

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2017-09-03 through 2017-09-09



Central African Republic

Bishop Juan Jose Aguirre Munos MCCJ (Spanish citizen; **UPDATE**: described how his seminary has taken in 2,000 Muslims who fear death at the hands of the anti-balaka militia)

Date reported: August 31, 2017

Location: Bangassou

Source [with audio]: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05drgw3>

Fr Louis Tongagnesi (retired priest, **hacked to death** on his farm by Seleka rebels)

Date: September 2, 2017

Location: Zambaguia village, near Zemio

Fr Robert Wiczorek (Polish national, abducted by Seleka rebels, tortured, released, hospitalized for surgery and blood loss)

Date: September 3, 2017

Location: Ndim

Fr Jean-Alain Zemi (reported on [August 20, 2017](#) to have said of Moroccan UN peacekeepers “You were warned, but you deliberately decided to abandon this town. This community is being sacrificed, and I will hold you responsible for all those dead and preparing to die”, over 30 were killed, bodies have been left in the street in front of his rectory; **UPDATE**: fled his residence with 15,000 refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, church looted)

Fr Desire Blaise Kpangou (reported on [August 20, 2017](#) to have wrote to the UN concerning Moroccan UN peacekeepers “If you don’t come soon to disarm these people, we will have to organize confessions and a final Mass and viaticum and prepare ourselves and the rest of the displaced people here for the worst”, added that the attackers appeared to be Sudanese; **UPDATE**: fled his residence with 15,000 refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, church looted)

Date: September 1, 2017

Location: Zemio

Source: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/09/catholic-priest-killed-another-injured-spate-attacks-car/>



China

Fr John Wang Zhongfa (aged 86, sentenced as a seminarian to 12 years' forced labor in 1956;
UPDATE: died of natural causes)

Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin (underground bishop; **UPDATE:** not allowed to attend the funeral of Fr John Wang Zhongfa but allowed to visit him in the hospital, sent to Beijing under guard for ear surgery)

Fr Paul Jiang Sunian (**UPDATE:** secretary to Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, detained by police to prevent his attendance at the funeral of Fr John Wang Zhongfa)

Date: September 2, 2017

Location: Wenzhou, Zhejiang province

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mgr-Peter-Shao-Zhumin-under-guard-in-a-Beijing-hospital-41738.html>



Czech Republic

Cardinal Dominik Duka OP (**UPDATE:** wrote in sympathy to the Greek ambassador after the German supermarket chain Lidl removed the cross from the Greek church pictured on some of its packaging “So far, ‘only’ the falsification of photos has occurred, but there are fears that soon real crosses may be removed even from churches...Their ignorance and suppression of their external expression bears witness of the priorities some businesspeople have”)

Date reported: September 7, 2017

Location: Prague

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/106249.htm>



Egypt

Pastor Dr Imad Shawky (said there are not enough churches in his province and that most need restoration)

Date: September 6, 2017

Location: Sohag province

Source: <http://www.copts-united.com/English/Details.php?I=1977&A=32144>



India

Fr Sebastian Panthalluparambil (aged 40, high school principal, charged with molesting a 17 year old student)

Bishop Joseph Kodakallil (said "This is totally a baseless and false complaint", added that a CCTV camera in the principal's office proves the incident did not happen: "It has been given as evidence to disprove the allegations")

Archbishop Leo Cornelio (**UPDATE**: said "It is an attempt to tarnish the image of the church. The real facts were distorted and a false case was registered against the priest")

Date: September 1, 2017

Location: Rewa, Madhya Pradesh state

Fr Leo D'Souza (aged 56, school principal, arrested on July 10, 2017 on child abuse charges involving an eighth grade student who had been accepted at the school only 10 days earlier, no preliminary police investigation was performed prior to the arrest; **UPDATE**: released)

Date: July 11, 2017

Location: Dindori district, Madhya Pradesh state

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-priest-charged-with-molesting-student-bishop-cries-harassment/80169>

Auxiliary Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas SFX (**UPDATE**: signed a statement by the Catholic bishops condemning the assassination of journalist Gauri Lankesh by likely Hindu nationalists "We salute her for the courage with which she wrote, the conviction with which she lived her life and the boldness with which she fought the forces of evil, hatred and corruption...The murder of this versatile and brave journalist follows other crimes of hatred of recent times: the murders of Sahitya Academy Award Winner and Writer M M Kalburgi in Dharwad, thinker Govind Pansare in in Kohlapur, thinker Narendra Dabholkar in Pune, the mob lynchings by Gau Rakshaks in the name of protecting cows, political killings in Kerala and other such hate crimes")

Date: September 6, 2017

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Indian-bishops-condemn-the-murder-of-'courageous'-journalist-Gauri-Lankesh-41707.html>

Mercy (arrested on forced conversion charges)

Roselina (arrested on forced conversion charges)

Sajan K George (**UPDATE**: said the arrests demonstrate growing "intolerance towards the Christian faith. The renewed audacity of extreme right-wing groups is a serious threat to democratic India. Based on simple suspicions, nationalist activists capture, interrogate, and intimidate Pentecostal Christians. On the contrary, women were not doing anything illegal. Increasing religious intolerance is taking violent forms in India... 'Gau Rakshas' [cow watchers] or vigilantes, who also question what people are eating")

Date: September 5, 2017

Location: Kavalapadoor village, Bantwal Taluk, Dakshina district, Kachada, Karnataka state

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Karnataka,-two-Pentecostal-Christians-arrested-for-forced-conversions-41713.html>



Iran

Sevada Aghasar (arrested on [August 21, 2013](#) in the [Karaj](#) office of Masoud Mirzaei, called home to say he was in good health, charges unknown; as of [October 18, 2013](#) has reportedly been held in a solitary cell in [Evin Prison in Tehran](#); released from prison in [Tehran](#) on [March 2, 2014](#), never charged; reported on [May 1, 2015](#) to have been sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "action against national security through collusion and gathering", the gathering in question was a meeting where he met with Ebrahim Firouzi to say goodbye before the beginning of Firouzi's original prison term; **UPDATE:** began serving his 5 year prison term)

Date: July 4, 2017

Location: Evin Prison, Tehran

Source: <http://mohabatnews.com/en/?p=3695>

Hadi Askary (arrested without warrant by MOIS agents while fishing and picnicking with his wife in [Firuzkuh](#) on [August 26, 2016](#); sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in [Tehran](#) on [June 11, 2017](#); **UPDATE:** began serving his sentence, appeal still pending)

Date: July 3, 2017

Source: <http://mohabatnews.com/en/?p=3703>

Firouz Khandjani (**UPDATE:** in hiding, described how Christian children are being forced to learn the Quran in school: "Right now [President] Rouhani wants to prove that he is a good Muslim by persecuting Christians. Most of the new Christians are former Muslims")

Date: September 7, 2017

Mohammad Vahid Roghangir (detained on [October 12, 2012](#) in a government crackdown that may have detained between 100 and 400 Christians; sentenced to six years in prison on [July 16, 2013](#); **UPDATE:** still imprisoned)

Bijan Farokhpour Haghighi (**UPDATE:** still imprisoned)

Eskandar Rezaie (**UPDATE:** still imprisoned)

Suroush Saraie (released from prison on [November 10, 2015](#); rearrested, then released in [December 2015](#); detained in [July 2017](#); **UPDATE:** recently transferred to a VEVAK interrogation center)

Date: September 7, 2017

Location: Shiraz

Source: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/37736-iran-threatens-to-expell-christian-children-from-schools>



Kazakhstan

Yelena Tretyakova (church youth camp in Zyryanovsk district was raided by police on July 28, 2017; signed the police complaint on August 4, 2017 but wrote on it "I do not agree, the facts are inaccurate"; **UPDATE**: church fined US\$1,366 and banned from meeting for three months)

Pastor Vitaly Zatolokin (challenged the police complaint, also complained that police "had not behaved correctly and were threatening" when raiding the church youth camp on July 28, 2017, challenge dismissed on August 16, 2018; **UPDATE**: church fined US\$1,366 and banned from meeting for three months)

Date: August 18, 2017

Location: Oskemen

Anatoly Melnik (aged 81, wife aged 79, disabled, testified he would not be able to travel to another location to worship if his church were to be banned from its current location)

Date: August 3, 2017

Location: Almaty

Source: http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2313



Kenya

Hillary Njuguna (carpenter, abducted and killed by al-Shabaab militants, failed to hear their arrival due to his power saw)

Joseph Kinuthia (secondary school teacher, shot and beheaded)

Jared Maiko (businessman, shot and beheaded)

Gushi Peter (shot and beheaded)

Joseph Muchemi (described the murders, said "The reason many people weren't killed like in 2014, when 15 people were killed and houses torched, is because we are always alert at night. This, however, doesn't mean that four people deserved to die. We will continue to ask the government to set up at least one police post in every three villages")

Pastor Bernard Baya "Since morning, the people here have been protesting the state of insecurity where only Christians are killed. Roads have been blocked and tires are being burned everywhere as the police try to calm the residents. I have heard some protesters say that

they would break into the mosques and burn them down because the Muslims have been killing their friends like chicken”)

Date: September 6, 2017

Location: Bobo village, Hindi

Source: <http://www.persecution.org/2017/09/06/al-shabaab-kills-four-more-christian-men-in-lamu-kenya/>



Nigeria

Fr Cyriacus Onunkwo (abducted by armed gunmen while on the way to his father's funeral, **found murdered by strangulation**)

Bishop Augustine Tochukwu Ukwuoma (reported on the murder of Fr Cyriacus Onunkwo)

Date: September 1 & 2, 2017

Location: Banana Junction, Amaifeke, and Omuma village, Imo state

Source: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/catholic-priest-kidnapped-murdered-in-imo/>
and <http://www.fides.org/en/news/62856->
[AFRICA NIGERIA A priest in southern Nigeria kidnapped and killed#.Wa7N0bK](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62856-)
[GOM8](http://www.fides.org/en/news/62856-)
and <http://morningstarnews.org/2017/09/catholic-priest-kidnapped-killed-nigeria/>



Pakistan

Riaz Bibi (aged 30, mother of Shahroon Masih, who was beaten to death by his classmates on the fourth day of school)

Elyab Masih (aged 35, brick kiln worker, father of Shahroon Masih)

Date: August 27, 2017

Location: Burewala district, Punjab province

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/17-y-o-christian-boy-beaten-to-death-by-muslim-students-in-school>

Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shah OFM (**UPDATE**: attacked in the press after the daughter of a former prime minister solicited votes from the pulpit, said "The Christian politicians called me two days ago and explained that her only objective was to pray for her ailing mother...We agreed upon a draft speech briefly mentioning her 11 years of studies at the Convent of Jesus and Mary school and the student career of the former prime minister at St Anthony's High School. Both institutes are operated by the Lahore Archdiocese. She was supposed to conclude with prayer requests for her ailing mother. We gave her the opportunity because of her faith and her acquaintance with ruling party...Maryam

transgressed by asking for votes for her father. I wanted to stop her but millions were watching live on their television screens. At one moment, I decided to walkout as boycott, but then it could have been detrimental for Church relations with authorities. We need their aid to help persecuted Christians and take back our nationalized schools and properties...A directive has been issued to all churches. The Church microphone and pulpit will not be given to politicians")

Date: September 1, 2017

Location: Lahore

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/-Deceived-by-Sharif's-daughter,-Lahore-archbishop-rejects-campaigning-from-pulpit-41687.html>

Sharif Masih (stabbed to death by a landlord for refusing to work in his fields)

Date: August 31, 2017

Location: Kalianwala village, Hafizabad district

Source: <http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/detail.php?hnewsid=6607>



Philippines

Archbishop Socrates Villegas (**UPDATE:** said at an archdiocesan synod "We must teach even if our voices get hoarse. We must teach even if they threaten us. We must teach even if they kill us and if they kill us, our message will echo even more because the best way to teach is through martyrdom!...In the lights and shadows of life, in the stormy and sunny days, in the persecutions we endure and the triumphs we bask in – the Lord speaks...We dream not of status quo Church but an ever vibrant Church that is excited, not afraid to plunge into the deep")

Date: September 2, 2017

Source: <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/filipino-archbishop-face-opposition-with-a-martyrs-courage-63919/>



Russia

Bishop Tikhon Shevkunov (commented on the movie Mathilde "The director Uchitel, who I don't personally know and whose films I've never seen, called me, and asked, 'Would you like to become a consultant for the film?' I said, 'Give me an official request. I will look at the request and then answer you.' The director Uchitel said, 'The script is already ready.' I said, 'The script?...First you make a request to consultants, and then you develop the script.' He said, 'The film is already almost ready.' I said, 'That's great! You want a consultant on a film that's nearly ready. Why?'"...Why do they make audiences believe in the historicity of these contrived heartbreaking scenes of a 'love triangle' in which

[Tsar] Nicholas, both before and after marriage, is melodramatically torn between Mathilde and Alexandra? What is that? The author's vision? No—it is slander against real people")

Date reported: September 5, 2017

Location: Ekaterinburg

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/106191.htm>



South Sudan

Natalina Andrea Mabu (church coordinator, arrested on or before [August 28, 2017](#) after soldiers attending an UN human rights seminar were sickened by alleged food poisoning from a local hotel, 3 died, 57 were hospitalized; **UPDATE**: released on bail)

Date reported: September 6, 2017

Location: Wau

Source: <http://www.fides.org/en/news/62874->

[AFRICA SOUTH SUDAN Coordinator of the Justice and Peace Commission accused of food poisoning released on bail#.Wa x4LKGOM8](#)



Syria

Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh OFM (aged 44; **UPDATE**: said his city "was a metropolis that [before the war] generated about 60 per cent of Syria's industrial output [but now is] paralyzed and does not produce even a kilo of tomatoes, [it is] only a great consumer...[It is an] unstable society, where seniors are abandoned to their fate and die alone because no one takes care of them. Then there are the widows, young and lonely mothers with children because the men have disappeared, those who have not died in the war but have escaped abroad to avoid compulsory military service...For every young man, there are 12 young women, a huge disproportion...violence is part of the everyday life that went from the street into the home. The main challenge is to rebuild the children's personality. This issue is not just about schooling, but includes psychological support and involves the Church and the parish with targeted activities...The fundamentalist ideology has put down roots in the minds of a part of the population thanks to ignorance, poverty, and a desire to vengeance...[Security issues exist] because of the presence of sleeper cells, ready to strike")

Date: September 6, 2017

Location: Aleppo

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/-Fr-Ibrahim-talks-about-Aleppo-Christians-and-the-metropolis%E2%80%99s-slow-revival-after-being-paralysed-by-war-41706.html>



United Kingdom

Jacob Rees-Mogg (aged 48, Member of Parliament, said he supported his church's teachings on marriage and abortion)

Rev Gavin Ashenden (**UPDATE**: later wrote to the Times of London "Your cartoon published today displaying Jacob Rees-Mogg as a fetus deserving of abortion for expressing Christian views on contemporary ethical issues, causes the most profound offense. But worse than the offense, is the implication that is presents a new form of Test Act for Catholics and other Christians...Such a cartoon deliberately sends the message that Christian ethical views have no place in the public and political forum and should be both ridiculed and excluded...")

Dan Hitchens (Catholic Herald editor, later wrote "...Considering all the truly evil things which happen in this country – workers paid pitiful wages to make their employers rich, addicts exploited by vampiric drug-dealers, the daily cruelty towards the elderly – it is strange that people get so furious about politicians saying that yes, since you ask, they wouldn't seek to change the law, but as a theoretical matter, they aren't wholly on board with the modern progressive beliefs about sex....Whatever can be said about Catholic teaching, there are at least various well-elaborated philosophical justifications for it; and it does provide a clear rule of life...the liberal sexual ethic amounts to little more than the vague wish: 'As long as no one gets hurt...' This can hardly address the complexity of human experience – both its nobility and its tawdriness...")

Date: September 6, 2017

Source [with video]: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/09/06/video-jacob-rees-mogg-i-oppose-same-sex-marriage-and-abortion-in-all-cases/>

and <https://ashenden.org/2017/09/07/a-letter-submitted-to-the-times-for-publication/>

and <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2017/09/07/the-liberal-rage-at-rees-mogg-hints-at-a-deep-insecurity/>

Archbishop Gregorios Theocharous (aged 88, complained after the German supermarket chain Lidl removed the cross from the Greek church pictured on some of its packaging "They hurt the Christians — not only the Greeks because it was a Greek church — but [all] the Christians what I read. I hope that many others will protest against this silly decision...It is immoral in my eyes to remove something which has been there for 2,000 year and is the symbol that Christ died on the cross for you, for me, for millions of people")

Date reported: September 7, 2017

Location: London

Source: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/106249.htm>



United States

Michael Brown (**UPDATE**: hundreds of religious videos demonetized by Facebook)

Date: August 17, 2017

Source: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/youtube-just-demonetized-hundreds-of-our-videos-196268/>

United States - California

David Daleiden (aged 29; investigative journalist, reported on [July 19, 2017](#) to have been found in contempt of court for having released videos of abortionists publicly discussing abortion details, fined over \$137,000, judge has connections to Planned Parenthood but refused to recuse himself; **UPDATE**: the judge increased the fine to almost \$200,000)

Date reported: September 6, 2017

Location: San Francisco

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/judge-orders-pro-life-investigator-to-pay-200k-in-fines-over-released-video>

United States - District of Columbia

Amy Coney Barrett (law school professor, mother of 7, federal appellate court nominee, told by Senator Dianne Feinstein "When you read your speeches, the conclusion one draws is that the dogma lives loudly within you" [pundits replied that the Senator sounded like Star Wars' Yoda], also questioned by Senator Dick Durban as to whether she was an "Orthodox Catholic")

Chad C Pecknold (theology professor, tweeted that Senator's Feinstein's questioning was "chilling", added "Senators Durbin and Feinstein weren't questioning a judicial nominee, they were holding a Religious Inquisition with extreme prejudice" and "I teach dogma for a living, and can honestly say that even orthodox Catholics aren't nearly so 'dogmatic' as secular progressives")

Date: September 6, 2017

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/democrat-senator-rips-catholic-judicial-nominee-the-dogma-lives-loudly-with>

United States - Ohio

Grace Elizabeth Johnson (**UPDATE**: Twitter account suspended after she tweeted an objection to Teen Vogue magazine's advocacy of teen anal sex)

Date: August 30, 2017

Source: <http://www.activistmom.com/blog/twitter-just-suspended-the-activist-mommy-for-the-craziest-reason/>



Vietnam

Fr Nguyen Duy Tan (church attacked by government thugs who arrived on a bus, locked the church gate and rang the bell to summon parishioners who detained the attackers, said “I recognized Nguyen Trong Nghia of the Red Flags group. Commune security kept inviting them back to their office, and district security officers behaved the same way, refusing to do any work at the scene. They wouldn’t note down the registration numbers of the guns or count how many bullets they had”, declined to press charges because “they are all on the same side, the side of the Communist Party. There would have been no point in pushing for prosecution”)

Date: September 4, 2017

Location: Xuan Tho commune, Xuan Loc district, Dong Nai province

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Dong-Nai,-armed-activists-raid-church-41704.html>

Event: Several clergy spoke at a national catechism congress

Bishop Joseph Nguyen Nang

Fr Peter Nguyen Van Hien (**UPDATE**)

Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Kham (**UPDATE**)

Archbishop Paul Bui Van Doc

Date: August 28, 2017

Location: Dong Nai province

Source: <http://www.ucanews.com/news/catechists-in-vietnam-told-to-dialogue-listen-to-people/80185>

Today’s Martyrs

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

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