

Evangelical
Fellowship of India



Religious Liberty
Commission

HATE AND TARGETED VIOLENCE AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN INDIA



HALF-YEARLY REPORT 2020

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF
THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA

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We would also like to thank the Christian Legal Association, Persecution Relief and Alliance Defending Freedom India.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

Lynching, ostracization in targeted violence against Christians in first half of 2020

The absolute sense of impunity generated in the administrative apparatus of India by the Corona pandemic lockdown, and the consequent absence of civil society on the streets and in the courts, has aggravated the environment of targeted hate and violence against Christians in major states and the National Capital territory, as seen in the data available till June 2020.

The near collapse of the media and the consequent absence of journalists in the field, and the inability of activists to go to distant villages because of the lockdown and restrictions on transport, has severely constrained accurate collection of data of the persecution of religious minorities. Even in normal times, the police were loath to register cases. The situation has worsened. Communally motivated crime is either unreported, or under reported. The victims have no recourse to the normal systems of reporting to the police, and severely restricted access to courts for relief.

A lynching, community ostracization and concerted efforts to stop worship and gospel-sharing, mark the 135 cases registered by the EFI in the first six momentous and eventful months of 2020.

Uttar Pradesh, ruled by the Bhartiya Janata Party with Mr Ajay Singh Bisht alias Yogi Adityanath, a religious abbot or head of the Gorakhnath sect's main temple in the eponymous eastern city of Gorakhpur, has the dubious distinction of topping the persecution scale with 32 cases of hate crimes. The southern state of Tamil Nadu also made headlines with some very troubling and terrible cases of violence. The tribal states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, where the governments changed with the defeat of the BJP in the elections in 2019, saw a renewed spurt of persecution with 24 and 10 cases on our records.

The most horrendous case of lynching and dismembering of the victim's body was reported from Odisha's Kenduguda village in Malkangiri district on 4 June, where a 14-year-old Christian boy was allegedly crushed to death with a stone by a group of people who then chopped the body into pieces and buried in several places. In the FIR, the police noted that the victim and his family including his father had adopted Christianity three years ago. Since then, a few of the villagers have been harassing them. Christians in this village have been facing many threats and are being continually harassed by religious fanatics, Pastor Kosha Mosaki said. "He was earlier attacked in February this year. I have made 4 complaints at the Malkangiri police Station regarding these attacks."

The anti-Christian violence in Tamil Nadu, which reported a horrendous custodial torture and murder of two Christians of the Nadar community by policemen backing RSS elements in a rival community, is traced to caste supremacist attitudes in villages and their linkages with political elements. The state goes for elections soon. In most of the districts of the state, the police are recruited from the dominant castes, which are inimical to the Christian community and its pastors, a large number of whom are from marginalised castes and economically poor or less affluent sections of society.

The Christian and Dalit communities have demanded a judicial enquiry by a High Court Judge into the police brutalisation of a small shopkeeper, Jeyaraj (59), and his son Emmanuel Benicks (31). The father and son were arrested on 19 June after they allegedly had an altercation with the Sathankulam town police in the Tuticorin district. They had been beaten,

brutally tortured, sodomised with rods. Magistrate P Saravanan supported the police which continued to torture till the two collapsed. They were at last taken to hospital on July 22 on the verge of death. Benicks died at Kovilpatti Government Hospital on the night of June 22, Jeyaraj died the next morning at the same hospital. Jeyaraj was accused of keeping his shop open beyond the Covid curfew hours and his son was arrested when he tried to protect his father from the blows of the police. Four police officers have been arrested after the Madras high court passed strictures against the police and the magistrate.

In Chhattisgarh, now at number three from its earlier sixth position, the rise is attributed to Christians more willing to report violence in the Bastar region where there had been so far a blanket of fear of both underground militant Maoist forces and the armoured police. The state saw six documented cases of targeted violence against Christians just in April 2020 despite the national lockdown being in place. Christians were summoned to village meetings when they refused to participate in religious rituals that violate their conscience. They were pressurised to recant and assaulted when they refused.

In three separate incidents on May 5, May 7 and May 18, in Bastar and Dantewada districts, Christians faced stiff opposition to bury their dead. They were told that since they had not followed village religious rituals, they would not be allowed to bury their dead. There have been 15 such confirmed incidents in these districts since 2019.

Jharkhand, which had seen two cases of lynching of Christians in 2018 during the rash of similar cases against Muslims by cow vigilantes, saw four major assault cases in May alone. Though no one was killed, women were molested. On May 25, local authorities had banned Christians in Pundiguttu village from getting rations from the government outlet. In Jharkhand too there were cases of Christians were being socially ostracized. The Pundiguttu village panchayat in May ordered the Christian converts to convert to the majority faith at pain of being denied water from the community well and other penalties.

It is important to point out that the numbers of cases recorded by the Evangelical Fellowship of India network and other Christian groups are only indicative, and the actual numbers may be much larger. The reasons for underreporting are fear among the Christian community, a lack of legal literacy and the reluctance/refusal of police to register cases.

The police have been very reluctant and slow to register FIRs in these cases involving cognizable offences despite being duty-bound to do so under Section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Even in the cases registered with the police, most never come to court.

The consummately organized hate campaign against the Muslim population, beginning mid- December 2019, and erupting in mid-February 2020 in the North eastern suburbs of the Indian capital city New Delhi has raised structural questions on the security of all religious minorities in the country, especially in extraordinary situations of social isolation as under the Covid curfew, with the Christian community questioning how safe they are if the Muslims are so brutally targeted by religious political fanatics structured in seemingly well organised formations on the social media application called WhatsApp, which has a reach of 400 million members in the country. This has been admitted in the charge-sheet present in court by the Delhi police in June, in which it records that groups of young men in East Delhi district were martialled and directed by their handlers to kill members of the minority community.

[In the violence that was unleashed in Delhi, at least 43 Muslims and 10 Hindus were killed. Nine mosques were burnt to the ground, as were academic institutions and the small shops that were the economic stay of the Muslims. Thousands were homeless. Front-line lieutenants of the ruling Bhartiya Janata Party called upon their followers to shoot them, a thinly veiled targeting of Muslims and activists protesting the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the government. The violence raged for several days as the police watched and the political apparatus seemed paralysed.]

While attention is on violence, there have been many other indications from the government and the ruling party of

changes in laws and many policies which will impact the Christian community together with other marginalised groups in many ways. Among them are changes in the environment protection codes that open up vast tracts of tribal-inhabited forest lands in central and north East India citing infrastructure development projects. There is also a renewed demand for all-India law against conversions from the Hindu faith.

While the National Human Rights Commission has set up a committee of its experts to suggest implementation of police reforms especially against torture, the central government is contemplating changes in the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedures (CrPC). Retired judges of the Supreme court have put up red flags, expressing their dismay at the manner in which the Code of Criminal Procedure, or CrPC, is being interpreted by the authorities in the country. In the Covid lockout conditions, there is no possibility of a national debate on such issues, even less so within the Christian community, the poorer of which are hard hit by the loss of jobs, and were among the millions who migrated from urban centres back to their homes in the villages of north and central India.

We are, in particular, disturbed by the Uttar Pradesh state Law Commission, in November 2019, drafting a controversial report recommending heavy penalties of up to seven years in prison to persons deemed to be violating a proposed new law against conversions. The cover page graphic and illustrations of the 268 paged report are taken from www.hindujagruti.org, the website of Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, whose explicit goal is to establish a Hindu Rashtra.

EFIRLC appeals to the Government of India and the respective State Governments of the States named in the report to ensure the rule of law and the security of religious minorities in India.

We especially appeal to the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, to deal stringently with the various right-wing organizations operating in these states whose primary agenda is to create an atmosphere of fear among the Christian community and other religious minorities.

For further information, please write to mail@efirlc.org

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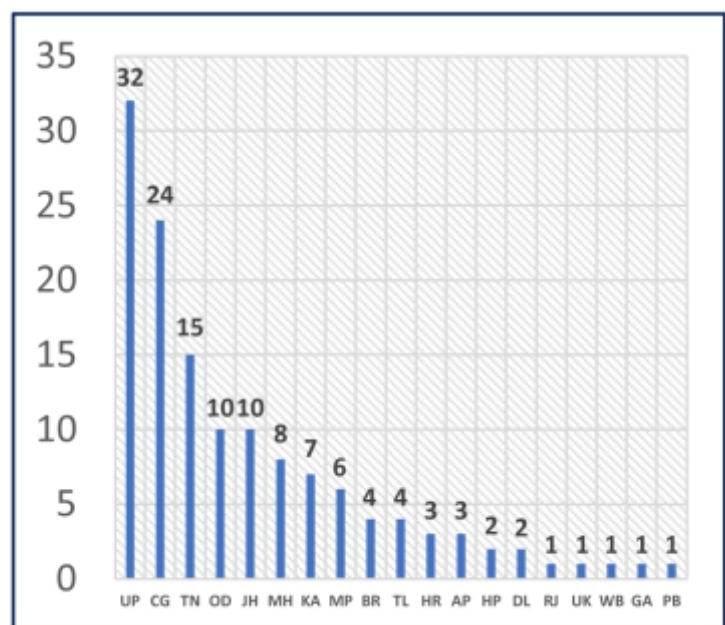
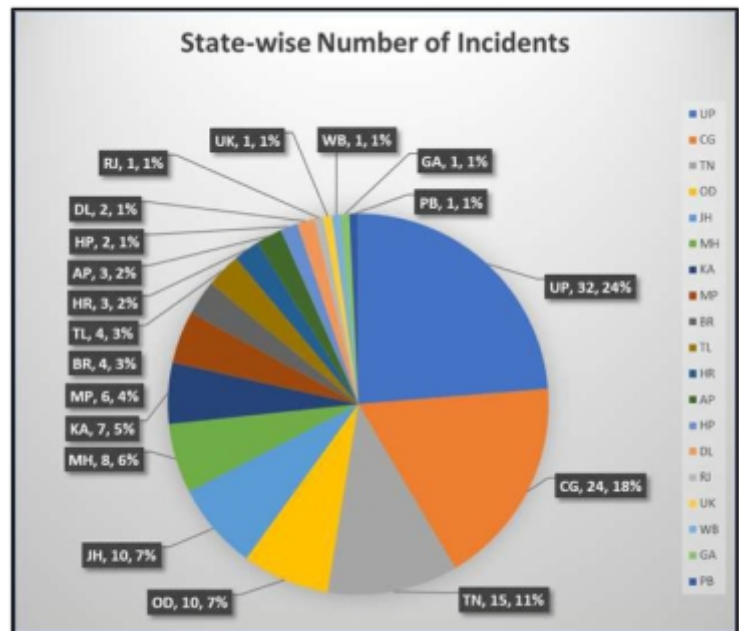
Rev. Vijayesh Lal
National Director – EFIRLC
General Secretary – EFI



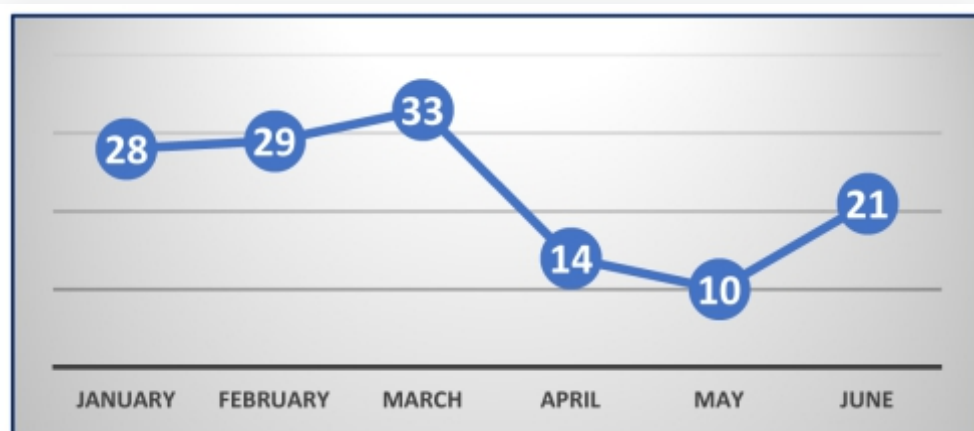
STATISTICS

State-wise Number of Incidents

States	No. of Incidents
UP	32
CG	24
TN	15
OD	10
JH	10
MH	8
KA	7
MP	6
BR	4
TL	4
HR	3
AP	3
HP	2
DL	2
RJ	1
UK	1
WB	1
GA	1
PB	1
Total	135

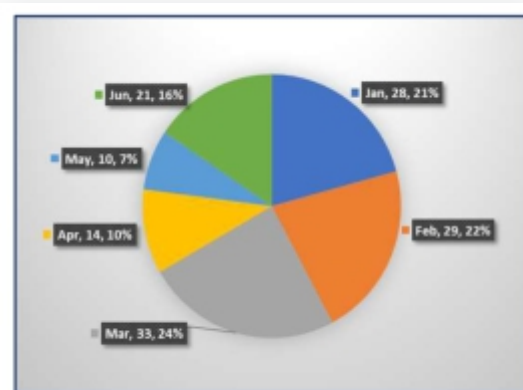
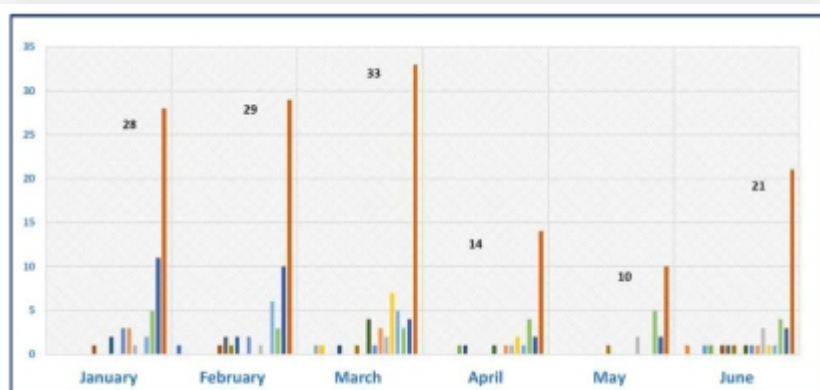


Month-wise Trend of incidents



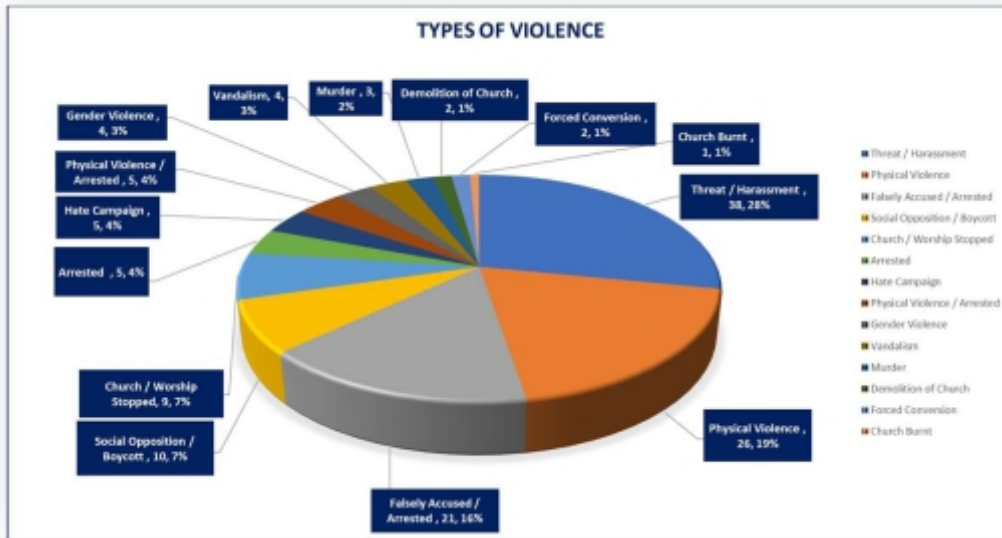
Months	No. of incidents
January	28
February	29
March	33
April	14
May	10
June	21
Total	135

Month-wise Number of Incidents



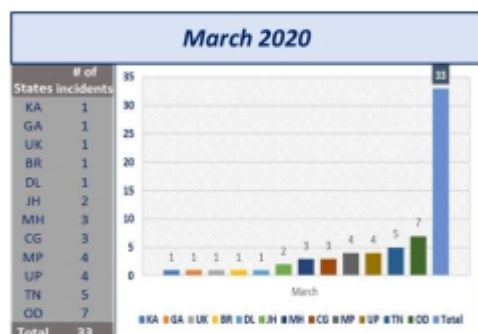
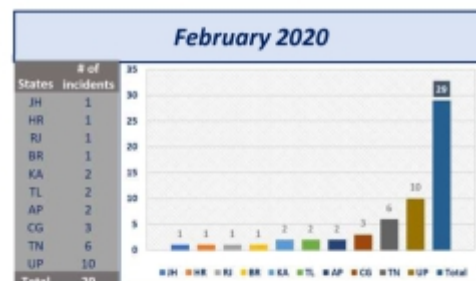
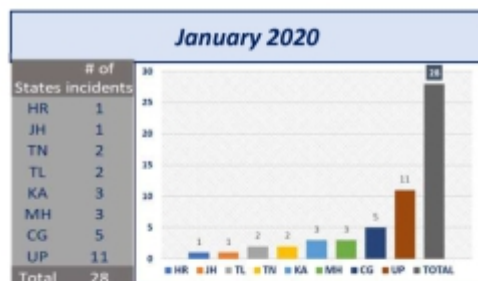
	RJ	PB	UK	GA	WB	HP	DL	HR	AP	BR	TL	MP	KA	MH	JH	OD	TN	CG	UP	Total
January								1			2		3	3	1		2	5	11	28
February	1							1	2	1	2		2		1		6	3	10	29
March			1	1			1			1		4	1	3	2	7	5	3	4	33
April						1	1					1		1	1	2	1	4	2	14
May										1					2			5	2	10
June		1			1	1		1	1	1		1	1	1	3	1	1	4	3	21
TOTAL	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	6	7	8	10	10	15	24	32	135

Types of Violence



Type of violence	No. of incidents
Arrested	5
Church / Worship Stopped	9
Church Burnt	1
Demolition of Church	2
Falsely Accused / Arrested	21
Forced Conversion	2
Gender Violence	4
Hate Campaign	5
Murder	3
Physical Violence	26
Physical Violence / Arrested	5
Social Opposition / Boycott	10
Threat / Harassment	38
Vandalism	4
Grand Total	135

MONTHLY NUMBER OF INCIDENTS



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

- a. Enact a comprehensive national legislation against targeted and communal violence.
- b. Enforce rule of law and arrest members of groups promoting sectarian hate, violence and involving in pre-orchestrated programs of levelling false accusations of conversions upon the Christian priests and missionaries in order to feed their political agenda.
- c. Ensure stringent action under criminal law against all those who channel hate speech with the intention of inciting violence and hatred against the Christian community and other minority groups.
- d. Advise the state governments, especially Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, to deal with right wing organizations operating in these states whose primary agenda is to create an atmosphere of fear among the Christian community and other religious minorities.
- e. Prosecute police officials who fail in their constitutionally mandated duty to enforce the law of the land, by being complicit in attacks against religious minorities, and by shielding the attackers or otherwise scuttling due process of law.
- f. Conduct sensitization programs for the police officials regarding laws on religious freedom as envisaged in the Indian Constitution and on laws related to human rights.
- g. Amend paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 to include Christians and Muslims.
- h. Ensure that an active Commission for Human Rights and Commission for minorities is operational in every state, and that members of each commission are appointed by transparent and non-partisan procedures.
- i. Prevent and pursue through the judicial process, all violent acts against religious and tribal minorities and Dalits.
- j. Initiate long-pending police reforms in the country, the lack of which continues to provoke caste and religion-based police brutality, custodial deaths and targeting of religious minorities.
- k. Direct state governments of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha to ensure protection and safety of religious minorities of tribal backgrounds - among whom multiple cases of social ostracization, rape, murder and marginalization has been reported.



PHOTOS



DETAILS OF INCIDENTS

STATE WISE

ANDHRA PRADESH

On 2 February in Vishakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, villagers stopped a Christian family from burying the mortal remains of one of their family members. Around 35 families live in this village, out of which seven are Christian. After the intervention of a few people from nearby villages, the funeral ceremony was finally conducted, although with much difficulty.

On 16 February in Lakkarajupalem of Aganampudi locality in Vishakhapatnam city of Andhra Pradesh, a local villager opposed and disrupted a Christian prayer meeting. Reportedly this person has been regularly opposing the prayer meetings conducted by Pastor Shivaji, on the pretext that the use of a sound system during the prayers disturbs him. The pastor has been facing opposition for the past one month on Sundays, even though the prayers have been taking place regularly in the locality for over a year.

On 22 June in Atchutapuram in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, Pastor John Mark informed of an imminent threat to two church buildings in the locality. Revenue officials had allegedly joined hands with religious radicals and planned to demolish the church buildings that were constructed on lands gifted by village heads. The two structures have existed in the place for over 12 years. Even though there are other religious buildings in the locality, John Mark reported that only the church buildings were targeted.

three Christians to the Sadar Police Station. The three were later released without any charges pressed against them.

On 15 March in Patna district of Bihar, Pastor Indal Sagar of India Missions was arrested and taken to the Bikram police station. He was arrested while he was conducting the Sunday prayer service. Reportedly, some journalists from Zee News had raised the alarm that amid the Corona virus pandemic the church members were not supposed to gather in public gatherings. The pastor was later released.

On 20 May in Jehanabad district of Bihar, a Christian pastor was physically assaulted by his neighbours who hold religiously radical views. Pastor Thomas Das' wife and daughters were verbally abused, while the pastor was beaten up by the extremists. This comes in a series of regular instances of assault upon the Christian family.

On 29 June in Chhapra city of Saran district in Bihar, Pastor Ajit reported of stone pelting at his house for five continuous nights. The pastor has been working in the area for the past four years and conducts regular prayers. About two years ago, a young boy experienced healing from his sickness as result of the pastor's prayers. Subsequently the boy and his mother chose to attend regular prayer meetings. This did not go well with the community leaders in the locality and they started harassing the pastor. From 24 June onwards, some miscreants started throwing stones at his house late every night with loud threats, demanding that the pastor leave the locality.

BIHAR

On 6 February in Hajipur town of Vishali district in Bihar, three Christians were confronted and persecuted by a large group of radicals. The trio - Satendar Kumar Ram, Kamal Singh and his wife Pramshila Devi - had met a woman on the street who was unwell with severe knee pain. This prompted them to ask the woman whether they could pray for her, to which the woman willingly agreed. While they prayed, a large group of radicals surrounded them. They seemed to be very agitated by the prayer. Before the three Christians could realize what was happening, the fanatics pounced on Satendar and Kamal. They grabbed them and started severely assaulting them. Soon Christian advocacy groups were alerted about the situation and were able to call up senior police officials for help. Subsequently, police arrived at the spot and took the

CHHATTISGARH

On 8 January in Aalkanhar village in PakhanjurTehsil of Kanker district in Chhattisgarh, some Christian families were ostracized from the village. The village authorities restricted the use of public amenities by the victims. Christians were also forbidden to interact with their relatives in the village.

On 12 January in Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, police and administrative authorities sought to collect information from Christians. When asked about the need for such an exercise that targeted only the Christian community, they responded that the survey was ordered by higher officials.

On 13 January in JagdalpurTehsil of Bastar district in

Chhattisgarh, villagers socially boycotted three Christians because of their faith in Christ. The village authorities also imposed a penalty of Rs. 1,50,000 on one of the Christians for burying her husband in the village. Further, they threatened the Christians to leave the village or pay Rs. 12,000 immediately.

On 13 January in Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh, a Christian family reported of continual harassment from four religious radicals. Allegedly, the radicals have been pressuring the Christian family to abandon their faith in Christ. The radicals seem to be intent on forcefully acquiring the family's land and converting it into a public pond.

On 16 January in Kawardha city of Kabirdham district in Chhattisgarh, a Christian pastor's house was destroyed by religious radicals. Of late, Pastor Jose Thomas had been continually facing threats from a local mob of religious radicals. They had earlier warned him to stop prayer meetings in the area or pay for it with his life. On the day of the incident, the radicals trespassed into the pastor's property and destroyed his house using a mechanical excavator.

On 1 February in Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh, villagers opposed the burial of the mortal remains of a Christian man. When the family tried to use the village graveyard for the burial, they were opposed due to their Christian faith.

On 20 February in Tikanpal village near Kirandul of Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, a Christian family was brutally beaten because of their faith. The Christians were under pressure from religious radicals to recant their faith and that became the reason for the attack on them. Podiya Tati, his wife and children, and his mother were beaten up by assailants - Baman Tati, Lisa Tati, Raju Tati, and others. The attackers not only beat them up but also broke their house, damaged the borewell, burnt their paddy and other eatables, and forcefully took away the chickens that the family owned. Somehow the Christians saved their lives and got admitted at the Kirandul Government hospital for treatment. The attackers, meanwhile, have issued a threat to kill the Christians.

On 21 February in Balrampur district of Chhattisgarh, a church service was disrupted by a mob of religious radicals. A congregation of Christians had organized a three-day convention from 19 to 21 February for Christians living in the vicinity. While the convention was in progress, a mob of assailants barged into the church premises and accused the guest speaker of forceful religious conversions. Thereafter, they verbally abused

the Christians gathered there and threatened to kill the pastors and the church leaders.

On 17 March in Nagri police station area of Dhamtari district in Chhattisgarh, eleven Christians - Pramod Das, Roshan Netam, Anand Mandavi, JaylalMandavi, ThuniramMarkam and others - were savagely beaten up by religious radicals due to their Christian faith.

On 30 March in KatekalyanTehsil of Dakshin Bastar Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, a Christian family was forced to convert to Hinduism. The incident occurred around evening, when about 120 people led by Aayturam, Maddaram, and Sukkoram, came to meet SanturamMarkam, HandoramMarkam, ManuramMarkam and their mother, MangriMarkam, and demanded that they leave their Christian faith and return to the Hindu religion. When they denied the demand, three of them were beaten up. The radicals now intent to conduct a ceremony, demanded Rs. 5,000, and a goat, a pig, a hen, some coconuts, and incense, as penalty from the Christians. The Christians have been warned that if they did not oblige, they would be excommunicated from the village.

On the evening of 31 March in KatekalyanTehsil of Dakshin Bastar Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, Raju Podyam, a Christian priest, was kidnapped by villagers, who were incited by religious radicals, and locked up in a room owing to his religious beliefs. The incident occurred when a mob of 100 to 150 villagers attacked a church in the village. They caught hold of the priest and locked him in a room. Since the window of the room was not bolted well, he managed to escape and hide in a forest. From there he was able to make phone calls to the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum seeking help. Due to a strict protocol on police movement in the Naxal affected area, the local police inspector was unwilling to go in the area to rescue the priest at night. Subsequently on 1 April, Raju Podyam was able to make it back home safely. A FIR has been lodged in the case.

On 6 April in Jaram village of Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, axe-wielding tribal animists lingered outside a Christian family's home at about 11 p.m. Mangduram Kashyap, his wife Lalita Bai Kashyap and their children locked themselves inside fearing for their lives. The assailants kept watch outside to hack the Christians to death if they stepped out. In the morning of 7 April, at around 6 a.m., six of the villagers took the Kashyap family by force to a place in the village where a mob of around 200 villagers surrounded them. Without uttering a word, the assailants started beating the Christian men and woman in Kashyap's family, including their infant

grandchild. The village council told the family they would be brutally killed if they reported the attack to police and fined them Rs. 5,000, a goat, and few chickens. Mangduram Kashyap had to undergo treatment for his injured eye. The family complained to police, but no action was taken.

On 7 April in Gadiras village in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, a mob of 150 villagers harassed and threatened a woman, MadaviDurgi, and her husband, Madavi Bheema, to abandon their faith in Christianity and perform 'GharWapsi' (reconversion to Hinduism). The villagers demanded livestock, coconuts, and money to be donated as offerings. They then locked the two in their house and ordered them to leave the village. Out of fear, the Christians ran away and took refuge in a nearby jungle.

On 19 April in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh, NilaKunjam(25), a Christian woman, was severely beaten up by three middle aged men on account of her faith. Around 8 am, the three men stormed into Nila's house, shouted at her parents, dragged her out and beat her on her back, head and knees. A mob of at least 60 villagers gathered, accusing Kunjam of defiling her caste. During the shocking ordeal, the mob kept looking at the men who vowed to kill her. When Kumar Kunjam, another Christian, tried to videotape the ordeal, the mob snatched away his phone and slapped him. NilaKunjam received severe blows on her back and knees and had to be admitted for hospital treatment. When her family filed a complaint at Bacheli police station, officers told them that they cannot take any action until the government lifts the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

On 5 May in Salhephal village of Bastar district in Chhattisgarh, tribal animists in India told five Christian families they would lose their harvest lands unless they returned to their tribal religion and beat them when they refused. When the families answered a summons to a meeting with village leaders, they found the tribal elders estimating the value of their lands. Earlier, the Christians had forbidden a tribal animist leader, DullaPoyami, to perform tribal worship on their land, he said. The village leaders told the Christians that since they were not taking part in the tribal rituals they could not be allowed to profit from their agricultural lands. The Christians emphasized that the lands were registered in their names, and they were working hard to earn their bread. Infuriated, the elders pounced on two Christians - MaddaPoyami and BaddaPoyami - and began beating them, while a mob of at least 60 people gathered around them, clamouring for Christians to renounce their faith in Christ.

On 6 May in Naktoka village of Bastar district in

Chhattisgarh, a mob of religious fanatics opposed the burial of the mortal remains of a Christian and demanded that the body be cremated as per Hindu rites. Bhima Kashyap breathed his last on 5 May. Since then about a hundred villagers began to oppose the burial of the body.

On 15 May in Datewada district of Chhattisgarh, two Christians - Rangma Nag, and her son Gauri Shanker - were pressured to leave their Christian faith during a village council meeting. The meeting was called at 8 am, where the villagers demanded that the duo renounce their Christian beliefs or leave the village. Around 10 am more villagers, belonging to the Mahara community, joined in the meeting and exerted pressure on the Christians. Subsequently the village head announced his decision to allow the Christians a time period of one month to make their choice.

On 20 May in Kokarpal village of Sukma block in Sukma district of Chhattisgarh, Bhima Markam and his family who are Christians, were subjected to physical assault and threats from villagers. For three days the villagers continued to issue warnings to Markam to stop talking about his Christian beliefs or face fatal consequences. On the night of the incident, around 9 pm, the radicals barged into Markam's house, beat his family with sticks and chased them out of the village. After spending the night in a nearby forest the Christian family were able to return home the next morning. The family has been warned they would be killed if they sought police's help.

On 29 May in Kumud village under Dhanora police station of Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh, Bajjo Bai, a Christian woman was reportedly raped and murdered. The woman, a member at a local church, often recounted the harassment she was being subjected to at his village owing to her Christian beliefs. She was publicly threatened four times to renounce her faith. On 25 May she had gone to a nearby forest to gather firewood. Her mutilated body was found four days later with the bundle of firewood lying nearby. A local found the body and immediately reported to the police. Bajjo Bai had accepted the Christian faith two years ago and has left behind four minor children.

On 17 June in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, Narendra Sahu and Usha Sahu, a Christian couple were summoned by Abhanpur police based on a false complaint of religious conversion. Police, however, did not specify the nature of the charges. Eventually they were let go. The couple feel that it was only meant to warn and harass them owing to their faith.

On 21 June in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, four

Christians were reportedly beaten up severely during a village meeting owing to their Christian faith.

On 24 June in Lakhram of Ratanpur taluk in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh, Pastor Nand Kumar Kamal was summoned by Ratanpur police based on a false complaint registered against him. Police informed him that they had received complaints from Pratap Gaud that the pastor had lured his wife Sarita to resume her attendance at the church. Sarita, who was once a frequent visitor at Kamal's church, had stopped attending for two years. The complaint further alleged that the pastor had threatened Sarita of consequences if she did not attend and would give her money if she did.

On the night of 26 June in Badrenga village of Bastar district in Chhattisgarh, three Christian women - Evangelist Chalki Kashyap, Rupa Kashyap and MunnaMandavi - were severely beaten up by Budro, Hungo, Ringo and another 15-20 villagers, owing to their religious conviction. The women were returning to their homes after saying prayers at a church member's house.

DELHI

On 21 March in Burari constituency of Central Delhi district in Delhi-NCR region of Delhi, a complaint was made against Pastor Azad and his church members for holding weekly prayer meetings. Anti-Christian elements had been threatening him continually alleging that he was involved in religious conversion activities.

On 17 April in East Delhi of National Capital Territory of Delhi, a legal notice was served to Harsha Batra, a Christian, with a false allegation of engaging in conversion by fraudulent means. The notice states that he had tried to convert his business associate who was also his distant relative. Batra categorically denied the allegation and reported that he had only shared his Christian belief with the person for a couple of minutes.

GOA

On 15 March in South Goa district of Goa, two churches - The New Jerusalem Church and The Gypsy Church - were

attacked by a mob of approximately 90-100 people led by Suresh Rajput. Pastor Pandu Naik leads both churches. During the attack three Christians suffered minor injuries and some of the church property were damaged. The violent mob accused the Christians of conversion. Subsequently police were called, and the mob was taken to the Vasco Police Station. Though the mob pressured the police to act against the Christians, police sternly warned the mob. No FIR was filed by the pastor.

HARYANA

On 18 February in Kirmach village of Kurukshetra district in Haryana, Christians were hounded by religious radicals while a prayer service was underway. Reportedly, Pastor Sukhdev Masih and a few Christians had gathered at a house for a prayer. Just then a large group of villagers surrounded the house, started damaging the property, and made loud threats at the Christians. Scared and in panic, the Christians locked themselves in the house, and called local police for protection.

On 5 January in Sonipat district of Haryana, a group of religious extremists assaulted Pastor Naresh and some Christians who had gathered for a prayer meeting at a home. While the meeting was going on, the assailants barged into the house and physically attacked those that had gathered. During the assault they threatened a Christian woman that they would burn her alive. After the attack, Christians are continually living in fear, and threats and opposition from radicals continue.

On 14 June in Pinjore of Panchkula district in Haryana, Pastor Tony Joseph was surrounded by the extremists in a believers' house when he visited for a regular prayer meeting. Pastor Joseph is associated with AG Church and is frequent to the believer's house for quite a few years. About 150 extremists were surrounding the house. Fortunately, the main door of the house was locked from inside. However, life-threatening comments with abusive words were made by extremists. Subsequently, other believers arrived at the spot, rescued pastor Tony, and took him away with themselves. While the pastor was leaving the spot, he was manhandled by some of the extremists.

On 19 April in Rakkar village of Dharamshala Tehsil in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh, Hari Bahadur, a Christian, was forced to chant "Jai Sri Ram" by members of a radical religious group. Bahadur along with his wife,

Nisha, was paying a visit to his friend, Kiran Kumar's house. While there, a group of fanatics barged into the house and demanded that Bahadur recite the chant. Soon police from Yol police outpost arrived at the spot. ASI Jagdish questioned Kiran Kumar, who in turn stated that Bahadur was his friend and had come to visit him. Police began a search of the house and their car, but no objectionable items were found.

On 1 June in Bhuntar town of Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh, Pastor Prem Gill was falsely accused by his neighbour, Devendra Chaudhary, who allegedly is a staunch follower of a religious extremist organization. Chaudhary lodged a complaint at the local police station at Bhuntar. Chaudhary had been constantly targeting the pastor's family on account of their Christian faith and publicly humiliating and verbally assaulting them for the past ten days. In his bid to further defame the pastor, Chaudhary orchestrated a publication in a local newspaper that accused the pastor of involving in religious reconversion through allurement and force. Police registered a FIR against the pastor under IPC section 153A.



JHARKHAND

On 6 February in Lohadanda village of Jainagar block in Koderma district of Jharkhand, around 100 Christians were trapped and locked inside a house amid a violent uproar outside. The incident occurred when Pastor Sukhdev Pandit and others had gathered for prayer. Soon local villagers surrounded the house and did not let the Christians come out. They aggressively confiscated Christian hymn books and raised violent threats. Subsequently, after unceasing phone calls from Christian advocacy groups for protection of the Christians, police personnel from Jainagar police station arrived at the spot and dispersed the crowd.

On 11 February in Jainagar town of Jainagar block in Koderma district of Jharkhand, a group of fifteen people barged into a prayer service that was taking place at the home of a Christian. The mob disrupted the prayer and demanded Pastor Mahender Singh to stop the meeting. Subsequently, they filed a complaint against the pastor and a FIR was registered against fifteen Christians.

On 2 March in Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand, a written complaint was registered against Pastor Ganesh Yadav at Barkhata police station accusing him of involving in

'conversion activity' at his home. When police personnel investigated the complaint, they found that the allegation of forceful conversion was baseless.

On 8 March in Barkatha block of Hazaribagh district in Jharkhand, police barged into a prayer meeting and disrupted the program. The incident occurred when Pastor Ganesh Yadav and his church members had gathered for the Sunday worship service. Subsequently, policemen resorted to physical assault on Christians to bring the meeting to a halt.

On 16 April in Sandih village of Khunti district in Jharkhand, a group of religious extremists barged into a home at around 11 pm, armed with guns and shot at a young Christian girl named Neelam Purty. The bullets injured her leg and finger. The assailants threatened her and her family to stop converting others in the village to Christianity. They warned them that they would meet a similar fate as their father who was shot dead by extremists in 2015.

On 17 April in Bichagara village of Khunti district in Jharkhand, Reena Kumari, a Christian, was severely beaten up when she refused to renounce her Christian beliefs. The girl had earlier been forced to attend a village meeting where she was told to sign a document stating that she was willing to give up on Christianity. When she refused, the infuriated villagers assaulted her. She sustained grievous injuries on her head and had to be admitted at a local hospital.

On 7 May in BanjariPatan village of Palamu district in Jharkhand, police issued stern warnings to radical animist villagers who had persistently been threatening Christians to leave their faith. Tribal mobs armed with clubs went to the homes of 16 families of a church every night for nearly three weeks, threatening to kill them if they did not return to their animistic Sarna religion. The persecutors were going with batons and wooden sticks, not giving the Christians any chance to say no, but emphasizing that either they reconvert to the Sarna fold or they would kill them right then and there. Of the 16 church families (about 130 people) threatened in one area, two families were terrorized into returning to their ancestral Sarna religion. Including Christian worshippers from surrounding villages, about 250 to 300 people attend Pastor Sarabjit Bharati's Kripa Bhavan SalomChurch. Though the Christians had been used to threats of expulsion and boycott in the past, the recent death threats marked a new level of terror as the mobs arrived at their homes every night for about three weeks. On 7 May, Christians registered a police complaint at the Patan police station, and 10 officers came to the village. The team sternly warned the villagers of adverse

consequences if they dared to knock at one more house at night. Since then, the threats have stopped.

On the evening of 10 May in Chaibasa town of West Singhbhum district in Jharkhand, an under-construction church building was damaged by miscreants. Earlier during the day, local villagers summoned Pastor Manoj Halshi and other Christians to a meeting to discuss on the construction. When no one turned up for three hours the Christians left the meeting venue and went home; only to be confronted by miscreants at the construction site later. The miscreants damaged the building, assaulted the women present and tore off their clothes. When the Christians resorted to the police station for help, no action was taken. Thus emboldened, the miscreants have continued their threats and warnings. Christians are now living in fear.

On 8 June in Bari village under Sayko police station in Khunti district of Jharkhand, Kande Munda (25), a Christian, was murdered by six to seven unidentified religious radicals. Reportedly a sharp-edged weapon was used for the murder. Police came to know about it the next morning. After the post-mortem, the dead body was handed over to the family. Members of his family confirmed that some people forcefully took Munda from his house on the night of 7 June. Munda was a faithful churchgoer and was the target of radicals owing to his Christian beliefs.

On 22 June in Dhanbad district of Jharkhand, two young Christians - Kaina (27) and Sushant (24) - were arrested and taken to Beliapur Police Station on charges that they were involved in religious conversion activities. Police seemed to have acted against them due to pressure from a religious extremist group and local media that had incited people to file a complaint against the Christians. Police assured that they had not received any formal complaint of illegal conversions and had taken the young men into custody to protect them from the 500-odd mob that was vying for their arrest. The two were later admitted into a hospital.

On 24 June in Palamu district of Jharkhand, Pastor Sarbjit and his family members were beaten up by local villagers who were opposed to his religious activities. The incident occurred while the Christian family was saying prayers inside their home. A FIR was registered at Panki Police station against the pastor under IPC sections related to land dispute, scuffle, and outraging the modesty of a woman (354 of IPC). In response the pastor filed a counter FIR by the pastor under relevant sections on trespassing private property and physical assault.

KARNATAKA

On 25 January in Krishnarajapuram neighbourhood of Bangalore city in Karnataka, a religious radical confronted a Christian pastor for conducting prayer meetings in the area. Pastor Rajendran Thomas holds religious prayers regularly, and about 25 to 30 Christians attend on Sundays and other days of the week. On the day of the incident, a person named Ramesh, having affiliations with a right-wing group, confronted the pastor and asked him to show authorization papers to hold the meetings. With an aggressive and threatening tone of voice, he warned the pastor to desist from holding prayers or face consequences.

On 13 January in Kanakapura city of Ramanagara district of Karnataka, right-wing organizations held a massive protest against a proposed 114-foot statue of Jesus Christ. They alleged that the statue was to be built on government land and was sponsored by a local legislator and senior Congress leader, D. K. Shivakumar. The protesters said the demonstration was also against the larger issue of alleged religious conversion that was taking place in the region. Hundreds of people, clad with saffron scarf took part in "Kanakapura Chalo", organized by the religious organization called Hindu Jagaran Vedike, holding saffron flags in their hand, marched from Aiyappa Swamy temple at Kanakapura to the Tahsildar's (tax officer) office, shouting slogans like "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Jai Sri Ram." Protesters accused Shivakumar of trying to turn "Kapalibetta" or "Muneshwara betta", the hill on which the proposed statue is to come up, into "Yesu betta." Bharatiya Janata Party leader and former Minister C. P. Yogeshwar, who took part in the protest, accused Shivakumar of trying to instigate communal violence for his politics.

On 19 January in Malasamudra village of Gadag Tehsil in Gadag district of Karnataka, religious extremists beat Christian children during a worship service. Later they filed a police complaint against the church. The Christians had begun worshipping at 7 a.m. when the radicals came up the stairs to the terrace, unnoticed. Soon the small congregation saw the intruders taking photos and videotaping them. When Mary Bellary, who along with her husband Hanumanthappa Bellary was hosting the worship, tried to stop them from taking video of the 12 children present, the intruders pushed her away. The Christians asked them to leave; instead, the intruders put their hands on the women's chests and pulled their sarees and tore them. The attack and threat so terrified the women that they did not leave their homes for the rest of the day. At about 7 p.m., officers from Gadag Town Police



Station showed up with word that a complaint had been filed against the Christians.

On 9 February in Mundgod police station area of Uttara Kannada district in Karnataka, a Christian family was taken into custody on allegations of religious conversion activities. Emmanuel and his wife Esther, church members of the Friends Missionary Prayer Band, were accused of carrying out religious conversion work. With the intervention of Christians rights-based groups, the two were let go without the police pressing any charges against them.

On 21 February in Hassan district of Karnataka, radical fanatics attacked Pastor Raju Arasikere and his church members. The fanatics attacked the houses of four Christian families - they broke the doors and windows of their houses, verbally abused the Christians, and brutally thrashed them. Two Christians were severely injured and had to be admitted at the Hassan District Government Hospital. The attack seemed to be a bid to instil fear among the Christians.

On 1 March in Benakanakoppa village in Gadag Tehsil of Gadag district in Karnataka, a pastor was tied to a tree, an electric pole, and a pillar, and brutally assaulted. The incident occurred right after religious radicals barged into a church while a Sunday worship service was taking place. Dressed in t-shirts with "Jai Sri Ram" written over them, the radicals hurled abuses at the church members, damaged the instruments and equipment's inside, and began an assault on Pastor Manju Keralli. After several punches and kicks, they dragged the pastor out of the meeting hall, tied him to a tree, and continued the blows and punches. They took him to two other places in the same village and tied him to an electrical pole and a pillar in the marketplace. The assault continued for more than three hours. Later, police arrived and took him to the police station. Allegedly, police threatened him too with foul language, accusing him of professing a foreign faith. A case was filed against the pastor under IPC Section 295. No case was filed against the assailants.

On 6 June in Harpanahalli taluk of Davangere district in Karnataka a Christian family was excommunicated from their village by the village heads due to their faith. Upon receiving information, a Christian advocacy group contacted Mr. Nayak and his family, called up local police officials and sought for their protection. Police assured the victims of all possible help.

MADHYA PRADESH

On 4 March in Sehore city of Sehore district in Madhya Pradesh, violence against Christians in India hit a new level, when religious nationalists ran their motorcycles over a key Christian evangelical leader after beating him. Armed with bamboo rods and a thick metal chain with a heavy lock on it, the ten nationalists beat Isaac Paulose, 48, and then ran their five motorcycles over him, fracturing one of his ribs. Paulose, an elder at the Grace Fellowship Church (Christian Evangelistic Assemblies Church) which is pastored by Uttar Kumar Deep, was attacked shortly after dropping his 5-year-old son off at school that morning. Paulose was rushed to a local government hospital, and then later that same day transferred to Bhopal Fracture Hospital. Later, Sehore police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against unidentified assailants.

On 8 March in Surpala village of Barwaha Tehsil in Khargone District of Madhya Pradesh, Pastor Prakash Ganthe was asked to vacate his rented accommodation on account of his Christian faith. At around 2:00 pm the pastor's landlord met him and insulted him with a foul language for conducting prayer meetings.

On 10 March in Dilodh village of Pandhana Tehsil in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, Pastor Lalu Kirade and his family, which is comprised of his mother, father and four small children, were chased out of a village. The pastor had been independently (without affiliation to any organization) holding Christian prayers in the village and a couple of families would often gather regularly. He had been earlier warned by villagers to stop Christian activities. On the day of the incident, some ten to twelve villagers, who seemed to be in an inebriated condition, barged into his thatched house and brought it down to rubble. They destroyed everything the family owned. They then physically assaulted the family, warned them to stop all Christian prayers and threatened the pastor to never return to the village again. Afraid and shocked, the family ran out of the village. He has now built a temporary plastic-sheet tent and is left unprotected and helpless. The pastor has decided not to lodge a police complaint. An EFI staff travelled to the location and provided the necessary aid to the shocked family.

On 14 March in Mandwa village of Nepanagar Tehsil in Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh, a Christian family was refused permission to perform funeral rites by Mandwa villagers. Donger Singh had lost his wife, Lalbai, and wanted to perform funeral rites as per the Christian tradition. However, villagers opposed the decision and pressured him to follow the village ritual of cremation.



After the intervention of police, the funeral was finally conducted as per Christian rites.

On 3 April in Bilood village of Pandhane Tehsil in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, tribal animists who had earlier demolished Pastor Lalu Kirade's house and threw him and his family out of their village in March, seriously injured him in an ambushed assault. The pastor had pitched a tent under open sky after being forced out of the village. On the day of the incident, while he was returning from a grocery store, six men and two women, physically assaulted him. After beating, choking, and pelting the pastor with a stone the villagers threatened to destroy his vocal cords as one of the assailants put her foot on his throat. While he lay bleeding a few Christians in the locality, who received an alarm about the attack, rushed to the spot to the pastor's rescue. Despite the pastor's complaint at the Jhirmiya police station no action has been taken by the police thus far.

On 22 June in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh, a video purportedly claiming religious conversion went viral on social media. Mr. Onkar Singh, a social worker, claimed that volunteers of the Human Development Service Association, a Christian group, called him to the office of their church and carried out religious conversion work on the pretext of giving free food grains. He alleged that the entire process of conversion went on for several days during and after lockdown. He further claimed that missionaries convert others by offering prayers to the needy. In response, the Director of HDSA, Father Thomas Philip refuted all such false allegations and clarified that prayers are meant for seeking divine protection amid the pandemic. He further said that HDSA had received a list of needy families from the administration, and about 80 thousand people had been provided with food.



MAHARASHTRA

On 23 April in Palghar district of Maharashtra, radical leaders raised allegations that Christians were linked to the unfortunate killing of three ascetics by a tribal mob in Gadchinchale village of Palghar District on 17 April. Swami Nischalanand a religious leader remarked in one of the social media platforms that Gadchinchale had 18-20 churches within 5 kilometres, and that each of them was paying Rs. 2 lakhs to each fresh convert. He claimed that the arrested tribals could be converted Christians. Trashing such insensitive remarks, Christian leaders felt that linking this gruesome incident to the church was a

deliberate attempt to malign the Christian community, and that such provocative statements could increase attacks on Christians, not just in Palghar district, also elsewhere.

On 19 June in Khaprikene village of Nagpur district in Maharashtra, villagers, influenced by anti-Christians, decided to prohibit the entry of pastors and Christian leaders in the village. They were falsely accused of carrying out religious conversion through allurements and force.

On 5 January in Nalasopara town of Palghar district in Maharashtra, a First Information Report was filed against the Last Hope Ministry Church. A week ago, a local politician had levelled allegations that the church members and its pastor, Noel Lewis, were practicing black magic and witchcraft in the guise of conducting prayer meetings. Allegedly, the politician belongs to a radical religious group in the locality. A FIR was registered at the Nalasopara police station.

On 9 January in Osmanabad district in Maharashtra, despite threats and pressure from right-wing organizations, veteran poet N D Mahanor inaugurated the prestigious Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (All India Marathi Literature Festival), amid tight security. Right-wing members had warned Mahanor—a Padma Shri and Sahitya Academy awardee—not to inaugurate the festival since a Christian priest, Father Francis D'Britto, who is also a Marathi writer, is presiding over the festival. The literature festival was held from 10-12 January in Osmanabad. The Akhil Bharatiya Brahman Mahasabha had sent a letter asking him not to inaugurate the event, as they would be protesting at the venue.

On 31 January in Sonagaon Police Station area of Nagpur district in Maharashtra, John Narayane, a Christian, was brutally beaten up by Manesh Rao, for following the Christian faith. John, a member of the New Life Church, had been facing frequent harassment from Rao for the past couple of weeks. On the day of the incident, Rao, in an inebriated state, launched a physical and verbal assault on John. He cursed him for being a Christian and used profane words against Christians and Christianity. Subsequently, a Non-Cognizable Offence Information was filed by John at the Sonagaon Police Station.

On 6 March in Rede village of Akola Taluka in Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra, religious extremists issued threats to Pastor Gideon Shantaram Karnik for conducting prayer meetings in the village. Recently, the pastor completed the construction of a building, and has been in the process of gaining permission to conduct prayer meetings from the Block Development Officer.

Reportedly, the BDO had agreed to the request and granted permission. However, local extremists, espousing a right-wing ideology, initiated a hate campaign on social media (WhatsApp) against the pastor. The message that has been doing rounds is that the pastor is involved in religious conversion activity, and the BDO is supporting him. The pastor now fears that the situation will escalate.

On 11 March in Rawanwadi village of Gondia Tehsil in Gondia district of Maharashtra, a Christian family was ostracized from the village owing to their Christian faith. Pastor Anand Dongre and family was issued a notice of social boycott by a village council citing his religious beliefs.

On 18 March in Akola district of Maharashtra, Pastor Vinod Hatole, his mother, and his son were beaten up by anti-Christian elements on account their Christian faith. The pastor has been opposed frequently by the locals for holding prayer meetings.



ODISHA

On 10 March in Kandhamal district of Odisha, a pastor was verbally harassed on account of his Christian faith. A day earlier, some locals had come to meet the pastor with demand for a donation for a religious festival. Since the pastor was not at home, they returned the next day. The pastor politely refused their demands stating that he was a Christian. To which the locals took offense and started hurling abuses at him. They threatened him of social ostracization for his beliefs. Reportedly, this is one of the many incidents of opposition and threats the pastor has been regularly facing.

On 13 March in Malkangiri district of Odisha, a Christian family was physically assaulted for praying in their home. Kama Sodi and family had gathered in their home for prayer when some radicals barged into their house and brutally assaulted the family members.

On the morning of 13 March in Dasmantpur block of Koraput district in Odisha, a prayer hall was set on fire by religious extremists. A petition has been filed by local pastors, Ayub Khora and Sukanti Khora, along with other Christians, at the District Collectors' office, who in turn has directed the Superintendent of Police to investigate the matter.

On 14 March in Hirakud town of Sambalpur district of Odisha, Pastor Amos Khatriya was called for a village council meeting, where he was threatened to stop Christian prayer meetings in the area. The pastor is associated with the Immanuel House of Worship (Hyderabad) and has been gathering with Christians for prayers for the past two years. Reportedly they have been regularly targeted by the locals. During the village council meeting the Christians were warned to desist from holding the Sunday prayers, otherwise be prepared for dire consequences. Prayers are conducted at a bamboo shed erected on Pastor Amos' land and about sixty Christians gather regularly for prayers.

On 17 March in Thakurmunda block in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, two Christian families were robbed of their belongings and livestock. The flurry of events began on 2 March when a prayer for child dedication at a Vishwavani Church, led by Pastor Trilochan Danga, was opposed by villagers, and hence had to be stopped. On 3 March, a Christian man was beaten up when Christian families denied making a monetary donation for an upcoming 'puja'. Amid the violence, two Christian families from the Santal tribe were forced to flee from their village. Subsequently, a complaint was made at the Karanjia police station. Though the police demanded the villagers to let the two families enter the village, the Christians were again opposed by radicals. This compelled them to take shelter in a neighbouring village. When they approached the Karanjia police a second time, three constables were sent along for protection. However, the villagers did not give in. On 16 March, the Christians approached the Sub Collector, who sent seven police constables along with the two families the next day. Upon their arrival at their houses, they were shocked to see that all their belongings, livestock and food supplies had been stolen.

On 20 March in Muniguda block of Rayagada district in Odisha, villagers threatened Christians for conducting prayer meetings in their village. Rajender Bhaskar, a member of the church, reported that the congregation had been facing regular threats and abuse from the locals. On the day of the incident, the villagers threatened the pastor and the Christians to stop all prayers activities as the village had a large Hindu population. They were warned that if they did not comply, they would have to face dreadful consequences. This congregation has been gathering for the past three years.

On 27 March in Borapada village of Dhenkanal Sadar Tehsil in Dhenkanal district of Odisha, Pastor Sarat Laguri and his family were threatened by local religious radicals. While

duly observing the 21-day lockdown over the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak, the small family had gathered inside their home for prayer. Halfway into the prayer, some religious radicals arrived at their house and started abusing them. Reportedly, the pastor has been facing threats and harassment for quite some time.

On 13 April in the Gajapati district of Odisha, Dikisha, a Christian evangelist, was blamed for the death of a 20-year-old villager named Sushant. Before dying Sushant wanted his parents to call the evangelist to pray for him. He was convinced that if Dikisha prayed for him he would be healed. However, his parents refused to do so. Upon Sushant's death the grief-stricken family decided to carry the corpse to the evangelist's house instead of going ahead with funeral formalities. They accused him of performing a fatal 'witchcraft' upon the young man. The family was later persuaded by villagers to perform the last rites. Subsequently, a meeting was called by villagers and a 'tantrik' (witch doctor) invited to consult whether their local deity was angered by the evangelist's Christian faith.

On 17 April in Ganjam district of Odisha, a Christian priest was arrested by Mohana police and detained for three hours at the police station. The incident occurred when Father Dhiren Nayak was walking from the hostel to his residence, both of which are located inside the church campus. Two policemen entered the campus, reprimanded him for breaking COVID-19 lockdown regulations, and asked him to sign on a register stating that he had flouted rules. Police then escorted him to the police station and kept him in custody for three hours from 12.30 pm. Despite Father Nayak's insistence that he was only moving inside his campus, the policemen were unwilling to budge. He was freed later and allowed to return to his residence. This incident drew criticisms from various religious sections of the society. Christians feel that the arrest was intentional harassment to the Christian religion.

On 4 June in Kenduguda village of Malkangiri district in Odisha, shocking news came in of the death of a 16-year-old Christian boy. The mutilated body of SambaruMadkami was found buried in the jungle of Malkangiri, about six kilometres from his village. The tribal villagers, who are animists, had seized him on 4 June, after failing to kill the male heads of the three Christian families they had targeted in their village. Incited by religious extremists, the animists decided to stab and stone the young boy to death for his Christian faith.

PUNJAB

On 7 June in Firozpur district of Punjab, Pastor Ashok Kumar was physically assaulted and robbed by religious radicals. The incident occurred around 10 pm while he was standing outside his church premises. Some motorcycle borne men, armed with batons and weapons, pounced on the pastor, severely beat him, and snatched whatever cash he had with him. They accused him of engaging in religious conversion activities and threatened him to desist from the same. The pastor has faced similar threats in the past.

RAJASTHAN

On 23 February in Redwa Kalan village in Abu Road Tehsil of Sirohi district in Rajasthan, police arrested Pastor Simon Zachariah, his wife and two sons. The pastor was conducting a Sunday prayer service with Christians when around 200 villagers surrounded the house and called the police. Subsequently, Pastor Simon and family was let go without any complaint against them.

TAMIL NADU

On the night of 5 January in Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu, a mob of religious extremists forcefully entered Pastor Nallamuthu's church, which was under-construction. The mob wrecked the vehicles parked in the compound and verbally abused the Christians, who were keeping guard at the church. They also spoke derogatorily about Christianity with the intention to hurt their religious sentiments.

On 17 January in Kottakulam village near Sengottai town in Tenkasi district of Tamil Nadu, Pastor James was summoned at the Kutralam police station regarding the prayers he holds at his house church. Kutralam Police Station Inspector Suresh, and two other policemen, came to the pastor's house and informed him that Hindu Munnani, a right-wing religious group, had filed a

complaint against the Christian prayers taking place at his house. Next day, Pastor James, accompanied with ten other pastors, went to the police station. Police informed them that the prayers were creating a disturbance in the neighbourhood and hence they need to stop. The inspector asked them to get the necessary permission from the Collector. However, the pastors showed a judgement of the Madras High Court (Madurai bench) which stated that no prior permission was required to hold prayers at home. Despite this, police asked them to take their demands before the Revenue District Officer. The RDO too did not agree to the pastors' requests and instructed them to get permission for holding prayers at home.

On 27 January in Pongalur town of Pongalur block in Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu, Pastor Johnson Pinto was threatened and harassed by religious radicals and police personnel. The threats came owing to the prayer services that he conducts at his house. Around 25 to 30 Christians gather regularly for the prayers.

On 2 February in Marakkanam Taluk of Viluppuram district in Tamil Nadu, police officials barged into a church and disrupted a prayer meeting attended by over forty Christians. Rev. Perumal Kanagaraj is the priest over the congregation at the Church of South India in Marakkanam. Police ordered the priest to stop the prayer meeting and in an abusive language accused the congregation of engaging in fraudulent activities to convert poor people by providing their material needs.

On 5 February in Sathyamangalam town in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, a group of Christians were physically assaulted by religious radicals while they were traveling to Bhavani Sagar. Consequently, local Christian leaders, accompanied with victims, met the Superintendent of Police with their complaint.

On 9 February in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, a Sunday worship service was disrupted by religious fanatics. Pastor Arokia Das was taken to police station and was compelled to sign a written undertaking that he will not hold worship services at his residence in the future.

On 21 February in Sathankulam town in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu, seven Christian pastors were taken into police custody. They were brutally assaulted and verbally abused by the officer-in-charge for propagating the Christian faith. Reportedly, the officers thrashed Pastor Barnabas most severely with a bamboo baton, which resulted in grievous injuries on his back and legs. The pastors were later released.

On 23 February in Elakurichi village in Ariyalur taluk of

Ariyalur district in Tamil Nadu, a mob comprised of religious radicals barged into a church service and disrupted it. They brutally beat Pastor Anbumohan and church members and took them to a nearby police station where the police kept the Christians in custody the entire day without providing the much-needed medical attention.

On 5 March in Gudiyatham town of Vellore district in Tamil Nadu, religious extremists applied 'vibhuti' (sacred ash) on Pastor Phinehas and his wife, for distributing Christian religious booklets and verbally harassed them.

On 5 March in Durga Nagar of Tambaram locality in Chennai city of Tamil Nadu, the ECI Church was demolished by authorities. Though the demolition was carried out on the directions of the Chennai High Court, church officials reported that they had received a stay order on the demolition hours before the demolition was executed. However, the local authorities overlooked the plea of the Christians to postpone, stating that they had not received a copy of the stay order yet. ECI church was established in the area 30 years ago. A case had been underway in the High Court claiming that the church stood in the way of a local temple built in the same area.

On 15 March in Kottakulam town in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, the construction of a church parsonage was disrupted by religious radicals. Pastor Gabriel Basker of the Pentecostal Maranatha Gospel Church had been building a parsonage on his property. Subsequently some religious radicals opposed the construction by raising slogans against the pastor. They inked "Om Sri Rama Jayam Sri Rama Jayam" on the door of the church. Eventually, Christians complained at the local police station and a CSR was registered.

On 16 March in Padayappa Nagar of Kalpalayam locality in Tiruppur district of Tamil Nadu, local administrative authorities issued a notification to the TuthiMagimayinJebaVeedu (Elohim House) to stop holding Christian worship services. Reverend Umarani, 43, and Reverend Saral Abraham, 42, have been looking after the congregation in the area for the past one and a half years. A few days back, a religious radical had filed a complaint at the Permanallur police station against the prayer meetings at the church. Subsequently, a policeman had approached Rev. Umarani to verify whether he had permission from the District Collector to hold the meetings. He informed Umarani that the locals were against such programs. On the next day, the Village Administrative Office issued a notification that worship services should not be held from the upcoming Sunday.

On 27 March in Erode district of Tamil Nadu, while a

Christian family was praying at their home, some religious extremists falsely complained at a police station that the family was conducting a public prayer, and many had gathered. When the police arrived at the spot, they found that Pastor Caleb and his family members were observing the 21-day lockdown with utmost care and had gathered to pray for the country amid the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak.

On 12 April in Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu, police barged into the house of a Christian family, searched every room, and clicked plenty of pictures. The incident occurred when Pastor K.P. Thomas along with his wife and three children, aged 18, 14, and 12, had gathered for Easter Sunday prayers. Police claimed that they were acting based on a complaint that the pastor was flouting COVID19 regulations and gathering with other Christians for prayers. Since they could not find anyone else, they left the house with threats of initiating a case against the pastor.

On 30 June in Avalpoondurai town of Erode district in Tamil Nadu, Paneerselvam, a Christian, was verbally and physically assaulted by a group belonging to a right-wing political party. The incident occurred while Paneerselvam was buying vegetables on the street. When he saw some students passing by, he decided to distribute copies of the New Testament (Bible) to them. This outraged three men who were watching this development. They immediately pounced on the students, snatched away the copies of the Bible, and began assaulting Paneerselvam, accusing him of engaging in conversion activities. Eventually he was able to leave the spot and approached the Arachalur police station to file a complaint against the trio.

Christian pastor was severely assaulted by a group of religious radicals. Of late, they had been opposing the prayers that the pastor conducts at his house. To show their opposition, they had earlier dug a trench right outside his house. This prompted Pastor Eswara Rao Appalabattula to complain at a local police station. Consequently, the irate group of radicals thrashed him and grievously injured him, resulting in a fractured hand.

On 5 February in Maqдум Nagar of Hyderabad city in Telangana, GHMC (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation) personnel arrived without warning or prior notice and partially demolished a Church that was under construction, reportedly at the behest of a national political party. 57-year-old Pastor Alagesan who was eyewitness to this illegal act went into shock and suffered a stroke which caused paralysis. The pastor had purchased the land in 2014 from a local Corporator, Jagan, who works with the TRS party (Telangana Rashtra Samithi). In 2018, he began the construction of a church building, and despite growing opposition and harassment, from a national political party, he was able to complete some parts of the construction. He, along with his family, had moved into the first floor of the building on 1 February.

On 22 February in Moula Ali suburb of Hyderabad in Medchal-Malkajgiri district of Telangana, Pastor Austin Dinaker and some church members of the Church of South India's Wesley Church, located in Sanjay Colony, were stalked and physically assaulted by religious radicals while they were returning home from a worship service.

TELANGANA

On 26 January in Narsingi town in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana, a Christian woman was threatened and physically abused. Anitha holds prayer services at her home and many Christians gather regularly. On 26 January while she was traveling on an auto rickshaw, a few religious extremists violently dragged her out and threatened her. The assailants also verbally abused and physically attacked some Christians who were traveling with her, warning them to stop gathering for the prayers. Thereafter, the assailants went to a nearby police station and filed a complaint against Anita.

On 27 January in Vishakhapatnam district of Telangana, a

UTTAR PRADESH

On 9 January in Karaudi Kalan locality of Sultanpur district in Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Vinod was arrested and taken into custody. Police swung into action after an alleged call from a villager claiming that the pastor was conducting mass conversions. The pastor was charged with section 151 of the CrPC. With the assistance of Christian rights groups, the pastor was able to fetch a bail and was subsequently released.

On 9 January in Rajwari village of Varanasi Tehsil in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, a group of right-wing radicals threatened Pastor Rajkumar Gupta accusing him of religious conversion. Moreover, the pastor's complaint at the local police station was denied. Police officials

warned him that they would visit the church on the next day and inspect whether there was any truth in the allegation against him.

On 10 January in Mihinpurwa Block of Bahraich District in Uttar Pradesh, a group of police personnel barged into two Christian homes and abused the Christians. Christians in the locality had earlier reported of continual harassment from the police. On the day of the incident, a police team comprised of two lady constables and three policemen barged into the houses of Mithilesh, son of Parshuram Jayashree, and Roshan, son of Suresh Chand. They ransacked through the household items of both the houses, opened boxes, removed a Christian cross on the wall, and took away all Christian literature found in the houses. They further threatened them to desist from Christian activities or would be sent to prison. On the next day, 11 January, Roshan and Mithilesh were again summoned to the local police station. No FIR was filed.

On 12 January in Mau district of Uttar Pradesh, a mob of around 100 people disrupted a Sunday worship service and called the local police. Police arrested Pastor Pankaj who was leading the Sunday prayer. Later, with the help of Christian advocacy groups, the pastor was able to secure a bail from the Sub Divisional Magistrate's court. However, police did not release him immediately and took him to two other police stations - Dubaari Chowki and Madhuban Police station. A case has been registered against him under section 153A & 295A of IPC.

On 12 January in Harraiya village of Harraiya Tehsil in Basti district of Uttar Pradesh, police personnel barged into a church where the Sunday worship service was underway. They said that they were looking for Pastor Ajay Lal since they had received complaints from various sources alleging that he was involved in religious conversion. Since the pastor was not present at that moment, police asked his wife to inform him to visit the Local Intelligence Unit officer later in the day. The pastor is working with Greater India Mission.

On 13 January in Kubersthan police station area of Kushinagar district in Uttar Pradesh, while Shiva Prasad, a Christian, was conducting a Sunday worship service, eight police constables accompanied with a news reporter, barged into the house. They abused and threatened the Christians who had gathered there, and inquired the whereabouts of Pastor Krishan Prasad, Shiva's father. Since the pastor was not at home, they arrested Shiva and two other relatives and brought them to the police station. The three were brutally beaten up by police the

entire night. After a day, Shiva was sent to jail, under IPC sections 151, 153a, 296, and 298. The Christians were able to secure a bail from the High Court after eight days.

On 13 January in Siddhartha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, local police arrested Pastor Surjit on false allegations of carrying out religious conversion and brought him to the Bansi police station. Christian rights groups connected with Bansi police station and spoke to SHO Shailender Singh. Subsequently, the pastor was released without any complaint against him.

On 13 January in Sujauli police station jurisdiction of Bahraich district in Uttar Pradesh, policemen raided and threatened Christians for conducting a Sunday prayer meeting. Christians - Rakesh, son of Nanhet Ram, and Brijulad Ramapati, his wife Kailash, and Joginder, along with others - were summoned at the police station the next day.

On 13 January in Sujauli locality of Bahraich district in Uttar Pradesh, police personnel barged into a church led by Pastor Ramesh Sagar. They stopped the ongoing prayer meeting, took away all copies of the Bible, and threatened the Christians to stop holding any religious meetings in the future. Further, they used an abusive language making remarks about the caste of the Christians. Reportedly, these threats and disruptions in prayer have been continuing for an entire week. Police allegedly rebuke villagers, demanding them to stop Christian prayers and reconvert to their old faith.

On 19 January in Motipur police station jurisdiction of Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, two Christians, Santosh and Harinath, were arrested on charges of gathering for a prayer meeting. The two men were saying Christian prayers at the house of a fellow Christian. Police barged into the meeting, stopped the worship, arrested the duo, and brought them to the Motipur police station. They were booked under IPC Section 151.

On 22 January in Maholi town of Sitapur district in Uttar Pradesh, a group of religious radicals accompanied with a Sub Inspector verbally harassed a Christian pastor. Pastor Virendra Kumar had been facing frequent opposition for holding prayers in the town from right-wing groups. Recently, he began construction of a building structure at his personal property. On the day of the incident, the group of radicals and police arrived at the spot, clicked a few pictures, and threatened the pastor. They warned him that any construction work would not be allowed, and he would have to face physical assault if he did not oblige to their warnings.

On 9 February in Chakeri police station area of Kanpur district in Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Sanjay and one other pastor, along with their wives, were taken into custody. Religious extremists surrounded the police station, accusing the Christians of carrying out religious conversion activities in the area, and put much pressure on the Station House Officer to register a complaint against them.

On 9 February in Mohammadabad Gohana town of Mohammadabad Gohana block in Mau District of Uttar Pradesh, a church service was disrupted by police personnel. While the prayer was in progress, some religious fanatics could be seen roaming around the church building and carefully observing the developments. After they left the place, police personnel barged into the venue and questioned Pastor Ramjit and the Christians who had gathered for the prayers.

On 12 February in Barsathi block of Jaunpur district in Uttar Pradesh, local police disrupted a prayer service. The prayer meeting was taking place at the house of a Christian. Police took five Christians, who were participating in the prayer - Gopi Patel, Dukhram Maurya, Sunder Bhardwaj, Umesh Kumhar and Surender Prasad Kashyap - into custody.

On 15 February Barsathi block of Jaunpur district in Uttar Pradesh, police summoned Pastor Dukhram Morya for inquiry. The Station House Officer informed the pastor that members of a right-wing radical group had filed a complaint against the pastor. The inquiry seemed like an effort to harass the pastor at the behest of the radicals. Later, Dukhram was let go for the day, and was asked to come back to police station the next day. After an intervention from Christian advocacy groups the SHO stopped summoning the pastor.

On 21 February in Bayara village of Sant Kabir Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, Christians were verbally abused and threatened. They were warned not to conduct worship services. Pastor Jagat Narayan sought help from an officer at the Khalilabad police station, but instead was warned to leave Christianity or be ostracized from the community.

On 22 February in Nehtaur city in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh, police arrested Pastor Dinesh for holding a prayer service. He was later released.

On 23 February in Shiv Katra locality of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, religious radicals attacked Christians during a prayer service and caught hold of Pastor Ruben and Pastor

Prabhakar who belong to the Assembly of Believers Church. They were taken to the Rama Devi police station.

On 23 February in Karimuddinpur village in Mohammadabad Tehsil of Ghazipur district in Uttar Pradesh, ten Christians, including Pastor Shivshankar, were taken into police custody. Earlier police personnel barged into a private home where the Christians had gathered and were praying peacefully.

On 23 February under Motipur police station of Bahraich district in Uttar Pradesh, police raided Pastor Harinath's house right after the pastor had concluded a worship service. Since the pastor was not at home, police left after a verbal tirade of threats and abuses directed at his wife.

On 25 February in Kaithauli village of Phulpur block in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, a group of religious extremists barged into a church attended by around 150 members. They disrupted the ongoing prayer service and created nuisance in the church. They assaulted the church's pastor, Ajay Chauhan, and later called the police. Police arrested the pastor and some church members and took them to the Didarganj police station.

On 7 March in Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Shankar Verma was summoned to the local police station. He was informed that local extremist groups have complained about Sunday worship services. They demanded that the pastor stop all prayer meetings with immediate effect; if he did not oblige, there was a good chance that the radicals would attack the church and destroy church property and equipment.

On 15 March in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, religious fanatics barged into a prayer meeting and disrupted the program. Pastor Sanjay Chauhan, along with Dashrath Rajbhar, were conducting the Sunday worship service, when the radicals attacked the Christians gathered there, and injured many of them. Police arrested both the pastors and took them into custody. Meanwhile the radicals surrounded the police station and continued to level allegations of religious conversion against the Christians.

On 15 March in Pratapgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, police from Kunda police station arrested Pastor Raja and some Christians - Mohit, Vishesh and Akash. Around 25 members of a religious extremist group had earlier disrupted a prayer meeting and had called the police. Subsequently, police brutally thrashed the Christians at the police station. Meanwhile the local Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) also got involved and exerted

pressure on police to file a complaint against the Christians.

On 26 March in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh, police officers banged and kicked on the door of a Christian pastor's house. As they banged on the closed door, they launched a verbally abusive tirade of foul language against Pastor Ratan Pal and his family. The pastor and his family, in compliance with the 21-day lockdown called by the government amid the Sar-CoV-2 outbreak, had isolated themselves at home. This is one among many growing reports of incidents of harassment against Christians and pastors during the lockdown period.

On 17 April in Noida city of Uttar Pradesh, some unidentified people disrupted a Christian NGO's food-kit distribution program. The Noida-based NGO, Board for Research Education and Development (BREAD), is managed by the Delhi based province of the Indian Missionary Society. Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, BREAD decided to distribute 5 Kg of wheat flour to some 30,000 families living in Noida. During the distribution when the crowd seemed beyond control, police requested the NGO to stop the distribution. While packing up a miscreant clicked a picture and tweeted it to the Commissioner. This infuriated the administration, only to later discover that BREAD had received appropriate permission from competent authorities. The matter was sorted out after the Deputy Commissioner of Police spoke to the Commissioner.

On 25 April in Kakrahia village, near Kotiya, of Kaushambi District in Uttar Pradesh, eight Christians were arrested based on false charges. Pastor Ramesh Kumar (32) along with Christians - Shri Chand, Rakesh Kumar and Mohit Kumar - were preparing aid packets for distribution to the poor when police stormed in and detained them and four others helping them. Before detaining them, the policemen used vulgar language and beat them with clubs. Police falsely accused them of violating lockdown with worship meeting, and officers ignored the pastor's plea to speak with village head, who could explain that it was not a worship service. Prime Minister Modi had called on people to help feed the poor families during the coronavirus lockdown, and the pastor told the officers they were trying to answer that call. Police were reportedly acting on a complaint by Aneet Shukla, Manoj Dwivedi and Abhishek Dwivedi. Officers later booked the eight men under the Indian Penal Code Section 269 for "negligent acts likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life" and "disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant," Section 188. At the Sarai

Akil police station, police threatened them with more beatings if they did not cooperate. They continued interrogating them with questions such as: "Where does the money come from to lure people to convert?", "From which country do you get foreign funds?", "Where did you buy relief materials from, and where did you get the money to buy the relief materials?", etc. A local newspaper published false information about the case. The complainants falsely alleged that they the Christians were gathering in hundreds, for worship, despite lockdown regulations in place, the newspaper reported.

On 18 May in Ram Ganga Vihar of Moradabad city in Uttar Pradesh, some locals insulted and verbally harassed a Christian family while they were praying in their home. Anil James and his family have been on the receiving end of such abuses in the past too. Every time a member of his family would step out of the house to get supplies, these miscreants would spit on them, use abusive language, and speak derogatorily about Christianity. In the recent past they even threw garbage in front of their gate. Perturbed by such behaviour, the family decided to confront the scoffers. In response the miscreants barged into their house with hockey sticks and threatened to beat them up. When the family approached local police, they were unwilling to take any action; instead, they suggested that the family seek a compromise with their persecutors.

On 29 May in Majhipur village of Mau district in Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Dinesh Kumar was brutally beaten up by religious fanatics while he was on his way back home after praying for a family at Majhipur village. He was admitted in ICU with several critical injuries. He had 16 stitches on his head and around 7 stitches on his hand. The injuries kept the pastor unconscious for hours at the hospital. Subsequently a few Christian leaders exerted pressure on Madhuban police to investigate the matter and take stringent action against the culprits. The SHO investigating the matter assured of a fair probe.

On 11 June in Noida city of Uttar Pradesh, a businessman, who has affiliations with a religious extremist organisation, threatened and harassed Pastor Vijay Pratap Singh by falsely alleging that the pastor had forcibly converted his employee. Pastor Vijay Pratap Singh ministers with senior Pastor Madan Pal Singh in Greater Noida. The infuriated businessman made a phone call, initially to Madan, and issued a threat for engaging in religious conversion activities. Disturbed by the tone, Madan gave the phone to Vijay, who in turn tried to amicably offer an explanation to the charges, citing the constitutional guarantee to profess, practice, and

propagate one's faith. He tried to assure the caller that the two Christian pastors were not involved in any illegal means to convert people.

On 17 June in Sarsaul town of Kanpur district in Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Pappu Yadav was taken into custody owing to a false complaint by local religious extremists. When all efforts to secure his release failed, local pastors contacted a Christian advocacy group. The group called Maharajpur police station and sought for Yadav's release. Consequently, Yadav was freed without a Challan against him. The officer in charge also assured Christians of his cooperation in the future.

On 18 June in Ram Ganga Vihar area of Moradabad city in Uttar Pradesh, Molly James (42) and her two sons - 12 years and 20 years old - lodged a complaint at the Civil Lines Police Station against their relatives who had been persecuting the family over their Christian beliefs. Molly's husband, Anil James, lives 187 kilometres away in Delhi, and was away from home due in part to coronavirus travel restrictions. In the night of the incident, around 11 pm, the family heard their relatives pounding on the door. Five men, along with Molly's brother, in an inebriated state, issued threats and shouted at Molly and her sons for accepting Christianity. Terrified, the trio were able to escape to the police station late at night. The officers in duty ensured that after assurance of protection the three were dropped back at their home safely.

UTTARAKHAND

On 21 March in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand, Evangelist Sister Rosemary was confronted by a mob of

religious radicals, when she was about to hold a meeting in a village. The sister has been working in a slum area for some time now, and a slum dweller had reported about her Christian services to some anti-Christian elements. Due to the timely intervention of police she was able to escape unhurt.

WEST BENGAL

On 19 June in Charabari village of Khashbalanda post in 24 Parganas North district of West Bengal, Biswambar Munda, a Christian pastor, was physically assaulted by three religious radicals. The pastor is associated with the Berachah Faith Mission. Earlier during the day, Christians - Jayanto Munda, Kadam Munda, Anima Munda and Dhakhina Munda - were physically assaulted by members of a local club, CharabariAdhibasiJuboSongho. The radicals - Sanjay Munda and Joy Munda - barged into the four Christians' houses, took them to their club and demanded that they renounce Christianity. Soon other radicals - Jyotish Munda, Aurobindo Munda, Sukro Munda, Lob Munda, Kolpona Munda, Urmila Munda, Tangri Munda and KobitaMund - joined in threatening the four Christians. They were told to either renounce their beliefs or leave the village. When the Christians tried explaining their faith, the group beat them severely. After issuing a warning to leave the village in three days, some other club members - Sukumar Munda, Arun Munda and Debkumar Munda - broke into Pastor Munda's house and assaulted him too. Sukumar Munda threatened that if the Christians did not leave the village by 22 June, he would bomb their houses. These threats are a frequent phenomenon for the past two months, and the Christians are under tremendous stress and fear.



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