

PERSECUTION



BREAKING CHAINS

One woman's journey to break free of domestic and societal persecution

ADOPTING DIGNITY

ICC provides a brighter future for an orphan of persecution

After the Dust Settles

In the aftermath of life-altering persecution, believers are faced with the unimaginable.

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

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Jeff King, President
International Christian Concern

Dear friend,

You often hear me say that ICC works in that difficult space between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—and what a terrible place it is.

Our local contacts in Nigeria are often the first to arrive after a Fulani extremist attack. We see the uncensored photos and videos of smoldering ruins of Christian homes, corpses stacked like cord wood, and beleaguered survivors grateful to have escaped with their lives. They are now faced with the task of restoring their lives with strings of God's strength holding them together.

But they are not left alone. This is where ICC steps in.

We first bandage our persecuted brother and sister and then it's onto helping them get back on their feet. It's that later task—helping them get back on their feet—that sets us apart.

We see survivors rise from the ashes and darkness into a new light with God's strength. Thanks to the faithful donations of you, our donor, we help them pay for medical bills and school expenses, care for loved ones, repair or find new homes, and launch new businesses to sustain their families for the long term.

In this issue, my prayer for you is to be touched by the stories of those we've helped.

Following the journey of Sukru as he escaped from the Taliban and must now build a new life in America, I'm amazed at his resilience and strength to lead his family into the unknown, guided by the father.

After seeing smile on three month old Ruth's face after Fulani militants murdered her mother and leaving her to die reminds me that nothing will hinder God's promises.

So many people are latched onto the latest breaking news headlines. It's easy for us to get caught up in the latest shocking attack. And those have their importance in this ministry.

But when the camera's turn away before the blood has dried, many survivors are left helpless. Our approach makes sure that they do not go unnoticed and unhelped.

God bless,

Jeff King

President: International Christian Concern | Persecution.org

Author: *Islam Uncensored* and *The Last Words of the Martyrs*

Podcast Host: *Into The Deep*



Your Dollars at Work

ICC'S ONGOING INITIATIVES



Afghanistan Crisis

As the Taliban rose to power in Afghanistan, countless Christians were left vulnerable to their brutal reign. ICC called upon its supporters to help rescue those in danger because of their faith. Although we unfortunately cannot share many details due to the sensitive security situation, thanks to your support, we have raised nearly \$500,000 to support these efforts at the time of writing. In and out of the country, we have been able to come alongside the most at-risk Christians in Afghanistan to pray and support them.

Persecutor of the Year Awards

During a press conference in November, ICC launched a monumental new initiative called the Persecutor of the Year Awards. The awards were published in a comprehensive 140-page report that condemned oppressive countries, entities, and individuals around the world.

Nigeria earned ICC's dubious award in the worst 'country' category, the Taliban for worst 'entity,' and North Korea Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un for worst 'individual.' Our goal is to call out the world's worst persecutors to make their heinous actions known and hold them accountable in the process.

Church Planters in India

Over the past few years, ICC has equipped church planters throughout India with Bibles to distribute and bicycles to transport them from one rural village to the next. By the grace of God, we have witnessed a tremendous response. We have distributed 100,000 New Testaments in 13 different languages, along with 1,000 bikes, in 18 of India's 29 states. As a result, over 7,000 people have come to faith in Jesus Christ.

With the great success we've encountered, ICC is launching another program in India to continue to equip rural church planters.

To learn more about how you can support these initiatives, visit www.persecution.org or give us a call at 800-422-5441.



Barbershop for Convert in Kenya

Last year, Kelvin and his wife accepted Christ after hearing the Good News from a group of medical missionaries. After their Muslim community noticed them skipping daily prayers at the mosque, animosity began to grow.

Kelvin was immediately fired from his job at a barbershop that is owned by a local Muslim businessman. He, his wife, and their two children were also rejected by their extended family for leaving the Islamic faith.

In order to support this family, ICC renovated and equipped a vacant shop for Kelvin to start his own barbershop.

He shared, “Today, I am grateful to God because He never sleeps nor slumbers. He saw our cry and our little faith and sent His angels to help us. Through our pastor, we got well-wishers who came to help us set up a new barbershop for me. It belongs to me. That is a miracle. I was not thinking about owning one soon for it is expensive to buy the equipment and install a good barbershop like this one”

Kelvin continued, “I already have several men who shall be coming to my shop for shaving and hair care. In a week, I will be able to provide all that my family needs, and in a month, I will start saving. May the name of the Lord be blessed.”



West Watch

ISSUES INVOLVING CHRISTIANITY IN THE WEST



Members of Congress call out Finland's Prosecution of Christian Legislator

Six members of the U.S. House of Representatives signed a letter condemning Finland's treatment of Dr. Päivi Räsänen, a Christian Finnish legislator being prosecuted for her faith, and Reverend Dr. Juhana Pohjola, a Lutheran bishop who published a Christian pamphlet Dr. Räsänen wrote.

In 2019, Dr. Räsänen, a practicing Lutheran, tweeted in response to her denomination's support for an LGBTQ pride event. Her tweet asked how a church could affirm homosexuality and still be consistent with

the Bible, including a link to Romans 1:24-27.

In 2004, Dr. Räsänen authored a pamphlet making the case for a traditional definition of marriage that was published by Lutheran bishop Reverend Dr. Juhana Pohjola. Finland's Prosecutor General, after repeatedly interrogating Dr. Räsänen, formally charged her with three charges of incitement against ethnic groups in April 2021.

The letter, sent to the U.S. Commission of

International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), said, "We are writing today concerning infringements on religious freedom in Finland. The Finnish government is currently prosecuting well-known Christians for publicly supporting long-standing Christian doctrine... [and] are specific examples of the Finnish government's violation of freedom of religion."

Representative Chip Roy wrote the letter, joined by his colleagues Representatives Doug Lamborn, Paul Gosar, Jody Hice, Michael Cloud, and Byron Donalds.



Australia's Efforts to Protect Religious Freedom

The Australian government has introduced a bill that, if passed, would protect people of faith and faith-based organizations. The bill states that they can make statements of belief as long as it does not threaten, intimidate, harass, or vilify a person or group, according to the Australian Prime Minister.

This bill's passing would be a major step in securing religious freedom in a Western nation that has grown increasingly hostile to Christianity. The state of Victoria recently proposed its own bill to limit religious schools in hiring educators of their choice. This new federal bill would overrule any such state and local laws limiting protected religious freedoms.

Hate crimes against Christians in Europe & Central Asia up by nearly 60%

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has released a report recording 980 incidents of hate crimes against Christians in Europe and Central Asia in 2020. This is up from 578 reports in 2019, an increase of 59.1% in one year.

The ODIHR is the human rights office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation

Europe, the world's largest regional security organization made up of 57 countries that specifically investigates hate crimes against religious groups.

The data included in the report has "hate incidents in 46 participating States, as reported by 136 civil society groups, UNHCR and OSCE missions."



University Sued by Students for Withholding Funding for Event with Christian Philosopher

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has been sued by the Christian student group Ratio Christi for denying funding to an event on rational belief in God.

According to the Alliance Defending Freedom, Ratio Christi requested \$1,500 in student activity funding to host an event with a former UNL professor and Christian

philosopher, but the school denied the request since the event featured, "speakers of a political and ideological nature." However, the university has sponsored other political events. The university said that if they wanted the event to take place they would need to "provide another spokesperson with a different ideological perspective."

In the Throes of Persecution

ICC continues to advocate and work to save Afghan Christians.

By ICC Advocacy Team

In the wake of the disastrous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the highly secretive Christian community in the country began to experience a rapid increase in threats. For Christians, the weeks and months following the fall of Kabul to the Taliban on August 15th were the most frightening times in years.

In multiple cases, Christians received threatening phone messages. “*We know who you are,*” the callers say. “*We’re coming for you.*”

Many Christians frantically tried to escape through the Hamid Karzai International Airport, hoping and praying to make it through the airport gates and onto a plane.

Only a few made it.

Scores of Christians remain in hiding throughout Afghanistan while others are in neighboring countries praying for an opportunity at religious freedom.

Weeks before Kabul fell to the Taliban, International Christian Concern (ICC) predicted the events weeks before. Because of this, ICC quickly rose to the occasion and organized work to get at-risk Christians prior to the fall.

However, for those left behind, more must be

done.

ICC is hard at work behind the scenes informing decision-makers with facts from the ground and telling U.S. and world leaders what is needed to save the Christians left behind.

In the beginning months of 2022, ICC will launch a strategic initiative for a long-term solution for Afghan Christians stuck in transit countries without a final destination, while also serving those still in hiding in Afghanistan.

Working with several partners throughout the halls of power in the United States, ICC will push for the international community to save these Christians and ensure that their voice is heard.

Much of this work will take place behind the scenes, but Christians in the United States can help by calling their Congressional representatives and urge them to make accommodations for the these severely at-risk Christians.

Stay up-to-date with the latest Afghanistan news and ICC’s initiatives by following our social media accounts. 







Lost Home, Newfound Freedom in the US

One Afghan Christian family shares their story escaping the Taliban.

Sukru held his two-year-old son in the crowded soldiers' barrack in an unfamiliar land, grateful to God that his family's long and arduous journey was almost over.

It had long been his dream to come to America, albeit under different circumstances. So, waiting four months on a military base to be placed in a community was nothing compared to the dangerous Afghanistan they just fled.

There were many moments when Sukru and wife Helena, son, and in-laws, doubted they could flee the Taliban. Their life as Christians in Afghanistan and eventual escape could have ended at so many junctures. God, however, had other plans.



Even now in a crowded, drafty barrack with a bed sheet for privacy, Sukru couldn't contain his excitement at his family's good fortune of being free. Not just physically, but more importantly spiritually. In the United States, he and his family could worship the Lord openly for the first time as they waited to be placed hopefully somewhere in the South.

"Freedom is priceless," Sukru said. "In America you have freedom of faith, freedom of speech, freedom of lifestyle. No one is putting a gun to your head saying, 'Don't do that.' My wife and sister-in-law don't have to cover their heads when they're out in public. That freedom is the first and main thing I noticed about this culture."

Sukru's path to the United States was unexpected, though not surprising. The devout Muslim had put his faith in Christ years earlier, after questioning his upbringing and then meeting Christians from South Korea and the United States. He married his bride and their life in Afghanistan was "perfect" as Sukru would describe.

"We had an active {underground} ministry," he said. "Kabul was a place you could walk at 11:00 at night with no problem." Things slowly eroded, long before this Taliban summer. The streets of Kabul became more dangerous, "even at 5:00 o'clock at night, people will rob you and kill you because of money."

After the Taliban ascended to power in August, the 8,000 to 12,000 Afghan Christians became targets—considered apostates by the Taliban and under a death sentence if caught. While International Christian Concern (ICC) moved many of the most vulnerable Christians out of the country before the takeover, others were forced even further underground. As things escalated, decisions had to be made quickly—stay and hide or flee. If the latter, friendships, mementos, and comforts were left behind.

While Sukru thought getting out of the country to the United States or Europe would be impossible, an American missionary had told him, "If God wants to take you out of this country, He will make a way."

And He did.

It certainly wasn't an easy path. Their family

caravan tried unsuccessfully to get through to the airport several times. They spent three hours in a dirty canal. Chaos and fear reigned. They were beaten and had their items stolen, leaving Sukru to wonder, "Is this really God's plan?"

An ICC contact helped Sukru's family and other Christians get to the airport for an opportunity to board a plane. They finally broke through with the aid of an American soldier. After much bureaucracy and seemingly endless waiting in line, Sukru's entire family was put on a plane to Kuwait, then to Spain, and finally to the United States.

"One night I was saying to God, I lost my

home, everything in Afghanistan. And I was feeling that God was saying a new chapter of life will start for you, so don't worry. I don't know what's going to happen when I get out of this camp. But I have hope in God."

ICC continues to help those Christian families and leaders who have chosen to stay in Afghanistan or are prevented from doing so; and to help others settle into safe areas outside its borders. This will be a long-term endeavor."

"Please continue to pray for us and our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan," said Sukru. 



Exposing Years of Human Rights Abuses

BY NIGERIA'S WEALTHY GOVERNOR

Governor El-Rufai is not who he tries to make the world believe he is

By Jay Church

As a human rights watchdog group, International Christian Concern (ICC) released a report profiling Nigerian Governor Nasir El-Rufai and analyzing his years-long pattern of punishing Christian communities in Kaduna State. While militant groups contribute to religious persecution in Nigeria, No Protest Allowed highlights another major source of persecution in Nigeria—the government. “Anyone who attempted to cross [the river] would taken away,” a source, preferring anonymity, told ICC.

Since taking office as Governor of Kaduna State in May 2015, El-Rufai has repeatedly endangered Christian communities by ordering them into strict lockdowns. These lockdown orders—which trap villagers in their homes—prevent villagers from organizing early warning systems and make militant attacks even more deadly as villagers no longer have the warning they need to flee impending attacks.

Despite international condemnation of these lockdown orders, El-Rufai has continued to punish Christians using this technique. In 2020, he locked down a Christian-majority agricultural area for over two months during planting season. Militants, taking advantage of his lockdown orders, killed over 100 Christian villagers during that time.

In addition to chronicling several of these





lockdowns, No Protest Allowed exposes El-Rufai's immense wealth and his family's extensive international travel including to London, Paris, New York, Dubai, and the Caribbean.

Dubbed the "reformist governor" by the Economist, El-Rufai's carefully-groomed image as a man of the people began to crumble as ICC researchers combed through the El-Rufai family's social media presence. While El-Rufai has loudly publicized his decision to enroll some of his children in Kaduna's public school system, ICC researchers found that he quietly sent at least one of his children to a private school in Canada where annual tuition is about \$44,000 USD per year. Another social media post showed his family drinking sparkling apple juice infused with 24kt gold flakes at the Burj al Arab hotel in Dubai.

Nigeria goes to great effort to cast itself as a beleaguered nation struggling valiantly against sectarian violence. Secular democracy, the narrative goes, is the guiding principle governing Nigeria—any deviation from that is the fault of malicious nonstate actors intending to spoil what they cannot control.

Nigeria does suffer from sectarian violence—

it is estimated that Boko Haram is responsible for over 35,000 deaths and that Fulani militants have killed from 20,000-50,000 in the last decade or so—but the idea that the government is an impartial player doing its best to promote justice and freedom for all is simply wrong.

A self-proclaimed admirer of China's Den Xiaoping, El-Rufai recently resurrected a military-era rule regulating pastors and their sermons. The regulations are striking similar to Chinese regulations and do not bode well for the future of religious freedom in Kaduna.

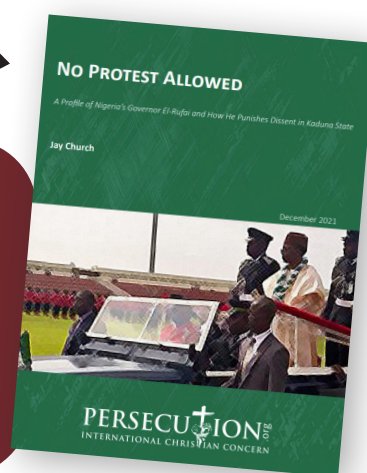
"El-Rufai's actions endanger thousands and

help to illustrate the deeply problematic nature of government persecution in Nigeria," said Jay Church, the report's author and ICC's Advocacy Manager for Africa. "ICC hopes that the international community takes note of El-Rufai's consistent pattern of persecution in Kaduna State and responds accordingly. We call on the U.S. and others to sanction El-Rufai for his egregious violations of human rights and hope to see those sanctions come about in the near future." ✝

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www.persecution.org/reports



FROM ADOPTION TO REDEMPTION

ICC follows and equips a young orphan's journey from devastating loss to a dignified future.

By William Stark

When the All Saints Church in Pakistan was bombed in September 2013 by extremists, 127 Christians were killed and another 250 injured. It was the deadliest attack against Christians on Pakistan soil.

Among the dead were the parents of Smith Sabir, who was in third grade.

ICC has been paying for his education and acting as his guardian ever since.

Now a tenth grader at St. John's School, he starts college next year as he aspires to be a medical nurse.

"I love playing football and cricket. I am proud to be a part of my school's cricket team, although we have not played much during the last 12 months. I miss my parents

a lot, but at the same time, I want to be strong for my younger brother—Musa Sabir. I want him to get a good education and live a dignified life as I dream of it," Smith told ICC.

Smith is now a part of ICC's latest initiative, Generation Transformation, where we will pay for Smith's college tuition.

"Often I keep thinking of God's strange plans. He took my parents to heaven, but He gave me ICC to take care of me, stand with me, to strengthen me, and to build my future. I have learned a lot from ICC on how to love others and engage in charity work. I would love to follow ICC's footsteps in the future if I could," said Smith. 

Top: Smith Sabir's school portrait at St. John's School

Bottom Left: Smith Sabir in June 2021 after he shared an update on his life.

Bottom Middle: Smith Sabir with his brother, Musa, who also received school aid.

Bottom Right: Smith Sabir holds a thank you sign when we first paid for his private school after the All Saints Church bombing.



“

"I often think of God's strange plans. He took my parents to heaven, but He gave me ICC to take care for me, stand with me, to strengthen me, and to build my future."

- Smith Sabir



AN INFANT OF HOPE





Left for dead, God had plans to bring baby Ruth into the richness of His blessings.

By Kate Piselli and ICC Field Staff

The rain was relentless. For over 24 hours, the sky opened up and the rivers banks filled to the brim. Maiyanga village, a small community located in Central Nigeria, was trapped.

“Anyone who attempted to cross [the river] would taken away,” a source, preferring anonymity, told ICC.

Around 2 a.m. the village felt relief—but only temporarily. Miles beyond the borders of the village, a group of Fulani militants had their gaze set upon isolate community.

When the Fulani attacked at 4 a.m., there was no way out.

Run for Cover

“We ran and hid ourselves by the riverside,” the source continued. “But the ground was wet enough to leave our footprints behind, and we could be easily tracked.”

One set of muddy footprints led the gunmen to Hannatu Yakaby, who was hiding by the river, holding her three-month-old daughter, Ruth.

When the militants found her, Hannatu began negotiating with them.

“Because she could not reveal the whereabouts of men as they demanded,

they decided to kill her. But she pleaded with them to spare her daughter, Ruth.”

The men agreed to let Ruth live in that moment, but they assured Hannatu that Ruth would eventually die of hunger.

“They reached out and picked up Ruth from her mother, and threw her away to the side. After that, they shot her mother without delay, leaving Ruth at the mercy of God in the cold weather.”

Just as Moses was abandoned as a baby, God had a plan in store for Ruth.

Unexpected Blessings

Five of Ruth’s family members were killed that day, along with 65 others in a series of brutal Fulani militia attacks that destroyed nine villages in the area.

In late 2021, an ICC representative presented a gift to Ruth, which included essential supplies so her caretakers could sustain her. The gifting meeting was filled with prayer and appreciate to God, as her caretakers led over 100 displaced persons in a prayer for baby Ruth.

“We will not forget this kind of love, from another country, to baby Ruth,” said her caretakers. ✝



“We will not forget this kind of love, from another country, to baby Ruth.”

-Ruth’s caretakers





NOT FORSAKEN

ICC supports an Egyptian mother after domestic and societal persecution

Hanan was kicked out her home in Egypt by an abusive husband, leaving the Christian mother of six without social status and sidelined as a religious minority and single woman. She unsuccessfully tried to get a divorce because of his abuse and infidelity but had little support.

**“I’m very happy
because of this
project. Now
I always have
money at my
pocket, before the
project I was not
able to.”**

- Hanan

For Hanan, raising children in a Christian household and seeking justice is a difficult feat when up against a Muslim man in a legal system and country that favors Islam.

To relieve Hanan’s economic burden as a single woman with many children, ICC provided a grocery store small business that she can run out of her home. For the first time, Hanan can breathe a sigh of relief. She is no longer bound to her abuser and has some money to spare that she earns herself. Hanan said, “I’m very happy because of this project. Now I always have money at my pocket; before the project I was not able to.”



Now, Hanan is serving a need in her community. “[There are not many] grocery shops here, so many people who live beside me are my clients. They always buy stuff like cleaning products, macaroni and rice,” she said. Hanan, free for the first time in her adult life, can dream of her future.

She hopes to grow her business and expand and continue loving her children and teaching them about God. ✝

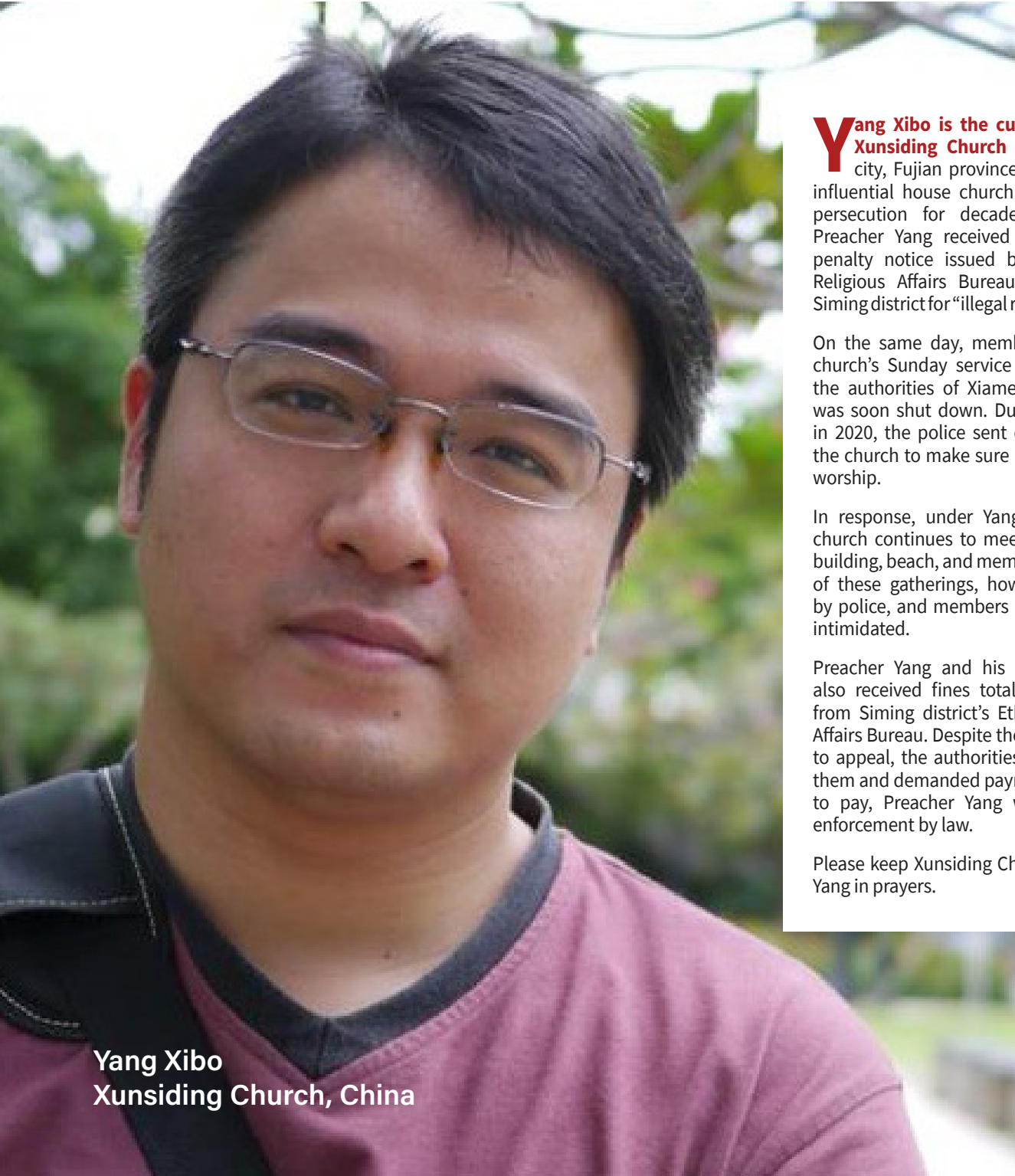




Frontlines of Ministry

PASTOR PROFILE

On the Front Line



Yang Xibo is the current preacher of Xunsiding Church in China's Xiamen city, Fujian province. The church is an influential house church that has endured persecution for decades. In May 2019, Preacher Yang received an administrative penalty notice issued by the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Xiamen city's Siming district for "illegal religious gathering."

On the same day, members attending the church's Sunday service were harassed by the authorities of Xiamen city, the church was soon shut down. During the pandemic in 2020, the police sent officers to monitor the church to make sure no one returned to worship.

In response, under Yang's leadership, the church continues to meet at a hotel, office building, beach, and members' houses. Many of these gatherings, however, were raided by police, and members were detained and intimidated.

Preacher Yang and his wife Wang Xiaofei also received fines totaling \$39,000 (USD) from Siming district's Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau. Despite the couple's attempts to appeal, the authorities still ruled against them and demanded payment. If they refuse to pay, Preacher Yang will be subject to enforcement by law.

Please keep Xunsiding Church and Preacher Yang in prayers.

Yang Xibo
Xunsiding Church, China



Pastors and Congregations Persecuted in India

ICC responds with training and church planting initiative to equip those most in need

Since the rise of the ruling BJP party in India, Pastors and Christians across the nation have experienced a surge in violence and harassment. In response, ICC has led Persecution Preparedness Trainings in India since 2016. ICC has trained pastors and Christian leaders from rural communities on how to avoid, mitigate, and manage instances of persecution.

ICC distributes them in hotspots of Christian persecution to equip and train Christians and pastors who are most in need.

In addition, ICC just launched an initiative to train and send out 200 church planters to grow the church in the second most populous country in South Asia. Candidates will participate in a yearlong training program that includes a mix of in-depth classroom instruction and fieldwork – to prepare them for a lifetime of ministry in India.

In 2021, attacks on Christians and their places of worship in India increased in number and severity.

In Chhattisgarh, a recent spike in persecution can be attributed to a series of public rallies put on by radical Hindu nationalists where hate speeches against Christians are common. In one speech, a nationalist leader even called for the beheading of Christian evangelists in Chhattisgarh.

In September, Pastor Ankush Bariayar was summoned to the Purani Basti Police Station in Raipur by the Station House Officer. According to local reports, Pastor Bariayar was falsely accused of engaging in illegal religious conversions by radical Hindu nationalists.

When Pastor Bariayar, accompanied by two other pastors, arrived at the police station, a

mob of nearly 50 radical Hindu nationalists burst into the Station House Officer's office and began to beat the pastor with shoes and fists.

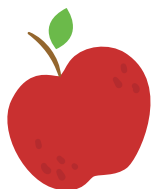
"The entire thing happened as if it was well planned," an eyewitness, who wished to remain anonymous, told ICC. "I think the police knew about the attack before it took place. It is sad that Christians are not safe even inside the police station."

"They told me to my face that they would kill me," Pastor Bariayar told ICC. "I thought I was safe, being with the police in their premises, but I was wrong. In the beginning, the police did not do anything to protect me from the attack. After they hit me with the shoe and punched me in my face, the police then tried to stop them from beating me."



Hope House Child Sponsor

SOSNA RIZK



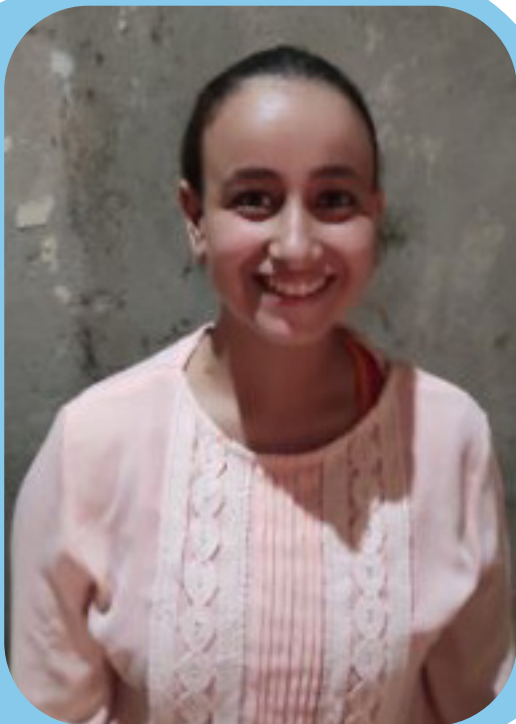
Equipping Young Girls

When ICC launched another Hope House in 2019, Sosna Rizk was one of the students who benefited from the center's efforts. In February, she was scoring poorly on her testing exams and was admitted into the child sponsorship program. Only eight months into the child sponsorship program, Sosna is back on grade level and is even scoring highly in math.

Sosna's parents are encouraged by her growth, not just educationally but also spiritually and physically. "I always pray for her that she will become the best person in the world, and I pray that God will achieve for her all that she wishes. But I left the desire of choice to her. She is very calm and obedient at home," her mom told ICC Hope House staff.

The middle of three children, one older brother and one younger sister, Sosna lives with her family in a quaint home. Her father works as a farmer, as do many men in her village. Sosna contributes to her family's needs by assisting her mother with the housework, saying "I have to help my mother to prepare bread dough then bake the bread."

ABC



"I always pray for her that she will become the best person in the world, and I pray that God will achieve for her all that she wishes."

- Sosna's mother

Hope House seeks to empower young women like Sosna, to encourage them to consider what their futures could look like. As with many poorer, Egyptian Christians, it is frequently considered that there is little place for women in education. Girls are needed at home to maintain the household, a task that may not require formal education. And yet, it is this mindset from cycles of generational persecution that limit the community and their opportunities.

"I learned from the lesson of love, how to love all people and help my family at home," Sosna says of her time at the center. She is involved in discipleship classes with the partner church and learns the Biblical basis for education and caring for others. When asked about her dreams, Sosna repeatedly tells her teachers and Hope House staff, "I wish to become a famous actress and I acted many plays at my church."

Partner with ICC

Would you consider partnering with ICC to help fight generational persecution that Christians in Egypt face?

To learn more about ICC's Hope House or provide a financial gift, please visit www.persecution.org/initiatives/hope-house/. To inquire about sponsoring a child, contact ICC at icc@persecution.org.





Hope for the Present

The Great Alchemist

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”
- Genesis 50:20 (ESV)

The following is an excerpt from Jeff King's upcoming devotional book focused on spiritual lessons from the persecuted and martyrs. For information about pre-orders, please contact moreinfo@persecution.org.

The alchemists of the Middle Ages spent their lives in vain in an endless series of experiments to discover a way to turn base metals like lead into gold. What they were attempting though, was an impossibility.

God, though, is the great Alchemist because He pulls off a transformation that is just as seemingly impossible. For out of the vilest raw materials (hatred, murder, and bloodshed), He creates life, and His work in this manner is always on display in the persecuted church.

In 2004, I traveled to Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation. It was trying to stamp out an Islamist terrorist movement that had radicalized native Muslims. They also killed approximately 10,000 Christians in a massive jihad. As I visited with victims and toured Christian villages and churches burned down in the jihad, I was struck dumb by the evil that had been unleashed.

That radical Islamist movement in Indonesia was largely defeated, but fighting radical Islam is a game of whack-mole.

I watched many Islam movements spring up or grow in strength after Indonesia, but then in 2014, the world was introduced to

ISIS when they took over Fallujah Iraq. The horror they perpetrated on Westerners, Christians, and others was horrific, and their expansion was incredible.

At the height of ISIS's "success," I asked a very prominent church leader in the Middle East how ISIS was impacting the church in the Middle East. His answer absolutely floored me.

"ISIS is the evangelist, and I am the baptizer," he said.

He was witness to a significant increase in Muslim interest in Christianity who were turned off by the savagery of their own religion. They said, "If that's Islam, I don't want any part in it."

While many turned atheist or agnostic, many were drawn to the love and beauty of Jesus, which stood out in stark contrast to Islam's darkness. I call God the "Great Alchemist," because out of the vilest raw materials (hatred, murder, and bloodshed), He creates life! He Himself is the catalyst!

His alchemy is always at work in the persecuted church, turning all the horror Satan throws at the body into something beautiful. In the church as a whole as well as in the heart of the individual persecuted

believer.

This same dynamic is seen in the Free Church as well because it's not about persecution. It's about how God works and molds His children in the midst of a very broken world. So God is at work in your life in the same way as the persecuted. You will encounter battles in this life. Your energy, resources, and "blood" will be spilled on the battlefield of life.

But, He's always there, ready to use the darkness you encountered to create life in you. To do that though you need to move towards Him in the depths of your despair, and not away from Him.

Honestly, this can be a tall order because we naturally question God's goodness in the midst of great pain.

But what Satan means for evil, God will use for His good. He will use it to bring you more life than you have ever experienced before. There will be scars, but time, pain, and the Holy Spirit can use your wounds to transform you into someone you never could have imagined.

The Great Alchemist is waiting for you. Bring Him the little you have left and let Him turn that lead into gold. 



JANUARY WEEKLY PRAYERS

Take one week this month to pray for the persecuted.

MONDAY

Please pray for strength for Christians in central India as persecution spikes due to anti-conversion laws.

TUESDAY

Please pray for Christians from Muslim backgrounds in Iran who face persecution for converting.

WEDNESDAY

Please pray for protection from Sharia law for Christians in Malaysia.

THURSDAY

Please pray for greater freedom for Christians in Libya.

FRIDAY

Please pray for Christians who are being targeted by jihadists in Burkina Faso.

SATURDAY

Please pray for Christian schools in Beijing to be able to operate freely.

SUNDAY

Please pray for protection for Christian priests in Eritrea.

To download our monthly prayer calendar, visit www.persecution.org/take-action/prayer-calendar



PERSECUTION PODCAST

Into the Deep features weekly stories from those who have suffered for Christ.

Into the Deep contains captivating and in-depth interviews and stories about the persecution of Christians around the world. Jeff King takes you on a spiritual journey that is insightful and heartbreaking.

Get ready for your faith to be transformed. Listen to the latest episode at www.persecution.org/icc-podcast



Volunteers



You Can Help!

ICC Fellows Program

Do you want to use your academic training and research abilities to serve the persecuted church around the world? ICC's Fellows program is an outlet for just that, providing researchers with a platform to publish work on persecution. There is much need for better research into persecution. It is an understudied topic and policymakers and thinktanks alike need something to point to when making decisions about how to handle religious oppression. Reach out to fellows@persecution.org for more information.

Sign our latest petition!

Are you wondering what you can do to actively push back against persecutors? Well, one way is to join ICC in one of our quarterly petitions. Serving as a public messaging tool, these petitions raise awareness about specific stories of persecution and appeal to a major decision-maker asking them to weigh in and make a difference. It's one of the most tangible ways you can jump in to serve the persecuted church, and there's even an opportunity to do more when you share the petition with your friends! Check the slider on persecution.org to see the latest petition!



Looking for a Way to Make a Difference in the World? **Join Our Team of Volunteers!**

Most people hope to make a difference in the world, but many are not sure where to begin when addressing an issue as daunting as religious persecution. However, volunteers in every corner of the world are making an impact in their own communities, whether through prayer, advocacy, raising awareness, or administrative help. By raising their voices in their own neighborhoods, ICC's volunteers have helped bring unity to the Body of Christ by bridging the gap between the Western Church and the persecuted. It is up to us to make a change, and it starts in our own backyard.

Learn About **Your Persecuted Family**

One of the most important things that we can do is raise awareness about the situation facing the persecuted Church. That starts with educating ourselves—reading and researching and seeking to understand. By educating ourselves, we create a foundation that we can expand upon, spreading the news of what's going on around the world, and helping to mobilize the Western Church on the issue of persecution.

Serving Through **Prayer**

One of the most common requests we receive from our persecuted brothers and sisters is prayer. We support this request on a daily basis through ICC's faithful Prayer Team volunteers. Many of these volunteers serve with their families, by setting aside a regular time, from daily to weekly, to pray together for the suffering Church. Prayer is vital to this ministry, and we are grateful for these intercessors who are diligent in caring for the persecuted in this way. Consider following along with the monthly prayer calendar posted to www.persecution.org and sharing it with others.

VOLUNTEER TEAMS

1 Advocacy

Fight for justice for the persecuted through petitions, congressional calls, and more.

2 Awareness

Raise your voice by speaking in churches, writing, and using social media.

3 Office

Lighten the load of ICC's staff by helping with administrative assignments.

4 Prayer

Intercede for our brothers and sisters in Christ, both individually and as a church.

5 Special Projects

Volunteer on your own schedule through one-time projects.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING?

Apply online at:

www.persecution.org/take-action/volunteer/

Email:

volunteer@persecution.org

Call:

(301) 329-6964 for more information.

Scan:

Use your mobile device to scan the QR code to learn more.



You Can Help Today!


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INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

SEND DONATIONS TO:
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SILVER SPRING, MD 20907

OR ONLINE AT
WWW.PERSECUTION.ORG

OR BY PHONE
800-ICC-5441

GIVING TO ICC VIA YOUR WILL

Provide now for a future gift to ICC by including a bequest provision in your will or revocable trust. If you would like more information on giving to ICC in this way, please give us a call at 1-800-ICC-5441.



International Christian Concern (ICC) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) (all donations tax-deductible). ICC makes every effort to honor donor wishes in regards to gifts. Occasionally, situations arise where a project is no longer viable. ICC will then redirect those donated funds to the fund most similar to the donor's original wishes.

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