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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by European Centre for Law and Justice, The / Centre Européen pour le droit, les Justice et les droits de l'homme, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Requesting That India Protect Christians From Ongoing Religious Persecution

1. INTRODUCTION

Christians are not safe in India. The safety of Christians is threatened every day in India by Hindu extremists who believe all other religions cannot be tolerated in India.(1) They have weaponized laws that ban religious conversions to carry out religiously motivated violence against Christians.(2) Christians gathering in either a home to pray or a church to worship is all it takes for Hindu extremists to accuse Christians of violating anti-conversion laws and violently attack their homes and churches.(3) These reasons have led India to be named as the eleventh worst country for Christians.(4)

2. BACKGROUND

Despite India's Constitution stating that "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion,"(5) religious persecution against Christians continues to rise at an alarming rate. In the first four months of 2025, United Christian Forum, an organization focused on protecting human rights in India, reported 245 instances of violence against Christians.(6) In 2024, it reported 834 instances of violence.(7) This is a staggering increase from the prior year when it reported 734 instances of violence.(8) Sadly, these numbers do not include the instances that remain unreported.(9) Additionally, these numbers do not account for the violence in Manipur, where violence has resulted in the deaths of more than 250 people and displaced more than 60,000.(10) Most of those affected by the violence in Manipur are Christians.(11)

In many of these cases Christians are left helpless with no one to turn to for their protection. Police oftentimes are no help because they are either complicit or choose to remain ignorant when Christians are confronted with religiously motivated violence. In fact, only forty-seven of the reported incidences that occurred in India between January and November 2024 resulted in formal action being taken by the police.(12)

In addition to the Constitutional protections of religious freedom, India is also bound by the protections enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR guarantees everyone the right to "adopt a religion or belief of his choice" and the freedom to "manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."(13)

As we will demonstrate through numerous examples below, India has shown that it is unwilling to protect religious freedom even though it has an obligation to do so under its own Constitution, as well as the ICCPR.

3. VIOLATIONS

In May 2025, a Catholic school staff having a picnic in Madhya Pradesh were harassed for two hours by police interrogating them on suspicions of carrying out conversion activities.(14)

On April 20, 2025, a group of Hindu nationalists carrying knives disrupted an Easter church service in Gujarat and accused church members of unlawfully converting Hindus.(15)

On April 12, 2025, thirteen families who converted to Christianity were threatened with eviction from a village in Chhattisgarh if they did not return to Hinduism.(16) The six Christian families who refused to renounce their faith were forcibly removed by other villagers.(17)

In March 2025, a mob of more than twenty-five people carried out planned attacks on two Christian churches in Andhra Pradesh.(18) In both incidents, the mob disrupted the worship service and threatened the pastor to stop the service.(19)

On March 31, 2025, a group of fifty Catholics on a pilgrimage tour in Madhya Pradesh were forcibly taken by a mob to a police station and detained for six hours over accusations of religious conversion.(20) Two Catholic priests who went to the police station to aid the detainees were assaulted by a violent mob outside.(21)

On March 22, 2025, fifteen police officials carried out a violent raid of a Catholic church in the Gajapati district of Odisha.(22) Police attacked multiple church members, brutally assaulted two priests, and destroyed religious statues.(23)

On March 9, 2025, police forcefully entered a church in Andhra Pradesh and disrupted the service by demanding to see a worship permit.(24)

On March 8, 2025, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav of Madhya Pradesh announced plans to amend the state's anti-conversion law to include the death penalty as punishment for those engaged in religious conversion.(25)

In February 2025, a new anti-conversion law took effect in Rajasthan.(26) The law requires an individual to give the government sixty days' notice of his plan to voluntarily change his religion.(27) The law also requires the individual performing the conversion ceremony to give the government thirty days' notice of his intention to perform the ceremony.(28) Failure to give notice results in a fine and up to three to five years' imprisonment.(29)

Also in February 2025, nine Christians were arrested for holding prayer meetings in Uttar Pradesh under the state's anti-conversion law.(30)

On February 16, 2025, a mob of almost 200 people attacked a group of about fifty Christians with iron rods at a church service in Rajasthan.(31) After the police arrived and the mob dispersed, the police began accusing the victims and pastor of forced conversion.(32)

In January 2025, a court in Uttar Pradesh issued a conviction under its anti-conversion law.(33) A couple faced a sentence of five years imprisonment for attempting to convert "vulnerable" people to Christianity after the couple had urged a family struggling with addiction to adopt a better way of life.(34) They were released on bail in February and continue to fight for their acquittal.(35)

On January 26, 2025, the police arrested a pastor in Uttar Pradesh for violating the state's anti-conversion law.(36) Police raided the pastor's residence and confiscated religious materials including Bibles.(37)

4. REQUEST

These are just a few examples of the numerous cases of religious persecution being inflicted on Christians every day in India. These examples demonstrate how anti-conversion laws have been weaponized to target Christians peacefully practicing their faith. At its core, anti-conversion laws prevent Christians from practicing their faith without fear in India. India must take immediate action to repeal all anti-conversion laws to ensure Christians are safe from imprisonment, harassment, and violent attacks fueled by allegations of forced conversions.

(1) India, OPEN DOORS.

- (2) Id.
- (3) Id.
- (4) How are Christians Persecuted in India?, OPEN DOORS.
- (5) CONSTITUTION OF INDIA 1949 rev. 2016 art. 25.
- (6) 245 Attacks on Christians in India in Just 120 Days: UCF, RADIANCE NEWS BUREAU (May 15, 2025).
- (7) Growing Violence ‘Threatens’ Christian Existence in India, FIACONA (Jan. 24, 2025).
- (8) Id.
- (9) Christian Persecution on the Rise in India: Report, FIACONA (Dec. 16, 2024).
- (10) Id.
- (11) Id.
- (12) Record Anti-Christian Violence in India Spurs Call for Action, FIACONA (Jan. 10, 2025).
- (13) International Covenant on Civil and Political Reports art. 18, adopted Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171.
- (14) Indian Bishop Slams Intimidation of Catholic School Staff, UCA News (May 2, 2025).
- (15) Hindu Nationalists Disrupt Easter Service with Knives, Sticks, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Apr. 22, 2025).
- (16) 6 Chhattisgarh Families Evicted for Faith in Christ, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Apr. 4, 2025).
- (17) Id.
- (18) 3 Churches Attacked in Andhra Pradesh, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Mar. 17, 2025).
- (19) Id.
- (20) Catholic Pilgrims Detained and Two Priests Assaulted in Madhya Pradesh, CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE (Apr. 14, 2025).
- (21) Id.
- (22) Lawyers, Activists Demand Accountability for Police who Attacked Christians, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Apr. 28, 2025).
- (23) Id.
- (24) 3 Churches Attacked in Andhra Pradesh, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Mar. 17, 2025).
- (25) Concerns Grow as Indian State Plans Death Penalty for Conversions, FIACONA (Mar. 17, 2025).
- (26) New Anti-Conversion Law Takes Effect in Rajasthan, INTERNAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN (Feb. 21, 2025).
- (27) Id.
- (28) Id.
- (29) Id.
- (30) 9 Christians Arrested Over Conversion Allegation in India, UCA NEWS (Feb. 25, 2025).
- (31) Christians Attacked During Sunday Service in Rajasthan, CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE (Feb. 20, 2025).
- (32) Id.
- (33) War on Faith or Forced Conversions?, FIACONA (Feb. 19, 2025).
- (34) Id.
- (35) Id.
- (36) Police Arrest 7 Indian Christians for Conversion on Republic Day, FIACONA (Jan. 30, 2025).
- (37) Id.