

Muslim Malaysia Set to Rule on Christian Use of 'Allah'

Religious tensions remain in the “simmer” mode in the wake of a court hearing in Malaysia last week to determine whether Christians can use the word *Allah* in print referencing God.

The controversy stems from Christians claiming that *Allah* is the Arabic word for God and is commonly used in the Malay language to refer to God. The government, however, insists that *Allah* is an Islamic word and that its use by others would confuse Muslims.

Last Thursday, the Court of Appeals ruled that the government could challenge a 2009 verdict by a lower court that permitted the newspaper of the Roman Catholic Church in Malaysia to use *Allah*.

The response to the 2009 decision was violent. A spate of attacks on Christians took place beginning Jan. 8, 2010, just after the Dec. 31 Supreme Court ruling which overturned a government ban on the use of *Allah* by Christians.

With the Aug. 22 decision, appeal hearings are scheduled to start Sept. 10 to resolve the dispute that prompted those attacks.

According to the Voice of the Martyrs Canada, despite constitutional freedoms, discriminatory legislation and actions against minorities seem to be creeping in. Sunni Islam is the official religion. Shariah law, applicable for Muslims only, actually supersedes constitutional law on many issues—a significant issue in a country with a strong and agitating Islamist movement.

Proselytizing Muslims is illegal, but considerable effort and lawmaking is exercised to induce tribal peoples and other

minorities to become Muslim. Punishment includes a prison sentence and caning.

Religious freedoms for all faiths are constitutionally guaranteed despite changes that threaten this. Pray that Christians will stand firm in their faith, despite opposition. Pray that Malaysian Christians will be free to practice their faith in Jesus Christ. Pray that all Christians in Malaysia will be able to freely access the Bible.

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