a visa for Sr Ban Madleen in the House of Commons)

Date: July 16, 2018

Location: London

Source: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2018/07/17/home-office-finally-grants-visa-to-iraqi-nun-after-rejecting-her-twice/>

Bishop Marcus Stock (criticized a report on religious education [RE] by a former Education Secretary and a professor “Not only are their recommendations largely incompatible within our sector, they were compiled with the knowledge that the Catholic community would find them unacceptable, this was explicitly stated in their report...Firstly, [it is wrong] that the State can impose a national RE curriculum, which would dictate what the Church is required to teach in Catholic schools. Secondly, the curriculum they suggest contains no theological content, which is at the core of Catholic RE...Catholic schools are the most successful providers of Religious Education in the country. This is because we take it seriously as a rigorous, theological academic subject. However, rather than look at the sector that does it the best they have opted for a reductionist approach which is exclusively sociological and has no consensus amongst RE professionals”)

Date reported: July 18, 2018

Location: Leeds

Source: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2018/07/18/religious-education-report-is-an-attack-on-catholic-schools/>

Fr Mark Morris (fired as a university chaplain after offering a service of reparation for a Gay Pride march)

Date: July 17, 2018

Location: Glasgow Caledonian University

Source: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2018/07/19/university-chaplain-sacked-after-holding-service-of-reparation-for-gay-pride/>



United States - Pennsylvania

Event: Christian foster parents and Catholic Social Services sued the city of Philadelphia for its attempts to shut down their foster care program because they would not place children in same-sex households, a Federal court has denied their request for an injunction, appeal underway

Sharonell Fulton (has fostered over 40 children)

Cecelia Paul (has fostered over 100 children)

Date: July 16, 2018

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/dont-let-philadelphia-shut-down-catholic-foster-agency-appeal-says-93623>

United States - Texas

Bishop Edward J Burns (expressed thanks after a Federal appellate court reversed a district court ruling to compel the Catholic bishops of Texas to release their private emails regarding abortion, “We believe that life is sacred from the moment of conception. We also believe that we have a right to discuss in private how to address this issue and uphold the dignity of every human life, and that while upholding the sacredness of life may seem at odds with some people, our religious liberties and religious rights should not be eroded”, the bishops were not a party to the suit by abortion providers against the state law requiring funeral internment of aborted remains but had only stated they would provide free burial in Catholic cemeteries)

Date: July 15, 2018

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/federal-appeals-court-sides-with-texas-bishops-in-privacy-case-87392>



Vietnam

Mary Magdelene Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh (aged 39, mother of two, sentenced in [Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa](#) province on [June 29, 2017](#) to 10 years' imprisonment for anti-government internet postings, which included criticism of hospitals refusing to serve the poor;

UPDATE: denied a Bible, began a hunger strike to protest deliberate food poisoning, harassment by fellow inmates, and use of a toilet with no privacy, in poor health)

Date: July 6, 2018

Location: Prison Camp No. 5, Thanh Hoa province

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/jailed-vietnamese-activist-on-hunger-strike/82847>

Today's Martyrs

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

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