

Persecution Watch

Iraqi Churches Bombed

Five Christian churches were bombed in Iraq Oct. 16, the first full day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Assist News Service (ANS) reported. There were no reported casualties from the series of blasts that erupted outside five Baghdad churches in the course of an hour. At press time, no one had been blamed for the attack. This was the second coordinated attack against Christians in the predominantly Muslim country. The first series of church bombings led to Christians fleeing Iraq for relative safety in neighboring countries, ANS reported.

50,000 Killed in Religious Conflict in Nigeria

A Nigerian government study released in September reported that more than 50,000 people have been killed in Muslim-Christian clashes since 2001, BBC News reported. Previous figures estimated that 10,000 had died in the violence that has mostly pitted Christian farmers against Muslim animal herders in Plateau state. The deaths were split among men, women and children.

Christian Converts Found Dead in Afghanistan

Since June, five Afghan Christians have been killed in separate incidents, Compass Direct reported. The first death was reported July 1 after a Taliban spokesman called Reuters news service and announced the murder of Mullah Assad Ullah. The man said Ullah's throat was cut with a knife because he

was preaching Christianity. Another Christian's body was found Aug. 7 near his abandoned car, while three other men were stabbed or beaten to death in separate incidents in July, Compass said.

Indian Christians Return To Hinduism

The World Hindu Council (VHP) announced the "re-conversion" of 75 tribal Christians to Hinduism Sept. 19, Compass Direct reported. Christian leaders say the Hindu council deliberately targeted Christians in Orissa state, in eastern India, who were not attending church services. The Rev. D.B. Hruday of the All India Christian Council said VHP members have threatened tribal Christians in Orissa state with the loss of government welfare benefits if they refused to convert to Hinduism, Compass said.