

Persecution Watch

Pentecostal Pastor Detained in Iran

An Assemblies of God pastor is still being detained at an unknown location in Iran, though nine other church leaders arrested with him have been released, Compass Direct reported. As of mid-September, Hamid Pourmad, 47, had not been able to contact his family since police raided a denominational meeting held in Karaj, located 20 miles north of the capital. Voice of the Martyrs expressed concern for Pourmad, who converted to Christianity from Islam 25 years ago, and feared there may be a new crackdown on Christians under way in the mostly Muslim nation.

House-Church Leader Released in Vietnam

A prominent house-church leader was released Sept. 6 after eight days of interrogation. The Rev. Tran Mai was arrested on Aug. 29 as he crossed the border of the Asian nation after several months abroad, Compass Direct reported. He was questioned regarding his association with two other prominent house-church leaders who are currently in police custody, the Rev. Bui Van Ba and the Rev. Nguyen Hong Quang. Mai's release came after the Vietnam Evangelical Fellowship (VEF), an association of 30 unregistered house-church groups of which Mai's group is an active member, called for a three-day period of fasting and prayer from Sept. 5-7. The VEF also urged Christians to pray for the protection of house churches, especially in light of Vietnam's new Ordinance on Religion, which is scheduled to become law on Nov. 15, Compass reported.

Gunmen Open Fire in Colombian Church

Masked gunmen opened fire on worshippers gathered for an evening service at the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Puerto Asis, Colombia, Sept. 4, killing three and wounding 13 others, Compass Direct reported. The pastor, Francisco Sevillano, was not harmed. Colombian army spokesmen blamed the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) for the attack, Compass said. Sources told the news service the shooting appeared to be aimed at an individual in the worship service and not the entire church body.