

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Weekly Report – 2019-09-15 through 2019-09-21



China

Rev Han Chung-Ryeol (aged 49, **assassinated** by North Korean agents for his missionary work among Korean refugees who had crossed the border)

Sang-chul (convert, North Korean refugee, husband, later testified on the murder of Rev Han Chung-Ryeol)

Date: 2016

Location: Changbai, Changbai Korean Autonomous County, Jilin province

Source: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/chinese-pastor-shared-gospel-with-1000-north-koreans-before-being-assassinated-for-his-faith.html>
and https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=oGqEgkF7I8

Mary (reported on government threats to demolish a Catholic outdoor shrine, Catholics responded by camping out at the shrine to defend it, said “I believe they may demolish the shrine bit by bit”)

Date: May 13, 2019

Location: Shengdiliang Shrine, Hebei province

Peter (described the removal of a cross from a church, added that 24 churches have been slated for demolition)

Date: May 7, 2019

Location: Hebei province

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/catholics-block-demolition-of-chinese-shrine/85213>



Cuba

Adya Rigal (wife of Pastor Ramon Rigal, mother of Ruth and Joel, sentenced on [April 25, 2017](#) to house arrest for one year for removing her children from government schools to avoid anti-Christian teaching; detained on [April 16, 2019](#); put on trial on [April 18, 2019](#) with only a half hour warning, denied an attorney; **UPDATE**: sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for illegal homeschooling)

Pastor Ramon Rigal (husband of Adya Rigal, father of Ruth and Joel, reported on [July 14, 2017](#) to have been sentenced to one year at hard labor for removing his children from government schools to avoid anti-Christian teaching; sentence reduced to home arrest on [July 6, 2017](#); told on [July 31, 2017](#) that he may no longer work as a church leader and that he will now work as a mosquito inspector; told on [August 8, 2017](#) that he may work as a church leader but not leave his home; detained on [April 16, 2019](#); put on trial on [April 18, 2019](#) with only a half hour warning, denied an attorney; **UPDATE**: sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment for illegal homeschooling, denied family visitations)

Date: [April 22, 2019](#)

Location: [Guantanamo](#)

Ruth Rigal (aged 13, daughter of Pastor Ramon Rigal and Adya Rigal, sister of Joel Rigal, now resides with her father's grandmother while her parents are in prison for homeschooling her and her brother, said "It all started when I was in fourth grade, I suffered bullying at school because I was a Christian. I was kicked in the belly, so he [my father] decided to get me out of school. They began to chase us, to threaten us, saying that if we did not go to school, they would take us to the house of children without parental protection, and they were going to put my parents in jail")

Date: [July 8, 2019](#)

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/09/christian-pastoral-couple-in-cuba-imprisoned-for-homeschooling-children/>

Golquis Almaguer (imprisoned along with his wife for homeschooling their children, has said "What is Christianity without Christian education from the cradle? It is nothing. I am sure they will take me to a forced labor camp. Any support you can provide to me and my family will be gratefully accepted. I don't know what will happen, but I know I and my family are in God's hands")

Date reported: [June 12, 2019](#)

Source: <https://hslda.org/content/hs/international/Cuba/20190612-senators-seek-to-free-cuban-homeschool-parents.aspx>



India

Fr Benoy John (aged 42, arrested on [September 6, 2019](#) on forced conversion and illegal occupation of land charges; **UPDATE**: released on bail, hospitalized for a heart condition)

Munna Hansda (catechist, arrested on [September 6, 2019](#) on forced conversion and illegal occupation of land charges; **UPDATE**: still in jail)

Date: [September 16, 2019](#)

Location: [Rajatha, Godda district, Jharkhand state](#)

Charlis Hansda (tribal leader, accused of forced conversion and illegal occupation of land, has fled to avoid arrest)

Date reported: September 17, 2019

Location: Jharkhand state

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Priest-accused-of-forced-conversion-in-Jharkhand-released-on-bail-48033.html>
and <http://mattersindia.com/2019/09/catholic-priest-let-off-on-bail-after-7-day-detention/>
and <https://www.ucanews.com/news/priest-bailed-amid-anti-christian-campaign-in-eastern-india/86124>

Fr Cedric Prakash SJ (**UPDATE:** Published a commentary entitled *Christians, wake up now:* "...The situation in India today, on all fronts, would be much worse than that of El Salvador during the time of Romero...The recent happenings against the Christians and other vulnerable communities are not mere aberrations or one-off incidents by 'passing mobs'. They are systematic and calculated attempts by the Hindutva forces in connivance with the ruling regime, to denigrate the Christians and other minorities and to put them on the backfoot: these forces, who are against a secular, pluralistic India and the values enshrined in the Constitutions, unleash on the country their insidious agenda, towards the establishment of a Hindu nation-State...Given, what is happening in the country today there seems to a pathetic lack of response from the Christian community in general and from Church leadership in particular. There has been no outrage from the community to what is happening in Kashmir or Assam; no protests when freedom of speech and expression is being throttled or when human rights defenders are being harassed and even killed...Christians, Wake Up NOW! Tomorrow will be too late! We are called to play a prophetic role in India today! We need to become Romeros for our country!")

Date: September 19, 2019

Source: <http://mattersindia.com/2019/09/christian-wake-up-now/>

Fr Alphonse Aind SJ (aged 48, middle school principal in [Kochang village, Jharkhand state](#), arrested on [June 22, 2018](#) on fabricated charges of organizing the abduction and rape of five social activists by six Pathagadi tribal gunmen after the gunmen had seized his automobile, denied bail; convicted on conspiracy charges on [May 7, 2019](#), church officials continue to insist the charges are fabricated; **UPDATE:** sentenced to life imprisonment)

Fr Xavier Soreng SJ (**UPDATE:** said the prosecution was an attempt to "tarnish" the Church and drive people from it)

Fr Anand David Xalxo (maintained that Fr Aind had been framed for political reasons)

Date: May 17, 2019

Location: Khunti

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/indian-priest-to-appeal-conviction-over-rape/85229>



Nepal

Pastor Sukdev Giri (aged 59, convert, husband, in hiding after receiving death threats for the unauthorized posting of a YouTube video of his conversion, which he said was in part due to Hindu accounts of rape, incest, bestiality, and adultery by the three main deities)

Ganesh Sreshta (attorney, said “It is the first time a Christian [in Nepal] has been targeted for sharing [on social and other media] about his past religion and introduction into Christianity. It is turning out to be a high-profile issue, with Hindu fundamentalist groups linked to prominent political leaders taking interest in this video...There is a lot of impact of Indian media channels on Nepal’s Hindu population. The Hindu extremism in Nepal is taking its shape from observing the Hindu fundamentalist RSS [the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh paramilitary] operations in India...Many Christians are restricting prayer services to closed doors of their homes, as they feel insecure to expose or disclose their faith in public. Article 18 proscribes discrimination on grounds of religion, caste, race etc., but it’s only on paper and can nowhere be seen implemented in case of Christians”)

Date: August 11, 2019

Location: Chitwan district

Source: <https://morningstarnews.org/2019/09/social-media-backlash-reflects-new-era-of-hostility-in-nepal/>



Niger

Fr Pierluigi Maccalli SMA (Italian national, abducted from Bomoanga by jihadists on September 18, 2018, probably taken over the border into Burkina Faso; **UPDATE**: still missing)

Date: September 16, 2019

Source: [http://www.fides.org/en/news/66634-
AFRICA_NIGER_The_whole_community_awaits_Fr_Maccalli_in_prayer](http://www.fides.org/en/news/66634-AFRICA_NIGER_The_whole_community_awaits_Fr_Maccalli_in_prayer)



Pakistan

Neha Pervaiz (aged 15, daughter of Jamila Masih, raped and forced into an Islamic marriage, later said “I was taken by my aunt, a Muslim convert, to her house on April 28 [2019] to help her look after her sick son. But there I was asked to marry a Muslim man named Imran. When I refused, they beat me up and threatened to kill my minor brother who was with me. Later I was taken to a room where I was raped by Imran. They then pressurized me to convert to Islam and marry Imran. On April 29, I was taken to an Islamic cleric, who asked me to recite Quranic verses and gave me a new name, Fatima”; **UPDATE**: escaped, returned home barefoot)

Jamila Masih (mother of Neha Pervaiz, said "I was shocked to learn what had happened to my daughter as I was under the impression that she was at her aunty's house to help her")

Pastor Ghazala Shafiq (helped Neha Pervaiz file a criminal complaint against her rapist, said "Girls under 18 years of age are considered minor and those doing this are punishable according to Pakistan's Penal Code")

Fr Saleh Diego (National Commission for Justice and Peace director, **UPDATE:** said "We appeal to the Sindh government and Prime Minister Imran Khan to take urgent steps to protect religious minorities from forced conversion to Islam")

Date: May 5, 2019

Location: Ittehad Town, Karachi, Sindh province

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistani-christian-teen-raped-forcibly-converted-to-islam/85195>

Event UPDATE

Samson Masih (catechist, reported on the desecration of up to 38 graves in a Christian cemetery "When we went to the graveyard following our Sunday Mass, crosses on the graves were found broken and thrown on the ground. We have reason to believe that this was driven by hatred for minorities living in the area. This is shocking for all of us as this is the first time that such an incident of religious intolerance has happened in our village")

Fr Saleh Diego (**UPDATE:** said "It is very sad news for us all that some sick minded people have resorted to attacks on our graves and dishonored and damaged crosses")

Date: May 12, 2019

Location: Okara, Punjab province

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-graves-desecrated-in-pakistan/85236>

Fr James Channan OP (**UPDATE:** honored by the government for his 'exemplary service' to promote interfaith harmony and peace, said "Everybody is my neighbor, and being a follower of Jesus Christ I have to love everybody - it keeps me motivated and zealous. We always have to share this message that we are one human family")

Date: May 17, 2019

Location: Lahore

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/pakistan-honors-priest-for-promoting-christian-muslim-dialogue/85291>



Philippines

Fr Edwin A Gariguez (**UPDATE:** called for an investigation into voting irregularities in the recent midterm elections)

Date: May 16, 2019

Location: Manila

Source: <https://www.ucanews.com/news/philippine-priest-demands-probe-into-massive-poll-fraud/85199>



Russia

Event: Over 80 Russian clergy both inside and outside the country signed an appeal to the government asking for police and legal restraint against peaceful protestors, including for a man sentenced to 4 years in a prison camp for holding a banner quoting the late Soviet era martyr Fr Alexander Men "Mercy is everything we aspire to"

Protoiereus Oleg Batov (theologian)

Fr Alexander Borisov

Fr Ioann Guaita (**UPDATE**)

Fr Vladimir Zelinsky (Italian resident)

Date: September 19, 2019

Source: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Russian-priests-defend-rights-of-arrested-protesters-48042.html>



United States - Arizona

Two Christian artists filed suit in [May 2016](#) to block a municipal ordinance that would require them to cater to same sex weddings; the court ruled against them in [September 2016](#); the court ruled again against them in [October 2017](#); an appellate court ruled against them in [June 2018](#); filed an appeal to the state supreme court on [July 9, 2018](#); **UPDATE: the state supreme court ruled 4-3 that the artists could not be compelled to create custom wedding invitations in violation of their religious beliefs**

Breanna Koski

Joanna Duka

Date: September 16, 2019

Location: Phoenix

Source: <https://www.christianpost.com/us/christian-artists-cant-be-forced-to-make-same-sex-wedding-invitations-ariz-supreme-court-rules.html>

United States - California

Pastor Jim Domen (husband of Amanda, father of three, former homosexual, church's Vimeo account including 89 videos deleted on [November 24, 2018](#) for 5 videos Vimeo

incorrectly claimed advocated conversion therapy, later said "The only thing the videos did was tell stories of transformation, of how Jesus transformed my life. I didn't call [homosexuality] out as sin. I didn't call out any LGBT people. It was exclusively just speaking of my own personal story and others like mine"; **UPDATE:** has filed suit against Vimeo claiming US\$75,000 in damages)

Date reported: September 18, 2019

Location: Newport Beach

Source: <https://www.charismanews.com/us/78043-formerly-gay-pastor-sues-vimeo-for-censoring-his-videos-deleting-his-account>

Event: The state legislature passed a resolution that called on Christians to refuse to convert homosexuals

Pastor Dan Carroll (earlier said "It's not a law. That's really important to say. Nobody's being forced to do anything...The thing that we agreed with the LGBTQ caucus on was that we are not for any kind of coercive behavior on the part of leaders or counselors or pastors. And as we shared with the LGBTQ caucus, we don't know anybody in California, that's Christian that is actually doing what they're suggesting that we're doing")

Russell Willingham (New Creation Ministries executive director, earlier said "ACR discriminates against perfectly rational adults who seek an alternate viewpoint to the gay-affirming counseling many of them have already tried and found wanting. I believe ACR99 sets the stage for future laws that will criminalize pastor caregivers like me who provide such a resource - resources that offer an option for those who don't want what the state is telling them they must accept")

Dean Broyles (National Center for Law and Policy President, earlier said "This resolution will not foster or promote the classic liberal ideals of authentic tolerance, diversity, or inclusion. It will crush them and destroy them. ACR 99 represents a misguided authoritarian attempt to coercively mold the beliefs of California's citizens regarding controversial and sensitive issues on human sexuality, and thus will only serve to chill and suppress the freedom of thought, speech, conscience, and religion of our citizens—safeguarded by the First Amendment")

Jonathan Keller (California Family Council President, earlier said "California Christians love our neighbors who identify as LGBTQ. Sadly, it appears Assemblyman Low and other intolerant legislators will not stop until people of faith publicly celebrate the legislature's preferred concept of sexual orientation and gender identity")

Date: September 4, 2019

Source: https://www.theepochtimes.com/california-legislature-pass-resolution-attacking-religious-liberty_3079010.html

and <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2019/august/ca-christians-say-resolution-condemns-religious-leaders-who-oppose-lgbtq-lifestyles>

United States - New York

Rev Joseph Jude Gannon (church vandalized on [September 8, 2019](#); **UPDATE:** commented on the second vandalism of his church by a woman with a hacksaw "It's a kick in the stomach. It hurts...Such acts of religious intolerance have no place within our society, and every house of worship, regardless of their beliefs, should be respected")

Dates: September 15, 2019

Location: Hollis section, Queens borough, New York City

Source: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/brooklyn-diocese-teaming-with-nypd-to-search-for-church-vandal-27459>

Today's Martyrs

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

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