

China: 'Repurposing' Church Buildings

The Chinese Communist Party is taking drastic action against church venues in order to stop Christians holding services. Churches that do not comply with government dictates run the risk of being demolished and repurposed as entertainment venues, factories, or political propaganda centres. One Three-Self Church was converted into a memorial hall for China's revolutionary heroes. A large sign over the entrance reading 'God loves the world' was replaced with the sign 'Military and Political Auditorium'. Another church was sold by the government and is now a centre to teach the younger generation about 'China's revolutionary spirit.' Last year, in one province alone, more than 70 Protestant churches were shut down. Affected church members are continuing to hold secret meetings in homes.

Christian Headlines

State brutality among Myanmar's hill tribes

Most of Myanmar's tribal people are nominally Christian. While it is true that some of these, such as the Kachin and the Karen, have well organised armies that oppose the central government, other tribal people are not so militant. For them, the only way to defend themselves from unprovoked military attacks is to flee for shelter. But the country's military rulers, making no discrimination, are using overwhelming military violence against hill tribe people. Since mid-May, 40,000 predominantly Christian ethnic Chin have been displaced as the junta expands its brutal war. Hundreds of thousands throughout the hill tribe regions have been displaced, churches destroyed and camps attacked. Thousands in the forests are without shelter, food or medicines, all aid having been blocked by the junta.

Religious Liberty

Christians at work in Nicaragua

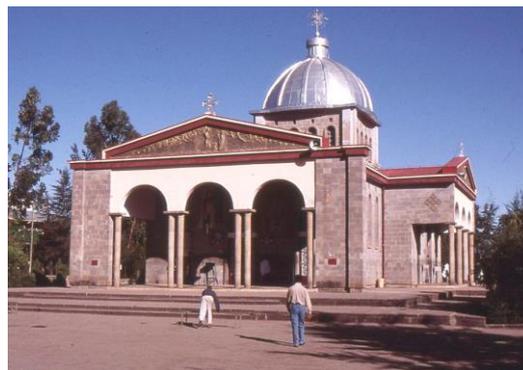
In spite of some restrictions, local Christians have been engaging in an extensive Bible distribution program, particularly to victims of the Covid pandemic and to the families of children with cancer. Health professionals and local authorities are encouraging this work. Even with reduced visits, 96,000 Scripture portions were distributed among outpatients and a further 4,109 Bibles among child cancer patients and their families.

Sower

Ugandan apprehension

Uganda is a nominally Christian country, but because Idi Amin registered it in 1973 as an Islamic state, many Muslims believe that the country was given to them and they want to reclaim it. Muslims hold many strategic positions in politics, security, law and media, causing some Christians to fear that their values are being systematically undermined. Christian converts from Islam often find themselves facing difficulties from Muslim officials as well as half-hearted acceptance from churches. Many Christians are fearful of Islamic influence, but some vibrant local ministries concentrate on teaching them how to understand and evangelise Muslims and then integrate converts into their churches.

Barnabas Fund



Ethiopia's Orthodox clergy

An evangelist to clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church writes: "Our latest training for Orthodox Church clergy concluded successfully. One of those clergymen has 175 people under him. He said, 'Before this I had no knowledge of the Bible to help my people, but now my mind is open to read and understand the Bible and how to refer the Word of God to others.' We have just trained two groups of six and one group of nine clergymen, all converted to Christ from their traditional religion. Many of them have a great work place in their own local Orthodox churches. They asked us for more of this training to develop their spiritual life and knowledge. It is a great victory for us and you and other prayer warriors."

Bridgeway

Radio in Vietnam

Vietnam has gospel broadcasts in 19 of its 54 ethnic languages. Tribal minority groups are often the most responsive to gospel broadcasts, partly because they hear the message in their heart language. The Vietnamese government, which is communist, encourages the notion that Christianity aims to overthrow the government.

FEBC

France and religious fervour

Islamic violence has claimed over 200 lives and wounded close to 1000 in France in recent years. Consequently, the French Parliament has passed a bill designed to help the state counter the influence of inherently political fundamentalist Islam. One problem with this law is that it empowers the state to interfere extensively in the practice of any religion if it considers a group to be inciting violence or hatred, a charge that is open to abuse by hostile anti-Christian groups.

The law also requires that parents who home-school their children obtain government authorisation to ensure that children are taught France's secular values. Many of these may be contrary to Biblical values.

Religious Liberty

Iran's Christians – more than just surviving

Christians in Iran gather in secret fellowships but run the risk of being infiltrated by spies and subsequently arrested, fined or imprisoned. Bible teaching reaches people through radio and electronic media, in spite of government attempts to close certain avenues of communication from the outside world. About 30,000 Bibles are smuggled into Iran each year. Iranians in countries all round the world are coming to Christ in large numbers.

VOM/Christian Today

'Exercising worship' in Algeria

Freedom of religion in Algeria is specified in the constitution as 'freedom to exercise worship,' which means that Christian practices are protected only if exercised in accordance with the law. One of the requirements for the 'exercise of worship' is that it must be carried out within a licenced building. But no applications for new buildings have been granted since 2006 and more than a dozen churches have been forcibly closed in the past two years.

Persecuted Church

Malawi: From a helper of pastors

"In one district we met the group of pastors who meet once a month to study the leadership principles through your teaching materials. They invited me to go and see what they are doing. Today I can testify they have agreed to conduct gospel crusades in their surrounding villages to harvest more souls to Christ and support the needy people. I spoke to them again about having vision, having a burden from God and about planning to achieve their vision.

"Earlier we trained 80 pastors in another place, teaching them about pastoral leadership, discipleship, evangelism, marriage and Christian ethics. We bless the name of Jesus for his faithfulness and grace for making this work successful with your support through your books. What these pastors have requested from us is Chichewa Bibles for their churches and to have the bicycles for them to reach more areas easily to teach others as well."

Bridgeway



Syrian refugees in Lebanon

Tent Schools International have had success reaching out to Syrian refugees by running schools in shipping containers mounted on trucks. Refugee camps can be disbanded at short notice, but trucks can be moved to reach refugee children anywhere in Lebanon and so help their education to continue. When a truck is not being used for school, it can be used to teach trade skills to young adults. If the project goes well, it may be replicated in other countries.

Mission Network News

Saudi Arabia

Although all overt Christian activity in Saudi Arabia is outlawed, the Lord is working there. Reports indicate that there are underground churches even in Mecca and Medina. Many younger Saudis are not embracing Islam as their forebears once did. Tired of the oppressive state religion, they are more ready to consider a loving Jesus who cares for them. This does not mean that large numbers are coming to Christ, but some people are ready to look outside Islam and evaluate the claims of Christ. Recent government reforms have granted citizens modest freedoms, yet the reality remains that any convert to Christianity, if discovered, could be executed and their entire family killed or jailed for life.

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