

## **Table of Contents**

- ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Systematic attacks against Christians in Karnataka***
  - ***Recent Incidents of Persecution***
  - ***Orissa: nun raped in pogroms identifies chief assailant***
  - ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Christian in India suffers miscarriage in Hindu extremist attack***
  - ***India under threat from Islamic extremism***
  - ***India less tense after court verdict on holy site***
  - ***The fruits of "Burn the Koran": Catholic school burnt and two Protestant schools targeted***
  - ***Christian assaulted in Orissa state***
  - ***More than 4,000 Christians victims of abuses and forced conversions in Orissa***
  - ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Hindu deputy sentenced over Orissa pogrom***
  - ***Suspicious actions follow murder of pastor in Assam***
  - ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Endless violence against Christian women of Kandhamal***
  - ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Christians attacked by Hindu extremists, arrested by police***
  - ***Theology student dies in attack in Madhya Pradesh***
  - ***New acquittals for people who attacked Christians in Orissa***
  - ***Indian police arrest 13 Christians for 'forceful conversion'***
  - ***Signs of witness intimidation mount in Orissa***
  - ***Maoists blow up Protestant school***
  - ***Attacks in Punjab, India similar to Orissa mayhem, report says***
  - ***Recent incidents of persecution***
  - ***Orissa, "there is no justice for Christians"***
  - ***Frequent attacks on Christians in India's Karnataka***
  - ***India finally allows EU to visit Orissa – but no fact-finding***
  - ***Marxist Communist Party in India bans leaders from practicing faith***
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## Recent incidents of persecution

By Mahruaii Sailo and Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct (31.12.2010) / HRWF (01.01.2011) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – Madhya Pradesh, December 31 (Compass Direct News) – Hindu nationalists on Dec. 26 beat a Christian distributing gospel tracts in Damoh Naka at Jabalpur. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at about 3 p.m. Devanand Dandale was distributing literature when Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal and Dharam Sena grabbed him, seized his mobile phone and money and phoned other extremists to come. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that for nearly two hours the extremists repeatedly slapped and kicked Dandale, pulled his hair and mocked him, finally forcing him to the Kotwali police station. En route, they falsely told news reporters that Dandale was a convert who was forcing others to convert. On advice of police, Dandale filed a complaint against Amit Tiwari, Sunil Sonkar, Ambasingh Thakur, Surendra Jain and Babu Tiwari, after which he was sent home at 9 p.m. At press time Dandale was receiving medical treatment for swollen legs and severe pain. – BW

Andhra Pradesh – On Dec. 20 in Hi- City, Hyderabad, about 100 Hindu extremists attacked Pastor T.R. Raju, warning him to vacate the area. The previous day Pastor Raju had led a Christmas celebration with a convert from Hinduism, an actor identified only as Surya, as a guest speaker, reported the All India Christian Council (AICC). Surya had mentioned the blessing of having Christ as God and did not criticize other faiths, according to the AICC. Afterward, however, four people came and argued with the pastor and verbally abused him. The next day, about 100 Hindu hardliners gathered at the pastor's house, verbally abused him and beat him, according to the AICC. Surya also showed up and pleaded with the furious mob to stop, and police arrived as the attackers scattered. The extremists continued to threaten the pastor to leave the area or face harm. They also threatened the pastor's landlord, who subsequently gave notice to the pastor to vacate the house in 10 days. – MS

Maharashtra – Carol singers on Dec. 18 were beaten at 10:15 p.m. in Worli Koliwada, Mumbai, reported national daily the Times of India (TOI). Joseph Dias of the Catholic Secular Forum reportedly said 25 members of the New Life Church youth group were singing carols when Dhananjay Desai of the Hindu extremist Hindu Rashtra Sena began mocking them, saying they were paid to sing. Desai then phoned other Hindu extremists, who rushed to the spot in three cars and charged into the youth group, beating two of them, Ganesh Gadam and Joel Metrin. The TOI reported that the extremists forced the victims into their cars and took them to a police station. Dias told Compass that police issued a warning to the assailants, who threatened the Christians with harm if they persisted in holding public Christian activities. – BW

Karnataka – Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Sawaymsevak Sangh on Dec. 17 attacked a Christian and accused him of "large-scale conversion" in Shimoga. The All India Christian Council (AICC) reported that about 15 Hindu extremists gathered at the house of S. Prakash, manager of the Dalit Education Centre, and accused him of using the school as a cover for the alleged conversions. The extremists beat Prakash, leaving him with several internal injuries, and threatened further harm if he did not close down the school. They also cut down trees at the school and destroyed its signboard. Prakash filed a complaint with local police. Village officials are supportive of the work by the school, reported the AICC. A police investigation was ongoing at press time. – MS

Madhya Pradesh – On Dec. 9 in Satna, police arrested Pastor V.A. Anthony and booked him under the state anti-conversion act. The arrests was made in connection with an incident that took place earlier this year when the pastor conducted a Christian funeral at the request of the parents of the diseased, reported the All India Christian Council (AICC). An activist with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, Lakshimi Yadav,

learned of the funeral and filed a case against Antony. Police investigated the case but found no wrongdoing by the pastor. In early September, Hindu extremists from the Sangh Parivar forced local newspapers to publish biased reports about the funeral and complained to the inspector general of police that the pastor had forcibly converted the parents of the deceased, identified only as Rajesh. The Hindu extremists threatened the pastor on Sept. 12. – MS

Karnataka – Hindu nationalists from the Bajrang Dal on Dec. 8 disrupted a prayer meeting, falsely accused Christians of forcible conversion and seriously injured two of them in Gonilkoppa. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at about 8 p.m. the Shakina Full Gospel Church was worshipping when 10 extremists led by Hindus identified only as Manu, Devaraj and Manju stormed in. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that Christians identified only as Raju, Kaliaamma, Rajukamma, Belli, Lovaliamma and Viji were verbally abused and dragged to the Gonilkoppa police station, where the extremists pressured police to arrest them. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that officers released the Christians without charges but strictly warned them, for security purposes, not to conduct future worship meetings at their homes. Belli and Viji, who bled profusely from the attack, received medical treatment at the Gonilkoppa Government Hospital. "Police, however, did not take action against the extremists for attacking the Christians," a GCIC coordinator noted. – BW

Madhya Pradesh – Armed men on Dec. 6 attacked the Rev. Thomas Chirattavalli in Satna. The suspected Hindu extremists hit the priest's head when he opened the door of the parish house, then they chased and beat him. The parish driver, cook and another staff member heard the disturbance and tried to come out, but the assailants had locked the doors from outside. The priest sustained two deep wounds on the head, as well as injuries on other parts of his body. He filed a First Information Report at Burgama in Singrauli district. – MS

Karnataka – Shimoga police on Dec. 5 forced the closure of a house church at Rippon Pete, Shimoga district. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that on Dec. 3 Pastor Sebastian Babu was falsely accused of forced conversion by area Hindu extremists who threatened to harm him if he continued church services. On Dec. 5, as Sunday worship was going on in Rippon Pete, police arrived after the extremists complained of "conversion activities." Officers took Pastor Babu into custody and warned him against conducting worship, adding that he had to report to the police station the next day with the landlord of this rented house. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that Pastor Babu and his landlord went to the police station on Dec. 6, where officers learned that the landlord had no objection to the house church. Nevertheless, they advised him against conducting Christian worship "as a security measure." – BW

Karnataka – Hindu extremists on Dec. 5 pressured the Slum Board administrative committee in Kengeri, Bangalore to demolish the Gypsy Prayer Church building. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the extremists barged into the prayer hall and disrupted a service led by a pastor identified only as Rajesh. They filed a complaint with the Slum Board committee against the Christians and persuaded it to order that the church building be demolished. – MS

Karnataka – Police on Dec. 2 arrested a pastor on charges of attempted forcible conversion in Udayanagar, near Mahadevapura. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that a pastor identified only as Johnson and a senior church member identified only as George were invited for a prayer service at the home of a Christian. Johnson, 26, of Kerala, was staying at the Evergreen School at Udayanagar near Mahadevapura. While they were praying at about 11 a.m., nearly 25 Hindu nationalists from the Bajrang Dal stormed the house, dragged Johnson outside and continued hitting and kicking him while falsely accusing him of forced conversion. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that the extremists forcibly took them to the Mahadevapura police station, where officers filed charges. At press time, the pastor was still in jail. – BW

Kerala – Hindu extremists on Dec. 2 attacked a nun who is a college student in Ernakulam. The All India Christian Council reported that Sister Ann Matthews was attacked by a group of men inside Ernakulam South Railway Station and had to be treated for her injuries at Medical Trust Hospital. Matthews said she was targeted because she was a nun. Police have registered a complaint, but no arrests had been made at press time. – MS

Karnataka – Police arrested a pastor on Dec. 2 after Hindu extremists beat him and accused him of forceful conversion in Udayanagar, near Bangalore. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that Hindu extremists stopped the pastor, identified only as Johnson, as he was returning home after a prayer meeting. They accused him of forcefully converting Hindus to Christianity, beat him and dragged him to Mahadevapura police. The assault continued in front of police. Later Pastor Johnson was arrested under Section 295 of the Indian Penal Code for damaging a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class. A judge sent the pastor to Bangalore Central Jail, but he was released on bail the next day. – MS

West Bengal – Radical Muslims in Natungram, Murshidabad have forbidden a woman who converted to Christianity from Islam to buy or sell if continues in her new faith, a source told Compass. The past few months the Muslims had ordered Chanda Babi and her family, who became Christians in February, not to attend church services and told them not associate with any neighbors. As Babi and her family continued to follow Christ, the Muslim radicals on Nov. 28 ordered villagers not to buy from her family's milk business, and they ordered shopkeepers not to sell to her, the source said. They further warned that they would impose a large fine if her family continues to believe in Christ. – MS

Uttarakhand – Police on Nov. 9 detained three Christians from the Indian Pentecostal Assemblies on false charges of forceful conversion in Ravli Mehdud, Haridwar. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that police officers stormed into the prayer meeting and took Pastor Manoj Kumar and two church members into custody. Officers verbally abused the Christians, uttered derogatory remarks against Jesus Christ and the Christian community and threatened to harm Pastor Kumar. The Christians were released without charges after the intervention of area Christian leaders. – MS

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## **Systematic attacks against Christians in Karnataka**

Nirmala Carvalho

AsiaNews (07.12.2010) / HRWF (08.12.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – More attacks against Christians in Karnataka. On December 5 groups of Hindu extremists have made four different attacks against Protestant Christians.

The first took place against the Gipsy Prayer Hall in Bangalore in the Kenger Upanagara slum. Here, the extremists attacked a church while during Sunday service, terrorizing and threatening about 50 participants. The district of Shimoga was the scene of two other incidents. The Hindu extremists beat up and dragged four Christians out of their churches, and then had them arrested by police on false charges of proselytism.

The fourth incident targeted the Christians of the Pentecostal Church of Jyothinagar (Bangalore). A group of 40 extremists surrounded the building during services, throwing stones and shouting anti-Christian slogans.

Sajan George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, said: "The four attacks on the same day in Karnataka is reflective of the insecurity of the vulnerable

minority Christian community and more importantly this is an indication of the climate of fear, of persecution and harassment and terror in which Christians must practice their faith in this Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-governed state". "The Bajrang Dal activists continue to attack, beat and threaten the Christians. This is a real challenge to our secular democracy. The situation could become worse if the authorities do not intervene."

"The allegations of proselytizing of the Sangh Parivar [Hindu extremists] against Christians are baseless and false". "The law of Karnataka on freedom of religion aims to avoid forced conversions, but it is often manipulated and used to criminalize conversions in general and is used by Hindu extremists with the complicity of local police to attack Christians."

"The sad thing - says Sajan - is that such laws were passed not only in BJP led states, but also in states led by the Congress Party [PC]. For example, the Himachal Anti-Conversion Law was approved during the government of PC. "

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## **Recent Incidents of Persecution**

By Mahruaii Sailo and Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct (30.11.2010) / HRWF (01.12.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Hindu extremists on Nov. 14 beat a Christian in Moti Nagar, Ludhiana, threatening to harm him and his family if they attended Sunday worship. A source told Compass that a Hindu identified only as Munna had argued with a Christian identified only as Bindeshwar, insulting him for being a Christian, and beat him on Nov. 7. Munna then returned with a mob of about 50 Hindu extremists on Nov. 14. Armed with clubs and swords, they dragged Bindeshwar out of his house and severely beat him, claiming that Christians had offered money to Munna to convert. Local Christian leaders reported the matter to the police at Focal Point police station. Officers arrested three Hindu extremists, but under pressure from local Bharatiya Janata Party leaders released them without registering a First Information Report. Police brokered an agreement between the parties on Nov. 18 and vowed they would not allow further attacks on Christians. - MS

Tripura - Hindu extremists attacked a prayer conference on Nov. 6 in Burburi, threatening Christians if they opened their mouths. A local evangelist known only as Hmunsiamliana told Compass that area Christian leaders organized a prayer conference on Nov. 5-7, but extremists ordered the participants not to open their mouth or make any sound. Christian leaders reported the threat to police, and the participants proceeded to pray aloud. On the nights of Nov. 6 and 7, a huge mob of Hindu extremists pelted the Christians with stones, but the participants continued praying. The meeting ended on the evening of Nov. 7 under police protection. - MS

Chhattisgarh - Hindu extremists from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP or World Hindu Council) disrupted a Christian youth gathering in Raipur on Nov. 6 and accused organizers of forcible conversion. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that Vision India had organized the Central India Youth Festival with about 900 in attendance when the extremists stormed in at about 4:30 p.m. and began questioning leaders. The Christian and VHP leaders then held a meeting in the presence of police, with the Christian leaders explaining that it was a normal youth meeting with no forceful conversion taking place. Nevertheless, officers and VHP leaders proceeded to observe the gathering and proceedings, and the Christians were made to submit a list of participants. In this tense atmosphere, the meeting concluded at 10 p.m. under heavy police protection. - MS

Madhya Pradesh – On Oct. 31 in Neemuch, Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal barged into a worship meeting shouting Hindu slogans and accused those present of forceful conversion. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that about 40 extremists rushed into the church building at about 10 a.m. shouting “Jai Shri Ram [Hail Lord Ram].” The Rev. K. Abraham, who was leading the service, pleaded with them to come back later, but the invaders remained and continued shouting. After the service ended, the extremists rushed Abraham and accused the church of paying money to people to convert, as published in newspaper Pupils Samachar. The Christians said the newspaper published the false news because Abraham, principal of United Alpha English School, refused to advertise in it, according to EFI. The extremists grabbed a woman in the congregation who had a bindi (dot) on her forehead, claimed that she had been lured to Christianity and asked her why she was attending the service, according to EFI. “Where were you people when I was demon-possessed?” the woman replied, according to EFI. “You didn’t come to help me, but when I came to the church in God’s presence, these people prayed for me and helped me to get deliverance.” – MS

Karnataka – Police on Oct. 29 detained Christians after Hindu extremists registered a false complaint of forced conversion in Kalamnagar village, Uttara Kannada. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at around 8:15 p.m. police accompanied extremists belonging to the Bajrang Dal, who along with members of the media stormed the Blessing Youth Mission Church during a worship service for senior citizens. They dragged out Ayesha Nareth, Hanumanta Unikal, Viru Basha Doddamani, Narayana Unikkal and Pastor Subash Deshrath Nalude, forced them into a police jeep and took them to the Yellapur police station. After interrogation for nearly six hours, the Christians were released without being charged. – BW

Orissa – Hindu extremists refused to allow the burial of a 3-year-old Dalit Christian who died in Jinduguda, Malkangiri. The All India Christian Council (AICC) reported that the daughter of unidentified Christian tribal people fell ill and was taken to a nearby health center on Oct. 27. The doctor advised the parents to take the child to a nearby hospital, and the girl developed complications and died there. When the parents brought the body of the girl back to their village, according to AICC, Hindus refused to allow them to bury her with a Christian ritual. There are only 15 Christian families in the predominantly Hindu village. With the intervention of local Christian leaders, police allowed the burial of the body in a Christian cemetery. – MS

Karnataka – On Oct. 6 in Beridigere, Davanagere, a Christian family that converted from Hinduism was assaulted because of their faith in Christ. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the attack appeared to have been orchestrated to appear as if the family provoked it. An elderly woman, Gauri Bai, went to the house of the Christian family and picked a quarrel with them. Bai started shouting and screaming for help, and suddenly about 20 Hindu extremists stormed in and began beating the Christians. They dragged Ramesh Naik out to the street, tied him to a pole, beat him and poured liquor into his mouth and onto his body. His sister, Laititha Naik, managed to escape and called her mother. Later that day, at about 8:30 p.m., the extremists pelted their house with stones, and then about 70 people broke in and began striking them with sickles, stones and clubs. Two brothers, Ramesh Naik and Santhosh Naik, managed to escape with their mother in the darkness, but the Hindu extremists took hold of their sister Lalitha and younger brother Suresh and beat them; they began bleeding and lost consciousness. The attackers continued to vandalize the house, damaging the roof and three doors with large boulders. The unconscious victims received treatment for head injuries and numerous cuts at a government hospital. Police from the Haluvagalu police station arrested 15 persons in connection with the assault. – MS

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## **Orissa: nun raped in pogroms identifies chief assailant**

by Santosh Digal

AsiaNews.it (03.11.2010) / HRWF (05.11.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – Santosh Patnaik considered the main author of rape will go on trial today, but has already figured among the main suspects accused in the court of Cuttack. To date, Sr. Meena has recognized five of the 10 extremists who raped her and beat her during the anti-Christian pogrom of 2008 in Kandhamal.

Cuttack (AsiaNews) – Despite obstacles, the trial against the Hindu extremist perpetrators of the anti-Christian pogrom that erupted in the district of Kandhamal (Orissa) in the summer of 2008 is pushing ahead. This morning, Sister Meena, the nun beaten and raped during the violence, recognized another of her 10 assailants. The man, Santosh Patnaik, has been defined by the religious sister as the main author of the rape. The identification was made just hours before the sixth session of the trial against the authors of the violence in the District Court in Cuttack. To date, Sr. Meena has recognized 5 of her 10 rapists.

Fr. Dibakar Parichha, head of legal assistance to victims of the pogrom, told AsiaNews that "more than two years after the rape, the case is now finally moving in a specific direction, as the rapist identified by Sister Meena is one of the accused by the court . We hope that the religious sister can get justice".

Sr. Meena Barwa, of the Servite religious order, worked at the Divyajyoti pastoral centre in K Nuagaon, in the district of Kandhamal, together with Fr. Thomas Chellan. The sister was born in the district of Sambalpur, and took her final vows last April. Last August 25, together with the priest who worked at the center, she was seized, beaten, stripped naked, and paraded around the village. At one point, the fundamentalists wanted to burn her alive together with the priest. Instead, they raped her. Only much later, at night, after the beating and mistreatment continued, were the two freed by the police.(See: AsiaNews.it, 25/10/2008 I, Sr. Meena, raped by Hindus while police stood watching) .

In 2009, the case of Sr. Menna was moved for safety reasons from the district court in Kandhamal to Cuttack. To date, the climate of intolerance in Kandhamal does not allow the regular course of investigations and several witnesses have been threatened with violence outside the courts. Yesterday, the Special Court indicted 12 people in the district, but has proved 46 innocent because of alleged lack of evidence, sparking protests from victims.

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## **Recent incidents of persecution**

By Mahruaii Sailo and Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct (29.10.2010) / HRWF (30.10.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – Police arrested Pastor Muthyalan Paul on Oct. 26 in Nelamangala, Bangalore, after Muslim radicals barged into a prayer meeting, accused him of forceful conversion, tore Bibles and damaged household items. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that police, alerted by the Muslim extremists, charged the pastor with "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious feelings of others." A judge sent the pastor to Nelamangala Sub-Jail, but with area Christian leaders' intervention he was released on bail the next morning. – MS

Karnataka – Hindu nationalists on Oct. 20 burned down a house church in Bellakatte village, near Chitradurga. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that Pastor

Mallappa Hanumanthappa Andrew of Samadhana Prayer House and his brother were walking on a village road when six area extremists waylaid them and began slapping the pastor, falsely accusing him of forcible conversion. They also slapped and shoved his brother when he tried to come to Andrew's aid. Cursing, the extremists then burned down the house used for worship. Baramasagara police arrested four extremists identified only as Manjunath, Parashuram, Ramanna and Devaraj, charged them with unlawful assembly and released them after two hours. – BW

Madhya Pradesh – Threatening to file a police complaint, Hindu nationalists in Chattarpur on Oct. 19 accused Pastor Kunal Parichha of forcibly converting people and sending them to Bible college, a source said. The pastor and the nationalists met for talks the next day, only to have the extremists threaten to kill him if he continued to lead worship meetings. At press time area Christian leaders were taking steps to resolve the conflict. – MS

Karnataka – Police detained a pastor identified only as Surendra for more than three hours on Oct. 15 after Hindu nationalists disrupted the worship of Calvary Assemblies of God Church and beat him in Boothanhalli Kaval, near S. Bidra village, Chickmagalur district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at 7:30 p.m., as the pastor was leading worship in another Christian's house where 15 others had assembled, nearly 25 cursing extremists stormed in, chased them out and repeatedly slapped and punched Pastor Surendra. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that the extremists dragged the pastor outside, ripped his shirt off, took away his mobile phone, and telephoned police that "conversion activities" were taking place. Conversion and "conversion activities" are legal in India. Police arrived at 9 p.m., arrested the pastor and interrogated him. With GCIC intervention, Surendra was released at 12:30 a.m. without being charged. – BW

Orissa – Hard-line Hindus in Paikamara, Puri, Orissa district on Oct. 14 confined three recent converts to Christianity in a house, assaulted them and pressured them to deny their new faith. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that Aswini Sahu, Sanatana Jena and Amulya Swain became Christians six months ago after listening to Christian radio broadcasts. When the Hindu extremists learned of it, they threatened them and expelled them from the village after the Christians continued to worship Christ. The Christians took shelter in different homes, and then went back to their village after receiving word by telephone that tensions had cooled. As soon as they returned, however, the extremists caught hold of them, beat them and confined them. With GCIC and area Christian leaders' intervention, police rescued the Christians and warned the extremists not to disturb them again. – MS

Haryana – Hindu extremists on Sept. 30 attacked a church's Christian school in Ghaziabad. A source said that the extremists showed up in a truck armed with guns and other implements of destruction at the Ingram Institute and broke a wall. Trying to occupy the church property, they started building a wall around a student hostel and other properties near the school and verbally abused director Hepesh Shepherd, staff members and students. Christians immediately filed a complaint, and police detained two extremists. They were later released without charges. – MS

Chhattisgarh – Hindu extremists assaulted Pastor Suresh Deep of The Church of God on Sept. 28 in Rajnandgan. A source reported that the incident began the previous day when two church members, Shilembra Sahu and Raj Kumar, started quarrelling about whether Kumar was meeting standards for Christian living, and as villagers came to become involved in the conflict, Hindu extremists took Kumar's side. The extremists filed a complaint against Sahu, and police arrested him for joining an assembly likely to cause a disturbance. The next day, Pastor Deep went to submit a bail petition for Sahu, and some 20 extremists who had gathered at the court verbally abused him, beat him and dragged him to a Hindu temple. There they forced him to drink dirty water and to write that he would refrain from any conversion activity. The pastor sustained bruises all over



his body. Area Christian leaders intervened, and police registered a case against the attackers, but no arrests had been made at press time. Sahu was sent to Rajnandgan district jail but was released on bail on Sept 30. – MS

Kerala – Muslim extremists beat a Christian convert from Islam after they saw him worshipping Jesus on Sept. 22 in Vikas colony, Ambalavayal. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that a pastor identified only as Chacko had established a friendship with a Muslim man who was an alcoholic. After attending the church, the Muslim stopped drinking alcohol, led a changed life and decided to follow Jesus Christ. Enraged by the change in him, the extremists seriously injured the convert. They also damaged Pastor Chacko's pipeline, the source for water for about 10 Christian families, and pelted the pastor's home with stones, damaging the house. GCIC reported that the extremists continued to threaten the pastor by telephone daily. – MS

Madhya Pradesh – Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Sept. 16 attacked a building belonging to the Believers Church in Jabalpur, bringing it to the ground. Believers Church representative Sushant Sona reported that the RSS members arrived in a huge vehicle designed to demolish buildings and destroyed the facility, claiming that they would not allow any church to exist in the area. The Rev. Samkutty Issac and other Christian leaders pleaded with the government officials to take action against the culprits. – MS

Karnataka – Hindu extremists attacked a church building under construction at Byappanahalli village on Sept. 12 near Bengaluru, accusing area Christians of large-scale, forcible conversion. The extremists broke into the church building and tried to pull it down, reported the All India Christian Council. Police arrived in time to stop them, but the extremists filed a complaint against Pastor John Babu and other Christians for alleged forcible conversion. Under the extremists' pressure, the police later issued a notice to the church to stop construction and issued arrest warrants against the pastor and seven others. To avoid further harassment, the Christians applied for anticipatory bails. They also filed petitions seeking court intervention to stop the extremists from further assaults. At press time the church building remained abandoned and unguarded. – MS

Karnataka – A mob of about 100 Hindu extremists on Sept. 5 barged into the house church worship of a congregation of the Indian Pentecostal Church and beat a pastor in Doni, Gadag. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the extremists ripped Bibles, tore the clothes of Pastor Mallikarjuna Sangalad, dragged him out of the house and beat him. Police arrived and arrested Pastor Sangalad, where they ordered him to stop leading worship meetings, according to the GCIC. Christian leaders intervened, and police released the pastor without charges. – MS

Karnataka – Ramnagar police Sub-Inspector Babu Madhar on Sept. 3 forcefully entered a Calvary Fellowship Prayer house church meeting led by Pastor P.R. Jose and ordered him to immediately stop the service. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that police accused the Christians of forceful conversion and ordered them to close down the house church. After area Christian leaders' intervention, according to the GCIC, the Christians were given police protection for worship. – MS

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## **Recent incidents of persecution**

By Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct (13.10.2010) / HRWF (14.10.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – Hindu extremists belonging to the Bajrang Dal on Oct. 3 stormed into a Christian worship service, beat those attending and confiscated Bibles in Emarakuntte village, Kolar district.

The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that nearly 25 extremists barged into the house of a Christian identified only as Manjunath, where Pastor Daniel Shankar was leading Sunday worship. Verbally abusing those present and falsely accusing them of forcible conversion, the extremists dragged them out and photographed them. Pastor Shankar managed to escape. Police arrived – after the extremists called them – and confiscated the Bibles and a vehicle belonging to the pastor. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that Shankar, accompanied by area pastors, went to the police station the next day, and officers made him give a written statement that he would stop Christian activities in the village. Only then were the Bibles and vehicle returned. No worship was held on Sunday (Oct. 10).

Karnataka – Police on Sept. 5 detained a pastor after Hindu nationalist extremists registered a false complaint of forcible conversion in Doni village, Gadag district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at 8:30 p.m. nearly 100 extremists belonging to the Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh stormed the worship of an Indian Pentecostal Church at the home of a Christian identified only as Nagaraj. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that the extremists repeatedly slapped Pastor Mallikarjuna Sangalad, dragged him outside and tore his shirt. They also tore up a few Bibles of those in the congregation. The extremists called Mundargi police, who arrived at the spot and took Pastor Sangalad to the police station as the slogan-shouting extremists followed. Police questioned the pastor for over two hours and warned him against leading services. With GCIC intervention Sangalad was released at around 11 p.m. without being charged, but he was forced to sign a statement that he would not conduct services at Nagaraj's home.

Karnataka – Police on Sept. 3 stopped worship and falsely accused a pastor of forcible conversion, threatening to jail Christians if they continued religious activities in Ganeshgudi village. A Global Council of Indian Christians coordinator told Compass that Ramnagar police Sub-Inspector Babu Madhar, acting on an anonymous accusation of forcible conversion, disrupted worship and threatened Calvary Fellowship Prayer Centre Pastor P.R. Jose as nearly 40 congregants of the house church looked on. The sub-inspector warned the Christians against worshipping there and told Pastor Jose to shut down the church or be arrested. On Sept. 4, however, Madhar returned to the house and informed Pastor Jose that they could continue worship services.

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## **Christian in India suffers miscarriage in Hindu extremist attack**

***Four pastors also injured in Karnataka, hub of anti-Christian persecution***

By Vishal Arora

Compass Direct (13.10.2010) / HRWF (14.10.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – Police in a south Indian state known for turning hostile to minority Christians in recent years have arrested two suspected Hindu nationalists for beating four pastors and striking the wife of one of them in the stomach, killing her unborn child.

The attack took place at a Christian gathering in a private Christian school to celebrate the birth of Mahatma Gandhi on Oct. 2 in Chintamani, in Karnataka state's Kolar district, reported the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC).

About 40 people barged into New Public School during the concluding prayer that morning and began selectively beating the pastors and Kejiya Fernandes, wife of one identified only as Pastor Fernandes. Chintamani police arrived but the attack went on,

and when it ended at noon officers took the Christians to the station instead of arresting the attackers.

Denied medical attention, the injured Christians were released at 7:30 p.m. only after Kejiya Fernandes began to bleed profusely, GCIC reported. She and her husband later received hospital treatment, where she lost the baby she had been carrying for four months, according to GCIC.

Pastor Fernandes received an injury to his ear. The three other victims, identified only as pastors Robert, Muthu and Kenny, all ministered in a local independent church.

Of the 12 suspects named in the police complaint, two were arrested the same day, and the rest are absconding, said attorney Jeeva Prakash, who is associated with the Evangelical Fellowship of India's (EFI) advocacy department.

The police complaint against the 12 includes "causing death of quick unborn child by act amounting to culpable homicide" (Section 316 of the Indian Penal Code), and "intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace" (Section 504). No charges related to defiling a religious place or gathering or creating communal conflict were included.

All the accused are residents of Chintamani city and suspected to be associated with Hindu nationalist groups.

The attack was reportedly carried out to avenge an alleged insult to Hindu gods during the Christian gathering, with the accused also having filed a police complaint, added Prakash, who visited the area and the Christian victims this week.

The complaint against the Christians was for "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings or any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs" (Section 295-a), and, strangely, Section 324 for "voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means," among other charges.

The Christians were not arrested, as a court granted them anticipatory bail.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, whose birthday the Christians were celebrating, was friends with Christian missionaries during British rule and taught religious tolerance. The acclaimed Hindu, India's greatest political and spiritual leader, was killed in 1948 by Nathuram Godse, who was allegedly influenced by the ideology of the Hindu extremist conglomerate Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

For the last three years, Karnataka has been seen as the hub of Christian persecution in India. Of the more than 152 attacks on Christians in 2009, 86 were reported in Karnataka, according to the EFI.

This year, too, Karnataka is likely to top anti-Christian attacks. According to the GCIC, at least 47 attacks on Christians in the state had been reported as of Sept. 26. Persecution of Christians in Karnataka increased particularly after the August 2008 anti-Christian mayhem in eastern Orissa state, where Maoists killed a Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader but Hindu extremists wrongly blamed it on local Christians.

The attacks in Orissa's Kandhamal district killed more than 100 people and burned 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions.

While Hindu nationalists had targeted and were working in Karnataka for close to two decades, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to sole power in the state for the first time in the history of independent India in May 2008. Prior to that, the BJP ruled in coalition with a local party, the Janata Dal-Secular, for 20 months.

It is believed that the victory of the BJP – and later the violence in Orissa, which was also ruled by a coalition that included the BJP – emboldened Hindu extremists, who now enjoy greater impunity due to the party's incumbency.

Despite the high incidence of persecution of minorities in Karnataka, BJP leaders deny it, alleging complaint are the result of a political conspiracy of opposition parties.

There are a little more than 1 million Christians in Karnataka, where the total population is more than 52 million, mostly Hindus.

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## **India under threat from Islamic extremism**

Nirmala Carvalho

AsiaNews (07.10.2010) / HRWF (07.10.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> – In the Indian state of Kerala, and more generally in the Indian Union, “fundamentalism is rising sharply and it concerns every religion. As a consequence, the various faith groups tend to turn inward, become more closed, lacking in openness to others,” said Fr Paul Thelakat, spokesman for the Syro-Malabar Church. “The attack on Prof T J Jose is an example of extreme Islamic fundamentalism,” but “there is also the plague of Hinduvta fundamentalism along with Christian (Pentecostal) fundamentalism,” he told AsiaNews. The case Fr Thelakat referred to is that of Prof T J Joseph, the former head of the Malayalam Language Department at Newman College, guilty in the eyes of some Muslims of including in an exam back in March some questions they deemed offensive to the Prophet Muhammad.

The scholar explained that it was not his intention to insult anyone and he publicly apologised for it to the population, the college administration, the Church (which runs the college) and the police department. However, this was not enough. On 4 July, unknown assailants from the Popular Front of India attacked him and chopped off his hand and part of his arm.

On 1 September, Newman College, the Catholic institution where he worked, fired him for hurting the religious feelings of the population, justifying the step with the need to protect the institution's secular nature.

On 12 September, a pastoral letter was read in all 120 parishes of Kothamangalam diocese (Ernakulam district). In it, the diocese joined the college that fired the educator in condemning the “irresponsible action of Prof T J Joseph”.

“Islamic extremism is growing in India,” said Syed Ali Mujtaba, an Indian journalist and founder of the South Asia Contact Group, as the case of Prof T J Jose clearly shows. “Those behind the dastardly act tried to communalise this issue,” he told AsiaNews.

For Sajan K George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, “the deafening silence of the authorities on the Islamic radicalisation of society, especially in Kerala and Kashmir, underlines the serious threat of Islamic fundamentalism to the secular fabric of India. Let us hope that one day all of this will just be a memory.”

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## **India less tense after court verdict on holy site**

Biswajeet Banerjee

AP (01.10.2010) / HRWF (01.10.2010) - <http://www.hrwf.net> - Schools, shops and businesses reopened Friday as fears of violence ebbed in northern India following a court order to divide a disputed holy site between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

Thousands of government forces remained in the streets and on high alert, but the decision Thursday offered at least a reprieve in a battle over the site that has sparked deadly rioting in the past.

With both Muslim and Hindu lawyers vowing to appeal to the Supreme Court, public reaction to the verdict was restrained.

"The law and situation throughout the country has been extremely peaceful," India's Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram said. "There have been no incidents reported to us."

As the day broke, hundreds of devotees prayed at a makeshift Hindu temple at the disputed site in the town of Ayodhya.

R.K.S. Rathore, the senior superintendent of police, told The Associated Press there were no confrontations between Hindus and Muslims in the region.

Streets had been mostly deserted as the ruling was delivered, but vehicles returned Friday, ferrying children to schools. Shops and businesses reopened in Ayodhya, Varanasi, Lucknow and other potentially explosive places with a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims.

The Allahabad High Court ruled Thursday that the 64-acre (25-hectare) site should be split, with the Muslim community getting control of one-third and two Hindu groups splitting the remainder.

Muslims revere the compound as the former site of the 16th century Babri Mosque, while Hindus say it is the birthplace of their god Rama and contend a temple to him stood on the site before the mosque.

Thursday's ruling said the Hindus could keep the area where the mosque once stood because the court determined it was the birthplace of Rama and archaeological evidence showed a temple had predated the mosque.

Over the years, the dispute triggered bloody communal violence and threatened India's foundation as a secular, multicultural democracy.

The muted reaction to the potentially explosive verdict generated hope the increasingly confident country, with its growing regional clout and skyrocketing economy, has moved beyond its divisive history.

The dispute over the religious site in the city of Ayodhya, 350 miles (550 kilometers) east of New Delhi, has been one of the country's most contentious issues.

In 1992, while the legal case lingered, tens of thousands of Hindu extremists ripped apart the mosque with spades, crowbars and their bare hands as security forces watched. A small tented shrine to Rama now stands on the site.

The demolition sparked nationwide riots that killed 2,000 people and shook the foundations of India's claim to be a multiethnic, secular democracy.

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## **The fruits of "Burn the Koran": Catholic school burnt and two Protestant schools targeted**

by Shefali Prabhu

AsiaNews (14.09.2010) / HRWF (14.09.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A Catholic school was burned last night and two other Protestant schools were attacked in the province of Jammu and Kashmir, following the "Burn the Koran" campaign launched by the Rev. Terry Jones in the U.S.. Yesterday morning a Protestant school and a church was burned.

The Bishop of Jammu-Srinagar, Mgr. Peter Celestine called for a return to peace in the region. "Religious leaders - he old AsiaNews - have a responsibility to bring peace, tolerance and coexistence."

Last night at 7.30, an angry mob set fire to the Good Shepherd School in Pulwama in response to the attempt to desecrate the Koran. Unlike yesterday morning with the Protestant school, this time the police intervened in force, reducing damage to the prestigious institution.

There are reports that Muslim groups have attempted to attack two Protestant schools, the Christ School and Christ Mohalla School in Pooch Jammu.

The situation is tense and curfew continues to be imposed the area. All movement is prohibited and it is risky to venture outside of homes during the day.

All flights to and from Srinagar are suspended for three days because of the unrest caused by the "Burn the Koran" campaign, which here however also takes on an anti-Indian and anti-American sentiment. Yesterday the clashes between police and thousands of demonstrators caused at least 17 dead and 80 wounded.

Bishop Peter Celestine expresses all his concern to AsiaNews: "I am deeply saddened by this mob incited violence, we are a micro minority community [0.0014% of the population], which is peaceful and tolerant. Additionally, we give good witness through our schools. And this school was targeted last night, yesterday the Christian Mission Society School, in Tangmarg was completely burnt down, and the resulting violence led to many deaths. Peace must be restored, we religious leaders have a responsibility to lead peace and tolerance and coexistence"

According to the prelate, the small Catholic community has always had "cordial relations with our Muslim brothers and with the authorities." To confirm this, yesterday the attack on the Protestant school was ordered by separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, placed under house arrest by Indian authorities. "I call on all Muslims - he said - to protect members of minorities and their religious sites. We must maintain at all costs the ancient brotherhood and harmony between communities, for which Kashmir is known throughout the world. "

It should however be remembered that over the years the struggle for the independence of Kashmir have been infiltrated by radical Muslim groups, giving the project a fundamentalist stamp and linking it to the struggles in Iran and the Middle East. Yesterday in the demonstrations anti-Indian slogans were chanted, but also anti-US and anti-Israel, a fact that, quite new in the political landscape of India.

The attempt to Islamize Kashmir, eliminating other minorities - Sikhs, Hindus and Christians - is growing.

The same Good Shepherd School, attacked last night, was the subject of violence in past years, since its founding in 1997. In 2003 it was twice attacked by Islamic fundamentalists in the same year, its founder, Fr Jim Borst, was struck with the charge of proselytism and threatened with expulsion. According to the fundamentalists, the priest convinced the school children to become Christians. In July, Fr. Brost, the only Mill Hill missionary who lives in the area since 1963, received a deportation order, even though four months earlier the central authorities had renewed his permit to stay until 2014.

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## **Christian assaulted in Orissa state**

### ***Extremists in Kandhamal vowed to kill a Christian around date of Hindu leader's death***

By Shireen Bhatia

Compass direct (09.09.2010) / HRWF (14.09.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Suspected Hindu nationalists in an area of Orissa state still tense from 2008 anti-Christian violence beat a Catholic father of seven until he fell unconscious on Aug. 20, the 47-year-old victim said.

Subhash Nayak told Compass that four unidentified men assaulted him as he made his way home to Laburi village from the hamlet of Kapingia in Kandhamal district. Hindu extremists in Kandhamal district killed more than 100 people in several weeks of attacks following the murder of Hindu extremist leader Swami Laxamananda Saraswati.

An 80-year-old monk who for decades spearheaded the anti-conversion movement in Orissa's tribal-dominated areas, Saraswati was shot dead on Aug. 23, 2008. Area church leaders such as Biswajit Pani of Khurda told Compass that villagers in Laburi have planned to attack at least one Christian around that date every year.

Nayak said the assailants left him for dead.

"I could not see their faces as it was very dark, and they tried to poke my eyes with their sticks," said Nayak, still in pain. "They stomped on my chest with their feet and hit me relentlessly till I fell unconscious. They left me thinking I was dead."

Nayak said that he was returning from work at a construction site in Kapingia when, about a kilometer from his home in Laburi, a stone hit him. Four men appeared and began beating him.

The stone struck him in the forehead between 7 and 8 in the evening as he was riding his bicycle, he said.

"As I fell on the road with sharp pain, figuring out who hit me, four people came and started to hit me with wooden sticks," Nayak said.

Asserting that no one had any personal enmity toward him, Nayak said that Hindu extremists in Kandhamal district have been telling people, "We destroyed and burned their houses and churches, which they have rebuilt, but now we will attack their lives, which they cannot rebuild."

Pani and another area Christian, retired school teacher Tarsish Nayak, said they also had heard Hindu nationalists spreading this message.

Nayak recalled that a year ago, while returning to his village at night around the anniversary of Saraswati's murder, he heard someone whispering, "Here he comes ... He is coming near," at which point he fled.

"There were people hiding, seeking to attack me," he said.

Saraswati, a leader of the Hindu extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), was assassinated by a Maoist group, but Christians were falsely blamed for it. The ensuing anti-Christian attacks killed more than 100 people and burned 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions. Violence also erupted in Kandhamal district during Christmas week of 2007, killing at least four Christians and burning 730 houses and 95 churches.

The area where Nayak lives and works was one of the worst-hit in the anti-Christian attacks that took place after Saraswati's assassination.

After regaining consciousness, Nayak strained to stand up and felt blood dripping down his cheeks, he said. His bicycle was lying at a distance, its front light broken.

Nayak said he was not sure how long he lay unconscious on the road, but it was 11 p.m. by the time he managed to walk home. He said it was only by God's grace that he "slowly, slowly reached home."

"I am dying,' were my words as I entered home and fell unconscious again," Nayak said.

His wife Mamta Nayak, two of his children, his parents and eight villagers carried the unconscious Nayak on a cot three kilometers before getting him into an auto-rickshaw and on to Raikia Government Hospital at 1 a.m.

A doctor was summoned from his home to attend to Nayak, who required stitches on the right side of his forehead. He sustained injuries to his right knee, face, an area near the ribs and chest, and he still has difficulty chewing food, Nayak said.

"I feel nausea and pain in my head as I move my jaw," he said.

Feeling weak from blood loss, Nayak received a saline solution intravenously for eight days in the hospital. He said he earns very little and had to sacrifice some of his valuables to pay the medical expenses. The doctor advised him to undergo a head scan, which he has eschewed as he cannot afford it, he said.

Pani told Compass that Nayak has refused to file any complaints with police out of fear of retaliation.

Nayak explained, "The police will not take any action, and we have seen in the past that I will be threatening my life by doing so."

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## **More than 4,000 Christians victims of abuses and forced conversions in Orissa**

Santosh Digal

Compass direct (03.09.2010) / HRWF (06.09.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Two years after anti-Christian pogroms broke out in the Indian state of Orissa, Hindus in some 20 villages in Kandhamal District continue to treat more than 4,000 Christians as social outcasts, pressuring them with force to convert. Beside fears, threats and total



banishment from the local economy, Christians are not allowed to use public fountains or collect wood in the forest.

"People are living in misery," said Mgr Raphael Cheenath, SVD, Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, at a press conference in Bhubaneswar last Monday. "They need to live a dignified life. The Orissa State government has an obligation to do something about it and protect Christians from this inhuman treatment," he added.

The prelate urged local authorities to compensate those who suffered losses during the pogroms and now find themselves homeless. He slammed the puny sums given out so far, US\$ 1,000 for destroyed homes and US\$ 400 for damaged homes.

"The Orissa State Government must raise compensation, from Rs. 5 lakhs (US\$ 1,000) to Rs. 20 lakhs (US\$ 4,000) to rebuild damaged Churches, religious and public institutions, NGOs, including the furniture and other fixtures that were destroyed with the buildings in the violence," Archbishop Cheenath said.

At the start, the government made an "arbitrary" assessment to determine victims' compensation, and did so without consulting them to find out their needs. Thus, "About 12,500 people have been resettled in their houses;" however, "About 17,500 people are still displaced and have a right to be resettled by the state government," the archbishop added.

Between December 2007 and August 2008, Hindu extremists killed 93 people, sacked and torched more than 6,500 homes, destroyed 350 churches and 45 schools. The pogroms displaced more than 50,000 people.

So far, most of the perpetrators of these crimes are free. Many witnesses scheduled to appear at trials taking place at the Kandhamal courthouse have been silenced through threats and acts of discrimination.

Between 22 and 24 August, victims, human rights activists and religious leaders organised a people's court in New Delhi to shed light on what happened and push India's central government to intervene.

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## **Recent incidents of persecution**

By Mahruaii Sailo and Binaifer Wadia

Compass direct (30.08.2010) / HRWF (01.09.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Police in Sivaho Dhamtari on Aug. 29 arrested three Christians after Hindu extremists filed a complaint against them of luring people to convert to Christianity by offering them money and "false hope." A source reported that the extremists had recently launched a series of attacks against Pastor Dilip Chakravarty, Ganga Ram and Shankar Lal of the Church of God, accusing them of forceful conversion and trying to force Ram and Lal to "reconvert" back to Hinduism. Ram and Lal sustained fractures on their hands and legs from the attacks. Area Christian leaders said no forceful conversion took place. The three Christians were charged with 295 (a) of the Indian Penal Code for "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion" and were sent to Dhamtari district jail the same day. - MS

Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal disrupted the worship meeting of Ebenezer Assembly of God Church and beat Pastor Ravi George and a church member identified only as Ramu on Aug. 29 in K.R. Nagar, Mysore. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that about 20 extremists broke into the worship meeting, snatched Bibles and a

mobile phone from Pastor George and started beating those present. The Christians received hospital treatment for serious head and hand injuries. Pastor George submitted a police complaint. – MS

Christians in Madalawada, Haliya face a social boycott and the Rev. Philip Rock of St. Sebastian Church was charged with “causing disharmony” after Christians refused to follow Hindu rituals. In an effort to stop the spread of cholera in the village, local Hindu leaders On Aug. 24 urged villagers to pray to a Hindu deity and told them not to work on two Tuesdays and three Fridays, reported the Global Council of Indian Christians. Rock advised the Christians not to observe the Hindu rituals, and they resumed their daily activities. The Hindu extremists boycotted the Christians’ businesses and grocery shops, kept students from attending Christian schools and refused to repair Christians’ farm equipment. A police investigation is underway. – MS

Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bajrang Dal attacked Pastor Isaac Laal on Aug. 22 in Bhavana, Dariyakala Pura, New Delhi as he was returning home from a Sunday church service. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that armed extremists stopped him and took him to Municipal Corporation hall where about 150 RSS members were meeting. The extremists accused Laal of forceful conversion and severely beat him, leaving the pastor with internal injuries. The investigating officer of Bawana police station told Compass that police are investigating but no First Information Report has been registered. – MS

Hindu nationalists on Aug. 20 beat a pastor after falsely accusing him of “allurement” in the conversion of villagers in Bhendwad, Belgaum district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that Pastor David Kalagade of Jeevan Jala Prayer Mandiram was conducting a prayer service at another Christian’s house when 40 area extremists barged into the house at about 8 p.m. and accused him of bribing villagers to convert. Pastor Kalagade told Compass that the extremists tore up Christian literature and dragged him to the village council. Police were summoned, but the extremists could not substantiate their claims that people were given 500 to 1,000 rupees (about US\$10 to US\$20) to embrace Christianity. Police called the pastor to the police station on Aug. 21 and, contrary to the religious freedom provisions in the Indian constitution, forced him to sign a statement that he would not convert people in the village. Police official Anil Kumar told Compass that police also took a written statement from the extremists pledging that they would not create disturbances for the Christians. GCIC sources told Compass that the extremists were closely monitoring the daily activities of Christians. – BW

Police on Aug. 20 deported five South Korean students on the basis of the complaint of “propagating Christianity” on Aug. 16 by Hindu extremists in Pune. Manifesting one’s faith is legal in India. The Indian Express reported the police as saying that the five Koreans were distributing pamphlets in Pimpri Chinchwad, which led to a quarrel with local Hindu extremists. Area Christians said the Koreans were leading Bible studies in Christian homes and were distributing pamphlets on health issues to those who wanted them. – MS

Police on Aug. 19 detained a pastor after Hindu nationalists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) beat him while he was showing a film in Mahalingapura, Bagalkot district. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that Pastor Hanok Mahadev Inachi of the New Apostolic Church and two Christian students identified only as Sarah and Gauri were showing a film, “Oceans of Mercy” to villagers when a mob of over 200 RSS extremists attacked. The Hindu extremists repeatedly struck the pastor on his back and took the film projector, a DVD player, generators, amplifier and a speaker box worth nearly 100,000 rupees (US\$2,135), which police later forced them to return. Pastor Inachi told Compass that the extremists pushed, shoved and struck his back as they forced him to the Mahalingapura police station. He was released the next morning

without charges but was forced to sign a statement pledging that he would not enter the village again; the two women were also given a warning. – BW

Police on Aug. 16 filed charges against a pastor under the state's "anti-conversion law" after local Hindu extremists disrupted his house church meeting in Nisarpur village, Dhar district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that as independent Pastor Balu Sasya and an assistant pastor identified only as Raju were leading nearly 30 Christians in prayer and worship, about 35 extremists stormed the church, shouting slogans and slapping Raju. Falsely accusing the pastors of forcibly converting villagers, the extremists forced Sasya and Raju to the Nisarpur police station and filed a false complaint against them, GCIC reported. A GCIC regional coordinator told Compass that both Sasya and Raju were in still in Badhawani jail at press time. – BW

Police arrested Pastor S. Martin Rajasekaran after Hindu extremists along with police disrupted a prayer meeting on Aug. 15 in Tanjore. Barging into the prayer meeting led by Pastor Rajasekaran, the extremists chased away the Christians, seized a church amplifier and loud speakers and locked the house, according to the All India Christian Council (AICC). The pastor had been threatened and driven away from his rented house six times by the extremists and insulted and manhandled many times, according to the AICC, but all his complaints to police were ignored. – MS

Two Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal, Ram Naresh Rai and Santosh Namdin, threatened a Christian convert on Aug. 15 in Dhanora, Lahknadon. Achelal Jhariya of Light of the World Church told Compass that the extremists filed a complaint against him of forceful conversion, claiming that he was constructing his house for conversion activities. Jhariya said the extremists went to the property site and told him to stop worshipping Jesus and warned him to stop construction or they would destroy all his belongings. The Christian said he was not building the house for any conversion activities, though such activities are legal in India, and reported the matter to police. Officers promised him security. – MS

Police arrested two Christians after Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal accused them of forceful conversion and disrupted their worship meeting on Aug. 15 in Mandya district. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the extremists led by Hanumant Raj, local president of the Bajrang Dal, forcefully entered the worship meeting in Shesha Gowda's home and started abusing the Christians. They filed a complaint against the Christians of forceful conversion in K.R. Pete police station. Police took 12 Christians to the station for questioning, releasing 10 without charges. Pastor Satish and Evangelist Ravi Pas, however, were arrested under Section 295 and 298 of the Indian Penal Code for "defiling a worship place with intent to insult religion of any class" and "uttering words with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of any person respectively." – MS

Police on Aug. 13 detained Christians after accompanying Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members to a church and standing by as the BJP extremists disrupted their worship in Birur, Chikmagalur district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the Indian Pentecostal Church pastor identified only as Dileep, along with 10 other Christians including three women and a young child, were taken to the Kadur police station and interrogated for over four hours. During the interrogation, BJP extremists surrounded them and shouted false accusations of forcible conversion and other abusive statements at the terrified Christians. With GCIC intervention, the Christians were released at 8:30 p.m. with a strict warning, contrary to the religious freedom provisions in the Indian constitution, to refrain from conversion activities in the area. – BW

Members of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Aug. 8 disrupted a Christian prayer meeting in Mailani, Lakhimpur-Kheri district, according to the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI). Nearly 25 BJP extremists accompanied by police gathered at 11

a.m. at Life Prayer Centre, where nearly 600 Christians had congregated for worship. The intolerant Hindus shouted slogans and demanded that Pastor Robert Samson come out, EFI reported. Police dispersed the Christians and took Pastor Samson in for questioning, releasing him later that afternoon without charges but allegedly threatening to shut down the church, according to EFI. Police also prohibited the congregation from gathering the following Sunday. Using a loudspeaker, the BJP nationalists continued making public accusations of forcible conversion by Pastor Samson throughout the day, EFI noted. – BW

Members of the extremist Hindu Jagaran Vedike, a wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Aug. 8 disrupted a prayer meeting and falsely accused Christians of “forceful conversion” in Kanakagiri, Koppal district. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that at about 7:30 p.m. nearly 60 extremists stormed into an Evangelical Church of India service led by Pastor John Harris in the home of a family interested in learning about Christianity that had been regularly attending the church for about a year. Ordering the Christians to go outside where broadcast media were waiting, the extremists verbally abused the Christians for their faith, told them to stop all worship meetings and falsely accused them of forcible conversion. The Hindu nationalists took the Christians to the police station and pressured officers to arrest them. Police forced the Christians to sign a statement that they would not conduct meetings in homes and threatened to file a case against them if they did. – BW, MS

Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on Aug. 7 attacked Singhasini Church and threatened Christians in Raxual. A source reported that the extremists pasted several pictures of Hanuman, a Hindu god, on the church’s wall and demanded that Christians leave the area. The extremists further threatened the Christians that they would hoist the Hanuman flag over the church building if they continued to worship Jesus. With area Christian leaders’ intervention, no further harm came to the church. – MS

Armed Hindu extremists on Aug. 1 attacked a church meeting and beat Christians including women and children, seriously injuring two people in Orlem, Malad. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that after a group of armed extremists barged into the Sunday worship meeting of the Church of North India’s St. Emmanuel Church, Ponkumar Nadar and Devashish Nagarwere sustained injuries that required treatment in a local hospital. The congregation was attacked with rods and other blunt weapons, according to the Catholic Secular Forum (CSF). Joseph Dias, secretary of CSF, told media that the Hindu extremists were drunk at the time of the attack. – MS

Muslim extremists on Aug. 1 destroyed a vegetable field belonging to a Christian in Natungram, Murshidabad. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported the field belonged to Gaffar Sheik, a member of Believer’s Community Worship Center. Earlier, Raffiqul Sheik had warned Gaffar Sheik that if he continued to worship Christ, his crops would be burned. The extent of the damage was estimated at about 20,000 rupees (US\$400). Police visited the site, and an investigation is underway. – MS

Police detained Christian students after accusing them of forceful conversion on July 24 in Luknow. The All India Christian Council (AICC) reported that four students from Compassion for India Ministry were visiting the slum area when the police team led by an officer identified only as Tripati called their pastor to the police station. The officer accused the pastor and his team of forceful conversion and forced the Christians to report about their work in detail. Police took money from the pastor before releasing the students, reported the AICC. The students maintained that they were just distributing food to the needy in the poor area and that there was no forceful conversion. – MS

A mob of about 50 Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal barged into a Christian meeting shouting, "Jai Shri Ram [Praise lord Ram]" on July 23 in Kanpur. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the extremists forcefully entered the two-day meeting organized by Pastor Samuel Sarkar of the Kanpur Pentecostal Church and stopped the service. Police came to the spot and took the two parties to the police station, where officers told the Christians to cancel their meeting, which was subsequently discontinued. – MS

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## **Hindu deputy sentenced over Orissa pogrom**

AsiaNews (30.06.2010) / HRWF (13.07.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> – The arrest and conviction of a deputy from Orissa over the anti-Christian riots in Kandhamal district is a positive sign which shows the public that criminals can not escape punishment. The law pursues them, even if it takes time to get them". This is the reaction of Mgr. Raphael Cheenath, archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, to yesterday's sentencing by a state court of Manoj Pradhan to seven years for having committed murder and acts of vandalism during the clashes.

The man is a leading member of the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP), the political party that promotes the "return to Hinduism in India" and carries out a vicious campaign of discrimination against religious minorities. Many analysts see the hand of the party behind the ethnic or religious clashes of the last decade. Among other things, he was elected deputy in District G Udaygiri, one of the most affected by the violence of the summer of 2008.

Speaking to AsiaNews, Mgr Cheenath notes that yesterdays' "was a long awaited judgment and it we are happy that the law has taken its course. it would have been preferred if Pradhan was given life term as a deterrent to others. It has restored the faith of the people in the judiciary, it shows that no one is above the law. It also serves as a warning to the criminals, that they cannot get away with anything and they cannot hold the country to ransom- the criminals will be strongly cautioned with this conviction, that the law will follow them and convict them. "

Regarding the situation in Kandhamal district, Mgr. Cheenath says: "There are signs that in Kandhamal the Church is getting stronger, the faith of the priests, religious and lay faithful is emerging stronger, importantly concern, support and communion is very present among about Kandhamal Christians. Within a few days, we will be finishing construction of 2,000 houses and handing them over to the people. While relief and rehabilitation work is going on in a slow manner, our education and trauma counselling and other activities are progressing well".

With regard to the pacification of the area, the bishop says: "we have two Religious Advocates, Fr Nicholas and Bro. Mark who are trained professionals, - both have been living in Kandhamal district and working full time to bring about peace and reconciliation and harmony. Both of them move around from village to village convoking meetings between the Hindus and the Christians. It is heartening to see, the attitude of the Hindus changing, there is clearly a change of heart in favour of the Christians, they would sincerely like to mend fences with the Christians, and many of them have expressed regret for the Anti Christian violence". (N.C.)

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## **Suspicious actions follow murder of pastor in Assam**

***Body destroyed before being identified; police try to link him with poachers***

By Shireen Bhatia

Compass Direct News (14.06.2010) / HRWF (15.06.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A pastor in Assam state was murdered and cremated without being identified last month before family members learned of his death when they saw a photo of his body in a newspaper.

The body of Son Englang, 35, was recovered alongside National Highway 37 on May 20, with marks indicating his hands had been tightly bound before he was shot. The pastor from Mallasi village, Karbi Anglong, supported by Gospel for Asia (GFA), had reportedly been kidnapped early in the morning of the previous day as he rode his bicycle to the Bokakhat marketplace to buy paint materials for his nearly completed church building.

The unknown kidnapers, suspected Hindu extremists, reportedly took him to the jungle to kill him.

Local police took his body to a hospital in Golaghat, where he was cremated without being identified after three days.

"The hospital along with the local police cremated Pastor Englang's 'unclaimed body,' as there is a provision in the hospital of holding a body for a maximum of three days," said the Rev. Juby John, Karbi Anglong diocesan secretary of GFA.

News of his death reached his family four days after he was killed when they saw a photo of his body published on May 22 in local newspapers reporting him as unidentified.

"With great difficulty, his photo could be recognized," said John. "It was a semi-decomposed body. Pastor Englang's brother with a few villagers identified him and then informed the pastor's wife."

John told Compass that Pastor Englang had evangelized in the Daithor area for 14 years, and "many, many people came to the Lord because of his extensive evangelism."

Anti-Christian elements in the area likely had taken note of Pastor Englang's fearless evangelism and the church building on the verge of completion, John said.

"Pastor Englang gave me a phone call just three days before he went missing," John said. "He was very happy and excited about the completion of the church building and said it was his dream come true."

Along with his wife, Pastor Englang is survived by a 6-month-old son and a 3-year-old daughter.

He had served with GFA since 1996, ministering in Karbi Anglong, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) from the site where his body was recovered.

Local media reported his death along with those of three poachers who had illegally entered Kaziranga National Park to hunt rhinoceros and were shot by park guards. The bodies of the three poachers were recovered from the park the same day that police found Pastor Englang dead on the highway.

Strangely, police reported Pastor Englang as a poacher accompanying the three who were killed inside the wildlife park. Investigations are underway regarding the suspicious claim, resulting in the arrest of a park guard and a local policeman.

**False report**

Questioned by media, police were unable to explain why Pastor Englang was included with the poachers given the large distance between his body and the three recovered inside the park. They were also unable to explain the marks of binding on Pastor Englang's hands.

"There was no weapon discovered on the pastor, whereas there were ammunitions recovered from the trespassers," John told local newspapers.

John emphasized that Pastor Englang worked day and night on the construction of his church building for the past five months.

"He had nothing to do with the poacher case," he said. "I spoke to the villagers and his close associates, who absolutely denied any kind of involvement of the pastor even in the past. The villagers emphasized the good character and blameless record of the pastor."

John said he went to visit Pastor Englang's family and the church building under construction on May 24.

"The laborers working on the church construction, who personally had nothing to do with Son Englang, wept as I spoke to them about the pastor," he said. "His death was sudden and untimely."

Hindu extremists have a presence in the state. Hemanta Das, a 29-year-old Christian worker whom Hindu extremists had warned to stop his ministry, succumbed to injuries in a hospital on July 1, 2007, two days after extremists beat him in the Chand Mari area of Guwahati. A convert to Christianity from Hinduism, Das previously had been a supporter of the Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

The All India Christian Council (AICC) later wrote to state officials requesting that those who killed Das be arrested and the Christian minority community protected from such attacks. AICC noted that Hindu extremist groups had warned Das of "dire consequences" if he continued preaching Christ.

At that time the Rev. Madhu Chandra, an AICC leader from northeast India, told Compass the presence of Hindu extremist groups in the state was very high.

"When I was working with a Christian organization in the state till a few years ago, many of our workers would be attacked by extremists," Rev. Chandra said.

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## **Recent incidents of persecution**

By Mahruaii Sailo and Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct News (01.06.2010) / HRWF (15.06.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Hindu nationalists on May 27 falsely accused a pastor of forcible conversion in Rajanpura village, Hassan district, after disrupting a worship service. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the intolerant Hindus also warned the Christians not to worship in the area. Manjunath Shastri led a mob of 20 area Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh extremists that barged into the rented home of Pastor Siddanagowda Barmanagowda as he led a house church service affiliated with the Karnataka Evangelical Association. The extremists forced the pastor to the Hiriseve police station, where they filed a complaint about the alleged forcible conversions and warned him against conducting worship services in the village, according to the GCIC. A GCIC coordinator told Compass that police told Pastor Barmanagowda to vacate his home and leave the area. - BW

Andhra Pradesh – Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh damaged a church building and installed an idol of the Hindu god Hanuman inside it on May 23 in Tadipatri, Anantapur. The All India Christian Council (AICC) reported that at about 9 a.m. the extremists from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) attacked India Pentecostal Church's Holy Spirit Prayer House, which was under construction. Pastor Venugopal Reddy approached Tadipatri police, but officers refused to help him. After local Christian leaders' intervention, police questioned the attackers. AICC reported that Pastor Reddy had acquired government permission to build the church building. – MS

Karnataka – Police on May 19 arrested Christians on a false complaint of forcible conversion in Mandya district. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that Pastor Shanth Kumar and Pastor Nagesh Kumar had jointly organized a three-day Vacation Bible School for 35 to 40 children near Netkal village when nearly 30 Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal stormed the premises and forced the pastors along with two teenage students to the Belakawadi police station. Police charged the pastors with "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting religion or religious beliefs," while the students were sent home without charges. The pastors are locked up Mandya Jail at press time. – BW

Karnataka – A mob of Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal attacked an evangelist and three women on May 18 in Hubli. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that at about 6:30 p.m. Edward Bellary and three women from Mayer Memorial Church were visiting a family at their invitation to pray for a woman who was ill when the extremists barged in, accused them of forceful conversion and of deceiving the family with false hopes, and beat Bellary. Later, Elish Mulur of the same church came to aid Bellary, but the Hindu extremists badly beat him, according to EFI. Mulur sustained injuries, and his left eardrum was damaged. The extremists dragged Bellary to a police station and pressured officers to arrest him. Police held him for about eight hours, and he was later released without charges. – MS

Chhattisgarh – On May 13 in Maroda, Bhilai, Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal and Dharam Sena (Religious Army) attacked a prayer meeting and accused Christians present of forceful conversion. A source told Compass that at 7:30 p.m., about 100 Hindu extremists shouting Hindu slogans gathered near the house of Dwarika Dewangaon, site of the prayer meeting. Accusing the Christians of forceful conversion, they locked the door from the outside and continued to shout anti-Christian slogans. Police came and took the homeowner, Dewangaon, to the police station for questioning. They detained him for about four hours and warned him not to conduct further Christian meetings in his home. With area Christian leaders' intervention, Dewangaon was released without charges, and the area superintendent of police informed the Christians that he would look into the matter. – MS

Andhra Pradesh – Hindu extremists on May 9 attacked a pastor who goes by the single name of Devasahayam, of Yehova Nissi Prardana Mandiram church, on May 9 in Nellore, sources said. A member of the Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) identified only as Babu barged into the worship service, verbally abused the pastor for his faith and manhandled him. The pastor stopped the meeting, and the assailant left the premises. Some 30 minutes later, the sources said, Babu died in his home of a heart attack. That afternoon, a furious crowd of RSS members gathered near the pastor's house and threatened to burn him and his home. The pastor took the matter to the police, but they refused to help, the sources said. The pastor has relocated as a safety measure. – MS

Uttar Pradesh – Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal attacked a church meeting, beat a pastor and threatened to kill his infant son on May 6 in Kanpur. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that about 40 Hindu extremists accused the Christians



of forceful conversion and verbally abused Pastor Dalayu Sonam before dragging him out to the street. They accused his wife of running a brothel inside the church building and threatened to kill his 1-year-old son. The attacks were carried out in the presence of media, reported EFI. – MS

Karnataka – Hindu nationalists on May 2 disrupted worship in K.R. Nagar, Mysore district, verbally abused the Christians present and filed a false complaint of forcible conversion against the pastor. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that at around 10:30 a.m. nearly 20 Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal stormed the rented home where the Indian Christian Revival Mission church met and drove away worshipers. The intolerant Hindus forced Pastor Elisha Gangadhar to the K.R. Nagar police station. Pastor Gangadhar told Compass that police officials questioned him for nearly three hours, and then released him without charges on the condition that he vacate his home and conduct no future prayer meetings in the area. No services were held the next two weeks. – BW

Madhya Pradesh – On May 2 about 60 Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal disrupted a house church service in Mandla, and then threatened to kill a pastor after filing a complaint against him of forceful conversion. A source told Compass that the extremists were shouting Hindu slogans when they barged into the worship meeting of Bethel Prartna Church at 11:15 a.m., having already filed a complaint of forceful conversion against Pastor Bhagchand Rujhiya at Banhani Banger police station. The extremists dragged the pastor out to the street and threatened to kill him if he continued to lead worship meetings there. Church members came forward to defend the pastor against the Hindu extremists, but police arrived and took him in for three hours of questioning. The intolerant Hindus gathered at the police station shouting that they would wipe out Christians from the area. Police forced the pastor to write a statement that he would conduct no future worship meetings, refrain from praying and visit no church members at their homes. Area Christian leaders submitted a memorandum to government officials to take action against the attackers. – MS

Karnataka – As if religious conversion or manifesting one's faith were illegal in India, Hunsur town police on May 1 arrested four Christians including a woman on charges of "attempted conversion," reported the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC). The Christians were part of a group led by preacher Robin Paul, of Rolls Park Church, who were distributing pamphlets and brochures related to Christianity, reported the Deccan Herald. GCIC reported that at around 11:30 a.m. some 30 members of the Hindu extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal stopped the Christians, accused them of "conversion activities" and called police, who arrived and took them into custody. After questioning, the Christians were charged with "hurting religious sentiments." Paul and two other Christians were sent to K.R. Nagar jail, while a female Christian, Soundary Sandaman, was sent to Mysore jail. With GCIC intervention, all four were released on bail on May 3. – BW

Andhra Pradesh – Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on April 29 attacked a gospel meeting, where they accused Christians of forceful conversion in Mahaboobnagar. The All India Christian Council reported that the extremists angrily barged into the meeting and manhandled the pastor who organized the event and a guest pastor. The Hindu extremists accused them of forceful conversion and damaged furniture and the sound system. Police arrived on the scene but only watched as the Hindu extremists ransacked the site. The following day, the extremists went to the home of the event organizer, identified only as Pastor Daniel, and beat him. They warned the badly bruised pastor not to conduct further Christian meetings. – MS

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## **Endless violence against Christian women of Kandhamal**

Santosh Digal

AsiaNews (17.05.2010) / HRWF (18.05.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Christian women were beaten, abducted, suffered sexual and verbal violence during the August 2008-2009 anti-Christian pogrom in Kandhamal district, Orissa. Now a group of researchers connected with the College of Social Work Nirmala Niketan in Mumbai have conducted research on the violence, the first step to finding a solution.

A team of 16 between 6 and 12 May interviewed a group of 300 women from several villages in Kandhamal, visiting the sites and their homes to gather information on their social situation and housing and families.

Sister Anita chat services, Daughters of the Heart of Mary, is a teacher at the Nirmala Niketan Center who participated in the research. She told AsiaNews that "women and girls of Kandhamal have suffered various forms of violence" such as cases of beatings, sexual violence, insults and threats, kidnapping, and have had to flee from their villages. According to information gathered, the Hindu extremist assailants belonged to different clans and tribes and came from different regions.

Sister Chata says that many women and their families are still traumatized by that time and are afraid to cultivate their land. Many women have reported a continuing state of anxiety, fear, tension, fear for their lives and those of their children at all times.

Sukumari Digal, 40, from Latingia village, mother of four children, now "only" suffers verbal violence and threats, along with other women of the village. But this has left a mark on her life and she says that together with other women, "we feel depressed. We do not feel for the land. Our cows have disappeared. "I can not concentrate on daily chores, I am always afraid. I fear to travel on a bus. I feel great anxiety when any member of my family is away from home and when the children are not with me. Now even when I go to meet people I know I feel ashamed and embarrassed talking with them. I feel anger toward those who should have protected me and did not do it. The situation is still tense and many people do not feel safe to return, because the refugee camps of the government are quite safe and the village is not ". Sukumari says that about 50 girls and women of her village have fled to other cities looking for work and fearful for their safety. She has made reports to local police, but they have made no inquiries and no one was arrested for the violence. They do have help and support from priests, nuns and social workers.

"Despite all this, I feel no anger towards the people who caused all this."

Sunila Bhise, also a member of the research group from Mumbai, confirms that Kandhamal women continue to suffer from the violence. In their villages, they lack medical facilities, social opportunities and work security. Those who went home are finding it difficult to resume life as before. Others have gone to different cities.

Father Ajay Kumar Singh of the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar believes that the study should provide a credible framework for Kandhamal women. The Church and other groups of civil aid, based on similar reports, want to develop strategies to help women and the entire population of the area.

The study of the Nirmala Niketan is a scientific report and will be submitted to the National Commission for Human Rights and other pro-rights groups by August.

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## **Recent incidents of persecution**

By Mahruaii Sailo and Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct (30.04.2010) / HRWF (01.05.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Police arrested Pastor Jaswant Singh after extremists from the Hindu Jagrang Manch (Hindu Awareness Platform) filed a complaint against him of forceful conversion on April 25 in Rooria, Haridwar. A source told Compass that the extremists disrupted the prayer meeting of a house church service the pastor was leading, insulted the Christians' faith and accused Pastor Singh of forcibly converting people. Police arrived and arrested Pastor Singh under Sections 107 and 10 of the Criminal Procedure Code for security and "keeping the peace," and he was sent to Roorkie district jail. The pastor was released on bail the next day. - MS

Karnataka - Police on April 19 detained Christians after local extremists filed a false complaint of forcible conversion against them in Hagare village in Hassan district. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that a Christian identified only as Venkatesh invited two Christians, Guru Gowraiah and Puttuswamy Bhadraiah, to a prayer meeting at Basavaraj Pura. At about 7 p.m. a group of local extremists led by Hindu nationalists identified only as Mohan and Thammaiah disrupted the meeting, verbally abused the 20 people present and falsely accused Gowraiah and Bhadraiah of forcible conversion. Halebeedu police arrived and arrested Gowraiah and Bhadraiah. A police inspector identified only as Ramachandran M. told Compass that they were questioned and released after the complaint against them proved false. - BW

Uttar Pradesh - Police arrested two Christians after Hindu extremists filed a complaint against them of making derogatory remarks against Hindu gods on April 15 in the Mohan area of Unnao. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that police arrested Budhi Ram and Vijay Phule of the Church of God as they were leading a prayer meeting. The two Christians were taken to Hassan Ganch police station and released on bail the next day. The Christians denied making any derogatory remarks against Hindu gods. - MS

Chhattisgarh - Police on April 15 arrested four Christians in Bhilai after Hindu nationalists filed a complaint against them of forcible conversion in Bhilai. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that a group of young members of the Brethren Assembly were distributing Christian literature when a mob of nearly 40 Hindu nationalists from the extremist Bajrang Dal and Dharam Sena attacked them. The Christians suffered cuts and bruises. Police arrived and took both parties to the police station. The All India Christian Council reported that on hearing the news of the attack, local Christian policeman G. Samuel went to help and was also hit with a false allegation of forceful conversion under Chhattisgarh's "anti-conversion" law. The Christians were released on bail on April 22. - BW

Karnataka - Hindu extremists on April 12 stopped a prayer meeting and accused Christians of forceful conversion in Chandapur, near Bangalore. The All India Christian Council reported that the intolerant Hindus beat the Christians, who sustained minor injuries. Police refused to file a complaint by the Christians. - MS

Kerala - Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal accused a Christian media team of forceful conversion and beat them on April 12 in Perambra, Calicut. The All India Christian Council reported that the extremists attacked the media team of the Assemblies of God church while they were screening films on Jesus and a documentary on cancer. After the film ended, the enraged extremists stoned the house of a pastor identified only as Ponnachen and accused him of forceful conversion. They further threatened to set the pastor and his vehicle on fire if he screens Christian films again. - MS

Karnataka - About 50 Hindu nationalists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh attacked a house meeting of an Indian Pentecostal Church on April 11 in Horahalli, Kanakapur, on the outskirts of Bangalore. The All India Christian Council reported that the Hindu extremists barged into the church's worship service and accused Pastor K.

Subhash of forceful conversion, threatened to beat him and warned him against leading any future house meeting services. Officers arrested Pastor Subhash, and he was released only after the station police inspector warned him not to conduct any future house church meetings while telling the extremists not to disturb the Christians. – MS

Karnataka – Hindu extremists accompanied by police roughed up 12 pastors and accused them of forceful conversion on April 5 in Karmoda, Kodagu. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the mob stormed into the Christians' meeting in the home of a Christian identified only as Vijay and took them to Ponnampet police station. After questioning, the Christians were charged with uttering words intending to hurt the religious feelings of others, defiling a place of worship, intent to insult the beliefs of others, intention to provoke a breach of peace and criminal intimidation and sent them to Virajpet jail. – MS

Chhattisgarh – Police arrested three Christians based on a complaint of forceful conversion by Hindu nationalists on April 4 in Durg. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that police arrested Pastor Premlal Chhatriys and two Christians identified only as Umabai and Sulanbai of the Evangelical Christian Church of India. The Hindu extremists had encouraged a Hindu woman, Agasia Bai, to file the complaint as she had attended the church twice last year seeking healing for her sick daughter. In February her daughter died, and the Hindu nationalists massed at Bai's house and forced her to write a police complaint against the Christians of forceful conversion, according to EFI. She submitted a complaint claiming that the Christians had offered her 5,000 rupees (US\$112) to convert and another 5,000 rupees after conversion, and that a pastor identified only as Chhatriys had forced her to eat beef on her two visits to the church in July of last year. With area leaders' intervention, the Christians were released on bail on April 6. – MS

Chhattisgarh – Hindu nationalists from the Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) disrupted Easter Sunday worship (April 4) of a Church of North India in Parsapani, Bilaspur, and accused pastor Bhaktu Lakda and others of forceful conversion. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reported that the extremists tore Christian pictures, seized Bibles and other gospel literature and beat the Christians. The Hindu extremists were accompanied by some local residents. Police arrived and made an inquiry. – MS

Uttarakhand – A mob of Hindu extremists accused Pastor Vinay Tanganiya of forceful conversion and beat him on March 30 in Barkote. The general secretary of the Christian Legal Association, Tehmina Arora, told Compass that the pastor, who also runs a school, fled to Barkote police station after the Hindu extremist mob beat him, but police refused to take his complaint and threatened to beat him further. The pastor was badly bruised. – MS

Kerala – Police on March 29 detained a pastor and an evangelist along with their family members, including a 4-month-old baby, on false charges of denigrating Hindu gods in Ambalavayal police station in Wayanand. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that the Hindu extremists, accompanied by police officials, stopped the Christians on their way back home after the screening of a gospel film in the Madakara area and started beating them. Pastor Eassow Varghese and Baiju P. George had obtained permission from the villagers to screen the film. The villagers testified that the allegations of the Hindu extremists were baseless. Police also seized the Christians' film projector and van. After four hours, the Christians and their family members were released without charges. – MS

Andhra Pradesh – Hindu extremists on March 25 disrupted a prayer meeting and beat Christians for their faith in Kadim, Alidabad. The All India Christian Council reported that the extremists, led by Anjane Yulu, stormed into the prayer meeting as church members

were singing. The extremists beat two pastors identified only as John and Prabudas of the Indian Evangelical Team, as well as other church members, and verbally abused them for their Christian activities. The Christians sought the help of the village head, but the intolerant Hindus continued to beat them even in his presence. Police refused to take the complaint of the Christians. – MS

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## **Christians attacked by Hindu extremists, arrested by police**

AsiaNews (29.04.2010) / HRWF (30.04.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - A gang of Hindu extremists affiliated with the Bajrang Dal attacked a group of Christian women and children who were coming from a peace festival. The incident occurred last night around 11.30 in a village in the State of Karnataka. During the attack, the Hindu extremists called in police who instead of stopping the attackers arrested the women and children. The latter were kept in jail overnight and released only this morning at 8.30. Christian activists slammed this latest example of anti-Christian discrimination and violence, which represents further evidence of the progressive "talibanisation" of India.

The incident began at 11.30 pm in the village of Kawdoor, not far from the city of Karkala (Udupi District), in Karnataka. A group of Christian women and children were going home after attending the three-day "Festival of Peace 2010" organised by the Bharatiya Christa Okoota, a Christian movement, at a high school in the city of Udupi. About 3,000 people took part in the event.

About 20 people affiliated with the Bajrang Dal, the youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a rightwing Hindu extremist political movement, took part in the punitive expedition led by three of the organisation's top leaders, Suresh Shetty, Suresh Poojari and Ganesh Shetty.

The young Hindus attacked 16 Christian women and children who were on their way home after a joyful day spent at the festival. They beat them with sticks, molested them under the cover of darkness and using abusive and vulgar language mocked the women as women and Christian. They also claimed that the State's home minister was their patron and that "no one can touch us".

Around half past midnight, the Hindu extremists called in the police. When the agents arrived at the scene, instead of arresting the attackers, they took into custody the Christian women and children.

Police Inspector Ramachandra Naik and his men diligently followed the instructions of the Hindu extremists and brought the women and children to Karkala Police Station, where their humiliation and abuse continued all night long, until their release in the morning at 8.30.

Sources close to the local Christian community said that the women and the children were in a state of shock as a result of their traumatic experience, which is the 19th such event endured by Karnataka Christians in recent months.

In a public statement, the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) has strongly condemned "the attack and molestation of women and children". The Council slammed the collusion between extremists and police, calling it an example of the progressive "talibanisation" of India. In their view, the country is increasingly becoming like Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"In both cases," the GCIC said, "religion has been politicised to infringe upon the rights of women and minorities." Even if "they were trying to protect our culture," what they did does not correspond to "our culture."

This morning, the CGIC filed charges against a number of Hindu extremists, five of whom were arrested for their acts of violence against Christians.

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## **Theology student dies in attack in Madhya Pradesh**

***Hindu extremists raid revival meeting in one area, while others attack gospel event in another***

By Shireen Bhatia

Compass Direct (27.04.2010) / HRWF (28.04.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Hindu extremists raided Christian events in India's Madhya Pradesh state this month, leaving a visiting theology student dead and several other Christians injured.

The body of 23-year-old Amit Gilbert was recovered from a water well 25 feet from the site of a Christian revival meeting that 15 to 20 Hindu extremists attacked on April 17 in Gram Fallaiya, Post Pathakheda, Betul district. With covered heads and carrying iron rods and bamboo clubs, members of the Hindu extremist Dharam Sena and Bajrang Dal cut electricity at the night-time event and began striking, sending the more than 400 in attendance running, Christian leaders said.

Eyewitnesses said the assailants chased Gilbert, of Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh state, and beat him mainly on his legs. Police in the state controlled by the Hindu extremist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said that for the moment they believe Gilbert accidentally fell into the well amid the chaos, but Christians present said that is unlikely.

His body was found with his head and legs submerged in the 1.5-meter deep water of the well, yet he had no water in his lungs or stomach when Christians drew him out, said Pastor Santwan Lal, organizer of the April 15-17 revival event, suggesting that Gilbert was dead before being thrown in.

"Amit was hit first and then picked up and thrown into the well," Pastor Lal said. "If he had fallen into the well, he would have had more bruises and at least a broken bone or two, since the well is rocky and narrow. But that was not the case."

Pastor Lal and others Compass spoke with said they believe the posture of the body leaves no doubt that Gilbert was murdered.

"He sustained an injury on the left side of his face near the ear," Pastor Lal added.

An autopsy was conducted, but authorities are not disclosing findings, Pastor Lal said. Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bajrang Dal are reportedly exerting intense pressure on local authorities.

Betul Assistant Sub-Inspector Santosh Jain told Compass that the results of the autopsy, conducted by a team of doctors, will not be released because they have now become politicized.

Police on April 19 arrested nine people in connection with the incident and charged them with rioting, violence and trespassing, but not murder. Officers also registered Gilbert's death under the Section 174 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which pertains to inquiry and report on an incident involving death of a person whether suicide or otherwise.

"We are trying hard, but this case does not seem to be moving forward," Jain said. "A report has been registered against 10 to 12 [initially] unidentified people, and we have so far arrested nine. All have accepted their involvement in the crime, and all belong to the Bajrang Dal. Not one of them is a local from Betul. Their bails have been rejected at the lower court."

Arrested were Rakesh Dhurwe, Neeraj Rajput, Radheshyam Sahu, Sonu Rajput, Raju Kahar, Rajesh Oriya, Raju Deshmukh, Arun Thackrey, and Hemrath Bahalavi, he said.

Though police have initially determined that Gilbert fell into the well, they say they are open to the possibility that he was thrown into it.

Pastor Lal added that two women were also injured in the melee.

"As a result of the violence, two ladies attending the meeting were hit, and one of them was admitted in a local hospital for three days," he said.

Christian leaders said Betul has increasingly witnessed such attacks since the BJP came to power in the state in 2004, with various incidents of Christians being beaten, arrested and intimidated.

The April 17 attack was sudden and without provocation or warning, Pastor Lal said. Soon after the assailants left, the Christians gathered to determine if anyone were missing. An unnamed girl and a nephew of the pastor were missing but later found, and that night Gilbert's body was found when a Christian shined a flashlight into the well.

Gilbert was visiting as a volunteer to another pastor after having finished his Masters in Divinity degree from Central India Bible College, Itarsi, Madhya Pradesh, in March. He had reportedly insisted on staying to help Pastor Abhishek John in Sallaiya village in order to gain ministry experience.

Sources said April 17 was to have been Gilbert's last day of volunteer service, as he was planning to return home to Uttar Pradesh the next day.

### **Rampage in Balaghat**

In Balaghat on April 14 and 15, Hindu extremists attacked a three-day gospel meeting with fuel-bombs in spite of the presence of police summoned beforehand to provide security.

Prior to the event attended by 10,000 people in Balaghat's Mulna stadium, local newspapers carried open threats issued by the Bajrang Dal and BJP workers against the Christian community. On April 14 Bajrang Dal members threw two fuel-bombs into the stadium that did not explode.

"They had hurled petrol bombs even in the presence of the police," Saurabh Panduria, a local Christian doctor, told Compass. "Thankfully it did not explode, or anything could have happened as there were many women, children and sick people in the crowd."

The next day Bajrang Dal and the BJP workers attacked the event as well as the quarters where people who had come from outside Balaghat to attend the meetings were staying, including Kamla Nehru hall.

Police increased security for the April 15 meeting, but as it was drawing to a close about 150 BJP and Bajrang Dal members surrounded the stadium. Some of them tried to storm

in, but police repelled them. Hindu extremists responded by pelting them with stones and throwing fuel bombs at police vehicles. They also attempted to destroy stadium property. Bajrang Dal workers Golu Thakre and Manu Yadav were among those who harassed participants at an afternoon meeting on April 15, said Dr. Amos Singh of Jeevan Jyoti Ministries in Balaghat.

"Darbari and Ganesh from Barai village in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, and Sunil Jagne from Gondia, Maharashtra, were severely beaten by the Bajrang Dal people, and they were interrogated like they were criminals," Singh said. "The police arrived later."

At 5 p.m. extremists caught hold of some Christians and forced them to the BJP local office in Balaghat, where BJP and Bajrang Dal members assaulted at least three of them. Police arrested nearly 23 Bajrang Dal members, including eight leaders. This prompted BJP Member of Parliament K.D. Deshmukh and Member of Legislative Assembly Ramesh Bhatere to lead a mob that surrounded the police station and protested throughout the night, loudly shouting slogans against the administration and the Christian community.

About 1,000 to 1,500 BJP and Bajrang Dal supporters fanned throughout Balaghat, bunching particularly around a bus stand and railway station and damaging at least three vehicles, including ones belonging to a senior police officer and an ex-Member of Parliament, Ashok Singh Saraswat. The mob attempted to set fire to buses from Maharashtra state transport corporation.

Since most of those attending the meeting were outsiders, the Bajrang Dal members descended on the railway station and bus stand and harassed passengers and broke property, damaging both buses and railway coaches, Singh said. If the extremists found a Bible in the luggage of people at the railway station and bus stand, they attacked them, he said.

"Christians who were returning from the meeting and attempting to get away from Balaghat as soon as possible were attacked and beaten with sticks and pelted with stones," Singh said. "Women workers of the BJP attacked Christian women staying in Sindhi Dharamshala [hall], and some Christians who had come from Gondia and other places from nearby Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh had to flee for their lives, leaving behind their luggage in the Kamla Nehru hall and other places where they were put up."

Pastor Kamlesh Nagpure said that he and his family were stuck in the stadium, unable to go to their home outside the city limits of Balaghat.

"People were driven to safety in tractors and private cars following the ruckus, and they were attacked even till early morning, 4 a.m.," he said. "The attackers used large sticks to rough people up and indulged in brick throwing, which also damaged some vehicles. Some of us who could not get a safe ride outside town limits were forced to stay inside the stadium the whole night. Most of the crowd was composed of women and children."

Christian leaders reportedly said the mob also damaged a Catholic church in Balaghat and attempted to attack other church buildings and houses belonging to Christian leaders. They threw fuel-bombs at the house of the Rev. Arvind Deep, where several participants had taken refuge that night.

At last the administration was forced to impose a curfew until April 17, even as the BJP declared a total shutdown of market and other activities on April 16 and 17 as part of their protest.

"Targeting participants of the meeting and beating and intimidating them continued till 10 a.m. on April 16," Singh told Compass. "Many Christians have fled Balaghat out of fear and have gone to live with their relatives."



Eight people who were arrested on April 15 were reportedly released the next morning.

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## **New acquittals for people who attacked Christians in Orissa**

by Nirmala Carvalho

AsiaNews (21.04.2010) / HRWF (26.04.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Fr Edward Sequeira, a Verbite priest who saw anti-Christian violence firsthand and was almost burnt to death during the 2008 pogrom, tells AsiaNews that a big organisation is working against Christians. He is certain that the Church will return to the areas where its institutions have been laid waste. The archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar says the Church is ready to appeal the acquittals.

A court in Orissa acquitted five Hindu extremists charged with attacking Christians in Orissa and ordered the release of 17 more for lack of evidence. Speaking to AsiaNews, Verbite priest Edward Sequeira said, "Kandhamal is still simmering with communal tension and hostilities. Many of our people have not gone back as they are afraid that they will inevitably be forced to go back to Hinduism." However, the clergyman, who experienced firsthand the violent pogrom when he was almost burnt alive (see Nirmala Carvalho, "Fr Edward, survivor of arson in Orissa: the Hindu radicals are terrorists," in AsiaNews, 4 September 2009), said that he was "going back to his lepers" because "they need the love of the Church." Currently, the priest lives in a parish on the outer edge of the district.

"Thousands of people are still displaced, living in shanties outside the district," he said. "Many people have had to go to other states. Getting back to normal appears difficult. Housing is a priority but construction is rather slow. Churches or other facilities are not being rebuilt, and security remains a big issue for Christians."

At present, health reasons have kept Fr Sequeira away from his community. "I am here under medical advice as my lungs are not improving and my breathing problem still persists," he said. However, "I am also living here in secret" because of "threats to my life."

Still, "I make unannounced visits to the leper colony in Padampur," he added, because "I am willing to risk everything for the lepers; they are the people who most need our services. They are the poorest of the poor and are ostracised by mainstream society. Therefore, I often visit in order to provide them with whatever services I can offer. With love and dignity, the Church has always helped them, all of whom are Hindu."

As for the most recent verdicts, he said, "In my case, I saw my attackers get out on bail. It must be said but there is a big organisation, powerful, violent and hostile to Christians. It is understandable that witnesses might have second thoughts or become hostile towards the victims. These people have to live every day alongside the people they have to accuse. Other witnesses are simply dismissed by the courts because they are poor or come from the low castes. Even in the courtroom, people can be threatened by rightwing nationalist extremists."

"We are deeply concerned about the high rate of acquittals in the Fast Track Courts," said Mgr Cheenath, archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar. "Church authorities are studying the judgments and investigating into the frequent acquittals. On the merits of our findings, we will appeal to the High Court." Altogether, some "3,232 complaints were filed in various police stations in Kandhamal. Of these, the police registered cases in only

832 instances." Making matters worse, "the whole atmosphere inside and outside the court is communalized".

"The credibility of those tasked with carrying out investigations is questionable," said Sajan K Gorge, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians. "Rightwing ideology is deeply ingrained in local officials. Only 89 people have been convicted so far, against as many as 251 who have been acquitted and set free for lack of witnesses."

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## **Indian police arrest 13 Christians for 'forceful conversion'**

ICC (12.04.2010) / HRWF (13.04.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that 13 Christians remain imprisoned after Indian police arrested them on April 5 in Verajpet, Karnataka. They were arrested after Hindu extremists falsely accused them of forcefully converting Hindus to Christianity.

Vijay, Lakhama, Philomina Raj, John K.O, Peter, Satish, Macho, Baby, Wilson Mathew, Abraham, Mathew K.J, Freddy, and Johny K.A. were arrested while holding a prayer meeting at a Christian house. The imprisonment is taking a toll on the Christians and their families as most of the prisoners are heads of families. John K.O is suffering from heart disease.

The Christians have sought release on bail, but their requests have been refused by authorities four times.

The state of Karnataka is ruled by the BJP, a Hindu nationalist party that is infamous for persecuting Christians. Last year, the highest number of attacks against Indian Christians took place in Karnataka.

*"Ever since the BJP took over, there have been frequent violent attacks against Christians in Karnataka. The Christians in Karnataka are worried about what will happen to them if such attacks continue. We ask the international community to put pressure on our government to protect Christians from further violence,"* said an Indian Christian leader in an interview with ICC.

ICC's Regional Manager for South Asia, Jonathan Racho, said, *"We condemn the Indian police for arresting the Christians while they were holding a prayer meeting. We urge Indian officials to immediately release the Christians and guarantee their rights to exercise their religion freely."*

Please call the Indian embassy in your country and politely ask Indian officials to release the Christians and to respect the rights of Christians to worship freely.

Indian Embassies:

USA: (202) 939-7000 [Phone] - (202) 265-4351 [Fax]

Canada: (613) 744-3751 [Phone] - [hicomind@hciottawa.ca](mailto:hicomind@hciottawa.ca)

UK: 020 7836 8484 [Phone] - [att.pni@hclondon.in](mailto:att.pni@hclondon.in)

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## **Signs of witness intimidation mount in Orissa**

### ***Fear factor results in transfer of rape case; meantime, 6-year-old girl says politician is killer***

By Shireen Bhatia

Compass Direct (02.04.2010) / HRWF (03.04.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Due in part to intimidation of witnesses in Kandhamal district, a judge this week granted a change of venue for the trial of men accused of gang-raping a nun during anti-Christian attacks in Orissa in 2008.

The trial will be transferred from Baliguda, Kandhamal to Cuttack, near the Orissa state capital of Bhubaneswar. Justice Indrajit Mohanty of the Orissa High Court on Tuesday (March 30) ordered the inter-district transfer of the trial. The nun, Meena Lilita Barwa, had argued that witnesses would be intimidated into refraining from testifying if the trial were held in Kandhamal district.

She also argued that Kandhamal's intimidating atmosphere made it too dangerous for her appear in court there. Christians were hopeful that the transfer would lead the administration to review police and court processes in Kandhamal district.

Police have arrested 19 people for allegedly assaulting the nun on Aug. 25, 2008 and parading her half-naked through the streets.

### **Hindu Politician Identified as Killer**

After a series of trials in which murder suspects in the 2008 Kandhamal district violence have gone free as Hindu extremist threats have kept witnesses from testifying, a 6-year-old girl has identified a powerful local politician as the man who killed her father.

In testimony at Fast Track Court No. 1 on March 14, Lipsa Nayak of Kandhamal identified Manoj Pradhan, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Orissa, as the man who cut and burned her father to death when Hindu extremists attacked Christians following the Aug. 23, 2008 death of a local Hindu leader.

Pradhan has been accused in nine cases of murder and in 14 cases of arson. So far he has been exonerated on the murder charges against him for "lack of witnesses." Christian leaders say that Pradhan has been intimidating witnesses because of his position as a member of Legislative Assembly. Lipsa's mother, 32-year-old Kanak Rekha Nayak, has said that Pradhan and his associates have threatened to harm her family if they identified him as the killer.

The Nayak family lived in Tiangia, Budedipada, in Raikia block of Kandhamal district. During the anti-Christian attacks that followed the death of Hindu leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, Lipsa's parents and her sister had taken refuge in the forest to escape the fury of the Hindu extremists, but the rampaging mob tracked them down.

Lipsa, then 4 years old, along with her mother and 2-year-old sister, watched in horror as the crowd allegedly beat her father, Parikhita Nayak, for two hours and then killed him by cutting him into pieces and burning him.

Prosecution and defense lawyers questioned Lipsa for more than 90 minutes, and she reportedly answered all questions without wavering. Asked by the judge if she could identify the killer of her father, she pointed to Pradhan, the MLA from the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) from G. Udayagiri, Kandhamal.

Her mother later told media, "They played with him for a few hours before cutting him into pieces and dousing him with kerosene."

Accused as a primary suspect in the murder along with Pradhan is Kali Pradhan. The government of Orissa has set up two Fast Track courts to try cases related to the violence that spread to more than a dozen districts of Orissa. Maoists have taken responsibility for the killing, though Hindu extremists accused Christians in an effort to spark anti-Christian violence. The attacks killed more than 100 people and burned 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions.

Christian leaders have denounced the legal process in the Kandhamal violence, saying not only that witnesses have been threatened and the intimidated but that police investigations have been negligent or corrupt.

"There has been no conviction in any case of murder," said Dr. John Dayal, a member of the National Integration Council. "More than 70 people were killed, and trial is being held only for 38 or so of those deaths. Eleven murder cases have been tried with no one being indicted or sentenced for murder so far – because of terrible investigation by the police, a poor show by the prosecuting lawyers and shoddy judicial process."

The 123 cases tried in the Fast track courts have resulted in 97 convictions and 323 acquittals, including several cases decided on Wednesday (March 31). Seven people in two separate cases were convicted of arson and rioting cases. Nata Pradhan, Jahala Pradhan, Ashok Mallick, Bapa Pradhan, and Udayanath Pradhan from Raikhala-Gadiapada village were sentenced for two years imprisonment for destroying the house of Birendra Nayak of the same village. They were also fined 2,500 rupees (US\$55). In the other case, Ratnakar Pradhan and Parsuram Pradhan from village Tatamaha, Raikia block were convicted of riot and arson.

At the same time, Fast Track Court I Judge S.K. Das acquitted 20 people persons in three separate cases for lack of evidence.

"Witnesses are being coerced, threatened, cajoled and sought to be bribed by murderers and arsonists facing trial," said Archbishop of Orissa Raphael Cheenath in a statement. Previously he had demanded that the cases of politically powerful persons such as Manoj Pradhan be transferred out of Kandhamal to ensure proper justice.

"We are deeply concerned about the high rate of acquittals in the Fast Track Courts," Cheenath said. "Victims filed 3,232 complaints in the various police stations of Kandhamal. Of these, the police registered cases in only 832 instances."

Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik filed a written admission in the Orissa Assembly in November 2009 in which he said 85 members of the Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), 321 persons of Hindu nationalist umbrella group Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and 118 persons of Hindu extremist youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, had been arrested for their involvement in the Kandhamal riots.

While the government says that situation is normalizing in Kandhamal, Christian leader like Dr. John Dayal give a different story.

"While it is possible to visit one half of the district of Kandhamal and discover only peace, it is the other half of the district which speaks of the continuing tyranny," he said. "The bloodshed has stopped because of belated police action, but the miscarriage of justice and the lost peace continue to haunt thousands of people who have not been able to go back to their homes for fear of their lives. Thousands of children cannot go to school, especially the girls. What is worse is that many girls have been trafficked."

The district collector banned all Christian organizations from coming to the district to bring aid to victims after the 2008 violence, he added, "and it took an appeal to the Supreme Court of India by the archbishop of Bhubaneswar for much needed relief to be given to the people in the then refugee camps."

He expressed doubts about the government portrait of normalcy in Kandhamal.

"Even if the church does its best, only half of the 5,600 or so houses burned to the ground will ever be rebuilt," he said. "The district collector and other officers of the civil and police system who are guilty of gross dereliction of duty continue to be in control. Thousands of men continue to be without jobs. Is this normalcy?"

### **Firebrand Arrested**

On March 20, a controversial leader of the VHP, Praveen Togadia, was arrested as he tried to defy orders prohibiting him from entering Kandhamal. Togadia had played a major role in whipping up passions among the Hindus of Kandhamal after the killing of Saraswati.

Togadia had led a procession with the body of Saraswati through different areas of the district for more than 100 kilometers, sparking off or intensifying violence against Christians.

The government of Orissa came under heavy fire from civil society for allowing the procession, and on the latest occasion the local administration was careful to detain Togadia under the Section 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which provides for authorities to make arrests to prevent potential offenses. Togadia was later released on bail.

Togadia termed the prohibition on his visit a "ban" that was "illegal and undemocratic." In response to the "ban" on Togadia, the Hindu extremist Sangh Parivar and the BJP protested with a 12-hour bandh (shut down) in Kandhamal on March 20, while the VHP held demonstrations in Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, Bolangir, Sambalpur and Cuttack. VHP also blocked National Highway 217 for one hour and burned an effigy of Chief Minister Patnaik.

"The state government didn't stop foreign missionaries from going to tribal areas of Kandhamal and other parts of Orissa," VHP leader Swadesh Pal Gupta said. "They were being provided with full support and freedom. But when a leader who is an International Secretary General of VHP tries to go to Kandhamal, the government stopped him. We are staging a nationwide protest against this."

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## **Maoists blow up Protestant school**

Union of Catholic Asian News (30.03.2010) / HRWF (06.03.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Maoists blew up a Protestant school and several other institutions in an eastern Indian village on March 29 to protest a government crackdown.

Some 40 armed men stormed Duddha, a village near Bhabua, headquarters of Bihar's Kaimur district, in the wee hours, police sources said.

They forced villagers to stay indoors before detonating dynamite at a primary school managed by Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior (GEMS), a non-denominational Christian sect.

The Maoists also blew up a government school and three community centers before leaving the village. The buildings suffered severe damage, but no casualties were reported, police said.

Police have intensified patrolling in the area and launched raids to nab the Maoists.

Local newspapers said the attack was against "green hunt," a crackdown on Maoists jointly undertaken by federal and state security forces.

GEMS has been active in the area for several years. The group works for the development of the poor, especially illiterate women.

The village comes under Buxar Catholic diocese.

Jesuit Father Sebastian Kanekattil, its vicar general, said the Catholic Church has no center in Bhabua. A priest, Father Thomas Vettukattil, stays in a rented place to explore ways of opening a mission there, he told UCA News.

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## **Attacks in Punjab, India similar to Orissa mayhem, report says**

### ***Hindu nationalists try to burn Christians alive for protesting offensive Jesus banners***

By Vishal Arora

Compass Direct (03.03.2010) / HRWF (04.03.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Attacks on Christians last month in Punjab state following protests against banners depicting Jesus drinking and smoking were eerily similar to the anti-Christian violence in Orissa state in 2007 and 2008, according to a fact-finding mission.

"I was struck by the similarities between the attacks in northern Punjab state and the violence in eastern Orissa state in 2007 and 2008," said Dr. John Dayal, a member of the All India Christian Council (AICC) fact-finding mission, which released the report yesterday.

Dayal pointed out that factors such as the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) being part of the ruling coalition, police inaction, coordination of attacks and support of the local merchant community for Hindu nationalist groups in the anti-Christian attacks in Punjab reminded him of mayhem in Orissa's Kandhamal district.

"I have been in Orissa almost a week a month since December 2007 and have become quite familiar with the range of right-wing groups' violence techniques," Dayal, a member of government's National Integration Council, told Compass. "The strategy of the assailants in Punjab was eerily reminiscent of what was practiced and perfected against churches in Orissa."

Violence erupted in Orissa state's Kandhamal district during Christmas week of 2007, killing at least four Christians and burning 730 houses and 95 churches. The attacks came in retaliation for an alleged attack on a Hindu extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council or VHP) leader, Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati. More blood was shed there in August-September 2008, after the assassination of Saraswati by a Maoist group, as Christians were falsely blamed for it. The attacks killed more than 100 people and burned 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions.

Following the Feb. 20 attacks, the AICC fact-finding team visited the affected region from Feb. 22 to Feb. 25. In its report, it gave an account of the attacks in Batala town near Amritsar city in Gurdaspur district in west Punjab, where most Christians are from Dalit (formerly "untouchable" according to Hinduism's caste hierarchy) backgrounds.

It reported that supporters of the Hindu extremist Sangh Parivar burned the 1865-built Church of the Epiphany belonging to the Church of North India (CNI) denomination on Feb. 20. They also tried to destroy a nearby Salvation Army church, built in 1958, and attacked its pastor, Gurnam Singh, leaving him seriously injured.

The Sangh Parivar is referred to the family of outfits under the umbrella of India's chief Hindu nationalist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), seen also as the parent body of the BJP.

"Even as the larger group of attackers focused on burning the CNI church, a group of men armed with sticks and rods came to the house of the CNI deacon," the report notes. "The deacon, Victor Gill, and his wife Parveen, hid themselves under the bed. The assailants damaged the doors, tried to enter the room forcibly, and told the couple they would be burnt alive if they did not come out."

At the same time, the report notes, Hindu nationalists at a second CNI house overturned a scooter, took gas from it and doused teacher Christopher Morris and his daughter Daisy with the fuel while her mother, Usha, cringed in their home.

"They tried to set the two on fire, but the matchbox had also been soaked in the petrol, and despite three attempts to strike a match, the matchsticks would not ignite, saving the family from being burnt alive," the report states.

### **Provoked and attacked**

Christians were attacked while they were trying to enforce an area-wide closure of markets to protest a picture of Jesus Christ holding a can of beer in one hand a lit cigarette in another. It appeared on roadside banners in preparation for a Hindu festival, Ram Navami (the birthday of Rama), which falls on March 24 this year.

"The banners were sponsored by a coalition of local political, media and business leaders, together with the trading community, which is almost entirely Hindu," said the report without identifying the sponsors.

"The Sangh Parivar reacted to the Christian protest by mobilizing shopkeepers and youth 'to teach a lesson to Christians,'" the report states. "Otherwise, local shopkeepers routinely enforce closures.

The Rev. Madhu Chandra, AICC's regional secretary, also a fact-finding team member, told Compass that the banners were apparently put up to provoke Christians and then launch attacks on them. The fact-finding team included attorney M. Adeb of the Human Rights Law Network and Marang Hansda of the AICC.

The offensive picture of Jesus was taken from a cursive writing exercise book for Class I of a private school in Shillong, the capital of the northeastern state of Meghalaya, reported the Press Trust of India on Feb. 18. Published by Skyline Publication, the book used the picture to illustrate the alphabet "I" for the word "Idol."

When some parents of the students noticed the picture, they reported it to the school authorities, which reported it to police. Christians, who constitute 80 percent of Meghalaya's population, protested. On Feb. 18, police registered a case against the Delhi-based publisher and confiscated the books.

In Batala town in Punjab more than 1,500 miles away, however, the same picture was appeared on banners, causing tensions.

The Tribune, a regional newspaper, reported on Feb. 20 that Christian youth tried to forcibly implement the market shut-down, or "closure," and looted shops. But Chandra of the AICC said the district officials the fact-finding team met were not sure if the allegation was true.

"The officials asked us if the newspaper reports were true," he said. "But we also read it in newspapers only."

Dayal said that Hindu nationalists used the market shut-down to attack Christians.

"Instead of sympathizing and cooperating with the protest – as merchants do when the Sangh Parivar or the ruling Shironami Akali Dal party calls for closures on routine intervals – they sought to teach the Christians a lesson," said Dayal.

He added that in Orissa state's Kandhamal district, Hindu nationalist groups likewise befriended merchants, mostly tribal or aboriginal people, and turned them against Dalit Christians.

### **Police inaction**

The fact-finding report deplored police inaction. When the mob tried to burn Morris and his daughter Daisy, said the report, "police were watching" but did nothing to help.

It quoted Pastor Gurnam Singh as saying, "We pleaded with the police to help, but they did not."

Police were outnumbered by rioters, as happened in Kandhamal in Orissa, remarked Dayal.

Despite intelligence reports of Christian anger and the Hindu nationalist groups' plans to counterattack, authorities said they "could not enforce a quick curfew until late on Feb. 20 because most of the police were sent to the Pakistani border nearby, where Home Minister P. Chidambaram inaugurated a defence outpost."

By the time the police returned and a curfew was imposed, "violence had already occurred," the report states.

"No police report has been filed on the attempted murders, even as the top police and administrative officers enforced a one sided 'peace accord' on the local Christian leadership," the report notes. "Christians were instructed not to press for charges immediately so that a number of Christian youth who were arrested – together with a few Hindu men – could be released. Police forcibly cleaned up the Church of the Epiphany. They removed burnt furniture and made the presbyter whitewash the walls to remove traces of fuel oil used in the blaze. This was done before a formal enquiry could be conducted by the government."

Referring to the police inaction, Dayal pointed out that "the BJP, as in Orissa during 2007 and 2008, is in power in Punjab as member of the coalition government with the regional Shironami Akali Dal party.

Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Prakash Singh Badal has asked his officials to unravel the "entire conspiracy," the report states.



There are around 300,000 Christians in Punjab, or roughly 1.2 percent of the total population.

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## **Recent incidents of persecution**

By Mahruaii Sailo, Shireen Bhatia and Binaifer Wadia

Compass Direct (01.03.2010) / HRWF (05.03.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena on Feb. 20 beat Christians and vandalized two churches in Batala after a protest against an objectionable picture of Christ. Christians had noticed the picture posted as part of a composite poster for an upcoming Hindu festival, Ram Naumi. The poster contained pictures of other religious deities as they normally appear, while Jesus was portrayed with a cigarette and a beer, reported the Evangelical Fellowship of India. In response to the Christian protest, the Hindu extremists went on a rampage, beating the pastor of the Church of North India and a Salvation Army officer and burning and looting the two churches. With church leaders' pressure, police registered a case against Hindu extremists Pratap Singh and Raj Kumar, who were said to have put up the picture of Jesus, for a "malicious act intended to outrage religious feelings of others" and "punishment of criminal conspiracy." - MS

Orissa - Police on Feb. 20 arrested the Rev. Anant Prasad Samantray after Hindu extremists filed a complaint against him of making derogatory remarks against Hinduism in Bhabanipatna, Kalahandi district. Having obtained written permission from local police, Samantray, a former Hindu priest, spoke at a revival meeting of his journey to becoming a Christian pastor, remarking that "Jesus is the only way, the truth and the life," a local source told Compass. After hearing his speech, some Hindu hardliners dragged him to a police station and filed a complaint against him of speaking ill against Hinduism. Officers arrested the Christian for "malicious acts to outrage religious feelings of others" and "uttering words to wounds religious feelings." - MS

Karnataka - Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on Feb. 15 attacked Christians in Gokalam, Mysore. A source told Compass that Hindu extremists attacked church members of Shekinah Assembly of God Church because of their faith. Running from one house to another, the extremists beat the Christians in their homes, took Bibles and Christian literature and burned them. A Christian identified only as Shivmurthy sustained serious head injuries, lost four teeth and underwent an operation on his right ear. Jaylaxmi Puram police refused to register a complaint filed by the Christians, who left the area out of fear of further attacks; at press time 22 families had taken refuge among Christians in a neighboring area. - MS

Karnataka - Hindu extremists on Feb. 14 stopped the inaugural service of Native Village Vision Church's new building and accused Christians of forceful conversion in Mysore. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at about 5 p.m. a mob of intolerant Hindu radicals barged into the inaugural service of the new church building, verbally abused the Christians and accused them of forceful conversion. The extremists filed a complaint against the Christians of forceful conversion at the Beechanahalli police station. Officers told the Christians to cease future worship, though GCIC reported that Pastor N.S. Suresh had obtained permission from the village head to construct a church building and had produced required legal documents. Nevertheless, revenue officials locked up the church building on Feb. 15. At press time area Christian leaders were meeting with authorities to resolve the matter. - MS

Karnataka - Hindu extremists from the Rakshana Vedike, affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, on Feb. 8 attacked a pastor identified only as Timothy G. and two

Bible students in Bangalore. An Evangelical Fellowship of India representative reported that the extremists attacked the Christians, who belong to Lord Living Hope Church, as they made their way home after visiting a sick Christian in the area. The extremists verbally insulted them and manhandled them, shoving them and threatening to do more harm if they continued Christian activity in the area. The Christians reported the matter to the police and continued to conduct worship meetings in the area. – MS

Orissa – Hindu extremists on Feb. 7 attempted to rape a refugee at Mondakai Camp and threatened to harm Christians there if they filed a police complaint against them in Phulbani, Raikia P.S. area. A Christian Legal Association (CLA) representative reported that one unidentified man from the Hindu extremist community followed Afasari Nayak, who had fled her home during 2008 anti-Christian violence, as she went to take bath in a river near the camp after work. Nayak shouted for help as the man started attacking her, and people rushed to rescue her. At about 7 p.m. the suspect along with four other extremists went to the camp and threatened to hurt the Christians if they filed a complaint, saying also that the refugee Christians should not return to the village unless they convert to Hinduism, the CLA source said. – MS

Orissa – Police arrested 11 Christians after Hindu extremists filed a complaint against them of assault on Feb. 3 in Badimunda, Kandhamal. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that Hindu extremists verbally abused two Christians and threatened harm unless they stopped worshipping Jesus; when the two Christians asserted their right to worship Christ, the extremists began beating them. People of both faiths amassed, and the two Christians managed to escape further attack. At about 7:30 p.m. the next day, five extremists showed up at the same place searching for the two Christians. Forcefully entering the house of Dibyakand Nayak, a Christian, one of the extremists hurt his own forehead, according to EFI. Upon seeing this, the extremists started beating Nayak. They damaged household goods and dragged him to the police station. Police arrested 11 Christians for allegedly causing hurt, causing hurt by dangerous weapons and obscene acts and songs. All except Nayak were released on bail. – MS

Orissa – Two Fast-Track Courts on Jan. 30 convicted 15 people and acquitted 39 others in cases related to anti-Christian violence in August 2008. Judge Sobhan Kumar Das sentenced 13 people to five years imprisonment and fined them 2,500 rupees (US\$54) each for torching houses in the Sarangarh area, Kandhamal district, between August 2008 and October 2008. The court, however, acquitted 17 people for “lack of evidence” in the same case. In a separate case related to arson at Ranjabadi village of Kandhamal district, the court sentenced two persons to five years of prison and imposed a fine of 2,000 rupees (US\$43) on each of them. Judge C.R. Das of Fast-Track Court II acquitted four people who were accused of violence in Baliguda block, while 18 people were acquitted in another case of arson that took place in Phiringia block, Kandhamal. The district was rocked by anti-Christian violence that lasted more than three months after the Aug. 23, 2008 death of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, who was assassinated allegedly by Maoists. – SB

Andhra Pradesh – About 50 Hindu extremists on Jan. 29 accused a pastor of forceful conversion and forced him to eat food offered to Hindu idols in Secunderabad. The All India Christian Council reported that the extremists stopped Pastor Satyam Yellasiri of Good Shepherd Community Church at about 9:30 p.m. as he was returning from a birthday celebration and accused him of forceful conversion. The extremists forced him to eat the food offered to Hindu idols and threatened to beat him when he refused. Police, alerted by the extremists, arrived and took the pastor to the police station, where they detained him for two hours. Officers initially refused to register his complaint against his assailants. The next day, though, with area Christian leaders intervening, police accepted the complaint. Officers claimed they detained the pastor as a safety measure and assured the Christians that immediate action would be taken against the attackers. – MS

Karnataka – On Jan. 24 in Bidarikere, Chitradurga, Hindu extremists from the Rashtriya Swayamsavak Sangh broke into the worship meeting of Indian Evangelical Mission and assaulted a Christian worker. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that at about 10:30 a.m. the extremists barged into the meeting shouting slogans and started beating H. Raju, who was leading the meeting, and accused him of forceful conversion. They also burned Bibles and Christian literature and dragged him out to the streets, forcing him to identify Christians' homes in the area, according to EFI. Entering three Christian houses, the Hindu hardliners threatened to harm Christians if they did not stop worshipping Jesus. Local Christian leaders on Jan. 27 filed a police complaint with Jagalur police, and the next day police arrested three extremists. – MS

Karnataka – Hindu extremists accompanied by local police stopped the worship service of Calvary Gospel Church (CGC) on Jan. 24 in Dudda, Hassan. Two local police stopped the Sunday worship in the rented house of Sekhar Chandra and his wife, Kala Chandra, and chased the Christian worshippers out of the house. Hindu extremists had filed a complaint against the couple, whose rented home was being used for the worship service. After the Jan. 24 disruption, Hindu extremists announced to all villagers they were not to allow any house be used for Christian worship. Subsequently, the landlord along with an agitated mob threw the couple out of their rented house, along with their household goods. The Christian workers are now renting the house of another Christian in the same area and are continuing their ministry. – MS

Madhya Pradesh – Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal accompanied by Madhya Pradesh police stopped the worship meeting of Central India Christian Mission's (CICM) Shahdol Christian church on Jan. 23 and forced church members to falsely testify against Pastor S.K. Ashawan in Shahdol. A source reported that the extremists barged into the prayer meeting attended by about 35 Christians, verbally abused them and dragged them to Shahdol police station. Amassing at the police station, the angry extremists beat, punched and kicked the Christians, forcing them to testify falsely against the pastor by saying he offered each of them 5,000 rupees (US\$108) to convert them to Christianity and also forced them to eat beef. Under pressure, the Christians gave a written statement with these accusations. Police summoned the pastor, detaining and questioning him for two hours. The town inspector told Pastor Ashawan that 35 Christians had testified against him, and he threatened to beat and arrest the pastor if he did not give him 100,000 rupees (US\$2,168). "It was midnight, and I was under pressure with the police threatening to beat and put me in jail if I did not submit the money," Pastor Ashawan told Compass. The pastor started calling area Christians for help. That night, a source said, 100,000 rupees arrived into the inspector's hands. Ajay Lal, Director of the CICM, took the matter to administrative authorities, but state Chief Minister Shivraj C. Chauhan advised the area district collector to close the case immediately. Christian leaders planned take the matter to a higher court. – MS

Andhra Pradesh – Hindu extremists on Jan. 10 stormed a house church, disrupting worship and beating a pastor in Jillelguda L.B. Nagar, Hyderabad. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that at 9 a.m. nearly 50 area extremists belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh barged into Heavens Glory Church, shouting Hindu devotional chants. Repeatedly slapping Pastor Benhur Johnson, they falsely accused him of forcible conversion and warned him against conducting Christian services in the area. The extremists also beat some who came forward to help the pastor. A GCIC regional coordinator told Compass that Christians telephoned police, who rushed to the church and stopped the attack. Pastor Johnson along with other Christians went to police to register a complaint, but an official mediated an agreement between them and the extremists. The pastor told Compass that no worship was held on Jan. 17 or 24 out of fear of another attack. – BW

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## **Orissa, "there is no justice for Christians"**

Nirmala Carvalho

AsiaNews (24.02.2010) / HRWF (25.02.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - "Christians in the district of Kandhamal are still the innocent victims of intimidation and violence. The government does nothing to help their rehabilitation, after the religious violence in 2008, and they continue to live in fear. On the other hand, the thousands of complaints filed against assailants have served no purpose: the perpetrators of the massacre still roam freely across the State of Orissa".

This is the charge of President of the Global Council of Indian Christians, Sajan K George, who has been following the situation of persecuted Christians in India for years. The Council, which unites Catholics and Protestants, provides legal and material aid to the population affected by persecution.

Speaking yesterday to local media, George added: "We need a system that helps the faithful to return to normal life. They need a job and a house, given that in order to avoid death, the inhabitants of 14 villages were forced to flee their homes and now live in tents. The government must intervene, to see justice is done".

The violence erupted in Kandhamal district in the summer of 2008, resulting in casualties among both the clergy and the faithful. The false charge of proselytism was used to destroy Churches and schools run by local Christians, who were then forced by the Hindu community to abandon their homeland to seek refuge elsewhere.

During the clashes 5347 houses were destroyed and 75 people lost their lives in the name of their religion or ethnicity. Over 50 thousand people were forced to emigrate, becoming refugees in their homeland. Immediately after the riots, the victims lodged 3232 complaints in different police stations in the district. Of these only 832 were accepted: 89 persons were sentenced to minor penalties, while other 251 were released immediately.

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## **Frequent attacks on Christians in India's Karnataka**

Compass Direct (04.02.2010) / HRWF (08.02.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - Karnataka state recorded the highest number of anti-Christian attacks in India last year, and it is keeping pace this year.

Christians in Karnataka are being attacked "at rapid regularity" and "with near impunity," and it is "a serious matter of concern for the Christian community," said Dr. Babu Joseph, spokesperson of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI).

Much of the violence occurs under the vigilante pretext of rounding up Christians supposedly involved in "forcible" or "fraudulent" conversion efforts. On Monday (Feb. 1) in Thagadur village, Kodagu district, Hindu extremists dragged 11 Christians - including four women - from their homes and colluded with police to arrest them on such false charges.

The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that all of the Christians, members of the Beraka Gospel Church in Suntikupa village, were tortured at the Siddapur police station to pressure them to admit to the charges. Most of the jailed Christians are tribal, daily wage laborers who work on coffee plantations.

Police denied torturing the Christians, but like many people in India easily confused by Hindu extremist propaganda, Inspector Ratan Singh of the Siddapur police station seemed to erroneously believe that laws against fraudulent conversion apply to any kind of proclamation of faith.

"According to the complaint we received, the accused were inviting local Hindus for prayer meetings to convert them," Singh told Compass, as if such activity were illegal in India. "We did not beat them. When they were produced before the judicial magistrate, they said they were not mistreated by the police."

The GCIC recorded 72 attacks on Christians in Karnataka in 2009. That represents a decline from the 112 attacks the previous year, when three months of anti-Christian violence in Orissa state's Kandhamal district in 2008 led Hindu extremists in Karnataka to lash out as well, according to Christian leaders.

Justice Michael F. Saldanha, a retired judge of the Karnataka High Court and president of the Catholic Association of South Kanara (a district in Karnataka also known as Dakshina Kannada), told Compass that attacks on Christians in the state increased after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) began to rule.

In May 2008 the BJP came to power in Karnataka, thus making it the first southern state with a stand-alone BJP government in the history of India. The party's rule was preceded by a 20-month rule in alliance with a local party, the Janata Dal (Secular).

Although Karnataka has had a dominant presence of the Hindu extremist Sangh Parivar since 1950, its cadres obtained free rein only after the BJP's electoral victory, Saldanha explained.

"The real headquarters of the Sangh Parivar is not in Maharashtra [official headquarters of the Hindu extremist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS, in Nagpur], it's in Karnataka," said Saldanha, who conducted a private inquiry into a series of attacks that rocked Karnataka in September 2008 following the unprecedented anti-Christian bloodbath in Orissa state's Kandhamal district.

Between Aug. 17 and Sept. 21, 2008, more than 28 attacks on churches, led mainly by the Hindu extremist Bajrang Dal, a Sangh Parivar offshoot, were reported from various parts of Karnataka.

Saldanha pointed out that Brahmins, the highest or priestly class in the caste hierarchy in Hinduism, from Udupi district and Mangalore city in neighboring Dakshina Kannada district played a special role in leading the Hindu right-wing movement. The retired judge also accused the BJP government of supporting Sangh Parivar outfits with public money.

"The Karnataka government gives money to right-wing groups for festivals in the name of celebrations, and also through donations to certain temples," he said.

Agreeing with Saldanha, the CBCI's Joseph said the violence in Karnataka points to a "decline in civility and collapse of administration."

"It is indeed sad that Karnataka, which enjoyed communal harmony and social amity for so long, has recently been pushed into the cycle of hate crimes perpetrated by the extreme elements in society that do not believe in mutual tolerance or acceptance," Joseph said.

Karnataka Gov. H.R. Bhardwaj reportedly said earlier this week that protection of people's lives and liberties, including the right to propagate their religion, was "the essence of Indian democracy."

The governor said it was the responsibility of the state government "to see that nobody is allowed to flout the democratic norms and laws of the land," acknowledging a rise in the incidence of attacks against churches, reported Daijiworld.

His comments came a day after an attack on a glass painting of the Virgin Mary at the entrance arch of the Canara Organisation for Development and Peace building in Nantoor area on Saturday (Jan. 30).

On that day Christians held a silent protest in Mysore, and on Monday (Feb. 1) Christians in Mangalore protested in like fashion against increasing attacks on them.

On Jan. 28, unidentified people burned down a church in Raipura area in Molakalmuru town in Chitradurga district. The Jesus Loves Holy Temple Church turned into ashes, reported GCIC.

Two Catholic churches were attacked in Mysore and Uttara Kannada districts on Jan. 25. Unidentified people reportedly broke a statue of Mary on the compound wall of the Holy Family Church in Hinkal village in the wee hours in Mysore district. In the other incident, glass panes covering the statue of Mary were broken at St. Anthony Church in the Pernamakki area in Uttara Kannada district.

At 2:30 a.m. this morning, unidentified people broke into a Catholic church and vandalized it in the Malavalli area of Mandya district, reported the Karnataka-based GCIC. The cross, statues and musical instruments in the St. Mathias Church were destroyed, it said, adding that the parish priest filed a complaint at the Malavalli police station.

### **'Lip Service'**

Echoing claims of the Hindu nationalist BJP, Karnataka State Minorities Commission member Anthony Fernandez said he does not believe there is any reason for concern.

"Some elements are simply trying to tarnish the image of the state government," he said.

Fernandez acknowledged, however, that the Hindu nationalist Sri Ram Sene (Army of God Rama) was involved in some attacks. The Sri Ram Sene is believed to be a splinter group from the Sangh Parivar family of organizations under the RSS.

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa on Jan. 28 warned those who vandalize religious places, saying he would have their hands "chopped off."

"I, the chief minister of Karnataka, am saying I will chop off their hands," Yeddyurappa was quoted as saying by Headlines Today news channel.

The CBCI's Joseph said "lip service" by the government was "no longer enough."

"It has to show results on the ground that it means business in tackling the menace of communal elements," he said. "Unprovoked violence against fellow citizens in the name of religion is pernicious, and it must stop forthwith, or else the impression may gain ground that the administration of the day is colluding with criminal and extreme elements in vitiating the social harmony for short term political gains - something this country can ill afford in the long run."

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## **India finally allows EU to visit Orissa – but no fact-finding**

***After months of asking, delegation wins clearance to enter Kandhamal district***

By Vishal Arora

Compass Direct (29.01.2010) / HRWF (01.02.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) – Weary of international scrutiny of troubled Kandhamal district in Orissa state, officials yesterday finally allowed delegates from the European Union (EU) to visit affected areas – as long as they do no fact-finding.

A team of 13 diplomats from the EU was to begin its four-day tour of Kandhamal district yesterday, but the federal government had refused to give the required clearance to visit the area, which was wracked by anti-Christian violence in 2008. A facilitator of the delegation said that authorities then reversed themselves and yesterday gave approval to the team.

The team plans to visit Kandhamal early next month to assess the state government's efforts in rehabilitating victims and prosecuting attackers in the district, where a spate of anti-Christian violence in August-September 2008 killed over 100 people and burned 4,640 houses, 252 churches and 13 educational institutions.

When the federal government recommended that Orissa state officials allow the delegation to visit the area, the state government agreed under the condition that the diplomats undertake no fact-finding, according to the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency. The government stipulated to the EU team, led by the deputy chief of mission of the Spanish embassy, Ramon Moreno, that they are only to interact with local residents. The delegation consented.

Delegates from the EU had also sought a visit to Kandhamal in November 2009, but the government denied permission. The diplomats from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland were able to make it only to the Orissa state capital, Bhubaneswar, at that time.

Ironically, three days before the government initially denied permission to the EU team, the head of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Mohan Bhagwat, visited Orissa and addressed a huge rally of its cadres in Bhubaneswar, reported PTI on Tuesday (Jan. 26).

While Bhagwat was not reported to have made an inflammatory speech, many Christians frowned on his visit. It is believed that his organization was behind the violence in Kandhamal, which began after a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council or VHP), Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, was killed by Maoists (extreme Marxists) on Aug. 23, 2008. Hindu extremist groups wrongly blamed it on local Christians in order to stir up anti-Christian violence.

On Nov. 11, Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik told the state assembly House that 85 people from the RSS, 321 members of the VHP and 118 workers of the Bajrang Dal, youth wing of the VHP, were rounded up by the police for the attacks in Kandhamal.

### **EU's Indictments**

It is believed that New Delhi was hesitant to allow EU's teams into Kandhamal because it has indicted India on several occasions for human rights violations. Soon after violence

broke out in Kandhamal, the European Commission, EU's executive wing, called it a "massacre of minorities."

Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who was attending the ninth India-EU summit in France at the time of the violence, called the anti-Christian attacks a "national shame." French President Nicolas Sarkozy, head of the European Council, and Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, took up the issue "strongly with Singh," reported The Times of India on Sept. 30, 2008.

On Aug. 17, 2009, the EU asked its citizens not to visit Kandhamal in an advisory stating that religious tensions were not yet over. "We therefore advise against travel within the state and in rural areas, particularly in the districts of Kandhamal and Bargarh," it stated.

The EU's advisory came at a time when the state government was targeting the visit of 200,000 foreign tourists to Orissa, noted PTI.

Kandhamal Superintendent of Police Praveen Kumar suggested that the advisory was not based on truth.

"There is no violence in Kandhamal since October 2008," he told PTI. "The people celebrated Christmas and New Year's Day as peace returned to the tribal dominated district."

Before denying permission to the EU, the Indian government had restricted members of a U.S. panel from coming to the country. In June 2009, the government refused to issue visas for members of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to visit Orissa. The panel then put India on its "Watch List" for the country's violations of religious freedom.

### **Tensions Remain**

Local human rights activist Ajay Singh said that while the state government had made some efforts to rehabilitate the victims, a lot more needed to be done.

An estimated 300 families are still living in private relief camps in Kandhamal, and at least 1,200 families have left Kandhamal following the violence, he said. These families have not gone back to their villages, fearing that if they returned without converting to Hinduism they would be attacked, he added.

Singh also said that authorities have asked more than 100 survivors of communal violence living in an abandoned market complex known as NAC, in G. Udayagiri area of Kandhamal, to move out. He said it is possible they were asked to leave because of the intended visit of the EU team.

Of the more than 50,000 people displaced by the violence, around 1,100 have received some compensation either from the government or from Christian and other organizations, he added.

Additionally, the state administration has to do much more in bringing the attackers to justice, said a representative of the Christian Legal Association. Of the total 831 police cases registered, charges have been filed in around 300 cases; 133 of these have been dropped due to "lack of evidence," said the source.

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## **Marxist Communist Party in India bans leaders from practicing faith**

Nirmala Carvalho

AsiaNews (19.01.2010) / HRWF (20.01.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: [info@hrwf.net](mailto:info@hrwf.net) - "In a document of the Communist Party Indian-Marxist (CPI-M) to grassroots committees, it is indicated that leaders should not attend religious services. This for me is difficult, because I believe deeply in my religion". K.S. Manoj thus explains why he recently left the CPI-M, to follow his faith.

With the PCMIA, K.S. Manoj, a Catholic, was elected to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of national parliament of India, in 2004 for the district of Alappuzha, where he defeated outgoing Congressman VM Sudheeran of the Congress Party (CP). Instead in the May 2009 elections he was beaten by the CP candidate KC Venugopal. He resigned from the CPI-M positions on January 9 over the contrast between his religious faith and political beliefs. He sent his resignation via a simple fax to the local CPI-M committee of Thumboli and the district office of Alappuzha.

Manoj explains that "the December 3, 2009 CPI-M document says on pages 82 to 94 that national MPs and local authorities and leaders of the Party can not participate in organized religions or religious functions. This means that as a Catholic I could not practice my faith. "

He says he believes his religious faith is more important than party ideology. He insists that even the Indian constitution recognizes the right of everyone to practice their religion, so that in the fax he asked "that the party reconsider its prohibition."

Father Paul Thelakat, spokesman for the Syro-Malabar Catholic Synod, in an exclusive interview with AsiaNews says that "Dr. Manoj has left the PCMIA because he found that his Catholic faith is not compatible with the party ideology. He said, among other things, that he does not want to be in a party where they consider him a second class citizen because of his faith. He hoped that the believers could work in the party with full freedom and dignity, to build a society of equals and without discrimination and exploitation. But he resigned when he saw that that was not to be" "These resignations - he continues - highlight the contradiction between the dialectical materialism of the CPI-M and its attempt to involve the believers. There are many party members who go to church or mosque or temple, but now the CPI-M says that its members can practice their religion but leaders no, they must embrace materialism. This is a double standard that applies a kind of caste system within the party. The CPI-M will have no future, if it does not leave aside this outdated ideology and open to spiritual and constitutional values".

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