Death Sentence for Pastor in India

Aimee, Bruce, Obaid and his wife Tarana

TMS Graduate Bruce Alvord (M.Div.’92, Th.M.’98) writes about his recent travel to India where he met Obaid, a pastor who has fled his country because of threats on his life.

We just returned from India, where we met an Afghani pastor living in New Delhi. “Obaid” fled Muslim Afghanistan because of a death sentence against him for his belief in Christ. Since escaping to India, he has had several attempts on his life and believes that he has been followed to New Delhi. Someone almost succeeded in running him over with a car in front of his home, but his neighbors rescued him.

Obaid pastors a church of believers who have fled for their lives from Afghanistan since the outbreak of renewed persecution that started in 2010. That particular wave of opposition ignited when Muslim spies infiltrated several Christian congregations in Afghanistan. Pretending to be interested in Jesus, they took pictures and video footage, then broadcast Christian conversions and baptisms on TV. Since that time believers there have been under enormous pressure; Obaid told us of Christians being beaten, tortured and sexually abused in prison this last month. Some have paid the ultimate price, like Abdul Latif who was publicly beheaded earlier this year by four Muslim radicals for his faith (for the whole story, see “Well-founded Fear,” July 16, 2011 World Magazine, pp. 40-43).

Obaid and his wife have both been rejected by their families. Not only did Obaid’s conversion destroy his relationship with his father, but his BROTHER has cut himself off from the family in anger that the father didn’t kill Obaid for converting to Christianity. These modern superheroes are
paying a breathtakingly high price to follow Christ, who is indeed worthy of the cost. Our family was deeply and profoundly honored to have spent time with them.

We are also thankful for the wonderful unity and love we enjoyed with “the India Team” (Shucks, Browns, Tolentinos), and six safe, glitch-free plane flights (unless you count the coleslaw sandwiches that were the only thing served on four of those flights).

Lastly, we are so grateful for the indescribable privilege of our whole family getting to meet those persecuted Christians from Afghanistan - true, living heroes of the faith. We so admire these people; they are like Navy SEALs in the spiritual battle. No doubt they will be uniquely honored for all eternity, and we got to meet them this side of heaven!

Please keep Bruce in prayer for the following requests -

- Please pray for the persecuted brothers and sisters in Afghanistan, particularly Abdul Latif’s wife and children who just became widowed and fatherless. Pray that his martyrdom will strengthen them, and they will live with the perspective that their husband and father is now, and will be, greatly esteemed for all eternity.

- The six Afghan families in Delhi facing torture and/or death if they are forcibly returned to Afghanistan. Pray the UNHCR will grant them refugee status so they can remain in Delhi.

- A taxi driver named Narinder, a Hindu who actually snorted when told they believed that Jesus rose from the dead. Curiously, he would still like for them to send him a Bible in Hindi.

Yours for the Master,

Bob White
Vice President for
Development and Operations