

Missionaries Arrested on Bogus Charges in India

Two Gospel for Asia-supported missionaries in India were arrested over the weekend. One was released later that same day, but the other remains behind bars.

Pastor Accused of Being Member of Rebel Group

Rahul Akkunj was arrested on Saturday and is charged with being a member of a well-known rebel group. Rahul is not part of the group. Rather, he is the pastor of a church in the village where he was arrested.

The allegations came after a fasting and prayer meeting Rahul led at his church. Several villagers who heard about the event were distressed, saying that if Rahul's church continues to grow at the rate it has been, their traditional religion will be wiped out.

Rahul's district leader went to the jail on Monday and tried to post bail on his behalf, but he was refused. The local authorities told the leader the charges against Rahul were serious and he would be forced to remain in the jail until there is a court hearing.

Pastor Rahul and the people who love him are asking for prayer that the Lord will speak into the heart of the judge to rule in favor of the missionary, and that the charges against him will be dropped.

Missionary Charged with Forced Conversion

Just a few miles away, GFA-supported missionary Murli Ghulam was arrested on Saturday. He was charged with forcing people to convert to Christianity after he led a prayer meeting for 25 people at the home of a local believer. A local anti-Christian extremist group brought police to the home. They broke up the service and arrested the missionary on the spot.

In the state where Murli and Rahul serve, there are strict laws that outline the process by which an individual is allowed to change their faith. The rules, which are officially known as "freedom of religion laws," were enacted to prevent conversion by force, fraud or allurement. The laws are said to protect those who practice traditional religions from being forced to convert to a Western faith by a pastor or missionary.

In many cases, especially those involving Christianity, extremists accuse the pastor of forcing people to change their faith, even when they testify that they chose to follow Christ by their own will. In some areas, the new believers are forced to register their intention to switch faiths with the local government. There are a myriad of penalties and fines for anyone who does not follow all the rules outlined in this legislation.

Murli was questioned by local authorities about the charges leveled against him. He clearly explained that he was not forcing anyone to change their faith. He was released on Sunday.

Murli's supporters are asking for prayer that God would encourage him and help him as he shares the love of God with the villagers. They also ask for prayer for wisdom and strength for the believers in this village, where Murli serves as the pastor of a local church. They are asking for prayer that they would be able to defend their faith in whatever circumstances come their way and that they would continue worshiping Jesus in spirit and in truth.

Murli and the believers in this village also asked for prayer for the salvation of those who opposed the ministry and brought the charges against the pastor.