

Persecution Watch

New Tribes Mission Relocates Venezuelan Missionaries

New Tribes Mission (NTM) relocated its Venezuela workers in compliance with a resolution giving the Florida-based missions organization until Feb. 12 to exit tribal areas. In October Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez ordered NTM to leave Venezuela, accusing the group of spying for the U.S. government. The process to overturn the expulsion order is ongoing, but a final decision could take up to a year, NTM stated.

Human Rights Group Calls for Release of Cuban Prisoner

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling for the release of human rights activist Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet, who is serving a 25-year sentence at Combinado del Este Prison in Cuba. Biscet was jailed in December 2002 for organizing meetings for the Friends of Human Rights groups he was establishing. Previously, Biscet had exposed a widespread government practice of using the chemical substance Rivanol to abort advanced pregnancies and to allow some infants born alive to bleed to death or be asphyxiated, the Wall Street Journal reported. After exposing those practices, Biscet lost his home and was beaten by mobs, the newspaper said. Biscet's family told CSW he continues to face harassment in prison. CSW, a United Kingdom-based human rights organization, is asking the U.K. government and the European Union to intervene on Biscet's behalf.

Christians Attacked by Hindu Mob in India

At least 10 Christians were injured and two were hospitalized after Hindu extremists influenced residents in Malkangiri district, Orissa state, to attack Christians there Jan. 24, Compass Direct reported. Fourteen Christian families and four missionaries from the Indian Evangelical Team (IET) had gathered to worship at a believer's house on Jan. 23 and stayed overnight, IET district coordinator Satya Das Benya told Compass. Members of the Hindu extremist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh apparently heard the Christians singing and gathered the villagers for a meeting. The next morning roughly 50 villagers beat the missionaries and attacked other

Christians in the house. Though one of the missionaries filed a written complaint naming 11 of the attackers, the Malkangiri district police superintendent said no attempt to arrest the accused had been made and denied that a formal complaint had been filed, Compass said.

Christians Arrested in Eritrea for Bible-Reading, Prayer

Eritrean military authorities jailed 75 Christians Feb.1 for “reading Bibles and praying during their free time,” Compass Direct reported. The youth were completing their required military service at Sawa Military Training Camp in the east African nation. Although Muslim recruits are allowed to read the Quran and perform religious duties in Sawa, it is “considered an act of Christian extremism” for Christians to read the Bible, an Eritrean Christian told Compass. The 75 recruits were put under “military detention and punishment,” though they had not broken any military law, Compass said. Jailed youth often endure physical and mental abuse by authorities who wish to see Christians deny their beliefs, the news service reported.