

Persecution Watch

Christian Leader Beheaded in Sulawesi

The head of a Christian chief of the Pinedapa village was found Nov. 5 near a gas station in Poso City, Jubilee Campaign reported. Bystanders saw someone throw the head of Sarminalis Ndele, 48, from a dark vehicle. His body was found later that day. The United Kingdom-based human-rights group said the murder is the latest violence against Christians in central Sulawesi. Two pastors were shot dead in their churches, and a Christian woman was stabbed to death in front of her home. "Islamic extremists in central Sulawesi have long been trying to provoke a renewed round of Muslim-Christian conflict by repeatedly attacking Christians," said Wilfred Wong, Jubilee Campaign's researcher and parliamentary officer. He said Ndele's beheading may have been inspired by the killings in Iraq.

Churches Ordered to Close in Indonesia

Authorities recently ordered 12 churches in Rancaekek, Indonesia, to close their doors. The order came after Muslim leaders in the Bandung region protested that the churches were meeting illegally, Compass Direct reported. The congregations had applied as early as 1993 for permits for church buildings, but were refused because officials said the land was reserved for a housing development. Christians have since been meeting in private homes, but a local Muslim group complained that this also was illegal.

Christian Worker Freed In Saudi Arabia

A Christian worker from India who had been jailed in Saudi Arabia for seven months for his faith was released Nov. 1 because of advocacy efforts by a human-rights group. Brian O'Connor was convicted of possession and sale of alcohol in the strictly Muslim kingdom. Without explanation, an Islamic court in Riyadh ignored the previous charge of spreading Christianity against him, and sentenced him on Oct. 20 to three more months in jail along with a punishment of 300 lashes for the liquor accusations, Compass Direct reported. He refused to accept the verdict, declaring that he was not guilty of any crime. He was released after dozens of Christians worldwide contacted the Saudi Embassy, Assist News Service reported.