

Prayer Lands 30 Eritrean Christians in Jail

Eritrean officials on Sunday arrested 30 Christians for praying at a private house in the capital city of Asmara. Some were only recently released after being detained for their faith, according to International Christian Concern's (ICC) Africa office.

Security officials arrested the Christians and took them to a police station in Asmara. Security officials also detained another Christian on January 4. The detained Christians are members of the Philadelphia Church, an evangelical church outlawed in Eritrea.

"Imprisoning citizens for holding a prayer meeting is not only deplorable but also against the basic rights of citizens to peacefully enjoy their religious freedom," says Jonathan Racho, ICC's Regional Manager for Africa. "We urge Eritrea to immediately release Christians who have been imprisoned for practicing their faith. We urge Christians throughout the world to pray for their Eritrean brothers and sisters and help them in this difficult time."

Several churches have been forced to go underground in Eritrea since 2002 when officials required all religious groups to register. The officials only registered four religious groups: Islam, the Eritrean Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Eritrea.

In Eritrea, more than 3000 Christians have been detained for their faith in Christ, ICC reports. Most of them are kept in underground dungeons, metal shipping containers, and military barracks. Several Christians have died while imprisoned due to torture and lack of medical attention.