

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2019-08-11 through 2019-08-17



Algeria

Pastor Messaoud Takilt (ordered by police on [August 3, 2019](#) to remove all items from his church within 3 days; **UPDATE**: church raided by police during a worship service, persuaded resistant congregants to leave, building sealed, later said “The assembly finally yielded and agreed to leave the premises, but with much pain. Some went out with eyes full of tears...I am deeply saddened by so much injustice – it breaks my heart. This is not surprising since other Christian places of worship have been closed and sealed as was the case today. But anyway, we will continue to celebrate our services outside while the Lord gives us grace for a final solution”)

Date: [August 6, 2019](#)

Location: Lekhmis village, Boudjima, Kabylie region

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/08/as-church-worships-police-in-algeria-arrive-to-seal-building/>



China

Gao Zhisheng (aged 55, human rights attorney; released from prison on [August 7, 2014](#); has been described by his attorney on [August 15, 2014](#) as "utterly destroyed" by his captivity - he is unintelligible and speaks only in single words, shows no emotion, and lost almost all of his teeth due to malnutrition; detained on [September 24, 2015](#) after accounts of torture while in prison became public, released but under house arrest in [Yulin, Shaanxi province](#), denied medical access; has been denied access to a dentist due to fears evidence of torture will be documented, wrote on [November 3, 2015](#) "...there is no understanding [by the authorities], just repeating over and over that they are 'the world's second largest superpower', and adding that they have a 'responsible behavioral style'. When, just a short while ago, a common person's teeth are destroyed and lost, [the attempt to correct the damage] is deemed a matter of 'national security'...the outside world can speculate that because I cannot treat my teeth, I must always be in a mood of personal, bitter hardship and torture. This is not entirely true. The world I find inside books occupies me to the point that I forget to eat. I do not even have the leisure to negotiate [with the police] regarding my suffering. To me, it is incredibly precious that I now have books to read.

Generally speaking, I know I will disappear immediately again after my book is published. So I am determined to try my best to read more books. This is something I need to do before this happens. This is very crucial to me"; reported on [November 15, 2016](#) to have disappeared after agents from Beijing arrived at his home and destroyed a copy of his new book, Year 2017, Stand Up China, which had been sent him from friends overseas; disappeared on [August 13, 2017](#); confirmed on [September 7, 2017](#) to be in police custody in [Beijing](#); **UPDATE**: still missing)

Date: [August 14, 2019](#)

Source: <https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/08/two-years-later-lawyer-gao-is-still.html>

Li Ruizhen (wife of Pastor Zhou Dixian, mother of Zhou Jie and Zhou Mei, evicted from her home in [Laixi, Shandong province](#) by thugs hired by a land developer in [November 2012](#), buildings and orchards destroyed; arrested on a charge of 'inciting trouble' in [March 2017](#) for protecting her land rights; sentenced to prison in [October 2018](#); **UPDATE**: diagnosed with cancer of the gallbladder while in prison, denied treatment while in prison, released, travelled to Beijing for outpatient treatment, unable to afford the recommended hospitalization)

Zhou Mei (daughter of Pastor Zhou Dixian and Li Ruizhen, reported on her mother's cancer)

Date reported: [August 10, 2019](#)

Source: <https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/08/prison-officials-denied-cancer.html>

Jiang Tianyong (aged 47, husband of Jin Bianling, son of Jiang Lianghou, human rights attorney, abducted by police in [Changsha, Hunan province](#) on [November 22, 2016](#); charged with 'subversion of state power' on [May 31, 2017](#); sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment on [November 20, 2017](#); as of [June 27, 2018](#) had been forced to take an unidentified medication in prison and has shown a memory deficit as a possible result, legs appear to have been injured due to torture or shackles, has been denied access to clothing and money sent by his family; released from prison on [February 28, 2019](#), disappeared, father and sister disappeared; allowed to return home with his father and sister on [March 1, 2019](#), wife has begun a petition for him to travel to the U.S. for medical treatment; **UPDATE**: still suffering from effects of his prison medication, prevented by police from travelling for a medical exam)

Date: [August 5, 2019](#)

Location: [Zhengzhou, Henan province](#)

Source: <https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/08/lawyer-jiang-tianyong-authorities.html>



Colombia

Pastor Plinio Rafael Salcedo (husband, father of two young children, **shot dead** in his home, had appealed for peace days earlier)

Date reported: [August 14, 2019](#)

Location: [La Caucana village, Taraza, Bajo Cauca Antioquia, Antioquia department](#)

Source: <https://www.charismanews.com/world/77601-evangelical-pastor-shot-dead-after-appealing-for-peace>



Cuba

Rev Alain Toledano Valiente (husband of Marilyn Alayo Correa; **UPDATE**: summoned to a police station and interrogated for three hours concerning a planned women's conference, threatened with arrest if the conference proceeded, said "It looks like the regime is planning to invent criminal charges to bring against me in order to imprison me, just as they have done in the past with other pastors...I have had to deal with the fury and the hatred of the communist regime in many different ways and I think now I have to deal with dirty tricks on their part")

Date: August 8, 2019

Source: <https://www.csw.org.uk/2019/08/09/press/4428/article.htm>



India

Pastor Sunil (aged 28, convert, father of six daughters and one son, forced by police on **June 6, 2019** to stop church construction, allowed to resume after producing the required documents; forced by police on **June 7, 2019** to stop church construction after a Hindu mob threatened him with death; allowed to resume construction on **June 15, 2019** by police but a mob of 300 Hindus prevented resumption; **UPDATE**: arrested on blasphemy charges after false allegations of fraudulent conversion were filed [his state lacks anti-conversion laws], later said "In our local community I am viewed as a pariah as I converted out of the Hindu faith after experiencing a miracle healing of my father from Tetanus after a Pastor prayed for him. Soon after I began reading the bible and learned about God's love for me and the redemption that was mine to take. I committed my life to God and began to serve him by sharing the Gospel to bring hope and joy to the lives of others. I have not blasphemed and the hatred I have received is unfair - I pray for swift justice and the removal of these false charges")

Juliet Chowdhry (British Asian Christian Association Trustee, said "The use of blasphemy laws without evidence of a blasphemy is a blight on India's reputation. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime the persecution of Christians and other minorities in India is palpably worse. Already the nation has risen to 10th on the Open Doors World Watch List and may rise further still...Pastor Sunil must be acquitted of the ridiculous charges and allowed to complete his building works which already have planning consent. Moreover in the interests of justice Pavan and members of the mob who have fomented

hatred towards Pastor Sunil and falsely alleged a blasphemy, must be prosecuted for hate crimes")

Date: June 22, 2019

Location: Karsa village, Kaithal district, Haryana state

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/pastor-building-community-hall-beaten-and-threatened>

Pastor Pankaj (attacked by a mixed Hindu-Sikh mob while officiating at a [June 28, 2019](#) wedding, said "I had just started to speak when a mob led by one Gurmeet Singh barged into the ceremony and began to spitefully speak to us. They were about 250 people, and every single one was carrying a rod or a wooden stick. It was evident that they were there to attack us", fled to a room along with the musicians, added "Soon we heard the agitated mob hurling curses and entering the marriage palace hall while we stayed in our room. They shouted at all the guests in the private party and shooed them away. The mob walked towards our room and knocked at our door, hurling abuses at us and calling us names. We opened the door and they barged in with sticks. Gurmeet Singh not only spoke vulgar words to us, but he also cursed Jesus and spoke disrespectfully about Jesus...I quickly prayed, 'Lord, I can see my death right in front of me – I pray that you would take me to be with You...Then one of the policemen asked the attackers to allow the police to take us to the police station, where [the officer said] we would be beaten up and straightened", arrested along with 8 other Christians including a 3 year old girl and their non-Christian taxi driver on a charges of fraudulent conversions and disrupting the peace, said "Along with accusing us of being involved in [fraudulent] conversion, they also accused us of tearing the holy book of Sikhism – the Guru Granth [Sahib]. The police pressured us to accept our guilt to the extent that they beat up one of the Christians arrested in order to make him confess"; **UPDATE:** denied food in jail until the afternoon, released on bail, said "After we were let out on bail, the agitated mob surrounded the police station and shouted slogans against the police for letting us out. The news was broadcast by various local news channels, and after we reached our respective homes, I saw on TV that the police denied that any conversion activity took place")

Sukhdev Mark (evangelist, arrested at a [June 28, 2019](#) wedding; **UPDATE:** released on bail)

Boilat Masih (evangelist, arrested at a [June 28, 2019](#) wedding; **UPDATE:** released on bail)

Gurpreet Singh (arrested at a [June 28, 2019](#) wedding; **UPDATE:** released on bail)

Harjinder Singh (attorney, convert, beaten after attempting to negotiate a settlement between Pastor Pankaj and the pastor's accuser, later said "The moment I introduced myself, Dr Gurmeet punched me, landing several blows on my face, and asked me to 'get out' of the place. As I left, I was surrounded by Dr Gurmeet's men [who were RSS paramilitary members] outside the clinic...Godara, my schoolmate, told me that he is the one who has registered the complaint against the Christians, and he is very angry at me for changing my faith from Sikhism to following Jesus Christ...Though a written statement was taken from me by the police, no case was registered. But the next morning, news in the local newspaper left me shocked, saying that a case had been booked against me by Dr Gurmeet Singh in the same police station [on charges of 'house trespass, intentional insult to provoke and unlawful assembly'], and the police had registered his complaint. No action has been taken by the police against Dr Gurmeet or Godara")

Rev Vijayesh Lal (**UPDATE:** later spoke of the intervention by the Superintendent of Police “He assured that he will personally look into the matter, and he did call up the local police station and inquired about the Christians. For that we are grateful. Although it is sad that under pressure from local Hindutva [Hindu nationalist] organizations, the Christians were harassed, while no action was taken against the attackers”)

P S Nehemiah Christie (**UPDATE:** spoke after the charges were dropped “We are so glad that in both states’ police [Rajasthan and Punjab], especially Rajasthan, the higher officials intervened and made sure that the constitution is still alive. They did not encourage extremism and allowed justice to prevail”)

Date: June 29, 2019

Location: Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan state

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/08/public-awareness-pressure-help-persecuted-christians-win-justice-in-india/>



Iraq

Event: Christian leaders opposed legislation to add four Muslim clerics to the Supreme Court

Professor Muna Yako (said "You need to have the court to interpret the constitution. Right now, I hope that if a case goes to the Federal Court they might prioritize human rights and democracy, in some instances. If, however, these Islamic jurists join the court, we will have no chance of ever prioritizing democracy or human rights")

Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako (**UPDATE:** wrote to the Speaker of Parliament that the proposal would threaten the future of Christians in the country "after all the suffering we have endured from terrorism, displacement, pillaging, murder and property theft")

Date: August 9, 2019

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20190809175324.htm>



Mexico

Fr Aaron Mendez Ruiz (immigrant shelter director, abducted after he tried to prevent the abduction of Cuban refugees from his shelter for ransom)

Date: August 3, 2019

Location: Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas state

Source: <https://www.csw.org.uk/2019/08/13/press/4430/article.htm>

Miguel Perez Diaz (husband of Guadalupe Hernandez, son of Miguel Perez Nunez, father of eight, family evicted from their home by their 'traditionalist Catholic' neighbors who practice a blend of Catholic and pre-Christian beliefs for refusing to financially contribute to their festivals, has since lived in a shack in the mountains, later said “To follow Christ is beautiful. It doesn’t matter if we have to live in suffering, persecution and contempt from our village. Everyone in the family says that to live close to God is a blessing, and we delight in the salvation found only in Jesus Christ”)

Guadalupe Hernandez (wife of Miguel Perez Diaz, mother of eight, evicted)

Miguel Perez Nunez (aged 87, father of Miguel Perez Diaz, evicted)

Pastor Mario Choj (reported on the eviction of the family of Miguel Perez Díaz: “The first action they took against them was to cut their potable water service. Then they made them leave the humble home they owned”)

Date: May 2019

Location: Tajlovijho village, San Andrés Larrainzar, Chiapas state

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/08/christian-family-takes-refuge-in-mountains-after-expulsion-from-their-home-in-mexico/>



Pakistan

Farazana (aged 21, daughter of Ilyas Masih, sister of Serish, abducted and gang raped on [December 3, 2014](#) in [Jaranwala district](#), laughingly told by her attackers that hers’ was the fate of 'poor Christian girls', released half naked; moved to a safe house, worked as a domestic in [Faisalabad](#), reported on [June 28, 2016](#) to have been falsely accused of theft, accusations likely resulted after the discovery of funds donated to help the family relocate; **UPDATE:** married Shahid Masih, said "Today I start my new life free of the despair that once consumed me. The bond of marriage is a sacred one and I thank God for his work in me that has led to this day and a much brighter future. Shahid is a wonderful man and I now dedicate my life to him and to God our protector - may He bless our union")

Date: July 15, 2019

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/rape-survivor-starts-new-life-with-husband-after-god-releases-her-from-depression>

Nabeel Masih (aged 19, arrested on blasphemy charges in [Dina Nath village, Kasur district, Punjab province](#) on [September 18, 2016](#) after accused of posting a photo of the Kabaa in Mecca on his Facebook page near a photo of a pig, family fled their home; sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on [May 17, 2018](#); **UPDATE:** has learned to read the Bible, said "When I am isolated in my cell all I think about is my family and I fear that someone may have been hurt because of the hate people have for me. It was good to hear that they are all surviving well and I am praying for a swift exit from this cell with God's help - so that I will be able to unite with them all again soon. It is a cause of great distress to me that

my whole village especially all the people who I have interacted with for so many years, could turn on me and call for my death. What pains me more is that I am innocent and a known illiterate [4th grade level], but despite this I remain in a cell and the Muslims who actually committed the crime enjoy freedom. I know God does everything as per His plan and one day I will be free - till then I am reading my Urdu bible which I have learnt to read whilst in prison - it provides me with great solace")

Date: August 11, 2019

Source: <https://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/illiterate-jailed-christian-teenage-blasphemer-finds-spiritual-help-in-urdu-bible>



Philippines

Pastor Ernesto Estrella (aged 51, **shot dead** while riding his motorcycle by men also on a motorcycle)

Event: Several bishops signed a statement condemning the murder of Pastor Ernesto Estrella: “Now is the gospel moment to speak out and stand together in the name of Christ in upholding the God-given value of human life, dignity and rights. In God’s righteousness, may we ourselves become the justice we desire and demand for the killing of Pastor Ernesto Javier Estrella, and for all Christians martyred for their witness to our faith”

Bishop Deogracias Iniquez

Bishop Rex Reyes

Bishop Joel Tendero

Bishop Dindo Ranojo

Bishop Ciriaco Francisco

Date: August 2, 2019

Location: Antipas, Cotabato province, Mindanao

Kristin Lim (Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, 'invited' by eight soldiers to their camp for questioning, the 'invitation' was repeated the next day, later said “I respect the invitation, but I would also like to insist, as I repeatedly did, that I am not a criminal. I courteously declined their invitation due to current personal engagements as a private citizen”)

Date: August 3, 2019

Location: Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon province, Mindanao

Source: <https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/church-leaders-in-the-philippines-lament-ideology-of-death-after-pastor-killed>

and <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/08/christians-in-the-philippines-decry-growing-hostilities-after-killing-of-pastor/>



Sri Lanka

Bishop Asiri Perara (reported on the beating of a Bible school student who was later hospitalized, wrote on Facebook “I assure all Buddhists of Sri Lanka that we Christians will remain calm and peaceful in the midst of the persecution we face today in Sri Lanka. I humbly appeal to you to be kind towards the Christians who live with you”)

Date: August 4, 2019

Location: Mahiyanganaya

Source: <https://barnabasfund.org/us/news/gang-of-buddhist-monks-viciously-beat-bible-college-student-in-sri-lanka>

and <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/After-Buddhist-monks-beat-Christian,-Methodist-bishop-insists-Christians-are-citizens-of-the-country-47734.html>



Syria

Fr Ibrahim Alsabagh OFM (aged 47; **UPDATE:** said "The situation in Aleppo remains very difficult. Every day, we hear the sound of rockets falling on some parts of the city. And the attacks go up, deliberately, at Muslim holy days...we see the situation getting worse, but the problem is not only related to the fighting still taking place in many places. For those who have resisted and remained, the ongoing conflict and the instability strongly affect people already emotionally harmed, preventing us from truly beginning to live and think about the future...Syria is at its economic breaking point...Parish activities do not stop in summer. Although we try to slow down the pace a little, pastoral and humanitarian work take all our time and energy. We have just concluded the summer oratory, with the presence of over 300 children and about 50 educators, catechists, teachers, and collaborators at various levels. Now it's camp time. Many people with various needs knock at our door every day...A very positive and decidedly unexpected development is the fact that, despite fear and uncertainty, many young couples have decided to get married and build a new family together...We also see births increase. With great joy, in addition to accompanying young couples on their journey of preparation for the sacrament and later years, we accompany families who welcome a new life and prepare to celebrate baptism. We help them even in the more tangible needs of life...Caring for new families, who are the future of the whole community, makes us feel like Noah building a new ark in the desert to keep hope alive")

Date: August 16, 2019

Location: Aleppo

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Aleppo-pastor-talks-about-building-hope-in-a-crescendo-of-violence-47757.html>

Event UPDATE: The U.S. State Department's Rewards for Justice has announced a US\$5 million reward for information on the abductions of still-missing prelates

Bishop Boulos al-Yazigi

Fr Isaac Moawad

Fr Michel Kayyal

Fr Paolo Dall'Oglio SJ

Bishop Yuhanna Ibrahim

Date: July 25, 2019

Source: https://rewardsforjustice.net/english/isis_kidnapping_networks.html



Thailand

Faraz Pervaiz (Pakistani refugee, fled Pakistan in 2014 along with 10 family members after blasphemy accusations were made against them; a bounty of US\$62,000 was placed on his head in 2018; another bounty of US\$124,000 was placed in January 2019; **UPDATE:** his address was posted online, stirring more death threats, said “This huge [prize] amount can easily attract any jihadis to come and deliver me to hell, according to their faith. This is fear. I don’t want to be killed by jihadis. For them, we are infidels, we are Christians. There’s too many organizations who just want to terminate me because of my faith in Jesus and we are risking our lives. We are risking our lives every day...Despite all this, the UNHCR is not helping us. They are saying, ‘It is better if you cross the border and you go to a neighboring country’...They [the UNHCR] are resettling all the Muslims [who are refugees] because the people who are the translators for UNHCR, they [are Muslims who] are misquoting our statements. They are misrepresenting to the interviewer...I want the American nation to wake up for Christians. Our only hope is America. I don’t know why our voice is not heard by the American nation. We pray for them...”)

Date: July 11, 2019

Location: Bangkok

Source: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/pakistani-christian-refugee-in-hiding-over-blasphemy-charge-calls-on-trump-un-to-help.html>



Turkey

Kuryakos Ergun (member of the Mor Gabriel Monastery; **UPDATE:** commented on a recent series of apparent arson attacks on Assyrian Christian properties: "We don't know if they were intentional or not, but these fires have shaken us to the core...For the fires to come right when the fruit was ready to pick has been devastating for us")

Ferit Kulen (property seized by local Muslims who then built a mosque)

Date reported: August 6, 2019

Source: <http://www.aina.org/news/20190806125143.htm>



Ukraine

Fr Viktor Dovbenyuk (husband, father, cancer patient, ordered to leave his home of 27 years by nationalists)

Date: August 9, 2019

Location: Pyatigory village, Rivne province

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/123060.html>

Archpriest Vitaly Duda (reported on a nationalist seizure of a church: “Three ‘priests’ of the OCU [Orthodox Church of Ukraine] cut the lock on the first doors. They also brought some unknown people with them, one of whom was in uniform, and began to open the second door, which, by the way, is about 200 years old. They tried to jimmy the lock open, but failing to do so, they simply broke the lock with a tire iron. Then they went inside and shut the doors. Our faithful prayed continuously until lunchtime on the threshold of their church... I talked with the police and local authorities to avoid a confrontation and conflict, and we agreed that the OCU representatives would leave the church. The chairman of the village council, which supports the newly-created structure, had to persuade them. They finally left, and the church was closed with two locks—ours and theirs”)

Date: August 11, 2019

Location: Bobly village, Volyn province

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/123030.html>

Fr Alexander Goncharuk (church attacked by nationalists during a worship service, church defended by police)

Date: August 11, 2019

Location: Galuzintsi village, Khmelnytsi province

Source: <http://orthochristian.com/123004.html>



United Kingdom

Andrea Minichiello Williams (Chief Executive of Christian Concerns; **UPDATE**: responded to a lawsuit by Humanists UK against Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust which alleged that the schools' observance of legally required worship for Christian students was a human rights violation: “Unfounded ideas like gender identity are routinely being taught to children from young ages. These ideas have no basis in reality, yet are often taught with a

religious fervor far exceeding typical Christian school assemblies. It's time for Humanists UK to realize that privileging the religion of LGBT ideology breaks its own declared secularist principles")

Date: August 7, 2019

Source: <https://www.christianconcern.com/our-issues/education/humanist-hypocrisy-over-christian-assemblies>

Bishop Gavin Ashenden (**UPDATE**: commented on the recent installation of a carnival helter-skelter and a mini golf course in two cathedrals: "In every generation the Church faces a live or die challenge. Convert or be converted. Either act as an agency for people to encounter the Living God and be forgiven, turned and transformed, or fit into the unforgiving contours of a society that is driven by other forces, other appetites, and smear over their agenda a patina of spirituality that confers a thin covering of political and cultural legitimacy")

Date: August 8, 2019

Locations: Norwich and Rochester

Source: <https://ashenden.org/2019/08/08/convert-or-be-converted-the-challenge-for-anglican-cathedrals-today/>



United States - Oregon

Fr George Kuforiji (Nigerian national, shouted down during Mass by some of his parishioners who opposed his traditional views)

Date: June 20, 2019

Location: Portland

Source: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/watch-progressive-pro-gay-catholics-shout-down-faithful-african-priest-during-mass>



Vietnam

Peter Ho Duc Hoa (aged 45, convicted on [January 9, 2013](#) for "carrying out activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration", sentenced to 13 years imprisonment; **UPDATE**: still imprisoned, has been denied medical care for fatigue and abdominal and spinal pain)

Date: July 25, 2019

Location: Nam Ha prison, Ha Nam province

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Free-H%E1%BB%93-%C4%90%E1%BB%A9c-H%C3%B2a:-Hanoi-denies-medical-care-to-jailed-Catholic-activist-47746.html>

Today's Martyrs

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