

Evangelical  
Fellowship of India



Religious Liberty  
Commission

# HATE AND TARGETED VIOLENCE AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN INDIA



## YEARLY REPORT 2020

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF  
THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere acknowledgments and appreciation to the team of the Religious Liberty Commission for contributing towards this report and making it possible.

We would also like to thank the following activists and organizations who facilitated our desk and field research. In particular we thank Dr. John Dayal and Advocate B. D. Das who continue to guide us.

We also thank Rev. Fr. Abhishek John, Mr. Surender Pokhal, Rev. Amit Manwatkar, Rev. Jagdish Sahu, Mr. Jimmy Damore, Mr. Moses Vatapalli, Rev. Nehemiah Christie, Mrs. Sonia Daniel, Mrs. Surinder Kaur, Mr. Jitendra Rathor, Mr. Manish Walter, Rev. P. David, Mr. D. Jaiswar, Rev. Akash Nandi, Rev. Soloman Ghosh and Rev. Shibu Thomas.

We would particularly like to thank the United Christian Forum (UCF). The UCF along with the RLC and other organizations and activists operates the helpline 1800-208-4545 where incidents of persecution and violence against Christian minorities can be reported 24x7.

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



Evangelical  
Fellowship of India



Religious Liberty  
Commission

Report by:

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF  
THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA

805/ 92 Deepali Building

Nehru Place

New Delhi—110019 INDIA

Email: [mail@efirlc.org](mailto:mail@efirlc.org)



# CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary and Analysis	01
2. Statistics	04
3. Recommendations to the Government of India	08
4. About The Religious Liberty Commission	09
5. Quotation	10
6. Photos	11
7. List of Incidents	13

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Persecution of Christians in the curfew of Covid - A report on 2020

The Corona-19 virus pandemic impacted India as much as it did the world, leaving, till December end 2020, more than 10.5 million Indian hospitalised, and 151,000 dead.

The Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, in a national telecast announced a nation-wide total lockdown on March 24. With all industrial, business and tertiary economic activity at a standstill, more than 400 million workers would be poverty stricken, as per estimates by the International Labour Organisation. Though the government has not released figures, the Chief Labour Commissioner's office, in June 2020, counted over 26 Lakh migrant workers stranded across the country, of which 10% were said to be in relief camps or shelter homes, while 43% were in situ at workplaces and 46% in other clusters. This was said to be an extreme underestimation, going by the other assessments made by Central and State governments, including Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's estimate of 8 crore stranded migrants used to determine extra ration provisions in the Atmanirbhar package. Tens of thousands were still on the road home even when these estimates came in. The scenes of an infant snuggling up to a mother who had died on railway platforms, and others dying on the road as they walks hundreds of kilometres, shook the conscience of the citizens.

The national [federal] government and states governed by Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, were accused of using the environment of fear of the virus and of police action, to curb freedom of expression, and protest. Several state governments and senior members of the ruling party were named for fomenting targeted hate that often led to violence against religious minorities.

While Muslims were the main targets, Christians, especially pastors in rural areas of several states across the country, were victims of violence, their congregational prayers disturbed, and places of worship attacked. Political excoriation, police impunity, and vigilante groups on their trail, marked the experience of many Christian communities in several parts of the country at the height of the COVID-19 spread.

**The EFI Religious Liberty Commission and other Christian agencies including a national Helpline co-founded by the EFI five years ago, documented 327 cases, in which at least five people lost their lives, at least six Churches were burnt or demolished, and 26 incidents of social boycott were recorded. This is by no means an exhaustive list of incidents, many of which remain mostly unreported and unrecorded even in normal years because of the fear of victims of further atrocities if they stand up to their tormentors, and the victims in the rural settings, in particular, are hesitant or outright refuse to register cases of religious persecution because of fear.**

The religious freedom situation has to be seen in the context of an unbridled push for a majoritarian political framework in the country with laws tweaked against minorities in various ways.

Social scientists, political scholars and activists have written “Federalism has ceased to exist and the last vestige of trust has been exterminated. The space for free speech has been drastically curtailed: dissent has been rechristened as anti-nationalism and sedition, and dozens of academics, social workers, students, activists and journalists have been incarcerated for being critical of the government. Hate speech laws are being applied selectively, sending a clear signal that remarks against a particular community will attract no punishment.” Some popular TV channels amplifying this targeted hate were, in fact, fined 20,000 pounds by the UK watchdog late in 2020.

The most alarming development has been the expansion and scope of the notorious Freedom of Religion Acts, which are popularly known as the anti-conversion laws, earlier enforced in 7 states, to many more states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Once targeting only Christians, they are now armed also against Muslims in the guise of curbing 'Love Jihad'. This is an Islamophobic term coined some years ago to demonise marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim women,

particularly those belonging to the Hindu upper castes. The laws ostensibly punish forced or fraudulent religious conversions. But in practice, they are used to criminalise all conversions, especially in non-urban settings.

The laws also take away all agency from Hindu women, rejecting or controlling their free will, and leaving them at the mercy of the patriarchy, further strengthened by political patronage and encouragement. Rulings by High Courts that adult men and women have the freedom to choose their partners have had no impact.

On 31 October, Yogi Adityanath, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh announced that a law to curb 'Love Jihad' would be passed by his government. With no legislative discussion, it became law by an ordinance passed by the state Governor, Mrs Anandiben Patel. In December, Madhya Pradesh approved an anti-conversion bill like the Uttar Pradesh one. Madhya Pradesh already has an anti-conversion law. By end of 2020, BJP-ruled states, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Karnataka have designed to prevent "forcible conversions" through marriage. Punishment can be as long as ten years in prison.

With the passing of the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, Uttar Pradesh has become the eighth state in India to enforce an anti-conversion law. Similar laws are in force in the states of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. The states of Arunachal Pradesh and Rajasthan have passed anti-conversion laws that are not in force for various reasons, and Tamil Nadu has passed and repealed its anti-conversion law.

Since the law came into effect in the Uttar Pradesh state, as per media reports, till the end of the year, the police in the state have registered 14 cases and made 51 arrests, of whom 49 are in jail. Out of this the 'victim' has filed complaint in only two cases. The rest of the cases were filed by others including relatives. Two cases, under the new law, have been registered against Christians in Uttar Pradesh: one in Gautam Buddha Nagar and the other in Azamgarh. Responding to several writ petitions, the Supreme Court of India has agreed to examine the constitutional validity of laws enacted by Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand but has said they need to be first challenged in the respective high courts.

Christian activists fear that the expanding footprint of the anti-conversion laws bring a step closer the BJP's manifesto promising a nation-wide law to check evangelisation by "missionaries", a term designed to impute western conspiracy to Christianise Dalits, Tribals and others in rural areas, small towns and urban slums. This, together with the accusation of Islamic population explosion because of the high birth rate, feeds the orchestrated rhetoric that the Hindu population will become a minority which underpins electoral propaganda in India.

As a result of the anti-conversion laws, religious minorities can now be targeted by just about anyone, especially vigilante groups many of whom are complicit in the mob violence of earlier years in campaigns against beef and the slaughter of cows. Moreover, this law places the burden of proof on the person who has been accused of conversion.

Former Delhi High Court judge and former chairman of the National Law Commission, Justice AP Shah commented on this law and noted that it, "reflects the philosophy of a khap panchayat, with the objective essentially being to subjugate women." He said that the law strikes "at the very root of right to life and liberty guaranteed under the constitution".

"In any criminal case (where) conversion is presumed to be illegal, the burden of proof is usually on the prosecution. In this ordinance, every religious conversion is presumed to be illegal. The burden of proof lies on the person accused of illegal conversion to prove that it is not illegal. So there is a presumption of guilt. The offence is cognisable. It is non-bailable and the police can arrest anyone," Justice Shah observed.

For the record, the year began with massive public protests by civil society, university students and in particular Muslim women against the 2019 provisions amending the Citizenship Act, ostensibly designed to trace illegal migrants from Bangladesh in particular, but in actual practice delegitimising Bengali speaking Muslims in states such as Assam, West Bengal and contiguous areas. The protest in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh "led" by the octogenarian 'Dadi' [grandmother] made global headlines and cover stories.

This report of the Religious Liberty Commission of EFI illuminates the hate and targeted violence against the Christian

community in 2020. It is again important to remember that the numbers of cases recorded by RLC or any other agency are only indicative, and the actual numbers may be much larger. The Christian community wherever it is in small numbers, remains fearful. Legal literacy is grossly inadequate, the police almost as a rule do not want to register cases. Even if a case is registered by the police, the assailants seldom face prosecution in a court of law. On the other hand, the complainant runs the risk of retributive action.

The incidents in this document are first recorded by volunteers who pass on information to the RLC. The RLC verifies it with the victim or witnesses. Effort is made to contact the local police station in each instance to reconfirm the details of the incident.

Uttar Pradesh once again heads the list of regions where the Christian minority has been targeted the most. RLC registered 95 incidents against the Christian community in the state in 2020.

It is followed by Chhattisgarh with 55 incidents, most taking place in the tribal region of Bastar, now saturated by volunteers from Hindu right-wing organizations posted to "counter Christian influence. In fact, there is a well-planned political campaign by these groups to 'Hindutvaize' tribal society. In Chhattisgarh, as in contiguous tribal regions, these groups face almost no political challenge. The Church has been present in the state and in the region for the last 200 years.

The push of the Hindu Right wing in Jharkhand is ominously similar to that of Chhattisgarh and has resulted in violence and social boycott of the Christians. Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh registered 28 and 25 incidents, respectively.

In Madhya Pradesh, all the incidents took place from the months of March till December and no incidents were recorded in the first two months. Incidentally, it was in March that the BJP wrested power from the Congress in the state. Majority of the incidents in the state happened in the last four months of the year.

Tamil Nadu in south India had 23 incidents. The state had the second largest number of cases in 2019, registering 60 incidents of some sort of violent action against the Christian community. It is the fifth highest in 2020.

The months of March and October saw the highest number of incidents recorded in the country against Christians, with 39 and 37 incidents, respectively. May was the lowest with only 12 incidents. This was perhaps due to the lockdown in the entire country.

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, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh 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](mailto:mail@efirlc.org)

Released by:

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

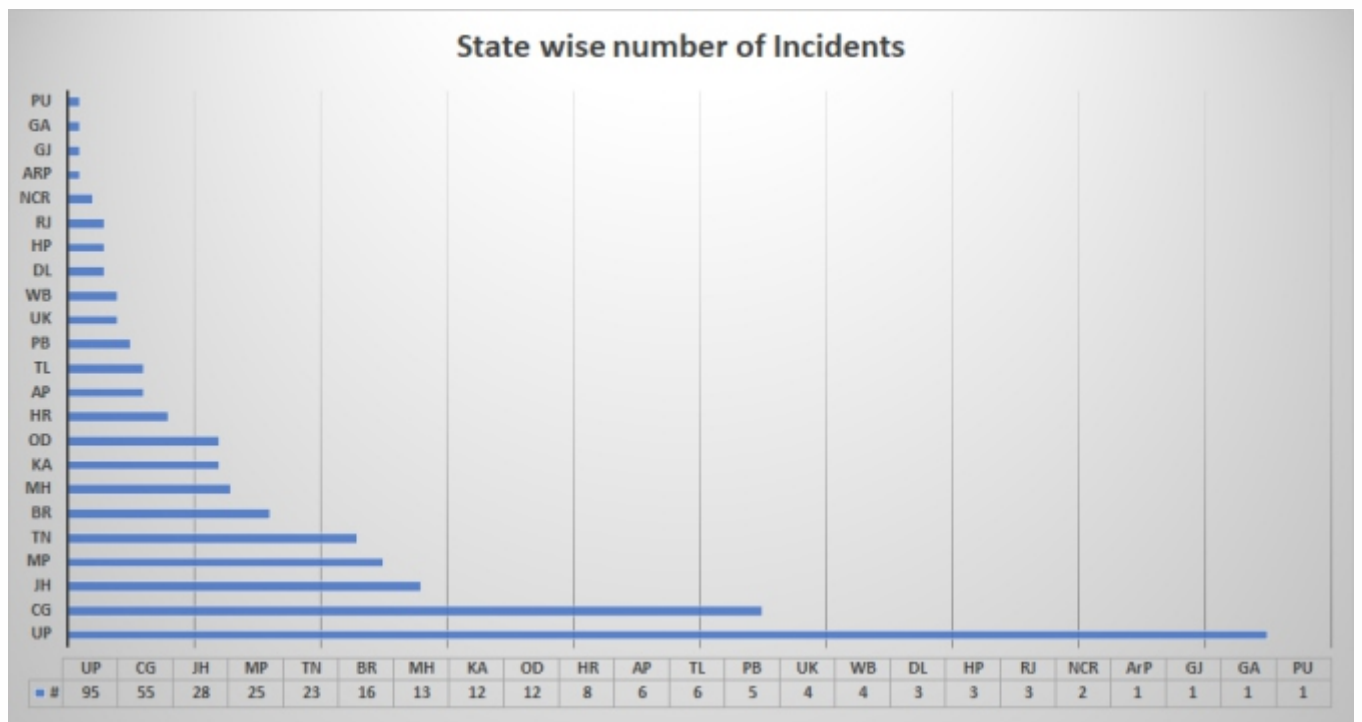




# STATISTICS

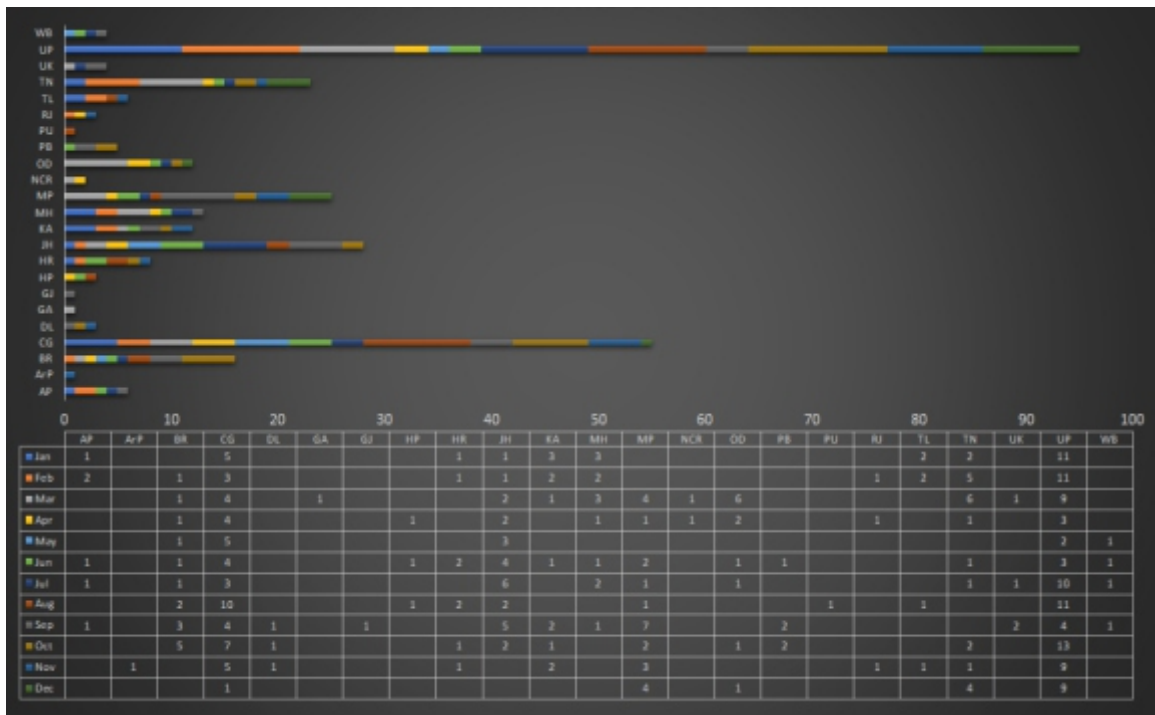
# STATE-WISE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS

State	No.
UP	95
CG	55
JH	28
MP	25
TN	23
BR	16
MH	13
KA	12
OD	12
HR	8
AP	6
TL	6
PB	5
UK	4
WB	4
DL	3
HP	3
RJ	3
NCR	2
ArP	1
GJ	1
GA	1
PU	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>327</b>



# MONTH OF INCIDENTS ACROSS MONTHS

State	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
AP	1	2				1	1		1			
ArP											1	
BR		1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	5		
CG	5	3	4	4	5	4	3	10	4	7	5	1
DL									1	1	1	
GA			1									
GJ									1			
HP				1		1		1				
HR	1	1				2		2		1	1	
JH	1	1	2	2	3	4	6	2	5	2		
KA	3	2	1			1			2	1	2	
MH	3	2	3	1		1	2		1			
MP			4	1		2	1	1	7	2	3	4
NCR			1	1								
OD			6	2		1	1			1		1
PB						1			2	2		
PU								1				
RJ		1		1							1	
TL	2	2						1			1	
TN	2	5	6	1		1	1			2	1	4
UK			1				1		2			
UP	11	11	9	3	2	3	10	11	4	13	9	9
WB					1	1	1		1			
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>19</b>



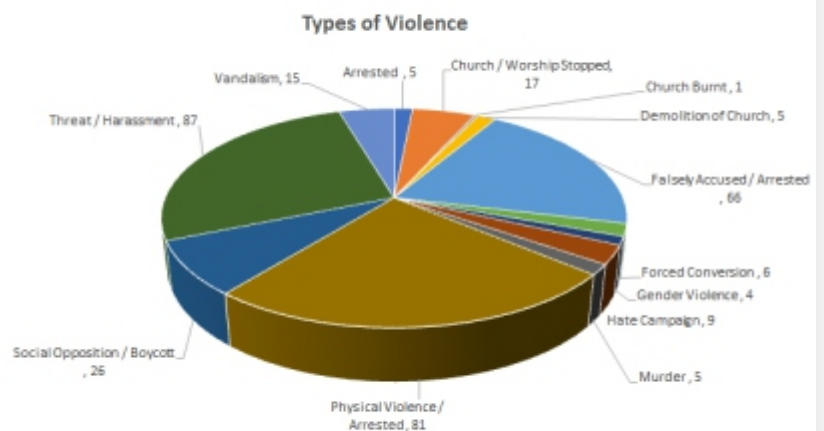
# MONTHLY TREND OF INCIDENTS

Month	No.
Jan	29
Feb	31
Mar	39
Apr	18
May	12
Jun	24
Jul	28
Aug	31
Sep	34
Oct	37
Nov	25
Dec	19
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>327</b>



# TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Type of Violence	No. of incidents
Arrested	5
Church / Worship Stopped	17
Church Burnt	1
Demolition of Church	5
Falsely Accused / Arrested	66
Forced Conversion	6
Gender Violence	4
Hate Campaign	9
Murder	5
Physical Violence / Arrested	81
Social Opposition / Boycott	26
Threat / Harassment	87
Vandalism	15
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>327</b>



# RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

- a. Enact a comprehensive national legislation against targeted and communal violence.
- b. Advise the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha to repeal the unconstitutional Freedom of Religion laws that actually limit religious freedom and are being misused by agenda driven groups to harass and create trouble for the religious minorities. The new laws in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh are especially troublesome as they infringe on personal freedoms even more than the laws in other states.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. Advise the state governments, especially Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, 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.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.
- h. Amend paragraph 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order 1950 to include Christians and Muslims.
- i. 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.
- j. Prevent and pursue through the judicial process, all violent acts against religious and tribal minorities and Dalits.



# ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION

The Religious Liberty Commission (RLC) is an initiative of Evangelical Fellowship of India and is established in accordance with biblical principles to facilitate reconciliation, to promote religious liberty and fundamental freedoms for all, and to seek justice for those who are abused and oppressed. The RLC promotes through its activities a suitable response to violations of religious freedom in the complex context of India while speaking for the marginalized.

It was formed in 1998 and is envisioned as a platform for all like-minded Christian groups, clergy and activists working on issues of Freedom of Religion or Belief and other fundamental freedoms. The RLC played a pivotal role in the formation of the Christian Legal Association which is a separate body today consisting of lawyers from across the nation.

Helping and empowering victims of persecution through practical and legal means is something that the RLC has done since its inception and continues to do so. It has been documenting incidents of hate and targeted violence on the Christian community since 1998 onwards and has since 2009, released an annual list of incidents. The RLC continues to engage in advocacy to raise awareness on issues connected with religious liberty and other fundamental freedoms.

Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), founded in 1951, is the national alliance of evangelical Christians. Its membership includes over 54 protestant denominations and related congregations (over 65,000 Churches), over 200 Church related mission agencies and organizations and thousands of individual members. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, it represents the Evangelical voice and builds capacity to promote participation in nation building.

EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance. The WEA is a global organization of evangelical Christian churches, serving more than 600 million evangelicals, founded in 1846. WEA has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.



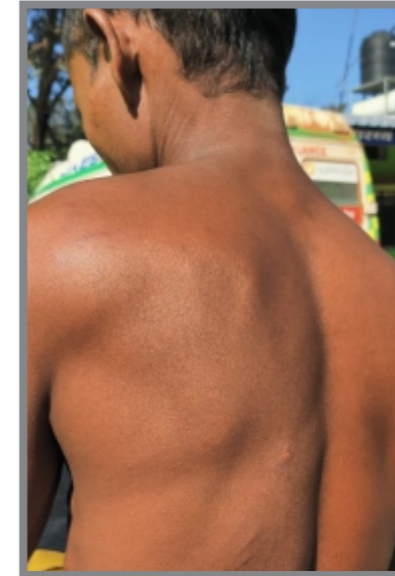
## QUOTATION

"A united India is not one characterized by a single identity devoid of its rich plurality, both of cultures and of values. National unity denotes a shared culture of values and a commitment to the fundamental ideals of the Constitution in which all individuals are guaranteed not just the fundamental rights but also conditions for their free and safe exercise."

Hon'ble Dr. Justice Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud



# PHOTOS



# 2020





# DETAILS OF INCIDENTS STATE WISE

# ANDHRA PRADESH

**On 5 January** in L.B. Patnam village, Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, a religious priest belonging to the majority religion, led a group of villagers to the house of Pastor Eswara Rao Appalabattula, and threatened to kill his wife, Karuna Appalabattula. The locals hold radical religious views and were furious at the presence of a church in their community. The priest picked up a large log of wood and came running toward Karuna. He kept screaming that he would kill her. He called Karuna a Christian prostitute and warned that he would kill her husband too. The pastor informed a police official, who told him to peacefully resolve the matter.

**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 man 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 sound system during the prayers disturbs him. Even though the prayers have been taking place regularly in the locality for over a year, the pastor started facing opposition every Sunday for over a month.

**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.

**On 5 July** in Vishakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh, Pastor Chinna Rao and some Christians

were summoned to a local police station for inquiry. The incident occurred after the pastor was seen baptizing some church members in a nearby sea beach. A person raised objection to the program, accused the pastor of conducting illegal religious conversion, and complained at the local police station. The pastor leads the Christ Church where a group of 50 to 60 Christians gather regularly for prayers.

**On 11 September** in Ponduru village, Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh, at around 12:30 am, a group of religious fanatics burnt a car which was parked in the church premises of Christ Worship Centre. The car belonged to Pastor Prabhu Dass. Sources informed that the pastor was being harassed by fanatics for over six months. A complaint was registered at the local police station. Not only the church buildings were targeted.

---



# ARUNACHAL PRADESH

**On 7 November** in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, a large protest was held, under the leadership of Mr. Toko Teki, President of Arunachal Christian Forum, where many Christians across denominations gathered as a show of solidarity. The protest was related to an issue that garnered public outcry when on 10 October Tawang District Administration ordered the Christian Revival Church of Tawang to stop their church construction claiming that they did not have proper land allotment copy. However, the church authorities feel that this is a violation of their rights and a deliberate attempt to suppress the Christians. They further claimed that they have been in possession of the impugned plot of land since 1999, for almost 21 years. Consequently, the ACF organized a large protest in the capital Itanagar demanding justice for the Christians in Tawang district.

# 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 three Christians to the Sadar Police Station. They 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 a 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 7 April** in Khudabandpur tehsil, Begusarai district, Bihar, Pastor Niranjana Sahani's parents were beaten up and falsely accused of alluring and converting people to Christianity. During the first phase of lockdown, religious radicals confronted the elderly couple, physically assaulted them, and lodged a complaint at the local police station. Only after an intervention from the head of the village council a compromise was effected and the police complaint withdrawn.

**On 20 May** in Jehanabad district of Bihar, a Christian pastor was physically assaulted by his neighbours who hold religious 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 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.

**On 13 July** in Sitamarhi district of Bihar, a Christian pastor, Ramniwas Kumar, was severely beaten up during a prayer meeting. The incident occurred when the differently abled pastor had gathered at his house with a small group of Christians and was praying. Just then a group of religious radicals barged in and physically assaulted them. Subsequently, police arrested two Christian evangelists who were visiting at the pastor's place for prayer and took them into custody at the Punaoura police station. Though the police accused the Christians of violating lockdown norms and using loudspeakers during the meeting, Pastor Ram Niwas denied the allegations and informed our sources that only five to six people had gathered, and they had not used loudspeakers. Some of the injured Christians were later taken to a nearby hospital.

**On 28 August** in Parsurampur village, Arwal district, Bihar, religious extremists attacked members of Pastor Arun Kumar's church owing to their Christian beliefs. Many Christian women and men, including Siwan Das, Mukesh Das, Vinowa Das, Punam Devi, Chinta Devi, and others, were grievously injured. The victims approached local police with their complaint.

**On 30 August** in Sirsa Biran village, Lalganj Nagar Panchayat, Vishali district, Bihar, a Christian couple - Ravi Bhushan and his wife Veena - were brutally beaten up allegedly by members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, according to reports. Sources informed that the incident occurred while Bhushan was conducting a prayer meeting at the house of a Christian. Just then a mob of radicals barged into the house and assaulted the couple. They received severe blows on their head, chest, legs, and hands. The mob forced Bhushan to apply 'tilak' (a

religious mark for married women) on his wife's forehead. The incident was live streamed on social media by Mukul Pandey, a member of ABVP, who allegedly was the prime instigator of the assault.

**On 2 September** in Taarbaank village, under Sonoh police station, Jamui district, Bihar, Christians including the local pastor, Santosh Kumar, were prohibited by the villagers from accessing water from the community hand-pump and from using other common facilities of the village due to their Christian faith. The village-head refused to accept and approve the documents of the Christians that they submitted to avail the government housing scheme for assistance in constructing houses. Christians are living in constant fear but did not register any complaint with the police.

**On 14 September** in Jhikatia village, Arwal district, Bihar, while Punita Kumari was caring for her family, about 25 hard-line religious radicals armed with bamboo sticks forced their way into their one-room home. Saying Christians could not live there, the assailants dragged her husband, Pastor Vinouwa Das, out and began beating him along with his sister. Kumari told sources that the mob shouted at her that she must vacate the premises immediately, and that they will not allow Christian services in the village. The furious mob beat her up with the wooden sticks. Her new-born baby also suffered injuries along with her. The assailants intercepted and attacked Pastor Das again on 17 September while he was on his way to a market to buy essential items for their home and baby.

**On 28 September** in Bisfi block of Madhubani district, Bihar, Pastor Baiju Paswan was physically assaulted by a mob comprising of anti-Christian elements on account of his Christian faith. Local witnesses claimed that the attack took place while the pastor's son stood watching.

**On 1 October** in Sakra Block, Muzaffarpur, Bihar, anti-Christian elements, with an intention of causing harassment to a Christian family of Mr. Sriram, blocked their street lanes that were used for gaining access to their home. Sriram contacted local police and got the lanes unblocked. No complaint or FIR was registered by the family since police had acted upon their issue and assured them of help if they encountered any further trouble.

**On 5 October** in Tiryani village of Sheohar district in Bihar, Pastor Vishwanathan Shelton was severely beaten up by religious extremists. The incident occurred while he was distributing Christian literature. A group of extremists wanted him to stop the same, to which the pastor refused and was brutally attacked. They locked him up in a room for days and continued to threaten and warn him. Seven days later, an elderly woman who lives nearby heard his cries and opened the door. Later the pastor went to a nearby police station to lodge a complaint but upon realizing that the police were hand in glove with the extremists, he decided not to pursue the matter. The pastor reported that the injuries he sustained were internal in nature, and he often feels dizzy.

**On 6 October** in Warisaliganj town of Nawada district in Bihar, religious fanatics violently barged into the house of a Christian family and ransacked the place. They threatened the family demanding that they worship the idols of their deities. The family chose not to report the matter to the police out of fear.

**On 11 October** in Babupur village, Sabour CD block, Bhagalpur district, Bihar, religious fanatics barged into a Christian prayer meeting and attacked the assembled Christians. The group of Christians had gathered for a Sunday prayer service. Pastor Vincent Cherian reported that the fanatics barged in at 10 a.m., physically assaulted Sujit Kumar who had started video recording the assault and grabbed the pastor by the collar threatening him to stop Christian prayers. Subsequently, the Christians lodged a complaint at the local police station. Despite police's warning, the fanatics swore that they would not allow Christian prayers in the village in the future.

**On 16 October** in Udwant Nagar of Bhojpur district in Bihar, a group of Christians were threatened and verbally abused by religious extremists. The incident occurred while Ramji Ram and fifteen other Christians were praying at his home. The extremists barged into his house, accused them of conducting religious conversion and threatened them to desist from Christian prayers or be beaten up and get thrown out of the village.



# CHHATTISGARH

**On 8 January** in Aalkanhar village in Pakhanjur Tehsil 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. The families were also forbidden to interact with their relatives in the village.

**On 12 January** in Dantewada district, 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 Jagdalpur tehsil, Bastar district, 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, 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, Kabirdham district, Chhattisgarh, a Christian pastor's house was destroyed by religious radicals. Pastor Jose Thomas had been continually facing threats for some time 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, 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 beliefs.

**On 20 February** in Tikanpal village near Kirandul, Dantewada district, 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. Not finding Podiya Tati, a Christian evangelist, at his home the assailants attacked other family members – Tati's mother, his wife and children. In vulgar language, the indigenous animists asked them why they partake in church activities but not in the village's religious festivals. Tati belongs to the indigenous Gond tribe, which worships village deities and ancestors. 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. Tati registered a First Information Report (No. 14/2020) against the assailants in the Kirandul police station on 21 February.

**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 members 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 orchestrating forceful religious conversions. Thereafter, they verbally abused the Christians gathered there and threatened to kill the pastors and the church leaders.

**On 6 March** in Bijapur district, Chhattisgarh, religious radicals threw stones at the house of Pastor Sannu Telam. The assailants hurled abuses at the pastor and his family, threatened them with dire consequences, and demanded that they abandon their Christian faith.

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

**On 30 March** in Katekalyan tehsil 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 Santuram Markam, Handoram Markam, Manuram Markam and their mother, Mangri Markam, and demanded that they leave their Christian faith and return to the Hindu religion. When they denied the demand, three of them were savagely beaten up. The radicals now intent to conduct a ceremony demanded Rs. 5,000, 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 Katekalyan Tehsil of Dakshin Bastar Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh, Raju Podiyami, 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 Podiyami 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. while 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 killed if they reported the attack to police and fined them 5,000 rupees, a goat, and few chickens. Mangduram Kashyap had to undergo treatment for his injured eye. Eventually the family complained to the police, but no action was taken.

**On 7 April** in Gadiras village in Sukma district, Chhattisgarh, a mob of 150 villagers harassed and threatened a woman, Madavi Durgi, and her husband, Madavi Bheema, to abandon their faith in Christianity and perform 'Ghar Wapsi' (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, Chhattisgarh, Nila Kunjam (25), a Christian woman, was severely beaten up by three middle-aged men due to her religious beliefs. 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 remained mute spectators. When Kumar Kunjam, another Christian, tried to videotape the ordeal, the mob snatched away his phone and slapped him. Nila Kunjam received severe blows on her back and knees and had to be admitted for medical 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, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, tribal animists 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 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, Dulla Poyami, to perform tribal worship on their land. 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 livelihood. Infuriated, the elders pounced on two Christians - Madda Poyami and Badda Poyami - 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 Dantewada 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 period of one month to make their choice.

**On 20 May** in Kokarpal village, Sukma block, Sukma district, 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 family was able to return home the next morning. They were warned that they would be killed if they sought police's help. The family had to be admitted for medical treatment at the Sukma District Government Hospital for a week.

**On 29 May** in Kumud village under Dhanora police station, Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, Bajjo Bai Mandavi, 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 her village owing to her religious 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 man found the body and immediately reported to the police. Bajjo Bai had accepted the Christian faith two years ago and is survived with 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, Ratanpur taluk, Bilaspur district, 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 a Pratap Gaud alleging 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, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, three Christian women - Chalki Kashyap, Rupa Kashyap and Munna Mandavi - were severely beaten up by Budro, Hungo, Ringo and around 15-20 villagers, owing to their religious conviction. The women were returning to their homes after saying prayers at a church member's house.

**On 1 July** in Mohanbeda village, Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, a mob of religious extremists barged into the homes of Christians - Ram Vati and Laxman Vati - destroyed their corn field and threatened them to either leave their faith or leave the village. On refusing to do so, the mob of assailants severely assaulted the members of the family and vandalised their homes. Thereafter, police personnel rushed to the spot after the mob informed them. Subsequently police stationed themselves outside the victims' house, practically putting them under house arrest.

**On 8 July** in Jashpur district, Chhattisgarh, Yudhveer Singh Judev launched a provocative and threatening verbal tirade against Christian missionaries working in the area. His statements come after a Shivalaya and a statue at a local temple were vandalized by unknown miscreants. The two-time MLA from Chandrapur blamed the missionaries for the desecration and said that his 'team' would not seek police help or protest because he had lost faith in the administration. He

further threatened that in retaliation for one temple his people would destroy ten churches, and missionaries must be prepared for the retaliation.

**On 12 July** in Potiyadih village, Dhamatari district, Chhattisgarh, six members of a religious extremist group knocked on the door of a Christian family and said they would be beaten to death if they did not stop attending church programs. The group had followed a Christian woman and her 18-year-old daughter on their way home after a Sunday church service. Their local church pastor Narottam Yadav told our sources that after the threats the drunk group dragged the 18-year-old out of her home and demanded she reveal the names of those with whom their family had shared about Christ and distributed copies of the Bible. They forcefully took her to each Christian home and told her to collect the Bibles. Her family was terrified and pleaded them to let her go, but they insisted that they want to know those that possess the Bibles. The next morning, village officials went to Christians' homes and warned them that they must renounce their Christian faith and embrace their former religion.

**On 14 August** in Mutanpal village, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, three Christian families were coerced by villagers to convert to a specific religion. Two among the victims - Dasman Mandavi and Gali Mandavi - were told to perform a sanctification ritual by presenting goats, pigs, hens, coconuts, wine, and incense sticks to the village deity. However, after denying their demands the Christian families thought it wise to flee from the village fearing for their lives.

**On 14 August** in Tarhul village, Kanker district, Chhattisgarh, three Christian families were socially boycotted by the village council. Kuvar Singh Pradhan, Kamal Bhuvarya, Santoshi Chalki, and their families are the only ones following the Christian faith in their village and attend Pastor Sailesh Singh's church. The pastor told our sources that they have been subject to threats and harassment continually.

**On 15 August** in Kader village, Bijapur district, Chhattisgarh, three Christian women - Latha Avlam, Chinna Korsu and Rinku Avlam - were attacked by Naxalites. They were beaten with bamboo sticks amid threats to renounce their Christian beliefs. However, the women stood firm in their convictions. They are members of the BCM church, located in Kodepal near Nimed, led by Pastor Pandu Telam. The pastor informed our sources that they are continually being

threatened to desist from organizing Christian prayers.

**On 16 August** in Anjar village, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, a group of villagers threatened pastor Mosu Ram while he was visiting the Christian families of Somaro and Mada. The next day, when the pastor went to the local police station to file a police complaint, the assailants surrounded his home and severely assaulted him.

**On 18 August** in Ajnar village, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, a group of villagers attacked a group of Christians who were attending a prayer meeting and involving in a Bible Study program led by pastors from a nearby village. When the victims approached Mardum police station for help, the Station House Officer visited the place of the incident and filed a complaint against the assailants. However, upon request from the Christians to affect a compromise, the attackers sought an apology from the victims.

**On 23 August** in Khamhar village, Kharsiya tehsil, Raigarh district, Chhattisgarh, Ram Kumar, a Christian, reported on United Christian Forum helpline about the threats he was facing in constructing a church. Kumar had started the construction on his own property when a group of villagers confronted and warned him to stop work or face physical attack and social boycott.

**On 26 August** in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, a group of religious extremists physically assaulted Dalsai and Tangru, both Christians, because of their religious beliefs. Earlier on 6 June a similar incident had taken place when a Christian family was threatened and socially ostracized by the villagers.

**On 28 August** in Bafna village, Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, villagers opposed the burial of a Christian woman named Daymati. The villagers halted the burial and demanded that the woman's son leave his Christian faith, only then would they allow the burial. The family approached the SHO at Kondagaon police station. Eventually the corpse was buried under the protection of police personnel and Tehsildar (revenue officer).

**On 28 August** in Kasturpal village, Lohandiguda tehsil, Bastar, Chhattisgarh, a writ petition on the issue of Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificate was filed at the Bilaspur High Court. Christians approached the



court with their grievance owing to a decision of a village council to not issue ST Certificate to the Christians, terming them as 'Christian' instead of 'Scheduled Tribe'. The village council head claimed that due to an order from the Chief Minister, ST status certificates would not be issued to the Christians who had converted.

**On 31 August** in Dhamtari district, Chhattisgarh, a single mother, Shelendri Dhrow, and her two children were threatened by miscreants of her village due to her Christian beliefs. The goons came to her home drunk in the evening, forced their way in, and abused the family. They barged into her house on the next day too, at around 7 am, and threatened that they would throw her out of the village and would even get her murdered.

**On 2 September** in Badrenga village, Lohandiguda Tehsil, Bastar District, Chhattisgarh, two Christians - Jagra Kashyap, 45, and his son Asharam Kashyap, 20, were physically assaulted by a mob of 60 led by religious extremists because of their Christian faith. Demanding that Kashyap and his son renounce Christianity and return to Hinduism, a mob of extremists stormed their home at 10:30 a.m. and struck the elder man's ear until it bled while delivering severe blows to his son's back. Kashyap's own brother was in support of the villagers. They were taken to the government hospital for treatment and the doctors said that Jagra had permanently damaged his ear and that he would need hearing aid the rest of his life. Though the victims approached the police station to file a complaint, officers said they will not register a FIR unless there are eyewitnesses who would come forward to give statements.

**On 11 September** in Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, some religious extremists forced a Christian named Raj Kumar to abandon his Christian beliefs and convert to their religion by performing sanctification rituals. They threatened him to either leave the village or leave Christianity if he wishes to continue living in the village with his family. They further threatened him and his family with severe consequences if he did not oblige them.

**On 22 and 23 September**, in Kakdabeda, Singanpur, and Tiliyabeda villages of Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, around 16 houses were completely razed by villagers under the influence of religious extremists. A largescale social boycott and attacks

were launched against the unsuspecting Christians. They were called to a village council meeting before the attacks, threatened to denounce their Christian beliefs or opt to leave the village. The Christian men fled from their homes leaving their families behind went into hiding. Though a complaint was lodged at the Kondagaon police station, no concrete action was taken against the vandals. Earlier some Christian families had registered three complaints – one with Kondagaon police on 20 September based on signs of impending danger, the other with the superintendent of police's office in Kondagaon on 22 September, and the third with the district collector on Thursday (24 September). Despite this, police and administration sought to solve the matter through negotiation. However, the victims stated that unless the assailant villagers give a written undertaking that they would live in peace in the future, they were not willing to withdraw their complaint. The families continue to live in a state of fear and shock – homeless and boycotted.

**On 26 September** in Korlapal gram panchayat, Dantewada district, Chhattisgarh, a group of Christians were forced to reconvert to their ancestral faith. They were threatened and pressured for three hours by a mob of 80 to 90 people during a village council meeting. They made frantic calls to the police control-room, but no help arrived. Hence, out of fear and for the safety of their members, some Christian families gave in and participated in the reversion ritual. No police complaint or FIR was registered by the Christians.

**On 11 October** in Kakabeda village, Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, two Christians - Lacchim and Amar Singh - were savagely beaten up by religious fanatics due to their religious faith. They had to be immediately rushed to the district hospital for treatment. Advocacy groups contacted Kondagaon police station, but no action was taken. Subsequently the Superintendent of Police of Kondagaon arrived at the village to forge a peaceful resolution of the matter.

**On 14 October** in Kakabeda village, Kondagaon district, Chhattisgarh, police arrested two Christians, Shivram Poyam and Vijay Sori, whose houses had previously been damaged by religious extremists. Police claimed that they had arrested the victims to maintain law and order in the district. However, local sources believe that police acted at the behest of

religious extremists who have been targeting Christians in the area.

**On 18 October** in Bargaon village, Mainpur block, Gariaband district, Chhattisgarh, a group of men interrupted a church service, which was led by Pastor Chitrasen Sahu, looking for Sattar Singh Markam. He was asked to present himself before a village council where representatives of eight village councils had gathered. After the service when Markam went to see them they told him to leave Jesus Christ or "leave with your Christian faith and never come back," the pastor reported. Markam, who had suffered three epileptic seizures a day before he put his faith in Christ 12 years ago, told them that he believed Christ had healed him and given him a new life and that he would never turn away from his faith.

**On 25 October** in Ramgarh village, Kawardha tehsil, Kabirdham district, Chhattisgarh, some religious extremists barged into the house of a Christian named Sahmat Bai, and abused and threatened him and his family for holding Christian beliefs and rejecting the local gods and goddesses. They also vandalized household items and grabbed the cash they could find in the house.

**On 25 October** in Bargaon village, Mainpur block, Gariaband district, Chhattisgarh, religious fanatics barged into Sattar Singh Markam's house and brutally assaulted him. Allegedly, the activists belong to the Gondwana Samaj. The fanatics raided Markam's house, vandalized the furniture, misbehaved with the women, and assaulted him. They demanded that the Christians leave their faith. The victims approached the district administration and police officials with their complaint. An FIR was registered in the case.

**On 27 October** in Pandariya, Kabirdham, Chhattisgarh, a group of Christians submitted a police complaint at Pandariya station against religious extremists. The Christians complained that they were beaten, and their homes vandalized by the extremists. Despite the complaint no action was taken by the police. However, police sources claim that the investigation is on.

**On 30 October** in Madanpur village, Korba district, Chhattisgarh, a Holy Cross situated in the premises of a Roman Catholic Church was broken by unknown assailants.

**On 2 November** in Chitrakot village, Lohandiguda Tehsil, Bastar district, Chhattisgarh, ten villagers attacked a group of Christians - 18 women and 12 men - while they were working in their fields. The assailants walked into the field carrying batons and sticks. When they began hitting the victims, many managed to escape, however, 3 Christians, one of them a woman named Nani Morriya, could not. The assailants severely assaulted them leaving them bleeding and grievously injured on the head. Sources informed that the attack was communally driven.

**On 9 November** in Durg district, Chhattisgarh, the family of Janak Sahu, a Christian, was intimidated by religious fanatics to disown Sahu from the ancestral property and cut off all ties with him. Sahu works as a Christian minister and the radicals were irked by his religious beliefs. Sahu has not approached the police or administration on the matter.

**On 10 November** in Buddi village, Sukma district, Chhattisgarh, a district-level meeting was organized by local tribes, influenced by right-wing groups, with the main agenda of reconversion of tribal Christians back to their tribal religion. Sources reported that the motive behind the meeting was to deprive tribal Christians of government welfare schemes. The meeting went on to discuss the way Christian leaders approach the locals and lure them to accept Christianity.

**On 24 November** in Balrampur-Ramanujganj district of Chhattisgarh, several pastors and Christian women were arrested by the police while they were attending a prayer service in a church. Around 15-17 Christians were praying when religious fanatics barged in and disrupted the service. Pastor Brijlal Kerketa, Ajit Lakra and Vikas Lakra and several women were arrested. Later police released the women but sent the three men to jail on the basis of an FIR, bearing number 244/2020, that was registered against them. They were charged under section 295A of the IPC and sections 3 and 4 of Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act.

**On 25 November** in Chingrwarum village, Sukma district, Chhattisgarh, religious extremists in an inebriated condition, attacked a group of Christians who were sleeping under a tent. Armed with bamboo sticks, iron rods, bows and arrows, and iron sickles, the large mob attacked a home and adjoining church hall where Christians had celebrated a child

dedication program the previous evening. Some 20-25 friends and family were sleeping in the home and another 25-30 in the church hall when the villagers, many of them drunk, launched the assault accusing the Christians of converting people and playing loud music. More than 15 Christians were severely injured and had to be admitted at the Civil Hospital Sukma. Others approached the nearby Gadiras police station at 6 a.m. to file an FIR, however no action was taken by police until 4 p.m. Despite repeated complaints by Christian advocacy groups on the rise in orchestrated incidents of violence, state ministers and police do not seem to have taken notice.

**On 24 December** in Old Dera Basti, Kunkuri tehsil, Jashpur district, Chhattisgarh, villagers created a ruckus and beat one Raju Soni, alleging that he was leading a religious conversion in the guise of religious prayers. They accused him of coming from the neighbouring Navapara area and luring people to attend the prayers and convert to Christianity. Soon activists allegedly belonging to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal reached the spot and created an uproar. Soni continued to calmly defend himself denying claims that he was converting people.



## 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 beliefs with the person for a couple of minutes.

**On 6 September** in Narela, a tehsil of North Delhi

district of Delhi, Pastor Suresh Masih was accused of converting people during prayer meetings. On the day of the incident around 8 to 10 people arrived at the house where the pastor lived as a tenant. They approached the landlord and claimed that the pastor was conducting prayers in the building and converting the locals. However, the landlord refuted their accusations and spoke in favour of the pastor. About a year ago (2019) he had faced a similar problem and had been compelled to leave the place.

**On 1 October** in Swaroop Nagar, North West Delhi, Delhi, three Christians - Ravinder, Shivam and Satyam - and their relatives, were brutally beaten up by members of a radical religious group. Our sources reported that they had been facing opposition and threats for quite some time. Human rights groups raised the matter with the District Commissioner of Police of the area and sought his intervention and help.

**On 7 November** in Geeta Colony, Shahdara, Delhi, Christians gathered at a prayer meeting were assaulted by a mob. The meeting was in progress in a banquet hall when a group of around 40 people surrounded the hall, started raising slogans, and verbally abusing the pastor who was conducting the prayer inside. Eventually 7 to 8 people barged into the hall, accused the pastor of converting people, and physically assaulted the Christians with spoons kept on a table. Many people sustained injuries including fractured limbs.



## 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 issued a stern warning to the mob. No FIR was filed by the pastor.

# GUJARAT

**On 15 September** in Poshina, Sabarkantha district, Gujarat, a swarm of religious extremists held large scale protests and rallies against Christian missionaries. Eyewitnesses recounted that they heard hate speeches used against Christians and Christianity. Notably, such rallies have been happening frequently in the town for the past one month. Sources claim that extremists have been gathering the locals for a so-called "awareness program" and inciting them against Christianity.



# HARYANA

**On 5 January** in Bichpari village, Sonipat district of Haryana, a group of religious extremists assaulted Pastor Naresh Singh and some Christians who had gathered for a prayer meeting at a home. While the meeting was underway, thirty 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. The assailants accused Naresh Singh of being responsible for the growing number of people converting to Christianity. Naresh Singh's female relatives tried to stop the mob from attacking Pastor Singh but were shoved away, injuring the women and children. After the attack, Christians are continually living in fear, and threats and opposition from radicals continue. An FIR was filed against Naresh Singh and several other Christians falsely accusing them of offering money to Hindus to lure them to convert to Christianity. The next day, 6 January, Naresh Singh was presented before a judge and sent to judicial custody. An attorney with a legal advocacy group filed a petition for bail, and he was released on 7 January.

**On 18 February** in Kirmach village, Kurukshetra district, Haryana, Christians were hounded by religious radicals while a prayer service was in progress. Reportedly, Pastor Sukhdev Masih and a few Christians had gathered at a house for 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 14 June** in Pinjore, Panchkula, Haryana, Pastor Tony Joseph was surrounded by extremists in a church member's house while visiting him for a prayer meeting. About 150 extremists were surrounding the house. Fortunately, the main door of the house was locked from inside. However, the mob launched a verbal tirade of life-threatening comments and abusive words. Subsequently, other Christians arrived at the spot, rescued pastor Tony, and took him away with them. While the pastor was leaving the spot, he was manhandled by some of the extremists. Pastor Joseph is associated with the Assembly of God Church.

**On 21 June** in Dayalpur village, Ballabgarh tehsil, Faridabad district, Haryana, religious extremists placed an idol in the Assembly of God Church, claiming that the church was built over the ruins of a temple. The pastor had been active, after the first phase of COVID19-lockdown was lifted, in rendering help to the children and needy ones in the locality. He was also in the process of renovating the church building. When the pastor objected to the extremists' action, they physically assaulted him.

**On 9 August** in Sector 29, Faridabad district, Haryana, while a Sunday prayer meeting was in progress at Pastor Raj Singh Chauhan's church, some miscreants broke the glass windows of an autorickshaw, which belongs to a church member. The pastor told our sources that the locals might be furious over the regular Christian prayers taking place in their locality. He feared that the situation may get aggravated soon.

**On 11 August** in Faridabad district, Haryana, two Christian families were brutally beaten up due to their faith. The incident occurred following an argument with neighbours over rainwater. Sushma, a Christian, was threatened by her neighbours for following the Christian religion. The argument flared up and prompted Pastor Rajesh Gupta and Sushma to approach the Sanjay Colony police station for help. Police did not register the complaint, only assured them of looking into the matter. Upon their return home they were shocked to see a large group carrying metal objects waiting to assault them. Subsequently,

the pastor, his wife and daughter, and Sushma's family were brutally beaten up. The pastor somehow managed to escape, however, the women sustained grievous injuries. They were later admitted at the Badshah Khan Hospital.

**On 28 October** in Chandni Bagh, Vikas Nagar, Panipat district, Haryana, Pastor T.K. Rajan and other Christians were verbally harassed by religious radicals while they had gathered for a prayer meeting at the home of a Christian. The pastor is a missionary with Jesus Mission. Christian advocacy groups spoke to the DGP of Haryana, Manoj Yadav. Consequently, local police arrived at the spot and rescued the Christians. No FIR was lodged in the case.

**On 15 November** in Narayangarh, Ambala district, Haryana, a group of Christians were attacked by religious extremists. Pastor Vikram Eliyazar of the National Church of India Global Diocese had organized a prayer meeting after availing necessary permissions from local authorities. During the meeting, the radicals barged into the venue, assaulted the Christians, while a media person was busy filming the attack. Sources informed that the reporter threw the Bible on the floor and mocked the Christians. The victims called the police for help. Police tried to resolve the matter through mutual understanding and compromise.

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 in Bhuntar. He had been constantly targeting the pastor's family on account of their Christian faith and publicly humiliating and verbally assaulting them for the about 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 conversion activities through allurements and force. Police registered an FIR against the pastor under IPC section 153A.

**On 3 August** in Baddi town, Solan district, Himachal Pradesh, Pastor Satish Chand was summoned at a local police station on charges of converting people through allurements. The pastor informed sources that a certain couple that attended his church had conspired to falsely implicate him. The pastor was summoned at the police station and asked to reach a settlement by paying money.

---

## HIMACHAL PRADESH

**On 19 April** in Rakkar village, Dharamshala tehsil, Kangra district, 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

---

## 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 the protection of Christians, police personnel from Jainagar police station arrived at the spot and dispersed the crowd.

**On 11 February** in Jainagar town, Koderma district, 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 police complaint against the pastor and an 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 religious 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, Hazaribagh district, 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 2 April** in Barkagaon tehsil, Hazaribagh district, Jharkhand, Pastor Nageshwar Kumar Mahato was verbally abused and falsely accused of religious conversions. A radical religious group approached the pastor demanding financial donations for a Ram Navami celebration. Upon his polite denial to donate, the group began a verbal tirade against him and his faith in Christianity. The pastor told our sources that he has been frequently targeted due to his faith.

**On 16 April** in Sandih village, Khunti district, Jharkhand, a group of religious extremists barged into a home at around 11 pm, armed with guns and shot 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, Khunti district, 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 Banjari Patan village, Palamu district,

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. Of the 16 church families (about 130 people) threatened in one area, two families were terrorized into returning to their ancestral Sarna religion. About 250 to 300 people attend Pastor Sarabjit Bharati's Kripa Bhavan Salom church. 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, the 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 Budhakaman village, West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand, an under-construction church building was damaged by miscreants. Earlier during the day, local villagers summoned Pastor Sudarshan Sinku 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 later be confronted by miscreants at the construction site. 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 31 May** in Budhakaman village, West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand, in a follow-up of the 10 May incident, a group of tribal animists returned and set the church building cross on fire. Pastor Sudarshan Sinku's wife Suman Sinku reported that the police later summoned both parties to the Jagannathpur police station. Village chief Vignesh Tiriya reiterated that the Christians produce certificates to prove their Christian faith. At the police station, Suman questioned the police if they were aware about the constitutional provisions for religious freedom and the special provisions for Scheduled Tribes. The inspector seemed clearly annoyed, asked her to leave

the room where the discussion was going on and attempted to negotiate a compromise without listening to the Christians' pleas.

**On 8 June** in Bari village under Saiko police station, Khunti district, 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 8 June, officers at the Saiko police station registered cases for kidnapping or abducting to murder (Section 364) and murder (Section 302) of the Indian Penal Code.

**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 under relevant sections on trespassing private property and physical assault.

**On 29 June** in Kulagada village, Latehar district, Jharkhand, some 40 to 50 irate villagers threatened fellow villagers, who follow the Christian faith, to renounce their beliefs, and warned them of a possible expulsion from the village if they failed to do so.

**On 5 July** in Kulgada village, Latehar district,

Jharkhand, a mob of around 80 people tied a group of Christians - Ranjeet Bhuiya, Jogender Bhuiya, Lalu Bhuiya and some women - with rope and beat them up. The Christians were sternly warned to give up their Christian beliefs or face expulsion from the village. Only after an intervention from police the violence was brought to a halt. Christians are contemplating the possibility of filing an FIR.

**On 5 July** in McCluskieganj, Ranchi district, Jharkhand, a group of religious radicals stormed into the house of Mr. Karthik and threatened the Christians who had gathered there for Sunday prayers. Soon a larger group arrived in three cars. They forcefully detained the Christians at the house threatening to beat them up.

**On 6 July** in McCluskieganj, Ranchi district, Jharkhand, around 50 members of a religious extremist group performed Homecoming (Ghar Wapsi) rituals and forced six Christians - Karthik Malar, Geetha Devi, Jeera Malar, Pinky Devi, Arjun Malar, Pramod Malar, Urmila Devi, Chandru Malar and Poonam Devi - to participate. They were forced to chant 'Jai Shree Ram'. Subsequently the Christians, including little children, were paraded around the village in a procession.

**On 15 July** in Latehar district of Jharkhand, members of the Bhuinya caste launched a protest against the work of Christian missionaries in the area. The protest was incited by a religious extremist group. Dhaneshwar Munda, a local leader of the group and head of the Dharma Pramukh Project, accused Christian missionaries of converting people to Christianity through allurements.

**On 20 July** in Regadi village, Khunti district, Jharkhand, Sunita Devi (name changed for security reasons), a 26-year-old mother, was killed when she refused to hand over her minor daughter to be raped by religious radicals who had assaulted the girl and other Christian minors, sources said. The assailants had previously called Devi by phone with demands to hand over her daughter. Upon refusal, they attacked her in the dead of the night. Devi belonged to a church in nearby Saridkel, pastored by Jaymasih Nag of Grace Family Ministry (Anugrah Pariwaar Seva). Her corpse was found thrown in a sack in the nearby river, two miles away. Khunti police filed an FIR and two suspects were arrested. Devi and her family began attending his church six years ago. Hers is one of eight

Christian homes in her village of 25 families. Pastor Nag said that girls from Christian homes are intentionally targeted by religious radicals who influence followers of tribal Sarna religion, trying to introduce their gods into their rituals and uniting with them against Christians. Other area Christian leaders also said the rapes and the killing were clear cases of persecution. Devi was laid to rest on her own farmland on Tuesday (21 July). She is survived by her husband and four children, aged 2 to 13.

**On 29 July** in Garhwa district, Jharkhand, a group of about 30-40 people barged into the house of a Christian family and physically assaulted three men - Ajay Ram, Vijay Ram, and Sanjay Ram - while they were reciting Christian prayers. The mob also assaulted all others who were in the room and vandalized several personal belongings of the victims that were kept in the house.

**On 8 August** under Mandar police station, Ranchi district, Jharkhand, Pastor Vicky Lakra was threatened and harassed by around 15 religious extremists. They demanded the pastor to stop conducting prayer meetings. When he approached the Mandar police for help, the constable on duty asked him to wait until the SHO arrived. Upon the SHO's delay the pastor had to submit his complaint to the constable who was unwilling to give the pastor the receiver's copy.

**On 24 August** in Kandra, Lohardaga district, Jharkhand, irate villagers demanded that the corpse of Satish Tirkey, a Christian, be exhumed. Satish, a member of GEMS Church at Kandra, died on 24 August due to jaundice. He is survived by his wife and two children - Angel (8 years) and Ashish (1 ½ years). He had been suffering for the past two years. Prior to his death he drove an autorickshaw for a living. Since the church did not have a burial ground, his body was buried at his uncle's personal property, 2 kms away from Kandra. Subsequently a large group of villagers gathered, started protesting against the Christian burial, and demanded that the body be exhumed.

**On 14 September** in Kandra, Lohardaga district, Jharkhand, religious extremists again raised a hue and cry about the grave of Satish Tirkey, a deceased Christian villager, and approached the police with their complaint. They alleged that the burial of the person was not according to local rites and reiterated their demand that the body be exhumed. Police called

both parties - Christians and the extremists - and eventually sided with the Christian demand to ensure sanctity and protection of the grave.

**On 16 September** in Bherikudar village, Simdega district, Jharkhand, after beating and parading Pastor Raj Singh along with four other Christians, religious extremists tonsured them. The pastor had previously been a Hindu but upon confirming his conversion, the mob used obscene language as extremists accused him of being a traitor. After shaving their heads, the mob tied garlands of old shoes and slippers around their necks and continued parading them from one area of the Bherikudar village to another. The extremists told them to chant "Jai Shri Ram [Victory to god Ram]" and, when the Christians did not comply, beat them with wooden sticks, the pastor reported. Accusing them of eating and smuggling beef, the mob of 60 to 70 people had initially attacked seven Christians in the village, but two had managed to escape.

**On 22 September** in Hazaribagh district, Jharkhand, religiously motivated villagers demanded Pachal Ganjhu, a Christian, to sacrifice a pig to perform a conversion ritual, and convert back to the village tribal religion. When he and other Christians refused to comply to their demands the assailants robbed the Christians of their crops and seeds, that were stored for cultivation in the upcoming season.

**On 25 September** in Lohardaga district, Jharkhand, a Christian family was socially ostracized by villagers. The villagers severely assaulted the Christians and locked them inside their homes restricting their movement. The family attends a church which is pastored by Lachchhu Ashur at Gamariya Chapal.

**On 27 September** in Chhapar Toli village, Gagari panchayat, Ormanjhi block, Ranchi district, Haryana, the village council summoned the Christians of the village and demanded that they declare their Christian faith in writing. The council members were furious that certain households had embraced Christianity and wanted to deny them access to government welfare schemes. The council decided to form a committee that would try to convince the new Christians to reconvert back to their old faith.

**On 11 October** in Barkakana, Ramgarh district, Jharkhand, a mob of about 40 people burst into the house of Sohan Bediya, a Christian, and physically



assaulted him. Bediya along with other Christians had gathered for a Christian prayer meeting. The mob verbally and physically abused the Christians, destroyed the medicines kept at Bediya's house, read from the Bible, and mocked the Christians for their religious convictions. When the victims approached local police for help, they were told to stop conducting Christian prayers.

**On 30 October** in Chatra district, Jharkhand, an unidentified Christian man was taken into police custody. Pastor Deepak Kumar told our sources that the person was a member of his church and had been subject to intense pressure to abandon his Christian beliefs. The pastor said that a police complaint was filed against him based on a false allegation that he had physically assaulted and robbed a woman. After an intervention from a Christian advocacy group the pastor was released the same day without any charges.



## KARNATAKA

**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 a religious organization called Hindu Jagaran Vedike. Holding saffron flags in their hand they 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 the information that a complaint had been filed against the Christians.

**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 9 February** in Mundgod police station area of Uttara Kannada district, 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 gravely injured and had to be admitted at the Hassan District Government Hospital.

The attacked 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, then 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 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 electric 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. Reportedly, 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 the information, a Christian advocacy group contacted Mr. Nayak, the victim, called up local police officials and sought for protection of the family. Police assured the victims of all possible help.

**On 23 September** in Susai Palya, Chikkaballapur district, Karnataka, in a six-hour long operation, 300 police and revenue personnel removed a 32-meter-long cross from the hilltop and 14 seven-meter-long crosses on the way to the hilltop where the St. Joseph's Church is located. "The government officials acted arbitrarily without any prior notice," said parish priest Father Antony Britto Rajan. He said that hundreds of parishioners gathered and watched the police action "in shock and horror." The parishioners had been using the Way of the Cross for more than five decades for praying, especially during the Lenten season. Besides Catholics, people from other religions also visit the hill for prayer. Police officials claimed they were following a state High Court order but refused to show any such order, the priest said.

**On 28 September** in Yelahanka suburb, Bengaluru

district, Karnataka, a pastor was physically assaulted by religious extremists. Pastor Ajay Ajjappa was invited to the house of a Christian, to conduct prayers. While the pastor was still praying, a group of religious extremists barged into the house and began to physically assault the pastor. The assaulters left with a warning to the pastor to desist from conducting any more prayers in the neighbourhood.

**On 16 October** in Davangere district of Karnataka, Pastor Sundar Rao and 18 other Christians were forcefully taken to the Honnali police station. The incident occurred while they were on their way to a Christian's house. Religiously motivated villagers confronted them on the way with accusations of holding mass religious conversions in the village. They abusively escorted them to the police station and demanded their arrest. However, after preliminary inquiry, police released the Christians.

**On 8 November** in Kuknoor taluk, Koppal district, Karnataka, Pastor Elisha Devenderappa was arrested and taken into police custody. Sources informed that certain religious radicals showed up at the house where the pastor was conducting Sunday prayers. Accusing him of converting people to Christianity, they forcefully took him to the Kuknoor police station. The radicals continually built pressure upon police to file a case against him. However, after intervention from advocacy groups, the pastor was released without any charges.

**On 29 November** in Haliyal taluk, Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka, twenty-three people from five Christian families converted to Hinduism in the presence of BJP Member of Parliament Anant Kumar Hegde in an event described by saffron outfits as ghar wapsi (homecoming) and voluntary action. At the function held in Haliyal town the Uttara Kannada MP and former BJP MLA Suneel Hegde handed over the saffron flag to those who converted. "Most of these families are poor and have no knowledge of conversion to other religions," Suneel Hegde said. "The conversion of the Dalits and tribals to Christianity will be opposed tooth and nail. More such people will be brought back to the Hindu fold. I request those who are converting Hindus to desist, else they will face the repercussions. Most of those who converted are Dalits. They realised it was a 'mistake,'" he added.



# MADHYA PRADESH

**On 4 March** in Sehore city, Sehore district, Madhya Pradesh, violence against Christians 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 radicals 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, Barwaha Tehsil, Khargone District, 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 9 March** in Dilodh village, Pandhana tehsil, Khandwa district, 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 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 rubbles. 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, Neapanagar tehsil, Burhanpur district, 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, Pandhana tehsil, Khandwa district, 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 Jhirniya 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 tried to convert him 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.

**On 25 June** in Mediras village, Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh, an FIR was filed against Pastor Sunil Masih under Sections 293, 323 and 506 of the

Indian Penal Code based on a complaint from Pankaj Mishra, a religious radical. This incident occurred after a heated debate ensued at a grocery store in the village. While the pastor and his wife were at the store, Mishra, an active member of the local Gau Raksha Samiti, confronted him along with his friends. They accused him of engaging in conversion activities and warned him to desist from the same. Shocked by the threats, the pastor and his wife approached the Chachai police station for help. To their dismay, police filed an FIR against the pastor.

**On 13 July** in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh, a complaint was lodged against a Christian pastor, Remu Singh. The complainant falsely alleged that the pastor was misleading people and converting many tribal people into Christianity. The complaint goes on to claim that the pastor had violated lockdown norms while Section 144 was in effect in the district and had gathered a group of Christians for a prayer meeting at his house.

**On 11 August** at Indore, Madhya Pradesh, a Christian woman named Seema was brutally beaten up by perpetrators because of her faith in Christianity. Her brother named Murli was also targeted by the perpetrators. Seema filed a complaint at the local police station.

**On 3 September** in Khan Colony, Mhow cantonment, Indore district, Madhya Pradesh, Pastor Sangeeta Upadhyay and her husband Chandrashekhar Upadhyay were booked under sections 323 and 506 of Indian Penal Code, Section 3 sub-sections of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, and section 3/4 of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, based on a complaint lodged by one Yogita Chauhan. The couple were sent to jail. Sources reported that the complainant was a regular attendee of the pastor's church, but seemingly under intense pressure from some anti-Christian elements registered a false case against the pastor.

**On 6 September** in Adabaydapura village, Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, a mob of around 50 fundamentalists disrupted the worship service of a house church led by Pastor Mohan Avsari. The mob threatened the pastor and the host, Ganga Ram, of severe consequences if he continued to invite the pastor. The mob approached the Sub Divisional Magistrate of Manawar, submitted a complaint against Ganga Ram, and got an official notice issued

to show up at the SDM's office. The pastor told our sources that they later went to the SDM's office and refuted the allegations against them. Eventually no further actions were taken by the authorities.

**On 13 September** in Alirajpur district, Madhya Pradesh, Christians were attacked during a prayer service. The incident occurred while Pastor Anar Singh Jamara and a small group of Christians had gathered for prayer at Beersheba Church of God. Just then, around 15-20 people barged into the building and attacked the Christians. During the violent and bloody attack, a Christian suffered grievous injuries on his head. Subsequently, the assailants snatched the pastor's mobile phone and a few copies of the Bible and fled away. When the pastor approached the police to file an FIR, the extremists sought for a compromise. Eventually the matter was settled after the pastor's mobile phone and the copies of the Bible were returned.

**On 19 September** in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, a seminar was organized by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at the VHP's Central Board of Critics in Bhopal, where a decision was taken to stop the alleged game of conversion by the missionaries in tribal-dominated states. Chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Dr. Mohan Bhagwat, attempted to build a false narrative manoeuvring his statement that under the schemes of international organizations missionaries pose a threat to the nation's internal peace and harmony, hence religious conversions need to be stopped. He further stated that those who had converted, will need to be reconverted back to the Hindu religion.

**On 20 September** in Chhindwada district of Madhya Pradesh, a religious extremist group submitted a memorandum at the Navegaon police station claiming that forceful religious conversions were being carried out in the Chhindwada block. Christians in the area refuted the claims calling them "baseless and false allegations".

**On 27 September** in Damua, Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh, a Christian woman was charged of religious conversion and taken into custody by the police. Santoshi, a Christian adherent, who attends Pastor Admin David's church, was invited by a family to conduct prayer. A group of religious fanatics questioning Santoshi and accused her of converting people into Christianity. On their complaint, police

officials arrived at the location, arrested Santoshi and took her to the Navegoan police station. Pastor David believes that Santoshi has been falsely charged.

**On 30 September** in Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh, a group of religious extremists barged into a house during a prayer meeting led by Prembati Belvansi. The extremists verbally abused her and threatened her. Thereafter, they called the police and accused her of converting people in the village. Police detained the woman at the local police station.

**On 18 October** in Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, Mangi Lal Pargi, a Christian pastor, was arrested and taken into custody at the Shivgarh police station. The pastor was conducting a Sunday prayer meeting when police personnel barged in and arrested him. Local sources informed that Mangi Lal has been facing frequent opposition from religious extremists in the area. Subsequently, upon intervention from Christian advocacy groups, he was let go without any charges.

**On 25 October**, at around 10 am, in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh, a group of religious fanatics barged into a Sunday worship service and severely beat Gomti, an elderly woman of 60. The incident occurred while Pastor Sumistha Vasunia was conducting the prayer. Around eight people, brandishing guns, walked into the meeting room, verbally abused the Christians, and grievously injured Gomti and two other Christians. They accused the Christians of engaging in religious conversion. After firing two rounds of bullets in the air they left the place.

**On 22 November** in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh, some antisocial elements barged into an ongoing Sunday prayer service and disrupted the program. They verbally assaulted the Christians and their pastor, Ashish Yadav. They warned them to stop conducting prayer meetings. The victims approached the Hoshangabad Dehat police station, however no actions were taken. Police told our sources that that the station in-charge had visited the site, had taken some written statements from both the parties, and that the investigation was underway.

**On 24 November** in Adabeda village, Manawar tehsil, Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, Pastor Mohan Osari reported that he had received threats over the phone to cease from conducting prayer meetings in the village. Allegedly, the caller belongs to a major

political party with a right-wing ideology. He warned the pastor that if he did not oblige and continued visiting Christian houses to conduct prayers he might be brutally beaten up.

**On 27 November** in Gadra Jhiri village, Bhainsdehi tehsil, Betul district, Madhya Pradesh, three Christians - Pastor Hamlin Jebasargunam of Gate of Glory Church, Pastor Reglin Emmanuel, and Pastor Gunwant Malevar - were arrested during a prayer meeting and taken to the Bhainsdehi police station on allegations of religious conversion. Sources informed that the pastors had been falsely accused and one of their cars was damaged by religious extremists. Subsequently an FIR was registered against them.

**On 1 December** in Parasia tehsil, Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh, a Christian missionary was escorted to the Badkuhi police post by religious extremists. Sources informed that the mob falsely claimed that the missionary was converting the local tribal people by means of force and allurements. They also submitted a memorandum to the police demanding that the religious conversion work undertaken by Christian missionaries needs to be opposed and subdued.

**On 9 December** in Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh, a Christian couple - Clement Francis and his wife - were confronted, manhandled, and verbally abused by religious radicals. The couple had gone to visit their family friends who come from a tribal community. The radicals accused that on the pretext of visiting tribal homes the couple convert people to Christianity. Subsequently, local Christian leaders met the couple, and submitted a complaint at the office of the Superintendent of Police on their behalf.

**On 11 December** in Dindori district, Madhya Pradesh, acting on a complaint filed by religious fanatics, police confronted Pastor Sudarshan Agrawal alleging that he was converting people by luring them with Rs. 5,000. Earlier the fanatics had abused him and lodged a complaint with the police. No FIR or complaint was registered in the case.

**On 31 December** in Thikri town, Barwani district, Madhya Pradesh, a mob of fifty religious fanatics physically assaulted a group of Christians who had gathered for a prayer meeting. The mob accused the Christians of luring people into Christianity and attacked some of the women. Earlier Pastor Arvind

Piplode had arranged the meeting at his church member's house and had applied for permission from local authorities. On the day of the meeting when the pastor reached the meeting venue, he was shocked to learn that a mob had attacked the Christians. During the assault, a pregnant woman was grievously injured which led to the death of her baby in her womb. Subsequently police reached the spot and wrote down the names of the Christians and went away. When the pastor tried to file a complaint with the police, they were reprimanded for conducting religious programs and threatened that their bank accounts would be investigated since they were being paid to become Christians.



## MAHARASHTRA

**On 5 January** in Nalasopara town, Palghar district, 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. The 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 as 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 Sonegaon police station area,

Nagpur district, 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 report was filed by John at the Sonegaon Police Station.

**On 2 February** in Bhandara district, Maharashtra, religious extremists barged into a church building where Pastor Anand Janake ministers. They destroyed church equipment including the amplifier and other movables. They threatened some of the church members who were still in the church premises, burnt the Holy Bible and dragged the members to the local police station at Bhandara.

**On 19 February** in Nalasopara town, Palghar district, Maharashtra, a mob of fifteen religious extremists barged into Pastor Ganesh Wankhede's house where a prayer meeting was being held. The mob disrupted the prayer service, verbally abused, and threatened the Christians gathered there, and accused them of converting people. They then physically assaulted some of the Christians and warned the pastor not to hold prayer services anymore.

**On 6 March** in Rede village, Akola taluka, Ahmednagar 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, Gondia tehsil, Gondia district, 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 of their Christian faith. The pastor has been opposed frequently by the locals for holding prayer meetings.

**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 were 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, Nagpur district, Maharashtra, villagers, influenced by anti-Christian elements, decided to prohibit the entry of pastors and Christian leaders in the village. They alleged that Christian pastors carry out religious conversion through allurement and force.

**On 10 July** in Bhatpar village, Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, Pastor Munshi Devu Tado was murdered by Maoists. The incident occurred while he was leading a worship service on his property for about 15 families from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Just then three armed men and three women forcefully escorted him away out of the house. They shook hands with him at first, then took him by his hand and, after few steps, they tied his hands at his back with a rope. Though his relatives tried to follow him as he was being taken away, they were pushed and thrown to the ground. Hardly five to seven minutes later, they heard a gunshot. They ran in the direction only to find the body of the pastor in a pool of his blood while the Maoists had gone. He is left behind by his wife and four children, ages 6, 5, 4 and 1. Seemingly, local villagers had been upset with the growth in the

number of Christians in the area and had incited the Maoists to kill the pastor claiming that he was a police informer. Police later denied the report that the pastor worked as an informer.

**On 30 July** in Malampahali village, Etapalli taluka, Gadchiroli district, Maharashtra, local villagers beat Diliram Toppo, a member of Church of North India, when he returned home from a Christian Bible Study meeting. No police complaint was filed by the Christians.

**On 19 September**, in Anajangaon, Amravati district, Maharashtra, a Christian named Sanjay Ambhore was beaten up on account of religious beliefs. Sanjay is a member of Hosanna Fellowship which is pastored by Ashok Wagh. A non-cognizable offence information report was registered at Anajangaon police station against the attackers.



## ODISHA

**On 12 March** in Kodalmetla village, 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. The animist mob beat 30-year-old Kama Sodi unconscious. They had first attacked him the night before, surrounding his house as he, his wife and children were praying as they would before bed. During the second attack the next morning, she screamed at the assailants that he would die if they did not stop. The assailants threw the family's food grains and belongings outside and told them to leave the village.

**On the morning of 13 March** in Dasmantpur block, Koraput district, Odisha, a Christian 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 directed the Superintendent of Police to investigate the matter.

**On 14 March** in Hirakud town, Sambalpur district, Odisha, Pastor Amos Kkhatriya 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 he has 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, Mayurbhanj district, Odisha, two Christian families were robbed of their belongings and livestock. The flurry of events began on 2 March when a child dedication prayer meeting 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, Rayagada district, 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 has a large Hindu population. They were warned that if they did not comply then they would have to face dreadful

consequences. This congregation has been gathering for the past three years.

**On 27 March** in Borapada village, Dhenkanal Sadar tehsil, 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 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 his 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 an intentional harassment directed against religious minorities.

**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. 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' invited (witch doctor) to consult whether their local deity was angered by the evangelist's Christian faith.

**On 4 June** in Kenduguda village, Malkangiri district, Odisha, shocking news came in of the death of a 16-



year-old Christian boy. The mutilated body of Sambaru Madkami 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 deciding to kill the male heads of the three Christian families in their village. Incited by religious extremists, the animists decided to stab and stone the young boy to death for his Christian faith.

**On 21 July** in Badaguda village, Koraput district, Odisha, two villagers assaulted a Christian family at 1 a.m. and vandalized their home, only to attack again at 8 a.m. with about 100 others who came to the house where they had taken shelter and beat members of the 12 Christian families with wooden planks, reported their pastor, Ayub Khora. The 12 Christian families have been facing opposition almost every day since the day they decided to follow the Christian faith. Complaining that Christian prayers have driven away their nature-based gods, tribal animists have repeatedly attacked 12 families since the Christians left their traditional religion two years ago. The 55 to 60 Christians have been sheltering together each night for the past six months, fearful of more assaults after villagers beat the Christian men, women, and children.

**On 7 October** in Hirma village, Jharsuguda district, Jharkhand, a mob of religious fanatics attacked all the Christian families residing in the village. Allegedly, the mob was comprised of members of RSS and Bajrang Dal, who along with local villagers, went from door to door and verbally abused and physically assaulted the Christians. The mob of around thirty people threatened and forced the families to proclaim, "Jai Sri Ram". Those that did not oblige were attacked. The radicals alleged that Christians were gathering regularly for prayers and were converting the locals. They warned that they would kill Samal Lagun, the local missionary. Fortunately, Lagun was able to make a safe escape. The matter is similar to an incident of violence against Christians that occurred five years ago. Victims continue to be in a state of fear.

**On 13 December** in K. Singhpur tehsil, Rayagada district, Odisha, religious fanatics vandalized a church building and manhandled Christian families in the remote village of Chichima. Pastor Bhibhudan Pradan who leads the church told our sources that the perpetrators disturbed the church service and manhandled all the Christians. They were drunk and

carrying axes. Subsequently they vandalized the homes of the Christians and razed down the shed that was used as a church. They threatened the Christians of dire consequences if they resorted to police help. Christians are now in a state of fear and shock.

---



## PUDUCHERRY

**On 2 August** in Akkaraivattam, Karaikal region, Puducherry Union Territory, the boundary walls of a church were vandalized by religious extremists. Pastor Robinson leads the Church of Jesus for the past 14 years in the locality. Recently he tried to erect a temporary shed on his land for his church members to gather. However local religious extremists filed a police complaint at Niravi police station against the construction. The pastor approached the Superintendent of Police and other administrative authorities. The SP gave him a verbal assent to proceed. Subsequently the pastor built a boundary wall around his land and completed the construction of the tin shed. On the day of the incident, he saw that the wall had been vandalized. Upon complaint, police acted swiftly and arrested 42 religious fanatics. The matter is now in the court.

---



## PUNJAB

**On 15 April** in Bhamriya Fala, Bicchiwara, Dungarpur district of Rajasthan, Jiva Thavara Bhagora and his family, comprising of his wife and three kids, were forced to live in the forest. For a long period, they had been facing ill treatment from the villagers for their Christian beliefs. Eventually they moved out of the village and prepared a makeshift house for themselves in the woods.

**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.

**On the night of 17 September** in Tarn Taran district, Punjab, Pastor Vicky, his wife, and son were brutally attacked by religious radicals. The pastor while returning home from a church gathering was followed by the radicals. A large mob lay in wait when he arrived at his house. Sensing danger, he tried to avoid an altercation. However, the mob severely assaulted the three of them. While the pastor's wife suffered a broken arm, the pastor and his son were severely injured. They also robbed them of their valuables including money, mobile phones, and jewellery. After immediate medical treatment and stitches on the injuries, the family approached the local police station for help. To their dismay the assailants had already lodged a complaint against them. However, after the intervention of a Christian advocacy group an FIR was registered against the radicals.

**On 24 September** in Batala, Punjab, Pastor Jakki Masih was severely assaulted by a group of assailants while he was on his way to a prayer meeting. The assailants had become aware that the pastor was planning to participate in the meeting. They robbed him of his things and left him severely injured. However, the pastor decided not to file a police complaint.

**On 7 October** in Kairon police station, Tarn Taran district, Punjab, according to reports received, Pastor Sokha Masih, a senior citizen, was allegedly beaten up by ASI Davinder Singh without provocation. Christian leaders, a day later, met the City Police Station Chief and expressed their concern and registered their protest against this unprovoked attack on a senior pastor.

**On 16 October** in Jalandhar district of Punjab, Pastor Gurmail Singh and his wife were physically and verbally harassed for his Christian faith by a religious radical named Manvir Singh. The pastor drives an autorickshaw to make ends meet and has been frequently troubled by Manvir. Recently the battery of his vehicle was stolen, and he had lodged a

complaint at the local police station. He also provided a video recording from a CCTV as evidence identifying the culprit as Manvir. Irate at the complaint, Manvir barged into the pastor's house, accused him of converting people to Christianity, and misbehaved with his wife. Police investigation is under way.

---



## 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.

**On the night of 10 November** in Bagidora, Banswara district, Rajasthan, Pastor Balsingh Tihori of the Holy Fire Mission was threatened and verbally abused by religious extremists. The radicals surrounded his house armed with swords, and threw stones at the main gate, while swearing at him and his family with offensive words. Soon local residents came out due to the commotion and tried to nab the assailants. However, they were able to slip away in the dark. One of the assailants was later taken into custody by local police. Others are still at large.

---



## TAMIL NADU

**On the night of 5 January**, Tiruppur district, 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, Sengottai town, Tenkasi district, Tamil Nadu, Pastor James was summoned at the Kutralam police station regarding the prayers he holds at his house church. 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, Pongalur block, Tiruppur district, 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 5 February** in Sathyamangalam town, Erode district, 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, Thoothukudi district, 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 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, Ariyalur taluk, Ariyalur district, Tamil Nadu, a mob comprised of religious radicals barged into a church service and disrupted the prayers. They brutally beat Pastor Anbumohan and the church members and took them to a nearby police station. Police kept them in custody the entire day without providing the much-needed medical attention.

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

**On 5 March** in Durga Nagar, Tambaram locality, Chennai city, 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 8 March** in Marakkanam Taluk, Viluppuram district, Tamil Nadu, a member of an extremist group uttered obscenities at Reverend Perumal Kanagaraj and a team of youth missionaries when they were visiting a nearby slum area of Anumandai village. The religious extremist soon lost his cool and started beating the missionaries while abusing them. Police rushed to the slum where Christians were providing food and other aid earlier this month and detained them on false charges of forcible conversion. Marakkanam police humiliated the Christians and falsely accused them in coarse language of trying to fraudulently convert the poor in the guise of providing necessities.

**On 15 March** in Kottakulam town, Tirunelveli district, 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 shouting and protesting

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 filed.

**On 16 March** in Padayappa Nagar, Kalipalayam locality, Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu, local administrative authorities issued a notification to the Tuthi Magimayin Jeba Veedu (Elohim House) to stop holding Christian worship services. Rev. Umarani, 43, and Rev. 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 coming 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 COVID-19 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, Erode district, 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.

**On 15 July** in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, a member of a political party that subscribes to religiously radical views, filed a complaint at a local police station to stop the construction of a church building. The property belongs to Christians who own a title deed for the land for almost 100 years. The community had sought permission from the local panchayat and had begun the construction. Acting on the complaint a local Inspector summoned the Christians at the station. Though relevant documents were produced before him, the Inspector ordered them to stop the construction and seek permission from the District Magistrate.

**On 7 October** in Mathiyampatti village, Vennandur taluk, Namakkal district, Tamil Nadu, reports came in about opposition to the construction of a boundary wall of the Jebamalai Matha Church. Fr. Lourdu Sami reported that Nala Aram Chey Foundation, a religious radical group, had restrained the Christians from constructing the wall. Recently the Foundation had got the crematorium for lease from the government, and had taken control of the area, forbidding Christians to bury the deceased in this place. Upon intervention from minority rights groups, Ashok Kumar, the Deputy Superintendent of Police, approached the revenue department to resolve the issue. Police assured that the concern raised will be amicably sorted.

**On 17 October** in Irudayanagar of Tirunelveli district, a cemetery of the Sacred Heart Church (Palayamkottai Diocese) was vandalized by unidentified religious extremists. The cemetery premise has been used for burial since 1982. However, some troublemakers had been disputing the church's ownership for the past 20 years. In response the church and government authorities had made it clear that the land legally belonged to the Church. A few months ago, religious radicals stirred up their opposition again during the Thamarabarani Pushkarana (a festival). The vandalism seems to have been provoked by a Tamil daily, Dinamalar. The

boundary wall and around 200 cemeteries with their crosses were vandalized. Thachanallur police filed a complaint against unidentified people. Meanwhile the church members launched an agitation and have been demanding an immediate arrest of the culprits. Monsignor Joe Michael Selvearaj, the Parish priest, and the parishioners have demanded a compensation of One Crore rupees from the government.

**On 29 November** in Velampalayam, Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu, a group of religious radicals confronted Pastor Johnson and his church members, alleging that their vehicles often block a smooth movement of traffic in the locality. The pastor told sources that the allegation was only a pretext to harass the community for their beliefs. He clarified that those in the neighbourhood do not have any qualms about the church, and their vehicles had never obstructed public commute. The radicals accused the pastor of conducting prayers without the requisite permission from authorities. The pastor reported that he had applied for permission at the District Collector's office many months ago, but no progress had been made.

**On 14 December** in Omalur Taluk, Salem district, Tamil Nadu, while Pastor Stephen Prabhu was leading a prayer gathering, a religious radical barged into the house and created a ruckus charging the Christians of engaging in religious conversation. However, upon opposition from local villagers he left the place.

**On 14 December** in Omalur Taluk, Salem district, Tamil Nadu, Pastor Charles was thrashed by some religious extremists. The incident occurred when the pastor was at his home. The extremists demanded that he stop conducting Christian prayers and leave the locality. No police complaint was filed until the writing of this report.

**On 16 December** in Komarapalayam town in Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu, Raj Kumar, a Christian, was taken into custody by local police. The pastor was distributing Christian literature when some people confronted him and accused him of converting people forcefully. They escorted him to the nearby police station. Upon intervention from minority rights activists, he was eventually released.

**On 24 December** in Vetrivel Nagar (Kumarapalayam Pirivu), Thongattipalayam,

Tiruppur district, some locals belonging to right-wing groups approached police officials at the Avinashi police station and requested the SHO to stop Pastor Sam Venkatesan and his church members from holding a Christmas program. Consequently, police arrived at the pastor's church and told him to desist from organizing any prayers on Christmas day. Christian advocacy groups contacted the DGP, IGP, Chief secretary and other district officials requesting help. As a result, revenue and local police informed the Christians that they could go ahead with the program on the condition that they would keep the volume low.



## TELANGANA

**On 26 January** in Narsingi town, Ranga Reddy district, 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 Anitha.

**On 27 January** in Vishakhapatnam district of Telangana, a 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. In order 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 Maqdam 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 Bharatiya Janata Party workers. 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, allegedly from the BJP, 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.

**On 30 August** in Kanapur village, Khammam district, Telangana, the Grace of Jesus Church was razed down by unidentified people at midnight. Pastor V. Shyam Kumar informed our sources that the demolition was intentionally carried out at night in order to escape law. The church was built in 2012 on public land, but public authorities had not raised any objection. Around 150 people regularly attended the prayer meetings. However, of late certain religious radicals had warned the pastor to vacate the land. During the demolition much of the structure was razed down, including audio system, pulpit, chairs, and other furniture inside the church building. The matter was reported to the local police, a case was booked, and the investigation is underway.

**On 4 November** in Meerpet, Hyderabad, Telangana, religious fanatics barged into a house where Christians had gathered for a prayer meeting at the house of Sandhya, a church member. The fanatics indiscriminately attacked everyone irrespective of their age or gender, even damaging certain vehicles parked outside. Pastor Steven Hanok told our sources that during the attack everyone ran for their lives. Subsequently they approached local police and filed a complaint against the assailants.

## UTTAR PRADESH

**On 9 January** in Karaudi Kalan locality, Sultanpur district, 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, Varanasi tehsil, Varanasi district, 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, Bahraich district, 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 and Roshan. 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 sections 153A and 295A of IPC.

**On 12 January** in Harraiya village, Harraiya tehsil,



Basti district, Uttar Pradesh, police personnel barged into a church where a 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, Kushinagar district, 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, 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 Briju Ladit Ramapati, his wife Kailash, and Joginder, along with others - were summoned at the police station the next day.

**On 13 January** in Sujauli locality, Bahraich district, 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 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, Sitapur district, 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, Jaunpur district, 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, Dukhiram Maurya, Sunder Bhardwaj, Umesh Kumhar and Surender Prasad Kashyap - into custody.

**On 15 February** Barsathi block, Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh, police summoned Pastor Dukhiram 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, Dukhiram 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 16 February** in Chiraiyakot, Mau district, Uttar Pradesh, a group of villagers filed a police complaint against Pastor Ram Jeet, accusing him of orchestrating religious conversions in the village. Consequently, police detained him and another Christian at the Mohamdabad police station. Upon an intervention from advocacy groups, the pastor was released without any charges.

**On 20 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. Christians were threatened that their names would be removed from the ration register and that they wouldn't be allowed to avail the government facilities. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate threatened the Christians the very next day to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ.

**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 Lathudih, Ghazipur district in Uttar Pradesh, ten Christians, including Pastor Shiv Shankar Ram, were taken into police custody. Earlier

Pastor was leading worship service at a home dedicated for Sunday worship where 20 extremists accompanied by police intruded and disrupted the service.

**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 Katauli village 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 1 March** in Faridpur town, Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh, a group of religious extremists barged into the Assembly of God Church building and disrupted an ongoing prayer service, demanding that the prayers be stopped. They then forcefully took pastor Amit Masih to the Faridpur police station and accused him of engaging in religious conversions in the locality.

**On 6 March** in Kerakat town, Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Michael John of IBP Church was brutally assaulted by a furious mob and subsequently detained at the Devgaon police station. Earlier the pastor had received a distress call from a woman who told him that she was being harassed by her family members to recant her Christian beliefs or leave the house. The pastor rushed to her house for help. However, the woman raised an alarm in the locality that the pastor has malicious intentions. Consequently a mob gathered at her house and severely assaulted the pastor.

**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 8 March** In Nainiha, Bahraich district Uttar Pradesh five policemen barged into a church building where a Sunday worship service was in progress. They disrupted the prayer service and threatened Pastor Shambhu Singh not to hold the services anymore. Around 30 Christians are a part of the congregation and have been meeting for prayer every Sunday since 2012.

**On 8 March** in Basti district, Uttar Pradesh, some religious extremists disrupted a Christian prayer meeting. Subsequently, police arrived at the spot and arrested pastor Ajay Kumar who was conducting the prayer service and escorted him to the nearby Duboliya police station.

**On 8 March** in Unnao district, Uttar Pradesh, police arrested Pastor Dinesh Kumar during a prayer service. He was detained for questioning at the Barwasagwar police station. Sources informed that the pastor was falsely accused of engaging in religious conversion activities.

**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 Indresh Kumar Gautam 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 16 April** in Bichargara village, Khunti district, Uttar Pradesh, religious extremists stormed into the home of a Christian woman, 23-year-old Reena Kumari, took her outside and pressured her to renounce her Christian faith. The next morning, the six extremists intruded into the family's home and dragged Phulmani Devi, her husband and three daughters, including Reena, out and presented them before the village council. Officials demanded that Kumari sign a document pledging to refrain from attending church services and telling anyone about Christ. Under immense pressure from the village elders her daughter agreed to sign it but balked at their subsequent demand that her parents and family also had to sign.

**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 the relief material, and where did you get the money to buy it?" 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 abusers. 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 look into 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.

**On 2 July** in Jakhawa village, under Bargarh police

station, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, while Sunita Maurya and a few other Christians were praying, a group of villagers along with 10-12 unknown people barged into the meeting and hurled abuses at them. They demanded that the Christians leave the place and go away, and that they would not be allowed to live in the village at any cost. After multiple threats they went away. The incident occurred around 11am. Subsequently, at 5 pm, they returned again with a group of several unknown people. They humiliated the Christians verbally and attempted to outrage the modesty of the women.

**On the morning of 3 July** in Dasmada village, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, in a second assault, about 150 people from the nearby Jakhawa village barged into the house of Sunita Maurya and abused the family. They falsely accused the family of engaging in religious conversion activities. Subsequently they dragged Maurya and others to the nearby village temple and demanded that she swear an oath that she is not engaged in conversion activities in the village. Only after an assurance from Maurya they let her go.

**On 4 July** in Dasmada village, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, a third in the series of repeated attacks, a mob of around 30-40 religious extremists barged into Sunita Maurya's house and brutally beat them, vandalized their vehicles, broke a hand pump, fans, chairs, sewing machine, musical instruments, motorcycle, two bicycles, all household items and razed their hut that was used for holding Christian prayers. Subsequently the extremists surrounded the area so that the Christians could not reach out to the nearby police station for help. However, Sunita Maurya was able to steal her way to the station and informed the police about the horror they had undergone. A First Information Report was registered bearing no. 0166/2020 under IPC sections 147, 452, 323, 504, 506, and 427. Taking immediate action police went out to nab the perpetrators but they managed to escape. Maurya stated in her complaint that she and her family have been routinely targeted for their Christian faith and ministry for the past three years.

**On 4 July** in Unnao district of Uttar Pradesh, religious radicals opposed the construction of a church building. Pastor Ajay Rajput owns the land and had begun construction after availing the required

approval from local revenue officer. Irked by the construction some local villagers, holding to radical religious views, lodged a false complaint that the construction was illegal and was being done on an encroached land. The pastor feels that he is being harassed owing to his Christian beliefs.

**On 1 July** in Dasmada village, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Vikas Gupta was leading a small group of Christians in worship in compliance with measures to control the spread of the coronavirus, when a mob of around 15 upper-caste religiously radicalized villagers surrounded the place chanting slogans and threatening to kill the Christians. They warned that if the pastor is seen again in the village, they would hack him to death. The Christians tried to speak peacefully with them, but they were too agitated for a conversation. The church has been facing opposition for the past three years. Later in the day, to the Christians' shock, the mob returned at around 5 p.m., about 30 this time, and started beating the pastor and other men present in the premises of the home church. One of them was severely injured and had to be immediately rushed to a hospital. The mob also damaged parked vehicles, the church roof and other property. A few days later, on 6 July, the villagers confronted the Christians again accusing them of converting their relatives by propagating a foreign faith in their village. They kept punching the Christians and striking them on their heads as they took them to a local temple and forced them to make a vow that they will not preach about the foreign god. Eventually, with the help of advocacy groups, the Christians filed a police report on 7 July.

**On 7 July** in Rampur district of Uttar Pradesh, a Christian orphanage and leprosy center was attacked by religiously motivated miscreants. Ramesh Kumar runs the center in the outskirts of Rampur. During the COVID19 lockdown period, he, along with his team, had distributed food packets accompanied with Christian literature to the hungry and needy ones. Religious extremists accused them of converting people through allurements and vandalized the centre in the middle of the night. They also lodged a complaint of forced religious conversion with the local police. Subsequently, Ramesh approached local lawyers and was able to refute the false accusations.

**On 13 July** in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, reports came in of another assault on Pastor Sunita

Maurya and her family. After the 4 July incident, police had been able to nab some of the accused. However, they were soon granted bail and they decided to launch another brutal attack on the pastor. They barged into her house, destroyed the household items, and threatened the family to leave the village or face fatal consequences. Three of Maurya's children were able to escape from the spot. The family is now living in dread of more such imminent assaults.

**On 15 July** under Dargah Sharif police station, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh, David Masih, a Christian, was threatened and abused by his neighbours to leave his residence and the area or face severe consequences. When he approached Dargah Sharif police personnel for help, they were unwilling to register a written complaint, instead called the accused to resolve the issue with mutual compromise.

**On 22 July** in Mehnajpur, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, a police complaint was filed against Pastor Mushafir Ram for allegedly violating COVID19 protocols. The pastor belongs to the Shalom Ministries. He informed our sources that a false charge of religious conversion was also leveled against him.

**On 25 July** in Sudanipur village, Madihun block, Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh, a mob of religious extremists barged into the venue of a Christian prayer meeting and badly beat Pramila Singh, Kunta Singh and other Christians. Sources reported that they were falsely accused of carrying out religious conversion and arrested by local police.

**On 5 August** under Dargah Sharif police station, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh, David Masih 's son was physically attacked by his neighbours when he was on his way back from the market. When David tried to rescue his son, he was beaten up too. His neighbours have been continually threatening him to leave the area since he and his family changed their religion to Christianity.

**On 9 August** in Bhadar block, Amethi district, Uttar Pradesh, religious radicals belonging to the upper caste threatened, harassed, and falsely accused Pastor Rajender Kumar of converting people to Christianity through allurements. The pastor has been conducting Christian prayers in the area for the past five years.

**On 10 August** in Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, a family was threatened by their neighbours and local

police to stop following the Christian faith. The family had embraced Christian beliefs and had freely chosen to respectfully remove icons from their earlier religious belief. This did not go well with the neighbours who confronted and threatened the family, and called local police. Police further threatened them. The family is being pressured to reinstall the removed icons.

**On 20 August** in Kushinagar district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Dilip Paul was arrested and booked for violation of Section 144 of CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code). Police acted based on a complaint filed by some religious extremists who recorded a video of the Christian prayer meeting being conducted by the pastor. Around 8 to 10 people had gathered for the meeting. The pastor told sources that though he had followed social distancing guidelines, yet the video had been circulated on social media as a hate propaganda against the Christians.

**On 25 August** in Harpur village, Maharajganj tehsil, Maharajganj district, Uttar Pradesh, some anti-Christian villagers barged into Pastor Sugriv Prasad's house and threatened him for professing Christianity. On the next day, pastor informed the Tarkulwa village president about the harassment, and the official summoned the anti-Christian villagers to his office and warned them to make no further disturbances. However, the same person returned that night again using obscenities as they disparaged Christianity. Pastor informed police at the Maharajganj police station. Two police officers came to their home on 29 August and asked Pastor Sugriv's son to show them where the accused lived. But the police acted at the behest of the anti-Christian villagers since they had political affiliations. The pastor was interrogated for a few hours and later let go. However, the son was released only after two days. No complaints were charged against him.

**On 25 August** in Ajhua, Kaushambi district, Uttar Pradesh, some Christians - Gangadevi Raidas, Sunita, Aarti, Ramraj, Ramlal, and fifteen other women and men - were taken into police custody. A prayer meeting (satsang) was being conducted at the house of Gangaram Raidas. Men and women from nearby villages and towns had gathered for the program. Locals from the neighbourhood alleged that the meeting was meant to convert the poor and helpless by alluring them with money, and the converts were

being asked to remove the idols of deities from their houses. Acting on the complaint police barged into the meeting and arrested the Christians. Ganga Devi told sources that no such activity was taking place at the venue, and the allegations were baseless.

**On 28 August** in Siddharth Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Sujit was threatened by two men who came to his house and questioned him and his intentions in residing there. The pastor hails from Balia which is approximately 400 kilometres away from the area he ministers in. The extremists intimidated him and warned him to stop the prayer services and leave the city.

**On 29 August** in Kanpur district, Uttar Pradesh, Ashish Masih, a Christian, informed our sources that he and his family were getting harassed and threatened for their Christian beliefs for over a month. Certain religious extremist youth would often gather outside his house and warn them that being Christians they would be chased away from the locality. Often the youth would be in an inebriated condition and would scream at the family for hours.

**On 29 August** in Lakhimpur district, Uttar Pradesh, three Christians - Pastor Balram, Rajesh and Gopi - were arrested and kept in police detention at the Lakhimpur Sadar police station. They were arrested while they were praying at a Christian's house. The victims were severely beaten up by the police while in detention.

**On 31 August** in Nainiha block, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Shambhu Masih informed our sources that he had been receiving constant threats from his neighbours for conducting prayer meetings. They warned him that they would give a written complaint to the police, falsely implicate him, and get him to jail, if he did not stop the meetings. The pastor has been conducting prayers in the area for the past 6 years, and around 30 to 40 people gather for prayers.

**On 31 August** in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh, two pastors - Vijay and Shalom - were severely beaten up by a mob of 70 to 80 people. The pastors were at the home of a Christian man when the incident occurred. The mob alleged that the duo was forcibly converting people. The pastors called local police for help and were taken to the local police station. The house owner rubbished the allegations and confirmed with the police that he had invited the pastors to pray over

the new house that he had recently moved in to.

**On 3 September** in Kushinagar district, Uttar Pradesh, two police personnel barged into Pastor Sujeet Kumar's house and questioned him about the church services he frequently conducts. They inquired about his work and took photos of the church banner and a high court order copy. They sternly warned that if he intended to continue the services, he would need permission from the Sub Divisional Magistrate.

**On 4 September** in Gopiganj Bazar village, Bhadohi district, Uttar Pradesh, two pastors - Bachche Lal and Jang Bahadur were invited for prayer in the house of a church member. Around 3 in the afternoon, as the pastors were leaving, men allegedly belonging to the Bajrang Dal arrived and abusively threatened to kill the pastors. They forcibly enquired the pastors' contact details and addresses. A video recording of the entire incident was circulated on various social media platforms. Two days later, on 6 September, Pastor Bachche Lal received a call and was threatened with dire consequences if he visited the village again.

**On 13 September** in Dharsauna village, Varanasi tehsil, Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Santosh Kanojia was taken into custody at the Cholahpur police station. Earlier, a group of religious fanatics had interrupted an ongoing prayer meeting, manhandled some Christians, and accused the pastor of engaging in religious conversion activities. Acting on a complaint local police arrived at the spot and took the pastor into custody. Eventually the matter was sorted out amicably and no FIR was registered.

**On 17 September** in Nimamau village, Barabanki district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Santosh Kumar, a resident of Kamta, Lucknow, visited a Christian family in the village. Some religious extremists spotted Pastor Kumar and immediately gathered a mob of 70-80 like-minded people. The mob accused Kumar of conversion and called the police. Six members belonging to the Christian family along with Kumar were arrested by the police and taken to the Subeha police station. They were detained for about six hours and later released without registering any formal complaint despite severe pressure from the fundamentalists. Kumar was let go after verbal warnings to not enter the village again.

**On 1 October** under Barsathi police station, Mariahu Tehsil, Jaunpur district, Uttar Pradesh, Krishna

Kumar Yadav, Urmila Devi, Harish Chandra Maurya and other unidentified Christians were named in a First Information Report filed by one Baijnath Yadav, accusing them of defaming Hindu gods and goddesses as well as carrying out religious conversions. The complaint filed under 156(3) of the Cr.PC registered a complaint against the Christians under sections 295, 298, 419, 420, 370 and 328 of the Indian Penal Code. The complainant is a relative of the accused and has been against them from the time they accepted the Christian faith. The accused Christians have denied all allegations.

**On 4 October** in Badgaon village, Kaushambi district, Uttar Pradesh, police disrupted a religious worship service being conducted by Pastor Prem Chand. The police personnel reportedly threatened the Christians and then took the pastor along with 3 other Christians to the Kaushambi police station. The names of two other Christians who were arrested are Tej Bahadur Singh and Ganesh. Local Christian leaders reached the police station, and the Christians were let go in the evening.

**On 4 October** in Maharajganj district, Uttar Pradesh, local police barged into a prayer meeting where about 25 Christians had gathered. Police disrupted the prayers and took the church's pastor, Sukhbinder, to the Nautawna police station.

**On 5 October** in Nagwa village, Mau district, Uttar Pradesh, two Pastors, Harilal and Kalicharan, were falsely accused by anti-Christian elements of carrying out religious conversions and taken into police custody at Ratanpura police station. Subsequently, two pastors were charged under sections 151, 107 and 116 of CrPC. They were released on bail the next day.

**On 8 October** in Bhabhora village, Ambedkar Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh, police arrested two Christians, Prem Sagar and Gulab Chandra, on alleged charges of converting people to Christianity. Two more people have been named by the police but have not been arrested. According to media reports, police acted on the complaint of Suraj Pratap Singh, the District Vice Chairman of the Hindu Jagran Manch. Sagar and Chandra were presented before a magistrate and were later released on bail. Earlier, Anita Kamal, a local MLA, had demanded police action against Christians for engaging in conversion activities.

**On 11 October** in Sujauli, Bahraich district, Uttar Pradesh, two Christians - Ramniwas and Dhurandhar - were arrested and taken into custody. The incident occurred when they were peacefully saying Christian prayers in their home. Sujauli Police acted on a complaint from right-wing religious groups that alleged that the duo was engaged in forced religious conversions. Police reprimanded the two for violating lockdown norms, and registered an FIR bearing number 125/2020 under section 188, 269, 270 of IPC and 3 sections of Pandemic Act.

**On 12 October** in Sahavabad, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, police officials confronted and threatened Pastor Neeraj alleging that he was converting the locals. On 11 October while the pastor was conducting a prayer meeting, certain right-wing groups with the help of police officials had disrupted the meeting. Police had summoned the pastor to be present at the police station on the next day for inquiry. When he failed to be there, police confronted him and warned him to stop the prayer meetings.

**On 13 October** in Prayagaraj, Uttar Pradesh, four Christians - Pastor Subhash, Sunil, Gabbar, and Anil - were arrested and taken into custody at the Sarai Mamrej police station. The pastor is affiliated to the Yesu Darbar church for the past five years. The incident occurred at night when the pastor was resting at his home. Around 10 pm, police barged into his house, started abusing him and threatening him, while accusing him of engaging in religious conversion. Subsequently, the pastor and three others were escorted to the police station. Sources revealed that a group of villagers with radical religious views had complained about them to the police. The four were released the next day. No FIR was registered.

**On 15 October** in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Mangla Prasad was stopped by a mob of fifteen religious extremists while he was on his way back home from visiting a Christian family. The mob threatened him and hurled abuses at him, accusing him of involving in religious conversions. They tore the Bible he was carrying and wrecked his phone and bicycle. They even robbed him of Rs. 1,500/- that he was carrying in his wallet and ran away. However, the pastor decided not to file a police complaint.

**On 18 October** in Raebareli district, Uttar Pradesh, a group of religious extremists gathered at Pastor

Jitendra Masih's home during a prayer meeting. The extremists accused the pastor of engaging in religious conversion activities and threatened him.

**On 22 October** in Paithuli, Maharajganj town, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Nand Kumar told sources that he had been subject to constant threats and warning from religious fanatics. The pastor has been conducting Christian prayers under the Life Care Prayer Church for the past two years. The fanatics have been falsely accusing him of engaging in religious conversion activities, Kumar said. No police complaint has been lodged in the matter.

**On 23 October** in Farrukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, three Christians were arrested and taken into police custody. Police acted on a complaint filed allegedly by Vishwa Hindu Parishad members who alleged that three Christian pastors were performing religious rituals and claiming to cure the villagers of their sickness. The three pastors had organized a prayer meeting where they were exhorting the Christians from the Holy Bible at Harinath Singh's house. The VHP members alleged that the trio was converting people by luring them with money. The accused denied all allegations. Station in-charge, Devendra Gangwar, arrested the accused and seized their motorbike. Later, Pastor Ajay from Delhi was let go. Gangwar told reporters that in the early stages of the investigation, it does not seem to be a case of conversion.

**On 29 October** in Phoolpur, Prayagraj district, Uttar Pradesh, police personnel disrupted a Christian prayer service of the Assemblies of God Church. Police was acting on a complaint against Pastor Ram Shringar. The pastor was summoned to the IFFCO Police Station, where the Station House Officer ordered him to stop all kinds of religious prayers and activities. Though police were under pressure to file an FIR against the pastor, upon intervention from advocacy groups the pastor was released without a complaint against him.

**On 1 November** in Banghel city, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Dharminder was threatened by religious fanatics for reopening his church after months in the wake of corona outbreak. Source informed that a false accusation of religious conversion work was levelled on him by the fanatics. Christian advocacy groups spoke to local police, as

well as district level police officers, requesting that the pastor be provided security and his fundamental rights be upheld.

**On 1 November** in Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh, two Christians, Pastor Rajpal Saini and Ram Kishor, were detained by local police. The incident occurred while a new church building was being inaugurated at Amroha. The inauguration was attended by over 200 people. When the neighbours noticed the huge gathering, they called the police on the suspicion that a mass religious conversion was taking place. Police disrupted the inauguration ceremony and questioned the organisers of the meeting.

**On 4 November** in Gola, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, two Christian Pastors - Samuel Raj and Avadhesh Kumar - were detained at the Gola police station. The pastors were conducting their regular prayer meeting when some religious fanatics lodged a false complaint of religious conversion activity. Upon an intervention and request from Christians advocacy groups to uphold the pastors' right to worship freely as per Indian Constitution, police released the pastors without any charge.

**On 15 November** in Sherpur, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, police summoned Pastor Blesson K.L. of Indian Pentecostal Church and warned him to stop inviting non-family members for prayers at his house. Around 35 Christians gather at his house every week for prayer meetings. The incident occurred while the pastor was conducting a Sunday worship service. The SHO let him go after a strict warning.

**On 16 November** in Sahjanwa, Gorakhpur district, Uttar Pradesh, a group of religious extremists abused and threatened a gathering of Christians. The incident occurred when Pastor Anil Bharti was conducting a wedding ceremony at the house of Durga Nandan Sharma, a Christian. At around 7 pm, a group of twelve religious extremists barged into the house, forcefully stopped the ongoing ceremony, and sent the pastor away. On the following day the extremists returned and threatened the Christians to desist from conducting any Christian gathering or they would not hesitate to murder the pastor if he was seen in the village.

**On 24 November** in Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh, a group of religious radicals attacked Pastor R.K. Munda while he was conducting a prayer meeting.

The radicals accused the pastor of converting people and started beating him mercilessly. The attackers then called local police. Acting on their allegations, police immediately took the pastor into custody. Subsequently the pastor was released without any charges after advocacy groups spoke to the police.

**On 25 November** in Soraon tehsil, Prayagraj district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Karan Kumar Yadav, and another Christian, were arrested on allegations of involving in religious conversion. Some religious radicals had filed a complaint against them. The duo was arrested while they were conducting a Christian prayer meeting. Only after an intervention from advocacy groups, the Christians were released without any charges.

**On 29 November** in Phulpur tehsil, Prayagraj district, Uttar Pradesh, a prayer service was disrupted by local police. Acting on a complaint against the Assemblies of God Church, police walked into the church during the prayer service and asked pastor Ram Shringar to stop all kinds of religious activities. They inquired whether any religious conversion was taking place in the church. Before leaving they informed that the details will be handed over to the Station House Officer, and the Christians may be summoned. A similar incident had happened a month ago, on 29 October, when police had questioned the church members on the basis of an anonymous complaint. No FIR has been registered against the Christians.

**On 29 November** in Nurpur, Bijnor district, Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Kamlesh and another Christian man, were taken to Nurpur police station on allegations of converting people. The incident occurred while the pastor was conducting a church service. Some religious fanatics barged into the venue and escorted the duo to the police station. Sources alleged that the police personnel demanded money to release them. Upon intervention from advocacy groups, police released the Christians.

**On 4 December** in Kujran village, Tarwa police station, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, three Christians - Sanjay Ram, Sravan Kumar, and Ravi Chandra - were taken into custody at the Tarwa police station. Police acted based on a complaint regarding religious conversions filed by religious extremists and arrested the three Christians during a prayer meeting. Upon intervention from advocacy groups, police released them without filing any charges.

**On 17 December** in Chimi village, Kaushambi district, Uttar Pradesh, police confronted Pastor Lakhan Chauhan, demanded Rs. 1,000 as a fine and warned him to desist from conducting prayer meetings. The incident occurred after the pastor had finished prayers at a Christian home where about 35 to 40 people had gathered. After the prayers concluded, a neighbour informed local police that the Christians were converting others to Christianity. The Station House Officer from the nearby police station met the pastor and issued a warning.

**On 19 December** in Surajpur, Greater Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar of Uttar Pradesh, police arrested four Christians - Anmol, Seema, Sandhya and Umesh - based on a complaint filed by one Anita Sharma who alleged that the group had been luring her to convert to Christianity for some time. Anmol, the leader of the group, is reported to be a Korean missionary. Anita alleged that the group had approached her with money and asked her family members to dispense with the idols in the house. The four were booked under Section 295 (a) of IPC and Section 3/5 (1) of Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020.

**On 19 December** in Khekra sub-district, Bagpat district, Uttar Pradesh, a case was filed against Pastor Monu Dhama at the local police station alleging that he was involved in religious conversion activity. The pastor had organized a Christmas program for his church members. Allegedly members of the Hindu Jagranch Manch filed the complaint alleging that the pastor had not availed the required permission from the SDM to organize the event. A case was registered under 116/107 of CrPC. Narender Dhama, an assistant to Pastor Dhama, reported that the pastor had not been arrested yet.

**On 20 December** in Deeh Kauthaul village, Didarganj town, Azamgarh district, Uttar Pradesh, police arrested Neeraj Kumar, Balchandra Jaiswal, Gopal Prajapati and escorted them to the Didarganj Police Station. Ashok Yadav, a religious radical, had filed a complaint with local police that the Christian men had organized a five-day Bible Study at the home of Tribhuvan Yadav in order to illegally convert people to Christianity. An FIR was registered against the Christians under sections 504, 506 of IPC and sections 3 and 4 of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020.



## UTTARAKHAND

**On 21 December** in Bhatgaon, Maharajganj district, Uttar Pradesh, while Pastor Sugriv Prasad was conducting a prayer meeting along with 30 to 40 Christians, local police barged into the hall and took the pastor and other Christians - Pawan, Vicky, Shakti Kapoor and Sikandar - to the Shyam Deuwa police station. Sources reported that the Christians had gathered while upholding social distancing regulations of the government. However, certain anti-Christian elements falsely informed police that around 200 people had gathered in a hall while flouting all norms.

**On 22 December** in Malaka village, Phulpur tehsil, Prayagraj district, Uttar Pradesh, police arrested Pastor Lal Chandra, Pastor Deepak and Vikas and took them to the Tharwai police station. They were picked up while they were conducting a Christian prayer meeting in the village. The Christians were accused of engaging in religious conversion activity and under sections 107 and 116 of CrPC.

**On 24 December** in Nanua village, Siddharth Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh, after Pastor Kuldeep Kumar finished conducting a prayer meeting at the Assembly of God Church, a group of police personnel barged in and arrested him. They took him to the Itwa police station. Sources reported that police implicated him on the basis of a false allegation that he was converting people. The pastor was later released without any charges after Christian advocacy groups intervened in the matter.

**On 25 December** at Thakurine Kheda village, Purwa tehsil, Hilauli block, Unnao district, Uttar Pradesh, media persons barged into the house of Pastor Nathuram Gautam where Christmas celebrations were underway. They inquired whether religious conversion was taking place during the program. The Christians defended that they were celebrating Christmas. Subsequently two police personnel arrived at the spot and asked him to report at the Maurawan police station. The pastor informed our sources that some religious radical groups had complained to the District Magistrate regarding church activities. The SHO politely requested the pastor to reduce the number of attendees at the prayer meetings since certain groups were opposing the prayers. The pastor accepted suggestion and left the police station. No complaint or FIR was registered in the matter.

**On 21 March** in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand, Rosemary, a Christian evangelist, was confronted by a mob of religious radicals, when she was about to hold a meeting in a village. She 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.

**On 17 May** in Haridwar district, Uttarakhand, religious extremists barged into a Christian wedding ceremony that was being conducted by Pastor Mange Singh. The goons created havoc, checking the dining area whether beef was being served as food. When police arrived at the spot, they remained mere spectators while the ruckus continued. The pastor kept insisting that police restrain the goons and do the checking themselves. However, the officials remained silent.

**On 28 July** in Balawali village, Haridwar district, Uttarakhand, a mob of at least 10 extremists barged into the house of Pappu Kumar, who was praying with his family. Pappu responded to extremists that he was praying inside his house, and that should not bother anybody, but the furious mob began to assault him. The mob verbally abused Kumar as they kicked him and beat him with the rods, batons, and fists, repeatedly telling him to stop following the Christian faith. The extremists intentionally threw Pappu on a heap of bricks that were placed near his house, so that they would cause him grievous injuries. Pappu Kumar's brother and son borrowed a motorbike to take him to Mange Singh's residence, a local church pastor. Pastor Singh rushed Pappu to a government hospital, around 25 miles away at 1 am, in Haridwar city. No police complaint was filed.

**On 6 September** in Umedpur village, Sahaspur, Dehradun district, Uttarakhand, about 20 religious fundamentalists surrounded a Christian family who left the house of Pastor Emmanuel Raj Verghese after fellowship on Sunday afternoon. The miscreants manhandled the Christians and used vulgar language as they threatened them. They dragged the Christian family to Pastor Verghese's house, called him out, falsely accused him of carrying out religious conversion in the guise of running the Elizabeth Public School in the locality. They objected to him residing in Uttarakhand being a south Indian. They further threatened him of dire consequences if anybody visited his home or if he prayed for the visitors. Verghese reported the matter at the local

police station. Eventually police got a compromise letter from the fundamentalists assuring that they would not create any trouble for him in the future.

On 8 September in Pauri, Garhwal district, Uttarakhand, a mob of 15 to 20 religious extremists barged into the house of Pastor Vinod Kumar and verbally abused him for constructing a hall at his residence for prayer meetings. They threatened that they would demolish the building if he did not stop the construction immediately. Pastor Kumar approached the local police station and registered an FIR against the extremists. Since the filing of the complaint, Kumar has not had any trouble.



## 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, Charabari Adhibasi Jubo Songho. 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 Kobita Munda - 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.

**On 7 July** in Charabari village, 24 Parganas North district, West Bengal, some Christians faced verbal and physical assault from villagers. In the middle of the night a group of radicals pelted their houses with stones while using slogans against the Christian faith. The villagers were infuriated at the local pastor, Biswambar, who is associated with Berakah Faith Mission, and the Christians who gather for regular prayers.

**On 7 September** in West Midnapore district of West Bengal, a Christian couple - Rabi Hansda and his wife Kalpana - were threatened by religious extremists to denounce Christianity or face dire consequences. The extremists could not tolerate the couple as they attended regular Sunday church services and evangelised in the village to others. Since the couple was determined to follow Christ, except the verbal threats the village council could not harm them. No police complaint was filed from either side.







RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF  
THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA

805/ 92 Deepali Building  
Nehru Place  
New Delhi—110019 INDIA  
Email: [mail@efirc.org](mailto:mail@efirc.org)