

India Missionary Released After 8 Years of False Imprisonment

After eight years of imprisonment under false accusations, and numerous delays in justice proceedings, a Gospel for Asia-sponsored missionary in India has been released.

Brother Samuel was arrested in 2004 in Jharkhand, India, on charges of participating in insurgency riots that left 19 dead. Despite avowing his innocence from the beginning and having no connection with the incident, he was immediately jailed. Within prison, he continued his ministry, sharing with others the good news of God's love.

"I was thrilled to receive the phone call informing us that our Pastor Samuel was released from prison," said K. P. Yohannan, Gospel for Asia (GFA) founder and president. "Jesus told us we should not be surprised of such persecution when we follow him. Yet I am so relieved to know our prayers have been answered. Our brother has remained faithful to his calling and now is free again."

Jharkhand is home to thousands of Naxalites—a Maoist rebel group. The government has been working hard to keep the peace in this state. However, after a vicious fight where 19 policemen were killed, authorities mistakenly identified Samuel as one of the Naxalite rebels responsible for the attacks.

Samuel's incarceration dragged into years as appeals and hearings were continually delayed, separating him from his wife and young daughter, who were left alone. During these eight years, as jailers came to trust him, they gave him permission to conduct prayer services on Sundays and Fridays within the prison. Many came to know Christ.

As early as August 2010, an Indian court ruled that all charges against him should be dropped, since evidence was insufficient to prove guilt of the crime or any association with the insurgents. However, a final hearing necessary for release was not scheduled on the court docket for many months, and then was delayed time after time.

During that period, Samuel wrote from prison: "I was totally depressed in this situation, but the Lord helped me to realize he has a special plan for me to be in the prison. The Lord is helping me to share the love of Jesus with the prisoners. Through my ministry, I see the transformation that is happening in their lives."

The news of his release this month brought jubilation among the thousands who had prayed for him over the last eight years. During his incarceration, about 20 prisoners had come to know and follow God because of his ministry behind bars.

"What the enemy intended for evil, the Lord has used for good," said Yohannan. "Because Brother Samuel remained faithful in spite of persecution, many in prison who would have never known of His love are now joyfully worshipping the name of Jesus."