

## **Table of Contents**

- ***[New briefing highlights concerns at proposed anti-conversion clauses for new constitution](#)***
  - ***[Hindus pressure police to arrest 40 Christians](#)***
- 

## **New briefing highlights concerns at proposed anti-conversion clauses for new constitution**

CSW (11.08.2014) - A [new briefing](#) on freedom of religion or belief in Nepal, published by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), expresses concern about a proposed anti-conversion clause for the new constitution.

Existing constitutional proposals contain a provision that “no person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another against his or her desire.” Furthermore, draft proposals for the new Penal Code of Nepal prohibit all changes of religion, “with or without inducement”. CSW’s briefing explains that this “fails to allow choosing and changing one’s faith to be seen as a positive individual choice or as a matter of individual rights”.

The briefing recommends that “The Constituent Assembly therefore needs to ensure that full religious freedom is embodied within the new constitution.”

Recently, high level officials are reported to have called for a total ban on the Nepali people’s right to change their religion or belief. On 30 May, while on a visit to Nepal, Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, the Vice Chairman of the Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), called for a total legal ban on conversions from one faith to another. On 5 June, Nilam KC, Nepal’s Social Welfare Minister, said that conversion from one religion to another must be prohibited in Nepal. There is also pressure from some political parties to restore the Hindu monarchy.

Nepal was the only official Hindu state in the world until 2008, when the newly-elected parliament declared the nation to be a secular republic. The Constituent Assembly is at present involved in drafting the new constitution, due to be completed in 2015, incorporating the human rights essential for a fully democratic state. The framing of the constitution is governed by Nepal’s Treaties Act of 1991, which requires the nation’s laws to conform to the principles of the International Treaties it has signed and ratified.

Nepal is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees “the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”. This includes a person’s “freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.”

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said “It is most disturbing that a government minister should express views aimed to persuade Nepali leaders and political parties not to include full freedom of religion and belief in the new constitution of Nepal. The freedom to choose and change one’s faith is a fundamental right which must be upheld as an essential part of any constitution which adheres to international human rights principles. CSW continues to urge all political parties and religious leaders in Nepal to insist that this right be fully guaranteed in the new constitution.”

---

## **Hindus pressure police to arrest 40 Christians**

***Around 40 church leaders and members were arrested in [Nepal](#), accused of forcibly converting Hindus, in an ominous threat to religious freedom in the country***

Barnabas Fund (18.06.2014) - They were detained in Boudha on Friday (13 June) by police, who were pressured by Hindus to take action against the Christians.

A Hindu crowd gathered outside the jail and threatened a riot if the Christians were freed.

Most of the detainees were nevertheless released, but eight leaders were held in custody until Sunday (15 June).

On Saturday (14 June), a pastor in nearby Mulpani was threatened.

A Barnabas contact in [Nepal](#) said that Hindus are looking for arguments with Christians and trying to attack them, having been encouraged by their counterparts in [India](#).

In a visit to [Nepal](#) from 30 May to 1 June, the vice president of [India](#)'s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won the country's [general election](#) last month, urged senior Nepali leaders to outlaw religious conversion immediately.

Bhagat Singh Koshiyari spoke to Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and Maoist party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, claiming that Western countries had been promoting proselytism in [Nepal](#) since it became a secular state in 2006. He called for religious conversion, particularly from Hinduism to Christianity, to be stopped, describing it as "illegal".

The election of the BJP in [India](#) sparked alarm among its Christian minority. The party had already introduced "anti-conversion" laws in a number of states, which are regularly used as a pretext by Hindu extremists to attack Christians – whom they falsely accuse of converting people by force – and also to prevent legitimate Christian evangelism.

The party's attempt to influence [Nepal](#)'s leaders to follow a similar path is extremely disconcerting, especially at a time when the Constituent Assembly is in the process of drafting a long-awaited new constitution. Christians are concerned that their rights and freedoms will not be upheld as Parliament comes under increasing pressure to restore the Hindu monarchy.

---