

Eritrea Imprisons 35 Christians for Worshipping

Open Doors says Eritrean military officials have rounded up another group of evangelical Christians this week.

Authorities arrested 35 believers on Sunday, on suspicion of gathering for worship in Assab, a port city. The group, which included 17 women, was taken to the Adi-Nefase military camp near Assab, a notoriously harsh detention center.

Open Doors also reports that 25 Christian students from Mai-Nefhi Educational Institution (roughly 12 miles southwest of Asmara) have been released on bail in order to sit for their final exams. They may have been part of a group of students arrested at the beginning of June for “unpatriotic behavior.” Sources in the country expect the students to be taken back into custody as soon as their exams have been completed.

Meanwhile, government pressures continue on the sanctioned Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran and Islamic groups to enroll their religious workers under the age of 30 for compulsory military training. All but the Catholic Church have complied, protesting that in the past, church workers were exempted from military service because of their religious duties.

Despite these stories and others about open persecution, the government continues to support its statement issued in May 2003 that “no groups or persons are persecuted in Eritrea for their beliefs or religion.”

Eritrea ranks 12 on the Open Doors 2011 World Watch List, a compilation of the top 50 countries where persecution of Christians is the worst.

That said, believers in Eritrea ask for prayer for their

country, where at least 1,000 religious prisoners endure harrowing incarceration conditions country-wide. According to Voice of the Martyrs Canada, of the Christians in detention, “not one has yet been charged with a crime or faced trial.”

Pray that the government will stop the campaign against evangelicals and will allow freedom of religion for all.