

Twelve die in attack on Coptic church in Cairo



Twelve people (Muslim and Christian) died following an attack on a church in Cairo on Saturday 7 May, in which 200 people were also injured.

The trouble began when local Imam Muhammad Zughbi led about 200 Salafi Muslims, armed with clubs, swords and automatic guns, to St Mina Church in the Imbaba district of Cairo. They were protesting about a rumour that a Coptic woman had converted to Islam and was being held in the church against her will. Witnesses said that the Imbaba confrontation began with shouting between protesters, church guards

and local people. The Muslim group began to use their weapons, shouting "Allahu Akbar", and the Copts tried to defend the church with pistols. Firebombs were thrown, Copts hurled stones from their balconies and Muslims from nearby areas joined in. The dead and injured were carried into the church, and fighting continued in the area for several hours before the army brought the situation under control.

190 people (including many Christians) were arrested and are due to be tried in military courts. The ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has threatened the death penalty for anyone found inciting sectarian strife. (*Arab-West Report, BBC*)

PRAY... for God's comfort on all those bereaved or injured in the violence and pray that Egyptian Christians will continue to rejoice in the Lord and trust God for their future.

Chinese police arrest church members five weeks in a row

On Sunday 8 May, police detained thirteen members of Shouwang Church, one of Beijing's largest house churches, as they congregated to hold an outdoor worship service in Beijing's Haidian district.

The authorities continued a tactic they started using after the first Shouwang outdoor worship attempt on 10 April: pressurising landlords to evict Shouwang members from their homes. More than 160 Shouwang members were arrested the first week they tried to meet outdoors, about 50 the second week, 40 the third week and 30 the fourth week. The declining number of arrests is probably due to the government placing so many members under house arrest. More than 500 members were placed under house arrest on Easter weekend alone.

Shouwang Church lost its meeting space, in a restaurant, when the government pressurised the owners to evict the church. Shouwang has tried to rent other venues, but landlords have been pressurised not to cooperate. It bought a premises, at great expense, but has been denied access. (*China Aid*)



PRAY... for the many members of Shouwang Church who have been arrested in recent weeks and pray that a solution will be found so that the church can meet together for worship.



Asia Bibi visited in prison by daughter

Asia Bibi (45) the Christian farm labourer sentenced to death under Pakistan's blasphemy laws, has been visited in prison by her 12-year-old daughter, Isham, who brought her a bouquet of flowers. The emotional visit meant much to Asia who feels very lonely in prison and greatly misses her family. Asia's husband, Ashiq Masih, and his five children are continuing to live in hiding.

Asia has received medicine in recent weeks which has cured her chicken pox. Her psychological condition is reported to swing between despair at her situation as an innocent prisoner, and prayer that always leads her to trust in the providence of God. Asia has been very encouraged to know that many people around the world are praying for her deliverance. The political implication of the killing of Osama Bin-Laden has dominated public debate in Pakistan and Asia's case is no longer in the headlines. Asia's lawyers have welcomed the opportunity to work on her appeal without undue pressure from radical Muslim groups in the background. (Agenzia Fides)

PRAISE GOD... that Asia has received medicine to treat her chicken pox and had the joy of a visit from her daughter. Continue to pray for her deliverance from these false charges.



Shoib Assadullah leaves Afghanistan

Shoib Assadullah, a Christian who was formerly a Muslim, was released from prison on 30 March and left Afghanistan last month following concerns about his safety. Shoib had been commanded by court officials not to leave his home town of Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan. However, a friend said that "Shoib's location in Mazar became known and this was judged to be a high risk, so he has left the country for an indefinite stay abroad. He travelled to Kabul and then [out of the country] with the help of friends." (International Christian Concern)

Three Christians released in Iran

Sonia Keshish-Avanesian, Arash Kermanjani and his wife Arezou Teymouri were set free from Hamadan state prison on 30 April 2011, after almost eight months of captivity. The released Christians have lost a lot of weight, are very weak and face a long road to full recovery. Sonia, who was pregnant at the time of their arrest, and had previously suffered three miscarriages, lost her baby in prison. Sonia's husband, Vahik Abrahamian, remains in prison. (Elam Ministries)



PRAISE GOD... for the release of Shoib (Afghanistan) and Sonia, Arash and Arezou (Iran) and pray for healing of body and mind and a full recovery. Pray also for Vahik who remains in prison.

Around The World in Prayer

Christians gathered from Dublin, Wicklow and further afield for an afternoon of prayer at Crinken Church Hall, Shankill, Co. Dublin last month. Speakers from Eritrea, Iran, Uzbekistan and Egypt who live in Ireland plus Irish Christians who had recently travelled to Morocco and North Korea gave presentations, which were followed by prayer in small groups. During the tea break, bread and cakes from Egypt and Eritrea were served while delegates viewed each country's display table.



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