

JUNE 2017

“. . .They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the . . . prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.” —*Luke 21:12-13*

Dear Friends,

Has Nepal been visited by the White Witch? Just like in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, it may soon be the case that Nepal will be a land where it is “always winter (*spiritually*), but never Christmas.” And we don't mean just visits from Santa Claus and presents under the tree. Christmas means so much more to our brothers and sisters in Nepal.

No Christmas in Nepal?

According to our colleagues in Nepal, the Nepali government decided this Spring to remove Christmas as a public holiday. Nepal provides public holidays to all the other religious communities—Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Kirant—as well as two public holidays for Muslims. Unfortunately, under the new regime, Christmas has now been excluded.

This step by the Nepali government further demonstrates its consistent policy efforts to restrict Christianity in all regards—including restrictions on preaching the gospel and even simple activities. In order to challenge these efforts of the government in a serious way Advocates for the Nation, a non-profit company established by the Christian lawyers there, filed a writ of petition at the Supreme Court to strike down the decision of the government for not granting Christmas Day as public holiday. At the initial hearing the Christian lawyers pleaded at the court—the Supreme Court issued a show cause order against the Nepali government. According to our colleagues, it is a positive first step taken by the Court but challenges remain to win a Court order to issue certiorari to compel the Nepali government to re-institute Christmas Day as public holiday. But what is this case really about?

Our colleagues believe that if the Supreme Court rules favorably on the issue of Christmas holiday, many other doors could be opened to legalize other opportunities for Christians, including legalizing all ministerial work of churches and Christian organizations.

Buddha Ghissing and his colleagues at Advocates for the Nation are building a legal team that will take on this challenge from numerous angles, including violations of international covenants and treaties, violations of human rights, and equality under the Nepali constitution.

The legal team in Nepal plan to present at least five experts in international law who can testify about all of the international treaties and agreements to which Nepal is a party; what they provide regarding religious freedom; and what they mean to Nepal (including the downside of not complying with them). They have been able to get these experts for a total cost of just under \$10,000. In the U.S. the price would be well in excess of \$100,000.

Advocates International is looking for investors who would like to help us fight this legal challenge against the Nepali government's decision to cancel Christmas.

Will you join us with a special gift? We're looking for donors—especially new ones—who can give a gift of \$1000, or \$500, or even \$100, above your regular giving. We've got two commitments for \$1000 each and only eight more donors at \$1000 each will fully cover the costs for our friends in Nepal as they continue fighting this legal case. If you have friends who have a heart for Nepal, please let them know about this issue and ask them to help support this effort.

Please contact us right away so that we can encourage, equip and enable our Advocates in Nepal to win this case, put Christmas back on the official calendar, and hopefully help to re-open the door in other ways for the Gospel in Nepal. Most importantly, join with us in prayer for our Advocates in Nepal until they win the case.

Helping Chinese Refugees

Advocates will be filing an *Amicus Curiae* brief at the U.S. Supreme Court in support of a petition for certiorari in the case of Mr. Ting Xue, a Chinese Christian refugee whose request for asylum was denied by an immigration judge in Colorado. That decision was affirmed by the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in a decision that is in conflict with at least three earlier decisions from other circuits. The facts of Mr. Xue's case are incontrovertible: He was arrested and imprisoned for attending his house church; fined **60 percent** of his annual salary; and told never to attend that church again. When the members of the house church continued to meet, government officials arrested them again and sentenced them to one year in prison. Xue, however was not at church the day of the arrests and ultimately fled China. However, the immigration judge did not find these facts were enough to conclude that Mr. Xue was at threat for future persecution, but rather, practicing his religion in secret was not persecution.

Our hope is that the Supreme Court will agree to hear the case and render a helpful legal decision that will help to clarify the law in regards to what constitutes persecution, thereby relieving Mr. Xue of the fear of being returned to China, and helping others who face the ever growing threat of persecution in other nations as well. One challenge remains, however, is that we are now incurring unbudgeted expenses of about \$2500 to cover the costs of filing our *amicus* brief. Your gift of any size will help us defray this unexpected cost.

Thanks for your continued financial support that allow us to encourage, enable and equip advocates around the globe. Please note the designation for your gift on the enclosed response card. Thank you also for your ongoing prayers that strengthen our advocates who continue to battle religious persecution.

May the Lord bless and keep you in His perfect . . .

Grace and Peace,



Brent M. McBurney
President & CEO

