

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2016-12-11 through 2016-12-17



Azerbaijan

Event: Police raid a prayer meeting in a private home, arrest 30 Christians, 26 taken for questioning, 22 released that day, 24 told they would be fined

Gamid Shabanov (spouse of Ginayat Shabanov, home raided during a prayer meeting, arrested, released the next day)

Ginayat Shabanov (spouse of Gamid Shabanov, home raided during a prayer meeting, arrested, released the next day)

Mehman Agamemedov (arrested during a raid on a prayer meeting at the home of Gamid and Ginayat Shabanov, released the next day)

Dates: November 27-28, 2016

Location: Aliabad village

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/12/4771508/>



Egypt

Event: A church was attacked by a suicide bomber during the Divine Liturgy right after the reading of the Gospel, 24 were killed and 50 wounded

Madeline Michelle (sister-in-law of Noureen Grace, **killed**)

Souad Atta (cousin of Tahani Gabriel, **killed**)

Angel Anwar (injured in the Sts Peter and Paul church bombing, hospitalized, **died**)

Samaha Tawfik (wife of Qelliny Farag, present near the explosion, condition not reported)

Magy Momen (aged 10, student, volleyball player, injured in the Sts Peter and Paul church bombing, hospitalized in critical condition with shrapnel in her brain, has not been responding to treatment)

Cynthia Michel (aged 14, hospitalized, recovering from surgery, said that just before the explosion "I was very surprised to see a man with something on his head and a big belly

walking into the church in the women's section. Then he opened his jacket, and after that I did not see or hear anything”)

Magdi Ramzi (aged 59, said “I realized from the shrieks, the many people running around me and those crying out in pain, that it was an explosion. I thought I was going to die, that it was the end of the world”, cried about a relative “She’s probably dead, she must be dead. Oh God! We were just praying!”, daughter hospitalized, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren survived, the one year old 's clothing was stained with his daughter's blood)

Qelliny Farag (aged 80, husband of Samiha Tawfik, said "I could not see anything, everything turned black suddenly...We were all in shock, covered in dust, running through corpses that got thrown by the intensity of the blast. A minute passed by and I started to see flesh scattered everywhere around us. Even the ceiling had collapsed")

Noureen Grace (sister-in-law of Madeline Michelle, said “She was completely destroyed. I spoke to her only yesterday. We spoke every day”)

Tahani Gabriel (aged 65, cousin of Souad Atta, said "The [church] turnout was bigger than normal” due to a memorial for her cousin's husband)

Tadros Zaki (aged 63, said “It was terrifying. Things were falling down on us. I couldn’t get down from behind the altar because of the smoke”)

Kamel Hanna (witnessed the attack, said at least 10 women were killed [the actual number of women was 22] "We were about to pray when the explosion occurred. My friends and I were outside because the church was full of faithful. There was blood everywhere")

Amin Mohamed Mowafy (cleaner, survived the December 31, 2011 church bombing in Alexandria; **UPDATE**: survived the Sts Peter and Paul church bombing, said he will never forget the sights of the two bombings for the rest of his life)

Fr Antonios Mounir (had been celebrating the Liturgy at the time of the explosion, said "The door next to the main entrance was the easiest for the bomber. No one saw him, neither the deacons, nor the volunteers who work for the church", added that he had he had met the attacker the day before during an apparent reconnaissance of the church "[He said he was] buying books. Since there were no books in that room, he asked to go and pray in the church but his request was denied")

Bishop Suriel (said "Today has been one of the most difficult days of my life. Hearing about such barbaric events on the news or watching them on television is one thing but experiencing them firsthand is something else altogether...Walking up to the Church of St Peter in the Cathedral complex and seeing from afar that the roof has blown out made me think, “O My Lord, what lies ahead inside the Church then????” What I saw on Ramsis Street made me realize that this is a huge disaster of gigantic proportions. The number of police on the street and the number of protesters who were very sad and chanting...It was then that I entered the church with some difficulty due to the large crowds. Nothing could prepare me for what I saw next. It was complete pandemonium...My heart dropped and I could not stop crying from what I was seeing. Then I saw the clock on the wall which had stopped at 9:57 am, the time of the bombing exactly. This moment in time will always be embedded in my mind and heart forever. It is the moment when we gained new martyrs in 2016 and new intercessors on our behalf in front of the throne of God...I began to try to

imagine what it would have been like to be praying in that church this morning. A Sunday morning, families going to celebrate liturgy during the beginning of the holy month of Kiahk before the Feast of Nativity, days that are full of joy. Then moments later the church looks like this? Tears ran down my face, my heart was weeping blood for the families that are suffering and have lost loved ones. Many mothers had lost their lives as the bomb was on the right side of the church where women stand...I looked at the roof that had blown out and I could see the heavens and asked myself, O Lord of heavens, why have you forsaken Your people? Why have you allowed for this tragedy to befall your beloved people of Egypt? Why Lord? I do not understand. Even if my mind cannot comprehend, I will always accept Your will and say "Thy will be done")

Fr Rafik Greich (**UPDATE:** said "We are deeply saddened and have cried for what happened to our Orthodox brothers and we share their grief with all our heart. We pray for the speedy recovery of the injured and we present our most sincere condolences to His Holiness Pope Tawadros II. We ask those responsible for security to find the perpetrators of this crime and to stop them. May God save Egypt from all evil")

Date: December 11, 2016

Location: Cairo

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Terrorist-attack-near-the-Coptic-cathedral-in-Cairo.-At-least-25-dead-and-dozens-wounded-39371.html>

and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Cairo-attack:-Catholic-Church-condemnation.-Reactions-of-Arab-world-39372.html>

and <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/at-least-25-killed-in-cairo-as-an-explosion-rocks-the-coptic-cathedral-complex/>

and <http://www.copticsolidarity.org/2016/12/12/attack-on-coptic-cathedral-in-cairo-kills-dozens/>

and <http://www.copticsolidarity.org/2016/12/11/bomb-at-egypts-main-coptic-christian-cathedral-compound-kills-dozens/>

and <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/a-sad-day-for-egypt-reflections-by-bishop-anbasuriel-on-the-coptic-church-bombing/>

and [warning - graphic] <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/dead-bodies-everywhere-video-from-the-coptic-church-bombing-graphic/>

and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Islamic-State-claims-responsibility-for-Cairo-attack-on-Copts,-vows-more-carnage-39405.html>

and <http://www.copticsolidarity.org/2016/12/15/church-bombing-the-aftermath/>

Pope Tawadros II aka Wagih Sobhy Baqi Suleiman (**UPDATE:** presided at the funeral for the 24 bombing victims, said "God, protect us and your people from the conspiracies of the evil ones...It is the destiny of our church to offer martyrs")

Nora Sedki (government employee, demonstrated outside the funeral, said "People have a volcano of anger inside their chests")

Date: December 12, 2016

Location: Cairo

Source: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-mourns-25-christians-killed-church-explosion-44135416>

and <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/photos-from-the-funeral-of-coptic-orthodox-martyrs-killed-in-the-horrific-church-bombing/>

Maher al-Gohary (convert, father of Dina, reported on [December 17, 2015](#) to have filed suit to change his religion on his national id card from Islam to Christianity, said he and his daughter have suffered persecution for years; home invaded in November 2016 by three men, threatened with death, forced to be photographed with signs that denounced Christianity and announced his return to Islam; **UPDATE**: has fled the country to Cyprus)

Dina (aged 22, convert, daughter of Maher al-Gohary, home invaded in November 2016 by three men, threatened with death, father forced to be photographed with signs that denounced Christianity and announced his return to Islam; **UPDATE**: has fled the country for Cyprus, said "My father did this for me, he protected me, and he always does")

Rania (aged 28, widow, husband killed by radical Muslims, father disappeared in 2015, said "They tried to make me convert to Islam, to change my religion and after my husband died, they are trying to make me marry a Muslim", has fled the country for Cyprus)

Date reported: [December 4, 2016](#)

Source: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2016/12/04/persecuted-egyptian-christians-appeal-protection/>

Event UPDATE: Muslims attacked Christians over allegations that a new church was to be opened in a community center

Samir Nashed (said "On Friday following the Muslim prayers, a great deal of fanatic Muslim young men, some of them were carrying gas canisters and rocks while others came armed with automatic rifles, clubs, machetes and knives, they attacked Copts and Coptic-owned houses. The attackers cut off the road so that the fire trucks could not enter the village. They also cut off the water and power supply to the village")

Date: [November 25, 2016](#)

Location: [al-Naghameesh village, Sohag province](#)

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/99474.htm>



India

Fr Stephen Rawat (attacked along with 20 parishioners for singing Christmas carols in a private home after a procession from Mass, hospitalized with 7 parishioners, said "I have no enemies, I was beaten because of my Christian faith...[the RSS paramilitary organization has a nearby hostel] where the ideology [Hindutva] is imparted to young people. It is not improbable that they were behind this attack against Christians")

Date: [December 14, 2016](#)

Location: [Tikariya village, near Banswara, Rajasthan state](#)

Samari Kasabi (aged 55, mother of Sukura, stripped naked, **beaten to death**, and burned by her neighbors, other Christians in the village converted to Hinduism as a result)

Date: early December 2016

Location: Dokawaya village, Chhattisgarh state

Sajan K George (**UPDATE**: documented the desecration of a church)

Date: December 11, 2016

Location: Udupi district, Karnataka state

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/61375->

[ASIA INDIA Violence and abuse of Christians in view of Christmas#.WFKwsMKQw5s](http://www.fides.org/en/news/61375-ASIA_INDIA_Violence_and_abuse_of_Christians_in_view_of_Christmas#.WFKwsMKQw5s)

and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Rajasthan,-20-Carol-singing-Catholics-beaten-for-forced-conversions-39408.html>



Indonesia

Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama aka Ahok (**UPDATE**: blasphemy trial begun, pled innocent, stated: “I had no intention of insulting Muslims or insulting the clergy. On that basis, I plead with the judges to consider my exception plea”, charge arose from his criticism of an interpretation of the Quran that would prohibit non-Muslims from any elected office with power over Muslims)

Date: December 13, 2016

Location: Jakarta

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/11/4749532/>

and <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/12/emotions-swirl-as-blasphemy-trial-begins-in-indonesia-against-ahok/>



Iraq

Fr Thabet (returned to his home after ISIL was pushed out, described their deliberate destruction of Christian homes: “It seems they wanted to make sure nothing of value would remain. The effect is a mounting feeling of hopelessness among the Christians when they discover the damage. They will really need time to recover from this news, to adjust to the new perspective of living in displacement longer than they might have expected...That my family’s house. It’s completely destroyed. ISIL used to shoot mortars from there...People have the feeling that their history has been erased [with the destruction of family photos]. They feel emotionally displaced because of this...There is no electricity, no water, nothing. Do you know how difficult it is to start cleaning without water available? This process is going to take longer than some people have expected. We have to prepare for a long time of reconstruction. Yet, I firmly believe this is

Christian ground, and I will work hard to help the Christians return to this place – God willing, to live here in peace”)

Date reported: December 15, 2016

Location: Karamles

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/12/4776149/>



Nigeria

Event: A Boko Haram double suicide bombing by two 7-year old girls in the main marketplace killed at least one and injured 18

Fr Gideon Obasogie (**UPDATE:** said "There are fears that this attack might mark the beginning of a series of Boko Haram attacks during the Christmas period...Attacks of this kind seem to be a reprisal of Boko Haram for the reconquest by the Nigerian army of areas of northern Nigeria that were under the control of the Islamist sect. It is also a way to encourage their members not to give in, showing that they are still able to hit in a big city like ours")

Date: December 11, 2016

Location: Maiduguri, Borno state

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/61354->

[AFRICA NIGERIA The Diocese of Maiduguri We fear new attacks during the Christmas period#.WE6eTcKQw5s](http://www.fides.org/en/news/61354-)

and <http://theorthodoxchurch.info/blog/news/photos-from-the-funeral-of-coptic-orthodox-martyrs-killed-in-the-horrific-church-bombing/>

Ndubuisi Uzoma (brother of Chidimma Umeh, **beheaded** by Muslim herdsmen on his farm)

Chidimma Umeh (sister of Ndubuisi Uzoma, said “I lost my brother on Saturday, he left in the morning and till night, I didn’t see him and I told my husband about it. We went to his farm to search for him, that was when I saw blood and I shouted, ‘Jesus, my brother is gone.’ Look at my brother’s corpse, there is no head, it’s been cut off, they beheaded my brother”)

Date: December 4, 2016

Location: Iddo village, outside Abuja

Source: <https://www.nigerianbulletin.com/threads/tragedy-as-fulani-herdsmen-behead-graduate-farmer-in-abuja.228656/>

Joshua Wede (church leader, said “The district head of Yauri, accompanied by a Muslim vigilante group, came to our church and disrupted the worship service. They beat us and claimed that the land our church was built on wasn’t approved by the government. But it belongs to one of our church members, who gave it to us to build a place for our services. The mosque close by was not pulled down, despite the fact that they didn’t get additional approval to build on the land either. On 11 May, we were arrested and taken to prison, where we were beaten again and given hard labor. We had no opportunity to contact a

lawyer, and some officials told us if we pleaded guilty we would be set free. We didn't have anyone to speak to or anyone who could stand for us, so we agreed. Some representatives from the Christian Association of Nigeria came to court to plead that the hearing be postponed so that they could talk with us, but it was too late. We had already pleaded guilty. The final judgement was passed on 18 May and we were sentenced to three years' imprisonment with hard labor or a fine of \$150 each")

Kabiru (church leader, said "I have been arrested many times on false accusations and have been imprisoned three times. It is all just an effort to frustrate evangelism")

Date reported: December 13, 2016

Location: Danbango village, Yauri local government area, Kebbi state

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/12/4772864/>

Event: Catholic bishops issue a pastoral letter *Enough of the Bloodshed* regarding continued Muslim herdsmen attacks "If anything, government has shown outright partisanship in favor of the herdsmen to the disappointment of the majority Southern Kaduna indigenes and Christians. This is what lends credence to our earlier assertion and belief that there is a well-planned Jihad against our people with the sole aim of conquering our people and occupying our land...In most of these attacks, the military stands aloof and watches while our people are being massacred. The viciousness of these self-styled Jihadists sends shivers into the spines of our traumatized people"

Bishop Aaron Tanko

Bishop Emmanuel Okolo

Bishop Ibrahim Yakubu

Joseph Bayei KSJ

Bishop Williams Abba

Date: December 10, 2016

Location: Kafanchan

Source: <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/print/239628/1/enough-of-the-bloodshed-the-catholic-diocese-of-kafanchan-kaduna-state-north-west-nigeria-speaks.html>



Pakistan

Sajjad Masih Gill (brother of Sarfraz Masih, sentenced to life imprisonment in Gojra district, Toba Tek Singh on [July 13, 2013](#) for allegedly sending a blasphemous text message, the transmitting cell phone was not recovered by the police and no evidence connecting it to the accused was presented in court, the conviction and sentencing also occurred after the accuser retracted the accusation and admitted that the police had pressured him into making it; second trial for the same offense begun, defense attorneys argued that this second prosecution constituted illegal double jeopardy, judge agreed on [September 30,](#)

2013 and dismissed the case; appeal underway as of [November 26, 2015](#), asked for prayers from Christians around the world; **UPDATE**: judge refused to hear his appeal because it was a blasphemy case)

Date: December 9, 2016

Location: Lahore

Source: <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/lahore-high-court-refuses-to-hear-bail-plea-of-christian-defendant-in-a-blasphemy-case/>

Bashiran Bibi (aged 58, domestic worker, asked to clean the home of a prominent Muslim, when she inspected the house she found it was too large to clean by herself and offered to return another day with two more workers, beaten into unconsciousness when he demanded the house be cleaned at that moment and told her that her refusal was an insult to Muslims, the attacker's wife attempted to stop the attack, forced to walk home with a badly fractured shoulder, unable to work for two months, has been demanding her attacker's prosecution)

Date: September 24, 2016

Location: Pattoki village, Punjab province

Source [with photo]: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/58-year-old-woman-beaten-and-kicked-to-unconscious-state-for-refusing-to-clean-muslim-home>



Thailand

Maqsood Iqbal (described the detention of Pakistani Christian asylum seekers, all had their UN High Commissioner for Refugee ID cards seized, said "This morning 45 people were captured and were taken as detainees. I have been there with them from the start till the end. i have seen everything with my sinful eyes. Within those 45 people are 23 Children, 13 Women and 9 men some of them are of old age. It was unbearable for me to see the people crying out for help. As you already know Christmas month has just begun and we are targeted like this after coming here, trying to escape persecution in Pakistan. Now if the fine are not be paid the entire group of asylum seekers will be thrown into criminal jails. So as a brother I ask you to help them in this time of need. May God bless you")

Date: December 10, 2016

Location: Bangkok

Source: <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/arrest-of-45-pakistani-christian-asylum-seekers-in-thailand-creates-panic-among-re-persecuted-christ>



Turkey

Andrew Brunson (aged 48, husband of Norine Brunson, U.S. citizen, detained as a 'national security risk' on [October 7, 2016](#), denied access to U.S. diplomats, attorneys, and fellow parishioners, told he would be deported; transferred on [October 20, 2016](#) to another detention center; **UPDATE**: ordered held on 'terrorism' allegations from a 'secret informant', attorney denied access to the allegations)

Date: December 9, 2016

Location: Izmir

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/10/4680155/>



Uganda

Malik Higenyi (aged 30, convert from Islam, son of Aimuna Namutongi , husband, father of two, beaten on [November 13, 2016](#) after publicly acknowledging his conversion, right hand broken, head injured, said “The attackers hit me with a blunt object, and I fell down and did not know what happened from there. I just found myself at Bufuja health center”;
UPDATE: attacked while harvesting crops with his mother, said “When I saw the furious relatives, I managed to escape. I thought my mother was safe and that her conversion was still hidden, only to hear one of them telling her, ‘We heard that you joined Christianity’”)

Aimuna Namutongi (aged 60, convert, mother of Malik Higenyi, attacked while harvesting crops with her son, right hand fractured, head lacerated)

Date: December 8, 2016

Location: Bufuja village, Butaleja district

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/12/former-muslims-60-year-old-mother-attacked-in-uganda-for-putting-faith-in-christ/>



United Kingdom

Sarah Kuteh (nurse, fired after sharing her faith with patients)

Date: August 2016

Location: Dartford

Source: <http://christiannews.net/2016/12/12/u-k-nurse-sues-after-being-fired-for-speaking-about-her-faith-with-patients/>



Vietnam

Event: Local authorities have been trying to close a church in favor of commercial development

Mai Thị Thanh T (mother of four, said "we live far away from the church, my children and I continue to come here to attend Mass and study the catechism. I am very angry with the authorities...who want to eliminate the parish")

Fr James Le Jang Niem (parish vicar)

Date: December 13, 2016

Location: District 2, Ho Chi Minh City

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Feast-of-Our-Lady-of-Fatima-in-Ho-Chi-Minh-City-parish-threatened-by-the-government-39387.html>

Today's Martyrs

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

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