

Persecution Watch

Pakistani Pastor Released on Bail

A Pakistani pastor imprisoned on blasphemy charges since December has been released on bail, Christian Solidarity International (CSI) reported. Jailed in Lahore, Pakistan, Anwar Masih was accused of insulting various prophets. His accuser, Nasser Ahmed, a recent convert to Islam, is said to have a grudge against Masih and previously was accused of severely beating a neighbor. In a May 28 letter to Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, the Rev. Hans Stuckelberger, president and founder of CSI, called for a broader review of the blasphemy law, calling it an open incitement to violence.

Christian Children Lured To Buddhist Monasteries

Children from Christian families in Myanmar are being lured from their homes and placed in Buddhist monasteries. According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), the children between the ages of 5 and 10 reportedly have their heads shaved and are trained as novice monks, never to see their parents again. During a visit with Chin and Kachin refugees in India in March, CSW officials also heard other accounts of persecution and discrimination. The government of the Southeast Asian nation, located between India and Thailand, offers incentives to impoverished villagers to convert from Christianity to Buddhism in Chin state, an area that is 90 percent Christian.

At least 350 People Die in Religious Clash in Nigeria

Two months after Muslim militants killed a pastor and 48 members of his church, fresh religious violence has erupted in the town of Yelwa in the central state of Plateau. The Muslim-Christian clash in May resulted in the deaths of at least 350 people, Compass Direct reported. Elsewhere, more than 120 people were killed and thousands more displaced when inter-religious violence erupted in Sarkin Kudu and Dampar villages in the northern state of Taraba in April. The skirmishes followed the murder earlier this year of a Church of Christ in Nigeria pastor and members of his congregation. Samson Bukar died on Feb. 23 when Muslim militants attacked his church in Yelwa.