

Persecution Watch

Nigerian Students Face Death Threats

Muslim militants pronounced a death sentence on five Christian students expelled from colleges in November for conducting an evangelistic outreach. The families of two of the students, Hanatu Haruna Alkali and Abraham Adamu Misal, were attacked on Jan. 26, when militants went to their homes in the northern state of Gombe, Compass Direct reported. Alkali and Misal escaped harm but are now in hiding. The location of the other three students is unknown. Alkali's sister said the militants attacked their house, and family members fear for their lives.

Pakistani Christian Acquitted of Blasphemy

Judicial Magistrate Dr. Mohammed Anwar Gondal ruled Dec. 17 that blasphemy charges against Anwer Masih were based only on hearsay, and he nullified the police report filed against him because it violated the criminal procedure code, Compass Direct reported. The ruling made Masih the first Pakistani Christian ever to be acquitted of blasphemy charges in lower court. Masih, now 32, was arrested in November 2003 after a neighbor who had converted from Christianity to Islam claimed Masih mocked his new beard and derided Islamic beliefs. Masih remains in hiding and has been unable to reunite with his wife and children because of death threats against him. Compass said Masih likely will have to apply for asylum abroad and assume a new identity.

Colombian Seminary Student Released

Luis Alberto Vera was released in January from jail in Medellín, Colombia, but the seminary student still faces an uphill battle to clear his name, Compass Direct reported. A member of a Foursquare church in Bucaramanga, Vera was arrested Nov. 26 for allegedly mugging a man in 2002. Vera's arrest came after a routine police check matched his I.D. number with an arrest warrant. Vera has amassed \$2,110 in legal bills fighting what Compass said was the result of sloppy police work and an overloaded justice system. "I'm not sure I will be able to continue my studies," said Vera, who left his hometown last year with his wife and son to attend the Biblical Seminary of Colombia.