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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 2023]

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

REQUESTING THAT THE U.N. RECOGNIZE THE CONTINUING VIOLENCE THAT IS ATTEMPTING TO RID INDIA OF CHRISTIANS

1. INTRODUCTION

At least 600 reports of persecution against Christians in the Republic of India (India) were filed in just the first three months of 2023.(1) Over the last five years, Christians in India have faced a sharp increase in religiously-motivated attacks.(2) In 2022, over 597 acts of violence were committed against Christians.(3) This number is nearly double the 292 reported acts of violence in 2018.(4) The Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand have the highest reports of violent acts, with Uttar Pradesh recording 149 incidents in 2022 alone.(5) However, attacks against Christians are a widespread problem in India, with twenty-one of India's twenty-eight states accounting for the 597 acts of violence in 2022.(6)

2. BACKGROUND

According to the World Watch List, India is the eleventh most dangerous country for Christians to live in, due to persecution from the Hindu population.(7) Christians face continual attacks to their faith, including pressure to convert to Hinduism. Other threats include death, physical violence, discrimination, and social exclusion. Hindu extremists adhere to Hindutva ideology, which holds that people of other religions are foreigners and need to be eliminated. Therefore, Hindu extremists seek to remove Christians by extreme acts of violence and often attack Christians with impunity.

India also seeks to eliminate Christianity through anti-conversion laws, which have been implemented in several states, and are used to harass, intimidate, and imprison Christians. These laws are passed under the guise of protecting Hindus from being forcibly converted but are actually used to accuse Christians and keep them from practicing their faith.(8) Twelve states have already enacted anti-conversion laws, which prohibit conversion, require notification to the government of intent to convert, and have a presumption of guilt.(9) The Indian government fails to recognize the persecution of Christians as shown by the recent affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court of India, which stated that "there is no communal violence against Christians in India," despite the number of cases of violence against Christians rising in recent years.(10)

3. VIOLATIONS

In May 2023, violent clashes broke out between the predominantly Hindu Meitei community and predominately Christian tribes in Manipur.(11) The violence began on May 3 and lasted for weeks.(12) Mobs of people, motivated by religious differences, destroyed homes and private property including the destruction of more than forty churches.(13) While sixty deaths were reported, it is estimated that 160 people were killed, most of whom were Christians.(14) These attacks resulted in many being displaced from their homes, including 9,000 who chose to flee the area and about 20,000 who were evacuated by the government and placed in camps in order to prevent further escalation.(15) The government deployed military forces to the region, even ordering them to "shoot on sight" to enforce a curfew, but has been unsuccessful in quelling the violence.(16)

On May 5, 2023, during one of the attacks in Imphal Tribal Colony, a woman was pulled out of her car by the mobs, and her son was killed during the attack.(17)

On May 3, 2023, the Pastoral Training Center in Imphal was raided four times, which included burning vehicles and looting the building.(18) There were also reported physical attacks on people based on their Christian identity. A witness to the attack reported that,

despite repeated calls, police failed to intervene. The next day, the attackers set the church on fire by stacking the pews in the middle of the church and using a gas accelerant.(19)

On April 11, 2023, three churches were demolished for being constructed illegally in Imphal Tribal Colony in Manipur.(20) The destruction of these churches is part of an effort, which began in February 2023, by the Hindu population of Manipur to remove Christian tribes, such as the Kuki, from the area.(21)

On March 30, 2023, over twenty Hindu extremists attacked the home of a pastor in Daharipatti Village of Uttar Pradesh.(22) The attack took place while Christians were gathered for a prayer meeting. Over twelve people were injured as the attackers charged the home and beat the Christians with sticks. Incredibly, after the attack, it was not the extremists who were arrested, rather it was three Christians, including two pastors, who were arrested under the state's anti-conversion laws.(23)

On March 19, 2023, police arrested nineteen Christians from seven different locations across Uttar Pradesh for carrying out conversions.(24) In one of these cases, eight people were taken into custody after their church was attacked during a Sunday worship service by a group of Hindu extremists. The attackers even dragged the pastor from the church. Members of the church called police for help; however, police arrested the Christians rather than stopping the attackers. Later, four women who were arrested were released while the four men were charged with carrying out conversions.(25)

On February 26, 2023, a pastor and his wife, Santosh and Jiji John, were arrested under anti-conversion laws in Uttar Pradesh after complaints were filed by a group of Hindu extremists.(26) The attorney for the couple reported that the arrest was made in response to pressure from Hindu extremist groups, without any evidence of a violation. After thirty days, the pastor and his wife were released.

In January 2023, a crowd of 150 people attacked a man at his home in a village in Chhattisgarh.(27) The attackers used verbal threats and demanded that he convert back to Hinduism. The man was also physically attacked, including slapped, punched, and kicked while on the ground. The attackers later destroyed his home and stole all of his possessions, which forced the man to flee and live in a shelter outside of the village.

Between December 9 and 18, 2022, about one thousand Christians were displaced from their homes as Hindu extremists attacked thirty-three villages in Chhattisgarh.(28) The Christians were told to convert to Hinduism, and faced threats of physical violence, including death. More than twenty people were hospitalized for injuries after being beaten with things like tires and rods. In addition to physical violence, more than forty Christian families were forcibly converted to Hinduism. The families were forcibly taken to the village temple where a Hindu priest performed rituals and declared the Christians to be Hindus. Their Bibles were also confiscated from their homes.

4. REQUEST

These incidents are just a small fraction of the violent attacks and arrests that are occurring in order to rid India of Christians. Every day, more Christians are being targeted by Hindu extremists. Christians endure discrimination, imprisonment, physical violence, and even death. In order to ensure that Christians have a place India, it is important that the Human Rights Council urge India to take immediate steps to protect Christians. India must stop the persecution and escalating violence against Christians. We also ask that India engage with the international community to help in this endeavor.

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- (2) Hate Crimes Against Christians Peak in 2022: Karnataka, TN Highest in South Says Report, THE NEWS MINUTE (Nov. 26, 2022), <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/hate-crimes-against-christians-peak-2022-karnataka-tn-highest-south-says-report-170336>.
- (3) United Christian Forum (UCF) Issues Memorandum on Targeted Violence Against The Christian Community in India, COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION (Feb. 22, 2023), <https://www.cwmission.org/united-christian-forum-ucf-issues-memorandum-on-targeted-violence-against-the-christian-community-in-india/>.
- (4) Hate Crimes Against Christians Peak in 2022: Karnataka, TN Highest in South Says Report, supra note 2.
- (5) Id.
- (6) United Christian Forum (UCF) Issues Memorandum on Targeted Violence Against The Christian Community in India, supra note 3.
- (7) India World Watch List 2023, OPEN DOORS, <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/india/> (last visited May 24, 2023).
- (8) Id.
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- (10) Dismay as Indian Government Dismisses Claims of Christian Persecution, OPEN DOORS (April 27, 2023), <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/india-court-update/>.
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- (13) Anto Akkara, Christians Targeted in Bloody Ethnic Conflict in India's Manipur State, NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER (May 17, 2023), <https://www.ncregister.com/news/christians-targeted-in-bloody-ethnic-conflict-in-india-s-manipur-state#:~:text=Job%20Board-,Christians%20Targeted%20in%20Bloody%20Ethnic%20Conflict%20in%20India's%20Manipur%20State,Indian%20state%20on%20May%203.&text=The%20local%20Catholic%20Church%20has,Manipur%20state%20in%20northeast%20India>.
- (14) Id.
- (15) Dhillon, supra note 16.
- (16) Id.
- (17) Ryan Foley, Christians Beaten to Death in Wave of Violence; Evangelical Group Issues Call for Peace, CHRISTIAN TODAY (May 11, 2023), <https://www.christiantoday.co.in/news/christians-beaten-to-death-in-wave-of-violence-evangelical-group-issues-call-for-peace.html>.
- (18) Akkara, supra note 18.
- (19) Id.
- (20) The Genesis of the Manipur Problem: All You Need to Know About The Recent Crisis, THE TELEGRAPH (May 6, 2023), <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/the-genesis-of-the-manipur-problem-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-recent-crisis/cid/1934665>.
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- (23) Id.
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- (25) Id.
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