



CHURCH IN CHAINS

AN IRISH VOICE FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

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Eight Christians killed in riots in Pakistan

At least eight Christians were killed in violent attacks in the Punjab region of Pakistan last weekend. The first attack took place in Korian village (pictured) on Friday 31 July when a mob of over 500 Muslims burnt down 60 houses belonging to Christians.

The mob was responding to calls from a mosque accusing local Christians of desecrating the Quran. Local sources said nearly all village Christian families fled. The fires destroyed their homes and all belongings within that the attacking Muslims had not first looted.

The same accusation of desecration of the Quran (denied by local Christians) led to a massive protest by Muslims in the nearby town of Gojra on the following day (Saturday 1 August). **“There were only four police constables trying to stop the mob of thousands of people,”** said one witness. Crowd size and attacks grew, and Islamists managed to block main roads and railways to keep fire brigades from fighting the house fires. The victims of the attacks (men, women and children) were burnt alive – unable to escape from their homes.

The attacks have been condemned by President Zardari and by Pakistan's parliament, which observed two minutes' silence in memory of the victims and condemned the violence. (*Compass Direct, UCAN, Assist*)

Church in Chains has written to the Pakistani Ambassador to Ireland expressing shock and outrage at the attacks and calling for protection for Christians in Pakistan and the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.



PRAY...that the government of Pakistan will take decisive action to protect Christians in Korian and Gojra and to enforce the law.

News from Eritrea, North Korea & China →

Another Christian dies in prison in Eritrea

Yemane Kahasay Andom, aged 43, died on Thursday 23 July at Mitire Military Detention camp in north east Eritrea. He had severe malaria and was not given proper medical treatment. His body was secretly buried.



For two weeks before his death, Yemane had been held in an underground cell at the camp where he was being pressurised to sign a recantation form. Most Christians view the signing of such a form as denying their Christian faith.

Yemane had been imprisoned at Mitire for eighteen months during which he had suffered torture. Yemane's family details are not known.

Observers have described Mitire as a “special military concentration camp” set up by the Eritrean government for religious prisoners. Over 100 Christians detained because of their faith have been transported to the camp. Mitire is notorious because of the extreme heat there throughout the year. *(Compass Direct)*

Nine Christians are now known to have died in Eritrean prisons in the past three years.

Over 2,800 Christians are currently incarcerated – some in prisons but many others in police stations and makeshift prisons such as shipping containers or open air facilities in military camps.

Prisoners are routinely tortured and most are held arbitrarily, without any charges being brought against them. Many have come under severe pressure to sign documents renouncing their faith.



PRAY... that the Lord will comfort all those who mourn Yemane and all who are imprisoned in Mitire camp.

Christian woman executed in North Korea for distributing Bible

Ri Hyon Ok, aged 33, has been executed publicly for distributing the Bible, and for spying for South Korea and the United States, according to reports from a South Korean based alliance of human rights groups.

The execution took place in the north-western city of Ryongchon near the border with China on 16 June. Ri's parents, husband and three children were sent to a political prison camp in the north-eastern city of Hoeryong the following day, in keeping with the government's policy of imprisoning three generations of close family associated with a Christian.

North Korea claims to guarantee freedom of religion for its 24 million people but in reality severely restricts religious observances. The cult of personality surrounding national founder Kim Il Sung and his son, current leader Kim Jong Il, is a virtual state religion.

The activist alliance (the Korean title of which translates as The Investigative Committee On Crimes Against Humanity) also alleged in its report that in March, **North Korean security agents arrested Seo Kum Ok, 30, another Christian, in a city near Ryongchon and tortured her.**



The agents alleged she was attempting to spy on a nuclear site and hand over the evidence to South Korea and the US. The report said it remains unclear whether she survived. Her husband was also arrested and their two children disappeared, *(Daily Express)*



PRAY ... that the Lord will give strength to the family of Ri Hyon Ok as they live in a labour camp mourning her loss.

Alimujiang Yimiti (Uighur Christian prisoner) waits for trial verdict

Alimujiang Yimiti (pictured right with his wife, Guli Nuer, and his younger son) is waiting for a verdict to be announced following his trial in Xinjiang province in north west China on 28 July. Yimiti has been arbitrarily detained at Kashi Municipal Detention Centre since January 2008, charged with "revealing state secrets or intelligence to overseas organisations." **Yimiti testified that he is innocent and that he is being persecuted for preaching Christianity.**



Only the two lawyers representing Yimiti, Li Dunyong and Liang Xiaojun, were allowed to attend the trial. His wife, two children and Yimiti's mother waited at the gate of the courthouse. His family saw Yimiti in the police vehicle, and he was able to raise his handcuffed hands, smile and wave to them. This was the first time Yimiti and his family had seen each other since his detention 18 months ago.

Many people, including Christians of Han ethnicity, have contacted Guli Nuer to express their concern and to pray for Yimiti. **Nuer told them that though she is disappointed with this trial, she is still depending on Jesus Christ**, and therefore has peace in her heart. She said she will continue to pray for the final result of the trial. She also thanked all those Christians who pray for her own family, and said that it is the prayers of so many people that have sustained their family and have made her and Yimiti strong, so that they continue to have peace and hope today.

(China Aid Association)



PRAY...that Yimiti and Nuer will continue to know God's peace in their hearts and pray that he will be released back to his family.



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