

# Today's Martyrs

*Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom*

**Weekly Report – 2016-06-19 through 2016-06-25**



## **Canada**

Albert Felicitas (parochial high school religion teacher, 'temporarily' removed from his position after the children of homosexual parents complained of his statements citing church teaching)

Date reported: June 20, 2016

Location: Edmonton, Alberta

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/religious-teacher-removed-by-catholic-board-after-telling-students-gays-can>



## **Central African Republic: Bozoum**

Fr Aurelio Gazzera OCD (**UPDATE:** said of recent events "Here in Bozoum there are no problems, I know that there have been more in the north. From what I know the Seleka group which entered the [Ngaoundaye] mission stole a bit of things, especially food, but did not do much damage. Luckily the UN peacekeepers arrived and Seleka left the village...for more than two months there have been strong tensions in our area due to the presence of armed gangs that are reforming again. Hopefully now there is a greater presence of UN soldiers to ensure the security of all")

Date reported: June 17, 2016

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/60260->

[AFRICA CENTRAL AFRICA A missionary Armed gangs are reforming again we hope in the intervention of the Blue Helmets#.V2iTasIUUfg](#)



## **Chile**

Fr Enrique Catalan (described the destruction of a church by Mapuche rebels, a firefight followed in which a policeman was wounded)

Date: May 17, 2016

Location: Collipulli, Araucania region

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/60264->

[AMERICA CHILE Violence in the Mapuche region church burned and attack on police#.V2iSc8IUUfg](http://www.fides.org/en/news/60264-AMERICA_CHILE_Violence_in_the_Mapuche_region_church_burned_and_attack_on_police#.V2iSc8IUUfg)



## China

Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin (ordained as bishop in [Shanghai](#) on [July 7, 2012](#), then disappeared after stating in his first homily that he would resign from the state-sponsored church; still under house arrest as of [May 3, 2016](#), his Weibo social media account with 50,000 followers has been suspended in the last week of [April 2016](#); **UPDATE**: consternation erupted in China after an apology for his resignation from the state-sponsored church was posted on his social media account, no evidence exists that he authored the apology)

Date: June 12, 2016

Location: Shanghai

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/China-and-Vatican:-incredulous-reactions-and-distress-over-Shanghai-Bishop-Ma-Daqin's-volte-face-37798.html>  
and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mgr-Ma-Daqin:-the-text-of-his-“confession”-37799.html>

Bai Fengju (farmer, land seized in an attempt to build 'temples', land returned and compensation and apology made after his family posted news of the seizure with overseas news media)

Date: June 5, 2016

Location: Nanyang, Henan province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/06/gang-member-destroys-christians.html>

Pastor Zhang (interrogated by the authorities, told to move his church, to join the official church, and to provide a list members and funding information, said “I made my position clear. I told [the authorities] that the church was by no means a recent establishment, it had been there for a few decades...We cannot join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. The town government [that operates] in the village hasn't come to find us yet, but the landlord said today that officials from the public security, firefighting and various other industry and commerce departments will soon enforce the law here. No [official] has come yet, but the landlord is already very frightened. He said ‘You need to move out immediately...’ This is our current circumstance”)

Date: June 7, 2016

Location: Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/06/house-church-harassed-in-growing.html>

Li Hongmin (criminally detained on 'illegal business operations' charges for printing religious literature)

Date: June 6, 2016

Location: Guangzhou, Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/06/guangzhou-christian-detained-for.html>

Huang Xiaorui (pulled from the church pulpit during a police raid, donation boxes opened and US\$439 seized as illegal income)

Date: May 29, 2016

Location: Dongguan, Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2016/06/officials-raid-church-seven-times-since.html>



## Egypt

Naeem Aziz (home attacked after his construction of a second home on his property for his son was thought to be a future church, said “Six Muslims and six Copts were arrested. The police officer immediately let go of the Muslims and began putting the blame on us, using very vague excuses and explicitly telling us he did not care if we were right, to the extent that one of the injured was denied medical treatment until the police chief arrived”, has not been allowed back into his home by police, has been sleeping outdoors with his family)

Pastor Karas Nasr (church attacked by the mob, automobile destroyed)

Ramy Kashwaa (civil rights activist, said “Had it not been for the intervention of our sane Muslim brothers, the pastor would have died...The building has always been there, serving more than 80 families in the neighborhood...The violent assembly of nearly 1,200 people assaulting Copts and destroying private and public facilities has not even been subject to the Protest Law. We have warned that if no serious penalty is applied to perpetrators, there will be more of these attacks”)

Herfy Fawzi (arrested on sedition charges when he arrived in the village to reassure his daughter's safety)

Date: June 17, 2016

Location: Qaryat Al Bayda village, south of Alexandria

Source: <http://www.copticsolidarity.org/2016/06/20/sectarian-violence-against-copts-reported-near-alexandria/>

and <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1666&A=23998>

and <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1666&A=23973>

Mina Thabet (arrested in [Dar Al-Salam, outside Cairo](#) on [May 13, 2016](#) on false terrorism charges by National Security Agency agents for continuing his civil rights work, had returned home to face arrest so that his 21 year old brother would not be arrested; **UPDATE:** released on US\$1,127 bail, wrote "What really hurts, it is not what I went through, but charges of being part of terrorist groups to which I have always opposed")

Date: June 20, 2016

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/60296-AFRICA\\_EGYPT\\_Coptic\\_researcher\\_arrested\\_on\\_charges\\_of\\_terrorism\\_released#.V2yh18KV8fg](http://www.fides.org/en/news/60296-AFRICA_EGYPT_Coptic_researcher_arrested_on_charges_of_terrorism_released#.V2yh18KV8fg)



## India

Lion C Francis (described the demolition of a church to widen a road “the pastor was never informed by local authorities. The community is upset. This is a slum area and locals work mainly as stone crushers. People just came to pray and worship Jesus, and experience his liberating grace in order to survive their heavy and oppressive situation”)

Date: June 17, 2016

Location: Hyderabad, Telangana state

Sajan K George (**UPDATE:** described a church arson "The Pentecostal pastor had just built and inaugurated the building at the beginning of the month and it was reduced to dust by strangers")

Date: June 18, 2016

Location: Telangana state

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Two-Pentecostal-churches-destroyed-in-Telangana-37823.html>

Anoop Masih (aged 47, auto-rickshaw driver, protested Hindus throwing garbage in a Christian cemetery “I told them not to demean the Christian land and reminded them that the sentiments of the Christians are with their dead buried here”, said that later that day a customer “who seemed to me a learned gentleman...asked to stop for a moment in front of a shop in Santokhpura area, where seven men were waiting to ambush me. They suddenly pulled me down from my auto-rickshaw and started to assault me, saying that they are going to put me in a grave today...They hit me all over my body with many blows using their fists and legs, and then started to hit me in my private parts. One of them was wearing boots and his boot repeatedly hit one of my testicles so hard that I collapsed with the intensity of pain and I almost thought I’ll soon be dead”)

Pastor Vishnu Dev (said “The Hindu extremists intended to spread fear and teach [Anoop] Masih a lesson for speaking for the Christian community”)

Rev Vijayesh Lal (**UPDATE:** said “The situation for Christians in Punjab is getting difficult. This also coincides with the rise of the RSS [paramilitary organization] in the state”)

Date: May 25, 2016

Location: Jalandhar, Punjab state

Pastor Dharminder Bajwa (complaint filed with police for illegal conversions)

Date reported: June 17, 2016

Location: Pakhowal village, Ludhiana district, Punjab state

Arif Chouhan (aged 29, described an assault “Each of them was carrying a sickle in their hand and they hit me holding it upside down in a way that I would get internal injuries and not bleed. While assaulting me the attackers said that they had been following me for ten days and finally found me in a secluded place. I was unable to move for two weeks and the police have now given me two security personnel for my safety. In my 16 years of ministry as a Christian leader, I have not faced such opposition before”)

Date: May 27, 2016

Location: Gurdaspur, Punjab state

Source: <https://barnabafund.org/news/Rising-persecution-in-Punjab-India-alarms-Christian-community>

**Event: Christian leaders protested the harassment of Christian women by workers of an 'urban political party' who would invade their homes and then file false police cases against their male relatives**

Nazir Masih

Boota Imtiaz

Mahmood Kala

Pervez Bhatti

Date: June 19, 2016

Location: Latifabad township, Hyderabad

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=5963>

Fr Sushil John Soren (attacked by a man with a machete, hands seriously injured when he ward off a blow to his neck, hospitalized)

Bishop Michael Toppo (said "we do not know the reasons of the attack" on Fr Sushil John Soren)

Date: June 20, 2016

Location: Tezpur diocese, Assam state

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/60278-ASIA\\_INDIA\\_Catholic\\_priest\\_victim\\_of\\_an\\_attempted\\_murder#.V2y1xMKV8fg](http://www.fides.org/en/news/60278-ASIA_INDIA_Catholic_priest_victim_of_an_attempted_murder#.V2y1xMKV8fg)

Pastor Lalta Ram (aged 66, husband of Sushila Devi, beaten unconscious during a worship service by four masked Hindu extremists, hand fractured, hospitalized for 5 days, said of the 15 Christians who were injured in the attack “Anybody who needs prayer and counseling can come over to my place, and if anyone needs a home visit, I will go and visit”)

Sushila Devi (aged 59, wife of Pastor Lalta Ram, beaten along with four other women when all tried to protect him, hand fractured, face and back injured)

Assistant Pastor Vijay Bahadur (said “Pastor Ram was beaten up severely on his body, hand, leg and head. The cut in his head was two inches deep, and he started to bleed profusely and fell unconscious on the ground...The policemen at the station told us to close down the church and questioned us about whether we are forcibly converting anyone. They further claimed that because of the church and the preaching, all the sorcerers in the area had lost their businesses, as the people no longer believed in them but in Jesus”)

Date: May 22, 2016

Location: Naupur, Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh state

Praveen Choudhary (arrested along with Prabha Anthony and Rev V A Anthony)

Date: May 22, 2016

Location: Satna, Madhya Pradesh state

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/06/hindu-extremists-in-india-beat-66-year-old-pastor-unconscious/>



## Iran

Maryam Naghash-Zargaran aka Nasim (aged 38, began serving four years imprisonment on July 15, 2013, apparently has had a heart attack in prison; as of May 27, 2016 had begun a hunger strike in an attempt to force prison authorities to give her proper medical treatment, has been said to be nearly comatose; has been granted a medical leave, hospitalized on June 6, 2016; **UPDATE**: forced to return to prison against medical advice)

Date: June 18, 2016

Location: Tehran

Source: <http://mohabatnews.com/en/?p=2967>



## Jordan

Fr Jihad Ammari (described an attack on his church during a Divine Liturgy, the attackers had targeted a passerby who then took refuge in the church, the building and parishioners' automobiles were damaged)

Date: June 17, 2016

Location: Zarqa

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/60286-ASIA\\_JORDAN\\_Reconciliation\\_meeting\\_in\\_Zarqa\\_in\\_the\\_church\\_damaged\\_during\\_a\\_fight#.V2ykisKV8fg](http://www.fides.org/en/news/60286-ASIA_JORDAN_Reconciliation_meeting_in_Zarqa_in_the_church_damaged_during_a_fight#.V2ykisKV8fg)



## Mali

Beatrice Stockly (social worker, missionary, Swiss citizen, abducted in [Abaradjou, Timbuktu](#) on [January 8, 2016](#), had received death threats; **UPDATE**: still in captivity, an 8 minute video of her has been posted to social media)

Date: June 19, 2016

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/02/4302081/>



## Nigeria

Fr John Adeyi (abducted April 24, 2016, held for ransom; **UPDATE**: **found dead**)

Date: June 22, 2016

Location: Otukpo, Benue state

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/06/catholic-priest-kidnapped-in-nigeria-found-dead/>



## Pakistan

Manzoor Masih (aged 50, father of 10, home invaded by neighbors, after he disputed his payment for crops grown by his family, beaten, shot in the hand, clothes torn on female family members, home set afire, no arrests made, said “About six months ago my family and I labored in the fields...They [my neighbors] divided the profit among themselves and refused to give me my due - 26,000 rupees [roughly US\$260]. Whenever I demanded it they beat me up. On June 15, they again beat me, after which I informed the police...That night around 2am, around 15 men, armed with axes, batons and firearms, scaled the boundary wall and entered our house, calling us names, and saying they had been insulted in the village on our behalf. They fired one shot in the air and another into my left hand. Then they beat my wife and daughters, and humiliated them by touching their private parts...The police arrived and saw us all injured and bruised, but they were still not willing to register a case. This only became possible after several Christians from Lahore arrived and pressurized the police”, threatened with blasphemy charges if he pursues prosecution)

Mary Gill (Member of the Provincial Assembly, met with the family of Manzoor Masih, brought pressure on the government to prosecute their attackers)

Date: June 16, 2016

Location: Bugri village, Kasur district, Punjab province

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/kasur-a-christian-peasant-and-family-brutally-tortured-by-landlord-mpa-mary-gill-succors-the-victims/>

and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/06/4526165/>

and <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/pakistani-christian-farmer-shot-in-hand-after-demanding-his-share-of-crop-sale-profit>

Nadeem Masih (brick kiln worker, beaten by his employer after he protested a payroll shortage, head and face shaved, forced to stand on one foot for five hours in the sun)

Date reported: June 21, 2016

Location: Chuniyaan, Kasur district, Punjab province

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/at-the-pinnacle-of-malice-a-brick-kiln-owner-shaves-off-christian-laborer-head-eyebrows-and-mustache/>



## Syria

Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem II (aged 51; **UPDATE**: targeted by a suicide bomber dressed as a priest during a Pentecost [Eastern calendar] commemoration of the Assyrian genocide, escaped injury when the bomber was stopped by security and set off his bomb, 3 security guards were killed and 5 wounded)

Bishop George Saliba (present when a suicide bomber dressed as a priest attempted to kill Patriarch Ignatius Ephrem II, uninjured, said "Despite the heat, nearly 4,000 of the faithful had walked through the streets to the new memorial carrying crosses and rosaries. At the ceremony hall while a speech was given, a blast was heard outside. The Patriarch calmed the audience and asked for the proceedings to continue. He assured everyone Syriac guards were on top of things")

Gawriye Ado (security guard, wounded)

Riad Habsuno (security guard, wounded)

Marios Malke (security guard, wounded)

Fayez Farman (security guard, wounded)

Siwar Hassan (security guard, wounded)

Date: June 19, 2016

Location: al-Wusta district, Qamishli

Source: [http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Qamishli,-Syrian-Orthodox-Patriarch-Ephrem-II-escapes-a-suicide-attack-\(photos\)-37815.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Qamishli,-Syrian-Orthodox-Patriarch-Ephrem-II-escapes-a-suicide-attack-(photos)-37815.html)

and <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/suicide-bomber-targets-assyrian-event-in-syria-3-killed/>

and <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/06/4527996/>



## Thailand

Shahid Latif (aged 33, husband, brother of Shahbaz Latif, Pakistani refugee, **died of a heart attack**)

Shahbaz Latif (brother of Shahid Latif, Pakistani refugee, said "Shahid was a brave strong man who loved God and trusted in Him. However the difficult life we have had to endure in Thailand took its toll on him. He became thinner and weak due to inability to find regular food to eat. When he had his heart attack his body was just too weak to sustain his life, moreover he seemed to have less vigor and will to live. I pray that God allows his soul to rest")

Date: June 19, 2016

Location: Bangkok

Source: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/un-id-cards-provide-false-hope-of-safety-17-further-arrestsof-pak-christians-in-2-weeks-has-shattere>



### **United Kingdom**

Sarmad Ozan (aged 20, Iraqi refugee, spoke to 1,100 young people concerning his family's flight from their Mosul home after the ISIL takeover, and the revocation of his refugee status by the British government)

Date reported: June 19, 2016

Location: Carfin Lourdes Grotto, Motherswell, Scotland

Source: [http://www.catholic.org/news/international/middle\\_east/story.php?id=69515](http://www.catholic.org/news/international/middle_east/story.php?id=69515)  
and

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/iraqi.christian.who.fled.isis.faith.is.all.we.have.left/88597.htm>



### **United States - California**

Oscar Rodriguez Jr (retired Air Force Master Sergeant, assaulted by uniformed airmen and forcibly ejected from the base for having mentioned 'God' in a flag folding speech during a retirement ceremony in violation of regulations which state that the exact text is chosen by the retiree)

Date: April 2016

Location: Travis Air Force Base

Source: <http://www.charismanews.com/politics/issues/58011-pentagon-to-investigate-incident-involving-airman-s-religious-freedom>

### **United States - District of Columbia**

Stephanie Goodloe (youth minister, **shot dead** by an ex-boyfriend)

Date: June 18, 2016

Source: <http://www.charismanews.com/us/57979-youth-minister-tragically-killed-in-d-c-shooting>

## **Today's Martyrs**

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

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