

At Least 30 Pentecostal Christians Arrested During Community Prayer Meeting

The crackdown on Christians in Eritrea continues. Reportedly, more than 30 Christians (members of Pentecostal churches) were arrested by security forces in recent days. This report comes on the heels of recent news of arrests of 141 Christians, mostly women, in the nation's capital city of Asmara.

According to the most recent report, police stopped them in three different places, again in Asmara.

"Police officers carry out continuous raids in private homes where devotees of unrecognized religions, especially Pentecostal Christians, meet for community prayer," the report said. "They are released only if they disavow their faith."

Intensifying Friction in Asmara

The report also refers to intensifying difficulties between the church and Eritrea's government.

"The authorities, in fact, demand the full control of all organizations of religious origin, such as private schools, medical clinics and orphanages" the report indicated—all of which provide needed support to the Eritrean population.

Some 66% of all Eritreans live below the poverty line; and there remains an extreme lack of resources and poverty alleviation programs.

Only a couple weeks ago, police rounded up 141 Christians, including 23 men, 104 women and 14 minors, from Asmara's Mai Temenai area. Reportedly, officials separated the men and women before taking the women to Police Station No. 4 and the men to Adi Abeito prison, the main prison for Asmara and the

surrounding areas. It's not known where the 14 minors were held.

The 'North Korea of Africa'

Eritrea's intricate prison system is known for its brutality, including jailing prisoners in metal shipping containers in the scorching heat-weather conditions that often permeate the country's tropical desert climate.

Since 1993, Eritrea President Isaias Afwerki has overseen an authoritarian brutal regime that rests on massive human rights violations. Known as the "North Korea of Africa," the country in the Horn of Africa is consistently in the top 10 on Open Doors' World Watch List; this year, it ranks at No. 7.

Praying for Believers in Eritrea

- Pray that everyone in these recent arrests would experience God's transcendent peace and comfort as they endure this persecution.
- Pray for the Lord's spiritual and physical provision to these men, women and children.
- Pray for courage and wisdom as they interact with authorities.
- Pray that they will not be fearful but have the grace of the Lord's peace as they face uncertainty.
- Pray that the Lord would glorify himself through the testimonies of our brothers and sisters and that they will be surprised by hope.
- Pray that God would soften the heart of President Afwerki and draw the country's government leaders to Himself.
- And pray for the secret church of Eritrea. Ask God to give these believers His wisdom, discernment and courage as they follow Jesus in the volatile country.

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