



Yang Caizhen (L) during better times. CHINAID

Female Sunday School Preachers Sentenced in China

Follows sentencing of five other church leaders

By **MATTHEW ROBERTSON**
Epoch Times Staff

Less than a week after the heavy prison terms were handed to five leaders of the Linfen House Church in China's northern Shanxi Province, four female church leaders have now been sent to forced labor camps, according to a Christian rights group monitoring the situation. (<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/25672/>—please link "heavy prison sentences")

In mid-September, nine members of the Shanxi Linfen House Church were arrested while on their way to petition against the destruction of their church buildings and the beatings of church members several days prior, on Sept. 13. Five were sent to jail on Nov. 25 with sentences from three and seven years. (<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/22675/>—please link "destruction of their church buildings")

Of the remaining four, Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid, said he was able to confirm through relatives that one of them, Yang Caizhen, was given a sentence of three years on Nov. 29.

Yang's brother was asked by the authorities to sign a document acknowledging the detention, Fu said.

Forced labor sentences can be handed down directly by police, outside of China's court system; authorities do not need to present evidence, mount a case, or involve lawyers.

According to Fu, his organization believes that the remaining three also received labor camp terms, but they have not received details yet from family members.

Saudi Flood Victims to Be Compensated

By **STEPHEN JONES**
Epoch Times Staff

DUBAI United Arab Emirates—Survivors of flash floods in Saudi Arabia, which killed more than 100 people last week, will receive funding from local authorities.

Officials in Jeddah will pay families devastated by last Wednesday's floods 2,400 riyals (US\$640) a week, as well as meeting the costs of hospital treatment for survivors.

The move came after an intervention by King Abdullah, the Saudi daily newspaper Arab News reported.

"The government committee for housing has provided apartments to 2,186 people whose houses were destroyed or damaged in the flooding," Capt. Abdullah Al-Amri,

spokesman for Civil Defense in Makkah told the newspaper.

"The committee is also trying to find accommodation for the remaining victims," he added.

The rainstorm came the day before the annual Haj pilgrimage began, where thousands of Muslims from around the world converge on the oil state to celebrate Eid Al Adha.

Many victims were caught in their cars and drowned in 6.5 feet of water. A rescue operation by the Jeddah Municipality is still ongoing.

Jeddah Governor Prince Mishal bin Majed has called on local officials to restore electricity to the region and remove the piles of debris caused by the mass destruction of the floods.

Forced labor sentences can be handed down directly by police.

The four women, Yang Caizhen, Yang Hongzhen, Li Shuangping, and Su Qing, were preachers at Sunday school and among the main leaders of the Linfen Church, a group of 50,000 that operates in defiance of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policies on religious worship. Under the CCP, only churches operating under Party-controlled organs are considered legal.

The women were given administrative sentences of forced labor, rather than being processed through the court system because there was insufficient evidence against them, according to Fu.

"I think they just want to punish them without going through all this presenting evidence and a trial with trumped-up charges," he said.

When Yang Caizhen's brother went to visit her before she was sentenced, he saw that one of her teeth had been knocked out. According to Yang's daughter, Esther, a student in Los Angeles who spoke to Fu about the case, Yang lost the tooth after being beaten by guards.

It is unclear what Yang and the others were charged with.

"That's one question I didn't ask the daughter," Fu said. "Last night, she was crying over the phone when she told me. Especially after she learned her mom was beaten."

Honduras Vote Winner Calls for Foreign Recognition

TEGUCIGALPA (Reuters)—The winner of Honduras' controversial election called on Latin American governments on Monday to recognize him as president-elect to help pull the country out of a deep political crisis since a coup.

Sunday's election is likely to set Washington against emerging Latin American power Brazil, which says the vote was invalid and handed victory to the coup leaders who overthrew leftist President Manuel Zelaya on June 28.

The United States has tried and failed to have Zelaya reinstated and now looks resigned to backing the election as the best way for Honduras to get out of political gridlock and diplomatic isolation.

Opposition leader Porfirio Lobo won some 55 percent of the vote, easily defeating ruling party candidate Elvin Santos. A boycott by supporters of Zelaya was ineffective and electoral officials say the turnout was above 60 percent.

Lobo, 61, a conservative landowner, urged leftist governments in the region to recognize the vote, which was scheduled before the coup.

"We ask them...to see that they are punishing the people who went to vote, do so every four years and have nothing to do with what happened on June 28," he told journalists.

The U.S. State Department called the vote "a necessary and important step forward" after results came in on Sunday but did not say whether Washington would explicitly recognize Lobo.

"It sounds to me like they're all set to recognize the election. They've made all the noises—I guess there is some thing or other that could go wrong but it does seem to me



ALL SMILES: The president-elect of Honduras, Porfirio Lobo, waves to supporters in Tegucigalpa, on Nov. 30. Conservative Porfirio Lobo claimed a large win in the controversial first presidential election in Honduras since a June 28 coup, and vowed to form a national unity government. ORLANDO SIERRA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

(that they'll recognize it)," said Peter Hakim, president of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank based in Washington.

But Brazil, which is increasingly flexing its muscles as its economy becomes more powerful, has dug its heels in on Honduras and refuses to acknowledge Lobo's win. "Brazil will maintain its position because it's not possible to accept a coup," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Sunday.

Zelaya, sent into exile in the June coup, slipped back into the country in September and has taken refuge in the Brazilian Embassy in the Honduran capital. That put Brazil at the heart of a crisis in a region where the United States has long been dominant.

Washington supported coups and right-wing governments

fighting civil wars against Soviet-backed leftist guerrillas in Central America during the Cold War.

Today, millions of Central American immigrants to the United States send home money that is vital to the economies of countries like Honduras and El Salvador.

OBAMA'S APPROACH IN THE REGION

The coup against Zelaya sparked Central America's biggest political crisis since the end of the Cold War.

Neither Zelaya nor his arch-rival, Roberto Micheletti, who was installed as interim president by Congress after the coup, took part in the presidential election.

The dispute is threatening U.S. President Barack Obama's attempts to turn a new page with

Latin America, where leftist governments are in the majority.

Argentina and Venezuela also oppose the Honduran election, but Panama, Peru and Costa Rica have said they back the vote.

Argentine President Cristina Fernandez said the elections "were a sham" and took place in "absolute illegality," Telam official news agency reports said on Monday.

Vote 'a necessary and important step forward.'

—U.S. State Department

Honduras is the second largest coffee producer in Central America but the crisis has not affected production.

Lobo declared victory after electoral authorities gave him an almost unassailable lead with 55 percent of the vote, compared to 38 percent for Santos, who conceded defeat.

Lobo has also called on the international community to resume aid that was blocked in retaliation for the coup.

Due to take office in January, he must now decide what to do with Zelaya. He could try to negotiate a form of political amnesty for the deposed leader and the main players in the coup in a bid to unite the deeply divided nation.

Micheletti touted the vote as the way to end the crisis, upsetting leftists in Latin America who want to see Zelaya restored.

Colombia Says Venezuela Deports Hundreds of Miners

PUERTO INIRIDA, Colombia (Reuters)—Venezuelan troops deported more than 400 Colombian and Brazilian illegal gold miners to Colombia after expelling them from makeshift camps, Colombian authorities said on Nov. 30.

The expulsions came as Venezuela and Colombia spar in a growing diplomatic dispute that has damaged a trade relationship worth \$7 billion a year and heightened fears of a violent clash along their porous frontier.

Venezuela's government had no immediate comment on the incident. But Colombian authorities said 380 Colombians and 45 Brazilians were driven across the frontier in a move the government called a violation of human rights.

"The information they gave us is that it was pressure from the Venezuelans that forced them to return. They are scared and it was fear that made them return," Diego Molano, a presidential social assistance program director, said in a statement.

Authorities said the miners had arrived in the small town of Puerto Inirida, where some were being helped at shelters set up in a school and a local hall.

"This is a clear violation of human rights," said Colombian Defense Minister Gabriel Silva, who traveled to the border region where the miners arrived.

Tensions between Colombia and Venezuela are high after a series of frontier killings, accusations of spying and a call by U.S. adversary Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for

his military commanders to prepare for possible conflict.

Chavez says Colombia's plan to allow U.S. troops more access to its bases sets the stage for aggression against his oil-producing country. President Alvaro Uribe, a staunch U.S. ally, counters the plan is an extension of existing U.S. anti-drug and counter-insurgency cooperation.

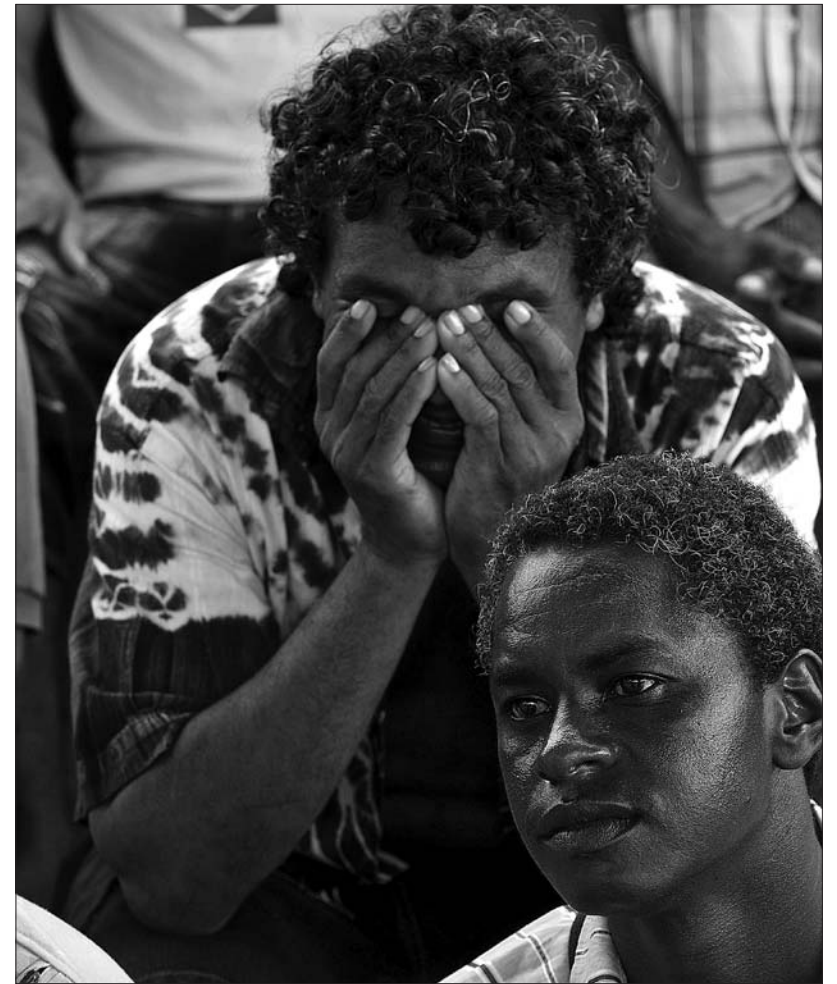
The Andean neighbors have often clashed before over Colombia's four-decade-old guerrilla war, which is fueled by the cocaine trade. But Uribe and Chavez appear unable to resolve the current crisis as they have in past disputes.

Venezuelan troops earlier this month blew up two makeshift footbridges stretching across the border after saying they were used by drug traffickers and smugglers. Colombia denounced the action as an aggression at the United Nations.

The two countries share a 1,375-mile border where drug traffickers, smugglers and leftist Colombian guerrillas operate and kidnapping and killings are common.

Colombia says top rebel commanders have taken shelter in Venezuelan territory. Chavez dismisses charges he supports the rebels and says Colombia has not done enough to stop its conflict spilling across the border.

Illegal gold mining is common in parts of Venezuela and Colombia, where miners often use water jets to blast makeshift pits and filter out gold with mercury, leaving behind scarred deforested areas and polluted waterways and rivers.



ILLEGAL MINING: A group of Brazilian gold miners that were expelled from Venezuelan territory attend a meeting with Colombia's Defense Minister Gabriel Silva on Nov. 30, in Puerto Inirida, Guainia Department, Colombia, near the border with Venezuela. Over 400 miners, some of them Brazilian, arrived in Puerto Inirida after Venezuela's National Guard closed the illegal gold mine they were operating on the Venezuelan side of the border. GUILLERMO LEGARIA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

South Korea Says North Leader Not Dead

SEOUL (Reuters)—South Korea's Unification Ministry dismissed rumors on Tuesday that North Korean leader Kim Jong-il had been attacked and killed, which prompted financial markets to slide briefly in what one analyst said was a reflection of fragile sentiment.

"That's the first I've heard of this," ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung

said when asked about rumors Kim was dead. "I haven't heard anything about it."

Kim is suspected to have suffered a stroke in August last year and was out of the public eye for months before re-emerging looking gaunt and markedly thinner.

His illness bred speculation that one

of his sons was being groomed to take over power in the reclusive communist state. South Korean officials have said Kim has recovered and is conducting normal state activities with a firm grip on power.

North Korea's official media have reported him on field guidance tours throughout the country in recent

months.

"There were rumors that Kim Jong-il was dead, sent around by some unreliable reports, but I have to say this is nonsense," said Lee Sun-yeop, a market analyst at Shinhan Investment Corporation. "However the fact that markets reacted, albeit briefly, implies that sentiment is fragile."