

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2017-07-23 through 2017-07-29



Central African Republic

Bishop Juan Jose Aguirre Munos MCCJ (**UPDATE**: reported "Half of the population of Bangassou has fled, taking refuge in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. The clashes have been going on for days...Two thousand Muslims have been welcomed in the fenced area of the Cathedral defended by the Moroccan military of MINUSCA [UN Mission in Central Africa]. But the anti-Balaka [militants] are raging in Bangassou, hitting Muslims in all ways, trying to kill them, preventing them from supplying food, water, and wood for cooking. The clashes are continuous and cause deaths on one side and the other...Everything started on Friday July 21, when the anti-balaka kidnapped a young pregnant Muslim. In response to the kidnapping, some 15 extremist Muslim youth seized two Caritas humanitarian operators with their families, about thirty people. MINUSCA reacted by releasing these people. The group replied by attacking the Cathedral, which suffered material damage and wanted to set fire to it. Fortunately, they did not succeed...This morning two anti-balaka attempted to enter the refugee camp but were rejected by MINUSCA and one of them was killed...MINUSCA is trying to control the situation by sending patrols in the streets that shoot warnings, which cause panic among the population; Some people have died of heart attack, while others have been injured")

Date reported: July 24, 2017

Location: Bangassou

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/62695->

[AFRICA CENTRAL AFRICA The Bishop reports Half the population of Bangassou has fled The Cathedral has been attacked#.WXX9LoTyuM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62695-)



China

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-Kium SDB (aged 85, **UPDATE**: wrote after the High Court invalidated the election of four pro-democracy lawmakers for rewording their oath of office: "How can this ridiculous thing happen in Hong Kong? Why didn't the public come out to make a stronger objection?...The behavior of the government makes people lose confidence in

judicial independence", the next day state media was ordered to no longer refer to him as "bishop emeritus" but rather as "former bishop")

Lina Chan (diocesan official, said "More than 100,000 votes have been invalidated. The government is using the judicial system to disqualify lawmakers to fulfill its political purpose. The election is being trampled on")

Date: July 18 & 19, 2017

Location: Hong Kong

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/disqualification-of-hong-kong-lawmakers-riles-cardinal-zen/79816>

and <http://www.ucanews.com/news/thin-skinned-chinese-censors-downgrade-zens-status/79859>

Senior Pastor Joseph Gu Yue-se (husband of Zhou Lian Mei, removed on [January 22, 2016](#) from his position as leader of the government sanctioned Three Self Patriotic Movement church; reported on [February 3, 2016](#) to have been arrested on embezzlement and corruption charges, sent to a black jail, had written that his church had been experiencing “unprecedented, chilling trials. Everyone must equally rely on the Lord’s grace to confront [this trial] and triumph over it”; released on [March 31, 2016](#), placed under travel and meeting restrictions; re-apprehended in [December 2016](#); **UPDATE**: fired his attorney, wrote “the last thing I want is to get you involved because of me. I do not want you to lose your freedom for me. Therefore, you do not need to defend me in Hangzhou. I am very grateful for what you have done for me”)

Date: July 16, 2017

Location: Hangzhou, Zhejiang province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/07/christian-official-fires-lawyer-raising.html>

Tang Lili (summoned to the police station to 'drink tea', interrogated, apparently released, home raided the following day without warrant, items seized)

Date: July 16, 2017

Location: Jiangmen, Guangdong province

Source: <http://www.chinaaid.org/2017/07/christian-leader-interrogated-church.html>



Colombia

Fr Diomer Eliver Chavarria Perez (**killed**)

Bishop Jorge Alberto Ossa Soto (issued a statement which called for the conversion of the killers of Fr Diomer Eliver Chavarria Perez "this son and brother...sacrificed in the exercise of his mission...at the service of evangelization")

Date: July 27, 2017

Location: Puerto Valdivia village, Antioquia province

Source: http://www.fides.org/en/news/62724-AMERICA_COLOMBIA_Priest_killed_in_Puerto_Valdivia_sacrificed_in_the_exercise_of_his_mission#.WXyTSYTyuM8



Egypt

Joseph Reda Helmy (son of Reda Helmy, soldier, **beaten to death** at his army camp within six hours of his arrival most likely for having a tattoo of Mary the mother of Jesus on his arm)

Reda Helmy (father of Joseph Reda Helmy)

Youssef Zarif (cousin of Joseph Reda Helmy, received a call to retrieve his cousin's body hours after his cousin had arrived at his army camp, told by army officers that his cousin had died from an epileptic seizure, took the body to a doctor who documented an extensive beating)

Malak Youakim (cousin of Joseph Reda Helmy, said his cousin was killed for his faith)

Date: July 19, 2017

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1945&A=31592>
and <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/07/soldier-beaten-death-christian-faith-relatives-say/>

Fr Makari Yunan (accused of contempt of Islam on or before **May 23, 2017** after he responded to an Islamic scholar who called Christianity corrupt by saying Islam was spread by the sword; **UPDATE**: arrested, charged with contempt of Islam, spreading hatred, and inciting sedition)

Date reported: July 26, 2017

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1947&A=31606>

Tharwat Sameh (aged 19, arrested on **July 22, 2017**, disappeared; **UPDATE**: **found dead, had been “extensively” tortured**)

Date: July 24, 2017

Location: al-Fayyum

Source [warning - graphic]: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/body-19-year-old-egyptian-found-street-covered-torture-marks-2-days-after-his-arrest-386798145>



Greece

Metropolitan Ambrose Lenis (aged 79, **UPDATE**: wrote on his blog “While we are silent as fish, everything is vanishing and dying. We are persecuting Christ! The Greeks are being de-Christianized!...The people from the ruling SYRIZA party are aiming to overthrow all

that is sacred, Christian, and national. They are seeking to uproot the Orthodox and national self-consciousness of the Greeks. Day by day, Greece is gradually changing its face and character...The voice of the Church is not heard today; the walls are falling one by one without resistance”)

Date: July 12, 2017

Location: Kalavyrta

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/105352.htm>
and http://mkka.blogspot.ru/2017/07/blog-post_12.html - with translation



India

Event: Six Christians were arrested at a worship service for 'unlawful assembly' and detained for 9 days, Bibles and literature seized, later accused of vandalizing an idol

Pastor Asha Ram Sahni (aged 38, accused of illegal conversions, slapped by the arresting officer after the officer asked for his favorite Bible reading and he read Matthew 7:7-11)

Gurudeen (aged 35, detained, told he deserved life imprisonment for eating beef, said “I don’t do any such thing. I only believe in Jesus Christ. Christ has done many wondrous things in my life. Sir, I did not do anything that I have to be jailed”, wife threatened with arrest in response and subjected to harassment at their home, after his release was threatened with arrest for 'making false statements' - the statements were his defense)

Lal Bihari Verma (aged 35, detained, said “The villagers respected my belief and even requested us to pray for their illnesses and problems since I accepted Christ as my personal Savior three years ago. There have been divisional politics and conspiracies cooking in the village for three months as the Christians are growing in numbers. The same people who earlier told us we can assemble and pray as church are now opposing us”, after his release the arresting officer called him to say the events so far were just a prelude)

Ram Naresh (aged 35, detained)

Gobrey Nishad (aged 45, detained)

Chote Lal (aged 45, detained)

Date: June 27, 2017

Location: Pujaripurvah village, Uttar Pradesh state

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/07/calling-worship-unlawful-assembly-police-uttar-pradesh-india-arrest-six-christians/>

Albert Dua (state minority commissioner, said of the assassination of Pastor Sultan Masih "After the incident, anti-social elements have already threatened a pastor in Haibowal and a sister in Kila Mohalla. We cannot let our people die. The administration must ensure our security")

Date: July 22, 2017

Location: Punjab state

Source: <http://www.christiandaily.com/article/indian-police-detains-41-after-christians-protest-over-ludhiana-pastors-murder/60831.htm>

Francis Pereira (aged 54, taxi driver, arrested for the recent wave of cross and cemetery desecrations)

Fr Savio Fernandes (said he doubted that someone of Francis Pereira's age could have by himself caused all of the cross and cemetery damage)

Date: July 15, 2017

Location: Goa

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Catholic-arrested-in-connection-with-smashed-crosses-in-Goa,-but-some-see-a-cover-up-41309.html>

Sajan K George (**UPDATE**: spoke after another Christian cemetery was damaged while Francis Pereira [the alleged perpetrator] was in jail, said "Christians are easy targets. Pereira's arrest is just a smoke screen to divert attention from the deep suffering of Christians...since the Hindu Janajagruthi Summit [HJS] had its rally at the beginning of the year, minorities live in a climate of insecurity. More than 150 groups of saffron [Hindu nationalists] participated in that meeting, who outlined an action plan for [the creation] of a Hindu Rashtra [Hindu nation]")

Date: July 26, 2017

Location: Caranzalem, Goa state

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/More-destroyed-Crosses-in-Goa.-But-the-Catholic-'culprit'-is-already-in-prison-41386.html>

Fr George Pattery SJ (Jesuit provincial superior, wrote: "There is a display of a majoritarian hegemony with a totalitarian outlook upheld by the RSS [paramilitary] agenda of ending diversity and establishing a Hindu Rashtra, a state with a monolithic culture...The infiltration by RSS sympathizers has communalized institutions of democracy like the judiciary with some judges of the Supreme Court, High Courts and other lower courts upholding Hindutva ideology...Much of Print and Electronic Media have become tools of Government propaganda...)

Date: July 25, 2017

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Indian-Jesuit:-dismantling-the-myth-of-the-'Hindu-nation'-41378.html>

Rekha Bai (elderly woman, convert, widow, fired from her job after she told her employer about her conversion, beaten, homeless, sheltered by another Christian, said "Now I wanted to live for Jesus Christ and live like a testimony. Nobody was there to care for me, no family member, no well-wisher, but now I have whole Christian community to care for me and worries about me more than I do. My own husband and my boss where I used to work never cared for me during my life time, but these unknown people with great love are helping me and caring for me, which really surprises me")

Date reported: July 27, 2017

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2017/07/27/boycotted-widow-in-india-rebuilds-her-life/>

Rev Sandeep Kumar (said of current persecution "They want to create a kind of fear into the life of Christians that they should not follow the Christ...Surely this has not weakened us but

it is strengthening us and helping us to how we need to get together in the Lord and grow in the Lord and pray for each other and lift up each other in prayer...this is motivating people to come closer to look to the Lord in prayer and to depend on the Lord – and the people are growing")

Date reported: July 28, 2017

Location: New Delhi

Source: <https://www.onenewsnow.com/persecution/2017/07/28/oppression-of-the-faithful-bringing-forth-fruit>



Iran

Amin Afshar Naderi (aged 29, convert, sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment on [June 11, 2017](#);
UPDATE: released on temporary bail of US\$80,000 after a 19 day hunger strike)

Date: July 28, 2017

Location: Evin prison, Tehran

Source: <http://mohabatnews.com/en/?p=3646>



Kenya

Event: Al-Shabaab militants attacked several villages and killed six Christians

Said Mbigo (**killed**)

Matei Mlatia (**killed**)

Peter Mburu (**killed**)

Teresio Munyi (**killed**)

Mwangangi Muneni (**killed**)

Katana Karisa Chai (**killed**)

Musyoka Maithya (**killed**)

Pastor Henry Divayo (said "The attackers have been targeting Christians living in Lamu County, especially farmers in the interior areas where small-scale agriculture thrives. [They] were asking the villagers to produce their identification cards and if you were found to be a Christian you would be shot or slaughtered. Victims have been evacuated to camps where food and security is provided by government and the Kenya Red Cross. We are hosting more than 200 people in our church and we expect the number to increase as more families are evacuated from Boni Forest")

Date: July 5-8, 2017

Location: Pandanguo, Jima, and Poromoko villages

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2017/07/24/al-shabaab-militants-kill-seven-christian-men-in-eastern-kenya/>



Laos

Cheu (aged 20 or more, alias, convert, said “One day, my brother and uncle came to me and lied to me. They invited me to go to their house which I agreed to without hesitation. Little did I know that when we arrived at my uncle’s house, they would beat me and tie me up with a rope. They told me that I need to return to my old faith, they would continue to beat me. They bound me with a rope with my hands behind my back. My brother, an average-sized man but with a solid build, used the side of his palms to hit my neck and face over and over again. I was tied from seven in the morning until seven at night. After that, I prayed and prayed and told God to forgive them and myself. After praying, I lied to my brother and uncle and other people and told them that I would return to my old faith. So they untied me. After they took off my ties, I slept at my house. I went to my wife very early the next morning to pick her up since my in-law’s house is very far from my house. We hopped on a bus to escape and came here. Until now, my uncle and brother and my family still don’t know where I am, and I heard that they are looking for me. I also heard that the village chief, my brother and uncle said that if I come back to our home in our village, they would hit me over and over again until I die...Nothing can stop my belief now, and I will not go back to the Hmong culture of worship. I will continue believing in Jesus instead. I will sacrifice myself to God. I will follow however God wants me to do. I will follow”)

Date reported: July 24, 2017

Source: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/family-disowned-christ/>



Mexico

Bishop Ramon Castro Castro (**UPDATE**: stated “The headquarters of the Mexican Bishops' Conference has been attacked with a three cylinder explosive device. I believe this reflects the situation in Mexico”, the bomb had been planted by a feminist group)

Aramando Cavazos (Bishops' Conference press officer, stated “today in the early hours of the morning, around 1:50 a.m., an unknown type of explosive device was placed at the main door of the CEM building”)

Date: July 25, 2017

Location: Mexico City

Source: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/bomb-set-off-at-mexican-bishops-conference-headquarters-84235/>
and <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/07/27/feminists-claim-responsibility-for-mexico-bishops-bombing/>



Pakistan

Javed Masih (aged 32, bonded farm worker [i.e. slave], brother of Imran Masih, **died from a severe beating** inflicted by his 'owner' the day before when he became the suspect in a motorcycle theft)

Imran Masih (brother of Javed Masih, said "We want justice. We are poor and therefore the police refuse to listen to us and record the complaint. Large landowners are threatening serious consequences because we have opposed any compromise. All this is because we are Christians and poor")

Date: July 19, 2017

Location: Kamalpur, Faisalabad district

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Faisalabad,-a-Christian-enslaved-and-slaughtered-by-his-Muslim-master-41362.html>

Nadeem (husband, father of five, bonded brick kiln worker [i.e., slave] for 10 years, has been sold twice, wife became ill but was forced to continue work, latest 'owner' wants the children to stop school and begin work at the kiln)

Date reported: July 23, 2017

Source: <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/christian-brick-kiln-family-sold-twice-in-pakistan/>

A suicide bombing at a vegetable market killed 26 including 9 policemen, 54 were injured

Ilyas Masih (aged 24, brother of Nadeem Masih, furniture repairman, husband of Samira, expectant father, **killed**)

Saul Samuel (aged 11, son of Samuel Masih, **killed**)

Patras Masih (**killed**)

Iqbal Masih (**killed**)

Dildar Masih (aged 84, **killed**)

Badal Masih (aged 18, **killed**)

Samuel Masih (husband of Nargis, father of Saul Samuel)

Nargis (aged 54, mother of Samuel Masih, said "My heart aches for Sam, he sacrificed so much to support our family despite being so young. He displayed great love and selflessness that none of us deserved, now I can never repay him. He will always be remembered by all of us he was such a caring child he deserved so much more. I don't think I will ever stop crying he is such a great loss...The cruel men that have taken my son will be judged

by God for their evil crime. They have taken so many lives because they believe a lie. While they will burn in hell my son will now share a place in heaven with his Father and Creator one day I will reunite with him")

Daniel John aka Jugnoo (aged 35, rickshaw driver, injured in his left arm, left leg, and back, suffers from post-traumatic stress, cannot work for two weeks, rickshaw damaged, said "I heard a loud bang suddenly everything went black. I must have woken up about an hour later and was surrounded by people in a panic. I knew this as all I could hear was screaming and shouting and people moaning from the pain they were suffering. Two paramedics helped me into an ambulance and gave me some water to drink as I was thirsty. Within a short space of time we reached Hameed Latif Hospital and I was injected with morphine for pain relief and a glucose drip was feeding me with energy. Whilst recovering in hospital I realized how fortunate I had been, if I travelled just 20m further I would be dead now. I believe God has a purpose for my life and hope I can fulfill it - I do not deserve His grace. So many innocent people were killed all I can remember is their dead bodies and the screaming of those who survived. I have been praying for all the survivors and the families who have lost loved ones may God give them all peace. I understand their pain")

Nadeem Masih (aged 26, brother of Ilyas Masih, furniture repairman, said "I was eating at home when the explosion occurred. I immediately realized my brother would have been in the impact zone. I rushed with other family members to be with Ilyas but on arrival all I could see was the lifeless body of my brother who had always been so full of life, ripped to pieces. I gripped his corpse trying to hold it together hoping it could somehow be revived and sat with him as I called other family members to tell them the news. When we got to the hospital Ilyas was declared dead on arrival. It was then that I really felt his loss, I realized I would never see his beautiful smile again and my heart felt so heavy. I still have not come to terms with the loss of my brother he was younger than me and my responsibility. I will grieve his loss every day")

Samira (aged 21, widow of Ilyas Masih, expectant mother, said "Ilyas and I had only known each other for 8 months but he was my life. I am very broken now and feel lost without me. He was my shield of protection and now I feel vulnerable. I am carrying his child and thank God for this blessing to provide a legacy for Ilyas who lost his life so young. My child is my focus right now I am worried about how I will be able to bring my child up without a father and seek prayers for this burden I am feeling")

Pastor John Feroze (said "Police have fenced off several kilometers from the point of the explosion. Among the delimited areas, is also the main entrance of the Bahar Colony [ghetto], where 50,000 Christians live. We are using alternative routes to get to our homes")

Roger Randhawa (church charity manager, said "Our city is a frequent target because it is literally called 'Heart of Pakistan'. Following the bishops' meeting, an immediate plan for victims will be formulated. We condemn this brutal act")

Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shah OFM (**UPDATE**: later said "We are living in the era of cruelty; there is a fire everywhere. The number of widows and orphans are increasing")

Asiya Nasir (legislator, later said “We just cannot hand over our country to these animals. It is time to give up religious or ethnic divisions”)

Date: July 24, 2017

Location: Lahore

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/lahore-ferozepur-road-bomb-attack-leaves-at-least-26-dead>

and <https://www.christiansinpakistan.com/ilyas-masih-was-amongst-those-slain-by-terrible-attack-in-lahore-city/>

and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Lahore,-Christian-neighborhood-sealed-off-following-Taliban-bomb-attack-41369.html>

Shamim Masih (human rights activist, journalist; **UPDATE:** shot at while driving his automobile, escaped unharmed)

Date: July 22, 2017

Location: Islamabad/Rawapindi

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6566>



Philippines

Event: Church leaders reacted to President Duterte's threat to bomb tribal schools

Aileen Villarosa (Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, said schools were already under attack "because of these accusations...What aggravates the situation is [Duterte's] statement that he takes responsibility for all the actions of state forces")

Nardy Sabino (Promotion of Church People's Response, said President Duterte's threat was "reckless and irresponsible...[he should] retract his statement")

Date reported: July 26, 2017

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/duterte-threat-to-bomb-tribal-schools-sparks-uproar/79850>



Sweden

Aideen Strandsson (convert, refugee from Iran, scheduled for deportation back to Iran despite a high risk of imprisonment)

Date reported: July 28, 2017

Source: <http://mohabatnews.com/en/?p=3639>



Syria

Basil Isaac (professor of agronomy, **shot dead** possibly by Kurdish PYO militants)

Date: July 21, 2017

Location: near Hassake

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/62698->

[ASIA SIRIA Christian professor killed in Hassake Syrian city controlled by Kurdi sh militias of the PYD#.WXX8b4TyuM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62698-)



Tanzania

Pastor Amos Lukanula (as of **June 22, 2015** has been forced to pay US\$100 in court costs each month to defend his church's land ownership; **UPDATE**: a court ruled that the church construction could not continue “Our church members have persistently worked alongside with me and are frustrated and weary, but we are always hopeful that God will still intervene. We cannot allow the Muslims to put up a mosque in place of the church”)

Annah Philippo Barihuta (widow of Harun Gikaro Wanzo, mother of seven, impoverished, as of **June 22, 2015** has had to bear some of the legal costs for defending her husband's prior ownership of the land; **UPDATE**: still resides on a portion of the land, risks eviction if the church loses its case)

Date: July 20, 2017

Location: Chukwani, Zanzibar

Source: <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/07/church-zanzibar-tanzania-shaken-court-supports-muslims-opposition-building/>



Ukraine

Vitaly Arsenyuk (aged 67, **died** of a massive heart attack in his home, hours earlier had appeared in a Russian court for illegal missionary activity, had been persecuted during the Soviet era)

Date: June 27, 2017

Location: Dzhankoi, Crimea

Yevgeny Butsy (ordered by Russian prosecutors on **May 24, 2016** to change the church name listed on posted fire evacuation notices to match its registered name, later fined, case dismissed twice by the courts; **UPDATE**: case reopened a second time by prosecutors)

Date: June 1, 2017

Location: Sevastopol, Crimea

Source: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2299



United States

former Pastor Craig Stellflug (aged 56, denied a Twitter advertisement to promote his book defending traditional Christian marriage, Twitter wrote that the text "One Man One Woman is about God's original design for marriage carried from Adam and Eve in the garden through today" was 'hateful', said "My book is not hate! It highlights conservative Christian marriage values — therefore it is 'hate.' Have we stooped so low in our country that my freedom of speech is squelched because I promote my Christian beliefs?", Twitter was not reported as having returned his payment)

Date: July 3, 2017

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/twitter-bans-ad-promotion-of-one-man-one-woman-marriage-book-calls-it-hate-193466/>

United States - Ohio

Fr Joseph Klee (struck by an abortion supporter's motor vehicle after she fled the scene following her attempt to steal anti-abortion signs on [April 8 or 9, 2017](#), hand injured, treated and released from the hospital; **UPDATE**: has had a restraining order imposed on him by the woman, who has barged into groups of pro-life demonstrators and then 'flopped' onto to ground to appear as if she were pushed)

Date: June 2017

Location: Columbus

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pro-abortion-activist-files-restraining-order-against-priest-she-hit-with-h>

United States - Pennsylvania

Victoria Miller (bridal shop co-owner, has closed her shop due to death threats after a lesbian couple drove an hour to the shop to request a wedding dress they knew the owners would not want to sell because of their beliefs)

Date reported: July 28, 2017

Location: Bloomsberg

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-bridal-shop-closes-doors-to-public-after-receiving-threats-for-denying-lesbian-wedding-dress-193452/>

United States - West Virginia

Pastor Rich Penkoski (as of [July 6, 2017](#) has had his automobile vandalized, received rape and death threats, homosexual pornography, and mailed feces after stating he opposed use of the rainbow flag emoji on his Facebook account, has had to change his telephone number; **UPDATE**: family has moved out of their home due to death threats)

Date: July 18, 2017

Location: Harpers Ferry

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pastor-forced-move-receiving-threats-opposing-facebooks-rainbow-flag-emoji-193075/>

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

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