



CHURCH IN CHAINS

AN IRISH VOICE FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

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Shuang Shuying visits dying husband after completing prison sentence



Shuang Shuying, aged 79, completed her two year prison sentence on Sunday 8 February and after release, went immediately to Beijing's Dianli Hospital to visit her dying husband, Hua Zaichen, aged 91.

While Shuying was pleased to be able to visit her husband, *she was saddened that he could not see*

her as his condition has deteriorated and he has lost consciousness.

Chinese authorities (including the Chinese Embassy in Dublin) repeatedly rejected pleas for early release for Shuying. Hua Zaichen was taken to hospital in late January suffering from shortness of breath. Doctors were able to revive him after his heart stopped beating but told his family to prepare for his death.

Visiting has been restricted (on police orders) to immediate family members and 7-8 military police are guarding the entrance of the hospital. The Hua family's home is being monitored closely by police officers and Shuang Shuying's son, Pastor Hua Huiqi, and his wife are being followed wherever they go. *(China Aid Association)*



PRAISE GOD ... that Shuying was able to see her husband before he dies and pray for God's strength for the family.

News from India, Pakistan & Iran



Hindu temple being built in place of Christian church in Orissa, India

The foundations have been laid for a Hindu temple on the rubble of the Roman Catholic church in Batticola, in the district of Kandhamal (Orissa).



The church in Batticola was raised to the ground and burned last August, at the beginning of the six week campaign of violence against Christians.

The foundations of the Hindu temple were discovered when some Christians left the relief camp in which they had been living for the past four months to check on conditions at the Dokewadi hamlet in Jhimangia village before returning there.

These Christians were surrounded by the Hindu villagers and given a dire warning: if they wanted to come back to the village, they had to convert to Hinduism.

This news from Batticola is a sign that the situation on the ground is not calm, although the government continues to give assurances that the danger has passed, and is closing the refugee camps, sending Christians back to their ruined homes.

Other sources say that some Christians who have gone back to Batticola have faced constant humiliation and discrimination. The Hindus in the village have instituted 15 unwritten rules against the Christians. One of them is that Christians should always give way to Hindus in the street; that in the public baths, the Christians should bathe last; etc.

There is now a new sense of superiority among the Hindus and a crushing of the dignity of the Christians. (*Asia News*)



PRAY ... for peace and reconciliation as Christians go back to their villages and seek to rebuild their lives.

Christian accused of sending blasphemous text message in Pakistan

Hector Aleem (aged 51) has become the latest member of the Christian community charged under Pakistan's controversial "Blasphemy Law".

Police raided Hector's house in the early hours of 22 January and assaulted him, his wife, and his two daughters.

The case against Hector began last November when a scholar associated with the national Islamist political movement Sunni Tehreek received a text message claiming to have come from Aleem. The religious scholar registered blasphemy charges against Hector on Nov. 28 at the Rawalpindi police station.

Hector is detained at the Adiyala Jail in Rawalpindi. During his incarceration, police have mistreated him and denied him adequate food and access to medicine for his heart condition. His family have gone into hiding as threats were made against them also.

At the latest court hearing on Monday 2 February, the judge exonerated him of blasphemy charges but did not clear him of abetting.



A government official stated that the judge's decision was heavily influenced by Islamic extremists attending the open court hearing who told the judge, **"If you release [Aleem], then we will kill him outside."**

The next hearing will be held in March when his lawyer believes Hector will be cleared of all charges because there is no evidence against him.

(Compass Direct)



PRAY ... for God's protection on Hector and his family and pray again that the Blasphemy Laws will be abolished.

Iranian Ambassador questioned by TDs about treatment of Christians in Iran

The Iranian Ambassador to Ireland, Mr. Ebrahim Rahimpour, appeared before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs in late January.

He made a presentation about the situation in Gaza and was then questioned on a variety of topics by TDs and Senators.



Billy Timmins TD asked the Ambassador to clarify if apostasy was a crime in Iran. **Senator David Norris** spoke about a visit he had made to Iran where he visited some Christians who were fearful of the Iranian authorities. **Alan Shatter TD** also asked about apostasy law and raised the cases of three Christians arrested in Iran in January.

In response to these and other questions, Mr. Rahimpour said "*I accept that there are human rights problems in Iran, but there are human rights problem in every country in the world...I recognise that there are problems on the table, but I also recognise the need for dialogue and I am ready for it*".

Church in Chains has followed up the committee discussion by writing again to the Ambassador seeking a meeting to discuss the issue of religious freedom and the treatment of Christians in Iran.

UPDATE: The Christians who were arrested in January have since been released but the legal cases against them remain open.



PRAY... that the Iranian Ambassador will engage in dialogue on these issues and that Christians will be better treated in Iran.



CHURCH IN CHAINS

PO Box 10447, Glenageary, Co. Dublin, Ireland

T 01-282 5393 **E** info@churchinchains.ie

W www.churchinchains.ie