

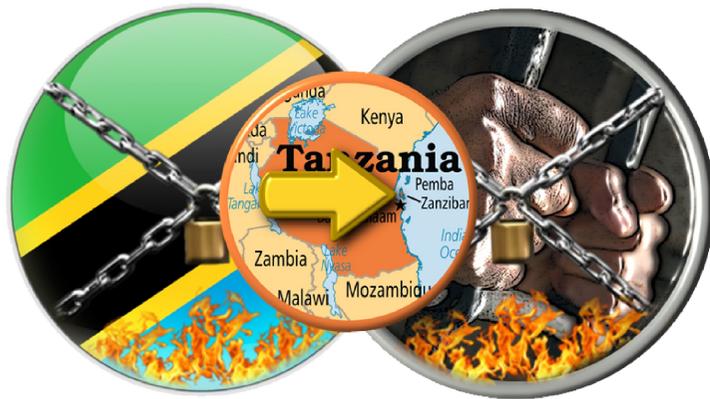


PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted in Zanibar

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



Total Population: 734,832

Muslim: 98%

Zanzibar: In the Deep Waters of Christian Persecution

01/18/2022 Zanzibar (International Christian Concern) - On March 19th, 2020, Pastor James* woke up as usual and left to conduct prayers at his church on the island of Zanzibar, located off Tanzania's eastern African coast. But when he arrived, to his horror, he found that his church had been flattened. Before he could comprehend what had happened, a group of radical Muslims descended on him with machetes.

"I went to open and arrange the chairs in preparation for our morning prayers when I found the walls demolished and the roof lying flat on the debris," Pastor James told ICC. "Suddenly a group of (radical) Muslims appeared from

the buildings next to our church and started beating me... they said that the church was not needed in the area."

What followed was a series of brutal attacks that led Pastor James to not only lose his church, but also his house, and all of his belongings.

"They cut me several times in the head and the hands and left for my home. They ordered my wife and children to get out of the house and then set it on fire. We lost everything in the house, from personal belongings, clothes, and my children's school textbooks to Bibles and hymn books. The first believers arrived fifteen minutes later and found me lying down beside our demolished church. They rushed me to the hospital."

Pastor James' church demolition is not the only case of persecution on the semi-autonomous Island of Zanzibar, where the majority Muslim population continues to crackdown on Christianity. In 2019, a Pentecostal Church was closed for a year after a Sheikh from a nearby mosque complained that worship services were too loud.

In another case, a church was court-ordered to stop construction after a land complaint launched by a wealthy Muslim businessman.

In the case of Pastor James, he continues to wait for justice, though he knows that compensation from the government is unlikely.

"We reported the matter to the authorities and gave a statement. Until now, nothing has been done. Our prayer is that we shall not wake up one day and find our church plot fenced off with a contractor putting up a mosque."

In the meantime, his church has been forced to refrain from meeting every Sunday, for fear of being attacked.

Bishop Dan* has been a critical voice for the freedom of Christian worship on the island. Although he has observed some gains over the year, he told ICC that there is a lot more work that needs to be done.

"The biggest obstacle to achieving equal religious judicial treatment is the concentration of Muslim judicial officers who take no action against the sectarian violence meted on the Church," he said. "The cases of Muslim criminals burning churches have reduced, but we have current cases where

churches are involved in court battles over land, and rape cases perpetrated by Muslim youth."

Weighing in on the current state of persecution in Zanzibar, pastor Adam* of the Evangelical Assemblies of God Church comments that:

"Zanzibar is still in the deep waters of religious discrimination and exclusion that affects Christians, for they are a minority group. The church in Zanzibar has tried to implore the government to intervene and create a level ground where different faiths and places of worship are respected and protected by law. This is still a dream and our daily prayer, and we shall not give up asking the Zanzibar authorities to protect believers from attacks orchestrated by the Arabic fundamentalists."