

## CHINA

### ALIMUJIANG YIMITI

More than ten years ago, Alimujiang Yimiti converted from Islam to Christianity. In 2007, the Chinese government closed down his business, and in January 2008, they accused him of “subversion of the national government and endangering national security,” a crime punishable by death. Eventually, he received a 15-year sentence, and this court decision has been upheld as recently as February 2011, despite numerous appeals.



Alimujiang Yimiti  
Section 11  
The Xinjiang No. 3 Prison  
No.1339, Dongzhan Road  
Urumqi City  
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region  
830013  
China

### LACHENG REN

Lacheng Ren is a Christian businessman who was one of the sponsors of the Enyu Christian Bookstore in Taiyuan. After the raid, which resulted in the arrest of Wenxi Li, Lacheng Ren was also arrested and then sentenced to 5 years in prison.

Lacheng Ren  
2nd Detention Center  
Xiaodian District, Beige Town  
Taiyuan City  
Shanxi Province  
China



### ZHANG SHAOJIE

Originally detained in November 2103, this pastor of Nanle County Christian Church in

Henan Province is currently serving a 12-year prison sentence. He was arrested as part of a crackdown on the church because of a land dispute the church is having with the county, and at least 20 other church members were arrested. Pastor Zhang Shaojie’s daughter, son-in-law, and baby fled the region after receiving numerous menacing phone calls, one of which threatened to “wipe out her entire family.”

Zhang Shaojie  
P.O. Box 14  
Xinxiang City  
Henan Province  
China, 453002



### ZHAO WEILIANG

This husband and father of two children—who also supports his elderly parents—was arrested in a raid by 50 plainclothes police on a choir practice. A total of 22 church members of the Bible-based Total Scope Church were detained that night. Eventually all the children, parents, and a pregnant woman were released, but Zhao and Cheng Hongpeng were charged with “cult” activity to “undermine law enforcement” and imprisoned. The night he was arrested, Zhao was not taken to the police station, but instead was taken to a hotel by an intoxicated police captain and abused physically and verbally. The police captain said he’d release Zhao if he confessed what he believed in was a cult, and Zhao refused. He is now serving a 4-year sentence, and his wife is relying on assistance from the church to maintain a small agricultural plot just to get by.

Zhao Weiliang  
Heze City Detention Center,  
No. 168 Changjiang Xilou,  
Cao county, Heze city  
Shandong province  
274031  
China



**CHENG HONGPENG (no image available)**  
Cheng Hongpeng was one of the 22 church members who were arrested during a raid on a choir practice on 25 June 2014. Most of those arrested were eventually released, but like Zhao Weiling, Cheng Hongpeng was charged with “cult activity” and given a prison sentence. This husband and father of two, who also supports his aging mother who is suffering from cancer, is now serving a 3-year sentence.

Cheng Hongpeng  
Heze City Detention Center, No. 168  
Changjiang Xilou, Cao county, Heze city  
Shandong province  
274031  
China

**YANG HUA (also know as Li Guozhi)**  
Pastor Yang Hua experienced his own father, also a pastor, being imprisoned in the 1960s. Now a pastor himself, and husband and father, Yang Hua has been detained in the past and was arrested most recently on 9 December 2015, as part of government harassment of the Living Stone Church, a 700-member house church that has resisted official pressure to join the state-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Church. Now Pastor Yang Hua is being detained indefinitely, has been accused with “divulging state secrets,” but has been given no trial date. Initially, his wife and lawyers were denied visitation, and he has been tortured while in prison. One of the prosecutors of the case told him, “I am a torture expert. I know how to beat

you up without leaving a mark on your body for people to see. Doctors won’t be able to diagnose you. Even you won’t know what you died of.”

Li Guozhi  
#1-3 North  
Nanming Detention House  
Attn: Li Guozhi  
WangchengpoChaoyangdong Road  
Guiyang City, Guizhou Province  
China



## **ERITREA**

### **HAILE NAIZGI**

At the time of his imprisonment on May 23, 2004, Reverend Haile Naizgi was serving God as the chairman of the board of the Full-Gospel Church of Eritrea, the largest Pentecostal denomination in the nation. Previously, he was a senior accountant with World Evangelical Alliance in Eritrea. Rev. Haile Naizgi, who is married with four children, was one of the key organizers of the Church’s activities in Eritrea.

Haile Naizgi  
Karsheli Prison  
2nd Police Station  
Zone 7 Northern East  
Zoba Maakel  
Asmara  
Eritrea



### **KIDANE WELDOU**

Pastor Kidane Weldou was the senior pastor of the church of the Asmara Full Gospel Church in March 2005, when his vehicle was found abandoned downtown, and he was presumably imprisoned by Eritrean security forces. His wife and children have been unable to visit him in prison, and his exact whereabouts remain unknown. He has

a degree in science from Asmara University and had been a high school biology teacher. In addition to his church's work, he was also involved in many gospel-related activities among students and professionals from various churches in the nation.

Kidane Weldou  
Karsheli Prison  
2nd Police Station  
Zone 7 Northern East  
Zoba Maakel  
Asmara  
Eritrea



### **DR. KIFLU GEBREMESKEL**

Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel was the pastor of South-West Full-Gospel Church in Asmara until his imprisonment on May 23, 2004. Dr. Kiflu, a former dean of science and lecturer of mathematics at Asmara University, left his job to serve the Lord as a pastor and Bible teacher in 1999. He has a Ph.D. in mathematics from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Dr. Kiflu was also the chairman of the Eritrean Evangelical Alliance, a union of all the churches belonging to the Baptist, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, and other Charismatic churches.

Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel  
Karsheli Prison  
2nd Police Station  
Zone 7 Northern East  
Asmara  
Zoba Maakel  
Eritrea



### **TWEN**

Twen was 23 when she was first arrested in 2004. She was initially released after her father persuaded her to sign a paper vowing she would not meet with other Christians or pursue Christian activity. However, in 2005,

she was arrested again after being found at a prayer meeting. She was a fellow prisoner with the well-known Eritrean gospel singer, Helen Berhane. Twen often defended Helen, took her beatings when she was sick, carried her to the toilet when she was too weak to walk—in addition to her own beatings and torture. For years, she and a large group of women who were imprisoned for attending a Christian wedding were first held at Wi'a prison on the Red Sea Coast—one of the most inhospitable places on the planet. Held in shipping containers that are unbearably hot during the day and frigid at night, the conditions at Wi'a were so horrific, the government eventually closed it down. They are now at Me'etr prison, which is barely better in terms of conditions, has no town nearby, and no access by public transportation, so the prison population mostly made up of Christians is largely cutoff from all visitors. Twen has had opportunities to escape, yet has persevered at the prison, acting as a mentor and protector of younger women, as well as discipling them in their faith.

Twen  
Me'etr Prison  
Asmara, Eritrea



### **OQBAMICHEL HAIMINOT**

Pastor Oqbamichel Haiminot was raised as an orphan in Dekemhare, Eritrea, at a Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) orphanage. Through hardwork and education, this husband and father of three became a teacher and eventually pastor of the Word of Life Church. He has been arrested and imprisoned repeatedly since 2003, for things as simple as being at a Christian wedding (where the bride and groom and all

guests were arrested too). During his various incarcerations, Pastor Haiminot has been tortured, held in solitary confinement, forced to carry rocks up mountains, and even suffered a mental breakdown at one point. He was last arrested in 2007 and has remained in prison since that time. He is described as a passionate teacher and caring pastor, and one who has refused to recant his faith throughout all these ordeals.

Oqbamichel Haiminot  
5th Police Station  
Asmara, Eritrea



### **MUSSIE EZAZ**

Mussie Ezaz had worked as an evangelist for 14 years, first with Youth for Christ and then as Youth Pastor at Word of Life Church, when he was arrested for his Christian activity. He made an almost successful attempt to flee the country after his arrest in 2007, but was captured just after reaching the border. He is described as kind, generous, and a gifted leader. Sadly, his phone call while he was fleeing Eritrea to Pastor Oqbamichel Haiminot led to the arrest and imprisonment of the latter as well. As is the case with most Eritrean Christians, Mussie Ezaz has never been formally charged with a crime, given a trial, or been given an actual sentence for his time in jail. For a long time, his wife and three children did not know where he was and feared he was dead. It is unknown if he will ever be released.

**Mussie Ezaz**  
Wenjel Mermera  
Asmara, Eritrea

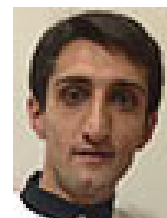


### **IRAN**

#### **EBRAHIM FIROUZI**

Ebrahim Firouzi has been in and out of prison since 2011. This Muslim-background believer has been accused of numerous “crimes,” including propagating against the Islamic regime of Iran, organizing evangelistic activities, and most unreasonable, spying. Though scheduled to be released in January 2015, he remained in prison, and was sentenced to five more years.

Ebrahim Firouzi  
Rajaei-Shahri Prison  
Karaj City  
Albourz State  
Iran



#### **HADI ASGARI**

On 26 August 2016 Hadi Asgari, a convert to Christianity, was arrested with several other believers at a family party near Tehran. He and another man were sentenced to 10 years in the notorious Evin prison, though Amin, the other believer, is currently out on bail. During long, drawnout trials, government officials try to pressure Christians to leave the country, at which point they seize all their property and assets—or they are left to languish in deplorable prison conditions.



Hadi Asgari  
Evin Prison  
Saadat Abad  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran



## PAKISTAN

### ASIA BIBI

Asia Bibi is a wife, mother of five, and a farm worker accused of blasphemy after a discussion with coworkers. On November 7, 2010, Bibi was sentenced to death. She is the first Pakistani woman ever to receive a death sentence for blasphemy. Despite appeals, Asia's life hangs in the balance. Prompted by Asia's case, the former governor of Punjab Province spoke out in favor of greater religious freedom and was murdered by his own bodyguard. She awaits the final appeal she has to have her death sentence overturned, and as of October 2016, she faced another delay in a series of setbacks and delays. Since her arrest in 2009, she has been abused, attacked, and received death threats. Her family faces threat and danger, and a Muslim cleric has offered a reward for her murder.

Asia Bibi  
Central Jail Multan  
Multan City-Punjab  
Pakistan



### IMRAN GHAFUR

Imran Ghafur is a Christian businessman who, along with his family, had managed many businesses in Pakistan. However, in July 2009, he was arrested and severely beaten for allegedly burning pages of the Koran while he was burning some trash.

Shortly thereafter, he was sentenced to life in prison. His family has fled the region due to local hostility towards them. Despite trials and a disheartening life sentence, he says he often prays and sings spiritual songs at midnight, and is even asked by Muslim prisoners to pray for them. Still, Imran is eager to be released to continue missionary work in Pakistan. He has faced setbacks and delays in his appeal process but remains steadfast. During a recent visit with his brother, Imran said he uses his time in prison for Bible study. "I am happy the Lord wants to use me for his Kingdom."

Imran Ghafur  
Central Jail of Faisalabad  
Faisalabad  
Pakistan



## TAJIKISTAN

### BAKHROM KHOLMATOV

The harassment of Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov (also spelled "Holmatov") began in February 2017, when his church was raided and church members were threatened, beaten, and told to recant their faith. During this time of harassment, Pastor Kholmatov attempted to move his family and begin pastoring in a different region. At the time of his arrest in July 2017, he had not yet joined his family in safety, and has been imprisoned ever since—charged with "possession of extremist materials" and materials promoting the "overthrow of the government." The materials the government cited were the book, *More Than a Carpenter*, by Josh McDowell and songs on his computer such as "Praise God, O Unbelieving Country," "Army of Christ" and "Our Battle is Not Against Blood and Flesh." Many believe that Pastor

Kholmatov was arrested because the government would like to seize the building of his Sonmin Sonbogym church. His most recent appeal was denied and his family are not sure if he remains in the city prison or if he has been transferred to a work camp to serve his sentence.

Bakhrom Kholmatov  
Yavan Prison  
Shamsova St.  
Yavan, Khatlon region  
Tajikistan  
735310



## **PRISONERS FREED SINCE DECEMBER 2016!!!**

### **SUDAN**

#### **HASSAN ABDURAHEEM**

Reverend Hassan

Abduraheem is one of four men facing the death penalty or life imprisonment based on charges ranging from “conspiring against the state” to “provoking hatred against or amongst sects.” This pastor serves as Secretary-General of the Sudan Church of Christ and was a speaker at a conference in November 2015, where Reverend Kuwa Shamal and Czek national Petr Jasek were in attendance. Reverend Abduraheem spoke about his work as a church leader and also showed a picture of a man from Darfur, who was badly injured during a demonstration, which led Mr. Jasek to meet with the injured man and contribute money to help with his



medical bills. Based on this activity, the Sudanese National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) confiscated Reverend Abduraheem’s laptop, phone, and camera, and then arrested all the men. They have claimed the financial support Petr Jasek offered amounts to support of rebel groups. Originally from the Nuba Mountains, Reverend Abduraheem is apparently in bad health due to the harsh prison conditions, poor food, and having duodenal ulcers.

#### **PETR JASEK**

Mr. Jasek, a Czek national, is a humanitarian worker with long experience in hospital administration and assistance to Voice of the Martyrs in delivering aid to suffering and displaced Christians in Sudan and Nigeria. However, the Sudanese authorities have accused him of being a filmmaker and conspiring against the Sudanese state. After attending a conference where Reverend Abduraheem was a speaker and learning of a man from Darfur who was severely injured in a demonstration, Mr. Jasek offered support to the injured man for his medical expenses. This donation is being construed by the Sudanese government as financial support of rebel movements. Facing at least seven trumped up charges, Mr. Jasek could face the death penalty or life imprisonment. He was arrested in December 2015 and was held for eight months before even being charged with an offense.



#### **KUWA SHAMAL**

Head of Missions for the Sudan Church of Christ, Reverend Shamal is also accused in the case involving Petr Jasek and Reverend Hassan Abduraheem, and along with them, is facing life in prison or even the death penalty for assistance offered by Mr. Jasek to a severely injured man from Darfur. The Sudanese government claims the men are supporters of rebel movements from the South, as well as being involved in espionage. Sudan is Muslim nation, is run as a totalitarian, despotic regime, and has a horrific record of genocide and human rights abuses. These charitable men are undoubtedly being targeted because of their Christian faith and humanitarian work.



part of a larger crackdown against the Living Stone Church, one of the largest churches in Guizhou Province. It is considered a house church, despite having 700 members, because it is not part of the state-sanctioned Three-Person Church, and the state has recently frozen its accounts and fined it over a million dollars. This wife, mother, and church treasurer was finally released after two years in prison.

## IRAN

### AMIN AFSHAR NADERI

Arrested in August 2016 at a family party on a weekend trip with friends, Amin Afshar Naderi was charged with “violating the national security by hosting house churches and promoting Christianity” and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He was held for months in solitary confinement and embarked on a hunger strike to protest the treatment of himself and other prisoners. The conditions of the infamous Evin Prison where he was held, in addition to his hunger strike, greatly jeopardized his health.



## UZBEKISTAN

### TOHAR HAYDAROV

As retribution for his work for the church, 27-year-old Tohar Haydarov was accused of the “illegal sale of narcotic or psychotropic substances in large quantities.” Church members insist that he is “a man with a pure conscience and an honest Christian.” They unequivocally assert these are fabricated charges and are further confounded by the extreme ten-year sentence.



## CHINA

### ZHANG XIUHONG

Zhang Xiuhong was arrested in July 2015 after withdrawing some funds from her church bank account from an ATM located in her beauty shop. She was charged with illegal business activity, as



## KAZAKHSTAN

### YKLAS KABDUAKASOV

This 54-year-old father and recent convert to Christianity was arrested by Kazakhstan’s secret police after he shared the gospel with family and friends in August 2015. The secret police searched his home and the church where he worshiped. Originally facing a 5- to 10-year sentence of house arrest for spreading “religious discord,” he was rearrested in December 2015, retried



for “inciting religious hatred” and sent to a labor camp for at least 2 years. Only a few months in the labor camp have taken their physical toll, and fellow believers feel Kabduakasov was targeted for his conversion and being made an example of.

### **YURI PAK**

This high school dean and local church leader, was falsely accused of bomb threats and imprisoned after a student used his phone to make a prank call. Despite the call record only being 6 seconds long, the police and prosecution submitted as “evidence” a 2-minute-long call from someone who was clearly drunk and referred to being angry about being in prison for 10 years, which was not the case for Yuri Pak. Regardless of numerous character testimonies from his students and church leaders, Yuri was sentenced to 2 years in prison, ostensibly because of his lay work in a church that teaches in the local language, Kazak. Preaching in Kazak is considered an attempt to convert Muslims.



Praise the Lord that teacher Yuri Pak was released from prison Saturday, June 17, 2017. He was able to attend the graduation ceremony of several of his students that same weekend. His wife, Olga, wrote to VOM, saying, “Our family is extremely grateful to each one of you for your prayers and letters with words of encouragement and faith. Your prayers and letters helped us to go through this difficult trial without losing our faith and courage. We believe that ‘your labor is not in vain before the Lord.’ With love in Christ: Yuri, Olga, Anna and Daniel Pak.”

### **MARAT NIYAZALIEV**

This Muslim-background believer is a husband, father of five, and a pastor who preaches in both Russian and Kyrgyst. He is a well-respected man of integrity, who was entrusted with overseeing the village’s water supply. In this position, he stopped an influential man from stealing water, and as retribution, this man brought false charges of child molestation against Marat Niyazaliev—even though he was in a city 60 miles away renewing his passport at the time of the alleged crime, and phone records corroborate this. Marat suffered terribly from the stigma of this false accusation, as well as his time in prison. After more than a year of this ordeal and being wrongfully detained, the charges were eventually dropped.



## **KYRGYZSTAN**