PERSECUTION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

PERSECUTION RELIEF
QUARTER – 1 REPORT, 2018

Tribute To
SUBBARAVAMMA
Sister Chadrajupalli Subbaravamma from Andhra Pradesh, was martyred for Jesus Christ. (story on page 20)
PERSECUTION RELIEF IS AN INDEPENDENT, NON-DENOMINATIONAL, CHRISTIAN INITIATIVE PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT, (PRAYERFULLY, FINANCIALLY, POLITICALLY, JUDICIA LLY) TO THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA.

OUR MISSION
To provide comprehensive support to the persecuted Church by linking the free Church of the world with the persecuted Church in India

OUR GOAL
Freedom to worship Jesus Christ in India

OUR MOTTO
Serving Persecuted – Loving Persecutors

OUR TOLL - FREE NUMBER TO REPORT CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION 24 X 7
1800-1234-461
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In a climate of growing communal tensions, my heart is bleeding after handling more than 1200 persecution incidents, over the past 32 months.

The growing divide in India between the citizens, on all fronts - caste, ethnicity and religion, is spreading like a wild fire. There has been an unprecedented rise in the forces of hate and division and tremendous unrest in India, which is visible with each passing day. The distressing pace at which these events are unfolding day by day, is indeed alarming. After planting hatred and sowing pain, the reversing of these terrible events – the aftermath, the post-trauma effects and re-adapting to normal way of life after hate, is bound to take a long time.

What are we handing over to our future generations! Hate, Intolerance, Discrimination, Racism, Bigotry, Injustice and Religious divide?

It is easy for us to be disconnected, to read the news and move on with life, without being affected with what is happening to our fellow Christians in India. I hope this report will close the gap between you and the body of Christ.

Persecution Relief has, since its inception, sought to accurately highlight the actual position of the persecuted Church in India. Churches in turn, need to desperately unite, to stand with the persecuted Church. Several Churches have recognized this urgent need and wholeheartedly partnered with us.
“What are we handing over to our future generations! Hate, Intolerance, Discrimination, Racism, Bigotry, Injustice and Religious divide?”

The New Testament commands unity of the members of Christ’s Body with one another, under the Headship of Christ – which must be an organic unity and not an organizational unity, without compromise or sacrifice of God’s truth.

The Church in India is called to manifest the divine love of God to the world. Most Churches are hot-beds of internal politics and rivalry – a total distortion of what Christ intended them to be. Our lives are still dominated by selfishness and self-interest. Victory over satan is possible only when there is fellowship of Christians, growing in love for one another, without the walls of denomination, living in obedience to God’s word, as a Body under the Headship of our Lord.

As more and more Christians throughout India are taking a bold stand and being persecuted for Jesus Christ, may we stand united and see the Church restored to her original glory, an instrument in God’s Hands, to rout the forces of darkness and a channel of blessing to a needy world. Let us make this our prayer.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and record my sincere appreciation and gratitude, for the crucial role played by the State Coordinators, District Coordinators, Volunteers, well-wishers, Pastor’s/ Fathers/Lay Leaders and Persecution Relief family. A very special thanks to our philanthropic partners, who generously and selflessly supported the persecuted church in India.

Last but not least, my gratitude to all our media friend’s, reporters and editors. A big thank you to all organizations who are standing alongside the persecuted church in India - EFI, ADF, CLA and all our partner Churches & Mission organisations across India. Persecution Relief invites you to partner with us. We can help you connect with your persecuted brothers and sisters. To find out more, write to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com.

Shibu Thomas
Founder - Persecution Relief
founder@persecutionrelief.org
INTRODUCTION
TO 2018 PERSECUTION

John Dayal

The situation of religious minorities is fraught in 2018 as India goes into the political phase that will culminate in the general elections in the sprint of 2019. The Bharatiya Janata Party, seeking a second term for the Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, has made it clear that its election platform will largely be built on a religious polarisation of the country. From Jammu to Karnataka, now in the midst of the state legislative assembly elections, has seen religion taking centre stage. The hate campaign and violence against Muslims has caught the attention of the public at large, and the international community – the ritual gang rape and murder of a Muslim nomad girl in a temple in the Jammu region has shocked the international community. The violence against the Christian community, spread across the length and breadth of the country, does not rattle the conscience of civil society and the international community perhaps because it is scattered, and in most cases the victims are so terrified that they do not even want to register a complaint. Many have learned from the experience of others where a police complaint has invited even more wrath of the majority community, and even the administration. Police impunity is aggravated by police complicity if not active police participation in the violence. In fact, in many states such as Jharkhand, the incumbent governments are ranged against the Christian community and its institutions. This calls for courage from the Christian community, its pastors and believers, and its activists. And it calls for a multipronged approach to peaceful challenge persecution.

It is important not be scared in reporting a crime. Pastors and families do not report violence against them firstly because they are traditionally frightened of the police and civil authority, but as much also by their lack of knowledge on how to file a First Information Report. Training of community activists in legal aid takes place, but in fits and starts, and never really does touch those deep in rural areas, among tribals, and in small towns.

John Dayal
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 1st Quarter report for 2018, is an ominous measurement of the rising Christian persecution in India today, showing the growing vulnerability of the Church in India. The trends had begun to emerge in 2016.

In comparison with the last 2 years, the number of attacks has steadily spiked, while there has been a downward spiral of human rights and democracy. Whether it be that most of the cases reported against Christians or made by Christians are under-investigated or under-reported, the broad picture is one of increased concern at the growing restrictions against freedom to worship Jesus Christ, freedom of assembly, and every form of stifling.

Persecution Relief continues to diligently highlight and expose the atrocities against defenseless Christians, in pursuit of justice and freedom to worship Jesus Christ in India, which is every citizen’s right according to the Constitution. Persecution Relief while actively providing comprehensive support to the persecuted Christian, is redoubling its efforts, and has been both, actively and proactively campaigning to keep the voice of democracy, the voice of reason, the voice of justice and the voice of legitimacy loud and clear, defending the rights of the persecuted Christians, exposing them to rest of the world.

Persecution Relief is making every effort to represent the Christian community facing persecution in India by reaching out to the law makers for a solution.

Facts & Figures recorded in the Persecution Relief Annual Report, was handed over to the following members of Parliament:
“Persecution Relief is making every effort to represent the Christian community facing persecution in India by reaching out to the law makers for a solution.”

On 06th March 2018, Hon. Member of Parliament raised the burning issue of the growing incidents of atrocities against Christians in the country at the Lok Sabha. He highlighted the number of incidents recorded vs. the number of complaints registered by the Police, highlighting the reluctance and collusion of the administration, which helps the culprits roam scot-free. He requested the Government to take immediate action in this regard, so that the minorities in the country can live in peace and security, without discrimination.

- Hon. Minister Alphons Kannanthanam, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Culture, and Tourism, was briefed by the Founder

- An “Open Letter to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi” was sent in light of the growing atrocities committed against the minority Christian community

- Based on Persecution Relief Annual Report, many National and International Print and Digital Media highlighted Christian persecution in India, across the world

- The following Petitions – “Stop the killing and brutalizing of Christians in India” and “Abolishment of anti-conversion law in India”, are on-line and still in progress. If you have not yet signed our Petition, please sign and share.

Persecution Relief was represented at National Mission Consultation 2018, organised by Friends Missionary Prayer Band.

Founder Persecution Relief met with Pastor D. Mohan, General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God of India and Vice Chairman of the World Assemblies of God. He discussed with him about the current situation prevailing in India and shared his vision for the persecuted Church.

Dr. Simon Samuel, Principal and Dr. George Oommen, Dean of Student Affairs, New Theological College (NTC) with Founder, releasing the Persecution Relief Annual Report. NTC is one of the many Bible Colleges where Persecution Relief conducted awareness sessions about the current persecution situation in India.
Ms. Fiona Bruce MP, House of Commons, Westminster, London, was informed about the alarming rise in Christian Persecution in India. Further, the Annual Report of ‘Persecution Relief’ was forwarded to “All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief”. This Group exists to raise awareness and profile of international freedom of religion or belief as a human right among Parliamentarians, media, government and the general public in the UK, and to increase the effectiveness of the UK’s contribution to international institutions charged with enforcing this human right. APPG members were also appraised by Persecution Relief.
Persecution Relief Team met with major Mission Leaders and Church Pastors, appraising them about the current situation Christians are facing across India. All of them have assured their help and support towards the persecuted Church.

Pastor Satish Kumar of Calvary Temple, Hyderabad, initiated ‘Body of Christ’ forum, connecting key Christian Leaders, representing almost all states of India, to stand with the persecuted Church. The Leaders have decided to meet every 2 months. Persecution Relief spoke on the current situation about Christian Persecution, in the forum. Founder, Persecution Relief handed over a copy of the Annual Report 2017.

France24, a 24-hour international news and current affairs television network, broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to 250 million TV households, in 177 countries around the world, based in Paris, France. On 01 April 2018, they ran an Easter Special Report, on the persecution of India’s Christian minority along with Persecution Relief. The France24 Crew, travelled with the Founder, to get first hand reports of the reality on the ground, interviewing innocent victims.

France24 also met with Hon. Minister Ajay Singh, Leader of Opposition, Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly, the state which has recorded high numbers of incidents against Christians. He denounced the bill which violates the freedom of conscience and religion, which is contrary to the constitution. Among several ground visits, the crew visited the site of the demolition and partition of Pushpa Mission Hospital in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. France24 drew attention to the Anti-conversion bill in India, through the documentary.

On 29th March, 2018, Persecution Relief was represented by Pastor Baiju George, Ireland, in front of the TDS (Teachtaí Dála (Deputies) and Senators to the Oireachtais Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs of Ireland (legislature of Ireland). Persecution Relief’s Annual Report 2017, detailing attacks on Christians in India was used for discussion at the meeting. The initiative was made by a religious organization working for the persecuted Church globally ‘Church in Chains’. The representatives were shocked to read about the reality on the ground and commended the religious organisation for bringing the report to the committee. They lamented the fact that reports of persecution did not receive much media attention. The Joint Committee conceded that they would act on the report’s recommendations by inviting the Indian Ambassador to attend the committee to respond to the report and that he would also write to Minister for Foreign Affairs, encouraging him to take up the matter at the next meeting of the EU Foreign Ministerial Council.
SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE

- This report covers the period January to March 2018 and has been compiled with data that was sourced from various sources including the State Coordinators, District Coordinators, Volunteers and staff of Persecution Relief. Other sources include Persecution Relief Toll Free Number 1800-1234-461 / WhatsApp Groups created across every State, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

- Locally, the teams are mobilized to provide the comprehensive support (Prayerfully, Financially, Politically, Judicially) required and brethren rehabilitated, to continue to serve the Lord at the same location.

- Overall, data in each state have ‘0’ margin of error and is 100% accurate.

- Once contact is made, interviews are conducted to establish authenticity of the case, local Coordinators/Pastors/Leaders approves the incident and further proofs through photographs and videos are reviewed and validated etc.

- The cases chronicled here are only a fraction of actual violence perpetuated and reported on the ground.
STATISTICS

PERSECUTION INCIDENTS RECORDED FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 2018 BY PERSECUTION RELIEF

List of State abbreviations follows

SUMMARY

- Christian persecution is widespread across India, as per the graph, and has been recorded in 21 of India’s 29 states.

- Most incursions tend to occur frequently in the following 10 states - Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh, and Jharkhand.

- Uttarakhand joined the previous seven states - Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha, who passed the so-called “Freedom of Religion Act(s)”, commonly referred to as Anti-Conversion laws, restricting religious conversion.

- The passing of this law continues to create a hostile and a violent environment, polarizing communities, instigating hatred and exploiting religious minority communities, because they do not require any evidence to support accusations of wrongdoing.

- Persecution Relief has started a public petition, urging the Prime Minister of India, to repeal the execution of the ‘Anti-conversion legislation bill’ with immediate effect.

- Cases chronicled here are only a fraction of actual violence perpetuated and reported on the ground.
**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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<th>No.</th>
<th>State/ UT</th>
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PERSECUTION INCIDENTS RECORDED FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 2018 BY NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The count of ‘Media stories’ reported cases contradicted conventional expectation of bias.

More and more Journalists, Television Channels and Newspapers are seen as being more objective and impartial in their reporting.

However, there are a few News Agencies which have political leanings and deliberately obscure the reality on the ground.

SUMMARY
TOP 5 STATES MOST HOSTILE TOWARDS CHRISTIANS

Tamil Nadu

- Among all the 29 States, Tamil Nadu recorded the highest number of attacks on Christians in the last 3 months – Quarter 1.
- Tamil Nadu was a more or less peaceful and tolerant state for Christians in the past. Today, even worship in homes are hijacked by religious fundamentals.
- Many Hindu religious fanatic organisations have mushroomed over the last couple of years.
- Political instability in the state in the last one year, has aggravated the situation of law and order.
- Police and local administration are mute spectators, while all attacks are recorded and published on social media.
- In 2017, Tamil Nadu ranked number 3 recording 57 incidents in 12 months.

Uttar Pradesh

- Uttar Pradesh is the largest and most populous state in India where Christians are a small minority.
- In the First Quarter 2018, 16 incidents of violence against Christians have been recorded so far.
- In 2017, Uttar Pradesh registered 73 persecution incidents topping all states.
- Physical violence, arrests on false allegations and stopping church services, vandalism, threats to give up Christianity, were frequent crimes.
- The Chief Minister needs to restrain the multiple religious groups that take law and order into their own hands and treat everyone without bias.

Pastor Gideon, Tamil Nadu

Pastor R. K. Massi, UP
MADHYA PRADESH

- Madhya Pradesh state which had passed the Anti-conversion law, finds it being misused as false cases of forced conversion are frequently slapped against Christians.
- House Churches and prayer meetings held in the privacy of homes, are arbitrarily attacked, violating the privacy and sanctity of an individual or a family, and is shut down with impunity on charges of forced conversions.
- Photo shows image of Pastor Chen Singh’s house that was burned to the ground.

ODISHA

- Odisha which has seen the senseless burning of Graham Staines and his 2 sons, continues to remain an unsafe place for Christians.
- Seven innocent Christians from remote Kandhamal district in Odisha state of India are still languishing in jail following the mysterious murder of Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati on August 23, 2008.
- While Odisha has recorded 7 incidents in the 1st Quarter 2018, 9 incidents were recorded in 2017 overall.
- Photo shows image of members of 5 Christian families were beaten up by local religious fanatics in the village. They were excommunicated and expelled from the village on 27th of February 2018.

TELANGANA

- There has been a surge in anti-Christian attacks in Telangana ranked 3rd among the states, in the 1st Quarter 2018.
- In Quarter 1, 2018, Telangana has record 11 incidents so far.
- In 2017, Telangana ranked 7th with 26 incidents.
- Telangana has seen an alarming increase in attacks on Christians and churches which were demolished.
- Law enforcement agencies are increasingly being used by the state to stop and disrupt worship in Churches.
A Pastor in Tamil Nadu was found murdered in the early hours of 20th January.
It is alleged that Pastor Gideon Periyaswamy was brutally beaten and tortured before being murdered. His body was found hanging in the Church at Kovathur, on ECR Road, near Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, situated on the Coromandel Coast, 70 kilometers South of Chennai.

An Evangelistic Team in Telangana were ambushed and assaulted by unidentified miscreants. Several cartons of the Holy Bible were seized from their possession and set on fire. It has become a trend across India, for the religious fundamentalists to confiscate and burn the Holy Bible and other Christian literature.

A mob of religious fanatics in Jammu, set fire to a church as well as the body of Sr. Seema Devi, as they were reportedly upset because a former Hindu woman Seema Devi, was given a Christian burial. Several lakhs of rupees worth of vehicles and property were gutted in the fire. Families had to run away in hiding from the violence in the village.

Pastor Stephen Paul went to Government Mandal Office to register his land for the purpose of constructing a Church. Before he could enter the office, he was stopped by a mob of unidentified religious fundamentalists who brutally beat him and forced him to sign away his original documents of the land to them.
PARTIAL LIST OF PERSECUTION INCIDENTS

FEBRUARY

A mob of radicals, attacked and ransacked Faith Gospel Ministry in Daulatabad, in Medak District in the state of Telangana. The radicals took Pastor Emmanuel outside the Church and threatened him, while the rest of the mob, illegally trespassed into the Church and vandalized nearly everything inside.

MARCH

Pastor Prem Singh Chouhan, Katahari village, located in Kerakat tehsil of Jaunpur District, Uttar Pradesh, was forcefully taken by 2 Policemen, in between the worship service on charges of conversion.

“Hallelujah Church”, in Sengipatti village in Budalur taluk of Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, was set on fire by unidentified religious fundamentalists. Pastor, who was inside the Church at that time, suffered burn injuries.

Pastor Madira KotiReddy living in Rentachintala village, Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh was attacked while he was praying in a little shed outside his home. Pastor was attacked by a hardline religious fanatic, Shiva Narayana with an axe.
Sis Subbaravamma, belonging to the Kummara tribe, was 65 years of age, and living in the village Bollapalli, Marturu Mandala, Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh, along with her 75-year-old husband, K. Jaya Ramaiah, her son Subharayadu and his wife. Sis had committed her life to following Jesus Christ and His teachings in 2008. As Sis. Subbaravamma was a faithful Christian and a prayer warrior, she went up to the terrace of her house daily and prayed for the city, from 5.30 to 6:30 pm.

A little distance from her house was a mountain. Several daily wagers used to go up to the temple located on the mountain top. Most of the daily wagers were from East Godavari District. Their occupation was to make stone and clay idols.

On 21st March, around 6.00 pm, one of the daily wagers, who had been observing Sis. Subbaravamma’s activities, decided to attack her. It is alleged that he came down the mountain, climbed the stairs leading to the terrace with a lathi. Finding her praying and totally oblivious of her surroundings, this killer attacked sister by beating her fatally on her head, multiple times until she collapsed. The perpetrator tried to make his escape by jumping off the roof. However, he was ambushed by the neighbours who accosted him and handed him over to the Police. A grievously injured and profusely bleeding Sis. Subbaravamma was rushed to the hospital but was declared ‘brought dead’.

The offender was booked under IPC 302 and the FIR No is 45.
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT

- The Indian Government must ban the ‘Anti Conversion Law’, which is a direct attack on individual’s freedom of conscience to choose one’s faith and on the freedom to profess, practice and propagate the faith of one’s choice, enshrined in Article 25 of the Constitution.

- Prime Minister Modi must speak clearly and consistently in support of full religious freedom in India.

- The Government of India must take measures to combat rising instances of religious intolerance and hate speech on social media. Strict laws need to be formulated while Police must act swiftly to curb hate speech.

- Social Media Facebook, Twitter & YouTube Platforms must be held accountable for publishing attacks and fake news, which ferment hatred and create fear psychosis, and take strict action against its perpetrators.

- State Governments must make clear that religiously-motivated violence will not be tolerated and instruct police under their jurisdiction, to bring perpetrators of such violence to justice. Police at all levels must impartially uphold the law at all times; protect religious minorities in daily life; prosecute the perpetrators of religiously-motivated violence rather than the victims, and to treat seriously threats against religious minorities.

- Any and every religious fanatical groups that injects venom into the society should be immediately banned.

- All Center and State Leaders should promptly and publicly condemn both verbal and physical attacks on minorities, as their silence is seen as an endorsement for religious fanatic groups to act against the minorities.

- Minority Ministries in the Center and State should take precautionary steps to counter violence in the name of religion. Support systems must be in place to rehabilitate and help displaced minorities who are persecuted and attacked.

- Government should allot places of worship and consecrated spaces to all the religions across India, without favoring any particular religion.

- Newspapers and TV channels should not be censored or gagged, but be allowed to work without fear of reprisal, honestly broadcasting and highlighting issues related to minorities, without bias.

- The Human Rights Groups must collaborate with major Church Leaders and house church leaders, of all denominations, and be able to enforce the rights of poor marginalized Christian community; to challenge oppression, exploitation and discrimination against any group or individual on the grounds of caste, gender, disability, age, religion, language, ethnic group, sexual orientation, and health, economic or social status.
REPORT CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION 24X7
TOLL FREE NUMBER
1800-1234-461
TOP 10 STATES WHERE CHRISTIANS ARE MOST PERSECUTED

- Tamil Nadu (TN)
- Uttar Pradesh (UP)
- Telangana (TS)
- Madhya Pradesh (MP)
- Kerala (KL)
- Odisha (OR)
- Uttarakhand (UT)
- Jharkhand (JH)
- Bihar (BH)
- Andhra Pradesh (AP)
PERSECUTION RELIEF

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for live updates

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Oklahoma Prayer Line
Sunday 9 to 11 pm – Oklahoma time
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