

21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

**FOR URGENT RELEASE**

**EFI in solidarity with Medical Professionals in this critical time.**

Evangelical Fellowship of India expresses its gratitude to medical professionals and affirms its solidarity with them as they lead the fight against COVID-19.

EFI mourns the loss of every doctor, nurse and paramedic who sacrificed her or his life in this pandemic. It is an abiding national shame that many have been insulted or attacked by people for any reason. It is inexcusable that three valiant doctors were denied a peaceful burial till authorities intervened.

It was distressing to hear that Dr. Simon Hercules, a 55-year-old neurosurgeon, who succumbed to COVID-19, was denied dignity in death by a mob who attempted to prevent his burial on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020. His friend, Dr. Pradeep had to bury Dr. Simon's body, using his bare hands and a shovel at a crematorium with the help of just two hospital ward boys as the undertakers had fled after the mob attacked them.

Other reports from Chennai, Coimbatore and Shillong are also of a similar nature, where doctors have been denied dignity in death.

On 13<sup>th</sup> April residents of Ambattur had protested the cremation of a 62-year-old doctor from Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, after he died of COVID-19 at the Apollo Hospital in Vanagram, Chennai.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April villagers in Coimbatore district had protested the last rites of a government doctor who died due to dengue and typhus, thinking it was a COVID-19 case.

In Shillong, Meghalaya, on 15<sup>th</sup> April, after the passing away of Dr. John L Sailo Rynthiang, a distinguished doctor known across the state, mobs went on the street opposing his cremation. Police had to be deployed to curb the protest. Thankfully, the body of Doctor Sailo was laid to rest at the Riatsamthiah Presbyterian cemetery in Lawmali on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020, after the cemetery voluntarily offered its space.

These reports break our hearts and at the same time point out the fear that is currently more widespread than probably the disease itself.

While we may lose some lives to this virus, we must not lose our humanity because of its fear.

Our doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals are a heroic tribe who are engaged in taking care of patients, including patients of COVID-19, during this troubling time of pandemic, at a risk of their own lives. They are doing this and putting in long tiresome hours, despite many resource limited settings, and in many instances, without proper protective equipment. They deserve our gratitude, our prayers, and our support.

A significant percentage of Christians are involved in medical services in India. A large chunk of nursing professionals in the nation come from the Christian community.

EFI appeals to the Church at large to devote an extended portion of time, this coming Sunday i.e. 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020, during our online Sunday services, to specifically pray for our medical fraternity and to commend them to the grace of God, who is the great physician and the healer and redeemer of all.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India and World Leader elsewhere including Mr. Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the UK, have lauded the work of medical professionals globally.

EFI appeals to the nation at large to be compassionate at this time and to rise above our fears and to cherish and support our medical fraternity through acts of kindness and support.

We are all in this together, come life or death.

**Released by**

**Rev. Vijayesh Lal**  
**General Secretary**