

Persecution Watch

Chinese House-Church Leaders Arrested

Three prominent house-church leaders were arrested recently in what is believed to be a government crackdown on the underground church. In January police arrested Qiao Chunling, 41; Deborah Xu Yongling, 58; and Zeng Guangobo, 35, who escaped two days after his capture, Christianity Today reported. The arrests followed the release of a book, *Jesus in Beijing* by David Aikman, and four-hour video, *The Cross: Jesus in China*, produced by China Soul for Christ Foundation. Both document the growth of Christianity in China, and police allegedly are focusing on those mentioned in the book and video. Some fear the crackdown may be as brutal as China's action against the Falun Gong, which led to at least 64 deaths.

Missionaries Beaten in India Attack

Six Gospel for Asia (GA) missionaries were beaten recently by anti-Christian fundamentalists who reportedly intended to kill the believers. The attack occurred in Orissa State, where Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were martyred in 1999. Onlookers intervened during the attack, sparing the missionaries. The men, however, were beaten so badly they had to be hospitalized. "Pray for their full recovery and strength," GA officials said in an e-mail to supporters. "Like several other Indian states, Orissa has an anti-conversion law in effect. Pray for souls to come to Christ in Orissa and for the believers to stay strong in their faith."

Sri Lankan Christians Blamed for Monk's Death

Christians in Sri Lanka were recently attacked after the death of a Buddhist monk. According to the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission (WEARLC), Soma Thero, who championed Buddhist nationalism, died of a heart attack while in Russia, but Buddhist monks labeled his death the result of a Christian conspiracy. Rioting reportedly marked Thero's Dec. 24 funeral, at which 15 Christians were wounded. On Dec. 28, two churches in Puvakpitiya were attacked as they ended morning worship. There were no immediate reports of casualties, but property damage was extensive. Security has been stepped up around churches, WEARLC said.