

# Nepal Christians Hope New Republic Brings more Religious Freedom

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A video grab of Nepalese Christians during service time.  
(Release International/CBN CWN)

Christian leaders in Nepal have reported persecution at the hands of Maoist guerrillas, as well as Hindu militants. They are praying the new republic will guarantee their basic human rights.

The republic has given a significant role to former Maoist guerrillas who fought a ten-year insurgency against the government. The fighting left 12,000 dead and displaced 100,000. The Maoists now hold about one third of the seats in the new parliament.

In the latest edition of Release International's World Update, a pastor (who cannot be named for security reasons) described how guerrillas had previously tried to close down his church and recruit him to their cause.

The guerrilla commander came to his church and demanded that it be closed. He then tried to get the pastor to join the gunmen, telling him: "It's the scientific age, why are you believing in Jesus? It's not the age for religious things. You have to go with us and carry a gun and fight for the nation."

The pastor's experience wasn't an isolated one, says CBN reporter Gary Lane, whose report appears in World Update. Some of Nepal's tiny Christian minority say their homes and churches were destroyed by the Maoist guerrillas. They were often targeted for opposing atheism and refusing to join the Maoist movement.

The challenge ahead for Nepal's new rulers will be to allow Christians the basic human right to worship freely and tell others about their faith. Many Christians are hopeful but distrustful because of the atrocities committed against them.

Christianity is spreading in Nepal. In central Kathmandu, one church reports that it is adding some 15 new members per week, and Christians there are sharing their faith with others around the country.

Many now face opposition and persecution from radical Hindus. The father of believer Joshua (not his real name) was a Hindu priest who tried to kill him with a knife when he discovered Joshua had become a Christian. Joshua fled unharmed and was forced to live elsewhere because his father had disowned him.

He said: "My father in this world left me, but my Father in heaven will never leave me. He will always love me."

Another pastor described how militant Hindus destroyed their church building in the village.

He said: "They made a slogan: Christians have to move from this village, otherwise we will kill. It was really hard, but praise God, God took every care. No-one backslid, no-one left Christ, they became very strong believers and they are the ones who are working the village now."

Joshua is also refusing to be intimidated. He is determined to return to his village despite the risk to his life to share his Christian faith.

He told reporter Gary Lane: "Go into the world and preach the Gospel. What you've received from God, share it with other people who do not know Christ.

"Whenever persecution comes in your life, do not be discouraged, just go and ask for strength from God and God will save you. God will guide you in every difficulty, in every difficult situation. Keep strong faith in God."

Release International's CEO Andy Dipper adds: "The Bible tells us to remember our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith. They need our prayers - and our financial support. And they have a dynamic overcoming spirit that we need to catch."

Through its international network of missions Release International supports Christians imprisoned for their faith and their families in 30 nations. It supports church workers, pastors and their families, and provides training, Bibles, Christian literature and broadcasts. Release International is a member of the UK organisations Global Connections, the Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network.