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89-90

Beijing killings bring turmoil;
Americans' status in question

By Erich Bridges

BEIJING (BP)--The killing of hundreds of Chinese citizens by the military in Beijing has thrown the city into turmoil, and could cause even more violence when news of the tragedy spreads across China, according to sources in China and Hong Kong.

At least 45 Southern Baptists teach or study at Chinese universities under the sponsorship of Cooperative Services International, including two in Beijing -- Jay Templeton and Jana Clayton -- students at Second Foreign Language Institute.

Templeton and Clayton witnessed tanks rolling by the institute late June 5, as angry students continued to set up barriers of burning buses and trucks to stop soldiers' movements.

Efforts by Baptist Press to reach the two Americans June 5 were unsuccessful, but Templeton talked by phone to his parents, Southern Baptist missionaries Logan and Lounette Templeton, in Hong Kong.

"I just talked to Jay, and he said they're in contact with the American consulate," Mrs. Templeton reported. "The consulate felt like they were in a low-danger area where they are. So they're not planning to evacuate right now. We've told them maybe he and Jana should just come on home, because they're not going to be able to take their classes anyway. But he said they couldn't even get to the airport. Taxis and buses aren't running."

French students at the institute already have been evacuated, the two Southern Baptist students reported, and Australians have been taken to their consulate.

"A lot of Americans are there, some teachers and students too," Mrs. Templeton said. "They go out to the edge of the campus and watch the tanks and the military convoys move through. The Chinese students on the campus are just enraged. They're so angry and defiant, throwing bricks. At this point, they don't seem to care what happens to them:

"But Jay doesn't think they (the military) will come there. There's a whole string of universities on that street. He said the army did come in (to one of the other university campuses) and open fire there, and students were killed there last night," June 4.

Information from other cities remained sketchy. Reports said troops were moving into Shanghai, and rumors reaching Hong Kong June 5 indicated military forces also had entered Chengdu and surrounded Nanjing.

"Most CSI personnel in China have been contacted by CSI in Hong Kong," Cooperative Services International Director Lewis Myers said. "Some of the personnel have called directly and talked to relatives here in the U.S. They don't seem to be in immediate physical danger, but the situation is very stressful and volatile. Communications and transportation in many of the major cities are difficult if not impossible. This has a domino effect on the whole system.

"We're praying that they not only will be safe physically, but that this will give them the opportunity to live out the Christian life in the face of difficulty and perhaps be a positive witness to their students and faculty around them. We don't have plans to dramatically alter our program in China. Our personnel go there in response to requests from China. As long as those requests come, we will continue to send personnel."

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Travel agents in Hong Kong said June 5 that all group tours into China had been cancelled, although individual travel to nearby Guangzhou (Canton) was still being permitted.

CSI officials are monitoring the situation through sources in China, Hong Kong and the U.S. State Department, they said.

The State Department has issued a new warning against travel to China because the situation is "very dangerous and potentially volatile" nationwide, a spokesman said June 5. The spokesman did not say what action would be recommended for Americans already in China.

"This is not an anti-foreign movement. The teachers should be OK," stressed CSI's Eritt Towery in Hong Kong. Any danger lies in the potential violence which could engulf the nation as Chinese learn of the Beijing killings, he said. Currently, most Chinese across the nation are not aware of what has happened in Beijing.

Chinese Christians have issued no further statements since Protestant Bishop Ding Guangxun publicly supported student demonstrators in May and praised Protestant seminary students who participated in democracy marches in Nanjing. Whether Ding and other Christians will face reprisals for their actions and statements is unclear.

At least 90 percent of the student body at the national Protestant seminary in Nanjing marched in support of democracy, according to reports.

In Hong Kong, meanwhile, grief and rage prevailed, missionaries there said.

"Our whole city is grieving," said Mrs. Templeton. "Anybody you talk to in Hong Kong ... you can't mention Beijing unless they break into tears. Yesterday (June 4) in church our pastor opened the meeting in prayer and wept his prayer. The whole congregation was weeping with him. It's really like a mass funeral here in Hong Kong, because these are brothers and sisters in China. "

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Tehran church members reunited
1 day before Khomeini's death

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
6/5/89

LEWISVILLE, Texas (BP)--News of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's death came just a day after 44 members of the former Tehran Baptist Church met for a reunion in Lewisville, Texas.

The English-language church closed and the last two Southern Baptist missionaries in Iran departed a few days after Khomeini came to power in February 1979. English-language Baptist congregations in three other Iranian cities had closed earlier.

During the following 10 years of Khomeini's Islamic revolution, Middle East tensions soared and Christians began placing greater priority on witness to the Muslim world.

Southern Baptist missionaries Henry and Helen Turlington, now retired and living in North Carolina, returned to Iran twice during the remainder of 1979. They departed the last time 10 days before 52 Americans were taken hostage at the U.S. embassy that November.

During the June 3 reunion, Mrs. Turlington said she sometimes felt as if she were back in Iran, enjoying the company of fellow members of Tehran Baptist Church. She and her husband went to Iran in 1977. He was pastor of the 200-member international church, and both taught at a college in Tehran.

Another missionary couple to Iran, James and Libby Kirkendall, left the country several weeks before the Turlingtons. The Kirkendalls, now retired and living in Oklahoma, were unable to attend the reunion.

Participants at the reunion often wondered aloud about the fate of Iranian friends back in Tehran. At the outset of Khomeini's rule in Iran, at least, Iranian Christians generally were not persecuted, Turlington said, but followers of the Bahai and Jewish faiths came under severe attacks. The Bahai faith, founded in Iran in the mid-1800s, began as a reform movement within Islam but soon embraced other world religions.

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Beyond Khomeini, much of the reunion conversation recalled "the concern and care we had for each other during the last six months of the Tehran Baptist Church's existence," Joe Howard said June 4. He and his wife, Jean, played host to the group at their Lewisville home. Howard was working for an American computer company doing business in Tehran and was active in the church.

"In times of crisis, you turn to people you can really count on," Howard said. "This group of people really got close" in observing months of Khomeini-inspired throngs protesting against the U.S.-backed Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

For many church members, their work for American companies brought them in contact with Iranian Muslims who faced peril because of their ties to the ousted government. Howard, for example, received a telex after returning to the United States that reported, "Joe, all your friends are either in jail or dead."

In Richmond, Va., Isam Ballenger, vice president of Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board work in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, said Khomeini brought a degree of extremism to Islam that previously had not marked the faith.

Ballenger said Khomeini's extremism endorsed the executions of tens of thousands of Iranians judged in violation of Islamic law and gave birth or strength to extremist groups throughout the Arab world. Iran also became one of several forces fueling Lebanon's devastating civil war.

Christian ministry in the Middle East never has been easy, Ballenger said, especially since the founding of Israel in 1948 and with U.S. policy often tilting toward Israel to the frustration of the region's Arabs.

Now Christian ministry is even more difficult, Ballenger said, because of Khomeini's anti-Western, anti-Christian convictions that, like other forms of extremism, are "governed by legalism, fueled by emotionalism, demanding adherence without question and fearful of freedom of thought."

Arab governments have become "more extreme in their measures to promote Islam and to deny or suppress freedom of religion," he added. "These governments are afraid of being overthrown by Khomeini-like zealots. They don't want to be accused of allowing any Christian inroads into the country, thus they have been more strict in their dealings with Christians."

Khomeini has deepened divisions already among Muslims by claiming superiority of his Shiite brand of Islam, Ballenger noted. Shiites comprise less than 15 percent of the world's Muslims, compared to 85 percent who follow the Sunni branch of the faith. Shiites place greater emphasis on suffering for their faith. And they believe their religious leaders attain a measure of the prophet Muhammad's spiritual abilities and thus should be political leaders.

Khomeini's rise to power spurred an exodus of numerous Iranians from the region, Ballenger said. The uprooting made Iranians more accessible and open to Christian witness in other parts of the world, he said, adding he hopes the deepened divisions within Islam someday may provide opportunities for Christian ministry.

For now, however, "I don't foresee a lot of change," Ballenger said. He noted that lifestyles in the West and current U.S. foreign policy probably will play into the hands of Islamic hard-liners who will continue depicting the West as decadent and anti-Muslim.

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High court denies charitable
deductions for Scientologists

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
6/5/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--Payments made to the Church of Scientology for "auditing" and "training" sessions may not be deducted as charitable contributions, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled.

In a 5-2 decision handed down June 5, the high court held such payments are not a "contribution or gift" as defined by the federal tax code but rather "quid pro quo" exchanges in which church members receive an identifiable benefit for their money.

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The Church of Scientology, which was founded in the 1950s by L. Ron Hubbard, operates through a "mother church" in California and branch churches around the world. Services offered through branch churches include "auditing," which involves one-on-one spiritual counseling between a participant and a church official and "training," which focuses on the study of church tenets.

The church charges a "fixed donation" for participation in auditing and training sessions. This system of mandatory charges is based on a central tenet of Scientology known as the "doctrine of exchange," which requires a person who receives something to pay something back.

In the dispute before the court, several church members attempted to deduct payments to the Church of Scientology as charitable contributions on their federal income tax returns. But the commissioner of internal revenue disallowed the deductions. The U.S. Tax Court and two federal appeals courts upheld the commissioner's decision.

Writing for the court's majority, Justice Thurgood Marshall said legislative history shows Congress -- in drafting the federal tax code -- intended to differentiate between "unrequired payments to qualified recipients and payments made to such recipients in return for goods or services." The payments in question, he added, were inherently reciprocal.

Marshall rejected the church members' claim they were entitled to deductions because the benefit they received was purely religious in nature, as well as their claim that payments made for the right to participate in a religious service should be automatically deductible.

Such a proposal, he said, would expand the charitable contribution deduction far beyond what Congress has provided.

"Numerous forms of payments to eligible donees plausibly could be categorized as providing a religious benefit or as securing access to a religious service," Marshall wrote. "For example, some taxpayers might regard their tuition payments to parochial schools as generating a religious benefit or as securing access to a religious service; such payments, however, have long been held not to be charitable contributions. ... Taxpayers might make similar claims about payments for church-sponsored counseling sessions or for medical care at church-affiliated hospitals that otherwise might not be deductible."

Such a deduction also could raise entanglement problems between church and state since the Internal Revenue Service and reviewing courts would be forced to differentiate "religious" benefits from "secular" ones.

In addition, Marshall -- who was joined by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Byron R. White, Harry A. Blackmun and John Paul Stevens -- rejected the church members' claim that the disallowance of their deductions violated the First Amendment's establishment clause by creating an unconstitutional denominational preference. He also rejected the members' claim that their right to the free exercise of religion had been violated.

But Justice Sandra Day O'Connor -- who was joined by Justice Antonin Scalia -- dissented, saying the government either must disregard all distinctively religious quids pro quo or tax them all.

O'Connor insisted no difference exists between the payments made by Scientologists and those made by when Christians rent pews, Jews purchase tickets for High Holy Days, Catholics pay Mass stipends or Mormons tithe as a condition for admission into their temple.

"In my view, the IRS has misapplied its longstanding practice of allowing charitable contributions ... in a way that violates the establishment clause," she wrote. "It has unconstitutionally refused to allow payments for the religious service of auditing to be deducted as charitable contributions in the same way it has allowed fixed payments to other religions to be deducted. ... the IRS' application of the quid pro quo standard here -- and only here -- discriminates against the Church of Scientology."

Golden Gate
honors alums

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Two Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary graduates have been named 1989 alumnus of the year and meritorious service award recipients.

Homer McLaughlin and Clyde B. Skidmore will be honored June 14 at the annual Golden Gate Seminary Alumni and Friends Luncheon held during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev.

McLaughlin will receive the alumnus of the year award. He is pastor of Montecito Baptist Church and a real estate broker in Santa Rosa, Calif.

He has been pastor of churches in California, and he has been president of the Golden Gate Seminary Alumni Association. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee and the bachelor of divinity and master of divinity degrees from Golden Gate.

Skidmore was elected the seminary's eighth meritorious service award recipient. He is a retired minister who now leads revivals and Bible studies and does guest preaching.

He was pastor of churches in Texas and California for more than 35 years. He also was a trustee of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and has been president of the California Southern Baptist Convention and the California Baptist Foundation. He earned a bachelor of arts degree from Baylor University, the bachelor of divinity and master of divinity degrees from Golden Gate and the doctor of ministry degree from California Graduate School of Theology.

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Texas Baptists near goal
of 2,000 new churches

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
6/5/89

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists have started 1,737 new congregations in the first three and one-half years of the Mission Texas effort to begin 2,000 new churches in five years, said E.B. Brooks, coordinator of the Texas Baptist church extension field services section.

"It is thrilling that, amid the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, Texas Baptists appear to be well on their way to starting at least 2,000 new congregations by 1990," said Texas Baptist Executive Director William M. Pinson Jr.

"Our people have demonstrated their concern for meeting the challenge of the mission field called Texas, where more than half the people are not affiliated with any church," Pinson said.

In addition to the goal of 2,000 new churches and missions by 1990, other Mission Texas priorities are to develop believers, strengthen missions, increase stewardship and pray for spiritual awakening.

"We believe it is possible that Texas Baptists can begin 2,000 new congregations by Oct. 1, 1990," said Brooks. "Through May of this year, the convention has signed cooperative agreements with churches and associations to help begin 1,057 new congregations, including 102 since last October. We anticipate at least 50 more new cooperative agreements by the end of this year."

Through cooperative agreements, the convention helps provide funding and other assistance to begin the new churches.

"Besides the new works for which we have cooperative agreements," said Brooks, "churches and groups of Southern Baptists have started 680 new works on their own."

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Lottie Moon gifts
top \$78.7 million

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Lottie Moon Christmas Offering receipts for 1988 topped \$78.7 million, a 12.7 percent increase over 1987 gifts to the annual Southern Baptist foreign missions offering.

When the financial books closed May 31, Southern Baptists had sent \$78,787,726.26 to help finance foreign mission work throughout the world, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials reported.

"Coming at a time when there is so much need and opportunity, I think this is certainly an encouragement to us and all the missionaries," FMB President R. Keith Parks said. "It reflects the fact that we as Southern Baptists are still committed to missions as our primary concern. I trust this trend will continue in the future."

Offering receipts for 1987 totaled about \$69.9 million -- some \$5 million short of the budgeted goal -- and FMB officials were forced to trim budgets last year. But the 1988 offering tops by \$6 million the amount the board anticipated when it drew up the 1989 budget.

Although the total falls short of the \$84 million goal, the increase from last year represents the largest percentage gain since the 1981 offering.

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BSU provides local church
an outreach on campus

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
6/5/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Although the size and structure of campus organizations may vary, Baptist Student Union is an outreach of the local church that provides a network of support and leadership opportunities for students, according to three BSU student leaders.

Scott Carroll, BSU president at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge; Kevin Inman, BSU president at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro; and Donna Ross, BSU discipleship chairman at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, discussed the nation's largest campus ministry organization while attending a training session for BSU leaders in Nashville.

Local campus organizations vary considerably because of size and background, but all BSUs have a priority of Bible study, evangelism and missions, the three agreed.

While they have their own programs and activities, BSUs focus on the local church. At Arkansas State, for instance, the BSU leadership encourages students to be involved in their local churches, Inman said.

Inman, who is from Blytheville, Ark., lives in an apartment in Jonesboro and is active in First Baptist Church of Jonesboro. Local pastors are invited to participate in BSU events, and communication is maintained with local pastors, he said.

Ross said support of the local church can make or break a BSU but the students, in turn, also must support the church.

"BSU is an outreach of the local church, not a substitution for it," she pointed out.

Most of the students in the BSU at MIT do not have a Southern Baptist background, but a Baptist mission and a Southern Baptist church are in the area, and some of the students attend, Carroll said.

As an arm of the local church, the BSU is a student-led organization that gives students campus-related opportunities to serve and hold major leadership roles that might not be provided in a church.

For example, as president of the Arkansas State University organization, Inman is an administrator of 10 committees and a 26-member BSU council.

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Inman, who is a personnel management major and plans to attend seminary, said a bank vice president in Little Rock, Ark., told him that BSU was the best training he had for his job. Inman believes he is getting similar experience, he said.

While the size of the organization requires Inman to delegate through committees, Carroll's job requires hands-on involvement.

The BSU at MIT has grown to 10 members in its four-year existence. Much of the emphasis for the organization is outreach.

Some freshmen are getting involved in the BSU, and they may help establish the campus organization as they become committed to it rather than other campus social and Greek organizations, Carroll said.

Establishing the campus organization can be part of an outreach to New England as it helps develop an identity for Southern Baptists in the area, he added: "There is a need for BSU in New England. There is no strong denomination there, and we need a Christian influence."

Carroll, who is a physics major from Baton Rouge, La., and an ROTC scholarship student who plans to attend law school, pointed out that MIT has one of the few BSUs among the 70 campuses with 350,000 students in the Greater Boston area.

BSUs as widely diverse as the ones at MIT and Arkansas State have a common bond, said Ross.

Ross, whose first year of college was at Washington State University in Pullman, has seen both the newer convention area BSU and "Bible belt" BSU operations.

"It's the large Southern BSUs that raise the money to send workers to the newer BSUs. They may be in different worlds, but they are unified in a beautiful way," she said.

Charles Johnson, director of the student ministry department at the Sunday School Board, told students in the training session that a BSU is not an isolated group but part of a network of more than 1,000 campus organizations with 157,000 students.

"We need to see one another standing beside each other as co-workers together to introduce students to Christ, nurture them and involve them in the life of a local church," he said.

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Midwestern Seminary graduates
114 during spring commencement

By Brenda J. Sanders

Baptist Press
6/5/89

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's newest graduates should serve God's people "as a shepherd cares for his flock," they were told during May 27 commencement services.

Guest speaker R. Rex (Peck) Lindsay, executive director-treasurer of the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, told the commencement crowd: "Whether you're male or female, pastor or music director, education minister or chaplain, you are to be a shepherd. ... A shepherd is one who says, 'Here are the people that God has given me. I will measure my ministry by its effectiveness in meeting their needs.'"

Midwestern President Milton Ferguson conferred 114 degrees on the class. The group included the seminary's first graduate to receive a degree as a result of taking classes at the off-campus center located in Wichita, Kan., Jean McClure Edwards.

Lindsay, a Midwestern alumnus, told the graduates they should minister as "first century shepherds in a 20th century world."

They should consider the needs of "the sheep" before their own, he said: "You minister, not because you enjoy applause or because you're paid to do it, but because you really have a desire to involve your life with other people. Is your concern for God's people genuine? If you're counterfeit, it'll show."

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A shepherd must have the attitude of a servant, he added, noting the most effective servant is one who models his ministry after the ministry of Christ.

"A servant says: 'I will be Christlike in my relationships, words and attitude,'" Lindsay said. "When everybody else is angry, a servant responds with love, acceptance and understanding.

"You are a shepherd as you serve the needs of other people. In so doing, there's tremendous authority, power and responsibility. Because of who you are, there's tremendous transformation potential through your life as you touch the lives of other people."

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MasterLife destroys barriers;
cuts through prison walls

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
6/5/89

PETROS, Tenn. (BP)--Talking to Robert Gibson is no different than chatting with any new Christian who is intent on serving God.

His name-engraved Bible, stuffed with notes and photographs, rarely leaves his hands, and he finds verses to back up points about his new-found faith.

While he is a sturdy man who can lift 500 pounds with one hand, his voice is soft, and his smile is sweet.

A new acquaintance would find the tainted past of Robert Gibson hard to believe if guards with brown uniforms and heavy handguns were not standing around to remind the visitor that Gibson, 31, is a prisoner at Brushy Mountain State Prison in Petros, Tenn. He murdered a man more than 15 years ago.

Gibson is one of four prisoners at Brushy Mountain prison studying MasterLife, a 26-week adult discipleship training course, under the tutelage of Ray Maynard, director of missions for Union Baptist Association in Sparta, Tenn.

"MasterLife is making me realize that I am responsible for my own actions, and that I am setting an example for Christ in other people's lives," said Gibson. "It helps me explain to people about my past and what Christ is doing for me, and how he has turned my life around through his Holy Spirit. Now I am able to talk to others and feel comfortable about that."

Maynard recognized the need to offer the prisoners Bible study when he visited Brushy Mountain last year.

"Last fall I went over to the prison to preach a revival and found out several of the guys were Christians," said Maynard, who became involved in MasterLife in 1982 while starting a church in Rapid City, S.D. "I just wanted to find a way to help them grow spiritually."

Maynard decided the Lay Institute for Equipping course, developed by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church training department, was the tool he needed to work with Christians in a prison population that relies on machismo to survive.

Avery Willis, manager of the leadership development section in the church training department, and Don Dennis, an ex-convict, MasterLife alumnus and Baptist minister from Ennis, Texas, recently visited the prison to present awards to the MasterLife students and persuade other Christian prisoners to take the course.

Dennis, who accepted Christ in prison, went through MasterLife in 1982 when a furloughing missionary requested it of him.

"That was the first time I really knew what it meant to be a Christian," Dennis said. "Through MasterLife, I grew to where I could handle life on the streets for the first time."

Dennis has helped to establish MasterLife groups in three Texas prisons and has more than 300 prisoners in 24 other prisons who have signed up to take the course. He said he is convinced prisoners must receive spiritual help before they get out of prison; afterward is too late.

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As with Dennis, Maynard's dedication to teaching the four MasterLife students goes beyond the call of duty.

"I leave my house in Sparta about 1 every Saturday afternoon and drive 99 miles to the prison," said the director of missions, who explained he shoots hoops with the prisoners for about two hours before starting the MasterLife class.

He teaches the course for about two hours before turning around and heading home, where he arrives about 9 p.m.

Although his Saturdays are grueling, yet satisfying, he is not planning to rush through the 26-week course, Maynard said.

"Sometimes we only do a half a lesson at a time and split sessions because I want them to really grow as they go," said Maynard, who noted the class started with about 10 men, but several were transferred to different prisons or other facilities.

The program has been so successful that Maynard is helping get MasterLife started in two other prisons in Tennessee.

"Those who take MasterLife are certified to teach it when they get through," said Maynard. However, prisoners are not able to teach other prisoners, and therefore are disqualified from teaching the course to each other.

Both Dennis and Maynard need volunteers to teach MasterLife to prisoners in their states.

The MasterLife course helps answer many of the prisoners' questions, Maynard said: "How do you know once you are saved, you're always saved? Why are there different denominations, and what do they each believe? How do you know for sure you are doing God's will?"

But one of the most important aspects of MasterLife, Dennis said, is the confidence and security it gives to Christian prisoners who want to tell others about Jesus.

"As Christian men, you have a ministry that's wide open," he said.

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