

Persecution Watch

Christians Massacred by Muslim Militants

Some 49 Christians were recently massacred by Islamic militants in a raid on the Christian town of Yelwa in Nigeria. According to the Barnabas Fund, ethnic Fulani Muslims reportedly shot most of the victims on Feb. 24 as they ran to a church desperately seeking refuge. Local Christians in Plateau State have suffered repeated attacks from ethnic Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers since September 2001. Hundreds have been killed in the violence. Believers in Plateau say militant elements within the Muslim community are working on a strategy to drive out Christians in the state, Barnabas Fund said.

Christians Pressured to Give Up Faith in Eritrea

Police recently imprisoned a group of 51 Christians worshiping in secret in the Eritrean capital of Asmara. On Feb. 16, Mengse Tweldemedhane, pastor of the Hallelujah Church, was arrested along with his congregation in the Edaga Hamuse district, Compass Direct reported. The 34 men and 17 women were detained at a military camp until Feb. 18, when Tweldemedhane was separated from the group and locked in an underground cell. He remains under severe pressure to renounce his Protestant beliefs and return to the Eritrean Orthodox Church.

Christians Flee Villages After Mob Attack

Christian women in Orissa State, India, were attacked and

humiliated recently by Hindus for refusing to give up their faith. On Feb. 6, Hindu extremists dragged eight women, including two 15-year-old girls, out of their homes while their husbands were at work and tried to persuade them to renounce Christianity, Compass Direct reported. When the women refused, the group beat the women, stripped them naked and forced them to walk through their villages before shaving their heads. The act of "tonsuring," or shaving the crown of the head, is a religious ritual normally reserved for priests and monks. When the mob of about 45 villagers made further threats against them, the women and their families fled the two villages of Kilipala and Kanimul in Jagatsinghpur District of Orissa. About 20 people, including two infants, took shelter in a church in Bhubaneswar.