

Persecution Watch

Pastor in Pakistan Found Shot to Death

The body of a Christian pastor was found Jan. 5 at the Khanewal Railway Station in Pakistan. An autopsy revealed the Rev. Mukhtar Masih, 50, had been shot in the chest, All Pakistan Minorities Alliance reported. Masih's son said his father recently had received death threats from local Muslim extremists, some of whom had in the past asked police to ban Masih's church from using loud speakers. At least 45 people have been killed and more than 90 injured since October 2001, Christian Solidarity International reported.

Christian Families Forced To Leave Laos Village

Two families were recently forced to leave their village in the Attapue Province because they would not renounce their faith in Christ. According to Christian Aid Mission (CAM), six women and their children arrived in the city of Pakse in southern Laos on Jan. 2 after being threatened for many months. "The situation is getting very unstable and dangerous," two of the women said. Elsewhere, police arrested 11 believers gathered for worship in Kang village, Somsouk village, Donphai village and Sanamsai City. Authorities reportedly are seeking other Christian leaders who are said to be in hiding. Some reportedly have walked more than 60 miles to avoid arrest, CAM reported.

Korean Aid Worker Imprisoned in China

A South Korean Christian humanitarian worker was recently

sentenced to a nine-year jail sentence for helping a small group of North Koreans defect to South Korea. The human-rights group Jubilee Campaign reported that the Rev. Choi Bong-il was arrested on April 12, 2002, in Yanji, located in the Jilin Province in China, and charged with organizing illegal border crossings for helping North Korean refugees attempt to defect to South Korea. During a December 2002 trial, a Chinese court did not render a verdict, but authorities continued to detain Bong-il. In mid-December, the court finally found Bong-il guilty. "Please pray that Rev. Choi's appeal will be timely heard by the court and that ... he will be released," Jubilee Campaign officials said. "Please pray that God continue to give him spiritual and physical strength."