Greetings in the precious & matchless name of Jesus Christ. Persecution Relief owes it deepest gratitude, first and foremost to Almighty God, for the success of ‘Indian Christian Martyrdom Day’ which was observed on 22 July 2017, across India. Persecution Relief has the distinction of being the 1st organization undertaking such a significant initiative, paying tribute to the Indian Christian Martyrs in India. Here are some images and feedback on the Event.

“We prayed yesterday during our special phone meeting for the event planned by Bro. Shibu Thomas. Many Churches here prayed for this cause today too. Thanks for your burden for this cause.” – Malayalam Christian Network, Maryland, Philadelphia

“We now begin planning for our next event on 01st October, a day of ‘Prayer for the Persecuted Church’, uniting all Churches across India. More details on this event will follow and we hope everyone of you will join us again.

The faculty, staff and students of The South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) honored the martyrs of the gospel in a special prayer session held at the SAIACS chapel on Friday, June 21, 2017. This was in solidarity with Persecution Relief India’s appeal to set apart July 22nd as the Indian Christian Martyrs Day. We remembered those suffering persecution, the comfort of the survivors, the progress of the Gospel and the transformation of the nations” – Dr. Idicheria Ninan, SAIACS, Bangalore

To receive a free copy of our News paper ‘Voice of the Christians’, write to us at votc@persecutionrelief.org

PERSECUTION RELIEF
AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL INITIATIVE TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT TO THE PERSECUTED CHURCH IN INDIA

For Private Circulation, within the Church
“Thank you for the great work you do for Christ. We are standing with you in prayer and support. This Sunday, we will spend special time praying for the Martyrs’ families and your ministry”
– Pr. Eldose

“Appreciate the effort taken by Persecution Relief”
– Bro. Moncy Mammen, UBS

“Thank you, Pr. Shibu Thomas, for your initiatives for Churches in India. God bless you for this movement.”
– Pr. V.B. Babu, Odisha

“We had a prayer meeting for this special matter” – IFGM Church, Maharashtra

“According to your appeal, we took time to remember and pray for the Persecuted Church and Martyrs. We admire the efforts and pain you are taking for the disadvantaged and persecuted. May our good God continue to bestow His supernatural charisma upon you, your team and your family, to accomplish the task vividly. Our sincere prayers are with you”
– SEAL Ashram Mumbai.
Executive Summary:
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Persecution Relief’s objective was:
- To host a special event aimed at honoring and remembering the great sacrifice of our martyrs and praying for their families
- To inspire and be inspired to lay down our own lives for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ
- To create awareness on the plight of the Persecuted Church in India and stir up people to seek the face of God
- To motivate people to pray for the Persecutors who are in darkness
- To establish Indian Christian Martyrdom Day (ICMD) as an Annual Event

Dissemination:
- Persecution Relief had appealed to all Christians, to gather individually, as a family, a Church or as a community, to observe silence for minimum of 3 minutes, in memory of our Martyrs throughout the Country
- Visual reminders like Posters, Press Release, Newspapers and other resources were developed and shared well in advance
- Daily WhatsApp posts on Indian Christian Martyrdom Day were shared closer to the onset of the event

Participation:
- 100’s of Churches across India and abroad fasted, prayed and paid rich tribute to our Christian Martyrs
- Most of the major Bible Colleges across India were active participants—UBS, COTR, SAIACS, ATA, INC to name a few.

Media:
- Print media—We wish to express our gratitude to all Newspapers that covered our event
- A 12-page, Special Edition on ‘Indian Christian Martyrdom Day, was featured in our in-house newspaper ‘Voice of the Christians’
- Harvest TV telecasted a 30-minute episode on Indian Christian Martyrdom Day and the life story of the Martyrds of India
- Power Vision Malayalam TV carried an interview of our Founder on Indian Christian Martyrdom Day

Social media:
The event was aimed at driving awareness across social media platforms as well. Over several hundreds of thousands of people were reached creating a great awareness of the event. Several attendees, media outlets and church leaders contributed to the social media buzz surrounding the event. However, the sentiment of the messages was edifying than the volume of messages.

Future:
We were honored to have so many Churches both in India and across the globe and renowned Bible Colleges offer up their time and energy for the event. We appreciate every bit of your participation and involvement. As we wrap up this event, we are interested in hearing about things that went well and places we need to improve. Please share any thoughts you have with the us at admin@persecutionrelief.org.
Murdered pastor was told: stop preaching or we’ll kill you

Credit - World Watch Monitor

The son of a church leader shot dead in north-western India on Saturday (15 July) has revealed that his father had received threats that if he continued to preach, he would be killed.

Alisha Masih, 22, who is also training to be a pastor, said his father, Sultan, who was 47, had received threats (from unknown sources) via WhatsApp and Facebook. He added that his father had recently asked a friend to pray for him in light of these threats.

Sultan was on the phone when he was shot, standing outside his Temple of God Church in Ludhiana – the largest city in India’s Punjab state.

“We don’t know if the phone call was connected to his murder,” Alisha said. “But the people who killed him were surely monitoring his activities because they waited for the time until he was alone.”

Sultan Masih had been pastor of the church for 20 years and also ran a school for the poor from inside the church. He leaves a wife and four children – two of whom were adopted. “Our father was a courageous man and he was never afraid to die for Jesus,” Alisha said. “He has put the same zeal in us. Our family will continue to serve God.”

Sultan Masih was killed outside his Temple of God Church, where he had been pastor for 20 years.

Hundred of Christians took to the streets on Sunday (16 July), blocking off a major national highway (the road to Jalandhar) for three hours, and only ceasing once they had received assurances from the police that the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

Sultan Masih was buried the next day, after the Christians had received reassurances that the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

Paul Tamizharasan, a close friend of his, told World Watch Monitor following the funeral: “Family members are grieving and we hope the government will catch the accused. We demand answers and have gone to the Punjab government, but they couldn’t find who did this.

“The state of Punjab is very safe in India for Christians. There are Sikhs living here – they are also a religious minority in India. We are also a minority, but never before have we had any threats. But unfortunately, this has happened and we are all shocked about how this is possible. Nobody knows how this can happen.

“Two people came by bike. Every Saturday, the pastor, after finishing his Sunday-service preparations, at 8.30pm he will come out. As usual, he had been talking with people outside, very casually. Then at 8.45, two people came very near, about 2-3 feet, and they shot his leg, and his face and his chest.”

CCTV cameras recorded footage of the attack, but a police spokesman said it was too dark to make out the attackers’ faces.

Christian Abducted, Brutally Beaten and Raped Because Of Her Faith

Credit-VoTC Correspondent

Sis. Rani (name changed), 26 years of age, survived a brutal and horrific rape by 2 men. Wife of Praveen Kumar who works as a laborer, she is a resident of village Khanpur, Haridwar District, from the state of Uttarakhand. Sis. Rani’s family is the only Christian family in the village.

The incident took place on the 04th of July. Sis Rani was on her way to pay her father a visit. She was to board a Public Service bus from Sultanpur city. While waiting at the bus stop for her ride, 2 men, both named Rahul, stopped her from boarding the bus. They told the driver that she was their Aunt and that she had left the home after a fight. They asked him not to take her in the bus. All through this commotion, Sis. Rani kept insisting that she had nothing to do with these men but it fell on deaf ears. Much to her shock and disappointment, the Conductor made her get off the bus. She was hastily forced to sit on a motor bike, between the two perpetrators, who drove off with her to a secluded place. In this isolated place, they mercilessly beat her, forced her to drink alcohol, all the while, provoking and insulting her faith saying, “We will make you a real Christian”. She was raped multiple times after that, from afternoon until the evening.

After being subject to such a brutal ordeal, Sis. Rani found her way home. The following day, 05th July, she and her husband went to the Laksar Police Station to lodge a complaint. They were made to wait from morning until 5.00 pm, with utter apathy and indifference and no complaint was registered. Police took her back to her village, saying that this matter was to be addressed by the Village Council. She and her husband were then pressurized to come to a compromise and withdraw the complaint.

Yesterday, 06th July, overcoming the stigma, humiliation and the risk of re-living the trauma, Sis. Rani along with her husband and the local Church Pastor, and a local Advocate, met with the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), who was not at all supportive of this case. He blamed the victim for what happened - refusing to move forward with the case. Again, the whole day was spent at the Police station.

The ordeal was far from over. A visit to the local government hospital and she was denied treatment and only after much pleading with hospital staff was she was admitted and provided basic treatment.

The abject failure of the state mechanism to deliver real justice, the prolonged delays, the constant intimidation and threats, raises the question of accountability, especially if the victim is from the voiceless, uninfluential section of society.

Church, please pray that the God in His infinite mercy and justice, may give Sis. Rani and her husband, the peace to trust Him. Pray also for the healing power of the Holy Spirit to move swiftly through communities fragmented by religious tension.

Pr. Sultan Masih

The son of a church leader shot dead in north-western India on Saturday (15 July) has revealed that his father had received threats that if he continued to preach, he would be killed.

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VHP to recruit 5,000 ‘religious soldiers’ in Aligarh to control cow smuggling, love jihad

Pradeep Saxena - Hindustan Times, Aligarh

This decision was taken at a VHP meeting held here on July 14-16, in which the outfit’s international president Dr Pravin Togadia was also present.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) will recruit 5,000 ‘religious soldiers’ in the district who will fight like commandos. They will be selected from among trained Bajrang Dal activists and will be responsible for controlling cow smuggling and love jihad. The enrolment drive will be launched in September.

Pastors Beaten Alleging Conversion Charges

Credit- VoTC correspondent

Fr Unnimon and Pastor Rahul had recently graduated from NTC, and were serving the Lord with Christian Evangelistic Assemblies Church, Haryana.

As was their regular schedule, they were visiting believers in the village Junpaur in Haryana for a Bible Study. Unexpectedly, religious fundamentalists entered the house when the Bible study was being conducted, which had been in progress for the last several months and beat the 2 brothers. The villagers kept threatening them that they will not be allowed into the village as their agenda is to convert the villagers to Christianity. They were also intimidated with being arrested by the Police.

There are congregations in over 10 villages at present where these Brothers minister. The perpetrators have taken their photographs, ID details etc. Although the Brothers are disturbed by this recent episode, pray that they will be strengthened and would stand faithful in the ministry.

A Catholic priest converts to Hinduism

A Catholic priest, Father Anthony Fernandes, converted to Hinduism. A Jesuit priest was converted at a public ceremony at Ram Krishna Temple in the ancient Hindu city.

"Today is a day of great joy for me, as I am no more attached to any church; from today, Fr Anthony is no more and Shankar Dev has taken birth," Anthony told rediff.com just after Hindu priests formally declared him as a member of the community.

The shuddhikaran (purification) of Fr Fernandes was followed by mundan (ceremonial head shaving) carried out under the auspices of the Hindu Sanskar Kendra, a religious body of priests - amidst chanting of Vedic hymns and sacred Sanskrit couplets, after which he was given the name Shankar Dev.

After a Dasvith Snan (holy bath), Fernandes was draped in a saffron robe with sandalwood paste on his forehead. However, it was not the end of the rough ride for Fernandes, who now fears the wrath of his four brothers, who are still staunch Christians. "They may oppose me, but time will certainly tell them what I did was right; after all, I have adopted a religion that was not only the most ancient and practiced by our own ancestors, but also a culture in itself," he added.

No Cricket, No Cakes: RSS Lessons on How to Lead a ‘Sanskari’ Life - The Quint

Volunteers of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Photo used for representational purpose. (Photo: Reuters)

Orissa POCat

First Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, with his modern outlook and western education, had laid stress on developing a scientific temper among Indians. Developing such a mindset also meant rising above superstitious beliefs and challenging such practices. All these would seem to be a thing of the past, if one goes by what has been happening in recent times. In a new development, the BJP led Madhya Pradesh government has decided to open Out-Patient Departments (OPDs) for patients to consult astrologers in hospitals, to know more about the diagnosis and depth of diseases afflicting them.

Soothsayers will provide guidance to patients facing diverse problems. These consultants will be staffed by qualified astrologers under the aegis of the Maharsi Patanjali Sanskrit Sansthan (MPSS), a state government institution. In these OPDs, experts will study planetary combinations in horoscopes of patients and offer solutions. This, by way of an initial guidance for doctors to follow and act upon.

At a time when advances in science and technology are rapidly taking over the world, India seems to be regress into the dark ages of superstition and religious fanaticism. From astrologers coming in before doctors and gun rakshaks openly brandishing weapons, the message from Hindu fundamentalists is clear. Fall in line with the hardline or clear out.

Rightly or wrongly, many superstitious beliefs formed part of the Indian way of life. Much of these have been progressively losing steam, but these are revival times for such beliefs, as is seen from the MP government’s new decision.

As reports say, astrologers will now be in place at hospitals, while emphasis is also laid on Vastu, the traditional Indian system of architecture. The government plans to produce a set of experienced Vastu experts, apart from astrologers and ‘purohits’. Vastu is believed to have a scientific basis, and is seen by many as more of a science than a religious belief.

Even so, the MP government’s decision to set up Astrology OPDs at hospitals seems to be a political move, going against scientific and modern thoughts in the world of medicine. The decision is also being seen as a move to create and strengthen a pool of qualified astrologers and Vastu experts across the state. At the same time, many will likely see this as an act bordering on religious lunaticism.

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Adopt a persecuted family

The courage and conviction of many believers in the persecuted Church of India, is both inspiring and humbling, but comes at a great cost. There are several widows of martyred brothers, orphans, and single parents in persecuted families who do not have the basic sustenance. With the growing persecution of the Christian Church, the Christian community needs to step in to support the future generations.

Jesus said, “For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.” Mark 9:41.

If you wish to learn more and partner with us to sponsor a family, please contact us at admin@persecutionrelief.org

For all enquires: admin@persecutionrelief.org

Call 9826025767
ADOPT A MARTYRED FAMILY

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• Daily 6 to 6.45 pm (New York time)
• Dial: +1-712-432-8273, access code 2186/8#

Oklahoma Prayer Line
Sunday 9 to 11 pm – Oklahoma time
Dial +1-605-562-3140, access code 217 648

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To subscribe our Newspaper: votc@persecutionrelief.org

For all enquires: admin@persecutionrelief.org
Call 9826025767

www.persecutionrelief.org
An Open Letter to President Kovind

Dear Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure that I extend to you our warmest felicitations on your election. My team at Persecution Relief and I, pray that India will find peace and prosperity under your leadership.

In your acceptance speech, you said “It is my duty to protect the Constitution and uphold its values as the president. I pay my respects to my countrymen and assure them that I’ll serve the nation in the spirit of ‘Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah’ (May all be happy).”

Our hopes are revived and may God give you the wisdom to lead India into an economic success and a truly free India, free of ideological confrontations.

Recent events of injustice, violations of human rights and discrimination against minorities across India, in the name of religion, language and caste, have made the landscape distressing. The brutal suppression of Christians by the state machinery to enforce discrimination remains like an open wound. This will impact the Country and could inject a new dimension to the campaign against minorities and extremism.

Today’s decisions will affect not only us but also the future generations. I am confident that with you taking office, you will respond to the challenges that India is facing.

Mr. President, we are on the cusp of a new millennium. This presidential election has been forecasted as “one of the most important presidential elections in the history of India” by the election pundits and tweeters. May this be true – your presidency will be a decisive moment in history to decide whether to flow with the currents that threaten to collapse the fabric of our hard-earned democracy or muster the collective will to chart a new course in the history of India, towards a peaceful, cooperative and inclusive Country.

You have an enormous responsibility ahead to construct a new architecture of peace and prosperity for all people groups, indiscriminately. We bless you in the name of Jesus Christ. The Christian community across India are looking forward to working with you, hand in hand, towards building this august nation. May the God of heaven and earth give you the wisdom and integrity to lead our Country in the ways of peace, justice and truth.

May God bless you and India.

Shibu Thomas
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