

# Today's Martyrs

*Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom*

**Weekly Report – 2019-02-17 through 2019-02-23**



## **Burkina Faso**

Fr Antonio Cesar Fernandez SDB (aged 72, **shot dead** in a jihadist attack, two other priests escaped)

Date: February 15, 2019

Location: on the road from Lome

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/65583->

[AFRICA BURKINA FASO The Rector Major of the Salesians May the blood of Fr Antonio Cesar be the seed of Christians faithful followers of Jesus and of young vocations at the service of the Kingdom](#)



## **China**

Dai Zhichao (**UPDATE**: detained)

Date: December 2018

Location: Chengdu, Sichuan province

**Event: Family members of Christians who had been detained were arrested on charges of 'illegal gathering' after they had assembled outside a police station to get information about their loved ones**

Xu Miaozhuang (wife of Elder Su Bingsen, detained)

Xiao Hongliu (wife of Deacon Tan Defu, detained)

Lu Lingzhi (wife of Dai Zhichao, detained along with her child)

Shen Bing (husband of Li Xiaofeng, detained)

Date reported: February 15, 2019

Location: Chengdu, Sichuan province

Source: <https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/02/spouses-child-of-arrested-house-church.html>



## Colombia

Pastor Leider Molina (aged 24, **shot dead** while leaving his church after a service)

Date: February 9, 2019

Location: Caucasia, Antioquia state

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2019/02/another-colombian-pastor-killed-leaving-the-church-terrified/>



## France

### Events: At least 10 churches were desecrated within 2 weeks

Bishop Robert Wattebled (denounced a church vandalism attack in which the tabernacle was opened and consecrated hosts were scattered on the ground, and a cross was drawn on the wall with feces, wrote "The sign of the cross and the Blessed Sacrament have been the subject of serious injurious actions. This act of profanation hurts us all in our deepest convictions")

Date: February 6, 2019

Location: Nimes

Fr Emmanuel Pic (church vandalized, tabernacle opened and consecrated hosts scattered, altar cloth stained, missal book torn, said "Nothing of value has been broken, but it is the intent that is very shocking. This is what characterizes profanation...[The damage attacked the] heart of the Catholic faith")

Date: February 9, 2019

Location: Dijon, Cote-d'Or

Source: <https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/02/15/eucharist-desecrated-and-statues-smashed-in-series-of-french-church-attacks/>



## India

Fr Masih Prakash Soy (reported on Hindu demands that a bust of a German missionary who had advocated for tribal peoples be removed from in front of a church: "The controversy is a ploy of the ruling BJP to divide tribal people")

Date: February 15, 2019

Location: Sarwada, Jharkhand state

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/hindus-oppose-german-missionarys-statue-in-indian-parish/84523>

Sr Concilia Baxia MC (arrested along with an orphanage staffer on human trafficking charges in Ranchi, Jharkhand state on July 5, 2018; **UPDATE**: still in jail, has been denied bail)

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas SFX (**UPDATE**: visited Sr Concilia Baxia in jail, said "It was an emotional heartbreaking visit...The poor sister suffers from diabetes and varicose veins. Uprooted from her daily routine, left to suffer alone, all of us, her co-sisters, Superiors, Bishops, priests and all who know her and are convinced of her innocence can only look up to heaven in helplessness and hope, as every attempt to even get bail for her has been brusquely rejected by our judiciary at various levels sometimes in a matter of minutes...Many like her are languishing in jail as under trials waiting for the slow churning of the wheels of justice which often appear to be spun by money power, political clout, massive media propaganda and even blatant manipulation of evidence")

Date: February 14, 2019

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/65564-ASIA\\_INDIA\\_A\\_sister\\_of\\_Mother\\_Teresa\\_in\\_prison\\_the\\_Church\\_calls\\_for\\_justice](http://www.fides.org/en/news/65564-ASIA_INDIA_A_sister_of_Mother_Teresa_in_prison_the_Church_calls_for_justice)

Anant Ram Gand (aged 40, convert, husband of Sukbati, father of five including Purno, **beheaded** by Maoist guerrillas at the instigation of radical Hindus)

Purno (aged 6, convert, son of Sukbati and Anant Ram Gand, witnessed his father's murder)

Sukbati (aged 38, convert, widow of Anant Ram Gand)

Shibu Thomas (Persecution Relief; **UPDATE**: said of the murder of Anant Ram Gand "Being a Christian today in India means being harassed every day: if you pray in the family you are beaten, if you pray in a domestic church you are beaten, in the streets you are beaten...I ask the prime minister and the Chief minister of the State to please order a probe. The government should provide compensation to the family and five small children. They should speak clearly against persecution of Christians and to protect freedom of worship. Enough is enough!")

Date: February 11, 2019

Location: Raigarh Tehsil village, Nabarangapur district, Orissa state

Source: <http://persecutionrelief.org/another-gruesome-murder-odisha/> and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Orissa,-a-Christian-beheaded-for-his-faith-46300.html>

Cardinal Oswald Gracias (**UPDATE**: issued a statement: "All of us gathered here strongly condemn the cowardly terrorist act that took the lives of 40 of our young soldiers last week in Pulwama [Kashmir] on Thursday Feb 14...We salute the brave young men who have given their lives for us. When they entered the armed forces and specially when they were being taken to this particular mission, they were aware of the great risks involved. They gave their lives to protect us...we pray for these Jawans who have died and for strength to their families in this moment of sorrow. May God bless India!")

Date: February 20, 2019

Location: Mumbai

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card-Gracias-condemns-cowardly-attack-against-soldiers-in-Kashmir-46303.html>



## Pakistan

Shazia Bibi (wife of Bashir, mother of eight, domestic worker, employer pressured her to convert to Islam, quit her employment, employer assaulted her and her husband in their home and abducted four of her children and placed them in a madrassah [Islamic school] to be converted, joined her children, told they would not be released unless they converted, released after an approximate payment of US\$1,430 was made to the employer)

Bashir (husband of Shazia Bibi, father of eight)

Date reported: February 19, 2019

Location: Chanan village, Gujrat district

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/7043>

Kashmala Munawar (aged 23, legs injured in the [September 22, 2013](#) bombing of All Saints Church in [Peshawar](#), right leg became infected and was amputated, told as of [October 20, 2013](#) that she needs treatment in a Western hospital; flown to Australia on [February 23, 2014](#) for treatment in the hope that her remaining leg can be saved; **UPDATE**: cannot walk without excruciating pain, requires a new prosthetic leg but cannot have any more corrective surgery, will be eligible for Australian citizenship in 11 months)

Date: February 18, 2019

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/church-bomb-survivor-and-refugee-needs-a-new-prosthetic-leg-as-she-suffers-a-long-wait-for-appropriat>



## Syria

Dr Nabil Antaki (testified "all the armed rebel groups are now amassed in the province of Idlib. Al-Nusra, the local emanation of al-Qaeda, recognized as a terrorist group by the UN and the international community, is in the process of eliminating or engulfing all other movements, of Islamic inspiration, with the force of weapons. For months, the Syrian army has wanted to launch an offensive to free the latter province from the hands of terrorists, 30 thousand of them foreigners, but the Western powers, through the intermediation of Russia and Turkey, are preventing it. The reason given: The risk of a serious humanitarian crisis. The real reason, as has emerged from some voices of Western leaders: what to do with all the foreign terrorists who would flee to Europe, in case the offensive was launched...On the other hand, a war is unfolding on our territory and it is the one that pits Turkey against the Kurdish militias. Finally, the Americans who illegally established two bases in a sovereign nation, today want to withdraw following

the decision of President Donald Trump. But his administration, like Congress, are incapable of reaching agreement on this strategy and try to sabotage it by all means possible...We are angry at the sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States against Syria, which only exacerbate the humanitarian situation without having any impact on the end of hostilities and the establishment of peace. The exodus of the Syrians, especially the Christians, continues. Moreover it seems to have increased beyond the levels of the dark hours of the war. The apostolic nuncio to Syria, Card. Mario Zenari, said during a congress in Hungary that Christians are now no more than 2% of the total population. That is half a million, out of a total of 23 million citizens. We knew this, but it is the first time that these figures have been revealed in public. My city, Aleppo, which had a population of about 150/200 thousand Christians in 2011, before the war, today does not count more than 25 thousand, at most 30 thousand. Syria, the cradle of Christianity, is emptying of its Christian population..."

Date: February 19, 2019

Location: Aleppo

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Aleppo,-Blue-Marists:-Wests-cynicism-fuels-conflict-and-Christian-exodus-46293.html>



## Ukraine

Archbishop Mitrophan (**UPDATE**: detained at a police checkpoint on 'suspicion of separatism', denied an attorney, released after a crowd had gathered in support at the police station)

Date: February 18, 2019

Locations: Malinkovka and Slavyansk

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/119413.html>

Archimandrite Gideon Kharon (U.S. citizen, forgave the arsonists who attacked his monastery on [January 25, 2018](#); issued a statement on [February 3, 2018](#) regarding ultranationalist threats against the Tithes Monastery of the Mother of God, Kiev; **UPDATE**: detained upon re-entry to the country after returning from the United States where he had testified to Members of Congress on the situation in the country, passport seized and then declared lost, denied access to attorneys, Members of Parliament, and medication, stripped of his Ukrainian citizenship and deported under armed escort, said "They didn't let me into Ukraine, arguing that my citizenship has been canceled, that it's invalid, although just 15 days ago I flew out without any problems or any kind of court decision...It's just such religious and political pressure and lawlessness that's happening in Ukraine today")

Date: February 13, 2019

Location: Boryspil Airport, Kiev

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/119347.html>

Bishop Pimen (said that several of his priests had received summons to report to Security service offices for interrogation and that it was clear that they were looking for incriminating information against those who remained loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate)

Date: February 4, 2018

Location: Dubno, Rivne province

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/119195.html>

Archpriest Oleg Tochinsky (diocesan secretary; **UPDATE**: described an attack on a church by members of the Kiev Patriarchate in which a police seal was broken and doors removed)

February 12, 2019

Location: Kulchin village, Volyn province

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/119323.html>

Fr Stephan Balan (injured in a brawl led by supporters of the Kiev Patriarchate during a church takeover, beaten by police, said "I think they're waiting for the official registration of the charter, then there will be an official storming. I counted 95 people today — people that never come to church. Our parishioners, who are always in church, numbered more than 60")

Date: February 3, 2019

Location: Gnezdichno village, Ternopil province

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/119124.html>



## United Kingdom

### **Events: One Muslim perpetrated several assaults, police dropped a charge of religious motivation despite clear evidence**

Claudio Bogge (street preacher, disabled, uses a wheelchair, spat upon by a Muslim while handing out religious literature, told his attacker "God's love covers multiple sins. I still love you because Jesus loves you")

Date: June 11, 2018

Location: London

Kayode Ogunleye (outreach volunteer for the homeless, head-butted by a Muslim while handing out food, fingers bitten, repeatedly punched, beaten over the head with a metal rod, told his attacker he forgave him and wished him "only Jesus's love")

Date: June 11, 2018

Location: Westminster

Milita Raymond (Christian hostel worker, spat upon by a Muslim after telling him he had to leave after he had been caught dealing drugs, threatened with a makeshift flamethrower)

Nora O'Keefe (Christian hostel worker, spat upon by a Muslim after telling him he had to leave after he had been caught dealing drugs, threatened with a makeshift flamethrower)

Roger Clark (Christian hostel director, threatened with a makeshift flamethrower, suffered a hairline shoulder fracture when struck across the back with a paper cutter, computers and printers destroyed)

Date: June 25, 2018

Location: London

Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6665357/Muslim-man-23-attacked-two-Christians-just-hours-apart.html>

Liz Parsons (Head of Advocacy for the prolife group Life, said after a court ruled that the July 2018 closure of the group's exhibit at a municipal fair constituted an illegal breach of contract: "Lambeth's agreement to settle this matter through a payment of damages is a victory for common sense and freedom of expression...In a climate where the prolife voice is being shut down by local authorities across the country, we want to be clear that we are going nowhere...For almost five decades we have stood firm in our provision of support for women and advocacy for the life of the unborn...The stall at Lambeth sought to educate people about the unborn baby and advertise our care services for pregnant women, including those who are homeless or in need of emotional and practical support...We must, and will challenge any organization which tries in any way to impede this important work")

Date reported: February 19, 2019

Location: Lambeth Borough, London

Source: <https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/02/19/london-council-pays-damages-to-pro-life-charity/>



### United States - District of Columbia

Faith McDonnell (Christian persecution researcher, personal Facebook page deleted after she posted a photo of the 21 Coptic martyrs on the four year anniversary of their murder by the Islamic State [ISIL], appeal denied, further communications unanswered)

Date: February 15, 2019

Source: <https://stream.org/328684-2/>



### Uzbekistan

Umida (convert, wife, mother of a daughter and a 2 year old son, **killed when her husband slit her throat** at the airport when she tried to flee the country, had previously been locked in her home after her husband discovered her conversion)

Date: February 9, 2019

Location: Tashkent

Source: <https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/uzbek-woman-killed-by-husband-because-of-her-christian-faith>

## **Today's Martyrs**

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

*or write to*

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