

SOMALIA: CONVERT ABUSED BY FAMILY

Voice of the Martyrs—June 2010

A 17-year-old girl in the Gedo Region of Somalia was severely beaten by her family recently after they discovered she had converted to Christianity, according to Compass Direct News. Nurta Mohamed Farah, 17, was later taken to a doctor, who prescribed medication for a “mental illness.” When she refused to abandon her Christian faith, her family forced her to take the medication.

Nurta’s family has read Islamic scripture to her twice a week since May 10, when they learned of her conversion. Somalis traditionally believe that the Quran cures the sick — especially the mentally ill.

Nurta has been shackled to a tree during the day and held in a small, dark room at night, according to Compass. “There is little the community can do about her condition, which is very bad,” a Christian source told Compass. “I have advised our community leader to keep monitoring her condition but not to meddle for their own safety. ... We need prayers and human advocacy for such inhuman acts, and for freedom of religion for the Somali people.”

The Voice of the Martyrs encourages you to pray that Nurta will be encouraged and emboldened as she suffers for her faith. Pray that her steadfast commitment to Christ will soften the hearts of her parents so that they, too, will come to know him. Pray that God will grant wisdom and guidance to the Christian community in Somalia as they share the gospel with their neighbors.

Prayer Guide:

- Pray for Nurta as she suffers
- Pray for Nurta’s family that they can see her witness and accept Christ as well
- Pray for those people who hear her story and will be influenced by her courage.
- Pray for other Somali Christians as they face similar persecutions
- Pray for the Christians in Somalia. Ask God to give them wisdom and courage as they share the gospel with their neighbors.

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AFGHANISTAN: CHRISTIAN AID GROUPS SUSPENDED

Voice of the Martyrs June 18, 2010

On May 31, the Afghanistan government suspended two Christian relief organizations over suspicions that they converted Afghans to Christianity. Proselytizing and converting from Islam to Christianity are crimes in Afghanistan. According to a New York Times report, an Afghan television station, Noorin TV, mentioned the two Christian organizations in a report that showed Westerners baptizing Afghans, and Afghans praying at private prayer meetings. However, Noorin TV later confirmed that it had no evidence linking the organizations to the baptisms or prayer meetings.

Mohammed Sediq Amarkhiel, a spokesman for the government agency that regulates aid groups in Afghanistan, told The New York Times that there was no evidence against the Christian aid groups. He said the groups were suspended because television reports “raised suspicions” and “made people very emotional and angry.” Amarkhiel said the government will further investigate the groups’ activities. “If they are really involved in proselytizing Afghan people for Christianity, then definitely these people will be introduced to the judicial authorities,” Amarkhiel said.

The report by Noorin TV led to a protest by Kabul University students and has also fueled anti-Christian sentiment within the Afghan government. According to the Associated Press (AP), the deputy secretary of the Afghan Parliament has called for the execution of Afghan Christians. The AP report quotes the deputy secretary as saying, “Those Afghans that appeared on this video film should be executed in public. The house should order the attorney general and the National Department of Security to arrest these Afghans and execute them.”

Pray for believers as they share the gospel in this very difficult region. Pray that their testimony will draw nonbelievers into fellowship with Christ.

Prayer Guide:

- Pray for protection from the government for these Afghan converts
- Pray for the Afghan Christians. Ask God to give them wisdom and boldness as they share their faith.
- Pray for the relief groups that are working in Afghanistan. Ask God to give them opportunities to share Christ in that hostile environment.
- Pray for the Muslim leaders of Afghanistan. Ask God to change their heart and open their ears to the gospel.

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PAKISTAN: EXTRA WORK FOR JESUS

Voice of the Martyrs

Twelve-year-old Sajid makes bricks in Pakistan. He and his mother, Miriam; brother, Aaron; and sister, Naomi, are the only Christians working at a brick factory. Their boss and the other workers are Muslims. Sajid's father died when Sajid was 10.

Sajid's family works six days a week. The boss pays them only \$4.15 for every 1,000 bricks they make. Then he takes almost half of the money away from them for "expenses and debts."

Sajid went to school for four years before his father died. Then he had to go to work to help his family. He is the only member of his family who can read. At church, he reads the Bible to the congregation. He loves to worship God, and he hopes to be a pastor someday.

But Sajid does not always get to go to church. His boss, Mr. Ali, wants Sajid and his family to become Muslims. He promises them money if they will stop being Christians. Whenever they refuse to become Muslims, he gives them extra work and even makes them work on Sunday.

Miriam tells her children, "See, we are like the Israelites in the Bible. They were forced to make bricks for Pharaoh. Some day our Moses will come to free us, too. We must wait for Jesus Christ to come. Then we will be able to praise him forever."

Once when Mr. Ali asked the family to become Muslims for money, Miriam answered, "How can we sell our faith? Our Moses will come. We love Jesus. We are willing to do whatever extra work we must do. Jesus died for our sins. So I do not see why we can't do a little extra work for him."

Mr. Ali did not like Miriam's answer. In anger, he slapped Sajid.

On some Sundays, Sajid's family is able to go to church in secret. They go without food to save money for their bus fare to the church.

Thank God for Christians like Sajid and his family who love and praise God even when they suffer. Ask God to keep them strong in their faith.

Prayer Guide:

- Pray for Sajis, Miriam, Aaron and Naomi
- Pray for other Pakistan Christians that they will be encouraged.
- Pray for protection from the authorities for those who are trying to reach the people of Pakistan with the gospel.

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PAKISTAN: A TEENAGE EVANGELIST

Voice of the Martyrs

Sidra is a teenager in Pakistan. She lives with her father, Ilyas Masih, and her mother, Najma Bibi. She has an older brother, four younger brothers, and a little sister. Only two Christian families live in her village, and there is no church building. Sidra has Muslim classmates, Muslim teachers, and Muslim neighbors.

Sidra loves Jesus, and she wanted to learn more about God's word. So she signed up for a Bible class. The class was a home study class. She received lessons in the mail, and she sent assignments back to the school's office.

Special Packages

Three Muslim children named Shazia, Sadia, and Muhammad lived next door to Sidra's family. The neighbor children noticed that the postman brought Sidra a package every two weeks. "What is in the packages?" they asked Sidra.

Sidra told them that she learned more about her Christian faith from the lessons that came in the packages. "We want to learn about Christianity, too!" said Shazia, Sadia, and Muhammad. "Can we receive the lessons?"

Sidra's father is a garbage collector, and her family is not rich. But she wanted to help her neighbors learn about Jesus. So she paid the \$2.50 membership fee for them, and she signed them up for the lessons.

Arrested

The village postman noticed that Muslim children got Bible lessons in the mail. He told the school principal. The principal went to Sidra's house and talked to her father. "You and your daughter have been attracting Muslims to Christianity," the principal said. "I will teach you a lesson for this!"

The principal told a news reporter and the police about the Bible lessons. The police came to Sidra's house and arrested her father. Thankfully, family members were able to see that the police freed him the next day.

Discuss the Following Questions

Sidra was guilty of "attracting Muslims to Christianity." To attract someone means to invite them or draw them closer to something. How might someone in your country attract others to Christianity? If you were accused of attracting someone to Christianity, would you be "guilty"? How can Sidra's story inspire you this week? What are ways that you can help attract others to Jesus?

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PRISONER NAME: Pastor Wang Xiaoguang

LOCATION: China

ARRESTED: November 2009

REVISED: June 28, 2010

On Nov. 25, 2009, Pastor Wang Xiaoguang and four other Linfen-Fushan church leaders from Shanxi Province were sentenced to criminal detention for two to seven years, according to China Aid Association. The five church leaders were accused of “gathering people to disturb the public order,” because they organized a prayer rally on Sept. 14, the day after 400 military police raided the church’s grounds. During the raid, more than 30 believers were seriously wounded and 17 buildings were destroyed.

The note cards provided contain an encouraging note in Chinese for Pastor Wang Xiaoguang. You will also see the translation. Please take a card and write a short note of encouragement. Feel free to include a Bible verse. Before you begin check out the instructions below.

Please note:

When writing a letter, never mention the name of the source of your information or the name of any organization such as Voice of the Martyrs or Prisoner Alert. It is not dangerous for a prisoner to receive letters from individuals, but if an organization is mentioned they may be accused of links with ‘foreign organizations’ and receive harsher sentences. Also, please do not state anything negative about their government.

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