

Falsely Accused, Justice May be Near for GFA-Supported Pastor

After nearly seven years in prison, Pastor Samuel may be close to freedom—if a final hearing scheduled for January 24 results in a favorable verdict.

After years of waiting, his wife and children—sustained by the prayers of believers around the world—still have faith the Lord will bring him home soon.

Last Thursday, Pastor Samuel's attorney convincingly presented the innocence of the Gospel for Asia-supported national missionary.

It is, hopefully, the last chapter in a frustrating story of hearings being repeatedly postponed—first for one reason, then for another.

Last summer, after years of discouragement, progress seemed to be made when a court ruled the case against Pastor Samuel lacked sufficient evidence or witnesses to stand. The missionary was charged with being a Marxist rebel, part of a group known as Naxalites who killed 19 policemen in a raid in 2004; but the court said it was dropping the case against him because there was no evidence that linked him to the insurgents.

All that was needed, his attorney was told, was a hearing where he and two others prisoners would receive their final pronouncement. That hearing, set for September, was delayed by a Marxist strike. Then, when it was held later in the month, the judge said Pastor Samuel's final hearing—where he could be freed—would be in October.

The October hearing led to a delay until November, then to December... and later to this month.

All the while, Pastor Samuel continued to share the love of Christ behind the prison walls, holding prayer meetings and services, leading lost and desperate men to the Lord and gaining favor and admiration of his jailers.

As the attorneys and judges wrangled, his wife and children continued to wait and pray for his release.

"It is difficult to imagine what it is like to be imprisoned for something you didn't do," says GFA President K.P. Yohannan, "and perhaps even more difficult to wait year after year while an innocent loved one is behind bars."

Now, at last, this excruciating ordeal may be over.

"We know that our God is in control of all of these events," Dr. Yohannan added. "At this critical time, I ask all of our faithful friends around the world to pray that on January 24, God will move in the hearts of the judges to release this innocent brother swiftly."