



Helen Berhane tells her story to Irish supporters

Helen Berhane, the Eritrean Gospel singer, spoke about her experiences as a prisoner in Eritrea at the **Church in Chains** Annual Conference in Athlone earlier this month. Supporters were delighted to meet Helen in person after praying for her during the 32 months when she was held prisoner in a shipping container.

Helen sang some of the songs that were an inspiration to her during her imprisonment and also spoke about how she coped with the harsh treatment that she received. She said that she viewed the constant pressure exerted on her to sign a document recanting her faith as an opportunity instead to restate her faith. Helen spoke vividly about daily life in the containers (claustrophobia; insufficient air; extreme heat in day; extreme cold at night; lack of privacy for toilet etc.) but also spoke about God answering her prayers for help by inspiring her to sing songs of praise and to encourage other prisoners.

The conference also heard about the many other Eritrean Christians who remain in prison, the Eritrean church and the situation of Eritrean refugees.

A 90 minute DVD of Helen speaking and singing at the conference is now available at a cost of €10 (Ireland) or €12 (overseas) including p + p. For more details, contact info@churchinchains.ie.



PRAISE GOD...for the encouragement of Helen's presence at the conference and pray for God's continued leading for her life.



Hua Huiqi (son of Shuang Shuying) arrested again in China

Hua Huiqi was arrested again by Chinese police on Thursday 17 September in Beijing.

The well-known house church pastor has been arrested on numerous occasions in recent years – most recently in June this year, when he was badly beaten.



Huiqi's mother is Shuang Shuying who was released from prison in February after serving a two year sentence.

On this occasion, police called to the family home and detained Huiqi while officials discussed the activities of his ministry, Tentmaker Fellowship. This Gospel ministry uses screen printing to print Bible verses on cloths, paintings, hand bags and other items.

At 6pm, Huiqi was taken by the police to "meet their boss". A few minutes later he secretly phoned his wife, Wei Ju Mei, and said, ***"The police did not take me to meet their boss. I am on Jingshi Highway now, and I don't know where they will take me."***

One of the police who took Huiqi away on this occasion was the officer who brutally attacked him in June. At that time, he had threatened Huiqi, ***"three months later when I have collected enough evidence, I will send both you and your wife to prison. I will see how you can share the Gospel then."***

Huiqi's family heard nothing about him for several days and then at 11pm on 22 September, five police escorted Huiqi to Beijing Tiantan Hospital for his final visit to his dying brother, Hua Huilin. The Hua family's request for Huiqi to visit his brother had been denied previously.

Under the eyes of the guards, Huiqi was ordered not to speak to anyone, and was allowed only a few brief moments with his brother.
(China Aid Association)



PRAY...that Huiqi will be released by police and that their continued harassment of Tentmaker Fellowship will end.

World Council of Churches calls for repeal of Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has called for the repeal of Pakistan's controversial Blasphemy Laws following the riots in the town of Gojra in early August in which eight Christians were killed.

The WCC said it considered the law has become "a major source of victimisation and persecution" of religious minorities who are living "in a state of fear and terror". It called on Pakistan to "guarantee the rights of all religious minorities in the country."

The governor of Punjab (the region in which Gojra is located) also called for the repeal of the laws but his call led to nationwide protests by the religious parties of Pakistan on Friday 18 September. Muslim clerics said that the demand to end blasphemy law was in itself "an act of blasphemy."

There continues to be great tension in Gojra and the surrounding area with Muslim residents demanding the arrest of Christians whom they accuse of provoking the violence. The list of those accused includes Bishop John Samuel of the Church of Pakistan and his two sons.

Meanwhile, eighteen Muslims arrested in the wake of the Gojra violence were released from jail on Saturday 19 September.



Mr. Shab haz Bhatti, the Federal Minister for Minorities, has pledged that the government will take strict action against those found guilty of involvement in the violence against Christians.

Mr. Bhatti, a Roman Catholic, also said "The growing misuse of blasphemy laws is worrisome and we will review, revisit and amend them to stop their misuse".

(Episcopal News, Assist News, Dawn)

In correspondence with Church in Chains, the Embassy of Pakistan condemned the violence in Gojra but did not respond to calls to repeal the Blasphemy Laws.

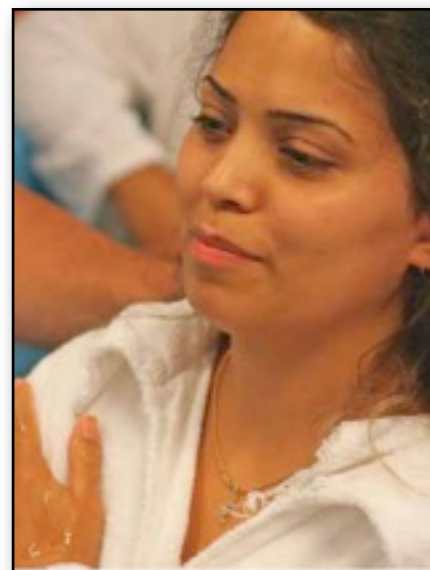


PRAY ... for peace and security for all residents of Gojra and pray again for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

Tina Rad and family leave Iran

Tina Rad and her husband, Makan Arya, left Iran during the summer along with their five-year-old daughter, Odzhan. In 2008, the Christian couple were arrested and beaten by Iranian security police and threatened that Odzhan would be taken from them.

The family have been granted a temporary permit to live in a new country where they have taken advantage of their new freedom to be baptised (see picture right). Tina said "Jesus is the one who is helping us all the way till here. We see it with our eyes, amazing."



Tina became a Christian early last year after a friend gave her a Bible and Jesus appeared to her in a dream. Her witness led her husband, Makan, to become a Christian also. However, other family members disapproved of their new faith and reported them to the police.

During their interrogation last year, many threats were made against Tina and Makan. Tina was told that if she and Makan continued to attend a house church and hold Bible studies, they could be imprisoned "for a very long time" and their daughter would be placed in an institution.



Tina's bruised face (left) after being beaten by security police in June 2008 was a potent image of the brutality inflicted on many Christians by the Iranian authorities. One of Tina's knees was also damaged as a result of torture by the police.

Tina's parents have told her that they never want to see her again. (*Open Doors*)



PRAISE GOD...that Tina, Makran and Odzhan are now in a safe country where they can live freely as Christians.



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