



CHURCH IN CHAINS

AN IRISH VOICE FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

June 2009



Joint Appeal for Christians in Eritrea

Over 80 supporters of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Release Eritrea, Church in Chains, Open Doors and Release International took part in a protest vigil outside the Eritrean Embassy in London on 28th May against human rights violations in Eritrea.

Demonstrators standing opposite the Embassy sang praise songs and prayed for those being persecuted in Eritrea. Speakers addressed topics such as President Afewerki's government, human rights violations, European aid to Eritrea, Christians in prison and the plight of Eritrean refugees in many countries.

The demonstration culminated in the presentation of a letter to the Embassy calling for the release of all prisoners held without charge or trial, including up to 3000 Christians.

David Turner, National Coordinator of Church in Chains, said: ***"It is a privilege to stand here today in solidarity with the persecuted Christians of Eritrea. Their bravery and perseverance is inspiring and we pray and look forward to the day when the doors of the prisons and shipping containers where they are being held are opened wide and they can walk out"***.



PRAY...that the Eritrean government will change its policies and begin to rule the country with righteousness and justice.

News from Iran, India & China



Five Christians arrested at house church in Iran



Iranian security police raided a house church meeting in the city of Karaj (20km west of the capital, Teheran) on Sunday 21st May and arrested five Christians who had gathered there for Bible study. The five people are understood to have become Christians recently.

Mr. Javad Abtahi, who was the host and the leader of this gathering, was also arrested along with the other participants. His house was searched without any court authorisation. During this search, several Bibles and New Testaments were confiscated and all the participants were handcuffed and taken to an unknown location.

The family members of **Mr. Saeed R**, one of the detainees, have stated that despite several enquiries, the government has refused to disclose the whereabouts and the well-being of the detainees.

The account of the arrest of these five Christians is similar to that of other Christian detainees and their families, who have been arrested by security officers in recent years. (FCNN)



There is no further news of Maryam Rustampoor (aged 27) and Marzieh Amirzadeh Esmeaeilabad (aged 30) who were arrested in early March. The two young women, who are known to have been subjected to harsh interrogation, are still believed to be held in solitary confinement in Evin Prison in Teheran.



PRAY... that Javad, Saeed and the other new Christians will know God's Holy Spirit with them during these difficult times.

Christians in Orissa face uncertain future as federal police leave

There is a spirit of uncertainty among the Christian community in Orissa following the announcement that federal paramilitary police are to withdraw from the state by the end of June.

The police were sent to the Kandhamal district last autumn after a wave of anti-Christian violence which left over 60 Christians dead. Fifty thousand Christians were forced to flee for their lives and settle in refugee camps. Most of the camps have now been closed and the majority of the refugees have returned to their home areas.

In last month's elections, the BJP (Hindu nationalist party allied with the extremists behind last year's violence) suffered great losses throughout India including the state of Orissa. However, it did win two state assembly seats in the Kandhamal district. One of the seats was won by Manoj Pradhan, who is facing 14 charges of rioting and murder in connection with last year's anti-Christian violence.

Some fear that the withdrawal of the federal police will leave the Christian community vulnerable to further attack. Hundreds of people still live in relief camps and are reluctant to return to their villages.

Hindu extremists attacked five Christian houses in Kandhamal's Raikia area on 31 May.



However, others are hopeful that the Orissa state police will be able to uphold the law. The Brethren in Christ group in Orissa (which has Mennonite links) is planning to organise a peacemaking dialogue with Christians, Hindus and political leaders in Orissa where it has 118 churches – some of which were destroyed in last year's violence.

(Compass Direct/UCAN/MCC)



PRAY ... that the efforts of peacemakers in Orissa will be blessed by God and that there will be no more violence.

Secret Plan for three year sentence for Alimujiang Yimiti

Alimujiang Yimiti (pictured right with his wife, Guli Nuer, and son) is facing a three year sentence of “re-education through labour”.



Yimiti's mother Wushuerhan, aged 65, said that she felt despair at hearing of the intentions of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) and prays that the Lord will mobilise many kind-hearted people to help rescue her son. She has been going to government offices in Kashi (formerly Kashgar) on an almost daily basis, petitioning authorities in tears for Yimiti's release.

As the Kashi PSB originally filed the case against Yimiti, it has the authority to exercise this power [to impose a 3 year sentence] independently without approval from the court or other government departments.

In September 2008, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that Alimujiang Yimiti's detention for more than one year was arbitrary and that the Chinese government should take the necessary steps to correct the situation.

Sources say the real reason for Yimiti's detention is because of his Christian witness among the Uighur people. Yimiti belongs to the Uighur ethnic minority whose homeland is in Xinjiang province in the north west of China. He is from a Muslim background and has been involved in the small but growing Uighur church. *(China Aid Association)*



PRAY...that the plans of the PSB will be frustrated and that Yimiti will be released soon and reunited with his family.



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