

Persecution Watch

Police Halt Christian Wedding in Eritrea

On July 25, police disrupted a Christian wedding ceremony in the Eritrean town of Senafe, arresting 30 guests and members of the wedding party, Compass Direct reported. Police ordered everyone who was not Pentecostal to leave immediately, Compass said. Thirty Christians remained and were taken to the police station. In early August, all but two had been released after signing a document promising not to participate in any evangelical Christian weddings in the future.

Anti-Conversion Bill Ruled Unconstitutional

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court ruled that certain significant clauses in a controversial bill prohibiting conversions were unconstitutional, Sri Lanka's Daily News reported. The Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Bill was introduced in July by the all-Buddhist Jathika Hela Urumaya party, which has been working to ban allegedly "unethical" conversions to Christianity. The legislation proposed fines of up to \$11,000 and up to seven years in prison for violators. The court said the bill would have to be approved by two-thirds of the Parliament and put before the people through a national referendum in order to become law, the News reported.

Brazil Court Reverses Pastors' Conviction

An appeals court in Sao Paulo has reversed the conviction last year of two evangelists charged with violating the South American nation's "hate crime" law. The landmark case

involving evangelicals and Afro-Brazilian spiritists is the first to test a federal law declaring it a crime to “practice, induce, or incite discrimination” against members of another religion, Compass Direct reported. Umbanda and Candomble spiritist groups brought criminal charges more than two years ago against Baptist pastor Joaquim de Andrade and Anglican Aldo dos Santos, claiming that gospel tracts they distributed at the annual Iemanja festival disparaged the African deity, and therefore violated the federal law. In April 2003, the men were found guilty, but refused to pay the fine imposed and appealed the verdict. Andrade hailed the appeals court’s decision as upholding freedom of speech and their right to conduct personal evangelism in public places.