

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2015-12-20 through 2015-12-26



Bangladesh

Bishop Sebastian Tudu (**UPDATE:** said “Several church leaders in Dinajpur have received death threats over the past weeks. Police advised us to remain as cautious as possible. All Catholic churches in this diocese decided not to hold Mass at midnight this Christmas”)

Date: December 24, 2015

William Proloy Samadder (organizing secretary of the Bangladesh Christian Association, escaped an attempt on his life, said "We convened meetings and all church leaders agreed that the fears of the church members were not unfounded. All churches in the country have been placed under unusually heavy police security this Christmas”)

Date: December 23, 2015

Nirmal Rozario (general secretary of the Bangladesh Christian Association; **UPDATE:** received a death threat, said “In Bangladesh, the churches are not engaged in any aggressive evangelical activity. They are well-known in this country for their service to the society. Some militant groups have robbed the spirit of this Christmas by unfairly targeting the Christian leaders. Many Christians fear that the militants are aiming to launch identical terror attack on churches...This is the first time in my life that I find Christians celebrating Christmas with such panic and fear”)

Date: December 22, 2015

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/bangladeshi-christians-skip-traditional-christmas-midnight-mass/3117525.html>



China

Event: Five Christian university students were expelled for praying together in a private room, had been secretly photographed

Li Binbin

Zhang Yaqi

Chen Huiyun

Ni Wangjie

Chen Ping

Jia Rong (prayed with the expelled students but was not expelled)

Date reported: December 19, 2015

Location: Shandong Yingcai College

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Shandong:-five-Christian-students-expelled-from-university-for-praying-in-private-36202.html>

Pastor Li Guozhi aka Yang Hua (husband of Wang Hongwu, **UPDATE**: detained for “illegally holding state secrets”)

Wang Hongwu (wife of Pastor Li Guozhi aka Yang Hua, said “Today, I went to pick up [my husband] Pastor Yang, but I failed. [I] saw four people pushing Yang Hua into a van without a license plate. Pastor Yang put on a black hood, and his mouth might have been sealed. I called out to him, but he didn’t respond. Those four people did not allow me to approach him. They pushed Pastor Yang into the car and sped away. I asked the detention center, and they only said that the department managing him took him away. They could not tell me which department [had taken him]. Then, I went home...I can only hand everything to the Lord!”)

Date: December 9, 2015

Location: Guiyang, Guizhou province

Source [with photo]: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/12/church-pastor-charged-with-illegally.html>

Pastor Sun Weili (said of Christmas "Christmas is a time of rejoicing for us, and we are all preparing our activities. I have heard that other churches have run into harassment, but so far we haven't. Perhaps it's because we are too small...we are being very cautious, and we won't be doing anything too ambitious")

Date: December 24, 2015

Location: Guangzhou

Zhang Shengqi (**UPDATE**: said of Christmas "Churches in Beijing are keeping a low profile and only informing their own members [about Christmas services]. They won't be inviting too many outsiders to join them")

Xu Yonghai (**UPDATE**: said of Christmas "In the past, we would get up early to spread the gospel and hand out leaflets, but the police found out about our plans this year, and have told us not to do that in future. They said they would have to start detaining us if we didn't stop that")

Date: December 24, 2015

Location: Beijing

Source: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/christians-12242015104323.html>



Egypt

Nader Shukry (**UPDATE**: criticized the government for scheduling college exams on Christmas Eve, saying it prevented students from celebrating with their families)

Imad Khalil (said that the government continues to schedule exams on Christian holidays despite years of protests)

Date: December 24, 2015

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1538&A=21619>

Kyrolos Reda (student, abducted in front of his school by masked gunmen)

Date: December 25, 2015

Location: Assiut

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1539&A=21637>



Eritrea

Patriarch Abune Antonios (**UPDATE**: still under house arrest, his government appointed replacement Patriarch Dioskoros has passed away after a long illness)

Date: December 21, 2015

Location: Asmara

Source: <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/?p=45451>



India

Event: Maharashtra state has again decided to hold 'Good Governance Day' on Christmas, including the National Service Scheme [NSS] camp for which students gain credits

Cardinal Oswald Gracias (**UPDATE**: said “Holding programs to promote Good Governance is good, but such a celebration should be avoided on Christmas Day...There might be a strategy behind it”)

Rev Dr Roger Gaikwad (National Council of Churches in India; **UPDATE**: said “There is definitely a deliberate attempt to undermine the importance of Christmas. The move cannot be seen in isolation from what is happening in the country. The BJP government has been keen on suppressing the minorities, their culture and icons at different levels”)

Bishop Thomas Dabre (**UPDATE**: said the government “should be sensitive, especially to religious minorities”)

Dolphy D’Souza (said the action “raises suspicion about the government's intentions”)

Fr George Paramel (said that the NSS camp was scheduled to keep Christian teachers and students at the camp on Christmas day)

P K Antu (school headmaster, said "Since the NSS camp is scheduled from December 19th to 25th, the students can return home only on the Christmas afternoon. So, I wrote to the NSS coordinator and to Kerala chief minister to prepone the camp so that the students can return on the Christmas Eve", was told the dates could not be changed)

Date reported: December 23, 2015

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/12/4181866/>

Event: Two Christians were beaten by drunken policemen who said "What has Jesus done for you, sons of prostitutes? Why are you running to Him?", the police seized their vehicle documentation and charged them with lacking documentation

A Rethinakumar (repeatedly kicked in the spine, suffered fractures, hospitalized)

C Nova (nose broken, mouth seriously injured, unable to eat for days)

Date: November 3, 2015

Location: Thomas Nagar, Tamil Nadu state

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/police-break-spine-of-one-christian-nose-of-another-in-tamil-nadu-india/>



Iran

Pastor Farshid Malayeri Fathi (aged 36, in jail since December 2010; **UPDATE:** released)

Date: December 21, 2015

Location: Rajai Shahr Prison, Karaj

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2015/12/22/pastor-farshid-fatih-released-from-iranian-prison/>



Iraq

Event: Christians will be celebrating their second Christmas in a refugee camp

Nabela Salim (mother of Marvin, refugee)

Marvin (aged 2, refugee)

Habiba Daud (refugee)

Majida Sabali (mother of Dima, Fadi and Nafa, refugee, said "I have a strong faith...")

Dima (child of Majida Sabali)

Fadi (child of Majida Sabali)

Nafa (child of Majida Sabali)

Date: December 23, 2015

Location: Erbil, Kurdistan

Source [with photo]: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151222210330.htm>

Sr Ban Saaed (refugee, has been living in a shipping container, said "Our identity is very difficult...in our country. We would like to live our lives in peace, but we haven't seen peace since we've been born")

Date reported: December 24, 2015

Location: Erbil, Kurdistan

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151224035913.htm>

Iraq

Nissan Botros (husband of Bernadette, refugee along with his children and grandchildren, said his family told the ISIL terrorists when they called from their home "Sit back then and make yourselves comfortable. But know that God will bring all this to judgement!")

Bernadette (wife of Nissan Botros, refugee along with his children and grandchildren)

Fr Daniel Behnam (refugee, spoke of his parishioners being driven out from their homes by ISIL "We closed the door behind, knowing there was no turning back. But one thing we would not do! We would not submit!...A church that is not suffering is not a church", and quoted Patriarch Ignatius Zakka's alternate reading of the Creed "one holy catholic, apostolic and *persecuted* church")

Firas (husband, teacher, refugee, said: "Don't ask me what I've lost. Ask me what I've gained!")

Date: December 24, 2015

Location: Ainkawa, Erbil, Kurdistan

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/12/4183271/>

Mariam (aged 29, teacher, said "Christians who left Iraq don't wish to return and some of them are even nagging us to leave, saying that even if we make it through this ordeal, the next one will be the end of it")

Abu Fadi (aged 51, Zayuna refugee camp worker)

Said Jalal (aged 31, Zayuna refugee camp volunteer, said "Christmas is in our hearts religiously, but I am depressed because it is not the same socially. Most of my family and acquaintances are either displaced or have left")

Date: December 25, 2015

Location: Bagdad

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151225153311.htm>

Imad Yokhana Yago (Member of Parliament; **UPDATE**: reported on the desecration of a Christian cemetery)

Date: December 24, 2015

Location: Kirkuk, Kurdistan

Source: <http://www.mcndirect.com/showsubject.aspx?id=65404>



Kenya

Bishop Joseph Alessandro OFM Cap (Maltese national; **UPDATE:** said in response to an al-Shabaab terror attack on a bus in which the Muslim passengers saved most of the Christian passengers from death by refusing to be separated from them "It is a very good thing; a concrete sign that Kenyan Muslims are against violence...The Shabaab now know that they do not have the support of the Muslim community. We hope that we continue in this direction, because a year ago there was a similar attack that caused a massacre")

Date: December 21, 2015

Location: Elwak

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/39098->

[AFRICA KENYA Muslim Passengers protect Christians from the Shabaab a very positive thing says the Bishop of Garissa#.Vnod6MJgkfg](http://www.fides.org/en/news/39098-)



Lebanon

Joseph Kourieh (aged 57, husband of Noura, Syrian refugee, said "I want to keep my family together, even if that means we stay here and starve to death")

Noura Kourieh (aged 50, wife of Joseph, Syrian refugee, said "There's nothing here for us - just emptiness")

Huda Kourieh (aged 34, daughter of Joseph and Noura Kourieh, said "We're being pulled apart by a war that has turned our lives black")

Hani Kourieh (aged 26, son of Joseph and Noura Kourieh, has considered paying smugglers to take him to Greece, his father has begged him to not go)

Fadi (aged 26, relative of Joseph and Noura Kourieh, disappeared after leaving Turkey on a smuggling vessel bound for Greece)

Date: December 24, 2015

Location: Beirut

Source [with photo]: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/a-christmas-of-despair-for-syrian-christian-refugees-in-lebanon/2015/12/24/d035f3a2-9d07-11e5-9ad2-568d814bbf3b_story.html



Mali

Dr Mohamed-Ibrahim Yattara (President of the Baptist Church, **UPDATE**: described an attack in which a gunman killed two employees of a Christian radio station and a visiting friend, said “We are trying to find out what happened, but for now we don’t have any explanation. It’s a Christian radio station that was broadcasting messages of peace lately. One of the young men who was shot last night, he had just finished broadcasting and his last words were about peace”)

Date: December 17, 2015

Location: Timbuktu

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/12/4166261/>



Nigeria

Event: Fulani Muslim gunmen attack homes and a refugee center, killing 15 Christians

Rose Monday (aged 57, widow, grandmother of Happy Matthew, Monday Matthew, and Anna Matthew, **shot dead** while trying to protect her grandchildren)

Happy Matthew (aged 3, grandchild of Rose Monday, **shot dead**)

Monday Matthew (aged 1, grandchild of Rose Monday, **shot dead**)

Anna Matthew (aged 5, granddaughter of Rose Monday, shot, hospitalized)

Gyang Christopher Choji (father of Monday Gyang and Gbari Gyang, tried to help his family escape the attack, was the only member to survive)

Monday Gyang (aged 15, son of Gyang Christopher Choji, student, **shot dead**)

Gbari Gyang (daughter of Gyang Christopher Choji, wife of Kaneng Nyen Gbari, mother of Dorcas and Rose Timothy, **shot dead**)

Kaneng Nyen Gbari (aged 46, husband of Gbari Gyang, father of of Dorcas and Rose Timothy, **shot dead**)

Dorcas Timothy (child of Kaneng Nyen Gbari and Gbari Gyang, **shot dead**)

Rose Timothy (child of Kaneng Nyen Gbari and Gbari Gyang, **shot dead**)

Date: December 13, 2015

Location: Hwak Kwata-Zawan village, Plateau state

Source [with photos]: <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/muslim-fulani-herdsmen-kill-15-christians-in-plateau-state-nigeria/>

Fr Franklyn Odiaka (abducted, released)

Fr Moses Nwaonwochei (abducted, released)

Dates: December 18 & 21, 2015

Location: Obior, Aniocha North local government area, Delta state

Source: http://www.fides.org/en/news/39103-AFRICA_NIGERIA_Two_priests_kidnapped_in_the_Delta_State_have_been_released#.VnodNsJgkfg



Pakistan

Falak Sher (resident of the H-9 colony [ghetto], will be homeless after its scheduled demolition, had moved to H-9 after the 2013 Mehrabadi pogrom)

Date reported: December 22, 2015

Location: outside Islamabad

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=5734>

Nargis Masih (aged 33, housewife, has been forced to travel three kilometers away to get water after the Capital Development Authority capped the three well in her colony [ghetto])

Date: December 25, 2015

Location: Rimsha colony, outside Islamabad

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3373907/Islamabads-Christian-slum-dwellers-pray-Christmas-miracle.html>



Sudan

Rev Kowa Shamal (**UPDATE**: arrested by the NISS secret police)

Date: December 18, 2015

Location: Khartoum Bahry

Rev Hassan Abdelrahim (arrested by the NISS secret police)

Date: December 18, 2015

Location: Omdurman

Source [with photo]: <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/two-more-pastors-arrested-in-khartoum-sudan/>

Pastor Hafiz Mengisto (being tried on a charge of interfering with a civil servant, charged after challenging the demolition of part of his church)

Date: December 14, 2015

Location: Bahri

Source: <http://www.meconcern.org/index.php/en/prayer-requests/992-sudan-pastor-and-lawyer-on-trial-following-destruction-of-church-building>



Syria

Youssuf (aged 65, said of Christmas “Dozens of people have died in this village; how could I put up decorations or hand out holiday sweets?”)

Fr Mtanyos Melhem Stouf (said “our youth, who at this time of year used to be busy decorating a big tree in the middle of the village, but who are now busy protecting our front lines”)

Date: December 24, 2015

Location: Sadad

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/christians-in-syrian-town-celebrate-christmas-amid-extreme-fear/>



Thailand

Event: Twelve members of an extended Pakistani refugee family are living under one roof despite one having untreated infectious diseases

Shahrooz Masih (aged 20, brother of Mafia Bibi, in failing health due to tuberculosis and a liver infection)

Mafia Bibi (aged 35, wife of Raju Bashir, mother of Andrew Isaac, Mather Hidden, and Adam Booker, sister of Shahrooz Masih, fled Pakistan after being accused of blasphemy, said "We are very grateful to God that we escaped persecution in Pakistan, but it's been very hard as my family have continued to suffer since our arrival here. Thailand is our only hope for a new life and a future to our children, but with their father detained I don't know what to do. Since my husband's arrest the children are terrified and very easily upset. My brother Sharooz is very sick and we are desperately worried about him as he needs urgent treatment, but we have no way to pay for this. I pray every day that God will move in our situation")

Raju Bashir (aged 34, husband of Mafia Bibi, father of Andrew Isaac, Mather Hidden, and Adam Booker, arrested by Thai police after illegally seeking work to support his family, bail denied after recent terror incidents)

Andrew Isaac (aged 6, son of Raju Bashir and Mafia Bibi)

Mather Hidden (aged 5, son of Raju Bashir and Mafia Bibi)

Adam Booker (aged 18 months, son of Raju Bashir and Mafia Bibi)

Date reported: December 18, 2015

Source [with photos]: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/sufferer-with-debilitating-tb-seeks-help>



Turkey

Pastor Eyup Badem (convert, has been beaten, eight year old daughter has been beaten at school)

Date reported: December 24, 2015

Location: Sanliurfa

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151224015543.htm>

Fr Bishare al Shemani (Iraqi refugee, said "They took our areas, our house, the places that we used to hold so dear")

Meryem Salim (Iraqi refugee, said "My last Christmas was in my family's house. It was me, my mom, and my dad and my brother. We were all together. And we hope to be united as one family in one place just once more")

Johnson Razgin (Iraqi refugee, said "This Christmas, it is sad to be far away from our country, it is sad to be away from our neighbors, from our friends, from our families. It is not easy. But something is better than nothing. Thanks for God, we have a priest here, that we are gathering here. I hope that everything will be OK")

Date: December 25, 2015

Location: Yalova province

Source [with video]: <http://www.aina.org/news/20151225201004.htm>



Uganda

Pastor Bongo Martin (aged 32, husband, father of two, **beheaded** by members of a mosque during a land dispute)

Date: December 23, 2015

Location: Nansololo village near Mazuba, Namudumba district

Event: Eight Bible study members **poisoned by a pesticide on December 18, 2015 in a Muslim majority village**

Katooko Aisha Sajjabi (aged 22, convert, **died**)

Mwanje Husain Sajjabi (aged 24, convert, **died**)

Eric Ali Sajjabi (aged 29, convert, **died**)

Musa Namusongi Sajjabi (aged 26, convert, **died**)

Mariam Kurumu (convert, expectant mother, **died**)

Date: December 19, 2015

Location: Kachomo village, Kachomo sub-county, Budaka district

Hajii Suleiman Sajjabi (convert, had hosted the Bible study, currently in a coma, one son who did not convert from Islam is the leading suspect in the poisoning)

Date: December 25, 2015

Location: Kachomo village, Kachomo sub-county, Budaka district

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/12/pastor-hacked-to-death-bible-study-members-poisoned-in-eastern-uganda/>



Ukraine

Iryna Horodchuk (aged 35, hospitalized in serious condition after being besieged in her church by Kiev Patriarchate and Right Sector militants who heckled her when she was removed on a stretcher, police have taken no action, a second parishioner was later hospitalized)

Archpriest Viktor Zemlyanoy (reported on the church siege)

Date: December 21, 2015

Location: Pticha village, Rivne region

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/89070.htm>
and <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/89069.htm>



United Kingdom

Rev Arun Arora (Church of England Director of Communications, **UPDATE:** said "Many families will be looking forward to going to the cinema during the Christmas holidays. It is astonishing that Digital Cinema Media refuses to show a short film focused on the Holy Family. This is not so much no room at the inn but a refusal by the innkeepers to take in any family who are religious")

December 22, 2015

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12064735/No-room-at-the-cinema-for-the-baby-Jesus.html>

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