22nd July will be honored as “Indian Christian Martyrdom Day”
On this day, please pause from your activities, individually or with family and friends, 
to pray at home, work, or Church, for 2 minutes, to remember the persecuted 
Church and the Martyrs’ families.
Let this Annual Event make us reflect on their great sacrifice, 
which India must never forget.
May it raise up believers to pray, volunteer and lend support to the 
persecuted Church in India.
Indian Christian Martyrdom Day:

Persecution Relief family are commemorating “Indian Christian Martyrdom Day” on 22nd July 2017. What is significant about this date? Exactly one year ago, on July 22nd 2016, Sis. Esther, whom we have named “Bharat ki Beti”, was brutally raped and martyred for Jesus Christ. This was an act of revenge and intimidation, to get her family to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of losing one daughter and despite threats of the other daughters being subjected to the same fate the family were unwilling to forsake Jesus and hence this brutality.

July 22nd will be established as an annual event and will be a day observed as a solemn tribute to martyrs, whose life and death have preached the loudest messages in the face of religious oppression. These witnesses of Christ have been the most effective end-time evangelists.

2016 saw the highest number of Martyrs, post-Indian Independence. We need to remember them, honor them, tell their stories in our Churches, our homes and in our communities. This is our responsibility and duty so that we may propel our brethren to “live a life worthy of the calling we have received” (Eph. 4:11) and be renewed in taking up our cross daily no matter what it might cost us.

Should all Christians desire to become martyrs? What does the Bible say?

The Bible applauds faithful believers who pay the ultimate price for their witness. Stephen was granted a glorious vision of heaven before he died, and in this vision, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:56), as though waiting for Stephen in an attitude of honor for Stephen’s faithful service. Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who were persecuted for His name: “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me” (Matthew 5:11). Clearly, the biblical evidence points to the fact that those who are persecuted and suffer for their witness to Christ (including enduring death) are pleasing in God’s sight.
However, when Jesus says, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39), He is not calling for people to make an attempt to lose their lives. Rather, He is calling us to be willing to lose our lives for His sake. Martyrdom is an expectation. Those who actively seek the path of martyrdom are not seeking it for the glory of God, but for their own glory. As the old saying goes, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church”. God’s purpose in martyrdom is the glorification of His name and the building up of His church.

Indian History of Christian Martyrdom:

Since its earliest days, hundreds of thousands of Christians have been killed for their faith. History chronicles the lives, suffering and triumphant deaths of these Christian martyrs.

The first two centuries are remembered as the age of persecution or martyrdom.

- All of Jesus’ disciples except for John and Judas were martyred. Surely, Jesus could have given them all a peaceful death – that in itself is a Christian’s standard
- Thomas the Apostle was the first to set foot in India. He was killed by a spear in Mylapore, Madras, India in AD 72.
- Devasahayam Pillai (1712-1752) originally named Neelakandan Pillai at birth, was born into a Hindu family in the 18th century. He converted to Christianity which angered the Brahmin Chief Priest of the kingdom, the feudal lords and so he was martyred in 1752.
- Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929), was a Sikh who became a Christian. He was ostracized by his family and thrown out. His heart was set towards Tibet and Nepal primarily because of the great challenges it presented against evangelism. Legend has it that he was martyred on his last journey to Tibet in 1929.

Indian Christians martyred post-Independence:

- In the 1990’s, three new Catholic converts were martyred in Assam for accepting a foreign religion.
- In 1994, three priests were savagely murdered and their Church bombed in the South Chotanagpur region.
- Early in 1995, five Franciscan nuns died near the border between Delhi and Ghaziabad.
- In February 1996, Sister Rani Maria was stabbed more than 40 times in broad day light and her body mutilated.
- In November 1999, in a hate campaign led by religious fundamentalists, Father Arul Das, a Catholic Priest was martyred.
- In January 1999, Graham Stuart Staines, an Australian Christian missionary who, along with his two sons Philip and Timothy, was burnt to death by right-wing religious activists. For nearly 35 years, he lived and worked with some of the poorest Adivasi communities in Odisha, along with his wife
- In 2016, among the galaxy of contemporary anti-Christian persecution, Bharat ki Beti (Sis Esther), Pastor Yohan Maria, Pastor Chamu Purthy, Pastor Gurumurthy Madi, Pastor David Lagun and Pastor Abel Patadi– stand out like beacons. No death is in vain.
Day in and day out, we continue to hear of brutal, horrific stories of persecution, torture and suffering. Not only are our brethren suffering physical and mental abuse, they are also being socially boycotted. A village collectively shuns the Christian, refusing to buy nothing from them, sell nothing, cutting off water supply, exchanging no words with them, showing them plainly that they are not wanted there. Life becomes so uncomfortable, with no source of income, that they voluntarily leave the society. Christian families are displaced; Christian homes are abandoned.

Who are we?

‘Persecution Relief’ is an inter-denominational initiative by born again, spirit filled believers, providing Comprehensive Support (Prayerfully, Financially, Politically, Judicially) to the Persecuted Church in India.

Our Mission: To link “The free Church of the world with the Persecuted Church in India”.

Our Goal: “Freedom to worship Jesus Christ in India”

Our Motto: “Serving Persecuted – Loving Persecutors”

More information about us can be found on www.persecutionrelief.org and www.persecutionrelief.tv. Persecution Relief is privileged to have served hundreds of persecuted believers across India. In 2016, we reported, helped and supported more than 348 cases. In 2017, as we approach the half way mark, we have reported 357 cases and provided support were required.

How has Persecution Relief supported the martyred families?

Since our inception in July 2015, one of our main focus has been in identifying the martyred widows and persecuted Christians who are in jail.

We have been providing them with comprehensive and monthly support in the form of livelihood and educational expenses etc. to all the widows of martyrs since 2015.

Summarizing our activities:

- We have dedicated prayer telephone lines to pray for Persecuted Church
- 720 plus Districts of India have been adopted by Individuals/Families who have committed to pray daily for the Persecuted and the Persecutors;
- We have formed local teams in almost every of the 29 states of India
- Persecution Relief family is regularly praying for transformation of the Persecutors
- We continue to provide financial support, medical support, court fees support, lawyer expenses, relocating charges, providing replacements of everything which has been destroyed by the Persecutors in the Church etc.
- We have been instrumental in mediating with Bureaucrats /Politicians to highlight the truth which has resulted in no FIR’s (FIR – First Information Report), being filed in various cases
- We have collaborated and helped acquit and exonerate several victims of persecution with the help of expert legal advice from advocates of Supreme/High/Session Court
- We have partnered with most major mission organizations for better reach and opportunity to serve across India
- We have tied up with Christian schools and colleges to provide free education for the children of persecuted families across India
We actively identify the truth and stop false propaganda about Christian persecution in the social media.

Future Plans:

Persecution Relief has envisioned “PARAN” which will be a sanctuary providing life-line to the persecuted Church in India. This shelter will address the desperate need of lodging, post-trauma care, spiritual renewal, recommitment and restoration to the widows and children of martyrs and other groups of persecuted brethren, forsaken by the community. 24-hour non-stop, inspiring praise and worship will be lifted up for the persecuted and the persecutors.

Christian Martyrs Museum:

Persecution Relief will establish the first ever Christian Martyr’s Museum which is necessary to preserve the memory of our martyrs. This Museum will be dedicated to the martyrs’ and their families, where the heroism of their deaths, their authentic and faithful lives to be on display.

Our objective is that, every person who walks into the Museum, will be inspired as in Apostle Paul’s words, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1: 21) and go back with an allegiance and determination that he would not count the cost but be willing and ready to be martyred for Jesus.

So, what is the ‘Church of God’ the ‘Body of Christ’ doing’?

We free Christians are part of the same body of Christ that is now being brutally persecuted and beaten - even martyred for Christ. Our brothers & sisters are out there, alone and without help, waging the greatest and courageous battle of the 21st century, in par with the early Church, while the free Church is oblivious and sleeps on!

We invite you, brother and sister, Churches and Leaders of all denominations, to partner with us to serve the persecuted Church in India, breaking the barriers of denomination, to work for the larger purpose (the body of Christ), to be strengthened during these times of hardships.

What is the expectation from you?

AWARENESS is the abject lack in the current Church landscape. Are we aware that the anti-Christian persecution is spreading slowly but surely? Are we aware that Christians, our brethren are being martyred and persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ? Are we aware that there is a deliberate attempt to silence the media as these are not covered by the mainstream media? Do you remember them? Are we indifferent or is it as if one of your family had died? Do we pray for their families? Do we tell their stories in our Churches, our homes and our communities? It is important to look beyond our own boundaries, to feel that we are the Church, one family in God!

How can you be part of this movement?

PRAY, PROVIDE & PARTICIPATE
**PRAY:**

Pray for our persecuted brethren across India
- Pray frequently and on a daily basis for the Persecutors and the Persecutors
- Pray earnestly – remembering those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners
- Pray with empathy and compassion, as if identifying and enduring the same hardships (Hebrews 13:3)
- Pray always in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)
- Pray that the Persecutors will be transformed and be Christ like

**PROVIDE:**
- Your time
- Your resources
- Your skills
- Your wealth
- Be a Volunteer

**PARTICIPATE:**
- ‘Adopt a Martyred family’
- ‘Adopt a persecuted family’

There are scores of widows of martyred brothers, orphans and single parents of persecuted families who do not have the basic sustenance. With the growing persecution of the Christian Church, the Christian community needs to step in to support the future generations.

What should our response and reaction to martyrdom and persecution be?

This was no easy Christianity for the widows of these Martyrs. Yet, they forgave their persecutors and prayed for them. Only godly love kills hate and makes forgiveness possible.

Listen to their own words:

- **Bro. Maner Sori (Father of ‘Bharat ki Beti – Sis Esther who was raped and murdered)**
  “I will never recant Jesus Christ whatever may happen. I am not worried about my daughter because she is at the safest place in Heaven. Even though they have threatened the same fate to my other daughters, I still will not forsake Christ”

- **Sis. Sonamati Dhan (widow of Pastor Chamu Purty – shot dead)**
  “I forgive my husband’s killers even though I am left with 4 children. I have taken responsibility of the church which no body was willing to, because of fear. God is giving me grace.”

- **Sis. Susanna Lugun (widow of Pastor David Lugun who was shot dead):**
  “My husband was murdered in front of me but I did not run away. I am still living in the same village and continuing serving the Lord”

- **Sis. Uika Mangaldevi (widow of Pastor Yohan Maria who was beheaded):**
  “Even though my husband has been martyred for Christ, my 3 sons have volunteered to carry on the work my husband started. I have forgiven my husband’s killers”
Sis. Debe Madi (widow of Gurumurthy Madi who was shot dead):
“I need your prayers and support to bear this great loss”

Sis. Gladys Staines (widow of Pastor Graham Staines who lost her husband and 2 little sons- burnt alive):
“I have forgiven the killers and have no bitterness because forgiveness brings healing and our land needs healing from hatred and violence”

So, is it possible to forgive our persecutors? The Bible says it is possible; these widowed sisters have confessed it.

Forgiveness is not emotional; it has nothing to do with our feelings, it’s a CHOICE. It’s a journey…

In conclusion:

Thank you for being part of Persecution Relief family. We acknowledge and honor your commitment and support. Let’s humbly pray for divine strength and love, that we will continue faithfully and consistently as His army, ministering amongst the persecuted believers.

Together, let us come alongside as the hands of Christ, to impact the lives and hearts of persecuted Christians today, that they might continue to proclaim the ‘name of Jesus’ to the nation of India.

If you know or hear of any Christian martyr’s widows, or of any Christian languishing in jail because of persecution, please inform us immediately.

“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways.”
Sincerely yours, in Christ,

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