



CHURCH IN CHAINS

AN IRISH VOICE FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

May

2009



New report describes Eritrea as “A Giant Prison”

A new report from **Human Rights Watch** has described Eritrea as “a **giant prison**” based on the evidence of extensive religious persecution, indefinite periods of military service

and the need for internal travel permits to travel around the country.

The 95-page report documents serious human rights violations by the Eritrean government including arbitrary arrest, torture, appalling detention conditions, forced labour and severe restrictions on freedom of movement, expression and worship.

The Eritrean Ambassador to the UK and Ireland, Mr. Tesfamichael Gerahtu, has stated publicly that his government had no intention of heeding the recommendations of the report.

Special prayer for Eritrea is being encouraged during May and especially on Eritrea's national day (**Sunday 24 May**). Contact the *Church in Chains* office for an up-to-date list of prayer points. On **Thursday 28 May**, *Church in Chains* is jointly organising a protest vigil outside the Eritrean Embassy in London to highlight the continuing persecution of Christians in Eritrea (where over 3,000 Christians are being held without trial). Click [here](#) to find out more.



PRAY...that the suffering of the people of Eritrea will soon come to an end and that righteousness and justice will be established.

News from Iran, Pakistan & China



Christian women held in solitary confinement in Iran

Maryam Rustampoor (aged 27) and Marzieh Amirizadeh Esmailabad (aged 30) have been moved to solitary confinement in the notorious Evin Prison in Teheran.



They had previously been held in an overcrowded cell with 27 other women.

Maryam and Marzieh have been subjected to harsh treatment in prison. It has emerged that both women are former Muslims – a prison official told them that they should face execution because they are "**apostates**". They have both been blindfolded during interrogation sessions which are expected to continue.

The object of the continued interrogation of Maryam and Marzieh is not known but such questioning is often aimed at discovering the identities of those involved in house church activities.

The ordeal of the young Christian women began on 5 March when they were arrested and the apartment that they shared was searched by police who confiscated computers, books and Bibles. There are concerns for the health of both women as they have been reported as suffering from infection and high fever.

Although no formal charges have been brought against Maryam and Marzieh, their families were previously informed that the women are accused of "**acting against state security**" and "**taking part in illegal gatherings**". Many international human rights organisations, including **Amnesty International**, have called for the release of Maryam and Marzieh.



PRAY... that Maryam and Marzieh will be kept safe in prison and will sense God's Holy Spirit with them at all times.

Innocent Christian remains in prison in Pakistan

Hector Aleem, aged 51, remains in Adiyala Jail in Rawalpindi, near Pakistan's capital of Islamabad, despite being declared innocent of charges brought against him under the Blasphemy Law.

The judge in the case, Mustafa Tanveer, dismissed his bail application at a court session in late April. **A crowd of 180 Muslim protesters gathered at the courthouse in a move described by Hector's lawyer, Malik Tafik, as designed to intimidate the judge into finding Hector guilty.**

Malik Tafik, who is a Muslim, has himself come under pressure from the Rawalpindi Bar for taking on the case of a Christian accused of blasphemy. Malik has now applied for future hearings to be closed to the public. The next hearing is scheduled for Thursday 14 May.

"If the judge does not punish Aleem according to the law, then [we] will kill him ourselves," said Tariq Dhamal, the prosecuting lawyer in the case.

Hector was arrested last November when a Muslim scholar received a text message insulting the Islamic prophet Muhammad. Court evidence shows the text message did not come from Hector's phone, thus proving his innocence.

(Compass Direct)



In reply to a Dáil Question from Ruairí Quinn TD in late April, Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, stated, "I shall seek to ensure that the issue of the blasphemy laws is included in future consultations (at EU level) with the Pakistani authorities".



PRAY ... that justice will be done in this case and that Hector will be released. Pray also that the law will be changed.

Alimujiang Yimiti (Uighur Christian prisoner) is allowed to meet lawyer

Alimujiang Yimiti (pictured right with his wife, Guli Nuer, and son) was allowed a meeting with his lawyer in prison on 20th April. His lawyer, Li Dunyong, had petitioned the People's Prosecutor to permit a meeting after Yimiti had been seen, in a distressed state, being taken into hospital by police on 31st March.



Following the meeting, the lawyer described Yimiti as “extremely happy” and said he was thankful for the concern shown for him from all over the world. However, when Mr. Li asked him about his health, Yimiti gestured that he was not allowed to talk about that.

Yimiti's wife, son and elderly mother were also present at the meeting in the prison. Yimiti's mother had spent the previous week petitioning government offices in Kashgar for the release of her son.

Yimiti has been imprisoned at Kashi Municipal Detention Centre in Xinjiang Province (north-west China) since January 2008. **Sources say the real reason behind his detention is his Christian faith and witness among the Uighur people** (who are predominantly Muslim). Most Uighurs are Muslims and desire more autonomy in their homeland. The Chinese government has cracked down hard on Uighur separatists in recent years. During the past ten years, Yimiti has been called in repeatedly by police for interrogation. *(China Aid Association)*



PRAY...that Yimiti will know God's protection each day in prison and that he will be released soon and reunited with his family.



CHURCH IN CHAINS

PO Box 10447, Glenageary, Co. Dublin, Ireland

T 01-282 5393 E info@churchinchains.ie

W www.churchinchains.ie