

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Events – December 2019

Sunday December 1, 2019



India: Maharashtra state

Three Christians were arrested on offending religious sentiments charges

Gajendra Maruti Devnoor (aged 26, arrested)

Ajay Gautam (arrested)

Amar Wadvav (arrested)

India: Perigaon village, Rayagada district, Odisha state

Pastor Bibudhan Pradhan (helped parishioners after they were attacked by Adivasi [aboriginal tribal] radicals on [November 26, 2019](#): “They were horrified by what happened...The drunk men abused the Christian families in filthy language and forcefully searched their homes for Bibles. The Christians tried hard to resist them to no avail. They gathered the Bibles from Christian homes at one spot at the center of the village, poured kerosene and lit fire”; **UPDATE**: attacked, said “After we concluded the prayers and community lunch service, a batch of around 15 tribal men came with axes, surrounded the church and threatened that they will chop us into pieces. They took us inside the village and held us hostage for more than four hours. They abused us in vulgar language, words that I can’t utter with my mouth, and threatened us that their gods and goddesses will swallow us alive for propagating Christianity in an Adivasi [indigenous tribal] hamlet”, released, church building destroyed in an arson attack that night)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2019/12/axe-wielding-tribal-animists-set-bibles-church-building-ablaze-in-eastern-india/>

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Maharashtra,-three-Christians-arrested-for-'forced-conversions'-48784.html>

Monday December 2, 2019



India: Paara village, Jhabua district, Madhya Pradesh state

Pastor Rahul Bariya (aged 38, husband, father of three, attacked by a mob of about 100 Hindu extremists as he returned home with his family from a worship service, dragged to the police station and detained for over 24 hours, said “The landlord forced my wife and children out of the house at 11 in the night while I was in police custody and did not allow them to pick up the household stuff. Without bedding and warm clothes, they were forced to wander in the middle of the night looking for some shelter...The house church is closed now. There are about 200 believers in the village, and they have been travelling in a radius of 25 miles to attend a church fellowship every week, all in different directions”)

India: Perigaon village, Rayagada district, Odisha state

Pastor Bibudhan Pradhan (helped parishioners after they were attacked by Adivasi [aboriginal tribal] radicals on [November 26, 2019](#): “They were horrified by what happened...The drunk men abused the Christian families in filthy language and forcefully searched their homes for Bibles. The Christians tried hard to resist them to no avail. They gathered the Bibles from Christian homes at one spot at the center of the village, poured kerosene and lit fire”; attacked on [December 1, 2019](#), said “After we concluded the prayers and community lunch service, a batch of around 15 tribal men came with axes, surrounded the church and threatened that they will chop us into pieces. They took us inside the village and held us hostage for more than four hours. They abused us in vulgar language, words that I can’t utter with my mouth, and threatened us that their gods and goddesses will swallow us alive for propagating Christianity in an Adivasi [indigenous tribal] hamlet”, released, church building destroyed in an arson attack that night; **UPDATE**: physically forced by police to put his thumbprint on a document that stated there would be no more Christian prayer in the village)

Sure Kadraka (wife of Bhasker Rao, attempted to file a police report against the perpetrators of the November 26 and December 1 attacks, police detained the attackers for a few hours but refused to file a report)

Bhasker Rao (husband of Sure Kadraka, church elder)

Hananiyo Lima (reported on events following the November 26 and December 1 attacks “Police held the suspects in custody for a while and sent them away. No cases were registered against the assailants, who confessed that they had set the Bibles ablaze, held the pastor hostage and later burned down the church. We refused to sign on any document, but they took our fingerprints forcefully”)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2019/12/axe-wielding-tribal-animists-set-bibles-church-building-ablaze-in-eastern-india/>

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine/>



United Kingdom

Pastor Keith Waters (reported to have received a death threat at his home, harassed at his church, and hounded out of his caretaker job for tweeting that pride events are harmful to children and that Christians should not attend them)

<https://christianconcern.com/news/pastor-threatened-harassed-and-hounded-out-of-his-job-for-opposing-pride/>

Tuesday December 3, 2019



Iran: Mashhad

Hossein Soodmand (convert from Islam, father of Rashin Soodmand, entered the ministry, ignored orders from the government to stop his Christian activities, **hanged** on **December 3, 1990**; **UPDATE**: gravesite discovered t have been destroyed)

Rashin Soodmand (daughter of Hossein Soodmand; **UPDATE**: said “As a member of the family of this martyred pastor, I can say that the recent disrespect shown to our father’s grave wounded our hearts yet again. Our father was killed cruelly and contrary to the law. They buried him in a place they called la’anatabad [accursed place], without our knowledge, and did not even give our family the opportunity to say goodbye to him, or to see his lifeless body. For years we had to travel to this remote place to visit his unmarked grave, and we were not even allowed to construct a gravestone bearing his name. And now they want to completely remove the only sign of him left for us...The blood of Jesus Christ was shed so we could be saved, and since then much more blood has also been shed, so that the good news of salvation can reach many. Today I am very proud of my father’s burial place. I no longer see a plain, ordinary dusty place, but I look deeper into it and see what God has produced”)

<https://www.christianpost.com/world/iran-bulldozes-over-grave-of-pastor-executed-for-converting-to-christianity-after-seeing-jesus-in-dream.html>



Sweden: Norrkoping

Isa Gergin (church caretaker, church damaged in an arson attack on [August 5, 2018](#), later said "I think they have closed the investigation"; **UPDATE**: church damaged in an arson attack, said "Someone had poured gasoline on the outside and lit it. But the emergency services were quickly in place")

<http://www.aina.org/news/20200110174456.htm>

Friday December 6, 2019



Nigeria: on the Benin-Owo highway

Two priests were abducted for ransom while travelling to a wedding

Fr Joseph Nweke

Fr Felix Efobi

http://www.fides.org/en/news/67110-AFRICA_NIGERIA_Two_priests_kidnapped_on_December_6_released

Sunday December 8, 2019



Vietnam: Loc Hung, Ho Chi Minh City

Police attacked parishioners while they erected a creche

Cao Thi Thu (aged 58, arrested, released, refused to pay the US\$0.35 fine, later said “We only gathered there to protect the nativity scene...I am 58 years old and I have really weak hearing. But I was beaten in the face and trampled. I felt a brick from somewhere hit my foot. It was so painful so I picked up the brick and threw it away and began to flee. That’s when they arrested me and accused me of throwing the brick [at them] which is an administrative violation”)

Pham Trung Hieu (arrested, released)

Pham Duy Quang (arrested, released, later said "Yesterday's suppression was so brutal. By 3:30 pm, we had gathered to pray and prepare to set up the nativity scene. After praying, a large force consisting of various Ward 6 agencies showed up to destroy [it]. They beat us, drove [us] into corners”)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Authorities-attack-Catholics-in-L%E1%BB%99c-H%C6%B0ng,-tear-down-nativity-scene-48778.html>

Tuesday December 10, 2019



India: Vadi village, near Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh state

Pastor Mukam Kiraad (aged 35, husband, father of four aged 7 to 13, attacked by a mob during a worship service, phones and Bibles seized, arrested and released after 9 hours, said “Some of them began to film the worship service while others went out and locked us in from outside, so that we would not escape. They disrupted the service and began to search the place while using vulgar language. About 10 assailants were hiding outside at various locations, to attack us in case any of us managed to escape. They took my [water] bottle, which later was presented in the courtroom as evidence with some test report. I do not know what the report said or what they added to my drinking water later. Everybody shared their faith testimony as the police personnel blamed me for forcefully converting villagers. However, one policeman showed his appreciation towards me for doing such a good work and wondered why the villagers were putting such allegations on me”)

Lalsingh Tomar (aged 40, same account)

Nanliya Rawat (aged 38, same account)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine/>



Turkey: Istanbul

Patriarch Sahag II Mashalian (aged 58, elected patriarch of the Armenian Church in Constantinople after years of government interference)

http://www.fides.org/en/news/67257-ASIA_TURKEY_Patriarch_Sahak_II_denies_criticism_of_the_Armenian_diaspora_attri_buted_to_him_by_Turkish_media



Serbia: Belgrade

Bishop Joanikije (Montenegrin bishop, possible victim of an assassination attempt while meeting in a hotel with a Montenegrin businessman, the businessman received a non-life threatening gunshot injury)

<https://orthochristian.com/126363.html>



Nigeria: on the Benin-Owo highway

**Two priests were abducted on December 6, 2019 for ransom while travelling to a wedding;
UPDATE: released**

Fr Joseph Nweke

Fr Felix Efobi

[http://www.fides.org/en/news/67110-
AFRICA_NIGERIA_Two_priests_kidnapped_on_December_6_released](http://www.fides.org/en/news/67110-
AFRICA_NIGERIA_Two_priests_kidnapped_on_December_6_released)



United Kingdom

Dr. Richard Scott (disciplined by the General Medical Council on June 15, 2012 after he suggested Christian spirituality to a depressed patient in Margate, Kent despite given no chance to rebut the charge; received a letter on or after June 7, 2019 from the General Medical Council after the atheist National Secular Society alleged 'concern' that he was promoting Christianity in his medical practice; **UPDATE:** case reported to have been dismissed by the GMC due to the hearsay nature of the allegation, said “This complaint should never have got to this stage. It was clear from the outset that the NSS was targeting not just me and the practice, but also the freedom of Christian professionals across the UK to share their faith in the workplace. The toll placed on my family and me, as a result of one spurious complaint, was totally unnecessary. Yet it is my hope that this outcome will mean other Christian practitioners will not have to go through similar experiences”)

<https://christianconcern.com/news/christian-doctor-secures-freedom-to-pray/>

Thursday December 12, 2019



Iran: Eghlid

Asghar Salehi (arrested in his home on [September 18, 2018](#); summoned to court on [April 18, 2019](#), warned he should stop all Christian activities; sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment on [September 22, 2019](#) on a charge of 'propaganda against the system through promoting Zionist Christianity'; **UPDATE**: arrested to begin his sentence)

Mohammadreza Rezaei (same account)

<https://www.meconcern.org/2019/12/27/iran-three-converts-start-their-sentences-in-eghlid/>



Venezuela: Puerto Ordaz

Rev Luis Gregorio Coronado (aged 58, husband, father of three, disappeared while travelling to visit parishioners)

<https://www.charismanews.com/world/79249-missing-pastor-found-murdered-on-church-property>

Friday December 13, 2019



China: Xinxiang, Henan province

Pastor Zhang Shaojie (husband of Wang Fengrui, met with police on [November 16, 2013](#) at his registered church in [Nanle County, Henan](#), tied up without a warrant, church and family members gathered to protest his illegal detention but were beaten, parents hospitalized with hypertension, two sisters detained; convicted on [July 4, 2014](#), sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment and fined US\$16,113; health in prison in decline as of [July 7, 2017](#), described as a "bag of bones" and as having dark discolorations under his eyes, when asked if he had been beaten replied "Do you need to be beaten to become like this?"; **UPDATE**: has been forced to take unknown medications in prison, family reported symptoms of mental disintegration during their last visit)

Esther Zhang Huixin aka "Yunyun" (daughter of Pastor Zhang Shaojie and Wang Fengrui, wife of Sun Zhulei, mother of Sun "Jesse" Jiexi; escaped China via a Christian 'underground railroad' to Southeast Asia and as of [July 14, 2014](#) has been allowed entry to the United States; **UPDATE**: reported on her father's condition)

<https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/12/pastor-force-fed-medicine.html>



India

Fr Cedric Prakash SJ (director of the Prashant Jesuit Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace; **UPDATE**: said "2019 is a truly horrible year for the protection of human rights in India...Since the government led by the Baratiya Janata Party took over power in May 2014, there has been a constant deterioration regarding respect for human rights in the country...According to the latest data, there is an increase in common incidents in nine states: Uttar Pradesh this year registered 457 episodes of religiously motivated violence between January and October. Nearly five hundred attacks against Christians have been reported in various parts of the country. Fundamentalists thrive on 'hate speech' and lynching has become terribly frequent...The situation is critical also for the defenders of human rights, who suffer threats, coercion, intimidation, arrests, insults and false accusations just because they promote human rights, justice and peace. A few months ago five well-known human rights activists, including the writer P Varavara Rao, were arrested on entirely fictitious charges. The ancient 'sedition law' is still used to suppress dissent")

http://www.fides.org/en/news/67122-ASIA_INDIA_A_priest_the_government_must_put_more_effort_into_protecting_human_rights

Sunday December 15, 2019



Pakistan: Faisalabad

Dawood Shahid (aged 14, son of Safia Bibi and Shahid Sardar, brother of Awais Shahid, embroidery factory worker, raped and **strangled to death** by two coworkers)

Safia Bibi (mother of Dawood Shahid, witnessed her son's murder)

Shahid Sardar (father of Dawood Shahid, witnessed his son's murder)

Awais Shahid (brother of Dawood Shahid, witnessed his brother's murder)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/head-line-news-details/7280>



United Kingdom: Hammersmith, London

Liane Pibworth (mother of Evangelina and Honey, reported to have filed several complaints over more than two years against Muslim neighbors who have assaulted her or her children or threatened their lives, no action was taken by authorities, a retaliatory complaint was filed against her in October 2019, produced written statements from Muslim friends testifying to her good character)

Honey (aged 15, daughter of Liane Pibworth, reported to have been the victim of the majority of harassments by her Muslim neighbors)

Evangelina (aged 5, daughter of Liane Pibworth, reported to have been forced to give up her dog after it had been injured by Muslim neighbors)

Wilfred Wong (attorney, activist, reported to have defended Liane Pibworth at a Childrens Services hearing after her Muslim neighbors alleged she was neglecting her children, noted there was no evidence to support the allegations and the retaliatory nature of the complaint)

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/white-christian-complains-of-no-muslim-no-go-area-after-being-persecuted>

Monday December 16, 2019



India: Vadi village, near Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh state

Pastor Mukam Kiraad (aged 35, husband, father of four aged 7 to 13, attacked by a mob during a worship service on [December 10, 2019](#), phones and Bibles seized, arrested and released after 9 hours; **UPDATE**: called to the police station, charged with practicing medicine without a license [apparently for praying for healing], said “We were taken before the judge, where I was asked what I do, to which I said I was a pastor and was conducting regular church service. No bail plea was presented. The judge ordered us to be sent to jail. We had a nice time sharing the word of God with fellow prisoners. Some of them had never heard the name of Jesus Christ, nor the gospel”)

Lalsingh Tomar (aged 40, same account)

Nanliya Rawat (aged 38, same account)

Pastor Dilip Rawat (reported on the arrests)

Pastor Vikelson Sewla (reported on the arrests, said they were a well-planned conspiracy: “They did this to cause trouble to the arrested and their families. They had no money for their bail bond, they are poor people. We helped them by raising money from the church. The court case has just begun, and on the other hand the worship service has completely stopped, and the house church has been shut down”)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine/>



Nigeria: Chidunu village, Chikun county, Kaduna state

Raphael Ayuba (aged 40, husband, father of five, **killed** by Muslims on motorcycles and armed with AK-47s)

Habila Auta (aged 40, husband, father of two, **killed**)

Buhari Abubakar (aged 41, father of four, **killed**)

Nigeria: Kunnet village, Bokkos county, Plateau state

Mary Machief (**killed along with her baby daughter** by Muslim Fulani herdsmen)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/large-scale-killings-kidnappings-hit-christian-communities-in-kaduna-state-nigeria-sources-say/>

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-slain-wounded-kidnapped-in-plateau-state-nigeria/>



Venezuela: Puerto Ordaz

Rev Luis Gregorio Coronado (aged 58, husband, father of three, disappeared on **December 12, 2019** while travelling to visit parishioners; **UPDATE: body found** in a nearby church building, **had been murdered**)

<https://www.charismanews.com/world/79249-missing-pastor-found-murdered-on-church-property>

Tuesday December 17, 2019



Myanmar: Kyaing Tong

The United Wa State Army allowed Protestant churches to reopen after 15 months' closure, but not Catholic churches

Bishop Lazarus (said "All of our churches finally opened last week, and only a Bible study school remains closed in Hotaung. We don't know why they will not allow this one to reopen yet")

<https://www.licas.news/2019/12/19/catholic-churches-schools-remain-shuttered-in-separatist-controlled-myanmar-state/>



India: Permuapalayam, Tamil Nadu state

Pastor Joshua (husband, father of two aged 4 and 11, beaten and clothes torn along with other Christians at an Advent celebration, threatened with death by arson, a 17 year old dressed as Father Christmas was beaten, the couple hosting the celebration was evicted from their home)

<https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/extremists-in-india-threaten-to-burn-alive-christians-attending-advent-celebration>



Ukraine: Kiev

Metropolitan Anthony (**UPDATE:** thanked the Supreme Court for siding with his church and against the government's attempt to force it to legally change its name)

Archpriest Nikolai Balashov (said "Of course, we evaluate this decision of the Supreme Court positively. It testifies to the judges' respect for the law and Constitution of Ukraine", added that the case was not over)

<https://orthochristian.com/126470.html>



Niger

Fr Pierluigi Maccalli SMA (Italian national, abducted in [Bomoanga](#) on [September 18, 2018](#) by jihadists, probably taken over the border into Burkina Faso; **UPDATE:** still in captivity)

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/67136->

[EUROPE ITALY Father Maccalli is a thread that has united us for 15 months w
e entrust him to the Lord](http://www.fides.org/en/news/67136-EUROPE_ITALY_Father_Maccalli_is_a_thread_that_has_united_us_for_15_months_w_e_entrust_him_to_the_Lord)



Nigeria: Adamawa state

Pastor Kayode Shogbesan (abducted)

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/nigeria-gunmen-kidnap-pastor-amid-rising-number-of-abductions.html>



Netherlands

Cardinal Willelm Eijk (said that priests cannot be present during acts of voluntary euthanasia or assisted suicide and must speak clearly against such acts)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/12/17/cardinal-eijk-a-priest-cannot-be-present-at-euthanasia/>



United Kingdom

Bishop Gavin Ashenden (forced to resign as a Queen's Chaplain on [January 22, 2017](#) after criticizing the Church of Scotland for allowing the reading of a Quran chapter on the birth of Jesus in Glasgow cathedral during the Epiphany because the chapter explicitly denied the divinity of Jesus; **UPDATE**: announced that he would be received into the Catholic Church and would be relinquishing Anglican Holy Orders)

Bishop Mark Davies (**UPDATE**: invited Bishop Gavin Ashenden to join the Catholic Church, told him he was needed, said “I am conscious of the witness which [Gavin] Ashenden has given in the public square to the historic faith and values on which our society has been built. I pray that this witness will continue to be an encouragement to many”)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/12/17/former-queens-chaplain-to-become-catholic/>

Wednesday December 18, 2019



Tajikistan: Yavan Prison

Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov (aged 43, husband, father of three, arrested in [Khujand](#) on [April 10, 2017](#) by the NSC secret police on charges of 'extremism'; reported on [July 14, 2017](#) to have been sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for 'singing extremist songs in church and so inciting religious hatred', friends and family threatened with arrest if they disclose details of the trial; **UPDATE**: released)

<https://www.persecution.org/2019/12/19/tajik-pastor-released-early-3-years-prison/>



Israel: Jerusalem

Archbishop Theodosios aka Atallah Hannah (hospitalized after a tear gas canister was fired into a church)

<https://orthochristian.com/126551.html>

Thursday December 19, 2019



China: north China

Fr Peter (said "This year's Christmas is not like that in the past. The official authorities have created a growing political atmosphere of tension. To avoid unnecessary headaches, the parish abolished the Christmas Eve Play, turning it into a meeting of prayer and evangelization. Before the Eucharist on Christmas Eve, the parish provides each member of the faithful with a bowl of lamb soup with special sandwiches to brighten the atmosphere. Then we pray, we sing, we listen to the Word of God and then we celebrate the Eucharist of the night. Since the authorities do not allow children under the age of 18 to participate in the Eucharist, the parish provides them with a room in the courtyard of the church where they are entertained and cared for by supervisors. At the end of the Eucharist, the priest goes to bless them. The parish has also abolished the tradition of touring the village to distribute 'peace fruit' [a package of apples] to non-Christians. Liturgical ceremonies take place on a regular basis, although the civil authorities send guards to supervise and monitor them")

[http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christmas-in-China:-without-young-people-and-under-police-supervision-\(I\)-48860.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christmas-in-China:-without-young-people-and-under-police-supervision-(I)-48860.html)



Thailand: Bangkok

Juliet Chowdhry (British citizen, commented on the arrest of 28 Pakistani Christian asylum seekers including 6 children on immigration violations: "This will be a devastating Christmas for all those arrested and we will do all we can to make Christmas feel special for these and other detainees. Our primary concern is to cover the overstay fines those arrested will have to pay in order to prevent them from incarceration in a brutal Thai Jail with murderers and rapists - this will adversely affect the children in particular. Our staff in Thailand are producing Christmas cards made by asylum seeker children and will distribute them to as many IDC's as financially possible with some Biryani rice near to Christmas. Biryani is a traditional Christmas meal for pak-Christians and when I think of the plain boiled rice they will eat on other days, I hope this will remind them that one day this world will end and more pleasant things are awaiting us in heaven")

John (said "The timing of these arrests could not be worse. Our community is feeling distraught and extremely sorrowful for our suffering brothers and sisters. We were all beginning Christmas celebrations but for many now their joy will be dulled as they await upon their future with only the thinnest strand of hope")

Rasoolan Bibi (aged 63, Pakistani refugee, mother of Amreen Latif, grandmother, suffers from eczema, arthritis and hypertension, arrested and placed in the Immigration Detention Center)

Amreen Latif (mother, daughter of Rasoolan Bibi, said after her mother's detention "In her last visit to a hospital the doctor advised my mum to be more careful because her kidneys were not functioning properly. Alarming there are certain prescribed medicines with she needs to take everyday, But since being detained there has been no way to send her any medicine. Now I'm afraid with her condition, that when [detainees] come down for exercise, her blood pressure remains high. I am praying for her swift release but I know the process for her bail will be slow, please ask people to pray for us")

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/christmas-arrests-of-pakistani-christian-refugee-and-asylum-seekers-in-bangkok-shatters-hope-for-saf>

<https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/63-year-old-pak-christian-grandmother-seeks-freedom-from-bangkok-idc>



Myanmar

The United Wa State Army allowed Protestant churches to reopen after 15 months' closure, but not Catholic churches

Bishop Philip Lasap Za Hawng (**UPDATE**: reported that Catholic buildings remained closed)

Fr Soe Naing (reported to have said churches remained closed, added "We heard the school in Winkhaung was converted into a police station, and that the school in Maingmaw was demolished")

<https://www.licas.news/2019/12/19/catholic-churches-schools-remain-shuttered-in-separatist-controlled-myanmar-state/>



India: Ahmedabad

Fr Cedric Prakash (**UPDATE**: arrested during a demonstration against a new immigration law, said "I was stopped with so many other people and it is already more than two hours that we are here [in detention]. But in the meantime we sing songs and slogans and read the Preamble of the Constitution. We are really living in a fascist state!")

India: New Delhi

John Dayal (**UPDATE**: arrested during a demonstration against a new immigration law, said "A day well spent. I was one of the thousands of people arrested across the country under a colonial law [section 144] for opposing a sectarian law that demonizes a fifth of the population")

[http://www.asianews.it/news-en/John-Dayal-and-Fr.-Cedric-Prakash-arrested-for-anti-Muslim-law-demonstrations-\(Video-and-photos\)-48869.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/John-Dayal-and-Fr.-Cedric-Prakash-arrested-for-anti-Muslim-law-demonstrations-(Video-and-photos)-48869.html)



Iraq: Bagdad

Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako (**UPDATE**: cancelled Christmas midnight Mass due to security concerns)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card-Sako-cancels-Christmas-midnight-mass-in-Baghdad-48859.html>

Friday December 20, 2019



Niger: Koutougou

Fr Mauro Armanino SMA (missionary; **UPDATE**: reported on threats against Christians: "The church of the Christian community is not far from the place of the assassination [of the local animist]. Shortly after his killing it was the turn of his Christian nephew to be threatened and 'invited' by the head of the group to inform the Christian community of the village that, if they go to pray in church, the only people to survive will be women and children...Next Christmas for the parish of Bomoanga will be very close to the original of Bethlehem, with the Herods of the moment")

http://www.fides.org/en/news/67154-AFRICA_NIGER_Threats_against_Christians_in_the_area_of_Bomoanga_and_targeted_killings_for_others_reports_a_missionary

Saturday December 21, 2019



Iran

Fatemeh "Mary" Mohammadi (aged 21, convert, arrested in [November 2017](#) while attending an underground house church; sentenced in [April 2018](#) to 6 months' imprisonment, released with time served; assaulted on a bus on [July 9, 2019](#) by a woman who objected to way she wore her headscarf, arrested by police when she attempted to file a complaint against the woman and held until 3 AM; **UPDATE**: tweeted that she had been denied an application to Azad University without explanation)

<https://articleeighteen.com/news/4242/>

Sunday December 22, 2019



Philippines: Cotabato, Mindanao

Fr Zaldy Robles (reported on a grenade attack outside his cathedral during Mass that injured 22 including 12 soldiers guarding the building, many fled into the cathedral for refuge, said

It is sad that this kind of violence is happening while we are celebrating the holy Christmas season. Let us not let the reign of darkness rule over us")

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/67169->

[ASIA PHILIPPINES Terrorist violence on Christmas eve attack in front of the Cathedral](http://www.fides.org/en/news/67169-)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2019/12/grenade-attack-near-cathedral-leaves-several-wounded-in-the-philippines/>



Nigeria: on the Monguno-Maiduguri highway in Borno state

Five aid workers were captured by ISWAP

Adamu Ozeshi

Arthur Ibojekwe Chima

Asabe Cletus Musa

George Danbaba Micheal

Jennifer Samuel Ukumbong

Nigeria: Tanjol village, Riyom county, Plateau state

Ayuba Lanjo (shot by Muslim Fulani herdsmen, survived)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/two-young-christian-women-killed-in-kaduna-state-nigeria/>
<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-slain-wounded-kidnapped-in-plateau-state-nigeria/>

Monday December 23, 2019



Indonesia: Jorong Kampung Baru, West Sumatra

Trisila Lubis (aged 56, reported that police had banned Christmas celebrations in her village including any gathering in homes and offered to transport the Christians 120 km to a church, declined the police offer out of concern a precedent would be set)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christians-banned-from-celebrating-Christmas-in-two-Muslim-majority-West-Sumatra-villages-48889.html>



Palestine: Gaza

Fr Gabriel Romanelli IVE (Argentine citizen, reported on the granting of visas by Israel for travel to Jerusalem and Bethlehem for pilgrimage: "[Christians are in] a condition of hyper-surrealism: a thousand people, 117 of whom are Catholics, compared to a total population of 2.3 million, there is no possibility of moving, of perennial war")

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Gaza-Christians-Christmas-joy,-stronger-than-walls-and-prohibitions-48888.html>



Uganda: Butumo village, Kasambira parish, Kamuli district

Richard Wamala (aged 25, convert, husband, father of a 1 year old daughter, reported to have been driven from his land by Muslims after his conversion was discovered, threatened with death and witchcraft, said "I am troubled in my heart, very sic. I lost my farm and the house, amounting to huge amount of money. I am homeless, and my appeal [to the local government] for help bore no fruits. I need help to get back the land, and possibly sell it so as to buy another piece of land to settle my family", spoke about his September 25, 2019 conversion thanks to a local pastor: "He shared with us the message of salvation of God. After a month, my wife and I were convicted of our sins, and we surrendered our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and since then our lives were totally changed")

<https://morningstarnews.org/2019/12/christian-mother-in-uganda-loses-marriage-for-turning-to-christ/>

Tuesday December 24, 2019



Australia: Melbourne

Cardinal George Pell (aged 78, charged with multiple child sex abuse crimes in [June 2017](#), the police had opened a case against him a year before a complainant was found, most charges were then dismissed for "fundamental defects in evidence"; reported on [December 11, 2018](#) to have been convicted on five counts despite the trial having been held in secret, a previously unreported trial had ended in mistrial after 10 jurors voted to acquit, trial witnesses anonymously reported extensive prosecutorial misconduct; verdict announced on [February 27, 2019](#) after prosecutors decided to drop the remaining charges,

taken into custody; sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment on [March 13, 2019](#); appeal denied on [August 21, 2019](#) on a 2-1 vote, the dissenting judge wrote that his guilt had not been proved beyond a reasonable doubt; **UPDATE**: still in prison, two dozen locals sang Christmas carols outside his prison for him and other prisoners)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2019/12/26/catholics-sing-carols-for-cardinal-pell-outside-melbourne-prison/>



Palestine: Bethlehem

Fairouz Ijha (aged 76, complained that the courts had refused for two years to help her recover land seized by Muslims: "Each time I ask the judge for permission to speak, he tells me, 'it's not your turn yet'. If I were a Muslim, I would have been treated differently")

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/15690/attacking-palestinian-christians>



Switzerland: Kleinhunigen

Pastor Christine Dietrich (church invaded by hooded activists during a service, possibly in retaliation for her past writings on Islam, said "The reaction of the worshipers to the action was a mixture of horror and fear")

Pastor Dr Lukas Kundert (President of the Church Council, condemned the disruption to the service: "It is a mockery that the activists call for peace and stand up against agitation, but also blow up a peaceful Christmas night service and incite the pastor")

<https://telebaser.ch/2019/12/25/aktivisten-stoeren-gottesdienst-in-kleinhunigen/?channel=105100> - with translation

Wednesday December 25, 2019

Christmas – Western Calendar



China: Xining, Qinghai province

An official church had its doors sealed in [early December 2019](#) by the authorities but more than 200 congregants continued to use the church by climbing in a window;

UPDATE: electricity shut off during a Christmas service, church slated for demolition in January 2020

Ms Anna

Ms Wang Ruiqin

<https://www.chinaaid.org/2020/01/three-self-church-is-shut-down-again.html>



India: Siwanka

Pastor Ram Kishan (father of Vinod Kumar, church threatened with attack by Hindu radicals)

Vinod Kumar (son of Pastor Ram Kishan, described an attempted attack by Hindu radicals on his church: “We kept watch that day and stopped them from causing any disturbance. They could not do anything and waited outside for a while for a chance to attack but, vexed at us restraining them, they left without causing any harm”)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/severe-attack-in-northern-india-devastates-families-church/>



Central African Republic: on the road between Batangafo and Bouca

Two pastors were shot dead by Seleka jihadists

Pastor Paul Djirobe (**shot dead**)

Pastor Michael Radjino (**shot dead**)

<https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/extremists-shoot-dead-two-pastors-after-christmas-day-service-in-car>

Thursday December 26, 2019



China: Chengdu, Sichuan province

Pastor Wang Yi (husband of Jiang Rong, son of Chen Yaxue, detained on [December 10, 2018](#), charged with 'inciting subversion of state power'; **UPDATE**: tried in closed court without his own attorneys, verdict not announced)

<https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/12/breaking-pastor-wang-yi-secretly-trying.html>



India: Vadi village, near Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh state

Pastor Mukam Kiraad (aged 35, husband, father of four aged 7 to 13, attacked by a mob during a worship service on [December 10, 2019](#), phones and Bibles seized, arrested and released after 9 hours,; called to the police station on [December 16, 2019](#), charged with practicing medicine without a license [apparently for praying for healing]; **UPDATE**: granted bail of US\$420)

Lalsingh Tomar (aged 40, same account)

Nanliya Rawat (aged 38, same account)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine/>



Egypt: Khosous, Cairo

Mervat Jamil Shehata (aged 25, mother of Kyrillos Sami, reported to have disappeared on a trip to the post office)

Kyrillos Sami (child of Mervat Jamil Shehata, disappeared)

<https://www.coptsunited.com/Details.php?I=2562&A=40356>



Montenegro: Durdevica Tara Bridge

Bishop Metodije (beaten by police while peacefully protesting a new law which authorized the confiscation of church property, two others beaten while protecting him, hospitalized)

<https://orthochristian.com/126743.html>



Nigeria: Gwoza, Borno state

Martha Bulus (**shot dead or beheaded** [accounts vary] along with her fiancé and friends on her way to her December 31, 2019 wedding by the Islamic State West Africa Province [ISWAP] or Boko Haram [accounts vary])

<https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/nigerian-christian-bride-and-friends-murdered-in-jihadi-ambush-on-way-to-wedding>

<http://www.fides.org/en/news/67198->

[AFRICA NIGERIA Explosion on the border with Cameroon causes 30 deaths](#)

Friday December 27, 2019



India: Mathwad village, Madhya Pradesh state

Pastor Ramesh Vaskale (arrested along with 2 others on forced conversion charges during a Christmas program)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/01/christians-in-india-spend-christmas-in-jail-accused-of-illegally-practicing-medicine/>



Pakistan: Faisalabad

Shahbaz Masih (aged 40, dragged to a landfill by two Muslims and beaten, a Muslim friend named Muhammad Ishaq attempted to stop the beating, both men were then accused of blasphemy, a nearby mosque then began a riot when it called on both to be killed, both were arrested and denied bail, both families fled their homes)

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Christian-and-Muslim-friends-arrested-in-Faisalabad-for-blasphemy-49024.html>



Germany: Tubingen

Pastor Guido Kasch (church vandalized, church owned vehicle destroyed by arson, an online feminist manifesto claimed responsibility, decried the 'increasingly hostile climate' against Christians)

<https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/tuebingen/Verdacht-auf-Brandstiftung-Brand-und-Schmierereien-an-Tuebinger-Freikirche,fahrzeugbrand-und-sachbeschaedigung-bei-tos-in-tuebingen-100.html> - with translation

Saturday December 28, 2019



India: East Midnapore district, Bengal state

Pastor Anup Ghosh (new church vandalized, said “We had gathered for a prayer on Dec. 28 when about 30 riders on 12 motorcycles arrived outside. They hurled bombs, forcefully entered the campus and vandalized property. All of them were carrying BJP’s [the Hindu nationalist political party] flag and chanting Jai Shri Ram. They broke the doors and smashed windowpanes, damaged 12 ceiling fans and the sound system, furniture and even the water tank. Local residents identified most of the vandals and we lodged a complaint with the police, naming all of them. The attack has shocked us, especially because those who did it threatened to come back and launch similar attacks on all churches in the neighborhood”, later called by the state Chief Minister and promised protection and reparations)

India: Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh state

Fr Anthony Raj Thumma (decried the use of a law used to arrest four men reading Bibles in a public park: “It should apply only to the temple premises and not to nearby areas and public parks. And not at all to the whole town which is against the fundamental rights of the people of other religions living in these towns. The Andhra Pradesh Federation of Churches had made representations to the government in the past regarding this matter, fearing its misuse”)

<http://mattersindia.com/2020/01/christians-face-heightened-intolerance-in-india-activist-claims/>



Ukraine: Novozhivotov village, Oratov district, Vinnitsa province

Fr Peter Monastyrsky (locks on his church changed on [December 22, 2019](#) by men loyal to the Kiev patriarchate; **UPDATE**: beaten along with four priests and five laymen loyal to the Moscow patriarchate with brass knuckles by inebriated supporters of the Kiev patriarchate, thrown down stairs and kicked)

Archpriest Dmitry Tsmokalo (reported on the attack)

<https://orthochristian.com/126868.html>

<https://spzh.news/ru/news/67411-v-novozhivotove-storonniki-pcu-grozyatsya-otobraty-khram-u-zakomnyh-vladelycev> - with translation

Sunday December 29, 2019



Italy: Mogliano Veneto

Bishop Corrado Pizzaiolo (reported to have condemned a church vandalism in which a figurine of the infant Jesus was hung by its neck)

<https://tribunatreviso.gelocal.it/treviso/cronaca/2019/12/30/news/mogliano-impiccano-la-statuetta-di-gesu-bambino-1.38266954> - with translation



Nigeria: Sokoto

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah (**UPDATE:** said of the government “They are using the levers of power to secure the supremacy of Islam, which then gives more weight to the idea that it can be achieved by violence. With the situation in Nigeria, it is hard to see the moral basis they have to defeat Boko Haram. They have created the conditions to make it possible for Boko Haram to behave the way they are behaving...The only difference between the government and Boko Haram is Boko Haram is holding a bomb...If the people in power don’t do enough to integrate Christians then they give oxygen to Islamism. If they have countries where everybody is Muslim in power then you give vent to the idea that Islam should be supreme...Christians have every reason to feel insecure and also there is a general feeling of their marginalization from the political process. If the principles of our religion were different, there would be a civil war by now. It is the glory of our religion that this hasn’t happened”)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2020/01/03/nigerian-government-are-islamic-fundamentalists-without-bombs-says-bishop/>

<https://www.aidtochurch.org/acn-news/601-islamic-state-says-it-beheaded-10-christian-hostages-in-nigeria-where-is-the-moral-revulsion>



United States – Texas: White Settlement

A gunman opened fire in a church, killing two

Deacon Anton "Tony" Wallace (aged 64, registered nurse, father of Sarah and Tiffany Wallace, **shot** while serving communion, **died** at the hospital)

Richard White (aged 67, **shot dead**)

Sarah Wallace (daughter of Deacon Anton "Tony" Wallace, said of his murder "He always wanted us to be in the church, he was always my role model. We just say God wanted him more than we did. They couldn't handle his perfectness here")

Tiffany Wallace (daughter of Deacon Anton "Tony" Wallace, witnessed her father's shooting along with her children, ran to her father's side, said of his murder "He was just our rock that held us together. Even when talking about Heaven, he said he was always prepared, but I never thought this would happen. You think dad would get old and sick but never get murdered...I forgive him, and it's the hardest thing to say because it's like, somebody killed your dad, but I forgive him. I'll never forgive what he did, but I forgive him")

Senior minister Britt Farmer (husband of Lisa Farmer, said of the gunman "I had seen him. I had visited with him. I had given him food. I had offered him food at other occasions that he had been to our building")

Jack Wilson (retired law enforcement officer, shot and killed the gunman)

Isabel Arreola (congregant, said of the gunman "I told him [my husband] I don't feel comfortable. I feel he's like dressed in like a beard and that's a wig...It looks so fake...I just kind of kept looking back there...I saw him pull the gun out and I was just panicked and then we heard it go off and we're just screaming, you know, trying to get under the pews")

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/30/us/texas-church-shooting-monday/index.html>

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/texas-church-shooting-daughter-of-man-killed-while-serving-communion-forgives-gunman.html>

Monday December 30, 2019



China: Chengdu, Sichuan province

Pastor Wang Yi (husband of Jiang Rong, son of Chen Yaxue, detained on **December 10, 2018**, charged with 'inciting subversion of state power'; tried in closed court without his own

attorneys on [December 26, 2019](#), verdict not announced; **UPDATE**: sentenced to 9 years' imprisonment)

<https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/12/wang-yi-receives-nine-year-sentence.html>

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pastor-Wang-Yi-sentenced-to-9-years-in-prison-for-'subversion'-48908.html>



India: Mumbai

Cardinal Oswald Gracias (**UPDATE**: accepted an apology from the hosts of a quiz show and from Walmart [the show's sponsor] for having insulted Christians in a Christmas Eve program)

<http://mattersindia.com/2019/12/hallelujah-controversy-cardinal-gracias-accepts-bollywood-apology/>



Cameroon: Bamenda

Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua (**UPDATE**: resignation due to having reached retirement age accepted)

http://www.fides.org/en/news/67180-AFRICA_CAMEROON_Resignation_of_the_Archbishop_of_Bamenda_and_appointment_of_new_Metropolitan_Archbishop

Tuesday December 31, 2019



Germany: Berlin

A Christian journalist was the victim of an arson attack on his automobile for the second time by radical feminists, Catholic and Evangelical bishops issued a joint statement condemning the attack

Gunnar Schupelius (journalist, husband of Magdalena Schupelius, father of five, automobile destroyed by arson in [March 2014](#), an online feminist manifesto claimed responsibility;

UPDATE: automobile destroyed by arson, the online feminist manifesto claiming responsibility also published his home address and called for further attacks)

Archbishop Heiner Koch (**UPDATE:** condemned the attack)

Bishop Christian Stablein (condemned the attack)

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2020/01/10/radical-feminist-group-admits-attacking-churches-and-pro-lifers-in-germany/>

<https://www.idea.de/menschenrechte/detail/brandanschlag-auf-auto-eines-christlichen-journalisten-111509.html> - with translation

December 2019, date unknown



Uganda: Kamuli district

Waiswa (aged 45, convert, husband of Namuwaya, father of nine, driven from his land and home after his conversion was discovered)

Namuwaya (convert, wife of Waiswa, mother of nine, same account)

<https://morningstarnews.org/2020/02/family-of-11-homeless-for-leaving-islam-in-eastern-uganda/>

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