

Nigerian Churches Unite to Address Terrorist Violence

Christian leaders seek UN inquiry into atrocities

Christians in Northern Nigeria remain at extreme risk from Boko Haram insurgents which the Global Terrorism Index cites as the world's deadliest terrorist group, even ahead of the Islamic State (IS). Over 4,000 Christians were slaughtered in 2015, representing a 62% increase over the previous year. Many Christian girls were kidnapped, forced into slavery, and conversion to Islam.

From 2006-14, religion-based violence killed an estimated 11,500 Christians; 13,000 churches were destroyed, abandoned or closed, and 1.3 million Christians fled. Over the past 2 years violence has spilled over into neighbouring Chad and Cameroon. Christians feel abandoned to their fate by the Nigerian authorities.



Jesus' commandment to "love your enemies" is especially challenging to those like Lami Jacob, a widow, whose son phoned to tell her that Boko Haram militants were holding him at gunpoint, ordering him to join them or die. "I told my son not to follow them and if they insist on taking him, just lie on the ground so they can kill him there. When my boy heeded my instructions, the captors told me to listen. Then I heard a gunshot. They shot and killed my boy. The last words from my son were, 'May God be with you.'" (CSW) World Watch Monitor reports that Nigeria's largest confederation of Catholic and Protestant churches has endorsed a commitment to revive the Church in Northern Nigeria before it is destroyed by violence.

A report entitled, "Crushed but Not Defeated: The Impact of Persistent Violence on the Church in Northern Nigeria", published by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Open Doors, forms the factual foundation of a Declaration demanding that the government quell the violence, and guarantee freedom. It also urges the UN to launch an inquiry into atrocities.



"This is the first time we're going public to sign a declaration which gives the true picture of the persecution Christians are going through," said Rev. Musa Asake, General Secretary of CAN which represents about half of Nigeria's 173 million people. The Declaration states: "This targeted violence, discrimination and marginalization of Christians, if unchecked and unhalted, could lead to the extinction of the Christian faith and Christian communities. There is still a large Christian presence in Northern Nigeria with the potential to unite and stand strong."

Pakistani Christians Celebrating Easter Targeted by Terrorists

Lahore – The deadly suicide bomb attack by Muhammad Yousef (20) in the crowded Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park on Easter Day killed 72 people and injured over 300, many critically. Amaatul Ahrar, an offshoot of Tahrir-i-Taliban Pakistan, has claimed responsibility. Its spokesman, Ehsanullah Ehsan, stated the attack specifically targeted Christians celebrating Easter.



Christians were on high alert as Easter approached, due to previous violent attacks on their community in Peshawar and Lahore. The tension was heightened by the recent execution of former police commando, Mumtaz Qadri, convicted of assassinating the Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, for supporting Asia Bibi and seeking reforms to the country's controversial blasphemy laws. Tens of thousands gave Qadri a martyr's funeral as riots erupted in the streets, inciting hatred against Christians.

"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

The 2015 Open Doors' annual World Watch List of the 50 most dangerous countries for Christians records "unprecedented" levels of persecution on every continent.

The recently released report notes, "Islamic extremism remains by far the most common driver of persecution: in eight out of the top 10, and 35 out of the top 50 countries, it is the primary cause. A rise in Islamic extremism sees Pakistan at its highest position ever, and Libya entering the top ten."

"The levels of exclusion, discrimination and violence against Christians is unprecedented, spreading and intensifying," said David Curry, CEO of Open Doors USA. "Christians, longing to stay in their home countries, are being forced to flee for their lives, and for their children's lives."

In 2015, (excluding North Korea, Syria and Iraq where records do not exist), over 7,000 Christians were killed for their faith, from nearly 3,000 in 2014, and approximately 2,400 churches were attacked – a 100% increase. "Beneath these 'headline' events is constant, low-level persecution: Christians are driven into exile, refused burial, denied jobs or education, and churches are destroyed. For millions, everyday persecution happens in their village, or even in their family."

Islamic extremism is crossing borders: The Islamic State has moved beyond Syria and Iraq into Libya; Boko Haram has spread to Cameroon and Chad, and al-Shabaab into Kenya. Extremist movements have declared themselves part of the IS group of caliphates. Even the West has felt the tremors. Bombs in Paris, gunfights in California, holidaymakers killed on a Tunisian beach, and explosions at Brussels airport.

For the 14th consecutive year, North Korea ranked the most dangerous place for Christians where an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 are believed to be imprisoned in labour camps. "Christianity is not only seen as 'opium for the people' as is normal in all Communist states; it is also seen as deeply Western and despicable. Christians try to hide their faith as far as possible to avoid arrest and being sent to a labour camp. Being Christian has to be a well-protected secret, even within families, and most parents refrain from introducing their children to the Christian faith...."

Second to North Korea is Iraq, where Islamic violence dominated the headlines throughout 2015. Christians fled by the hundreds of thousands to escape IS brutality. Curry said, "Christians are caught here in the crossfire of two different battles: one for a Kurdish autonomous country and one by terrorist groups who wish to make Iraq purely Islamic."

Many parts of the Muslim world are becoming more Islamic, fearful that extremists will take over if they don't. However, the counter-trend is gaining momentum as many Muslims turn away from extremism in disgust, choosing Christianity instead. Amidst the current crisis, there are sparks of hope as Christians reach out to share the Gospel.

Persecuted Christians were expertly represented by Elizabeth Kendal, Christian Faith and Freedom's Director of Advocacy, at the annual Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Human Rights Forum in Canberra on February 8, 2016. CFF values this opportunity to defend justice and freedom.

In a session devoted to "Death Penalty Abolition", Kendal raised the following issues:

- 1) the blasphemy law in Pakistan is based on the Sharia (Islamic law) principle that blasphemy is a capital offense;
- 2) prison conditions which are deliberately designed to increase the likelihood of death in custody.

Regarding this second point, she noted that it is not uncommon in Pakistan to find Christian prisoners being lynched. In Iran, Christian pastors who refuse to stop witnessing to Muslims are not sent to Evin Prison with the other Christian prisoners, but to Rajai Shahr – a maximum security facility housing Iran's most violent Muslim criminals. Despite not having been sentenced to death, they are deliberately placed at risk of death in custody.

To restore focus to internationally recognised human rights during a session devoted to "Diversity in Families", Kendal quoted Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which affirm the recognised, fundamental human right of men and women to marry and found a family, irrespective of race or religion. On that basis, she raised the following:

- 1) **Under Sharia law** – which forbids apostasy – all children born to men registered as Muslims are automatically registered as Muslims also. At age 16yrs, they are issued an ID card which identifies them legally as Muslim. Under Sharia, girls/women registered as Muslim must marry Muslim men to ensure their offspring will be registered Muslim at birth. Islamic law thus denies all girls born into Islam, the right to marry a Christian man.

When Muslim girls become Christian, they are invariably tempted to obtain a forged ID card – changing their name and religion. Only then will they be free to marry Christian men. However, if caught, the couple, and the unwitting priest who married them, will all end up in prison.

- 2) **Burma's new Marriage Law**, passed in July 2015, resembles Islamic Sharia law, confining girls born to Buddhist men to Buddhism, and compelling them to marry a Buddhist man.

During the 'Open Session', Kendal argued that, having supported the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq (2003), and the attempted regime-change in Damascus (2011), Australia now has a responsibility to come to the aid of the imperilled minorities now at risk of genocide, and to assist the Assyrians of Iraq and Syria to establish a safe heaven for Christians in their historic homeland.

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‘Living in the Spirit’



Elizabeth Kendal: International religious liberty monitor, analyst and author —

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Dr Darrell Furgason: Director of *Summit Ministries Canada*, international worldview training —

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Christian Faith Rises in Iran Amidst Intense Persecution

US-Iranian Pastor Saeed Abedini was released in a prisoner exchange on January 16, over three years after Iranian authorities arrested him for 'threatening national security' by planting churches. His wife, Naghmeh Abedini, who earned international admiration for her tireless efforts to secure her husband's release, said she had learned to trust God with her husband's fate while in the middle of a 21-day fast that she began on Jan. 5: "I felt the Lord saying, 'Let it go – don't touch the situation with Saeed, and I will take care of it. So I let go. I stopped my travels. I stopped speaking. it happened when I let it go.'" Nagmeh expressed profound admiration for Saeed's courageous refusal to renounce Christ, even while suffering extreme abuse in prison, but referred to past emotional and verbal abuse by Saeed. She told *CBN News* that amongst the joy of reunion, there will be difficult days ahead as the family seeks a time of healing. "The reality is that we are not heroes. Jesus is the only hero. we are broken people with issues". Since his release, Saeed has spoken of his wife and children with love, admiration and unmistakable tenderness.



Ebrahim Firouzi was sentenced to 5 years in Rajai Shahr Prison with potentially dangerous criminals because of his Christian activities, charged with "acting against national security, gathering, and collusion". In his appeal Ebrahim noted God's promises to those who remain faithful, emphasised that he wants to stand strong in the face of persecution. He acknowledged that he could not do this alone, and appealed for prayer. While he longs to be free, he noted that "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Jesus is our example; the Saviour who came among us to be crucified and save us. We sometimes have to sacrifice our freedom to live in God's love.... If my being in prison stirs the international community to work to prevent such future persecution, especially the suffering of new believers, then my choice is to remain in prison. I ask you to pray for the reopening of the churches in Iran.let the sound of worship and praise be heard in those buildings again! Pray for me to be a good example before the other prisoners."

Prosecuted for 'Spreading Christianity'

Pastor Amin Khaki, Daniel (Hossein) Barounzadeh, Mohammad Bahrami and Rahman Bahmani were among eight Christians detained and interrogated on March 2014 near the city of Danial-e Shoush. Iran's secret police arrived with guns drawn as they were enjoying a picnic, attacked and injured Rahman Bahmani and arrested them all for 'spreading Christianity'. Half of the Christians were subsequently released, but the four men were imprisoned for many months without communication and without charges.

Prison Mistreatment—former-Muslim, Pastor Khaki, suffered 'severe mistreatment' when transferred to the Interim Ward of Ahwaz Prison.

Present Truth Ministries (PTM) reports that during an appeal in the Ahwaz Appellate Court on February 1, their sentences were upheld. Each will serve one further year in prison and all are forbidden to hold or attend church services for two years after their release.



Iranians Drawn to Christianity as Jesus Appears in Dreams and Visions



Mass in Teheran: Reuters

Despite severe persecution and ISIS terrorism, Christianity is growing fast in Iran. CBN reports that former Muslims claim that many are coming to Jesus, giving them hope amidst hardship in one of the most hardline Islamic countries in the world.

A Muslim convert to Christianity says that desperation in Iran is driving people to run to Christ. "... The only one who can change their situation is Christ Himself."

God Reports is a privately maintained blog meticulously detailing first-hand experiences of ex-Muslims and their dreams about Jesus. This phenomenon has motivated converts to share their faith even more. They want the flames of Christianity to take a deeper hold over Iran. **"Please pray, and ask others to pray, for the people of Iran to experience the power of the Resurrection."**

Christians Fleeing Genocide Face Danger in Refugee Camps

While thousands of Christians are exposed to 'brutal harassment' in German refugee camps, desperate Iraqis hear the Gospel from Christians keeping faith alive in Northern Iraq.

The contrast between Christianity and Islam is clearly apparent in the value placed on human life and liberty....



Refugee children receive the comfort of God's love – and soft toys

Christian Today reports that in the face of escalating IS atrocities, the Gospel message is being broadcast 24/7 via satellite and radio by 'Leading the Way', a ministry meeting the humanitarian needs of thousands of refugees, and mentoring new believers.

Senior Director, Allan Guinan, said, "We face our greatest challenges and our greatest opportunities. The persecution, undoubtedly unprecedented in modern times, that has been unleashed and caused this mass migration of people, and horrible things, has also brought with it a refining of Christian faith". He said he was deeply encouraged by the faith of a woman whose experience of ISIS brought her from being a lukewarm Christian into a 'vibrant relationship with Christ'.

"People are becoming challenged about Islam, disenfranchised by the radical Islam they have experienced and are seeking truth and answers. We proclaim and demonstrate the Gospel, and present Christ in both word and deed. God is using the crisis in the Middle East to draw closer to his people. We've met so many families living in tents, struggling through the harsh winter months, living in agony, and when you present them with the Gospel, you make a difference. I think this land will be exposed to the Gospel more than any other time in history, and the Lord is able to change many people because of our great church partners who are really sacrificing their lives for the Lord to see change happening."

"Christian refugees from Syria, Eritrea and other countries are exposed to humiliation, manhunt and brutal harassment at the camps for refugees by Muslim neighbours," said Orthodox priest, Hegumen Daniil, in a letter to Federal Minister for Special Affairs and Head of the German Federal Chancellery, Peter Altmaier. Fr Daniil is among many leaders to express great concern about the treatment Christian refugees endure in camps. He said, "The cases when humiliation comes to injuries and threats of death are frequent."

Christian converts from Islam are at particular risk, and police intervention is essential to protect at-risk Christian and Yazidi minorities. Until German law is enforced, clergy of many denominations have proposed that Christians should be accommodated separately.

Assyrians Held Hostage by IS in Syria Finally Released

On the 23rd of February 2015, 230 Christian men, women and children were abducted by the Islamic State during a raid on Christian villages along the Khabour River. Churches were destroyed and hundreds of families were forced to flee into exile. News of the situation of the 230 captives was revealed to anxious relatives only spasmodically. It included the occasional release of a few hostages, and a video recording the execution of two men in October, 2015.

On 22nd February 2016, the remaining 43 captives were released. All 230 have now been accounted for.



Newsweek photo of released hostages

The Assyrian Church of the East Relief Organisation 'unreservedly' thanked everyone for supporting their community with prayer and petition throughout this ordeal. "While this news marks the end of the most recent tribulation, we mourn the tremendous losses, both human and material, suffered by indigenous Assyrians. The captives have suffered inordinate psychological trauma. The attempted destruction of Assyrian continuity in Syria is only the latest instalment in more than a decade of intense persecution. To-day, however, the Assyrian people have witnessed a ray of light from amidst the darkness. We pray all of Syria's suffering people may see this light of hope."

While the Assyrian diaspora has been forced to pay huge sums to IS to ransom their people, they remained faithful. God has protected His people during this dangerous time.

Assyrian International News Agency

Pope Francis condemned as “diabolical” the murder on March 4 of 12 people at a home for the elderly in Aden, Yemen, and the four Missionaries of Charity nuns caring for them. Father Tom Uzhunnalil, abducted during the assault on the home, remains the captive of ISIS terrorists. It was widely reported that they threatened to crucify him on Good Friday. Prayer around the globe uplifts Father Tom, and he appears to be safe, but not yet free. *Assist News*

Rev Dr Mark Durie addresses the premise on which Western leaders still hope for a peaceful coexistence with Islam.

Is Islam ‘A Religion of Peace’?

One may well ask how ‘the religion of peace’ became a brand of Islam, for the phrase cannot be found in the Qur’an, nor in the teachings of Muhammad.

Days after the ISIS-inspired terrorist attack in San Bernardino, President Obama’s address to the nation concerning the threat of ISIS missed the mark. In fact, President Obama seemed at times to be more concerned with Americans ostracizing Muslim communities through “suspicion and hate,” than he was with protecting innocent American civilians from murder in the name of radical Islam.

It is high time for Western political leaders to stop responding to terrorism by naming Islam as ‘the religion of peace’.

The West is in the throes of acute cognitive dissonance over Islam, whose brands are at war with each other. On the one hand we are told that Islam is the Religion of Peace. On the other hand we are confronted with an unending sequence of acts of terror committed in the name of the faith. There is a depressing connection between the two brands: the louder one brand becomes, the more the volume is turned up on the other.

The slogan ‘Religion of Peace’ has been steadily promoted by Western leaders in response to terrorism: George Bush Jr and Jacques Chirac after 9/11, Tony Blair after 7/7, David Cameron after drummer Lee Rigby was beheaded and after British tourists were slaughtered in Tunisia, and François Hollande after the Charlie Hebdo killings. After the beheading of 21 Copts on a Libyan beach, Barak Obama called upon the world to “continue to lift up the voices of Muslim clerics and scholars who teach the true peaceful nature of Islam.”

Islam was first called ‘the religion of peace’ as late as 1930, in the title of a book published in India by Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi. The phrase was slow to take off, but by the 1970s it was appearing more and more frequently in the writings of Muslims for Western audiences. What does “religion of peace” actually mean? Words for ‘peace’ in European languages imply the absence of war, and freedom from disturbance. While there is a link in Arabic between *salam*, a word often translated ‘peace’, and *Islam*, the real connection is found in the idea of safety. The word *Islam* is based upon a military metaphor. Derived from *aslama* ‘surrender’, its primary meaning is to make oneself safe (*salama*) through surrender. In its original meaning, a *Muslim* was someone who surrendered in warfare.

Thus *Islam* did not stand for the absence of war, but for one of its intended outcomes: surrender leading to the ‘safety’ of captivity. It was Muhammad himself who said to his non-Muslim neighbours, “*aslim taslam* – surrender (i.e. convert to Islam) and you will be safe” ...

Sheikh Ramadan Al-Buti of Syria was one of the most widely respected traditionalist Sunni scholars before he was killed in 2013 by a suicide bomber. The year before he had been listed as number 27 in the ‘The Muslim 500’, an annual inventory of the most influential Muslims in the world. According to Al-Buti, the claim that Islam is a peaceful religion was a ‘falsehood’ imposed upon Muslims by Westerners to render Islam weak. He argued in *The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography* that when non-Muslims fear Islamic jihad, their initial inclination is to accuse the religion of being violent. However, they then changed tack, and craftily feed to Muslims the idea that Islam is peaceful in order to make it so. He laments the gullibility of ‘simple-minded Muslims’, who “readily accept this ‘defence’ as valid and begin bringing forth one piece of evidence after another to demonstrate that Islam is, indeed, a peaceable, conciliatory religion which has no reason to interfere in others’ affairs. ... The aim ... is to erase the notion of jihad from the minds of all Muslims.”

There does seem to be something to Al-Buti’s theory, for it has invariably been after acts of violence in the name of Islam that Western leaders have seen fit to make theological pronouncements about Islam’s peacefulness. Who are they trying to convince? In the long run this cannot be a fruitful strategy. It invites mockery, such as Palestinian cleric Abu Qatada’s riposte to George Bush’s declaration that ‘Islam is peace’. Abu Qatada asked: “Is he some kind of Islamic scholar?”

We do need to have a difficult conversation about Islam. This is only just beginning, and it will take a long time. The process will not be helped by the knee-jerk tendency of Western leaders to pop up after every tragedy trying to have the last word on Islam. This strategy has failed, and it is time to go deeper.

(Independent Journal, December 17, 2015)

Torchbearers for Christ – Overcoming Persecution to Shine His Light in Dark Places

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." Matt 5:17



The Most Rev. Dr Benjamin Kwashi, Archbishop of Jos, and Mrs Gloria Kwashi radiate the Light of Christ to Nigerians facing existential threat. The Archbishop was born into a Christian home in Plateau State which straddles the largely Christian south and mainly Muslim north. He attended the Nigerian Military School, but received a clear call to Theological College, and it was there he met Gloria. After ordination and marriage, they served in many rural and urban parishes before Ben was appointed Rector of St. Francis of Assisi Theological College. He was consecrated Bishop of Jos in 1992, and Archbishop in 2008.

The Kwashis have preached and 'lived' the Gospel, sharing the trauma and pain of intense violence which has killed over 1,000 Christians in their state. During Muslim riots in 1987, their church and home were totally destroyed by fire; bombs killed scores of worshippers during 2011 Christmas Eve celebrations; a 2014 twin bomb attack killed 118 people; gunmen have killed worshippers and their pastors during worship services, and perpetrated other crimes targeting Christians and demonstrating a callous disregard for human life.

Ben and Gloria face this ongoing violence with courage and rise above it with grace, urging Christians to obey Christ's teaching to love their enemies, refrain from retaliation and avoid playing into the hands of BH whose stated aim is to impose hardline Sharia on Nigeria. Ben Kwashi has strongly criticized BH violence, and its founder, Mallam Yusuf, who has proclaimed: "Christians in Nigeria should accept Islam, or they will never have peace..."

The death threats the Archbishop has received testify to the effectiveness of his ministry. Men assigned to murder him once brutally assaulted and violated Gloria instead. He found her, seriously injured in hospital, praying that God would forgive her abusers.

Both the Archbishop and his wife hold Bachelor of Divinity degrees; he also has PhDs in Ministry and Divinity. He and Gloria have six children and have legally adopted 60 orphans who live with them at Bishops court – "there is always room for just one more!" The orphans had nothing, but surrounded by the warm and disciplined Christian love of "Daddy and Mummy Kwashi", they now have everything.

The Gloria Kwashi school she founded cares for 400 orphans whose education she and her dedicated staff of seven take very seriously, both as a Christian imperative, and a vital route out of poverty.

The Archbishop is the International Chairman of SOMA (Sharing of Ministries Abroad) for whom he travels widely, blessing each nation.

Archbishop and Mrs Kwashi Visit CFF

It is a particular joy to meet people for whom we have prayed, advocated, and sent aid; people who inspire us by their faith and their courage, and inform our prayers with their knowledge.

During one of their visits to Australia, Archbishop and Mrs Gloria Kwashi came to the Christian Faith and Freedom office in the Canberra House of Prayer for All Nations. It was a great honour and a pleasure to share a special time of fellowship with them, and to join them in prayer for their nation. We prayed especially that the Lord would prosper his church; increase the faith of the Christians of Nigeria; protect them from death and injury, and the kidnapping and abuse of their young women. We also prayed for the redemption of their abusers—for more 'Road to Damascus' revelations of the Lord, to convert BH terrorists into 'Ambassadors for Christ'.

Aware that the Nigerian police and armed forces were struggling to combat rising terrorism, our prayer focussed on the need for everything plotted in darkness to be brought into the light. Guerrilla attacks give strategic advantage to the aggressors, as only they know where, when and how they will strike next, giving no warning, leaving victims vulnerable and perpetually fearful. Some Muslims within the armed forces are suspected of collusion with BH as they appear to be forewarned of military action intended to disarm them, to prevent further destabilising violence.



It was a joy to place a gift into the hands of stewards who use everything with infinite wisdom to advance the Lord's work amongst victims of violence. CFF looks back on this occasion with awe: we gladly gave everything we had, but were astounded to receive that very day, a cheque for the same amount from our colleagues at Open Doors.

The visit of Archbishop and Mrs Kwashi was a time of celebration for former Directors, David and Jan Wauchope, and James Scott who recorded an interview which enabled listeners to Christian radio to enjoy the Archbishop's inspiring message.

Christian Women in Pakistan

A report by the **Movement for Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan** claims at least 1,000 non-Muslim women and girls are forced into Muslim marriages and conversion to Islam each year. As many incidents are unreported, the number of Christian women used to increase the Muslim population at the expense of their own communities is believed to be far higher.

Forced marriages remain a scourge: victims are sexually abused, forced into prostitution or trafficked into domestic and sexual slavery. Those who rebel are reminded that the punishment for apostasy is death. Even if a case goes to court, the victims and their families are threatened, and pressured to declare that the conversion was voluntary.



The case of Christian women, Tahira 21, and Reema Bibi 20 is emblematic. Asia News reported that they were abducted on 2 December in Sargodha, Punjab, by two Muslim men who raped them and forced them into marriage.

On February 11th Tahira escaped, but her 'husband' filed a complaint, and police arrested six members of her family. They were only released after pressure from human rights groups, but authorities ordered the family to return Tahira to her 'husband'.

The Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong has demanded the return of both Tahira and Reema to their families, and the prosecution of their captors and rapists, but 'infidel' organisations have little influence over Pakistan's Sharia law which is based on the Qur'an and the rights of men over women.

North Korea Still Worst Nation for Christians

Korean-Canadian Pastor, Hyeun-soo Lim, convicted of attempting to overthrow the North Korean government, has been sentenced to life in prison with hard labour.



Lim, head pastor of the Light Presbyterian Church in Toronto, had visited North Korea more than 100 times to distribute humanitarian aid and was not involved with the underground church, but a case like this still outrages the paranoid North Korean

government, and believers could be dealt with even more harshly if they are exposed.

During a press conference last July, Lim was forced to read a public "confession". Diplomatic efforts to secure his release have failed, and Pastors like Lim who have witnessed so much of how North Korea treats its prisoners, cannot easily be released. Unless Canada makes an offer North Korea can't refuse, Lim is unlikely to return.

Another consequence of Lim's case is that North Korea now applies a stricter visa policy, and NGOs from the US and Canada are much less eager to work in Kim Jong-Un's state.

In May 2014, North Korea sentenced South Korean pastor, Kim Jong-Wook to a life of hard labour. As a missionary, Kim operated from the Chinese border city, Dandong, where he provided shelter, food and other aid to North Korean refugees who crossed the border seeking relief from the famine in the North. Kim also taught them about the Bible. Eventually, North Korean agents infiltrated his network and convinced him to visit their country. Kim hoped to discover what had happened to refugees with whom he had lost contact.

In February 2014, Kim "confessed" to spying for the South Korean government, to giving money to North Koreans to establish 500 underground churches, and attempting to overthrow the regime.

North Korea links Christianity with South Korea and the US. Ever since Christians fled Communist oppression for the South during the Korean War in the 1950s, they have been seen as **'Enemies of the State'**. Consequently, tens of thousands of North Korean Christians have been imprisoned, forced into hard labour or executed.

Despite almost 70 years of severe persecution, the government has not 'won' its war with the church. Open Doors believes that about 300,000 Christians have survived brutal repression.

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