In Togo, Cape Verdean Adventist pastor imprisoned on dubious charges
Adventist lawyers, human rights advocates pledge to expedite release, exoneration

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In Togo, Cape Verdean Adventist pastor imprisoned on dubious charges
Seventh-day Adventist lawyers and human rights advocates are calling for the immediate release of an Adventist pastor imprisoned in Togo on what they say are spurious charges.

Antonio dos Anjos Monteiro was detained in March for conspiracy to commit murder after a Togolese man implicated him and two other Christians, one an Adventist, as conspirators in an alleged blood trafficking network.

The accuser had earlier confessed to the murder of some 20 young girls, claiming he worked for a criminal ring that trafficked human blood. The man had met Monteiro when the pastor previously ministered to him.

Monteiro, a native of Cape Verde, has served as the church’s Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director for the Sahel Union Mission, headquartered in Lome, Togo, since 2009.

Even though a police search of Monteiro’s home and local church headquarters failed to turn up evidence, local newspapers earlier this year published inflammatory photos depicting containers of blood alongside stories detailing the allegations against Monteiro.

“‘To say that Monteiro is innocent I think almost goes without saying,’” said Todd McFarland, an associate general counsel in the Office of General Counsel at Adventist world church headquarters.

“The suggestion that an Adventist pastor would hire someone to murder young girls and then traffic their blood is bizarre, fanciful and false,” he said.

Public pressure to solve last year’s string of murders, however, continues to thwart his release and exoneration, McFarland said. Prior to Monteiro’s arrest, human rights groups had accused Togolese police of not doing enough to solve the crimes.

In mid-September, church leaders met with government officials in Togo to expedite the case. The group included Gilbert Wari, president of the church’s West-Central Africa Division, which oversees Togo; John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Adventist world church; McFarland; and a lawyer from the church’s Sahel Union Mission.

“‘[The lawyer] is very hopeful. She said our visit created a strong impact on the government,’” Wari said.
“At first we could see that the government thought they were just dealing with a small church in the corner, but now with this level of support and mobilization, they see that the Adventist Church is a worldwide church,” he said.

The Adventist Church’s top international liaison is currently working with the ambassador of Togo to help secure Monterio’s release.

“The ambassador cordially welcomed me and promised to contact high level officials from the president’s cabinet to facilitate the release of Pastor Monteiro,” said Ganoune Diop, the church’s representative to the United Nations. Diop, who met with the ambassador in July, has since requested a follow-up meeting.

Graz said he wants governments to know that an innocent Seventh-day Adventist facing arbitrary detention is not alone.

“He has millions of brothers and sisters around the world ready to rally in support. We will do everything in our power to help get Monteiro released, and we are confident that justice will prevail.”

There are more than 5,300 Adventist church members in Togo, and close to 880,000 in the church’s West-Central Africa Division.

Monteiro, who was initially held in solitary confinement in jail for 14 days, has since been transferred to the Civil Prison of Lome, where pre-trial detainees such as himself are held together with convicted felons.

Despite deplorable prison conditions, Graz said Monteiro remains “optimistic and in good health.”

“We strongly believe that Monteiro is a modern-day Joseph,” Wari said, referencing a Biblical story in which an Old Testament figure is falsely imprisoned. “Everything seemed desperate and hopeless, but God was working and he was able to glorify his holy name through the crisis.”

Integrated media collaboration urged, starting with world communication audit
Agroup of Seventh-day Adventist media professionals recommended a greater focus on strategic planning for more effectively conducting mission, first with a worldwide communication audit and later forming a committee to organize global initiatives.

Church leaders say the goals will lay a foundation for greater collaboration across the denomination worldwide. Currently, most of the Adventist Church’s communication outreach is conducted separately by its 13 world divisions.

The proposals came out of a five-day global media summit, a gathering of 80 Adventist media professionals, both church employees and lay members, who explored how the church can work in a more integrated way.

Lay member Joanne Davies, a former marketing and public relations executive, challenged church officials to strengthen the church’s public identity by working together.

“The Seventh-day Adventist brand has been dwarfed, and no one oversees the strategic resource allocation," Davies said. “Let’s put media muscle behind our message.”

The summit, held here at the church’s headquarters, was an initiative of Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson, who said the meeting underscored unity among professional communicators.

“One of the most striking results was the highly spiritual commitment on the part of these world class communicators and media specialists to actually see that the Adventist message gets to every person in the world," Wilson said. “I think that is a tremendous move forward and shows real unity and mission of the church.”

Proposals will go through a committee of vice presidents next week, with a report offered to the world church Executive Committee later this month. Wilson said the meeting was a focused group of 80 people, but more time is needed to obtain strong support from administrators internationally.

“There were others who didn’t have the opportunity to attend the meeting, and we have to inspire them with the practical results,” Wilson said.
Participants also recommended the church more effectively articulate and promote the Adventist brand. Doing so would strengthen the denomination’s identity, said Garrett Caldwell, public relations director and an associate director in Adventist world church’s Communication department.

Collaboration, Caldwell said, could also involve creating a structure to communicate a single, unmediated message throughout the organization, including to individual church members. That approach could help strengthen worldwide initiatives and enhance communication during crisis situations, Caldwell said.

Already, there are communication and branding highpoints. The Adventist Church has more buildings branded with the denomination’s logo than McDonald’s and Safeway supermarkets combined, said Claud Richli, associate publisher of Adventist Review/World magazines. And Adventist World Radio podcasts are downloaded about 20 million times each month, said Daryl Gungadoo, an AWR engineer based in England.

Still, participants agreed that the church’s public relations outreach needs to be stronger.

“We [the church] are basically unknown,” said Greg Dunn, managing director of Allison+Partners, a public relations agency.

Some world divisions have made great strides in working together. The South America Division, based in Brasilia, Brazil, collaborates across its departments. The South Pacific Division, based in Waroonga, New South Wales, Australia, has consolidated its media work under one organization. The division’s Adventist Media Network (AMN) includes the Communication department, individual evangelistic media ministries, music ministries, publishing work and Bible schools.

Neale Schofield, CEO of AMN, says the church in that division has seen greater results in spreading the gospel, but it took four years to combine all the ministries. Last week he said he hopes to see unity in media outreach efforts.

“My view of this summit is to have the whole be greater than the sum of its parts for the purpose of efficient spreading of the gospel worldwide,” Schofield said.

—additional reporting by Tor Tjeransen of tedNEWS

Adventist Church President Wilson releases first book ‘Almost Home’
Seventh-day Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson has published his first book, a compilation of recent sermons on themes related to his call of commitment to God and service to others.

“Almost Home: A Call to Revival and Reformation,” was published and released today by Pacific Press Publishing Association.

Wilson said he never set out to publish a book, but was convinced of the idea by his assistant, longtime evangelist Mark Finley.

Wilson said the book focuses on Christ’s soon return and the Three Angel’s Message, as found in the biblical book of Revelation. It also underscores how church members can view their own role in anticipation of Christ’s return as people who are servants of the Lord and to each other, he said.

“I hope readers catch a full picture of the urgency of the times and the Lord’s soon return and that they feel very much a part of the great Advent movement and its real objective, which is to tell people the Lord is coming soon,” Wilson said.

All proceeds from "Almost Home" will benefit the “Mission to the Cities” initiative, which is the Adventist Church’s program to share the gospel message with people living in large metropolitan areas.

“One of my favorite and most cherished objectives is for people in cities to know of Christ’s love and soon return,” Wilson said.

In the book’s foreword, Finley wrote, “Elder Wilson’s passion to see this lost world won for Christ rings clear in each chapter. He longs to inspire Seventh-day Adventists around the world to reach out and witness powerfully for Christ and to be ready for the return of our Lord.”
In Mongolia, outreach paves way for ‘Mission to Cities’ push in 2013

Sep. 28, 2012
Silver Spring, Maryland, United States
Seong Jun Byun/ANN staff

Seventh-day Adventist leaders in Mongolia say a weeklong evangelism series held in Ulaanbaatar earlier this month signals a new focus on urban outreach in the region.

Some 860 people met in nine Adventist churches in and around Ulaanbaatar from September 15 to 19 for a series exploring how Adventism offers hope for the future.

Over the weekend, Adventists wrapped up the series with messages from the region’s top church official. Jairyong Lee, president of the church’s Northern Asia-Pacific Division, which oversees Mongolia, called joining the Adventist Church family “the best choice of your life” during his Sabbath sermon.

Adventist Church leaders in the division said the meetings set a foundation in the region for next year’s major outreach event in Tokyo. The capital city of Japan is one of 21 key cities worldwide where Adventists will hold coordinated evangelism events next year.

Called Mission to Cities, the initiative was launched shortly after Adventist world church President Ted N. C. Wilson called on church leadership worldwide to prioritize outreach to urban centers, where half of the world’s population now lives.

“This Ulaanbaatar citywide evangelism was a historical event that revived our churches in Mongolia through mission and outreach,” Lee said.

The series resulted in 246 Bible students completing a correspondence course offered by Adventist radio broadcast and Bible School supporting ministry Voice of Prophecy. More than 100 attendees chose to join the Adventist Church through baptism.

Church leaders in Mongolia said the outcome was significant, especially in a country whose citizens are largely ambivalent toward Christianity.

Adventist missionaries first came to Mongolia in 1990, shortly after the end of socialist rule opened the
country to religious expression. Today, about half of Mongolians are Buddhist and more than a quarter are atheist. The Adventist Church continues to grow in Mongolia, with close to 1,700 members now worshipping in the country.

“Over the past week, we have seen the involvement of our church members, HisHands missionaries, all the pastors and [regional] leaders working together to accomplish something great for God,” said Elbert Kuhn, director of the church’s Mongolian Mission Field.

“We are very happy but we don’t want to stop here. We want to revive ourselves first and then move forward to share the hope that we have in Jesus Christ,” Kuhn said.

In Nicaragua, Adventist awarded ‘best student’ in national competition

Oct. 01, 2012
Managua, Nicaragua
Javier Castrellon/IAD staff/ANN staff

A Seventh-day Adventist student was named Nicaragua’s “best student” last month after earning first place in a national competition measuring proficiency in math and science.

Nathon Leopold Hilton, 16, was recognized by Nicaragua’s Ministry of Education as the country’s top scoring student during a ceremony at the Chiquilistagua Stadium in Managua on September 13. The honor was based on Hilton’s performance on a national test covering mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry.

Leopold, an eleventh grader, is the first student from the Nicaragua Adventist Vocational School to receive such recognition, said school principal Felipe Cordero.

“We are excited for Nathan and that this recognition highlighted the school,” Cordero said, adding that school faculty and staff are committed to both strong academics and spiritual growth.

The school plans to hold a program to honor all the students who made district finals in various subjects, Cordero said.

More than 200 primary and secondary students are currently enrolled at Nicaragua Adventist Vocational School. The school is operated by the church’s Nicaragua Mission, headquartered in Managua. Close to 3,000 students attend 25 Adventist-run primary and secondary schools in Nicaragua.
There are roughly 62,000 Adventists in Nicaragua, a country with a population of about 3.2 million.

The **ANN news bulletin** is a weekly recap of news and information from the Communication department of the Seventh-day Adventist world church headquarters and is distributed by Adventist News Network.

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**ANN staff:** Williams Costa Jr., director; Ansel Oliver, assistant director; Elizabeth Lechleitner, editorial coordinator. Portuguese translations by Azenilto Brito, Spanish translations by Marcos Paseggi and French translations by Wenda Ozone-Mourandee.
Urban Evangelism is Wilson's Call to Adventist World Church

Oct. 08, 2011 Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Mark A. Kellner, Adventist Review

The growing number of people residing in the world's cities -- more people live in cities today than in rural areas -- signifies a clarion call for urban evangelism, Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, declared October 8 during Sabbath worship at the world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Taking his theme from Luke 19:41-42, Wilson noted that Jesus, on His final entry to Jerusalem, wept over the city where He was to be falsely accused, tried and crucified.

"Jesus wept for the city, [and] for the people of the city," Wilson said. "He knew what was to happen in a matter of days. ... He did not become angry or resentful. He wept! He wept for the people of the city!"

From that example, Wilson said, Christians can draw the conclusion that the people of the cities are important to God and to the fulfillment of the Gospel commission to take the good news into all the world.

"Our humble goal will be to reach approximately 650 major cities of the world before the next General Conference Session in 2015 all based on the power of the Holy Spirit through revival and reformation," he said.

"God is calling us to go into the cities of the world where the laborers are few and the harvest is plentiful," Wilson told the congregation of 500 world church leaders and guests. "Are you willing to weep and work for the people of the great cities? He calls for us to proclaim His love, His righteousness, His Three Angels' messages, His warning to a dying world, and the powerful announcement of His soon second coming!"

Wilson said, "Our Biblical message to the cities will unite us as a worldwide people and guard us from isolating ourselves from society and from each other. Our message to the cities of the world is that another city is coming: the New Jerusalem, a city of safety, hope and refuge with God at its..."
In a message simultaneously broadcast by the church's Hope Channel, Wilson said Jesus has issued a call to work in urban area, reflected in the writings of the denomination's co-founder Ellen G. White: "For over a hundred years, He has been asking His people to work the cities according to His methods. The Spirit of Prophecy [her writings] is replete with instruction about the work to be done for the cities ... it is a sustainable, careful, and comprehensive work ... a work that unites every aspect of church work in its approach to reaching the multitudes of the cities and will receive God's blessing when done according to His will with a humble heart."

He then quoted from White's book, "Medical Ministry," page 304: "The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed."

Wilson recalled White's account of the "beehive of activity" Adventists created in San Francisco, California, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries. He said that such efforts can, and should, be duplicated today.

"We need strategic planning, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for every city in every country in every division around the world that will produce that 'beehive,'" Wilson said.

He added, "Everyone can contribute to the development of the work-in-progress plans including our departments and institutions. We are calling for everyone to participate -- young and old, those who live in the cities and those who live in rural areas, pastors and church members, church organizations and church institutions. Every member involved in every possible way for comprehensive urban evangelism."

Wilson issued a challenge to his audience: "Are we willing to take the determined steps to put into practice God's plans for the urban centers of the world so that a 'mighty movement' will result, or will we turn and run like Jonah?"

Asserting the authenticity of the Scriptural account, he said, "This was a real story, a real Jonah, a real fish and a real appeal by God to go to Nineveh. Don't discount this story and others in the Bible as just symbolic or allegorical. The miracles of the Bible are true and demonstrate God's authority. Believe in the authenticity of God's Holy Word and the Spirit of Prophecy. God's Word speaks to us in clear language that shows He is in control and that we are to follow His instructions and live life to the fullest."

Wilson announced that the global urban outreach would begin in New York City, where the current G.C. president began his own ministerial work, and where Ellen White had directed special attention by Adventists.

"In 2013 we will launch a very specific, comprehensive, and sustained evangelistic approach for the world beginning in New York City," he said. "We want to start with New York City since Ellen White indicated that it should be a symbol as to how the rest of the world should be worked. Since large cities are made up of many smaller communities and neighborhoods, we expect to have approximately 150 to 200 evangelistic meetings in the metropolitan New York area from June 7 to 29 in 2013. ... By God's grace, I pledge myself and Nancy to hold one of those 200 evangelistic meetings in New York City in June 2013."

Wilson concluded his message with an appeal for prayer support and workers for the urban
outreach.

"I have full confidence that God will fulfill His promise as we humbly submit our plans to Him and follow His instruction in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Let us plead with the Holy Spirit for the power to accomplish the task entrusted to us," he said. "What a day it will be when Jesus returns and we join with those who have been saved from the large cities and the rural areas to ascend with the Lord to our eventual homes for eternity."

--read the full text of Wilson’s sermon HERE.