

# A YEAR IN REVIEW: 2020

JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

Jubilee Campaign



*A vital voice for those  
suffering in silence.*



Photo by Alheri Bawa Magaji

## PERSECUTION NEVER STOPS.

This year has been unpredictable, tumultuous, and unrelenting for every one of us. But as we all continue to rebuild our lives, it is important that we never forget those that are persecuted around the world for their religion or beliefs. The pandemic has only quadrupled their hardships. Religious minorities are scapegoated as virus-spreaders, imprisoned by the thousands, denied COVID-19 assistance and aid, and it is our job to raise their stories of suffering, survival, and resilience. Even when the rest of the world is put on hold for global pandemic, persecution never stops. This newsletter will focus on the projects Jubilee Campaign took on throughout the latter half of 2020 to highlight religious persecution around the world in Nigeria, China, Vietnam, Pakistan, and North Korea.

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## ***VICTIMS OF PERSECUTION SPEAK...***

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*There are many children and families who suffer a similar situation to mine and are deprived of the basic human right of religious freedom. It is important that we share these stories....*

”

~ Enoch, survivor of persecution for his Christian faith

### **...AT JUBILEE CAMPAIGN'S HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SIDE EVENT "CHINA BANS FAITH FOR ALL CHILDREN"**

In 2013, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child raised the alarm regarding the People's Republic of China's breach of Article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

Jubilee Campaign, in conjunction with the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council, hosted a parallel side event, "*China Bans Faith for All Children*", in which numerous experts and survivors of religious persecution shared how China - through its current repressive and persecutory actions towards religious communities - violates Article 14 of the CRC.

18-year-old Xinyang, the daughter of a Falun Gong practitioner, reveals what she suffered while her father was imprisoned and tortured: "My dad was sent to prison for his faith. He died in the hospital and left us forever. I only saw my father twice, The first time I was seven years old - we met him in prison but he was very thin but happy to see me. He wanted to hug me. Though I knew he was my dad, he was a stranger to me. It has become an eternal regret that I never hugged him."

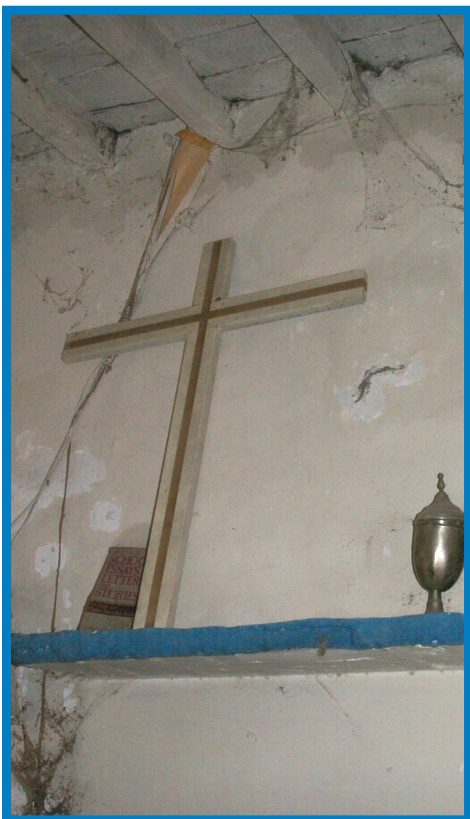
Esther, a former schoolteacher in China, tells the story of being interrogated and detained for her Christian faith and her career as a kindergarten teacher: "I don't remember all of the questions they asked me, but I know they questioned whether the material originated from the Bible. They asked me, 'Why are you teaching the children these materials? How many Christian teachers have you employed?'....It became even more clear that I was being unlawfully punished for two reasons - that I am a Christian, and that I taught kindergarten materials purchased from a Christian homeschool curriculum."

### JUBILEE CAMPAIGN SUBMITTED 8 WRITTEN STATEMENTS TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

This year, Jubilee Campaign submitted written statements on multiple countries and religious freedom topics to the UN Human Rights Council.

In addition to raising China's violations of Article 14 of the CRC with regards to the child's right to freedom of religion, Jubilee Campaign submitted a statement titled *Multi-Faceted Persecution of Uyghurs* in which we reveal the plethora of human rights violations and crimes against humanity that Uyghurs face both within detention facilities and even in the broader public: "arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, physical torture, forced re-indoctrination, sterilization are among the most egregious and reprehensible of such violations." In June 2020, the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act became law after passing both the House and Senate. Jubilee Campaign also raised the story of Chinese human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng in a separate statement. Gao was imprisoned by the Chinese government as punishment for his work defending religious minorities and victims of persecution. The month of August 2020 marked the third anniversary of Gao's most recent arrest.

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Jubilee Campaign also submitted a statement titled *Persecution of Religious Minorities in the Republic of India*. The Constitution of India, while it claims to enforce freedom of conscience and religion, fails to protect religious minorities from the discriminatory Penal Code, which has been used to accuse and imprison minorities on often-false charges of blasphemy. The newly-implemented Citizenship Amendment Act discriminates against Muslims by excluding them from a fast-track naturalization program which is provided to all non-Muslim migrants, and the National Register for Citizens is used to identify and target illegal migrants among the broader population of natural born and naturalized citizens.

At the same time, Indian religious minorities often fall victim to violent attacks by radical Hindu nationalists. According to Amnesty international, "Between January and June 2019, over two-third of the victims suffered harm on account of their Dalit identity followed by their Muslim (40), Adivasi (12), Christian (4) [identity]." Persecution Relief revealed that from the period of January 2016 to December 2019, approximately 1,770 hate crime incidents against Christians have been recorded.



## **JUBILEE CAMPAIGN SUBMITTED 3 WRITTEN STATEMENTS REGARDING THE SITUATION OF NORTH KOREAN WOMEN IN NORTH KOREA, SOUTH KOREA, AND CHINA**

North Korea, South Korea, and China have all ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). However each of them has been historically engaging in discrimination and outright violence against North Korean refugee women. Jubilee Campaign in its written statements to the UN Commission on the Status of Women discuss the extreme levels of vulnerability, discrimination, and violence these women face. A July 2020 report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reveals that women that attempt to escape North Korea but are repatriated by the receiving country face egregious human rights violations, including prolonged imprisonment, forced sterilizations and abortions, physical and sexual assault, starvation and malnutrition, rape, coercive labor, torture, and unsanitary or cramped living conditions.



For those North Korean refugee women that escape and make their way to South Korea and China, their lives often remain bleak. Especially in China, these women are not granted refugee status, making it increasingly difficult for them to access medical treatment and care. In February 2020, it was reported that a North Korean defector woman was denied medical treatment at a hospital despite that she was showing symptoms of COVID-19. That a defector was denied essential treatment during a pandemic because of her status is unacceptable. It is also reprehensible that North Korean defector women report facing human trafficking in China. An OHCHR survey of 636 North Korean women who had eventually made it to South Korea revealed that during their time in China, 70% to 80% were victims of human trafficking. Of these women sold into the sex industry in China, 7% reported being sold upwards of three times, 45% were sold twice, and 41% were sold once. After being trafficked and sold, these women face forced marriages and high rates of domestic abuse.

North Korean defector women report that the most common hardships they face in South Korea as a destination country include emotional and physical trauma as a result of their escape process, negative stigma and stereotypes, difficulty finding steady employment as a result of this societal rejection, as well as forced prostitution and virtual sex trafficking. In July 2019, North Korean defector Han Sung-ok and her special needs son were found dead in their apartment. There is reason to believe that the two passed as a result of starvation, as Han was unable to find work and did not receive sufficient benefits and social services from the South Korean government.



Photo by Alheri Bawa Magaji



### JUBILEE CAMPAIGN SUBMITTED ITS NEW REPORT, *NIGERIA: THIS GENOCIDE IS LOADING*, TO THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

This November, Jubilee Campaign submitted a new report to the International Criminal Court regarding the violence perpetrated by radical Fulani militants against predominantly Christian farming communities and raising the argument that the escalating situation is meeting the standards for both crimes against humanity and genocide.

In addition to outlining the overwhelming number and frequency of violent Fulani militant attacks from as early as 2013, Jubilee Campaign also describes how the situation in the Middle Belt of Nigeria has inflamed throughout 2020. In May, a Nigerian organization called International Society for Civil Liberties & Rule of Law revealed that within the first five months of the year, 620 Nigerian Christians had been killed in deadly attacks

by groups such as Fulani militants and Boko Haram. The United Kingdom All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religious or Belief released their report in which they state that, while "the exact death toll is unknown", multiple local and international organizations have counted no fewer than 6,000 Nigerian Christian deaths by Fulani militant attacks since 2015. The International Committee on Nigeria reported that the number of violent Fulani militant attacks - as well as Christian deaths resulting from these confrontations has steadily increased year by year. While the savagery and death toll of these Fulani militant attacks alone point towards the standards of genocide, other recorded factors, such as Fulani militants' sophisticated weaponry, premeditation and planning, sexual violence against women, and propensity to target Christian communities and pastors as well as peaceful and non-radical Muslims, are all worthy of investigation by the Court. The Court must prosecute these perpetrators immediately as their actions are increasingly genocidal and fatal.

Pictured above is 10-year-old Evelyn, whose mother was killed during a Fulani militant attack on a primarily-Christian Adara community. Evelyn sustained a deep skull wound and remained in a state of shock long after the incident. Pictured right is a boy who lost his mother, father, and two of his older siblings during a Fulani militant attack in Kajuru. The boy, who was shot at, survived but was injured by a bullet that grazed his head. His only remaining living family members are two other siblings.

Photo by Alheri Bawa Magaji



### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ANN BUWALDA TESTIFIES AT TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HEARING OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, "CONFLICT AND KILLINGS IN NIGERIA'S MIDDLE BELT"

Throughout the past few months, the international community of human rights and religious freedom advocacy organizations has been buzzing about the current state of affairs in Nigeria. On December 7th, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo officially designated Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern with regards to its violations of religious freedom. Just four days later, on December 11th, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, announced that she has authorized a comprehensive investigation into crimes against humanity in Nigeria.

On December 17th, Jubilee Campaign Executive Director Ann Buwalda joined other experts and witnesses to shed light on the escalating violence against predominantly Christian farming communities at the hands of radical Fulani militants. See below an excerpt of Ms. Buwalda's oral statement:



*"Fulani militants pose a mortal threat to the predominantly Christian farming tribes in the Middle Belt and surrounding states, but the Nigerian government is failing both to protect the victims of Fulani militant violence and to bring the perpetrators to justice according to its duty. As a member of the Genocide Convention, it is time for the United States to place pressure on Nigeria to end its impunity and offer security to the victims in Nigeria vulnerable to Fulani militant attacks and violence." - Ann Buwalda*



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*To the President of Nigeria... a land that has such bounty... it is high time for the Nigerian government to take these conflicts seriously. I don't know how much longer the world can look to Nigeria for the future.... All they see is internal bloodshed and a government that turns its back and its head.*

”

~ Congresswoman  
Sheila Jackson Lee



### JUBILEE CAMPAIGN ADDRESSED SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT MOON JAE-IN IN A NEW LETTER CONDEMNING SCAPEGOATING OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

This August, Jubilee Campaign, with the help of North Korea Freedom Coalition, submitted a letter to President Moon Jae-In of South Korea and Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the United States Hon. Lee Soo Hyuck. This letter, which calls on the South Korean government to cease all practices of scapegoating religious communities and churches for the spread of the novel coronavirus, garnered the signatures of some 14,832 individuals and 266 organizations - secular and religious alike - from 57 nations around the world.

In July, it was announced that Protestant churches were prohibited from hosting bible studies, choir practices, and other activities in order to combat the spread of the virus. They also were required to keep digital records of active church participants. These regulations, however, were not extended to secular locations and activities that also drew in large crowds and had the potential to escalate the virus, such as sports events, bars and restaurants, shopping malls, public transportation, beaches, and political party gatherings. Moreover, many churches throughout the nation had already been actively following public health guidelines, such as wearing masks, social distancing, holding worship services outside, and using hand sanitizer. In June, some 50 to 100 individuals were dispatched by the government to demolish a local church and dispel congregants, and in a separate incident, the Prime Minister sent 500 local authorities and police to Seoul Church to dissolve a gathering. Former governor Moon-soo stressed, "We sat apart, but these officials stood next to each other, not even social distancing."

As a result of the government's crackdown on and scapegoating of religious communities for allegedly being the primary cause of the spread of COVID-19 in South Korea, the national and even international media has adopted a similar misleading and harmful rhetoric that mischaracterizes the nation's faithful.



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*We are deeply troubled to see that the spread of the novel coronavirus has led to your government infringing on religious freedom in the Republic of Korea.... Your government's reactionary discrimination and persecution has already become a blueprint for how the government may handle similar crises in the future: pinpointing and placing blame on specific groups....*

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## PASTOR A ĐẢO - VIETNAM

Following a meeting with Jubilee Campaign and the Prisoners of Conscience Working Group, Congressman Glenn Grothman (R-WI) adopted Vietnamese Pastor A Đảo through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Defending Freedoms Project and United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project. Soon after, Congressman Grothman began advocating for Pastor A Đảo's release, and, alongside USCIRF Commissioner James Carr, wrote an opinion piece in August 2020 in which they highlight the persecution of Vietnam's religious minorities - notably Hmong and Montagnard Christians - as well as draw attention to Vietnam's discriminatory Law on Belief and Registration. They also cite to Jubilee Campaign's and Boat People SOS's joint submission on Vietnam to the United Nations Human Rights Council 43rd Session.



In their piece, Congressman Grothman and Commissioner Carr highlighted the case of Mr. A Đảo, who is a renowned religious freedom advocate and pastor of the Montagnard Evangelical Church of Christ. Pastor A Đảo, who had visited a conference on religious liberty abroad in East Timor in August 2016, was detained by police shortly after his return to Vietnam and was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of "organizing for individuals to flee abroad illegally." Pastor A Đảo's wife, upon her visit in 2018, discovered that her husband was suffering physical torture and that the prison officials had been forcing other detainees to beat him up.

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*Pastor A Dao's arrest and imprisonment is just one example of the challenges that ethnic minorities in Vietnam face when attempting to exercise their freedom of belief.... We urge senior U.S. officials to raise the cases of Pastor A Dao and other prisoners of conscience with their Vietnamese counterparts. These individuals should never have been imprisoned and we must not cease our advocacy until they are free."*

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~ Congressman  
Grothman and  
Commissioner Carr

Commissioner Carr announced on September 18, 2020, less than two months after his op-ed with Congressman Grothman, that Pastor A Đảo was finally released from prison after four years. Regarding the great news, Commissioner Carr explained, "I hope this release is a sign that the Vietnamese government is serious about improving religious freedom conditions and will release other individuals detained for their religious freedom advocacy, including Nguyen Bac Truyen." Congressman Grothman stated, "This is a hallmark day for both Pastor A Dao and Vietnam. Congratulations to Pastor A Dao on being able to return to his family. This also shows the importance of American elected officials speaking out against oppression and promoting the importance of religious freedom throughout the world. Religions should not be a tool to oppress anyone nor a stain on their character."

### NGUYỄN BẮC TRUYỄN - VIETNAM



In early December 2020, news was circulated that Hòa Hảo Buddhist lawyer and religious prisoner of conscience Nguyễn Bắc Truyền, along with a small group of other prisoners - one of which is notable political prisoner of conscience and blogger Nguyễn Văn Hóa - initiated a hunger strike to protest mistreatment that they are suffering in detention.

Nguyễn Bắc Truyền is a well-known legal expert and founder of the Vietnamese Political & Religious Prisoners Friendship Association. Additionally, he is the co-founder of the Vietnam Coalition Against Torture, and he also coordinated the first ever Vietnam Freedom of Religion or Belief Roundtable. Mr. Truyền has been offering pro-bono assistance to other prisoners of conscience for years prior to his detention. His

organization provided poverty-stricken prisoners with prison visitations, medical checkups, legal consultation, and scholarships for children of the detainees. Mr. Truyền's client base includes persecuted groups such as Catholics, Hòa Hảo Buddhists, Hmong and Montagnard Christians, and Cao Dai followers. Nguyễn Bắc Truyền has been arrested on multiple occasions for his advocacy, and he was sentenced to 11 years in prison and 3 years of house arrest as of April 2018.

Mr. Truyền's wife received a call from her husband in late November, in which he revealed that he and other prisoners of conscience were being denied access to medical care as well as having their personal belongings and letters from family confiscated by prison authorities. As a result, the group starting a hunger strike to protest against their mistreatment. Jubilee Campaign continues to pray for their health, safety, and release.

### PATRIARCH ABUNE ANTONIOS - ERITREA

News regarding the status of Patriarch Abune Antonios is few in far between; however, in October 2020, a new photograph of Patriarch Antonios was posted on Facebook showing the patriarch spending some time outside at the prison where he is being unlawfully imprisoned. Patriarch Antonios of the Eritrean Orthodox Church, now 93 years old, has been detained since 2006 for his outward criticism of the government's overreaching involvement in religious affairs and excommunication of 3,000 people of faith. Although Jubilee Campaign is pleased to see that Patriarch Antonios is alive and appears well, we still call upon the Eritrean government to release him immediately and unconditionally. This year, we have already witnessed the release of some hundreds of other Eritrean prisoners of conscience amidst growing concerns of COVID-19 and its threat to vulnerable prison populations.





### JUBILEE CAMPAIGN PERSISTENTLY ADVOCATED FOR THE RELEASE OF NEPALI PASTOR KESHAV ACHARYA

This year, Jubilee Campaign's alarm was raised regarding the case of a Nepali pastor Keshav Acharya, who was arbitrarily arrested for his faith. In mid-February, a video that had been circulated online showed Pastor Keshav actively praying against COVID-19 with his church congregation. One month later, on 23 March, Pastor Keshav received a phone call from a man who explained that his wife had contracted COVID-19 and requested to visit Keshav's home

to pray together for the healing of his wife. Keshav welcomed him, but when there was a knock at his door, four police officers from the Kaski District barged in to arrest Pastor Keshav. Four days later, Kaski District's Senior Superintendent of Police published a memo stating that Keshav had been arrested for "spreading false propagation about COVID-19" and willfully misguiding the public about the virus. After approximately two weeks in prison, Pastor Keshav was released on bail for 5,000 rupees ( $\approx$  USD \$40). However, he was re-arrested without warrant on the same day as his initial release, this time under newfound charges of "outraging religious feelings" and attempting to evangelize, both of which are addressed in Sections 156 and 158 of the Nepalese Penal Code. Pastor Keshav's new bail was set at 500,000 rupees ( $\approx$  USD \$4,300), which his wife was able to pay in full by mid-May; however, Pastor Keshav was arrested for the third time on the same day as his second release before being transported to Dolpa.

Pastor Keshav was forced to travel 72 hours straight to reach Dolpa District Police Office, an extremely remote and inaccessible location. Pastor Keshav was held in detention for 99 days before he was eventually granted bail and released on 30 June. A formal hearing to review the possible acquittal of Pastor Keshav's charges is scheduled for late December.

### WHERE WE COME IN...

Jubilee Campaign has consistently been advocating for the release of Pastor Keshav. Similar to our work with other religious prisoners of conscience, we participated in a multi-faith letter through the International Religious Freedom Roundtable in DC which called for the acquittal of Pastor Keshav's charges. Additionally, our letter, which was addressed to Nepal's Attorney General, we, along with 23 other NGOs, raised the issue of Nepal's problematic Penal Code, which has emboldened the arbitrary and targeted arrests of Nepal's faith minorities. Perhaps more importantly, through the help of generous donations, Jubilee Campaign was able to provide Pastor Keshav and his legal representative team with aid and funding to contribute to his release.



## JUBILEE CAMPAIGN ASKS EVERYONE TO #BOYCOTTMULAN AND HOLD DISNEY ACCOUNTABLE FOR ITS COLLABORATION WITH CHINESE COMPANIES COMPLICIT IN MASS DETENTION OF UYGHURS

In September 2020, Jubilee Campaign sent a letter to CEO Bob Chapek and Executive Chairman Robert Iger of The Walt Disney Company titled *Transparency Regarding Walt Disney's Relationship with the Chinese Communist Party and Activities by Walt Disney in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region*. From 2016 to 2018, filming of Disney's live-action 2020 movie *Mulan* took place, with portions of the various action scenes being filmed in the Xinjiang region of China. By this time, however, the systematic detention and incarceration of Uyghur and other ethno-religious minorities in Xinjiang was already well-known and condemned by human rights activists across the world. Moreover, numerous reports were already being circulated drawing attention to the abhorrent treatment of Uyghurs, with human rights violations including enforced disappearances, physical torture, sexual abuse, forced sterilizations and abortions, obligatory birth control, political indoctrination, and unhealthy prison conditions.



Upon the public release of *Mulan*, viewers were enraged to see that the movie credits included special thanks to multiple Xinjiang government entities responsible for organizing the policing and internment of Uyghurs as well as publishing false propaganda about the human rights situation. In our letter to Disney, we ask for clarity regarding the company's collaboration and relationship with these entities, and we make the following recommendations to Disney with regards to future projects:

- Refrain from engaging in business partnerships, associations, or any affiliations with organizations and entities responsible for or involved in human rights violations.
- Conduct human rights due diligence investigations prior to fostering collaborations with foreign entities and agencies...in accordance with Disney's commitment to corporate social responsibility.
- Engage in transparency with the public regarding the level of human rights standards that transactions, collaborations, and partnerships are contingent upon prior to engagement.

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*...That Disney, a family-focused and cherished American institution, filmed this movie in regions where Uyghur families live in fear of persecution and imprisonment or are separated for their ethnic and religious backgrounds is unacceptable.*

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## *THANK YOU!*

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We thank you, our supporters, our brothers and sisters, for sharing with us a deep concern for those who are persecuted around the world for no crime other than their faith and belief. Your support and care are the foundation for the work we do as we strive to be a vital voice for those suffering in silence.

Although this year has introduced unprecedented hardships and halted many of our plans, it is important to remember that persecution never stops. As we will eventually return to a world of stability and security, there are billions of believers who will continue to struggle in their everyday lives as they are discriminated, persecuted, imprisoned, and silenced for their beliefs. It is imperative that we continue to raise their stories of perseverance and survival at international stages, and we would not be able to do it without your help.

In 2021, we turn over a new leaf and welcome a fresh start for even more advocacy and even more engagement, and we thank you for your unyielding support along the way. Many blessings, and a happy new year!