

Christian Children Rescued From Radical Islamist Trafficker Disappear

Eleven of the 16 Christian children who were rescued from Muslim traffickers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Jan. 2 have again gone missing. Sources in the Christian community, as well as reports in local newspapers, report that they believe the children were re-trafficked and taken to madrassas, Islamic training centers, where they will likely be forced to convert to Islam and study the Quran.

Eleven Christian children, originally from the Rangamati district of Chittagong Hill Tracts, disappeared for the second time earlier this year after being given back to the custody of their parents. "We were not aware that our child would be taken to a madrassa," one parent told International Christian Concern (ICC).

The children, along with five others, had been rescued by police from a madrassa in the Abuzor Giffari Mosque Complex in Dhaka. The children had been missing for months. They were returned to their parents soon after their rescue, but traffickers continually threatened the parents until the recent re-disappearance of the children. Local authorities say the children were likely trafficked again to madrassas and are concerned that they will be forcibly converted to Islam.

"The [leader] of the traffickers gives a large sum of money to the traffickers to take the kids to the madrassa," said an ICC source. "Because of this, they threatened the parents and took their children, again, to a madrassa. It is all because of large sums of money, and because there are no punishments for the trafficker."

At least 141 children have been rescued from madrassas since

July, according to ICC sources. Parents have not been able to level charges against known traffickers, amongst whom are Norbert Tripura and Binoy Tripura (no relation), due to lack of funding and fear of reprisals. No arrests have been made to date.

“The Tripura Christians are very poor and cannot afford to bring a case against the traffickers. They are also scared to do this. If the parents do not bring a case, the police are powerless,” said an ICC source. “The traffickers do not get punishment from the courts. Because he has no fear of punishment, he will continue to traffic the children.”

Corey Bailey, ICC’s regional manager for Asia, said, “The children in these instances are targeted for trafficking based on their Christian faith and economic status. Once trafficked, the children are forced to convert to Islam and the training for ‘suicide squads’ begins. The buying and selling of human beings for any purpose is abhorrent and illegal under international law.

“The traffickers should be brought to justice and no longer allowed to operate with impunity. Education and opportunity for the Christian minority in Bangladesh should be a higher priority for the government to ensure that situations like this will no longer occur.”