



China – Jailed Pastor Wang Yi's defence team "disregarded" by authorities as he faces second charge, and Bible, God and Christ removed from a school textbook

The two lawyers appointed by Pastor Wang Yi to defend him against a charge of incitement to "subvert state power" have been "disregarded" by the authorities, according to a statement from the Early Rain Covenant Church on 10 August.

Authorities said they would instead appoint their own "Christian" lawyers to represent the pastor, who has been languishing in jail since December 2018. The move came soon after one of the lawyers, Zhang Peihong, revealed that Pastor Wang Yi was now facing a second charge of running "illegal business operations".

On 8 August, lawyer Zhang said he was being refused access to the pastor. Zhang said that it was possible Pastor Wang Yi has been made to feel he was alone and that the outside world had forgotten about him. "Pastor Wang Yi needs your prayers," urged Zhang.

Early Rain Church members said on Facebook on 10 August: "Pastor Wang Yi does not accept, does not recognise, and even condemns all actions performed [in his defence] by state-appointed attorneys, and he refuses to accept attorneys appointed by anyone but himself or his immediate family members."

Pastor Wang Yi, his wife, Jiang Rong, and about 100 other Early Rain Church members were arrested on 9 December 2018. Jiang Rong was released after six months in jail on 10 June and a church elder and a female church member were released in early August. Pastor Wang Yi and two other members of the church remain in detention. Six family members from Early Rain Church have also applied for asylum to the United States during a visit to Taiwan.

Meanwhile, Chinese censors have erased the words Bible, God and

Christ from classic children's stories including *Robinson Crusoe* in a new school textbook. Author Daniel Defoe's description of how Crusoe recovers three Bibles from the remains of his shipwreck, for example, has been altered to read that Crusoe saved "a few books".

Thank the Lord that while the authorities may believe that Pastor Wang Yi and the other two church members still in detention are alone, they are not, for God is with them and will not leave them in this time of captivity and isolation (Deuteronomy 31:6). Pray that Pastor Wang Yi's mind and body will be strengthened and that he will remember that no weapon used against him will succeed to separate him from God, and that the pastor shall prove to be wrong every tongue that rises against him in judgment (Isaiah 54:17). Pray that the children in that vast country will find many opportunities in the future to read about God and Christ in the Bible itself.

Nigeria – Several hundred Christians killed, villages decimated in merciless wave of militant Fulani attacks

Several hundred Christians lost their lives in the first half of 2019 as a wave of attacks by heavily-armed, mainly Muslim, Fulani militants continued to gather momentum. This "religious cleansing" is aiding Boko Haram's attempts to establish an Islamist caliphate in north-eastern Nigeria.

Barnabas Fund contacts described the situation as "horrifying" for Christian communities and the carnage has gone largely unchallenged by the Nigerian Federal Government. Swathes of Christian-owned farmland have also been seized by Fulani militants this year. A controversial government plan called "Ruga", that seeks to establish new Fulani settlements in the region, was recently suspended due to a public outcry.

The UN announced in July that the

upsurge of violent attacks on Christians taking place across sub-Saharan Africa is now at crisis level, with an estimated 4.2 million displaced people representing an "unprecedented" humanitarian emergency.

Kaduna has been the worst-hit state, with nearly 300 people killed when heavily-armed Fulani militia raided at least seven predominantly Christian villages across the region, between February and April. Brutal rapes and maiming with machetes were reported. Over 300 homes were destroyed in the raids and many acres of farmland ravaged and property looted. In Dogon Noma village, eyewitnesses described gunmen "shooting and hacking down anything that moved".

In the Kajura district, also in Kaduna State, between February and March, the bodies of about 73 women, some pregnant, and 101 children ranging from babies on their mothers' backs up to ten-year-olds, were interred in a mass grave.

Reports of attacks killing 66 Fulanis were circulated in televised reports from Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai during the presidential elections in February. These later proved to be false, but are thought to have aggravated hostility towards Christians in the state.

Ask that the LORD will encamp around the Christians, preserve them from evil, keep their souls safe and strong, and that He will deliver them from the extremists who continue to target them (Psalm 34:7 and Psalm 121:7). Call on the LORD to remind them daily that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5). Pray that the government will implement a system of land ownership that is fair and satisfies both the Fulani herdsman and the Christian pastoralists so that they may live in peace. Also ask God to encourage the Nigerian government to act with more decisiveness to combat the extremists among the Fulani, and to enable the security forces to successfully track down the thieves, agitators and killers.

Cameroon – Christians escape with their lives as Boko Haram militants step up attacks on villages in the north

About 200 families escaped with their lives when Boko Haram Islamist militants ransacked a mainly-Christian village in the far north of Cameroon on 10 July. Following several previous Boko Haram raids in the area, the families were sleeping in the bush to avoid further attacks when the armed gang stormed Roum village, in the Tourou area, setting fire to homes, killing livestock and plundering food stores and possessions.

A Barnabas contact said the villagers had lost everything and initially took refuge at a local school. He estimated around 1,120 families in the area were “living in distress” following the attack on Roum, and Boko Haram’s destructive onslaughts on other villages including Goldavi on 5 July, Zeleved on 10 July and Amchide on 11 July. He said, “The populations have all lost food stocks, clothing, sleeping sets and many other material goods and animals. These attacks led to great fear, psychosis, trauma and panic among the populations.”

Christian villages in the far north of Cameroon are subject to attacks by Boko Haram militias attempting to establish an Islamic caliphate from north-eastern Nigeria all the way to northern Cameroon, which is predominantly Christian. The UN estimates that more than 170,000 Cameroonians, mainly Christians, have been forced to flee their homes by Boko Haram, who have increased their attacks in 2019.

Call on the Lord to bring comfort, peace and strengthened faith to the hundreds of families who had to run and hide from murderous extremists. Pray that they will continue to be bold and rely on God to help them overcome their fears and doubts in the face of a terrifying opposition (1 Peter 3:14). Ask God to protect them and ensure they are provided with food and other resources to safeguard their health and survival.

Egypt – Sit-in staged after church closure forces yet another funeral to be held on streets, and legalisation of churches slows as Christian leaders say rules are too stringent

Christians staged a sit-in at a church in Egypt on 17 July to protest about the building’s continued closure, which forced them to hold another funeral on the streets. Members of the 2,500-strong Christian community in Koum al-Raheb village, close to the city of Samalout, agreed to end their protest only after police assured them a way would be found to provide a licensed church in the village. Christians have already had to hold at least three funeral services on the streets since 9 December 2018 when police closed what is the only church in Koum al-Raheb on the very day it opened, because it was unlicensed.

The new, four-storey church falls between the provisions of two laws. Its construction began before September 2016, when the new Law for Building and Restoring Churches was introduced. However, it was completed after the September 2017 deadline for applications to legalise unlicensed existing churches under previous legal provisions.

Fewer churches and church-affiliated buildings were licensed for worship by the authorities in Egypt in the latest batch announced on 5 August, amid complaints from Christian leaders that the civil defence requirements were too stringent and difficult to meet. Only 88 approvals were made by the cabinet-approved committee in charge of the licensing process, compared with 127 announced on 1 July.

Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli has previously urged the committee to accelerate the approval process, telling civil defence authorities to coordinate with churches over reasonable safety requirements.

Pray for a sustained acceleration of the licensing of church premises in Egypt so that more and more Christians will

be free to worship legally and also hold their funeral services in an appropriate place rather than in the street. Help these dis comforted Christians be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12).

Sri Lanka – Gang of Buddhist monks viciously beat Bible college student

A gang of Buddhist monks viciously beat up a Christian student in Sri Lanka on 4 August. The attack took place immediately after a Sunday worship service held at a home in the town of Mahiyanganaya, in central Sri Lanka, according to Bishop Asiri Perera, the president of the country’s Methodist Church. Three monks targeted the head, stomach and spine of their young victim, a Bible college student, during the attack. Perera said that the monks belonged to “a notorious extremist group that promotes religious disharmony and conflict in this country”.

“I assure all Buddhists of Sri Lanka that we Christians will remain calm and peaceful in the midst of the persecution we face today in Sri Lanka. I humbly appeal to you to be kind towards the Christians who live with you,” Perera said.

The student was admitted to hospital, and, when no arrests were made in the aftermath of the attack, Perera raised concerns over police inaction, saying that Christians were not treated as equal citizens. Sri Lanka has a history of extremist Buddhists targeting religious minorities including Christians and Muslims.

Lift up to the Lord the young student, asking that he will fully recover both mentally and physically from the attack. Pray that he will resist fear and instead know that the LORD God is his strength (Habakkuk 3:19). Call on God to bring peace to Sri Lanka, so that Buddhist extremists will have their hearts softened, and neighbours will respect one another no matter what their religion, and also that the good news of salvation through Christ will be shared.

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. - 2 Thessalonians 3:3

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