

VOICE OF THE CHRISTIANS

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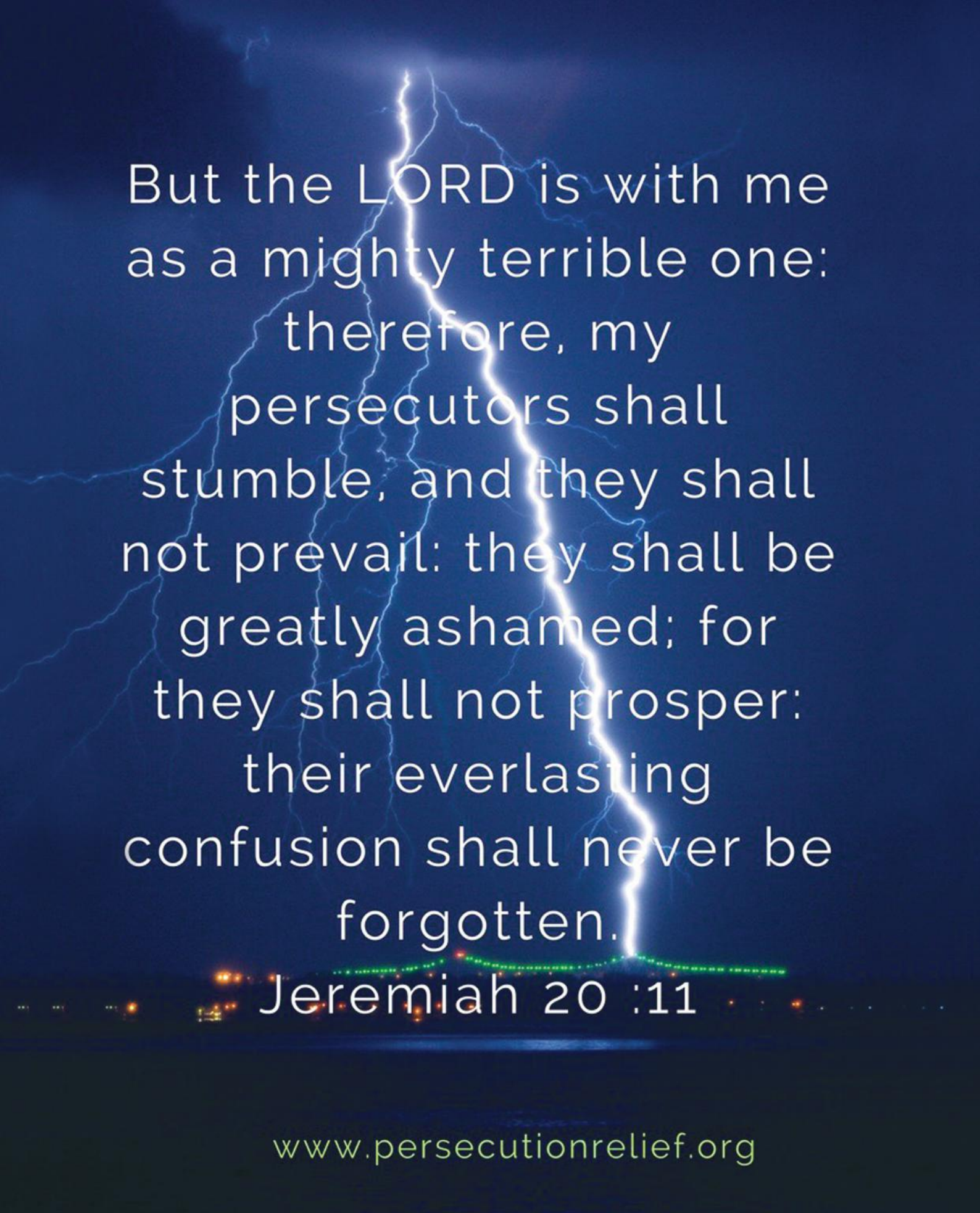


PASTOR FOUND DEAD

in Tamil Nadu, India

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But the LORD is with me
as a mighty terrible one:
therefore, my
persecutors shall
stumble, and they shall
not prevail: they shall be
greatly ashamed; for
they shall not prosper:
their everlasting
confusion shall never be
forgotten.

Jeremiah 20 :11

VOICE OF THE CHRISTIANS

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Chief Editor's **Note**

“The great division between Rome and Constantinople and the Protestant Reformation has divided ‘Christendom’ into a multitude of fractures.”

Why are Christians indifferent to other Christian’s suffering?

Christians go to a restaurant, pray for their food, attempt to share the gospel with the waiter but struggle to leave a decent tip for a Rs. 3000/- meal they just enjoyed! Most feel that the majority of Christians care little for others while the Scripture teaches that Christians, should be characterized by generosity and love, because they were first loved even though they were most undeserving.

I am always amazed at the grace, love, support, and forgiveness that is found among the “unchurched” which is rarely found among those who go to church. So why are Christians so mean & miserly? I have been battling with this thought, repeatedly, for a few weeks now as I encounter the similar pattern in our ministry too.

I have been handling persecution cases across India for the past 2 years. Persecution Relief has 67-WhatsApp Groups and other Social Media sites which publishes real-time persecution updates. What shocks me is the response of the Christians or lack of it! My team and I pour out our lives into this Ministry. We raise all the awareness that we can, but you just don’t care! Your response of these past months has reinforced this sad truth.

I have noticed that when someone from your denomination or your Church or City faces persecution, you are troubled. Otherwise, although publish a ‘Breaking News’ updates practically every day, there is no reaction. Why this indifference and partiality?

Let me tell you that any human suffering is a cry for help – whether Christian or otherwise. But it is specially distressing when at best I get a ‘lukewarm’ response to those who are being martyred or imprisoned for their belief in Christ. Before we look the other way, we need to think about the time when persecution comes home. That time will soon arrive if we do nothing about it now. Who will be left to save us?

The fact is, Christians have never been united. The great division between Rome and Constantinople and the Protestant Reformation has divided ‘Christendom’ into a multitude of fractures. To get a Roman Catholic to worry about the Full Gospel believer in the hard terrains of Uttar Pradesh or to get an Assemblies of God Church member to concern themselves about an Indian Pentecostal Church Pastor in prison, is a near impossible task. And we wonder why no one cares? You will have better luck raising awareness of persecution of Muslims in Gorakhpur.

Let me illustrate this as I see it.

◆ Persecution Relief does not have a ‘Donation Page’ on our website as we believe that God will supply all our needs. We work on a tight budget – providing “comprehensive support” to the persecuted Church.

Have you ever considered how Persecution Relief provides “comprehensive support” to the persecuted Church in India? Do you know what goes into our body of work? I am listing a few for your information. We help:

- a) secure anticipatory Bail to release a Pastor / Evangelist from a false case
- b) provide medical treatment /hospitalization for men/ women of God who are brutally beaten

c) provide temporary lodging or shifting of families of villagers who are being boycotted because of their faith in Jesus, to a safe place

d) support with a Lawyer to help / counsel/ secure release in serious charges

e) provide financial relief when house is burned, Church burned, vehicle destroyed,

f) send volunteers to counsel persecuted and discouraged families – meeting travelling expenses

g) provide permanent monthly support to widows of martyred Pastors

◆ We have recently launched our ‘Voice of the Christians’ 40-page magazine. All subscription money goes to meet the expenses of the persecuted Church.

Have you considered subscribing our Magazine to support the persecuted Church?

Have you considered gifting a subscription to nurture someone else’s faith?

◆ When the ‘On-Line’ Petitions are posted, do you acknowledge it? We have 15,000 plus members in our Groups yet at the time of this magazine going to press, we have had only around 1000 members who have signed in. Support the work that is being undertaken. Support change by signing up. Spread awareness.

◆ Have you considered to ‘Adopt a Martyred Family’?

Have you considered to ‘Adopt a Persecuted Family’?

You are what you are today because of the several little decisions that you have taken, in relation to either denying yourself or pleasing / indulging yourself. We can’t influence the world for God when we are worldly ourselves. We can’t give light to the world if we hide our light and revert to a lifestyle of darkness ourselves.

“And he said to them all, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.’” (Luke 9:23)

Now more than ever, we need a strong

community. This is the time we need to stand together in India to fight against this evil. We are united in having the same heavenly Father, the same Savior and Lord, and the same indwelling Spirit. Our hearts need to be converted. Jesus alone is our example. As “children of the light” we must be on our guard not to become so accustomed to the world’s darkness that we think it’s normal. It is not normal!

Many Christians, who are holding influential positions, have become enemies of God’s people. They must never forget that God has placed them there, in positions of power and influence, to help God’s people in time of trouble. Mordecai reminded Esther that God had brought her to the palace for a time like this:

“For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4: 14.

Where are the teenage ‘Daniel’s’ who will purpose in their hearts not to defile themselves and suppress all self-seeking motives, to not seek the world’s approval through worldly behavior?

Awake Christian! There is great evil and grave injustice being done to our fellow followers of Christ. Why do we lack the will to care? Is it because we want to be ‘politically correct’? We see this rampant in the media, in our politics and of course, in our churches. Our differences of doctrine, tradition, caste, whether rich or poor, whether from your Church or from your state, whether part of your Praise & Worship team, whether South Indian, North Indian, North East Indian or from Goa – they must all be set aside.

Be sensitive to the difficulties Christians are facing. Be alert to the human suffering around us. Don’t belittle their plight by your lethargy. The Bible commands us to do good to all men, especially to the children of God.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of

the household of faith.” (Gal. 6: 10).

Jesus spoke out strongly on such matters because He hated the attitude that many religious people had who were concerned only with religious activities but not with helping their needy brothers.

“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also” (Heb.13:3)

The rich man went to hell because he did not care for his brother Lazarus, who was a fellow Jew and a fellow son of Abraham.

The priest and the Levite in the parable of the good Samaritan, were exposed as hypocrites by Jesus because they did not show compassion on their fellow brother, a Jew, who was lying wounded on the roadside. The Bible says that those who see their brothers in need and who are not moved to help them do not really have saving faith.

Jesus was angry when the leaders of the synagogue did not want Him to heal a man, just because it was the Sabbath day.

Jesus taught that those who did nothing to help their brothers who were in need of the basic necessities of life, would be cast out of His presence in the final day.

“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1John 3: 17)

We are only deceiving ourselves when we say that we are followers of Jesus Christ; are we really? We may not have the gift of preaching, gift of prophesy or the gift of healing. Certainly, we can all encourage, visit, pray, give for our fellow brothers. That is all the Lord asks of us.

I am not writing what I have not practiced. God bless you.



Shibu Thomas

Founder & President

PERSECUTION RELIEF

AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS

In this series, Persecution Relief would like to highlight the true story of innocent men and women languishing in jails, while their families are stigmatized and abandoned. Persecution Relief family have 'adopted' their wives and children financially and is meeting their livelihood expenses on a monthly basis since the breadwinner is in prison. Please partner with us to support this worthy cause and continue praying for them.



2nd Victim:
Munda Badamajhi - 'dumb' man among seven convicts

Munda's Wife: Bandigudali Badamajhi

Backdrop:

Following the aftermath of the Kandhamal tragedy in 2008, seven innocent Christians - six of them illiterates - 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. This is their story.

Take the case of Munda Badamajhi who was picked up by the police in his sleep from his house in the night on October 4, 2008 from his village of Duringpodi under Madaguda panchayat (village council). Bandigudali, his wife, did not shy away from revealing the true character of her beloved from the same village she had married 21 years ago - when I met her at her house in October 2015.

An illiterate like Munda, Bandigudali said candidly: "He never went outside the village even for buying his own clothes as he could not distinguish between different denominations of notes. I had to go buy lungi for him. He had to depend on others for everything."

"He cannot communicate properly.

He would not even mix with other village people due to lack of self-confidence or join them for a drinking session. He works in the field, eats and sleeps at home - like an animal. He is like a dumb man," she added bluntly stopping short of describing her husband an 'idiot'.

Yet, the judge who convicted the seven-accused declared that the prosecutor had argued the case '*meticulously*' and produced the 'reliable witnesses' to prove the murder charge against the accused. Prosecution even claimed to have recovered a 'muscle loading gun' (hunting gun) from the house of Munda who cannot even handle currency notes.

"We never had a gun and my husband could not even use a gun. This is shocking," asserted Bandigudali. Further, she pointed out that no police or investigator ever visited her house to verify such an allegation after the midnight raid when her husband was dragged away in sleep.

CHRISTIAN PREACHERS JAILED FOR ALLEGED CONVERSION CHARGES, UTTAR PRADESH



Pastor Stanley Jacob, Bro. Amit, Bro. Vijay and 4 other brothers were finally granted bail on the 19th, after 15 days in Jail.

No mainstream media condemned these false charges against the Christians, which have left Christians with no faith in the media or any administrative body.

Police have arrested seven Christian preachers on Monday 04th December night, for allegedly carrying out a “forcible conversion campaign”.

Pastor Stanley Jacob, Sonu, Amit, Vijay and 3 other believers belong to “Masih Ghar Ministries” of Delhi headed by Pr Abraham. A team of 12 members had gone to Surir, a small Town located in Mant Tehsil of Mathura district in Uttar Pradesh.

They visited the family of a Christian and had a prayer meeting there. However, some of the relatives of this Christian who were still Hindus, strongly objected to this meeting. They apparently complained to the local village head who gathered a large mob of religious fundamentalists, illegally trespassed into the house and mercilessly beat all the Christians gathered. They were

eventually forcibly taken to the Police Station, demanding their arrest on charges of conversion activities.

Persecution Relief Founder spoke to Inspector BN Singh and managed to secure the release of the 3 women and a child. An FIR (First Information Report) against 295 penal code was filed by these religious fundamentalists, against 7 believers.

On the 06th December, at their bail hearing, Mathura Bar Association President and nearly 20 other Advocates came together and coerced the Judge not to release the Christians. Bail was denied and the 7 brothers continued to languish in jail on false charges of conversion activity. Subsequently, bail was denied twice.

Relief Provided

Founder, Persecution Relief, spoke to the Inspector handling the case, Mr. BN Singh and managed to secure the release of the 3 women and a child. While Bro. Stanley and his team were locked up in jail, Persecution Relief Team spoke to Bro. K. R. Abraham (father of Bro. Stanley Jacob) and encouraged him in the Lord.

A substantial amount of financial relief was provided to the team. Pastor Stanley is back in his hometown, strong and more determined to be a burning torch for Jesus Christ.

PASTOR BEATEN UP SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE STOPPED IN UTTAR PRADESH DURING SUNDAY WORSHIP



A Pastor has been brutally beaten by a mob of religious fundamentalists who stormed into the Church during Sunday worship Service. Police have arrested and taken him into custody for alleged conversion activities.

Located at Sareni village in Lalganj Tehsil of Rae Bareilly district in Uttar Pradesh, Pastor Ram Naresh, lives with his wife and 3 daughters. Originally a farmer, he was working in Punjab. But when he heard the call of the Lord, he gave up everything to return to his village and serve Jesus Christ. He continues to farm while also taking care of a small Church of believers.

Every Sunday, around 50 believers gather to worship at the Pastors residence, which has been the practice for the past one year. As usual, on the 17th December, Sunday worship started with prayer. Suddenly, a mob of fanatics trespassed illegally into the Church and brutally beat the Pastor, disrupting the worship service and desecrating the sacredness of the sanctuary.

The Pastor was later arrested by the Police under section IPC 151,161,170 falsely claiming that he was involved in conversion activities. He was eventually released on bail with 3 guarantors, for a bond of 2 lacs.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief Founder spoke to the Police in-charge of this case. Financial Relief was also provided to cover costs associated with a court proceedings and other allied judiciary expenses.

As the Body of Christ of Christ, Persecution Relief's "Prayer Warriors" continue to stand in the gap and pray, believing that the justice of God will prevail for Pastor Ram Naresh.

CHRISTIANS BEATEN LIKE ANIMALS



Pastor Hidma Sodi has an independent ministry called “New Bethesda”, located at Bhelwopal village, in Sukma Tehsil, Dakshin Bastar Dantewada district in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Six months ago, religious fundamentalists had broken into his house and vandalized the Church alleging conversion activities. A complaint was lodged by the Pastor and a counter complaint was lodged by the attackers too. The radicals were very irate that they had to go for the hearing and were waiting for an opportunity to retaliate at the Pastor. Pastor had to ultimately move to Sukma after the incident, leaving behind his ancestral property owing to the intense persecution.

A plot of land belonging to the local church had been rented out to Bro. Anil Marwi for cultivation. As it was nearing harvest season, a herd of swine entered the fields and began destroying the crops. In order to drive the wild animals, Bro. Sodhi Sini, threw a stone to chase them away which inadvertently killed a piglet.

The matter was raised with the Gram Panchayat and a grievance amount of Rs.1000/- was agreed to be paid to one Arma who owned the pigs. The matter was mutually and amicably settled.

After the Panchayat meeting, while both the parties were returning back to the village, the fanatics used this opportunity to pick a fight with the Christians. Suddenly, a mob of over 25 villagers brutally attacked the Pastors with sticks, stones and slippers. Several Christians were injured and needed medical attention. Some of them suffered grievous injuries and needed medical attention. Police were summoned and the injured rushed to Shukama Govt hospital.

The names of the 6 injured Christians are: 1) Bro. Muchaki Suka, 2) Bro. Madkami Hidma, 3) Bro. Madkami Mua, 4) Bro. Mandakami Madha, 5) Pastor Madavi Libra and 6) Pastor Madkami Bandy

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief provided immediate financial relief to address their hospitalization needs. We also arranged for an Advocate who assisted with the court proceedings to secure their release. Persecution Relief Founder prayed with these persecuted brothers, stirring up their faith, to induce in them a strong desire to continue to love the Lord and remain steadfast in their belief.

ADOPT

A PERSECUTED FAMILY



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CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS FORCIBLY STOPPED AND CHURCH VANDALIZED, UTTAR PRADESH



Pastor Vijay Kumar serves with New India Church of God, Village Sonvarsha, Block-Shikarn, Chunar, Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh.

While conducting Christmas celebrations at their Church, a mob of 15-16 radicals disrupted Christmas program. They abused the believers, threw away all the Christian literature and destroyed the decorations.

They also threatened Pastor and believers of severe consequences if they continued to worship Jesus Christ. Later they called to report the matter to the Police but the SO Chunar was very biased and joined the fundamentalists by threatening the Pastor and the believers not to worship again.

Relief Provided

Persecution Relief team counselled and prayed with the Pastor and encouraged him in the Lord. Financial support was provided towards the purchase and replacement of all Church equipment that had been destroyed by the vandals. Although financial gifts will not eliminate the trauma, additional resources are important in helping them recover quickly.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE FORCIBLY STOPPED AS FUNDAMENTALISTS SURROUND HOUSE CHURCH, UTTAR PRADESH

Pastor Pramod Maurya from Palia Bujurg Village in Hathgaon Tehsil in Fatehpur District of Uttar Pradesh, has been ministering from his 'house Church' for the last 8 years. More than 300 believers gather every Sunday for the worship service.

Several families from the Yadav tribe have committed their lives to following Jesus Christ. One among them was a notorious criminal named Bro. Raj Bahadur Yadav. He committed his life to Christ about 3 years ago, had given up all his bad ways and lives a respectable and God-fearing life in the neighborhood. Full of zeal and passion for the Lord, he felt compelled to build a Church on his own personal land.

This land is just adjacent to his home. As the construction work was in progress, a mob of religious fundamentalists, members from the Ram Dal, trespassed into the property, with the Police accompanying them. They demanded that the construction work stop and falsely claimed that that Bro. Raj Bahadur Yadav was getting funds from overseas and was using the same to build the Church and convert people.

Based on these fabricated charges, on 14th December, Bro. Raj Bahadur Yadav, his older brother, Bro. Jang Bahadur Yadav and Bro. Santosh Mourya were arrested under 151 penal code and were released on bail the next day.

On 17th December, Sunday Worship Service could not take place

as the entire house was surrounded by a mob of fundamentalists and harassment from the authorities.

All over India, many houses churches are closing down which is a matter of great concern. Church congregations are constantly under surveillance and forced to close down the Church.

We also need to specially pray for the new believers who are not able to have fellowship – that their faith would not weaken and that they should stand firm till the trumpet is blown.

We need the free church in India to be aware of these atrocities and partner with persecuted Church in India. Church, please continue to pray that these men of God will proclaim the gospel boldly and faithfully.



Relief Provided

Founder, Persecution Relief spoke to the Police Officials explaining that Pastor was detained on fabricated charges by the religious fundamentalists and that no conversion was taking place. We were able to secure his release through negotiating with the Police.

Persecution Relief team also counselled and encouraged Pastor in prayer.

PASTOR FOUND DEAD

IN TAMIL NADU

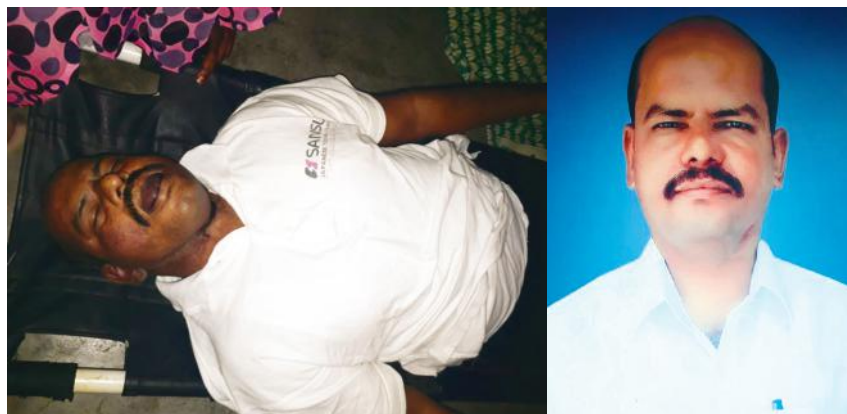
A Pastor in Tamil Nadu was found dead in the early hours of Saturday, 20th January, a week after he complained to police about opposition from religious fundamentalists, sources close to the Pastor said.

Congregation members found the body of Pastor Gideon Periyaswamy of “Maknayeem Church”, hanging from a rope, in his one-room house beside the church building, in Adayachery village, Kanchipuram District. It is alleged that Pastor was brutally beaten and tortured before being murdered.

Pastor was 43 years old. A convert from Hinduism 25 years ago, Pastor Periyaswamy was single and served as Pastor in Adayachery for more than 12 years.

A congregation member stated that on Friday night (19th Jan), Pastor had visited neighbouring Church families. He had asked some of the sisters to come early to help clean the Church hall as ‘prayer and fasting’ was scheduled 10 a.m., as was the practice every Saturday. When they arrived, to their surprise, they found the Pastor’s room bolted from the outside. They were horrified to find Pastor Gideon hanging when they opened the door. Although a rope was fastened to the roof and tied to pastor’s neck, his knees were bent stiff, as if someone had placed the noose around his neck after his death.

When the police came to remove the pastor’s body, cuts around his



neck area with blood clots were visible.

Pastor had been receiving frequent death threats. Earlier, religious fundamentalists had vandalized the roof of the Church. Another time, they had cut the water supply that was provided from the Village Panchayat, removed the bore well, beat and threatened him on many occasions, accusing him of converting people to Christianity. For the past six months, the local hardline religious fundamentalists have harassed the Pastor every Sunday, sources said.

A week before his death, Pastor Periyaswamy had filed a complaint with police that some village people were troubling him.

“Our investigation was underway, and now we find him dead,” Rajendran said.

Police initially refused to file a complaint from congregation members, sources said. After

church members and Pastors from neighboring villages blocked a road in protest, his body was transported to Chengalpattu Government Hospital mortuary. The Deputy Inspector General of Police of Kanchipuram Range, has assured that officers would carry out a fair investigation.

The Vanniyar community and other upper castes in Adayachery hate the lower caste of the Pastor and his congregation, said Pastor Immanuel Prabhakaran, who worked with the deceased leader of the church, which belongs to the Synod of Pentecostal Churches.

India rose to the 11th rank from 15th position last year, according to “Open Doors’ 2018 World Watch List of Countries” where Christians experience the most persecution, ahead of Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Egypt.

CHURCH BUILDING AND BODY OF DECEASED SISTER BURNED BY RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISTS, JAMMU

Pastor (* name withheld due to security reasons) had been pastoring Sehla Christ Church, which is affiliated to FMPB (French Missionary Prayer Band). This Church is located at Sehla Village, Seri Panchayat, Nowshera, which is in Rajouri District, of Jammu region in Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Over 15 Rajput believers attend this Church.

Sis. Seema Devi, who comes from a Rajput family, had committed her life to Christ over 2 year ago and was a regular member of the Church along with her husband Bro. Rinku Kumar.

A few days after her marriage, Sis. Seema Devi fell very sick. She was brought to the Church for prayers after which she recovered. A couple of weeks ago, she fell sick again. This time, her husband decided to take her to Jalandhar, to the Church that he belonged to before marriage, to be prayed over by his Pastor.

They left for Jalandhar on the 11th of January and after prayers,

she appeared completely recovered. Tragically, on the 15th of January, she breathed her last. Her husband brought her back to Jammu for the burial. Sis. Seema Devi's parents & local villagers on hearing this news, accused the Christian believers for causing her death.

Once the religious fanatics got wind of this news, more than 300 of them came attacked and vandalized the Church. They broke the doors and windows and the Christians in the Church were all indiscriminately beaten, who ran off into the nearby jungles to escape the brutality.

Local Christian leaders spoke to Senior Police officials and a team of policemen were rushed to the scene. The villagers and local fundamentalists were threatening to burn Sis. Seema Devi's husband as well in the same house.

Head of the Jammu and Kashmir Region, FMPB, spoke to the Founder, Persecution Relief. He briefed Founder on the situation that in spite

of strong Police presence, the religious fundamentalists have set the Church on fire. They have also burned the body of Sis. Seema Devi in front of the Church. The situation is very volatile at the moment.

Founder spoke to the Superintendent of Police (SP). Because of the large number of fanatics who had descended in the area, Police were mere spectators to this senseless arson.

Church pray for the situation there – Pray that God's peace would descend upon this location. Pray for divine protection and safety of the Pastors, Bro. Rinku, and the members of the Church.



Relief Provided

Persecution Relief was one of the first to learn of this tragedy. All possible Political support and Judicial counsel was provided in a timely manner, to quench the escalation of the simmering situation. Financial support was provided to the Pastor for the Church and members who had lost their possession in this senseless arson.



ADOPT A **MARTYRED** FAMILY



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STOP THE KILLING & BRUTALIZING OF CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

Open Letter to the Prime Minister of India

**Dear Hon. Prime Minister
Narendra Modi Ji,**

Persecution Relief, representing the persecuted Christian Community in India, would like to express our grave concern on the increasing intolerance and violence against the Christian communities.

A Pastor in Tamil Nadu was found murdered in the early hours of Saturday, 20th January 2018. It is alleged that Pastor Gideon Periyaswamy was brutally beaten and tortured by religious fundamentalists 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.

Pastor had been receiving frequent death threats. Earlier, religious fundamentalists had vandalized the roof of the Church. Another time, they had cut the water supply that was provided from the Village Panchayat, removed the bore well, beat and threatened him on many occasions, accusing him of converting people to Christianity.

In another case, in the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, a Sis. Seema Devi, who is a Christian died due to sickness. Her husband was not allowed to bury her body. Instead, religious fanatics burned her body in front of the Church and later burned the Church building as well.

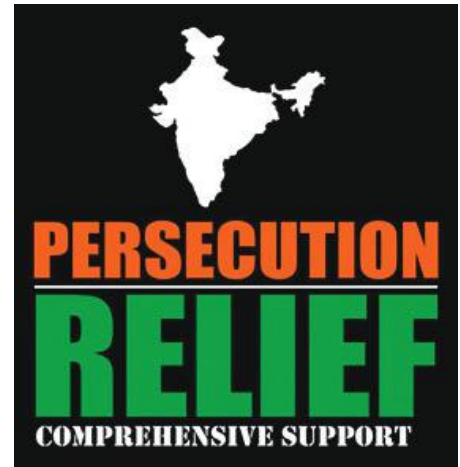
WHY ARE CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED IN INDIA?

Hon. Prime Minister, these are by no means isolated incidents. In recent times, there has been an unprecedented crackdown on Christians across the spectrum and these episodes has further aggrieved the community. India is a pluralistic society with a long-standing commitment to inclusion and tolerance. We place our faith in you to help foster a stable and inclusive country, respect religious minorities, including their religious freedom.

Persecution Relief is engaged in providing support to the persecuted Church and have recorded nearly 1200 persecution incidents over the last 2 years. The Christian community strongly condemns the outbreak of violence, discrimination, and rampant attacks on Churches, Christian Institutions and against the Christian citizens of this land.

I have spoken to Hon. Minister Mr. Alphons Joseph Kannanthanam, Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Culture and Tourism. He has extended his fullest support to the persecuted Church in India. Hon. Minister has helped us in the past and we are assured of his continuing support in the future. A copy of this petition will be handed over to him as well.

Mr. Modi, as you have committed that “that the religion of the



government was “India first” and the Constitution its “holy book”, we respectfully seek urgent and immediate redressal of this provocative climate of communal discord in this land. We are seeking an appointment immediately, to discuss this grave situation. Our voices must be heard.

Sincerely, in Christ,

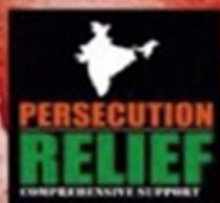
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STEVE HICKY
Protagonist

TWO CHURCHES A WORLD APART

While both teach of a Jesus that saves from eternal hell, the comfortable church forms its ideas of the expected normal Christian life based on its experience, which does not include persecution. In the comfortable church, life is relatively easy. Their faith is expressed without challenge, and lacking that resistance, their faith is often weak. The persecuted church, however, has developed a very different perspective of suffering. They see it as a normal part of one's faith. To choose faith in this setting is to acknowledge the persecution that will undoubtedly accompany it.

The expected ease of the comfortable church and the anticipated struggle of the persecuted church causes a distinct and increasing difference in their experience and expression of faith. The comfortable church, over time, grows comfortable not only with their

faith but with the world around them. There is little sense of warfare, of darkness, or even a difference between them and the unchurched masses that surround them. The comfortable church gives us ecumenicalism and the Co-exist movement because they see little difference in their own faith and the faith of others.

The persecuted church, however, grows more uncomfortable as a result of their stand for Christ. They fully understand that they are living in a dark world and are driven to be a source of light. They are faced daily with the differences between their faith and the false idol worship that surrounds and persecutes them. They understand that their faith and those false religions cannot and do not co-exist.

While most of the comfortable church knows that the persecuted church exists and even supports it through groups like Voice of the Martyrs, they also hold an attitude

Martyrdom

best described as “there but for the grace of God go I...” In other words, “Wow. How terrible. God has been so good to me. I’m glad that won’t ever happen.” I wonder how that sounds to the persecuted church? I wonder if they know their comfortable cousins are on the other side of the globe selfishly appreciating that they are somehow different.

America needs an Amos to prophetically challenge our delusions that all this wealth and comfortable living can’t be taken away, that our nation has reached an untouchable status believing the things that happen elsewhere won’t ever happen to us. They can, overnight, and at some point they will.

The comfortable church and the persecuted church will not be different forever. As time marches on and the Tribulation begins, the comfortable church will quickly sense a shift in the wind. At first it will be a shift in society. Their values, though not dramatically different than those of the unchurched, will stand out in the crowd because of their attachment to Jesus. In the beginning of the Tribulation, benevolence and meeting the needs of others for humanitarian reasons will be in vogue. Doing it in the name of Jesus will draw stares and the first wave of resistance that the comfortable church is likely to perceive.

Jesus will be pushed out of our culture in increasingly forceful ways as the Tribulation begins. People will desire spirituality but rebuff the idea of a redeemer. Members of the comfortable church will be split. Some will go the way of culture. Others will grow deeper in their faith. Those that grow deep will realize that they are becoming more and more like their persecuted cousins. Over time, the persecuted and comfortable church

“

Martyrs are a unique breed even though history, prophecy and common sense tell us that they shouldn’t be.

From its inception, the Church has been the target of rage from the enemy and his minions”

will become one. It will be far more painful for the comfortable church than it will be for the persecuted church, because the comfortable church will endure the greater rate of change. They will be comfortable no longer.

Many in the West grew up with at least a limited sense of entitlement – if not to a certain standard of living, at least to a certain measure of safety. We grew up watching hostility around the world on the evening news but it was a fairly academic exercise. We knew that it was happening somewhere, but those things didn’t happen in America. We were different. We were insulated. Safety within our borders was almost considered an inalienable right. What if our brief mental snapshot of history is wrong and the Bible is right? If the cost of following Jesus escalates to the level that he tells us it will? Will a comfortable church that has resisted pain at all cost suddenly be prepared to pay that price?

Martyrs are a unique breed even though history, prophecy and common sense tell us that they shouldn’t be. From its inception, the Church has been the target of rage from the enemy and his minions. Scripture tells us that rage will not abate as the clock of natural history ticks towards zero. Revelation 12:12 tells us that Satan will roam the earth filled with rage at that time. Simple logic tells us that having aligned with one side – even the victorious side – will make us a target for the other side. If Satan is truly to roam the earth filled with rage, who do we presume to be his target? Many confess Jesus and claim to do so “for better or worse.” However, then they seem shocked that ‘worse’ may include surrendering their earthly life even though they would have said they surrendered

every- thing at the cross when they began the journey.

A LIFE LAID DOWN ISN'T A LIFE WASTED

The idea of martyrdom makes us uneasy. It's not just the avoidance of pain that motivates us, although that is very real for all of us. No one likes the idea of physical suffering. More than that though, it's the perception that a martyr accomplishes nothing. We think that if we die in defense of truth, no one will be left to fight the fight. What does the body of a martyr accomplish? Does it convince any of its oppressors that it somehow won the debate? Or does it just lay there on the floor until it is carried away by other believers also destined for death?

Joseph Ton was a Romanian pastor who published a sermon calling for churches to resist the Communist government's control over their ministries. When he was confronted by the secret police, they insisted that he renounce his own sermons.

"No, sir!" Ton retorted. *"I will not do that!"*

Shock reverberated through the police station. Romanians did not routinely resist an order from the secret police. The Romanians were a proud people but resisting this powerful force never ended well. The police sergeant in charge of interrogation pressed harder.

"Aren't you aware that I am authorized to use force against you?" he asked. For the secret police, force was not a legal term. It meant beatings, torture and sometimes murder.

Pastor Ton swallowed hard and answered. "Sir, let me explain that to you. You see, your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.

You know that my sermons are spread all over the country on tapes. When you kill me, I only sprinkle them with my blood. They will speak ten times louder after that because everyone will say "That preacher meant it because it was sealed with his blood!". So go on, sir, kill me. When you kill me, I will win the supreme victory."

The secret police released him, knowing his martyrdom would be far more of a problem than his sermons.

You may read this and think "That doesn't apply to me. I have no sermons to sprinkle with my blood. If I were to die right now, even for my faith, what would it mean?" In reality, you have been preaching sermons with your life. What has your life meant so far? Whatever you have stood for will mean volumes more when punctuated by your martyrdom.

If you have stood for nothing until this point, your death really would be for naught. If you have stood for Christ and are known for your faith, then even in your martyrdom you are preaching. In fact, you are preaching the loudest message of your life. Because of this, the martyrs of the persecuted church will be the most effective of the end-time evangelists as they have lived their lives proclaiming truths that the comfortable church believed but kept to themselves.

There is a second and even greater reason that martyrdom matters. No martyr truly dies in vain. Revelation 6:10-11 tells us that in the end, Jesus will avenge their blood.

'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?' Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

Those who pay the ultimate cost

of discipleship, who do not love their lives unto death, will serve to punctuate the greatest sentence of all time. It is one that says that God is just and will not forget those who call upon Him.

All this talk of suffering and difficulty goes against our natural sense of order and peace. Primarily that is because we see it disconnected from purpose. The comfortable church calls all suffering 'senseless.' The persecuted church calls suffering 'training.' On the day when they are proven right, we will all proclaim, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are Your ways."

In the end, that will be the mark of a true disciple of Jesus.

Concluded



The idea of martyrdom makes us uneasy. It's not just the avoidance of pain that motivates us, although that is very real for all of us. **No one likes the idea of physical suffering. More than that though, it's the perception that a martyr accomplishes nothing"**



CHINESE OFFICIALS DEMOLISH YET ANOTHER CHURCH: IN SHANXI

GOLDEN LAMPSTAND CHURCH BECOMES THIRD CHURCH KNOCKED OR SHUT DOWN IN JUST OVER TWO WEEKS AS RELIGION CRACKDOWN WIDENS

UCANEWS.COM REPORTERS, BANGKOK



Authorities in China demolished a large church in the city of Linfen, Shanxi province on Jan. 9, despite efforts by worshippers to halt the demolition and who were then pressured to remain silent, according to witnesses.

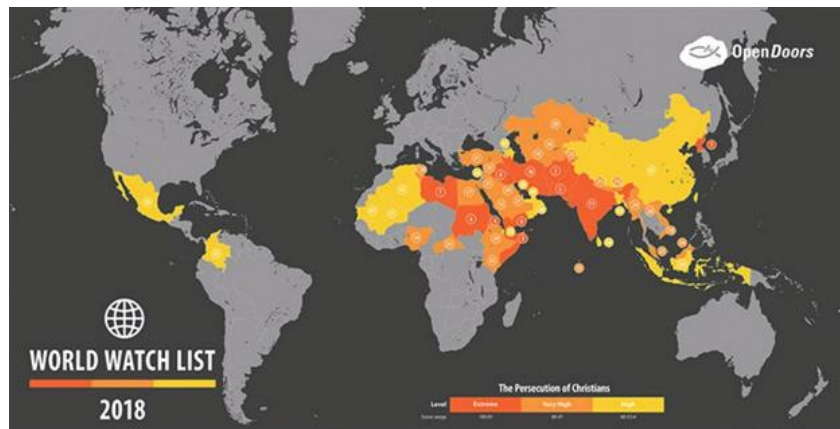
It was the third Christian church demolition or closure in China in just over two weeks and comes amid a broader crackdown on “Western” religions by the government of

authoritarian leader Xi Jinping. Muslims groups, especially in the far flung province of Xinjiang have also been targeted.

Officials surrounded the Golden Lampstand Church, while bulldozers reduced the large building to rubble, a witness told Radio Free Asia

NORTH KOREA IS WORST PLACE FOR CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION, GROUP SAYS

Kimberly Winston | *Religion News Service*



For the 16th year in a row, North Korea tops the list of 50 countries ranked for the worst persecution of Christians in the world, according to the Christian watchdog organization Open Doors USA.

A close second is Afghanistan, which jumped up one place since last year’s ranking. With the exception of North Korea, all the countries that cracked the top 10 are predominantly Muslim and most are in the Middle East and Africa

Credit - www.christianheadlines.com

FACEBOOK REMOVES CHRISTIAN PAGE ‘WARRIORS FOR CHRIST

Facebook has removed the Christian ministry “Warriors for Christ” page, saying the page violated community standards on bullying and hate speech.

Warriors for Christ, a West Virginia-based ministry, are a group that opposes any sinful behavior. Its Facebook page had more than 225,000 followers.

Its administrators frequently post memes that criticize LGBT rights and abortions, among other topics. Videos from Pastor Rich Penkoski are also posted on the page.

The page was first taken down on Dec. 29.

The page was reinstated after an online petition called for Facebook to reverse its decision. The page was then again removed last Friday.

COUNTRIES OF CONCERN FOR 2018 IN NEW RELEASE REPORT INCLUDE CHINA, NIGERIA AND INDIA

China has been cracking down on Christmas celebrations in some districts, banning Santa Claus and Christmas hats to further tighten its squeeze on Christianity.

China is a key country of concern for 2018 for Release International, which supports persecuted Christians around the world. Their latest Persecution Trends Report warns Christians in China look set to face a harsh new year.

Tougher regulations on religious affairs come into force in February, giving the state greater control over churches and other places of wor-

ship. Those new rules will mean unregistered house churches will face increasingly tough measures to control their activities.

The restrictions are being promoted to ‘block extremism’ and prevent the use of religion to ‘endanger national security and undermine social order.’ They reflect the Communist Party’s fear that foreign powers are working to undermine its authority by supporting Christianity.

It follows moves by Chinese president Xi Jinping to strengthen his control over the country by writing his name into the constitution. Although that constitution supposedly safeguards religious freedom, President Xi’s administration has been tearing down symbols of Christianity, such as crosses on churches, and imprisoning Christian lawyers who take legal action to prevent their removal.

Release partners China Aid say the clampdown on Christianity in the atheist state is at its severest since the cultural revolution.

At Christmas, that tightened into a shutdown on anything resembling festive celebrations in some places.

In Anhui, an official public security notice declared, ‘Public places are not allowed to celebrate Christmas. Even creating a Christmas atmosphere – such as putting up Christmas trees, Santa Claus, wearing Christmas hats, and all other items related to Christmas is severely restricted. All Christmas-related activities are required to be cancelled.’

In Zhejiang, officials tore down a Christmas tree and in Hangzhou authorities warned Christians not to attend a Christmas celebration,

leaving empty tables that had been laid and decorated, according to Release partner, China Aid.

The continuing measures against Christianity will also impact refugees from North Korea, as many who flee the country are cared for by Chinese Christians. Another Release partner Dr Eric Foley says, ‘The Chinese government crackdown on Christians is causing many to withdraw their willing hand to the North Korean underground church.’

Neighbouring Vietnam, which is communist, is also set to impose a new law on belief and religion in 2018 which will increase pressure on churches and their leaders.

Another country of concern to Release is Nigeria, where Christian villages have been coming under sustained attack by armed Fulani herdsman. The militants are driving Christians from their farms, killing and displacing thousands. A Nigerian partner of Release says the Fulani are being armed and encouraged to drive out Christians from the north in pursuit of an Islamist agenda.



Facebook has removed the Christian ministry “Warriors for Christ” page, saying the page violated community standards on bullying and hate speech. **Warriors for Christ, a West Virginia-based ministry, are a group that opposes any sinful behavior. Its Facebook page had more than 225,000 followers”**



Global Persecution News

Attacks against Christians are also increasing in India, fostered by militants, who believe that every Indian should be a Hindu. Extremists have been pressurizing officials to close churches and prevent Christian services.

In the Middle East, countries of particular concern include Iran, where the authorities are targeting Christian leaders. Release's partner says, 'This is a campaign to stop the spread of Christianity, to arrest those who are leading house churches and those involved in evangelism and teaching.'

The continuing clampdown has been driving Christians out of Iran, fueling the exodus of the Christian minority from the Middle East.

Also of concern in the region

is Egypt, where militants have been grooming Christian girls to seduce them and force them into marriage to change their religion. Release partners say Christian girls are being systematically targeted for kidnap. Observers believe the practice is being funded from Saudi Arabia.

Release International celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2018. Release, which was founded by Romanian pastor Richard Wurmbrand, today supports persecuted Christians in more than 30 nations.

'Fifty years is a significant milestone for our ministry,' says Release CEO Paul Robinson. 'Since 1968, the prayers and gifts of supporters throughout the UK and Ireland have helped many thousands of Christians who have been persecuted for their faith. For this we are

truly humbled and deeply grateful to God. Today, as our Persecution Trends Report for 2018 shows, the need for prayer and support is greater than ever.'

Release is asking Christians to pledge to pray for the persecuted throughout 2018.

Through its international network of missions UK-based Release International serves persecuted Christians by supporting pastors and Christian prisoners and their families, supplying Christian literature and Bibles, and working for justice.

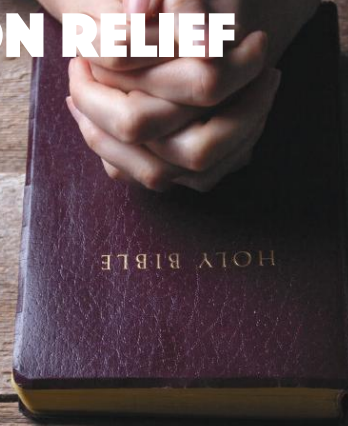
<http://www.releaseinternational.org/persecution-trends-2018-china-christmas-ban/>

**PERSECUTION RELIEF ANNUAL REPORT - 2017
ON CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION, CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM
www.persecutionrelief.org**



PERSECUTION RELIEF

Prayer Calendar
February 2018



Theme: Praising for Crisis Situations and Injustice

- 01 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would fill Your Church and Your servants with the Holy Spirit power and change the spiritual atmosphere in India
- 02 Feb.** Father, drive the darkness out of the nation of India and make this a Country of light.
- 03 Feb.** Father, we pray that You will establish justice in every sphere of society in this nation of India
- 04 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would remove every injustice, and establish Your righteousness, so that the glory of God would fill India.
- 05 Feb.** Father, we pray that our hearts and our prayers would be in agreement and aligned with You, as You do your works of justice in this land
- 06 Feb.** Father, we pray for your people who have lost families, homes and hope.
- 07 Feb.** Father, we pray for the social climate that is charged with racial tension and walls of hostility. Transform the Country we pray God.
- 08 Feb.** Father, we pray for your people whose problems only you can fix, please intervene God.
- 09 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would remove all thoughts of hopelessness that bombard our hearts and minds. Renew our minds in the Holy Spirit.
- 10 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would confront every social issue such as ethnic hostility, racial animosity, social discrimination, injustice by the administration and judiciary
- 11 Feb.** Father, we pray that you would break the strong holds & control of religious fundamentalists and open doors to revival and transformation in this nation
- 12 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would raise up redeemed men and women who are righteous and will establish justice in the land





PERSECUTION RELIEF

Prayer Calendar

February 2018

- 13 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would raise up workers of justice – men and women who are filled with the understanding and power of God
- 14 Feb.** Father, we pray that You will help us represent Christ on this earth, in every sphere of society, speaking the truth, for the sake of the glory of God alone.
- 15 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would help soften hearts people's hearts by making the crisis personal enough to understand.
- 16 Feb.** Father, we pray for those grieving. Surround them with your comfort and fill their hearts with your peace we pray.
- 17 Feb.** Father, we pray that You will right all the wrongs that are taking place in India and vindicate those that are being treated unjustly.
- 18 Feb.** Father, keep us from trying to take matters into our own hands for vengeance is Your and You will repay.
- 19 Feb.** Father, we pray that in Your grace and mercy, You would give justice and peace to all those that have been cruelly and unfairly treated by their fellow man.
- 20 Feb.** Father, we pray that You would give Your people a heart of compassion and kindness, especially on those that feel alone, unloved or uncared for.
- 21 Feb.** Father, thank you for Jesus wonderful example of His life, which was lived in spirit and truth – a life that demonstrated love as well as justice – a life that cared for all humanity, especially those that are weak or hurting or marginalized.
- 22 Feb.** Father, we pray that we may become Your eyes and ears and may Your heart of love and grace flow through us to those that are in need.
- 23 Feb.** Father, You came to seek and to save that which was lost – and Lord there are many lost and hurting people in intense misery and pain. Be gracious and merciful we pray.
- 24 Feb.** Father, in Your grace we ask that You would intervene and show mercy on those that are being harmed and abused by the policies of the government Your disciples in India
- 25 Feb.** Father, please be close to all who are feeling the bitter winds of depression and scarcity their lives and uphold them with the warming breath of Your love and grace.
- 26 Feb.** Father, we pray for the fiery trials and severe persecutions that is coming on so many of Your children, which are becoming increasingly intense and horrific. Help and support, protect and save, comfort and succor, and encourage and strengthen each and every one of them.
- 27 Feb.** Father, multiply the grace needed to endure and may they find encouragement, assurance and hope in the knowledge that they are but for a moment - knowing that they are participants in the suffering of their Saviour.
- 28 Feb.** Father, we place all the injustice of today's world before You asking that in Your time and in Your way, You would right all the wrongs – in Jesus name we pray

Amen



Dr. John Dayal, Member, National Integration Council, Government of India and the Secretary General of All India Christian Council.



JOHN DAYAL
Member, National
Integration Council



THE SANGH CONTINUES ITS POLITICAL PROJECT FOR ASSIMILATING THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS IN JHARKHAND WITH AN ANTI-CONVERSION BILL, AFTER ONCE LABELING THEM VANVASIS AND ROBBING THEM OF FREEDOMS OF FAITH, LAND AND LANGUAGES

Christian organizations have often pointed out that such laws, and the impunity they generate, have been used to wreak violence on pastors, Nuns, and Church-run educational and religious institutions throughout the country. They are sometimes deemed to be in force in states where they actually do not exist.

The anti-conversion laws have brought India unnecessary opprobrium internationally. Anti-conversion laws are routinely listed as the negative practices of the Indian system, in review of our Human Rights record at various international fora. As with the anti-Dalit Christian laws, the so called anti-conversion laws, ironically titled freedom of religion laws, are aimed at taking away the freedom of religion and rights of Tribals and other

marginalized sections of the Indian society.

The University of Ghent portal summarized the debate “In May 2006, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the new Indian ambassador to the Holy See, referring to the anti-conversion laws as “the reprehensible attempt to legislate clearly discriminatory restrictions on the fundamental right of religious freedom.” In response, the Indian Foreign Ministry declared sharply that India is a secular and democratic country guaranteeing equality for all religious faiths. But the Pope does not stand alone here.

In 2009, a special rapporteur of the United Nations pointed out that the anti-conversion laws “raise serious human rights concerns.” The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

decided in 2009 to put India on its “watch list” of countries requiring close monitoring on religious freedom issues because of its anti-conversion legislations.”

We must realize that the bill is both a stratagem and a smokescreen. It terrorizes a church which is tiring or reluctant of constant confrontation with an overwhelming powerful state, while dividing the tribals who had united on the land issue irrespective of their faith and beliefs.

Rousing the Sarnas, after robbing them of their languages and faith symbols, is part of the trick. The tribal is also under the larger threat that like Dalits, his land and political rights will be taken away if he converts. This is happening in the Bhil areas of the region encompassing parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and western Madhya Pradesh.

Concluded



DISFIGURED BUT NOT DESTROYED



07th November, 2016. It has been over a year since that fateful day, when the tragedy occurred.

Sis. Siporah, 35 years and Pr. Vamshidar Rao, 45 years, are both Hindu converts. Both had a miraculous encounter and decided to follow Jesus Christ. A loving wife to Pr. Vamshidar Rao, and a devoted mother to 3 lovely children – 18-year-old daughter Nishu, 12-year-old son Sonu and a second 8-year-old son Anirudh, her life seems peaceful and complete. They

made their home at Mehboob Nagar District, 110 kms from Hyderabad in Telangana State.

A portion of their home is transformed into a Church. People from the neighboring community gather every Sunday to worship at “Jesus God Power” Church, shepherded by Pastor Vamshidar Rao.

For most people, the hardest part of ‘quiet time’ is actually finding the time. But for Sr. Siporah, she was up every day at 4.30 am, while her family were still in bed. Slipping

“

While she sat with her Bible, eyes shut, **meditating in the presence of the Lord, suddenly the Church door flew wide open”**



IF YOU ARE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SUPPORT SIS SIPORAH FOR HER PLASTIC SURGERY OR SUPPORT HER FINANCIALLY, KINDLY REACH OUT TO US AT : E-mail : persecutionrelief@gmail.com Call : +91-9993200020

away early in the morning to spend time alone at her Father's feet, her heart possessed exclusively and completely in prayer, she cherished this part of her day.

While she sat with her Bible, eyes shut, meditating in the presence of the Lord, suddenly the Church door flew wide open. Five men stormed into the sanctuary, destroying its peace. Before she could even realize what was transpiring, still sitting at the pew, they pinned her down, holding her wrist in a firm grip and doused her hands with fuel and set her alight. Sis. hands and part of her abdomen and back began burning, her skin peeling off, tendons cracking until the bone began to show. As her agonizing screams pierced the early morning stillness and drew her husband's attention, the perpetrators fled leaving her aflame. An empty bottle that carried the kerosene at the scene of the crime, was the only evidence that there had been someone else in the Church apart from Sr. Siporah.

Both hands, from her forearm downwards, are severely deformed

and disfigured because of the horrific burns. Sis Siporah is very vocal about her ongoing challenges and struggles to lead a normal life, as she is very dependent on her husband and her children for even simple things like getting a drink of water. *"I don't hide my hands unless the other person is uncomfortable. My husband took me to the hospital for treatment for a long time and we spent around 1 lakh rupees. The Doctor has done all he can and now recommends plastic surgery which would cost around Rupees 8 lakh. We do not have the luxury of this money and so I have learnt to live with it".*

"My faith was very strong when they burned me. I prayed, 'God I will never forget you'. Sis Siporah paid a heavy price for her faith in Jesus but is still passionate about His ministry. Her body became a burnt offering to the Lord. Jesus was with her and gave her the grace to withstand the torture.

As all devout, she attributes her suffering to God's sovereign knowledge. She gives thanks to God

that He would count her worthy to be numbered among His chosen. While Sis. Siporah is a survivor who radiates indomitable courage, she is not alone. Many women are victims of such violence and harassment because of taking a firm stand for their faith in Jesus Christ, with no one to provide them physical or mental succor, except God.

The Bible tells us everyone who wants to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).

Our eyes swell with tears as our heart breaks yet rejoices in the strength of this woman. May Jesus grant commitment and loyalty to all who take a stand for His cause.

Several lakhs of rupees have been spent on her treatment and surgery. If there is anyone, reading this story and is led by the Lord to pray for her and her family, to refer her to a Plastic Surgeon or perform the surgery yourselves or pay for the surgery, kindly reach out to us at persecutionrelief@gmail.com

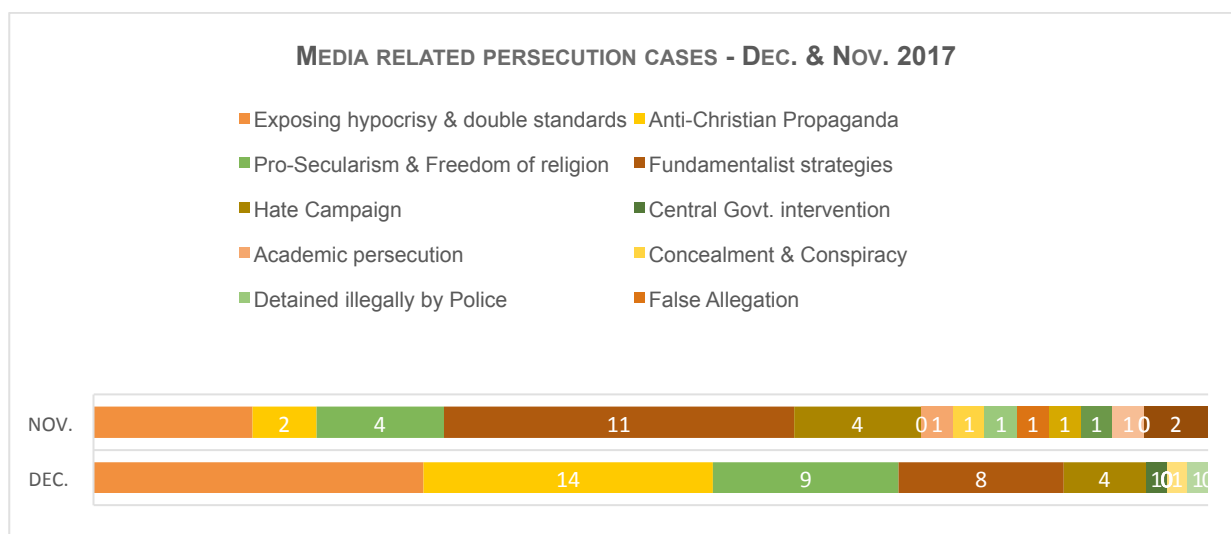
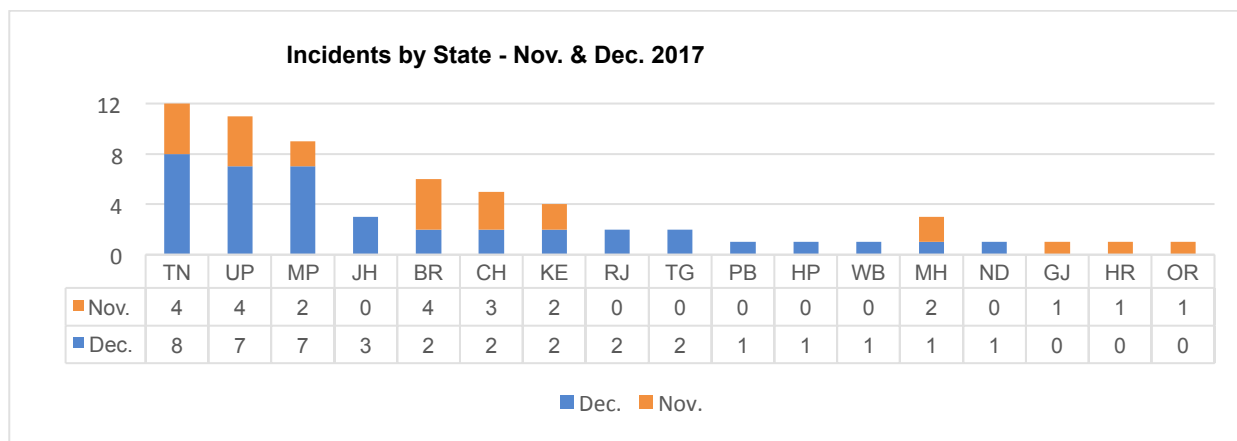


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Persecution Relief Monitor – November & December 2017



Description of persecution	Dec.	Nov.
Arrested - False allegation	8	6
Physical Violence	7	3
False allegation / Threats & Harassment	6	3
Worship service stopped	6	-
Anti-Christian Propaganda	3	-
Academic persecution	2	-
Christmas meeting stopped	2	-
Death threats	1	-
Hate Campaign	1	-
Obstruction for construction of church	1	-
Ostracization	1	-
Restrictions on religious assembly	1	1
Threats & Harassment	1	-
Christian Institution attacked	-	3
House Church attacked/closed down	-	3
Abetting suicide	-	1
Detained illegally by Police	-	1
Judgement favoring minority	-	1
Social Discrimination	-	1
Vandalism	-	1

Summary:

- In Dec. and Nov. PR recorded 40 and 24 incidents respectively
- PR recorded 53 and 35 media stories in Dec. and Nov. respectively, covered by the national and state media, which are not displayed in the graph
- Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh States see the highest number of persecution cases
- Tamil Nadu saw the highest spike. Most of the incidents were across South, East and West Tamil Nadu, with a large number of Churches being 'sealed' under various apparent



SAUL TO PAUL



Meghna Stephen

All glory and honour and praise be to the highest God and gracious Father, to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit. This is my testimony of how God turned my broken, filthy and ridiculous life to be the most blessed one.

I come from a typical Bengali Hindu Brahmin Family. In a country where boys remain prized and having a daughter is considered by many to be a curse, my parents and the whole family expected the first baby to be a boy. To their great disappointment, when I was born, I was rejected outright – except for my mother. She was my only comfort and solace. My mother singly brought me up.

At the age of one, I was diagnosed with Tuberculosis. In those days, my native place Bhusawal, was a little village in Maharashtra. The Doctor's who examined me told my parents that I would die in 24 hours as there was no access to good medicine or treatment. When my mother suggested that they take me to the city, my father's response was 'Let her die, after all, she is just a girl'. My mother was distraught but never gave up. She went back the next day to the same Doctor who found no trace of Tuberculosis! As amazed as the Doctor and my mother was, so were my family. Nobody knew how this transpired, but God knew me by name.

Several such miracles showed the mighty hand of God upon my life.

At the age of four, while playing, I had a nasty fall from a two-storey building but there was not a single scratch on my body. Nobody knew how this transpired, but God knew me by name.

Again, at the age of seven, I was found with a tumor in my throat which was diagnosed as 3rd stage cancer. The Doctors gave me a month to live since I was too young to endure Chemotherapy. The pain was excruciating. As the day for my Doctor's visit finally arrived, I suddenly woke up at 5.00 am with fear in me hear about the impending Doctor's visit. Instinctively, my hand moved to my throat and the tumor was gone!! I could not

believe my hands or my eyes! My mother was shocked as well as the Doctor as he could not find a single cell of cancer in my body! Nobody knew how this transpired, but God knew me by name.

From the age of ten, I started writing poetry, putting down on paper all the emotions locked up inside my head, which was a healing process.

As time passed by, the situation at home went from bad to worse. I was despised and hated by all and every one that was familiar to me. The idea of suicide was always on my mind. It was like this little voice telling me every time something bad happened: "Why don't you just kill yourself?"

The first time I tried to do it, I was 11 years old and I tried to cut my wrist but not a single drop of blood came out. I tried it a couple more times and I got the same result. I consumed 'rat poison' used to kill domestic rats and nothing happened to me! I drank pesticide that is used in the fields and nothing happened to me. I took around 15 painkillers, which was my mother's, and went to bed thinking I was going to be found dead. Next day, I just felt really dizzy, which was a miracle!! It was God showing me His unending mercy.

I tried to end my life by jumping in front of moving vehicles and everytime, I got saved at the nick of the moment! When all my attempts to kill myself were frustrated, I decided that I needed to plan and strategize better. I planned for a whole week the day that I was going to jump off our building and kill myself. So, I picked one night, after the entire household was asleep jumped off the 3rd floor. I felt that as I jumped there were 2 invisible hands holding me and like slow motion, I was gently placed on the ground. The whole night I was in shock, unbelieving that I did not have a scratch on my body! That was my last suicide attempt.

Soon after that I joined one of the "local underworld gangs" in Bhusawal. I felt that this was the natural progression to my life. Since I was not successful in killing myself, I decided that I would live life on my terms. Soon, I started drinking, smoking, and got addicted to drugs as well.

In the meantime, at the home front, things were getting bad to worse. Returning from the court, after filing for divorce, my parents met with a very serious accident. My mother recovered fairly quickly but my dad was very critical and needed a ventilator to breathe and

was admitted in the ICU.

My father, who was clinically dead for 15 minutes and came back to life knowing Christ. He claimed that he had an 'out of body' experience, and Jesus gave him a second chance at life. Praise God! Within a month, he was discharged from the hospital and after 4 ½ months, was able to resume his work with the Railways. After this, their lives changed dramatically. They started attending Church service every Sunday. I was totally opposed to Christians and began to hate them.

Angry at the turn of events, I was brutal in my opposition. I gathered all the elders of my Brahmin community and plotted against the Pastor who was taking my parents to church, alleging that he was converting them.

I hated Christians. I recall having a Christian friend who had told me that Christians were going to heaven and all Hindus would go to hell. I became an antagonist - actively opposing and hostile to all Christian people.

I spoke to my 'underworld' friends and together, we planned to burn the Pastor alive along with his wife and two small kids. But God reigns supreme over all. As my team mates and I made our way, suddenly, I fell to the ground, struck down, as though someone gave me an electric shock.

I have no idea what happened except that I began to weep bitterly, with strange words coming from my mouth – pleading with the Lord - "Lord please forgive me for what I have done, I will not touch your servant; I will live for you." These words were coming automatically from my mouth.

Not long after that incident I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. In October 25th October 2010, I committed my life to the Lord and on 31st December 2010, I was baptized. God started to open my eyes, and give me life through His word. Today, my life has meaning and purpose.

My father and my mother continue to faithfully serve the Lord. God put a great man by my side who loves me for who I am, my husband. And together we have a beautiful baby boy. We serve the Lord through our music ministry.

My God is my anchor. He is a Father to me, and I am His daughter. He is my strong tower, and my strength in the battle. I'm not alone anymore. The God of the universe, the God of my heart, is with me. And I'm His possession.

This is my testimony.





GURUMURTHY MADI SACRIFICED FOR CHRIST TO WIN HIS TRIBES



Debe Madi, wife of Pastor. Gurumurthy Madi, still couldn't forget the memories of that night when she heard the sound of four-gun shots. She knew for sure they killed her husband for being a daring gospel bearer.

Pastor Gurumurthy Madi had served many needy people in Malkangiri, Odisha. Through his transformed life and work, two Naxal commanders—members of a communist guerrilla group—gave themselves up to local police. After this he was able to inspire and influence other Naxals to surrender themselves to the Police. This transformation attracted the attention of Naxal leaders, who demanded that Pastor Madi return all those members of the group who had given themselves up to the police. When he refused to hand over a fellow pastor who was a former Naxal, Madi was on their hit list.

It was on the 10th of August 2016, when few men from the village came to their house in the wee hours looking for Guru as they needed to talk with him. Guru was away in the nearby villages spreading the Word to the thirsty. Guru never doubted the intention of the people seeking him as he was known in the province as a "Gospel Preacher" and the one who was available for any kind of help to the needy.

The next day, the religious fanatics came looking for him again saying they needed to clarify few things with others who are waiting for him there. The family members were helpless as they could do nothing except seek His face for a miraculous intervention.

On the night of 11th August, at about 9 pm, they heard four-gun shots from the nearby forest surrounding the village. They found him, lying on ground bleeding from the wounds of the gunshots & the brutal, vicious beatings. Guru is survived by this wife Debe Madi and 2 children.

Abolishment of Anti Conversion Law in India



Freedom of religion in India is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 15 and Article 25 of the Constitution of India

Article 15(1) in The Constitution of India 1949

- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

Article 25(1) in The Constitution of India 1949

- Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion

Credit: //indiankanoon.org

So far, seven Indian states – Madhya Pradesh Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand, have officially passed the Anti-Conversion law.

Church / Readers, your signature and support could make this a reality.

Freedom of religion is our Constitutional right.

By clicking on the link, you are asking the Prime Minister to abolish this draconian law across India. It is the responsibility of every Christian to sign this petition and make our voices count as it will adversely affect you and your children generation, either directly or indirectly.

<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/abolishment-of-anti-conversion-law-in-india>

Are you covered?

Continue....

2. Do not lodge an FIR

- Pastors must never be forced to file counter FIR's no matter the level of provocation – Jesus is our role model
- Please discourage the local pastors or village believers in filing counter FIR's and creating a hostile environment as they have to minister in a particular area lifelong
- Always reflect the heart of Jesus which is forgiveness and mercy
- Persecution Relief does not recommend lodging a counter FIR

3. Identify a Christian Lawyer in your City/ Village and carry his details with you

- Always identify and keep details of a Christian Lawyer residing near you in case of any emergency
- The Lawyer will help to secure anticipatory bail or accompany you to the Police Station, as he knows the law and penal codes that are applied
- Always carry the telephone number of Persecution Relief

4. Forced Confession or pressure by officials to make false statements

- Create awareness in your

congregations that no persons, no Government official (Police, Collector / SDM/ TI), has the right to demand that you to write down or sign on a blank paper

- For e.g. a Pastor was forced to write that 'the meeting that is being held in my house is illegal and I will not continue the Sunday worship in future'
- This document will further become a proof against you
- Do not give your mobile telephones to the Police - resist from giving it to them as it is your personal property
- For any further clarification, please call us on our toll-free number 1800-234-461 or email us christianpersecution@persecutionrelief.org


5. Conference/Large gatherings/ conventions/ Gatherings shut down

- Police must be informed well in advance and required permissions and sanctions secured for all large or small gathering and mass programs
- No programs should be conducted without written permission in hand
- Do not transport large groups of people in buses, trains and large trucks attracting attention

- De-centralize working style and work in smaller groups as first century Church practiced
- All Organizers should take prior permission for the use of speakers and ensure it adheres to the minimum sound levels
- Secure necessary permissions whether Auditorium, Hotel, School or Tents in open maidan, even outside your own property

- Even after permission is secured, there have been several cases were religious fundamentalists put pressure on the Venue Owners to cancel the booking
- Christians lose large sums of money when arrangements are cancelled i.e. Electrical installations, transport, venue rent, hotel bookings, food and beverage arrangements, venue arrangements have to be cancelled
- Ensure that you have a written confirmation from the Venue owners
- In the event the Venue Owners cancel or terminate the contract any reason, no liability should fall upon the organizers of the Convention/ Conference, including the advance
- Ask for Police protection at the venue for the duration of the program.

To be continued in the next edition



GOD TAKES IT PERSONALLY WHEN HIS BELIEVERS ARE PERSECUTED

Shibu Thomas
Founder-Persecution Relief

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the free church of the world



OUR GOAL

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to worship
Jesus Christ in India

Persecution Relief, while providing Comprehensive support [Prayerfully, Financially, Politically & Judicially] to the persecuted Church and the Christian Community in India, also serves as the link filling this crucial gap, highlighting, influencing and bringing awareness about persecution that has increased exponentially, to India and to the world at large.

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