PASTOR ABRAHAM TOPNO
BEHEADED
IN JHARKHAND  

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Princes persecute me without a cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your word.
Psalm 119:161
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JULY 22
INDIAN
CHRISTIAN
MARTYRDOM DAY

Persecution Relief will observe 22nd July as the “INDIAN CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM DAY”

This will be an Annual Event, to honour and remember the families, widows and children of the Martyred Christian soldiers, who lost their lives defending their faith in Jesus Christ

For all enquiries: persecutionrelief@gmail.com
This is my small tribute to another Christian, killed for Christ’s sake. I received a forward of several photographs of Pastor Abraham Topno, beheaded by militant Maoists in Jharkhand for being “too friendly with the Police”. I am sure many of you would have read about it.

Pastor Topno was a very well-known and prominent Christian in the community. On 01st May, as he was proceeding to his brother’s house along with his driver, Ranga Singh Munda, they were ambushed by unidentified Maoists who forcibly took Pastor Topno out of the vehicle and beheaded him. The Driver was let off.

My first reaction was anger. I soon recognized that anger was a sign that I had forgotten that I am a sojourner, a pilgrim on this earth. The reality of such horrific news in the 21st century, sounds more like Afghanistan than India.

Martyrdom may look like defeat but it is part of a plan in heaven, that no human strategist could ever conceive or design. It is not accidental and does not take God off guard. I pray that his death will not be in vain. I pray that Christianity will grow in the soil that was wet with his blood.

The thought that we might be beheaded one day, or watch someone we love being beheaded, is itself so traumatizing. I pray for Pastor’s widow, Sr. Hulda Topno, and hope that she has resources of endurance for a time like this. It is only the miracle of the peace of Jesus that passes all understanding, which appears miraculously when we trust God, that can heal us in our pain. The Bible is true when it says that, “all things work together for good…” according to His purpose.”

Difficult days lie ahead as we claim the promises of God. Over the past 4 months this year, Persecution Relief have reported over 150 incidents of Christian persecution where 3 Christians have been martyred in their faith. These attacks spanned more than 20 states. I dare say that persecution has only made the church of Jesus Christ continue to flourish in every State and at all times.

Jesus has many admirers today but few followers. He never called people to admire Him but only to follow Him. And if we follow Him, then we shall no longer belong to this world which will surely hate us. Jesus told His disciples very clearly that in the world they would face tribulation. But they were not to fear this, for He had overcome the world and its ruler; and therefore, they could be overcomers too (John 16:33). Eleven of the 13 disciples were martyred. Surely, Jesus was conveying something to us.

Every wholehearted disciple of Jesus should be prepared to partake in the “tribulation which is in Jesus”, as long as he is in this world. Jesus Himself said “They will deliver you to tribulation… but the one who endures to the end shall be saved” (Mt.24:13).

We have to enter into fellowship with Jesus in tribulation first, before we can share His throne with Him in His kingdom. Let us dedicate ourselves afresh, not to waste our lives.

Lord, we are yours. Show us how to live fully for Your purposes and Your Church. Amen.

Shibu Thomas
Founder & President
PERSECUTION RELIEF
Backdrop:
Following the aftermath of the Kandhamal tragedy in 2008, seven innocent Christians - six of them illiterates - from remote Kandhamal district in Odisha state of India, are still languishing in jail, following the mysterious murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati on August 23, 2008. This is their story.

Gornath Chalanseth suspected nothing when the Kotagarh police officials called him for a meeting in the first week of December 2008. Being active in politics and a member of Kotagarh Block panchayat, Gornath had couple of sessions with the police.

On December 13 early morning, police came and Gornath went with them with his cousin pastor Paramanand Badaseth accompanying them. From the police station, pastor Paramanand saw Gornath being taken away in a police van. As Gornath did not return for a couple of days, pastor Paramanand inquired about him from a friendly policeman and learnt that he had been taken to Rayagada jungle along with Bijay, Bhaskar and Budhadev. Along with Bijay, Gornath was also accused of distributing sweets in the church solely based on the testimony of Mahasingh.

“The evidence of P.W.17 (Mahasingh) that soon after the incident accused Garanath and Bijaya were distributing sweets at Kotgarh Church further indicate principle object behind the conspiracy which nothing but assassination of Swamiji,” claimed the judgment 7.

“The police never came to verify if sweets had been distributed in the church at all,” asserted Pastor Paramanand in charge of the Baptist church attached to his compound.

Moved by the framed-up story of the innocent Christians, Sujit Dolemajhi - the Hindu sarpanch of Madaguda, Baleswar Nayak - former sarpanch and other top 10 Hindus of the area went to Mahasingh’s house along with pastor Paramanand. Mahasingh told them to wait and called the police. The Tumudibandh police arrived promptly and questioned them why they were ‘forcing him’ and threatened to arrest them.

But the sarpanch told the police: “We are not forcing him but telling him in friendly manner why he should bear false witness to put innocent people in trouble.” ...

• These are excerpts from the yet to be released investigative book ‘Cry of the Oppressed’ by Anto Akkara - the journalist author who has pursued Kandhamal passionately from the day one.

Church please pray for the men and women of God who are languishing in jails, for their faith in Jesus Christ, on false charges.
Church in Action

Pastor Joshua Rajesh has been ministering with Bethel Prayer Assembly, in a non-residential area in Doctor garden, Marudur, Karamadai, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu state.

On Sunday, 01 April, while worship service was in progress, 3 unidentified persons walked into the Church while they were singing. Subsequently, as the service progressed, these men, secretly called other religious fanatics. Soon a mob of around 40 persons entered the Church premises and began beating the Christians indiscriminately. Even the women were manhandled and abused with unparliamentary language.

Pastor Joshua was isolated and brutally beaten, clothes torn and humiliated in front of all the believers. Soon, the Sub Inspector Ramesh Kumar arrived on the scene of violence, and in spite of his presence, the radicals kept beating the believers. Instead of protecting the Christians, the guardians of the law remained mute spectators. It is alleged that the district administration is in complicity with the caste and religious outfits, trying to break down the resolve of the Christians.

Pastor is married to Sis Jhoncy and they have 2 children - one son and a daughter.

Please pray for Pastor, his family and the believers in the Church, to stand strong and press on in spite of the persecution.

Relief Provided

Relief provided: Persecution Relief provided medical support to meet Pastor’s immediate needs. We also spoke with the members of the congregation, praying, encouraging and counselling them in the Lord, and discussed future course of action. Persecution Relief was the first organisation to reach out to Pastor, who was very appreciative of the encouragement and support.
3 incidents of vandalism and hate crimes were perpetrated on the 01st of April – a significant day in Odisha where “Odisha Day” commemorates the formation of the state as a separate unit on 01st April, 1936, after the death of king Mukunda Dev, which led to the formation of a separate state under British rule, on the basis of the language.

The 1st incident of vandalism happened at the gate of the Church in Salangabahal village, which is located in Raiboga Tehsil of Sundargarh district in Odisha. Here, the grotto at the main entrance, houses the statues of Mother Mary also known as “Our Lady of Good Health”. The grotto was vandalized and desecrated, where the body of the statue of the Mother Mary had disappeared, while the head of ‘infant Jesus’ had been left behind.

In the 2nd incident happened at Bihabandh village, located in Rajagangapur Tehsil of Sundargarh district in Odisha. There are 2 Churches in this location – an old and a new Church. Adjacent to the Church, a room was intentionally set on fire and was completely gutted.

The 3rd incident happened in Lanjiberna village, located in Rajagangapur Tehsil of Sundargarh district in Odisha, where the statue of Mother Mary was vandalized and damaged.

Narrating the incident to Persecution Relief, Father Suresh Minj, Treasurer, Diocese of Rourkela, Odisha, was extremely distraught at the blatant, brazen and frequent attacks on Catholic Churches and Institutions.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief spoke with Father Suresh Minj, Treasurer, Diocese of Rourkela, Odisha, encouraging him in the Lord. Since the perpetrators of the crime were unidentified, a fact-finding team was set up to bring the truth to light.

Enclosed is the Fact-Finding Report on the incident of vandalism of Church and Temple at Sundargarh District.
A fact-finding team of five members from Bhubaneswar visited Rajgangpur, Kutra and Kuarmunda block of Sundargarh district to investigate the affected areas and discussed with the local people about the incident.

The team first visited Kuarmunda block of Salangabahal Church where they saw the broken Marian Shrine at the main gate. The glass frame was broken and then the shrine too was broken and thrown into the river which was 2 ½ KM away from the incident place. After two days the broken statue was found by the fisherman from the bank of river and informed the police and brought back to the same place.

According to a local Woman the incident has taken place at 11.30 pm on 1st April 2018. She heard the crushed sound of glassware but she couldn’t dare to get out of the house to see the situation.

After that team had reached to Laxmiposh of Rajagangapur block where the head of the statue of the bull which was kept in front of the Shiva temple was crushed with stone by unknown miscreants in the same night.
are Hindu and this temple is being built by MP Juel Oram and MLA Mangala Kishan with government aid.

Though it is said that the incident occurred due to the opposition of MLA George Tirkey standing with the PESA act but behind this there is a conspiracy to create conflict between Hindu tribals and Christian tribals which is seen clearly.

On 2nd April at about 1am to 1.30 am (midnight) some miscreants have broken the flower pots first and the glass panel and then statue of Marian shrine of village Gyanpali, of Rajgangpur block was removed and crushed at the spot.

A woman named Sasmita Tirkey staying at the side heard the broken sound and came out and saw that a man holding a bag in the hand going away slowly. She called out the neighbours from the sleep and four young men with two motorcycles tried to follow the person. But they saw the church of Bihabandh at a short distance burning and awoke the parish priest Fr. Bipin Kishor Majhi and others who were sleeping behind and together they extinguished the fire. They went to find out the miscreants but could not find anyone. Later regarding this the written complaint was logged in the police station, the police provided security at the incident occurred places but there was an atmosphere of doubt everywhere. According to the vice president of the church Cum Ex Zilla Parishad member Biramitra Minz and other villagers it is a conspiracy to break down the peace, solidarity and brotherhood which is prevailing among them from the existence of the village.

After 5 days of this incident means on 7th April someone broke the statue of Mother Mary of the church of Laphoorbeda, Dahijira of Kutra block was thrown and crushed in front of the Church. According to the eyewitness the Kutra Police has detained a person but without proper medical enquiry and medical checkup they say the person is mentally imbalance.

The team after meeting and discussing with many persons found out from the incidents these following points:

- To create differences, doubts and enmities between the Hindu Adivasi and Christian Adivasi the temple was purposely broken. The purpose also to bring the Caste based division.
- In the same night the entire incident has occurred and there is more than one person involved in it.
- It is highly planned and purposefully executed.
- It is well planned to create fear and tension among the Christian. The purpose is to create religion-based division.
- This is the purpose of the Company, Corporate to establish communal attitude and to break the unity among the Adivasis with the PESA Act.

The Fact-Finding team members are Mr. Dhirendra Panda, Human Right Activist, Mr. Abhiram Mallick Vice president of Mulnivasi Samata Parishad, Ajay Kumar Singh Human Rights Activist, Mr. Amiya Pandav Journalist and Mr. Anil Kumar Mallick.
The incident happened at Kaler village, 12 kms from Batala, Gurdaspur District, Punjab. Pastor Vijay Kumar has gone to visit his family house at Bhamri village.

Aware of the whereabouts of Pastor Vijay, a local villager named Presem, broke into the locked house church around mid-night. He ransacked the house and burned 100’s of Holy Bibles along with Pastor’s personal belongings such as Camera, Laptop etc.

When Pastor returned in the morning, he was shocked to be greeted by the smoldering remains of the senseless late-night arson attack.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Mr. Peter Cheeda - Head of Samson Christian Sena, said that the radical villager Presem had been arrested and booked under IPC sections 452,458,295A.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief provided immediate financial assistance to meet basic livelihood expenses as Pastor and his family had lost everything. Not even a second set of change of clothes were spared by the fire. They did not even have a second set of clothes.

Persecution Relief will also be providing financial assistance to help reconstruct his home or help buy a plot of land to construct a new home.
Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh, is hard terrain for Evangelism. Persecution Relief has recorded several incidents of persecution against Christians who were beaten and chased out of the District.

Hence, during the fasting and prayerful season of the ‘Holy Week’ and Christmas, which involves larger participation of Christians, we have seen widespread severe threats and violent targeting of Christians. Most Churches and Christians across Uttar Pradesh worship under apprehension. The fear of fringe groups acting upon their threats, continue to keep Christians on guard in the state.

Pastor Neeraj Kumar, a passionate follower of Jesus Christ, started ministering at various villages under Mainpuri district. He is affiliated with “Gilead Gospel Mission” organisation, which works in Uttar Pradesh and in the Punjab area.

On Sunday, 08th April, around 10 Christians were gathered at Gilead Gospel Mission. At around 10.30 am, a few Policemen, trespassed into the Church and arrested Pastor Neeraj Kumar, alleging that he was involved in conversion activities. Pastor was taken to New Kotwali Police Station and later in the evening, booked under IPC 151 and sent to jail.

Pastor Philip George from Agra informed Persecution Relief about the incident, as we reached out to the local leaders in Uttar Pradesh. However, by the time Pastor Dheenanath, a Christian Leader in the area, spoke to the Addl. SP, the FIR was already filed against Pastor. It is alleged that the Police are always under tremendous pressure from the religious fanatics to file the FIR.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, Pastor Saji Chacko, Founder Gilead Gospel Mission had all praise for Pastor Neeraj Kumar. He claimed that Pastor was a passionate and committed worker in that area. In fact, his family were away to their home town during the incident. Pastor was working alone and except for Pastor Sanjay and Persecution Relief, there was no one else to support him at the time of arrest.

Bro. Rajeev Lal, a businessman, came forward to help the Pastor by making all efforts to secure bail for Pastor Neeraj.

Uttar Pradesh has been one of the most hostile states for Christians, based on our records. More than a dozen incidents have been recorded over the past few months.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief spoke with Father Suresh Minj, Treasurer, Diocese of Rourkela, Odisha, encouraging him in the Lord. Since the perpetrators of the crime were unidentified, a fact-finding team was set up to bring the truth to light. Enclosed is the Fact-Finding Report on the incident of vandalization of Church and Temple at Sundargarh District.
Pastor John Paul, Thondangi Mandal, A. V. Nagaram Village, East Godavari District, has been ministering at Gethsemane Church since 2000. Around 80 believers gather every Sunday to worship.

On 18th April, 2018, Pastor had gone to the village Thondanegi along with his family, which is around 7 Km's from A V Nagaram, for a Prayer meeting. They returned around 11.30 pm and retired for the night. Around 12.30 am, they were awakened by urgent knocking on the door to find their bike set on fire and the neighbors quenching the flames with water.

Speaking to Persecution Relief Pastor, John Paul said he did not lodge a Police complaint since he lives in an interior place and most of the neighborhood are against him and Jesus Christ. He said that he did not wish to alienate the community further.

Pastor claimed that this was not the first time the Church was being attacked. 8 years ago, his father was brutally beaten for his faith in Jesus Christ. The Church building was burnt down to ashes the following year. One month ago, the windows of the Church were broken and vandalized.

Nevertheless, Pastor and his family are steadfast in their belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief, provided financial support towards Legal and basic livelihood expenses. Persecution Relief will be further supporting Pastor to either repair / replace the damaged motor bike. The Team also encouraged and prayed with the Pastor to stand strong for Jesus Christ in spite of persecution, counselling on the further course of action. Persecution Relief Team counselled and prayed with the Pastor and encouraged him in the Lord. Persecution Relief assured him of every kind of support, if needed.
Pastor Jeba Durai has been ministering in Gandhi Nagar, Kovilpatti in district Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu, for almost a year now. He has been facing relentless persecution ever since.

The 1st incident happened a few months ago, where he was threatened not to run the Church in the area. The ‘Persecutor’ was pressurizing the House Owner to remove the Pastor. However, finding no other option, Pastor sought to lodge a complaint against the ‘Persecutor’ but no action was taken by the Police. More than 50 villagers (including unbelievers) signed a petition and gave in writing that they were blessed by the Church in the area and with the Sunday worship happening in the village. However, the harassment continues.

The most recent incident was of the same ‘persecutor’ accompanied by his son, breaking entry and trespassing into the Church and stealing the Pastor’s Motor-Bike. The bike was later found abandoned near the Railway Tracts. The local villagers who witnessed the incident, reported it to the Pastor.

Pastor had gone for a Children’s Ministry in Chennai. During his absence, the ‘persecutor’ visited his home and picked up a quarrel with his mother. He tried to stab her with knife, but by the grace of God she was not injured as the wooden handle part touched her body, as she had pushed him away in self-defense. He also punched her in the stomach, multiple times.

A Lady SI lady visited Pastor and asked him to vacate the area. Immediately, the House Owner came to his rescue and confirmed that the Pastor will continue to stay on the property and run the Church as well.

Persecution Relief Team, while speaking to Pastor, realized the immense emotional trauma and exhaustion of the relentless harassment endured by Pastor for the sake of the Gospel, which cannot be captured in mere words unless experienced.

The neighbours had a great testimony about Pastor.

“Pastor has been tremendously patient with this man who is a menace to all of us living on this street. His contention is that no Church should exist on this particular street. Seeing the harassment meted out to Pastor, around 50 unbelievers who live on the street, have signed a Petition to submit to the Police. But the Police are partial to this man because he has his people inside the Police Station”.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief provided Financial support towards loss and damage of the vehicle and medical expenses for his mother’s treatment.

The Team also encouraged and prayed with the Pastor to stand strong for Jesus Christ in spite of persecution.
ADOPT A MARTYRED FAMILY

Call +91 9993200020
Email: persecutionrelief@gmail.com
We request Christians across the globe to help Pastor Abraham Topno’s widow construct her house and live in safety. Please write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com, if you wish to contribute for this cause.
Pastor Abraham Tigga Topno, 46-years of age, is a very well-known and prominent Christian in the community. He had been ministering in the area for more than 20 years, with “Fellowship Church”, Jharkhand. His beheaded body was found close to the isolated Kubasal village in Tamar-I, Tehsil of Ranchi district in Jharkhand, on 01 May 2018.

A note was found next to his lifeless body with the symbol of his killers, namely the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), an armed Maoist group. The four-line note said, “Death to a police spy. Long live the PLGA. He was a police informer. This is the fate of all who go against us”, as reported by AsiaNews.

Speaking to Persecution Relief, the Pastor’s nephew Aman Christo said,

“As soon as they saw the vehicle, they stopped it and took Pastor away. Pastor had no enemies and he used to help all the villagers”, said Christo.

The driver was blindfolded and later released, he said. The driver told Christo that more than 25 people dressed in military fatigues and carrying weapons were waiting for the pastor on a deserted road. Pastor’s vehicle was set on fire and completely destroyed.

Even though it is the perception that Maoists killed him, it is significant to note that Pastor had received threats in the past, from local religious fundamental groups in the village. He was frequently targeted by radical groups because of this outspoken faith in Jesus Christ.

Pastor is survived by his wife Sister Huldah Hareing, who is heartbroken and covets our prayers. She now lives with her elder sister, in her old dilapidated house.

Although Jharkhand is among the states where Christians face persecution from right-wing religious fanatic groups, they seldom had problems with Maoist rebels, who usually do not consider Christian missioners a threat to their movement. It definitely suggests that they have deviated from their ideologies and principles.

The level of fear and uncertainty among the Christian minorities have increased tremendously in Jharkhand, in the wake of the anti-conversion law coming into effect and several attacks on tribals being reported.
"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer"

www.persecutionrelief.org
States and international communities continue to neglect the issue of religious persecution. This destructive force has many faces which depend on the perpetrator, which includes individuals, groups, states and their actors, or the severity of the crime ranging from discrimination to severe examples of violence. With the Daesh genocide that was unleashed in 2014, the high hope was that such atrocities targeting religious groups, especially religious minorities, would finally be taken seriously. However, as time passes by this great hope turned into dismay.

It is easy to turn a blind eye when the atrocities do not happen under our nose. However, we cannot forget that religious persecution anywhere in the world is a security threat to everyone, everywhere. One of the best examples of this is the terror unleashed by Daesh. Religious persecution in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa were not enough for the terror group. They called for acts of violence against Western values and culture all over the world, in what resulted as barbaric atrocities in the UK, France, Belgium, Germany and many more countries. What started with religious persecution in a ‘far away land’ turned into atrocities at home.

Again, even when the atrocities are perpetrated on the other side of the world, we cannot claim that we did not know because of the wide-ranging coverage of these crimes. Journalists and media are not the

August 9, 2014: Thousands of Yezidis were trapped in the Sinjar mountains as they tried to escape from Daesh. (Photo credit: Emrah Yorulmaz/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images)
Martyrdom

“DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE ISSUE OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IS YET TO BE ADEQUATELY ADDRESSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, IT HAS TO BE EMPHASIZED THAT THERE ARE SOME GOOD EXAMPLES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY CONTINUE TO BE AN EXCEPTION AND NOT THE RULE.”

Despite the fact that the issue of religious persecution is yet to be adequately addressed by the international community, it has to be emphasized that there are some good examples of affirmative actions, although they continue to be an exception and not the rule.

Hungary Helps
Hungary Helps was established in late 2016 and begun its work at full speed just a few months later. Hungary Helps provide a broad range of humanitarian services to Christians persecuted for their religion in many countries in the Middle East and Africa, and the scope of their work continues to expand geographically. Some of the main achievements of Hungary Helps are rebuilding a whole village in the Nineveh Plains of Northern Iraq to ensure that the lawful owners can return to their homes, providing scholarships to students to allow them to continue their education in Hungary, building schools, funding hospitals and more. It is the only such state-run program out there.

The United States
The Trump Administration has promised to make religious persecution the priority of its foreign agenda. Those assurances became tangible when the administration proposed to divert their UN contributions to

only sources of this information. There are several human rights and humanitarian organisations that operate in the affected areas to help the survivors. Many survivors themselves turned to reporting their fate using social media. The information is all around us, but we must learn to listen and interpret this information adequately.

Many organisations and research institutes continue to raise awareness about the situation of religious groups worldwide. The reports of the Aid to the Church in Need, Open Doors or the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) have been portraying the dire situation of religious groups worldwide, providing examples of the persecution suffered, and explaining its impact on the groups as a whole. Indeed, their reports are filled with instances of abuse, humiliation, violence perpetrated against religious groups because of them expressing their religious belief, manifesting their religious belief in the public or merely belonging to or identifying themselves with a religious group. Just a week ago, Open Doors released it’s World Watch List 2018, annual ranking of 50 countries where it is the most difficult (if not impossible) to live as Christians. Open Doors assessed that in 11 countries this persecution was extreme and in 24 very high.
assist religious groups persecuted by Daesh in countries like, for example, Iraq, and reviewing the Department of State’s ‘Countries of Particular Concern,’ countries that ‘engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom.’

The US Department of State re-designated counties include Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as Countries of Particular Concern. Also, for the first time since the introduction of the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act of 2016 which created such a new designation, the US Department of State announced its Special Watch List. The Special Watch List is meant for countries that engage in or tolerate violations of religious freedom that do not (yet) meet the threshold of Countries of Particular Concern. The US Department of State placed Pakistan on the new list for its ‘severe violations of religious freedom.’ It can only be speculated that Pakistan’s strict blasphemy laws may be one of these severe violations.

Apart from placing Pakistan on the Special Watch List, State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert announced that the US would cut almost all of the security assistance that the US has been paying Pakistan for years. The proposal comes from Senator Rand Paul who stated that the funds would be diverted toward building infrastructure in the US. Of course, the move is not all about ‘saving money.’ Restricting or removing foreign aid has often been used as a means of putting more pressure on the state receiving the assistance to deal with serious violations within the state, for example, countering terrorism or persecution of minorities.

Earlier this month, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced more funding for the ‘needs of vulnerable religious and ethnic minority communities in Ninewa Province, especially those who have been victims of atrocities by ISIS.’ According to the new agreement, $55 million of a $75 million payment will be directed towards this goal.

**Danish New Office**

On January 1, 2018, the Danish Government introduced a new office, the Office of the Special Representative for Freedom of Religions or Belief, with an aim to strengthen international cooperation on freedom of religion or belief.

**The new office will:**
- Promote freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as a fundamental human right;
- Assist vulnerable and marginalized minorities of religion or conscience in upholding their rights;
- Assist religious and human rights NGOs in promoting freedom of religion and conscience;
- Encourage strengthened international focus and reporting on violation of freedom of religion or belief.

Only the time will tell how and whether the office will be able to achieve its goals. However, as it stands, the plans are promising.

**What else needs to be done?**

Considering the ever-growing level of religious persecution worldwide, the issue requires a systematic and structured approach. The above-explained affirmative steps are reasonable, but they cannot address the problem with the lack of cooperation with other states or among international institutions. Religious persecution must receive adequate international attention as an issue on its own and not in conjunction with other issues. An appropriate action plan to prevent or address religious persecution is urgently needed. We must raise awareness of the issue of religious persecution, work on addressing it and introducing positive steps to combat it, wherever and whenever it occurs. Victims and survivors of religious persecution must be put first. The survivors should play an active role in any decision making. The memory of the victims should motivate to achieve more clarity in the approach taken. And religious persecution should never be tolerated ever again.

Ewelina U. Ochab is a human rights advocate and author of the book “Never Again: Legal Responses to a Broken Promise in the Middle East.”

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We must raise awareness of the issue of religious persecution, work on addressing it and introducing positive steps to combat it, wherever and whenever it occurs.”
Christians outraged at “heinous and gory” terrorist attacks that killed and injured dozens of worshipers Sunday morning.

Surabaya Center Pentecostal Church was one of three Indonesian churches attacked by terrorists on Sunday morning.

Suicide bombers launched coordinated attacks on three Indonesian churches during worship services this morning, leaving more than a dozen people dead and at least 40 more injured in a series of bloody blasts that horrified the country’s Christian minority and Muslim majority alike.

Diponegoro Indonesian Christian Church (GKI), Surabaya Center Pentecostal Church, and Santa Maria Tak Bercela Catholic Church—all in Surabaya, the second-largest city in the island-chain nation—suffered bombings carried out by six members of the same family, who are believed to be affiliated with Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an Indonesian terrorist cell aligned with ISIS.

Sunday’s bombings mark the deadliest terrorist attack in the world’s biggest Muslim country since the Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people in 2002.
RWANDA IS 95 PERCENT CHRISTIAN SO WHY IS IT SHUTTING DOWN THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES?

The state of faith in the East African country nearly 25 years after its brutal genocide.

Pastor Eugene Nshyimiyabo stands near his made church ‘The Holy City Church’ made of iron sheets, in Kigali, Rwanda.

Over the past two months, authorities have closed more than 7,000 churches across Rwanda for failing to comply with health, safety, and noise regulations.

President Paul Kagame welcomed the shutdowns but was stunned at the scale: “700 churches in Kigali?” he said during a government dialogue in March. “Are these boreholes that give people water? I don’t think we have as many boreholes. Do we even have as many factories? This has been a mess!”

The government isn’t clamping down only on what it deems to be issues of physical safety. Current laws allow Rwandans to open churches without requiring pastors to go through any training. A new law specific to faith-based organizations will require potential pastors to get a theology degree before they plant a church.

IN IRAN, CHRISTIAN CONVERTS FACE 10-YEAR PRISON SENTENCES

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In Iran, conversion to Christianity can be a crime meriting a sentence of more than 10 years imprisonment.

Catholic churches within the country are closely monitored with surveillance cameras to ensure that Muslims do not enter, and religious schools are limited in what they can teach, an Iranian-born journalist, Sohrab Ahmari, explained to CNA.

Ahmari is currently writing a spiritual memoir about his own journey to the Catholic faith for Ignatius Press. He converted in 2016 after living in the U.S. for more than two decades. His conversion would have been nearly impossible had he still been living in Iran.

“In Iran, Catholicism is primarily an ethnic phenomenon. There are Armenian Catholics and Assyrian. They have their own churches, but they can't evangelize and they can't have Bibles in any languages but their own,” said Ahmari, who worked for the Wall Street Journal for several years before becoming a senior editor for Commentary magazine.

“The Iranian Constitution enshrines Shiite Islam as the state religion and it relegates certain other religious minorities to protected, but second-class status, so that is Jews and Christians, mainly, people of the Abrahamic religions,” he continued. “These people have a certain degree of limited rights, but they also have all sorts of social handicaps.”

The Islamic republic’s population is 99 percent Muslim, and its recognized religious minorities are strictly controlled.

May 13, 2018. Catholic News Agency, (Credit: Thomas Hawk via Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0) via CAN), Courtney Grogan
GLOBAL PERSECUTION NEWS

A Christian believer sits behind bars in China in an undated photo.

CHINA TO TARGET RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN NATIONALS WITH REVISED RULES

China looks set to further tighten the regulation of public religious worship in a bid to prevent “hostile foreign forces” from infiltrating the country, RFA has learned. The State Administration of Religious Affairs began consultations this week on rules relating to foreigners who practice their religions on Chinese soil.

Existing regulations from 1991 already bar Chinese citizens from attending temporary religious gatherings organized by foreign religious groups, while foreign religious organizations are banned from any venue not previously authorized for religious purposes.

Now, the government is asking for input on a new set of administrative guidelines to “protect the public interest,” according to a notice posted on the Administration’s official website on Monday.

Foreigners are currently also barred from preaching or teaching, other than at the invitation of state-backed institutions, nor must they mentor or train Chinese religious staff and believers. “They may not produce and sell religious books, religious audio-visual products, religious electronic publications, and other religious supplies; they may not disseminate religious propaganda materials and conduct other forms of missionary activities,” the existing regulations state.

The new rules target “collective religious activities” of more than 50 people that are organized and attended by foreigners, in particular, at locations that have only been temporarily approved for religious activity for a year at a time.

Foreign nationals attending such gatherings will need to provide the government with personal details including passport number and place of residence in China before attending, the draft rules say.

Some 200 Christians have been detained in the province and falsely accused of being members, according to the U.S.-based Christian rights group ChinaAid.

Reported by Yeung Mok for RFA’s Cantonese Service, and by Qiao Long for the Mandarin Service. Translated and edited by Luisetta Mudie.
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### PRAYER CALENDAR - JUNE 2018

**Theme: Prayer for the nation of India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Prayer</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 01</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray for the India and its leaders and governors – that they may fulfil Your plans and Your purposes, in whatever they do - in their lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 02</strong></td>
<td>Heavenly Father, we pray that you give our Leaders, the wisdom to rightly and justly administer the law and to carry out their judgements and decisions in the fear of the Lord.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 03</strong></td>
<td>Heavenly Father, we pray that you keep our leaders from adopting humanistic laws, which are so contrary to Your truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 04</strong></td>
<td>Heavenly Father, we pray that you guard their consciences from being seared by so much that is flooding the corridors of world power today and give each one wisdom, insight and integrity in the decisions they have to reach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 05</strong></td>
<td>Lord, You are the One that places rulers in their high positions of honour and You are also the one that removes leaders from their elevated perches – and we pray that in Your grace and mercy You would look down on the nations of the world and intervene with those that are severely oppressing their own people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 06</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray that you will have pity and convict the leaders of our nations to turn to You - and protect the people that are having to live in nations with a corrupt or evil government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 07</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray that you keep our land free from war and aggressions – from winds and earthquakes – from fear and confusion and from other things that can cause hurt and fear and confusion. and may we as a nation turn to You and call out to You in the day of trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 08</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray that You will be with all those that are oppressed and downtrodden and especially those that do not know You as their Saviour – may there be many that come to know You as their saviour in this my country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 09</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray that the gospel may one day be preached in this land from shore to shore - openly and truthfully and keep us from compromising Your word of truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 10</strong></td>
<td>Lord, restore to this nation the joy of Your salvation and bring many to a faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour we pray.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 11</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray that You provide for those that are in need, feed those that are hungry, comfort those that are sorrowing, heal those that are sick and bring those that do not know You as their Saviour into a close and personal walk with You.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jun 12</strong></td>
<td>Lord, we pray that the gospel of Jesus Christ will not be compromised in our land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jun 13  Lord, we pray that the Church will not move away from the true gospel of grace and our churches and fellowships will not embrace alternative teachings and compromise teachings that are not true to Your word.

Jun 14  Lord, we pray that You would revive this land of India.

Jun 15  Lord, we pray that you would stir up the hearts of those that have come to trust in Jesus Christ, to seek the truth and to draw ever closer to the Lord Jesus.

Jun 16  Lord, we pray that You forgive us for the corruption, crony capitalism in making of laws to suit individual interests or benefiting few (Isa 10: 1-3).

Jun 17  Lord, we repent for the sins of our generation and the ones before us for not taking right stands when Laws were enacted that violated the laws of God (Daniel 9:3-19).

Jun 18  Lord, we pray that no unjust law be made or applied. Our right to worship You and share Your Love and Word in Jesus Name may never be curtailed.

Jun 19  Lord, we pray that our elected representatives be role models to impact those who are electing them and not be the representation of lack of values.

Jun 20  We pray for the service men and women. We ask protection for all our men and women in uniform both here and around the world.

Jun 21  Lord, we pray that You would forgive us as a country and as individuals. Lord, we have all taken our country for granted. And we have all fallen short of your wisdom, love, and mercy which is presented in your Word.

Jun 22  Lord, we pray that You Look down in pity on Your children and on all who are being systematically targeted by a government that is causing increasing number of people to find themselves in severe hardships – having lost their homes and families – their livelihood and dignity.

Jun 23  We pray for those leaders in India, who are seeking to abide by the truth of Your law. May they be tools used by You, to maintain justice and righteousness in their respective positions.

Jun 24  Lord, we pray that Your ways be known in our country and Your name be lifted up in the corridors of power.

Jun 25  Lord, guide our country we pray into the ways of peace, justice and truth

Jun 26  Lord, we pray that You will expose anything that is designed to undermine godly principles in our lives and pray that You would remove anyone who abuses their power or is seeking to place people under bondage or manipulate India's resources for their own personal advantage.

Jun 27  Lord, You are the prince of peace. Keep Your people covered we pray, by Your unconditional love and fill our hearts with the peace that passes understanding, through Jesus Christ our Lord

Jun 28  Lord, we pray that You would protect our nation from peoples that may seek to enter our borders, uninvited and ask that You would be with us and keep our roads, ports, borders and crossings safe and uncompromised.

Jun 29  Lord, we pray for the cultural and religious barriers of caste system in India, to be overcome by the Gospel

Jun 30  Lord, we pray that persecution might not discourage the Christian missionaries and workers, rather it may cause the furtherance of Christian work in Northern States.
GET PERSECUTION UPDATES

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Summary:

➢ In March and April, we have recorded 44 and 34 persecution incidents respectively.
➢ As for Christian persecution related media stories, 59 and 64 media stories were recorded in March and April respectively.
➢ Most common forms of persecution were Physical violence, Threats and intimidation, Arrests on False allegations, Restrictions on religious assembly, Arson attacks – House Church, vehicles being burnt, damage and desecration of religious property, Worship service forcibly stopped, anti-Christian propaganda, Attempted murder, Obstruction for construction of Church and ostracization and boycott by villagers.
Summary:

- Anti-Christian forces continue to obstruct preaching of the gospel, worship services & conducting prayers
- There has been a spurt in violence against Christians in the State as in 2018, Bihar ranking spiked to the 6th most hostile state while it was ranked 8 in 2017
- Indiscriminate physical violence with a sense of impunity, harassment & arrests creating a climate of fear
- 13 incidents of Christian persecution were recorded in the 2nd half of 2017, while 11 incidents have already been recorded in the last 4 months in 2018

Prayer Points:

- Pray for the protection of the missionaries working in Bihar
- Pray for the persecutors to know the Lord, the Truth and be delivered from all evil ways.
- Pray for the believers to be steadfast in the Lord.
- Pray for the good and just governance in the State
Pastor Abel Patadi Athram, from Gadchiroli District, Medukulli, Maharashtra was fatally shot dead after he attended a Christmas Worship service.

He was shot dead by Naxalites (Naxalites are a group of far-left radical communists). Pastor Abel was himself a Naxalite once but in 2012, he heard the wonderful news of the redeeming Savior, Jesus Christ and gave up his life of crime, for a life of peace and service to God. So sincere was his desire that he attended a ‘Bible Training College’ for ‘Tribal Revival Ministry’ in 2015.

His transformed life and ministry to the Naxals flourished as he brought scores to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This infuriated the Naxals who were adamant to put a stop to his influence.

Pastor Abel was shot dead at 8.00 pm on the 28th of December 2016. He is survived by his wife Anita and 2 children Reuben and Esther.

All of his immediate and extended family members were harassed, intimidated & threatened and forced to leave the village. Recently, over 20 people were baptized in the same village.
Abolishment of Anti Conversion Law in India

Freedom of religion in India is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 15 and Article 25 of the Constitution of India

Article 15(1) in The Constitution of India 1949
- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

Article 25(1) in The Constitution of India 1949
- Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion

Credit: //indiankanoon.org

So far, seven Indian states – Madhya Pradesh Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand, have officially passed the Anti-Conversion law.

Church / Readers, your signature and support could make this a reality. Freedom of religion is our Constitutional right. By clicking on the link, you are asking the Prime Minister to abolish this draconian law across India. It is the responsibility of every Christian to sign this petition and make our voices count as it will adversely affect you and your children generation, either directly or indirectly.


## Lessons learnt from past recorded cases and recommendations to mitigate risks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of persecution</th>
<th>Precautions</th>
</tr>
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| **Christian Institution, Orphanages shut down** | ▪ All Christian Orphanages should follow the guidelines laid by the government  
▪ As per the Juvenile Justice Act, all Childcare Institutions should be registered with the Women and Child Welfare Department failing which, all unregistered organizations will be black listed and booked for illegal detention of children. If you need any further information, please write to us at admin@persecutionrelief.org  
▪ Every household conducting ‘Church service’ at their homes must inform the Police of their schedule and frequency of meeting  
▪ Install CCTV’s (at least one) on the premises to monitor and be prepared of any imminent attacks  
▪ Identify and educate a few members of your congregation not to panic if attacked but to step away and discreetly record the proceedings, both audio or video. This evidence will help identify the perpetrators and assist Police with their investigations  
▪ Please keep your nearest police stations numbers handy  
▪ It is mandatory for all Christian Organizations (Church, orphanage, old age home, schools etc.) to be registered either with a Society/Trust etc.  
▪ All collection of funds in Church should be transparent and accounted for  
▪ All funds received / deposited in Bank, must be well documented and audited  
▪ New believers attending worship service or asking for baptism must be handled with discernment.  
▪ If a new comer asks for baptism, analyze the seriousness and commitment, then get an affidavit signed by him that he wishes to be baptized of his own will  
▪ You may write to us at admin@persecutionrelief.com for a format of the ‘affidavit’  
▪ Train volunteers in your Church on how to identify and interview new comers – to establish their intent of visit and collect their personal details  
▪ From our case studies, we have seen unidentified people gain entry into the Church discreetly, call other miscreants and attack the members |
Pastor Daniel Solomon Raju, is a graduate from NTC Theological Seminary. Blessed with a Godly heritage of parents and grandparents who have been serving the Lord all their lives, Daniel was called by God to serve in the ministry. Not wanting to build his ministry on someone else’s foundation or leveraging on the successful ministry of his father, the Lord directed him to Uttar Pradesh, where he has been faithfully serving the Lord, alongside his wife Asha.

On 4th May, when Pastor Daniel called Persecution Relief to inform about a recent incident that had just occurred, where an innocent Pastor and his team of 6 members, along with the family they were visiting for a prayer meeting, were falsely charged and jailed. As he narrated the incident to Persecution Relief Founder, he requested him to reach out to Pastor Gyan Singh’s team.

“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it”. 1 Corinthians 12:26

God worked in a supernatural way to secure the release of this team.

In spite of never having met Pastor Gyan Singh, the pain of the co-worker for Christ & the encouragement by the Founder, ignited compassion and moved him to action.

The location of the Police Station where Pastor & his team were being held was around 40 km’s away from his residence. When the Founder Persecution Relief called the SHO of the said Police Station, he was informed that no Pastor was detained there. Pastor Daniel took along with him Pastor Anurag, and they drove around, trying to track the Police Station, where Pastor Gyan Singh and the team were detained.

Finally, reaching the correct Police Station, they had the first-hand opportunity to courageously respond to all questions posed by the Police Officials about Jesus Christ, the Church, conversion etc. and help dispel their pre-conceived notions about Christians.

Pastor Daniel used the money...
that had been set aside for his house rent to pay for the bail expenses and expedite the entire process at the SDM Courts. If he had delayed it any further, Pastor and his team would have had to spend the weekend - additional 2 days in jail.

Pastors Daniel and Anurag spent the entire day, being used by God to minister to His servants. He expressed joy and satisfaction for being in the right place at the right time, to be used of God. A recipient of Persecution Relief updates, Pastor Daniel claimed that he would pray for the needs and was encouraged by the services of Persecution Relief. However, he was overwhelmed to be given an opportunity to be able to participate, contribute and provide support to Persecution Relief, Pastor Gyan Singh and others.

Pastor Gyan Singh was deeply grateful and touched for the timely help provided by Pastors Daniel and Anurag, who did not regard it a burden or hardship to aid an afflicted brother, another member of the body of Christ.

You can be a servant without death to self. But you cannot be a son without it.

Let us be inspired by this story – to feel a deep interest in the welfare of ALL members of the body of Christ, to serve without envy, sympathizing when another member of the body is hurting, seeking the good of others, extending service to others by going the extra mile, “bearing one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Let us join hands to help the Persecuted Church in India.

“"You can be a servant without death to self. But you cannot be a son without it.”
CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA

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We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your understanding.

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