“Read story on Page 20”
Jesus said

“If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke 9:23
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As we wrap up our data analysis for the First-Quarter report 2019, the grim reality of our findings is indeed deeply disturbing. We recorded 130 incidents of hate-crimes against Christians, in the quarter commencing January to March 2019. 2019 saw an increase of 11% from 2018, which recorded 117 incidents.

2 Christians, one from the state of Chhattisgarh and the other from neighbouring Odisha, were martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ. Sources tell us that in both cases, villagers allegedly influenced Maoist guerrillas to believe that the Christians were Police informers, as they were opposed to them following Christianity – prompting the guerrillas to kill them. May the blood of these Martyrs, be seeds for the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is Election Season and, in the world’s, largest democracy by population, election is scheduled to be held in 7 phases - from 11th April to 19th May 2019, to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. In a logistical coup of sorts, more than 900 million voters will cast their ballot. While the result may be indecisive, one thing is certain – Christians are agitated and distressed about the campaign of ongoing violence against them by the majority community.

Christianity has a long tradition in India. Previous Indian governments valued and supported the Christian community. The onset of Lok Sabha Elections has created a hostile and violent environment, polarizing communities, instigating hatred and exploiting minority communities. It has become increasingly very difficult for Christians to practice their faith. Christians in India experience an attack every 24 hours.
Travelling across the length and breadth of India, in the lead up to the General Elections in India, I have never witnessed such a significant number of praying communities stepping up and standing together, interceding for the restoration and upholding of Constitution of India.

Daily prayers, 72-hour prayer, 100-hour prayers etc., have sprung up everywhere. Christians are praying that a democratic Government will come to power, which respects freedom of religion and belief, and shows consideration and respect, for Christians to enjoy their Constitutional right to worship freely.

The Bible records several instances where “when God wants to judge a nation, He gives them up to wicked rulers” so that people of God may repent and come back to Him. God can turn the heart of any gentile king in our favour, like king Darius.

God is Sovereign and establishes and removes kings. It is “God Who promotes one and deposes another” (Ps. 75:6); and “There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.” (Rom. 13:1).

It is He who puts down one and exalts another (Ps. 75:7). And He resists the proud (1Pet. 5:5). As they seek to increasingly magnify themselves, God increasingly opposes them.

It is our responsibility to pray for righteous government; that they may not be prejudiced and discriminating but fair minded and tolerant towards all religions.

Pray that the elected Government will have an all-inclusive vision, engaging every people group while shaping their policies, value authenticity, model integrity, value new thinking, truly democratic and strive for righteousness.

It is time for Christians in India, to see the hand of God manifested, through these General Elections. God will definitely hear and answer our prayers.

Shibu Thomas
Chief Editor
Voice of the Christians
Pastor & associate beaten in two separate incidents, Karnataka

Paul says in, Acts 20:22-24

“And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

Rev. John Shamine had to say the same to us when we spoke to him. He was ministering in Bangalore, the capital city of Karnataka state. “10 years ago, after God’s calling, I left Bangalore in 2011 and started the ministry ‘Divine Mercy Ministries’ in the year 2010 in Rajanukunte, Doddaballapura main road. For the past 20 years I have been in the ministry.”

Rev. John told us that he had been persecuted more than 10 times in the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018 and on 19/3/2019. But by God’s Grace, his ministry has been growing. As persecution increased, the church grew.

He continued “On 19/3/19 I was at my residence with my family. Religious fanatics got into my house, beat me up and left. I went to the Rajanukunte Police Station and filed a complaint. Again on 22/3/19 around 6 pm, my associate Br. Suresh was coming back on his bike after doing ministry in a village when he was cornered by the religious fanatics who had arrived on 4 bikes. They beat up Br. Suresh with sticks, fists and kicks. Later I took him to a hospital following which he was discharged. He is presently resting at my residence. He is in tremendous pain and his head has a lacerated wound.”

One in three Christians face a high degree of persecution in Asia, with India entering the top 10 for the first time. India, the world’s largest democracy, rose to 10th place on the list, having been at 28th place five years ago.

Political rhetoric and ambiguous interpretations of the Freedom of Religion
Acts (or “anti-conversion” laws) are responsible for the high rate of Christian persecution in India according to the UK-US based monitoring group Open Doors. Open Doors publishes an annual World Watch List of 50 countries where it is most dangerous to live as a Christian.

In 2019, India ranked tenth – a first in the history of the list in over two decades. Dr Matthew Rees who authored the report told The Wire that “India has been going up the list rather steadily for the past five years” and can now be classified as a country with extreme persecution. Approximately 64 million Christians live in India but constitute less than 5% of the total population of 1.3 billion.

This report is based on the data Open Doors collects annually through an extensive survey in 75 countries.

Persecution Relief has recorded more than 477 persecution incidents in 2018, across the 29 states of India. The doors of a multitude of Churches have been sealed and scores arrested on false charges of indulging in conversion activities.

In 2019 we have already recorded more than 110 Hate crime cases against Christians.

“I am grateful to God for Persecution Relief, for their timely and urgent help to meet our medical expenses. I am indeed so privileged to know of their service. God bless them.”

-Pastor John Shamine
living in a small single-room house in Agraaharam village, (1-Town Police Station limits) Eluru mandal, West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, are 4 siblings living with their widowed mother, 3 sisters – Sis. Easwaramma, Sis. Srinivasa Devi, Sis. Durga (the latter 2 who are visually challenged) and 1 Brother Shivam and his visually challenged wife.

Sis. Easwaramma and the family are committed and ardent followers of Jesus Christ, who worship and pray in their home, because of the sister’s limitations.

Every Sunday, for the past 5 years, around 10 families used to gather at their home, for worship service would read the Bible and sing hymns rejoicing in the faith they had been given.

All this ended on Sunday 03rd March, as the sisters and family members were getting the home ready for worship service. 2 unidentified men, drove up to the house in a motor bike. They demanded to know the contact details of the Pastor who conducted the worship service. They claimed that they planned to conduct similar meetings in their home.

The household quickly sensed that something was amiss and noticing the “shiv shakti” sticker on the motor bike, refused to share the details of Pastor Nathaniel.

The enraged men verbally assaulted the family, threatening them with dire consequences, if they continued to worship Jesus Christ in the future. They also highlighted the fact that they live in a neighbourhood with upper caste brahmins and must stop worship or move out from the locality.

Bro. Shivam, tried to explain to the fanatic that nobody has the right to persecute somebody because of his or her faith, especially in one’s own home.

“How can you stop us from worshipping in our house? My sisters are blind and cannot go anywhere for meetings. We have been worshipping in our home for the past 5 years!?”

Threatening him and the sisters with dire consequences for challenging them, the belligerent men left, only to return in a short while, with an Advocate, living in the area. The Advocate had been abusing and threatening Sis. Easwaramma’s family for the past 3 months, asking them to vacate the locality or stop worshipping Jesus Christ.

With the arrival of the Advocate, the dispute became become even more volatile.
heated exchange, the hand of a blind sister, accidentally touched the Advocate which was like “the straw that broke the camel’s back”. This minor act caused an unpredictable and violent reaction in the Advocate.

The Advocate physically attacked the blind Sisters Srinivasa Devi and Durga and beat the rest of the women assembled there. Bro. Shivam rushed to the rescue of his sisters. Eventually, he along with his Sis. Eswaramma lodged a complaint with the 1 Town Police station.

Pastor Naveen, who lives in Karim Nagar, visited the residence of Sis. Easwaramma along with local Christain leaders, who were trying to help file a police complaint.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, the fear and pain in Sis. Eswaramma voice, as she narrated the whole incident, is unmistakable.

“These anti-Christians are using false accusations to incite hatred in the community”, she added.

The Blind Sisters and the family are terrified of what the situation will be in the future as the fanatics have threatened them to leave the locality immediately. They have also warned that no further meetings will be permitted to be held at the home, because of a high-cast brahmin who lives close by.

Church, pray for our brothers and sisters who risk their lives to worship Jesus Christ. Pray that God would supernaturally work through these discouraging circumstances.

The situation for Christians in India is worsening day by day. Police and the Administration are most times in collusion with the religious fanatics, who implicitly support them, acting as intelligence gatherers and report on Christians.

As the Elections approach, Politicians are openly campaigning the rights of the majority over minority communities - Christians and Muslims continue to be treated as the pariahs.

In India, the scale of “crack down” against the Christian minority community has been unprecedented, with tighter surveillance of churches and on those who continue to worship a western God, Jesus Christ.

Pray that God will frustrate and destroy the plans of those who intend evil and destruction of God’s people, and that they may witness the power and glory of HIS righteousness.”
62-year old Anand and Women beaten up during house meeting, West Bengal

Pangachhiya is a town in Barabani CD Block in Asansol Sadar subdivision of Paschim Bardhaman district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Bro. Anand Hari, a member of Full Gospel Church, was holding a cottage meeting at Sister Rekha Hari’s house in Pangachhiya on 19th March 2019, which was attended by around 10 people and Bro. Anand himself was presiding over the meeting as an elder in the Church.

62-year-old Anand had started the meeting at 7 pm and according to the Complaint that he had filed with the Kanyapur police station at Asansol, a mob of around 20 people led by Mr. Ghandi Nonia barged into the house and dragged Bro. Anand out and beat up the senior citizen because of which he is presently unable to walk. They also beat up the congregants. Many of the women were also slapped & kicked in the stomach. Bro. Anand himself was forced to say Jai Shri Ram and Hanuman chalisa while he was being beaten and was threatened...
with dire consequences unless he embraced Hinduism. Bro. Anand is admitted in Asansol Government hospital.

Rev. Raja Dey informed Persecution Relief about the incident and later Rev. Christian Paul, the head of Full Gospel Church, spoke to Persecution Relief.

Persecution Relief also spoke to Kushi, the grand daughter, who was saddened about what happened, as she arrived from Jharkhand to meet her grandfather.

Speaking to us from the Hospital, his son, Chandan Hari informed us that his father was in great pain. Doctors had advised for multiple X-rays and that the police had not taken any action as yet.

Religious freedom in India continues to deteriorate and it has been on a steep decline for the past few years. As a result, the plight of religious minorities is reaching new levels. This despite the fact that the right to freedom of religion or belief is clearly recognized in the 1949 Constitution of India.

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In 2019 we have already recorded more than 110 Hate crime cases against Christians.

PERSECUTION RELIEF ALSO SPOKE TO KUSHI, THE GRAND DAUGHTER, WHO WAS SADENED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, AS SHE ARRIVED FROM JHARKHAND TO MEET HER GRANDFATHER.

RELIEF PROVIDED

“SEVERAL OF US NEEDED HOSPITALIZATION AND MEDICAL ATTENTION. PERSECUTION RELIEF STOOD WITH US, PRACTICALLY SUPPORTING US SPIRITUALLY AND FINANCIALLY, TAKING CARE OF OUR MEDICAL BILLS. I AM GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR THE GREAT MINISTRY WORK THEY ARE DOING IN INDIA”.

-elder Anand Hari
THEY CAN BURN OUR BIBLES,
BUT THEY CAN’T EXTINGUISH OUR FAITH

Founder - Persecution Relief
Christian Persecution intensifies in Tamil Nadu

PASTOR JEEVARAJ IS CONTINUOUSLY HARASSED BY RELIGIOUS FANATIC GROUPS. THREE YEARS AGO, FANATICS BURNED DOWN HIS PRAYER HOUSE.

The churches in the state of Tamil Nadu are under increasing attack - house churches are being disrupted and forcefully closed, church structures are being burned down, the Bible is being burned, tract distributions are forcefully stopped, Christians are being harassed and pastors are beaten up on a regular basis.

Persecution Relief has reported 48 incidents of hate crime against Christians in 2017 and 67 such cases in 2018 in the state of Tamil Nadu alone.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Jeevaraj informed us that he runs a house church at his residence in Eravadi, a village in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu state, where around ten Christians have been gathering every Sunday for worship for the past two years.

Pastor Jeevaraj is continuously harassed by religious fanatic groups. Three years ago, fanatics burned down his prayer house.

“On 13th March 2018, police officials from Eravadi visited my house twice and at around 8 pm the sub-inspector asked me to come to the police station. Around 8:30 pm I went alone to the police station and I found around two dozen religious fanatics were already present there”, said Pastor Jeevaraj.

“The sub-inspector, influenced by the fanatics, started questioning me and made all sorts of allegations against me.”
Since Pastor Jeevaraj did not return home till 10:30 pm, his wife went to the police station. The inspector prepared a statement and forced both Pastor Jeevaraj and his wife to sign the statement. The statement stated among other things that

• they would not hold prayer meetings at their residence,
• they would not share about Jesus to anybody in their neighborhood,
• that people should not come to their house for prayer

Left with no choice, they signed the statement. Pastor Jeevaraj said,

“I left the police station late at night and when I reached home, I found my house vandalized, and stones and liquor bottles were strewn around”

Dr R. Anburajan, Secretary of Voice of Justice, spoke to the Supdt of Police (SP) and South Zone Inspector General (IG). 40 Pastors under the leadership of Pr Vino along with 4 Lawyers visited the police station and asked the police officials to file First Information Report (FIR) and to take firm action against the religious fanatics. Later, FIR was filed and Police has assured to take firm action.

The Bible tells us to pray for those in the midst of persecution! Hebrews 13:3 Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.

Relief Provided

“I was so discouraged and scared by the attack against my family and myself. Persecution Relief truly provided me relief and encouragement. They prayed for me to overcome fear and financially supported me to repair the prayer house and restore the damaged items. God bless Persecution Relief.”

–Pastor Jeevaraj

Church, rise up and pray for our dear Pastor Jeevaraj his wife and 3 children, after the midnight attack, they are fearful and are planning to shift from the current residence.

Church Pray that they find a suitable place to live peacefully. Despite enormous challenges Pastor is strong in his faith and he wants to continue ministering at the same place.

If you want to help Pastor and family please WhatsApp us at: +91 99932 00020
Widow ostracized and beaten for her faith in Jesus Christ, West Bengal

Sis. Moyazan Bewa (Bewa means widow) has been living with her 2 daughters, abandoned by her sons for the past 15 years, because of her faith in Jesus Christ.

A worshipper and a woman who fears God, she had been teaching the Koran to the women and children in the locality. When the Lord opened her heart in 2007, breaking tradition and risking everything, she committed her life to Christ. Little did she anticipate the opposition she would face from her own family members.

Guided by God’s Spirit and inspired by His Word, she continued to faithfully testify about His goodness over her life. When she started attending Christian worship services, she was totally rejected by her own sons, relatives, neighbours and Muslim community. She was up against a hard choice – “give up your newfound faith or reap the consequences”. But this wise old lady, who chose to follow Jesus Christ, suffered humiliating beating at the hands of her own sons and was ostracized by her relatives.
and neighbours. Nevertheless, she continued to fear God and live faithfully.

She had a few cows and used to sell the milk to maintain her family expenses.

But the local extremist groups, threatened the villagers, not to buy the milk that she was selling. If anyone was found buying her goods, they were warned, would face punitive measures. Isolated with such stringent prohibitive measures, and left with no other choice, Sis. Moyazan Bewa sold her cow.

A simple devout woman, in spite of persecution, opposition and the challenges life has thrown at her, she continues to concentrate all her remaining energy on communion with God.

Recently, 65-year old Sis. Moyazan fell very sick and had to be hospitalized in the local Government hospital. Her daughters looked after her while at hospital, but her sons and relatives do not want to help as she has refused to come back to Islam. She has totally denied Islam and all kinds of rituals of Islam due to her faith in Christ.

Pastor Bashir who ministers at Khoda-e-Jamat, in Murshidabad district in West Bengal for the past 17-years, called Persecution Relief to inform about the abandoned and sick widow.

Church, pray for Sis. Moyazan Bewa, for her steadfast faith, for her complete recovery, safety and God’s provision to meet her livelihood needs.

Pray that the peace of God that surpasses human understanding, will continue to abide with Sister and God would continue to use her for His glory and honour.

“I HEARD ABOUT PERSECUTION RELIEF AND WAS NOT VERY SURE ABOUT THEIR MINISTRY. BUT AFTER SPEAKING TO BRO. SHIBU THOMAS, I WAS VERY GLAD TO LEARN OF THEIR UNIQUE MINISTRY. THE FINANCIAL AND PRAYER SUPPORT THAT THEY OFFERED WAS BEYOND EXPECTATION. GOD BLESS BRO. THOMAS FOR HIS GENEROSITY.”

-PASTOR BASHIR
IEM prayer meeting near Hosur disrupted, Bibles burned

**People from the neighborhood gathered around and remained mute spectators. Nobody came to rescue us, and some women from around started shouting and yelling at us as if we had committed a crime sitting inside the house and praying.**

In yet another attack on the freedom of Christians, a prayer meeting of IEM (Indian Evangelical Mission) workers at Kurupatti, Krishnagiri district, near Hosur, was the target of religious fanatics. Pastor Neethi Raja (Church Promotion-IEM), along with a few others had gathered at the residence of Br Sitappa for prayer on 19 March, 2019.

While the prayer meeting was in progress, five religious fanatics barged in and started questioning them. “We are friends, we are just sitting and praying, what is the problem?”, asked Raja. Five to ten more fanatics joined and pulled them out and started insulting them and accusing them of conversion. “They took our bag and Bibles and tried to force us to burn the Bibles. We refused, but they kept on insisting.

“People from the neighborhood gathered around and remained mute spectators. Nobody came to rescue us, and some women from around started shouting and yelling at us as if we had committed a crime sitting inside the house and praying.”

The religious fanatics took the Bible from everyone. They also took the IEM magazines, IEM receipt book, some cash, cheque etc. threw them on the ground and they asked them to burn it. The IEM team refused but they kept shouting and pressurizing and threatening to harm them.
A Christian lady who lives across the street saw this and she informed her husband. He along with few others were holding a EU (Evangelical Union) meeting. They arrived at the spot and spoke to the fanatics. They asked Raja and others to leave the place. The EU leaders pacified the religious fanatics and they left.

Raja spoke to Persecution Relief and has asked for prayers. He was distressed initially, “but the grace of the Lord gave us strength to overcome this situation and we feel honored and we are thankful to the Lord that he gave us an opportunity to be persecuted for the Kingdom’s sake.” Raja said.

IEM National Secretary Reverend Raja Singh, speaking to Persecution Relief said, “We have forgiven the persecutors. Nothing happens to us without the knowledge of our Saviour Jesus Christ and the battle belongs to Him!”

In many states of India today, Christians can’t gather at their own residence and pray with family and friends. It appears Hindu fanatic groups are being specifically trained and given the responsibility to stop all churches in the villages and make sure no new church is being opened. At some places sign boards are appearing saying, ‘No Christians welcomed in this village’.

Why is this happening? Why are Christians isolated from their privileges? Is the Constitution of India not applicable to Christians? Why are politicians and political parties quiet on these issues? Why are these fanatics saying that India is a Hindu country and that if you want to live in India you have to become a Hindu?

Church, wake up, the persecuted believers need your prayer and support! We, as the body of Christ, need to be knitted together in a time like this and move forward with the Gospel of Jesus Christ across India!

“THANK YOU, PERSECUTION RELIEF, FOR HELPING PASTOR NEETHI RAJA, CHURCH IN CHARGE, FINANCIALLY. I APPRECIATE THIS UNIQUE PLATFORM PERSECUTION RELIEF, FOR BEING THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS, AND HIGHLIGHTING CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN INDIA -IEM NATIONAL SECRETARY REVEREND RAJA SINGH
Adopt
a persecuted family

Prayerline24.com
- Daily 6 to 6.45 pm (New York time)
- Dial +1-712-432-8273, access code 210618#

Oklahoma Prayer Line
Sunday 9 to 11 pm – Oklahoma time
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The age-old practice of excommunication is still being propagated in the villages of Gujarat. This shocking incident was reported from Dehda village, Dahod district of Gujarat.

For the past 8 years, around 25 families gather together at a believer’s residence for Sunday Worship in Dehda village, Dahod district of Gujarat state of India.

Things had been peaceful for all these years but, in the recent past, Christians in this village have been facing a lot of harassment and intimidation from the local villagers. Insulted, abused, beaten without any provocation and forced to worship their hindu gods, tension had been simmering among the villagers because the Christians were not worshipping their gods.

The whole incident fast-tracked when the Christian families refused to accept temple “prasad” (prasad is a material substance of vegetarian food that is a religious offering in Hinduism. It is normally consumed by worshippers after worship). This infuriated the village headman (Sarpanch) and a local committee (Panchayat), who invoked their traditional system of justice.

The elders of the village decided to ask the followers of Jesus Christ assemble outside a Hindu Temple during the last week of February 2019. Each member of the family, were asked to break a coconut and eat the “prasada”, which they refused point blank.

This enraged the village headman and members of the community, who decided to take the law into their own hands and punish the “impure” Christians.

The village headman, chosen by the people, administers the rights, rules and ceremonies of the village. If there is anything that affects the village’s interest, the village headman calls the villagers to sit together and settle it. The village headman who is expected to be unbiased, was prejudiced towards the majority community and manipulated by the local religious fanatics.

With no warning, the local villagers surrounded them and thrashed the trapped Christians with lathis. The young and able-bodied ran away, while the elderly and women folk with young children, bore the brunt of this malicious and unprovoked attack.

They decreed the following coercive practice to ostracize the families:

They decreed that the 25 Christian families, must pay a cash fine of ₹ 45,000/- and demanded a live goat, as offering to appease their god.

The families were forbidden to gather for Sunday worship service going forward.
The village headman alleged that the Christians had diminished the power of their temple gods. He also alleged that the traditional dignity and identity of the village, had been defiled, polluted and made impure by the Christian God. Therefore, to restore the sacredness of their gods, the spilling of blood was necessary as purification, in the belief that it will appease the violent vengeance of the gods.

This shameful and illegal incident, raises serious questions over the functioning and competency of the Village Council authority, where religion becomes the tool of oppression over an economically weaker and powerless minority group.

Instead of going to the Police – who usually try not to interfere in the village affairs, and fearing further harassment, the Christians have surrendered to the injustice and sentence passed by the community assembly. While they have vehemently refused to participate in the prescribed cleansing ceremonies, they have consented to pay for the cost of the goat and the penalty levied upon them, so as to avoid being excommunicated and accepted back into the community.

Uprooting their lives and livelihood, relocating from the area, giving up their ancestral property and homes and livestock, is something that these families want to avoid.

Last Sunday, these families travelled around 5 kms to the neighbouring village for Sunday Worship service.

Pastor T. A. Samuel, Head of Immanuel Fellowship Ministries in India [IFMI], was the first to break the story to us.

Speaking to persecution Relief, Pastor Mark, who is in-charge of IFMI, mentioned that the families were economically backward. Pastor Kanu, who ministers to these families, borrowed money on interest, to pay the Village Headman.

“The families are demoralized in their spirit and discouraged that they cannot gather to worship on Sunday’s at the village again”.

Church, while we sit in our Air-conditioned Halls and Auditoriums, 1000’s of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and oppressed and harassed, every Sunday, just to gather under a shed and worship. The Bible records that when a fellow Christian faces persecution, grief, or trials, we hurt as if we’re experiencing that pain.

“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it”. - 1 Corinthians 12:26

In the body of Christ, someone’s pain must ignite our compassion and move us toward action. We might pray, offer a word of encouragement, or do whatever it takes to aid the healing process. That’s how the body works together.

The estimated cost of a goat is around Rs. 13,000/- ($US. 190/-) and the cash penalty of Rs. 45,000/- ($US. 650/-).

If you are inspired by the Holy Spirit to support these families, please write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com or WhatsApp on +91 9993200020.
ANOTHER COLOMBIAN PASTOR KILLED, LEAVING THE CHURCH ‘TERRIFIED’

By World Watch Monitor

A Colombian pastor was killed as he left his church last week in the northwest of the country, in a region that has been plagued by violence from armed groups, local sources told World Watch Monitor. Pastor Leider Molina, 24, had just finished preaching in his church in Caucasia, Antioquia state in northwest Colombia, on Friday, 9 February. As he stepped outside, he was hit by five bullets.

“Communist guerrillas, paramilitary groups, criminal gangs and drug cartels all see the Church as an enemy to be eradicated because, thanks to the preaching and courageous action of leaders and pastors, many young people have renounced armed conflict and illegal activities,” the source said.

Last September two other pastors in the region were killed. Pastor Galarza, a social and religious leader, was shot death in front of his family.

FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN WOMEN, VIOLENCE IS COMPOUNDED BY ‘SHAMING’

By World Watch Monitor

It would be hard to argue the world is unaware that Islamic State fighters used rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war against Iraq’s Yazidi women: Nadia Murad shared the 2018 Nobel Prize after she told the world of her personal ordeal at their hands. However, testimonies from minority Christian women in northern Iraq and Syria, who also were subject to similar violations, are comparatively rare. One who bravely shared what happened to her is Rita, from the Iraqi town...
of Qaraqosh, who was 26 when the Islamic State invaded in summer 2014 and took her captive. She was sold and bought four times as a sex slave before being freed in 2017; finally, she was reunited with her father almost four years after she was taken captive.

The UN has now formally started to investigate IS crimes in the region. A senior Muslim cleric has said the UN team also should focus on “abductions, slavery and sexual violence” suffered by minority women there. Experts have told World Watch Monitor that Christian women are not speaking out in the way Nadia Murad has been able to, either because they are still too traumatized, or perhaps because they find their treatment “too shaming” and find it hard to speak out publicly.

It’s this “hidden” persecution suffered by women, often going un-acknowledged by both the victims themselves and their communities, that is the focus of the latest report from the Research Unit of Open Doors, which every year compiles the World Watch List of the 50 most difficult countries in which to live as a Christian.

**PAKISTAN CHRISTIAN STILL ON DEATH ROW, FIVE YEARS AFTER HIS ‘BLASPHEMY’ SPARKED JOSEPH COLONY ATTACK**

*By World Watch Monitor*

At the fifth anniversary of the arson attack on a Christian neighbourhood in the Pakistani city of Lahore, the mother of the Christian man convicted of blasphemy against Islam – and so provoking the attack – says she still prays for his release.

Sawan Masih*, a 30-year-old sanitation worker, was accused by a Muslim friend of making blasphemous remarks against the prophet Muhammad on 9 March 2013, for which he was sentenced to death in 2014. His appeal is still pending.

Following the initial accusation against him, an over 3,000-strong mob descended on Joseph Colony, setting fire to over 150 houses, including the Masih family’s home.

An anti-terrorism court last year acquitted every one of the more than 100 suspects accused of involvement in the attack, but Masih, a father of three, is still being held in the Central Jail in Faisalabad, 140km west of Lahore, awaiting the outcome of his appeal at the Lahore High Court.
5 YEARS ON, 112 CHIBOK GIRLS MISSING – BUT THEY ARE JUST ‘TIP OF THE ICEBERG’

By World Watch Monitor

Five years ago, April 14th, 2014, about 230 girls from Chibok Girls’ Secondary School in NE Nigeria were rounded up at night by men in army dress and driven off on trucks into the darkness.

In the immediate aftermath, 47 of them escaped; some jumped off the trucks, others managed to get away within a few days.

At least 200 of the girls belonged to the EYN Church: wife of a former President of EYN, Dr. Rebecca Dali (one of the first to visit the parents after the mass kidnap), told World Watch Monitor that she was pleading for the Nigerian government to find and free the girls.

In January 2016, the Nigerian military were reported to have freed 1,000 women held captive by Boko Haram, – but none of them were Chibok girls.

30 months on, the Islamist terrorist group freed 21 of the Chibok girls (Oct 2016), then 82 more in May 2017. Half of them -112 – have yet to be freed, says the Chairman of the Chibok Parents’ Association. Meantime at least a dozen of the Chibok parents has died, either themselves killed by Boko Haram, or by stress-related illness.
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I believe that one day, my preaching of God’s Word will be called a hate crime. That day may come sooner than later. Look around. The way the U.S. is going the things we teach and will be called hate speech. We may not be able to speak at all.

We had communist revolutions in China and Russia. The political leaders wanted to kill the church. Everything was built around the Orthodox Church in Russia. Once the government took away the buildings and the priests in Russia, the people didn’t know where to go. Most lost their spiritual moorings. In China the same thing happened. Under Mao Tse Tung, the Chinese government took away the churches, but there was a different result. In China there was a difference.

Chinese churches had empowered ordinary Christians to survive and thrive. When the churches closed, the Chinese people continued to share their faith and the church grew from about two million to approximately eighty million. Which camp would you fall into?

Could be God preparing us for the future, so that we are ready to share our faith in a post-Christian culture, under persecution?

Or are we so complacent that we are consumer Christians, spoon-fed by our favorite preachers, paying someone else to lead others to Christ and disciple them?

Whenever you are confused, and are seeking direction, just go back to the basics.

“When we stop living by faith, we will stop experiencing Him, and begin to doubt Him. My hope is to stir you to action (Hebrews 10:24) so that you experience the “life that is truly life!”
When the church has made mistakes in the past, it’s where the church has failed to elevate the core issues. Jesus made it simple. In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus was asked which was the great commandment. He replied, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind...and a second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and all of the Prophets.”

Don’t let anything become more important to you. If your family were to say to you, “We will never pray again, we will never read the Bible again,” where would you stand? I love Jesus so much. I know I will stand before God alone. I couldn’t bear to hear Him say, “Depart from me, I never knew you.”

Did you know that my Dad was a pastor? I didn’t want to tell anyone. I didn’t want to tell anyone because I didn’t want them to think my faith was inherited. My faith is so personal to me.

We gather together to spur one another on to love and good works. Give courage to other people. One of the guys, a theologian who loved me, saw me and he’s decided to tell me his story.

He was a long-haired hippie in the sixties smoking a joint and someone cared enough to look beyond his exterior and share Christ with him. The older saint, the famous theologian, began to weep. His salvation experience was so real to him, even after all these years, he still wept at God’s grace. I want to be that person. Gracious, loving, when people see me, they see Jesus.

That’s what God does for us. We are never to become callous to the Holy Spirit. Remembering God’s grace to save us should make us weep.

I am on an adventure. I have faith that God will use my life. I want to be a lover of God.

Taken from a sermon by Francis Chan, www.crazylove.org. Used by permission.
Adopt

THE FAMILY OF THE MARTYRED CHRISTIAN.

Contact: +91 99932 00020
The story of Esther in the Bible is set in the 4th Century BC in Ancient Persia or modern-day Iran. The Holy Temple that stood in Jerusalem had been destroyed more than 50 years earlier, and the Jews were now subjects of the mighty Persian empire. Three years after King Xerxes ascended the throne and after he had consolidated his position as the ruler of this great empire which encompassed 127 lands, he decided to have a grand celebration. For 180 days, the revelry went on, followed by a smaller party for the residents of the capital city of Shushan. In the women’s quarters, Queen Vashti was holding her own celebration for the womenfolk of Shushan.

On the seventh day, in a drunken state, the King ordered Queen Vashti to appear before all the menfolk because he wanted them to admire her exquisite beauty. When Vashti balked at this request, and upon the advice of his advisor, Memucan, Xerxes ordered that Vashti never enter his presence again.

When Xerxes’s wrath dissipated, loneliness engulfed him. His personal assistants suggested that he organize a beauty pageant. Officers would be appointed to go out into all the king’s lands to locate the next beauty who could become his wife. The girls would be brought to Xerxes and whoever found favour in the king’s eyes would become the new queen.

The leader of the Jews at that time was a Shushanite resident named Mordecai. He had a cousin, Hadassah, who was orphaned as a young girl. She was also known as Esther. Mordechai had raised her and treated her as a daughter.

Though Esther had no desire to be the queen, she was forcibly taken to the king’s harem, to participate in the contest. All the contestants had to undertake elaborate beauty treatments for twelve months to prepare themselves before they appeared before the King. Esther’s innate beauty, simplicity and character found her favour in the palace. When she appeared before the king, he immediately took to her, and Esther became the new Queen of Persia.

FOR IF YOU REMAIN SILENT AT THIS TIME, RELIEF AND DELIVERANCE FOR THE JEWS WILL ARISE FROM ANOTHER PLACE, BUT YOU AND YOUR FATHER’S FAMILY WILL PERISH. AND WHO KNOWS BUT THAT YOU HAVE COME TO THE ROYAL PALACE FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS” (ESTHER 4:14 NIV).
As per Mordecai’s directive, though, Esther refused to divulge her Jewish heritage and identity, even to the King. Why was this deceit necessary? Anyone who has studied the history of the Jewish people understands the trail of anti-Semitism that has always followed the Jews. Things were no different in the time of Esther, and Mordecai understood that her very survival depended upon her nationality being concealed.

Every good story must have a villain, and the story of Esther has one in the person of Haman, the egotistical and vengeful advisor to the king. Because of his enmity with Mordecai who refused to bow down to him, he plotted the annihilation of the Jewish people. Haman told the king, “There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them” (Esther 3:8 NIV). The king gave him authority to handle the fate of the Jewish people. In return, Haman announced a government-issued edict of genocide.

Knowing that the Jews were in imminent peril, Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people, reminding her of her unique place in history. He exhorted her that silence was not an option when her people faced mass extinction. In one of the most poetic Biblical passages, Mordecai speaks of God’s purposeful timing: “Who knows but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14 NIV). In other words, Mordecai told Esther in no uncertain terms that even her God-given beauty and current position as Queen in the palace were for a greater purpose.

A terrified Esther knew, of course, that going to the king unsolicited could be her death sentence. Anyone who came into the king’s

As believers, we need to realise that there are no accidents or coincidences in our lives. God uses our willingness to fulfil His plans and purposes in this world. We are given divine opportunities to alter situations and events. However, we need to realize, as Mordecai tells Esther, that if we are unwilling to fulfil God’s purposes, He will find someone else to do the needful. Only we will be the losers for missing out on the opportunity to serve Him.
presence without being summoned could be summarily executed. She had not been summoned to the king for over a month and was already feeling insecure about her position in the palace. But she also realized that the fate of her people hung in her hands.

Before making a life or death decision, she called for the Jewish people to join her on a 3-day fast. Following the fast, she put on her best royal robes, approached the king, and told him of Haman’s plot against her people. God orchestrated the favour that Esther would receive from the king because she first sought Him in prayer and fasting. The Jewish people were saved, Haman was hanged on the same gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai, and Esther received Haman’s estate. This dramatic unfolding of events plays out like a great chess game with several life lessons, not the least of which is that God has a plan for our lives.

As believers, we need to realise that there are no accidents or coincidences in our lives. God uses our willingness to fulfil His plans and purposes in this world. We are given divine opportunities to alter situations and events. However, we need to realize, as Mordecai tells Esther, that if we are unwilling to fulfil God’s purposes, He will find someone else to do the needful. Only we will be the losers for missing out on the opportunity to serve Him.

In the face of fear, we are to look to God for our courage and sustenance. Esther mastered her fear when she said, “I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16 NIV). Esther was willing to die to save her people. Sometimes we must stand in courage and risk everything, trusting God alone for the outcome. Esther’s obedience saved God’s people from genocide. The reality is that Esther didn’t know what would happen when she approached the king. She acted in obedience, and by doing so she saved a nation.

We need to understand that God is in control of every aspect of our lives, whether we want him to be or not. There is nothing that is not subject to him (Hebrews 2:8 NIV). No part of our lives is untouched. The best thing we can do for ourselves is to search for and surrender to his will. Just as Esther did, etched forever in the annals of history, and in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people.
Very often we think that if we had the opportunity to face dangerous situations for the name of Christ, we would have been bold and stood strong. We imagine that we would have reacted better and more fervently than many Christians who actually face persecution. However, let us examine this line of thinking by examining our own lives. Do we show courage in the small things?

When we are asked to join in celebration of festivals which would question our allegiance to the God of the Bible, what do we do? Do we justify taking part in the festival or do we politely refuse to take part? This alone would reveal the extent to which we are willing to compromise our stance. On the other hand, our response could also reveal the extent to which we are willing to stay true to the Scriptures. Similarly, when we are asked to eat food offered to idols, what do we do? Do we justify eating such food or do we politely refuse to eat by citing Biblical reasons? The response to this would again reveal the extent to which we are willing to compromise our stance or the extent to which we are willing to please the God of the Bible.

Christians as a group are largely ashamed of their God and refuse to speak the name of Jesus Christ in public. While this is not true of all Christians, this is indeed true of most Christians that I know of. However, the peoples of others faiths are not ashamed of their gods. They are willing to openly worship their gods and speak of their faith. They do it without a second thought like it is the most natural thing in the world to do. The reason why Christians don’t feel that it is natural to speak of Jesus Christ is because we have largely discarded family Bible reading and family prayer at home. The reason Christians don’t feel that it is natural to speak of the Bible or the name of Jesus is because we have stopped praying before meals.

Many Christians will even blame their own brothers and sisters who carry out the Great Commission while they themselves are comfortably sitting in safe settings, making money, and caring only for their own immediate nuclear family. By providing hospitals and educational institutions wherever Christians go, they have hid behind the good works of healing the sick and educating the populace while forsaking the Biblical mandate to make disciples. We have forsaken the Biblical mandate to visit the brothers in prison, and to provide support – whether monetary or emotional – to our
poorer and suffering Christian brothers and sisters. Most Christians don’t even bother to pray for the missionaries, let alone visit them or provide financial support for their families.

We must stop blaming those who carry out the Great Commission as being responsible for inviting the persecution that they face. Blaming those who carry out the Great Commission for the persecution they face is the same as blaming the aborted foetus for being aborted, and it is the same as blaming the rape-victim for being raped, and it is the same as blaming the murder-victim for being murdered.

If we don’t have the courage to do what the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded us to do, let us at least support those who do, by praying for them, visiting them and financially supporting them. But first, we ourselves must have personal prayer, we must pray before our own meals, we must have family prayer, we must give priority to attending church services and Bible studies so that our children grow up knowing where their priorities should be. We must live a life of faithfulness to the God of the Bible by the grace of Jesus Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has already done all that is necessary for us to be saved. All those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives and Saviour of their souls, has had the Holy Spirit gifted to them. Those who belittle and blame those children of God who carry out the Great Commission are grieving the Holy Spirit.

So, first of all, be faithful to God in your own family. May we have the courage to be faithful in the small things.

Credit: Dr. Chris Mathew
SUMMARY:

- In 2019, Maharashtra ranks 3rd among the most hostile states against Christians.
- In 2019, in the First Quarter – January to March 2019, it has already recorded 12 incidents of hate-crime against Christians.
- In 2018, Maharashtra was ranked 10th and recorded 16 incidents of hate-crimes against Christians.
- With the onset of Elections, violence against Christians continue, as fear and insecurity continue to pervade among minorities.
- Cases of Excommunication, Christians Sindhi’s being targeted and house Churches attacked have been reported.

PRAYER POINTS:

- Pray that the communal mindset will be crushed in Jesus’ name.
- Pray that the partisan and discriminatory attitude by the State Government and authorities, will be erased in Jesus’ name.
- Pray that Christian Persecutors will be transformed in Jesus’ name.
- Pray for the safety and protection of all Christians in the State of Maharashtra, who are facing intense harassment, in Jesus’ name.
- Pray for Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Devendra Fadnavis, his cabinet, the bureaucrats and all the persecutors.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)
TOP 10 HOSTILE STATES-QUARTER 1
(JANUARY TO MARCH 2019)

Top 10 Hostile States - 2019

Top 10 Hostile States - 2018

Top 10 Hostile States - 2017

Top 10 Hostile States - 2016
Key stories covered by Media related to Christians

• In a rather shocking development, mysterious hoardings, banners and boards sprung up in 2 states - Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, warning visitors not to preach Jesus Christ and deterring Christians from entering the village.

• Tripura, a north-eastern state of India, witnessed 96 Christians converted to Hinduism - ‘Ghar Wapsi’ (reconversion to the original religion), by right-wing Hindu Jagaran Mancha and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), at Kailashahar in Unakoti district, Tripura.

• The Delhi High Court on Tuesday quashed an order issued by Consulate General of India (CGI), Houston, that cancelled a Doctor’s Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Card on the grounds that he was involved in missionary activities in India.

• Rights Activist, Father Stanislaus Lourdusamy, 82, was charged in a sedition case under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which aims to check so-called anti-national activities.

• License of 16 Child Care Institutions (CCI), including ‘Nirmal Hriday’ run by Missionaries of Charity, has been cancelled following a report submitted by Jharkhand State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) with a recommendation to take action against 31 such shelter homes in the State.

• Several International Human Rights Organisations as well as International Government Agencies, condemned the intolerance and rise in persecution of Christians in India.

• Charitable trusts whose main objective is the advancement of religion, spirituality or yoga can be said to be in businesses, and so fall under the purview of GST. Selling religious books and CD’s will also attract GST.

• Jailed for over 220 days jailed nun awaits justice, bail. A Missionaries of Charity nun and an employee of Nirmal Hriday Home have been locked in jail for the last 222 days on the charges of child trafficking in the Jharkhand. The two women are languishing in the prison in Jharkhand and not even granted bail despite suffering from serious medical conditions.

• Kerala withdraws from introducing Church act. Following protest from Church groups across Kerala, the government has withdrawn from a move to introduce a bill aimed at managing temporal properties of churches in the state.

• Indian Court rules change of religion does not alter tribal status. The high court in India’s Chhattisgarh state has ruled that the tribal status of a person will not alter if they change their religion to Christianity, stressing they can still enjoy state concessions aimed at improving the life of indigenous people.
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