

# briefing

## India

### *Religious Violence and Discrimination against Christians in 2007*

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## I. Executive Summary

Despite the existence of strong constitutional and legislative protections for freedom of religion and belief in India, 2007 saw a continued pattern of societal opposition to the religious activities of minorities (particularly including Christians), which often erupted into violent attacks. There continued to be a chronic problem of impunity for perpetrators of religiously-motivated violence. These issues are compounded by specific legislative obstructions to religious freedom, in the form of state-level Freedom of Religion Acts (known dysphemistically as ‘anti-conversion laws’) and the religious conditionality attached to the definition of the Scheduled Castes, which governs eligibility for the ‘reservation’ system of quotas in the public sector.

A consistent pattern of religiously-motivated violence against Christians was recorded throughout 2007, particularly in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. During the last week of the year, large-scale communal violence broke out in the Kandhamal district of Orissa, resulting in the destruction of approximately at least 730 houses and 95 churches and Christian institutions, and the death of a small number of people. Although some Hindu properties were among those destroyed in the violence, the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) delivered the verdict that ‘there is no doubt that the Christian community and its places of worship were the principal target of attack.’<sup>1</sup> NGO fact-finding visit reports and the NCM report interpreted the violence as the culmination of a long process of co-opting the local tribal population into Hinduism and the concomitant vilification of the minority Christian community and of conversions from Hinduism. This process was carried out by the Hindu extremist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), under the leadership of its local figurehead, Swami Lakhmananda Saraswati.

The propagation of a culture assuming the illegitimacy of religious conversions from Hinduism fuelled the wider pattern of anti-Christian violence in 2007. Such a culture is rooted in the extremist nationalist ideology of ‘Hindutva’, which in practice, seeks to preserve and defend the cultural hegemony of Hinduism at the expense of minority religions. Many attacks on Christian targets were incited or perpetrated by proponents of Hindutva, chiefly the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its subsidiary organisations, including the VHP and Bajrang Dal. Such attacks were often justified by unsubstantiated allegations of illegitimate conversions carried out by the victims, perceived as a threat to the cultural and national integrity of India. The nature and severity of the attacks varied, but included murders, mob beatings, arson attacks and vandalism of houses, church buildings and schools.

Police inaction or complicity was a pervasive problem throughout 2007, with perpetrators of religiously-motivated attacks commonly receiving little more than a superficial censure. In numerous cases, particularly in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, police refused to register the complaints of Christians or arrested the Christian victims instead of their attackers. In some cases, police were directly implicated in violence against Christians. Ineffectual or discriminatory police responses were most common in states under the governance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which espouses a Hindutva agenda.

The culture of opposition to conversions from Hinduism was also reflected in state-level ‘anti-conversion laws’, in force in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh, and introduced but not implemented in Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Such laws appear to contribute towards dominant notions of the illegitimacy of conversions to minority religions and the consequent vilification of the minority Christian community.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Report of the National Commission for Minorities visit to Orissa, 6-8 January 2008’ (<http://ncm.nic.in/pdf/orissa%20report.pdf>), p. 1.

## 2. Recommendations

### 2.1. To the government of India

It is recommended that the government of India should:

1. Adopt and implement the recommendations of the Justice Ranganath Mishra National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, specifically that the eligibility for membership of the Scheduled Castes should not be linked to religious status;
2. Condemn and take steps towards the repeal of Freedom of Religion Acts in Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan states;
3. Adopt the recommendations of CSW in response to the communal violence in the Kandhamal district of Orissa, as follows:
  - a. Open an investigation into the violence in Kandhamal district by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI);
  - b. Ensure that the First Information Reports of victims of violence are properly registered, regardless of religion or caste status;
  - c. Respond to the attacks under the provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989;
  - d. Urge the Orissa state government to carry out a proper assessment of the damage;
  - e. Ensure that full and proper compensation is given to victims of attacks, in line with the provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and its rules;
  - f. Establish a fast-track court to deliver justice for the victims of attacks;
  - g. Address the widespread allegations (included those made by the National Commission of Minorities) of incitement to violence by Hindu extremist groups, specifically the VHP and its local leader, Swami Lakhmananda Saraswati, and ensure that any extremist religious groups found to be complicit in inciting violence are banned in Orissa state;
  - h. Adopt the recommendation of the National Commission of Minorities that an official paper should be released to clarify the issue of conversions, which has been exploited to vilify the Christian community;
4. Ensure the full and effective implementation of all laws protecting religious minorities from religiously-motivated violence, fully investigate allegations of the abuse of these laws and bring perpetrators of violence to justice under the provisions of the law;
5. Undertake a comprehensive programme of training of the police force, prosecutors and the judiciary, particularly to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned legal protections, including by fully implementing the recommendations of the Dharma Vira Commission and other relevant commissions;
6. Implement measures to guarantee the independence of the police force, prosecutors and the judiciary from political authorities (including by implementing a system of fixed tenures for senior police), and to increase their transparency and accountability;
7. Conduct independent reviews of the effectiveness of the various national- and state-level commissions mandated to protect the rights of religious minorities, in consultation with these minorities, with a view to developing their effectiveness as safeguards against discrimination;

8. Ensure that an active Commission for Human Rights and Commission for Minorities (in the model of their national counterparts), is operational in every state, and that members of each commission are appointed by transparent and non-partisan procedures.

### ***2.2. To states and regional actors***

It is recommended that states and regional actors should actively engage with the government of India to encourage the implementation of the recommendations given in section 2.1 above.

### ***2.3. To the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief***

It is recommended that the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief should:

1. Ensure due recognition of the issues of religious conditionality in the eligibility for membership of the Scheduled Castes, state-level Freedom of Religion Acts and religiously-motivated violence against Christians in her report and recommendations arising from visiting India in 2008;
2. Actively pursue the implementation of the recommendations given in section 2.1 above with the government of India.

### 3. Introduction: Anti-Conversion Culture

This report describes the known incidents of religiously-motivated violence against Christians and their property, and outlines the two most significant legislative restrictions to freedom of religion, from the perspective of Christians, in state-level 'anti-conversion legislation' and the religious conditionality attached to the definition of the Scheduled Castes, which governs eligibility for the 'reservation' system of quotas in the public sector.

Both religiously-motivated violence and legislative restrictions point to a deep and asymmetrical culture of 'anti-conversion' in India. Opposition to religious conversions is rooted in the ideology of 'Hindutva', which advocates Hindu nationalism and does not recognise a place for what it perceives as 'foreign' religions in India, such as Christianity.<sup>2</sup> A wide range of Christian activities, particularly those involving Dalits and 'low' castes, are misrepresented as attempts to convert others from Hinduism by illegitimate means, and such misrepresentations are then used to justify violent reprisals against churches and individual Christians, often carried out by large mobs.

The ideology of Hindutva is espoused by the extremist Hindu nationalist groups known collectively as the Sangh Parivar, primarily the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its subsidiary organisations, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which was heavily implicated in the December 2007 violence in the Kandhamal district of Orissa, and the Bajrang Dal. The RSS is also the parent organisation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which holds government singly in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, and forms part of coalition governments in Bihar, Orissa and Punjab. It was also part of the coalition government in Karnataka, which broke up in November 2007. Sangh Parivar groups were implicated in the incitement or perpetration of the vast majority of attacks against Christians, and police responses to these attacks were reported to be worst in BJP-ruled states, particularly Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. Police in these states commonly appeared to reflect the religiously discriminatory agenda of Hindutva.

However, the approach of proponents of Hindutva to religious conversions is asymmetrical. Conversions to Hinduism are commonly described by the term, *ghar-vapsi* (translated as 'homecoming' or 're-conversion'), which carries an implied legitimacy. It is conversions away from Hinduism which are perceived as illegitimate and a threat to the cultural and national integrity of India. This perspective fuelled many of the attacks on Christians in 2007.

Some incidents in 2007 involved attempts to coercively convert Christians to Hinduism. BJP governments have previously been involved in funding large-scale 're-conversions', such as the Shabri Kumbh Mela in the Dangs district of Gujarat in February 2006. The outbreak of violence against Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa was partially the culmination of a long process by Hindutva organisations of co-opting tribals into Hinduism, which involved the vilification of religious minorities, particularly Christians. The National Commission for Minorities reported that an 'anti-conversion campaign ... created an atmosphere of prejudice and suspicion against the Christian community and Christian priests and organizations'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 'Hindutva' describes an extremist nationalist interpretation of Hinduism, which encompasses a vision of India as a Hindu nation in which minorities must assimilate to and revere the Hindu religion, race and culture and which, in practice, seeks to preserve and defend the cultural hegemony of Hinduism at the expense of minority religions.

<sup>3</sup> 'Report of the National Commission for Minorities visit to Orissa, 6-8 January 2008' (<http://ncm.nic.in/pdf/orissa%20report.pdf>), p. 3.

## **4. Legislative Restrictions on Religious Freedom**

### **4.1. Religious discrimination in Scheduled Caste status**

Under current legislation, the designation of Scheduled Castes, who are eligible for the 'reservation' system of quotas in public sector education and employment, is linked to religious affiliation. Dalits who convert to Christianity or Islam lose their status as Scheduled Castes, and consequently their eligibility for the 'reservation' system. Since caste-based discrimination continues to be practised to some extent in all religious communities, and Dalit converts are typically regarded in society as Dalits irrespective of their religious faith, this generates social and economic penalties for those embracing Christianity and Islam. In practice, it has also resulted in the concealment of religious affiliation by beneficiaries of reservation, afraid of losing their jobs.

This configuration is being challenged through a Supreme Court case, originally brought in 2004.<sup>4</sup> When the government was requested by the court to give its opinion, it appointed the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (NCRLM) to undertake a study and issue a recommendation. In May 2007, the commission recommended that Scheduled Caste status should no longer be linked to religious identity. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes subsequently supported the NCRLM recommendations, but with the caveat that reservations for Dalit Christians and Muslims should not encroach upon the existing 15% reservations for Scheduled Castes. Given that additional proposed reservations for the Other Backward Classes would take the total quotas to just below the 50% limit set by the Supreme Court in 1963, the creation of additional reservations for Dalit Christians and Muslims would represent a significant challenge.<sup>5</sup> Throughout 2007 and into 2008, the government did not deliver its opinion to the court, and the case was repeatedly adjourned. On 3 March 2008, the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment announced that the issue had been referred to the National Commission for Backward Classes for its consideration, in what some Christian activists have interpreted as a fresh stalling tactic.

The removal of a link between Scheduled Caste status and religious affiliation has been condemned by extremist Hindu nationalist groups, including the RSS. Christian commentators have suggested that this corresponds to the Hindutva agenda to prevent religious conversions, for which a socio-economic disincentive would be removed if the recommendations of the NCRLM were adopted.

### **4.2. Anti-conversion legislation**

State-level Freedom of Religion Acts, known informally as 'anti-conversion laws', are currently in force in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh states. Similar laws have been passed in Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan, but are not implemented. 'Anti-conversion laws' are primarily associated with the ideology of Hindutva, which is openly opposed to religious conversions. Consequently, 'anti-conversion laws' have been usually representative of the political agenda of the BJP; however, the most recent of

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<sup>4</sup> Writ petition no. 180 of 2004, filed by the Centre for Public Interest Litigation.

<sup>5</sup> Reservation quotas are currently set as follows: 15% for Scheduled Castes of Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh religions; 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes; 27% for Other Backward Classes, excluding the 'creamy layer'. The latter was recommended by the Mandal Commission in 1980 and became highly controversial; it was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1993. The current reservation quotas total 49.5%.

these laws was passed by the then Congress Party administration in Himachal Pradesh, which subsequently lost power to the BJP in the 2007 elections for the state assembly.

The laws contribute towards creating an asymmetrical anti-conversion culture, in which religious conversions from Hinduism to Christianity in particular are reviled and attract violent opposition, whereas conversions to Hinduism are described by the dominant terminology of *ghar-vapsi* (translated as 'homecoming' or 're-conversion'). That the laws contribute to a climate in which religious conversions from Hinduism are perceived as illegitimate was corroborated by testimony which CSW heard from Christians in Himachal Pradesh state in October 2007. It was affirmed that the passage of an 'anti-conversion law' in that state had emboldened groups espousing a Hindutva ideology to target Christian activities through threats and physical violence. The incidence rate of violence against Christians has begun to rise in Himachal Pradesh following the introduction of its 'anti-conversion law'.<sup>6</sup>

CSW also heard testimony from Christians in Gujarat in October 2007, to the effect that although the law in that state has not been implemented, its existence on the statute books is a source of intimidation for Christians and would-be converts unaware of the nuances of the procedure by which the legislation is introduced. There is little public awareness that the law is not enforceable, and it therefore contributes towards creating an anti-conversion culture.

#### *4.2.1. Status of laws*

The status of the respective laws, as of 20 March 2008, is as follows:

- In force: Orissa, Madhya Pradesh (2006 amendment not ratified), Chhattisgarh (2006 amendment not ratified), Himachal Pradesh;
- Introduced but not formally implemented: Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat (2006 amendment withdrawn);
- Introduced but pending ratification by governor: Rajasthan;<sup>7</sup>
- Repealed: Tamil Nadu.

#### *4.2.2. Summary of concerns*

With the exception of the Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh 'anti-conversion laws', which are identical, each of the seven laws and their amendments contain slightly different nuances. However, each law ostensibly aims to prohibit conversions by 'force', 'fraudulent means' and 'allurement' or 'inducement', although these categories are ill-defined. Each law also imposes legal formalities on religious priests conducting 'ceremonies' for conversion and would-be converts.

The following concerns are applicable to each of the laws:

- I. The necessity for the laws is highly questionable. There is no evidence among any religious minority of forced or fraudulent conversions; this is indicated by the lack of any prosecutions under 'anti-conversion laws'. The pursuit of conversions by any

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<sup>6</sup> A number of such attacks are documented under section 6 below. However, it is likely that additional attacks may have also taken place,

<sup>7</sup> A new 'anti-conversion' bill was drafted in March 2008, to be introduced in the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly (Bill No. 18 of 2008).

such illegitimate means could be addressed under the existing provisions of Indian law, including sections 295A<sup>8</sup> and 298<sup>9</sup> of the Indian Penal Code. Furthermore, there is no statistical or census evidence to suggest that large-scale conversions to minority religions have taken place in India.

2. Contrary to the justification sometimes given for 'anti-conversion laws',<sup>10</sup> there is no evidence that they alleviate inter-religious tensions. Indeed, with specific reference to the Christian community, there exists some degree of correlation between those states with 'anti-conversion legislation' and those with the highest rates of religiously-motivated violence against Christians. In these states, anti-Christian attacks often happen with the complicity or sympathy of police. It is also worth noting that the laws contribute towards stigmatising religious conversions and, by extension, a wide range of religious activities. In Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh states, for example, many attacks against Christians are committed in connection with accusations against alleged 'attempts to convert' by the victims, as though this were an impermissible activity. Such justifications often appear to guarantee the impunity of the assailants.
3. The laws impose severe restrictions on the constitutionally or internationally protected rights to freely adopt, change, profess, practice, teach and propagate religion. Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which is binding upon India, protects an individual's 'freedom to have or adopt a religion of his choice', while Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides for an individual's 'freedom to change his religion or belief'. Article 25 of the Indian constitution protects 'the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion'. Each of the 'anti-conversion laws' imposes burdensome administrative restrictions, particularly on the rights to change and to propagate religion. Of particular concern are the requirements upon religious priests to either seek prior permission (as in Gujarat) or to send an intimation to the district magistrates, when performing ceremonies for religious conversions, and the imposition of similar legal formalities upon the potential convert. As a result of this, combined with social pressures, the political influence of Hindu extremist groups, the hostility of Hindu nationalist authorities to conversions and the realities of the hierarchical caste system, potential converts may face practically insurmountable obstacles to religious conversions. This has been corroborated by testimony which CSW has heard in several states. The laws therefore risk abusing religious rights which are protected by the national constitution and by international law.
4. The conditions under which conversions are construed as illegitimate are defined sufficiently vaguely as to allow a wide range of religious activities, including charity or education, to be portrayed as attempts to convert. This leaves such activities in a position of legal vulnerability and susceptibility to social pressure or, as in many cases, violent assault.
5. Conversions to Hinduism are widely described under the terminology of 're-conversion' (*ghar vapsi*; also translated 'homecoming'), including by Hindu

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<sup>8</sup> Section 295A of the IPC criminalises 'Deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs'.

<sup>9</sup> Section 298 of the IPC criminalises 'Uttering words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of another person'.

<sup>10</sup> The 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' in the Rajasthan Freedom of Religion Bill 2006 states that: 'In order to curb such illegal activities [as unlawful conversions] and maintain harmony amongst persons of various religions, it has been considered expedient to enact a special law for the purpose.'

fundamentalist groups to describe their own proselytism. However, it is not included in the purview of any 'anti-conversion law', with the implication that 're-conversions' carry a certain legitimacy lacked by other religious conversions. The violence perpetrated against Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa occurred in the context of a long process of vilifying religious conversions and scapegoating the Christian community while co-opting tribals into Hinduism. CSW has also heard testimony in Himachal Pradesh about extremist Hindu nationalist groups pressurising illiterate Christians to sign papers to 're-convert' to Hinduism, either through coercion or financial incentive.

6. The various religious parties and the nature of conversion between them is defined inconsistently and asymmetrically, leaving some religious groups vulnerable to the unequal administration of justice. The Himachal Pradesh law exempts from its remit any person who 'reverts back to his original religion', in what appears to be a thinly-veiled reference to 're-conversions' to Hinduism. The Arunachal Pradesh law specifically targets conversions away from 'indigenous' religions, defined as Buddhism, a form of Hinduism and animism. The 2006 Rajasthan law defines a conversion as renouncing the 'religion of one's forefathers' and 'adopting another'. The now-withdrawn 2006 amendment to the Gujarat law defined the Buddhist and Jain religions as 'denominations' of Hinduism, thereby exempting them from the conditions imposed by the law but failing to recognise their distinct religious identities; it attracted widespread criticism from Jain groups before it was rejected as unconstitutional by the state governor. Past legal judgements in India have also given an 'open' and flexible definition to Hinduism, leaving it in a dominant position.
7. The penal provisions are disproportionately harsh in the more recent laws, exceeding even those given for causing death by negligence. In the Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh laws, the penal provisions are increased substantially for those convicted for converting Dalits (Scheduled Castes) and tribals (Scheduled Tribes); this is often adduced as evidence that the prevention of these socially excluded groups from adopting a new religion is a chief aim of this legislation.

## 5. Religiously-Motivated Violence

### 5.1. Patterns in anti-Christian violence in 2007

The final days of 2007 saw what was described by the All India Christian Council (aicc) as 'the largest attack on the Christian community in the history of democratic India', perpetrated on a massive scale in an organised manner in the Kandhamal district of Orissa. Although the property of some 'low'-caste Hindus was affected in the broader material destruction, the National Commission for Minorities recognised that the violence was primarily targeted at Christians. A fuller account of the Orissa violence is given in section 5.2 below.

Excluding the Orissa violence, during 2007, an average of approximately three to four religiously-motivated attacks per week was recorded against the small Christian minority community. This affected members of numerous denominations, including Catholic, Protestant and the Syrian Mar Thoma church. This is not given as an exhaustive total of the number of the anti-Christian attacks, as several factors suggest the real figure may be considerably higher.<sup>11</sup> These attacks were usually either perpetrated or incited by Sangh Parivar groups, chief among which is the RSS, and its subsidiary organisations, including the VHP and Bajrang Dal. In a few cases, BJP politicians were responsible for committing or encouraging attacks.

The state of Karnataka had a particularly high rate of reported anti-Christian violence, with Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh also registering a large number of attacks.<sup>12</sup> The nature and severity of the attacks varied, but included murders, mob beatings, arson attacks and vandalism of houses, church buildings and schools. Both individuals and large Christian gatherings were targeted. The vulnerability of the attacked Christians is demonstrated by the numerous attacks that took place within homes, and the fact that women were among the victims of violence.

Many incidents suggested that religious discrimination is deeply entrenched within the police system, with attacks being committed with tacit or active police complicity. Ineffectual police responses were common, but at their worst in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. CSW also heard testimony in 2007 of anti-Christian prejudice among police officers in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh states. Police inaction in response to incidents of anti-Christian violence was pervasive: the majority of attacks were committed with impunity, or with only a superficial censure being given to the perpetrators of violence. Perpetrators were commonly released on police bail and faced no effective punitive action. Police frequently refused to register the complaints of Christians or arrested the Christian victims instead of their attackers; these phenomena were particularly common in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. In an incident in Bangalore, Karnataka, on 9 July, two Christian men were paraded naked by Hindu extremists and forcibly taken to the police station, where they were arrested for 'promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion' (IPC 153). Following the attempted murder of a Christian and the vandalism of a house church in Mandwa village, Chhattisgarh, on 19 November, police detained the Christian plaintiffs for 24 hours and failed to register their complaint.

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<sup>11</sup> The main factors which suggest this include the reticence of church leaders in remote areas to report attacks to police or NGOs (either for fear of attracting reprisals or lack of awareness about the options available to them to do so) and deficiencies in the reporting mechanisms in some states.

<sup>12</sup> This is not a definitive indicator that the rate of violence was highest in these states, due to the bias inherent in existing reporting mechanisms.

In some cases, police were directly implicated in violence against Christians: for example, in Tadas village, Karnataka, on 15 July, a police sub-inspector disrupted a house church meeting and beat two Christians with his baton, shouted obscenities at them and took them to the police station for questioning. In Savalgi village, Karnataka, on 23 November, five Christians were beaten by police officers opposed to their Christian charitable work. In a particularly egregious incident of police violence in Kerala on 14 May, officers reportedly nailed the penis of a Dalit Christian man with a steel pin.

The existence of an anti-conversion culture, is an important theme for interpreting the religiously-motivated violence committed against Christians. The vilification of religious conversions was highlighted by the NCM report on the December 2007 violence against Christians in Kandhamal district, Orissa, as a key factor in provoking anti-Christian sentiments. Throughout the year and across numerous states, many more attacks were justified by unsubstantiated allegations that Christians were undertaking the 'forcible conversion' of others. This was common in those states with 'anti-conversion laws'; nobody was convicted under an 'anti-conversion law' in any of these states, but the accusation alone provided an excuse for Hindu extremists taking the law into their own hands. It is noteworthy that a new trend of anti-Christian violence began in Himachal Pradesh state in 2007, in which such a law was passed at the end of the previous year. Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are the other three states with active 'anti-conversion laws'; each saw a high rate of anti-Christian attacks, many accompanied by accusations of 'forcible conversions' being made by the attackers.

However, there was no exact correlation between the existence of 'anti-conversion legislation' and the common recourse to accusations of 'forcible conversions', as evidenced especially by the highly concerning pattern of violence in Karnataka, where no such law exists, and in numerous cases in other states. In several incidents in Karnataka, Hindu extremists perpetrated violent attacks against Christians, accusing them before police of illegitimately converting people, to which police responded by arresting the Christians instead of their assailants. Similarly, CSW heard testimony of Christians being arrested for forcible conversions in Himachal Pradesh before the 'anti-conversion law' in that state had been passed.

Many attacks were propelled by disinformation campaigns or fabricated charges, often related to the anti-conversion culture. However, alongside many unsubstantiated allegations of 'forced conversions' or bribery to convert, other fabrications included accusations of rape and prostitution.

The consistent pattern of vilifying religious conversions highlighted the need for Christians to adopt a sensitive approach to their activities, particularly evangelism, in areas with a communally-charged climate. However, the consistent violent reprisals against social welfare programmes, including schools and charitable initiatives directed particularly at the socially excluded Dalit communities, gives considerable cause for concern.

## ***5.2. Communal violence in Kandhamal district, Orissa***

The outbreak of communal violence centred on the Kandhamal district of Orissa was the most significant development in 2007 relating to anti-Christian violence. Although a number of properties belonging to 'lower'-caste Hindus were destroyed in two locations within the broader material devastation, the government's National Commission for Minorities reported that 'there is no doubt that the Christian community and its places of worship

were the principal target of attack'.<sup>13</sup> As an outbreak of systematic violence lasting over a week, and given the extent of damage that was caused, this was on a different scale from the other attacks perpetrated on Christian targets, which mostly occurred in relative isolation. Instead of being included in the catalogue of atrocities (section 6), the attacks in Orissa therefore require a separate treatment in this report.<sup>14</sup>

The violence took place week following 24 December 2007, and was targeted primarily at Christians in Dalit and tribal communities. No final audit of the human and material damage had yet been carried out at the time of publication. In its initial fact-finding visit report, the aicc estimated that approximately 95 churches and Christian institutions and 730 properties were destroyed or otherwise damaged, resulting in homelessness for thousands. A number of deaths were also reported, but a final number had not been established. Among these was Bhogra Naik, a Christian from Barkhama village, whose death was witnessed by the pastor Adam Naik; according to this report, Bhogra Naik was murdered by VHP members and his body was cut into several pieces.

The roots of the violence lay predominantly in a lengthy process of incitement of anti-Christian feeling by Hindutva organisations, particularly the VHP and its local figurehead, Swami Lakhmananda Saraswati.<sup>15</sup> This process was highlighted by the NCM report, which is significant for having named and criticised the VHP for its role in the violence. The process of incitement involved the 'Hinduisation' of tribals and the exacerbation of tribal tensions, the vilification of religious conversions in a region in which a relatively large number had adopted Christian faith over a lengthy period of time, and the consequent fuelling of communal tensions.

Once catalysed in Brahminigaon village, the violence quickly spread to target Christians irrespective of tribal or caste status, including the Oriya, Kui and Pana communities. This led NGOs, media commentators and the NCM to conclude that this was a pre-meditated and organised set of attacks, deliberately targeted at the Christian community. In light of the long process of Hinduisation in the area, fears arose about the potential for further religiously-motivated violence in the area during 2008 and beyond.

During and immediately after the outbreaks of violence, which affected large parts of Kandhamal district and other locations in Orissa state, many police officers were negligent or, in the worst cases, complicit in the attacks on Christian targets. The state government has also been heavily criticised for failing to give adequate recognition to the religious dimension of the violence, for its unsatisfactory relief and compensation provisions, and for failing to permit NGOs to undertake relief work, albeit with the alleged exception of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and VHP, who have been accused of supplying aid to Hindus only.

The Christian community and secular NGOs led widespread protests against the outbreak of violence. In the following days, a number of NGO fact-finding teams visited the area, including one led by All India Catholic Union president, Dr John Dayal, a delegation representing the aicc and another from the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR). The government's National Commission for Minorities (NCM) visited the area from 6-8 January 2008 and subsequently released a report. Representatives of the Christian

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<sup>13</sup> 'Report of the National Commission for Minorities visit to Orissa, 6-8 January 2008' (<http://ncm.nic.in/pdf/orissa%20report.pdf>), p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> A fuller account of this violence in Orissa is given in the CSW briefing, 'Preliminary Report: Communal Violence in Kandhamal District, Orissa (January 2008)' (<http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=report&id=72>).

<sup>15</sup> Renditions of this name vary.

community held meetings with the highest levels of Indian government and with the Orissa chief minister, and large-scale protest rallies were held at numerous locations, including Delhi on 27 December 2007 and Bhubaneswar on 10 January 2008.

Since the outbreak of violence, there have emerged reports that Hindu extremists have continued to pressurise Christians to convert to Hinduism. This highlights the need for continued monitoring of the situation.

## 6. Catalogue of Atrocities

This report is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of incidents, as it is likely that further attacks took place and have not been reported, owing to numerous factors, including communication difficulties, deficiencies in the reporting mechanisms in some states and the occasional reticence of church leaders in notifying police or NGOs. However, it provides an overview of the nature and extent of religiously-motivated violence against people and property, targeted at the Christian community across India.

Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of each report. The additional sources used in this report are: CSW partners, the All India Christian Council (aicc); Assist News Service; Compass Direct News; the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI); SVM News; and The Hindu newspaper.

### 6.1. Andhra Pradesh

#### *6.1.1. Sadasiva Nagar, Nizamabad district, 6 January: pastor attacked by Hindu extremists*

A mob of Hindu extremists attacked Pastor Malaiya Gabriel with sticks outside his home. The extremists arrived at the house in the evening; however, Pastor Gabriel was not present, so they threatened his wife and demanded that the couple leave the village. She asked them to return when he was present. He returned at around 11pm and, seeing the mob waiting for him, ran for his house. The attackers reached the pastor before he was able to unlock the door, beating him with sticks and accusing him of 'forcible conversions'. Pastor Gabriel sustained injuries to his head and chest and was hospitalised in Kama Reddy for treatment.

It is not known whether he registered a complaint against his attackers.

#### *6.1.2. Naveepet, Nizamabad, 14 January: Christians attacked by Hindu extremists opposed to prayer meeting*

A group of Christians were attacked by Hindu extremists while preparing for a prayer meeting. The Christians were unloading electrical equipment from their vehicle, when an unidentified person asked what they were doing. Upon hearing that they were preparing for a prayer meeting, the person told them not to conduct Christian meetings there. Fearing further opposition, the group started to pack up their equipment. However, a mob of Hindu extremists arrived and attacked them, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'.

One of the Christians was able to get away and alert their pastor, who reported the incident to the police. No action is known to have been taken by the police.

#### *6.1.3. Tadipatri village, East Godavari district, 15 February: suspected arson attack on church by RSS*

A mob of suspected RSS extremists burned down a church in Tadipatri village. Pastor Mathai heard the noise of the attack and tried to extinguish the flames, but the building was destroyed.

The pastor lodged a complaint against the RSS district leadership, but no action is known to have been taken.

*6.1.4. Tadipatri village, East Godavari district, 12 March: suspected arson attack on second church by RSS*

At 2.30am, another church in Tadipatri village was burnt down, allegedly by the same group. They had threatened Pastor Premanadam earlier in the evening. The thatched roof was destroyed in the attack, and the walls were charred.

Christian leaders approached the district collector to seek justice. The collector visited the area and warned the RSS extremists against further intimidation. He assured Pastor Mathai and Pastor Premanadam there would not be any further trouble.

*6.1.5. Ambojipeta village, Medak district, 11 March: pastor attacked by RSS, with alleged police complicity*

Pastor Bakhthula Anand was reading the Bible at home, when two police officers arrived and told him that the Ramayampet circle inspector wanted to meet him at the Jhajipatri Police Station. As they were walking, a mob of around 25 RSS extremists joined them. The extremists surrounded Pastor Anand and forced him to enter a forest area around four miles from the village, at which point the police officers disappeared. Pastor Anand's hands were bound behind his back and his feet were tied. The extremists beat him with wooden clubs and sticks and accused him of using money to allure people to convert people to Christianity. This continued for several hours. He was untied at 3am and left injured in the forest. He managed to return to his home the following morning, and sought medical treatment.

The Ramayampet circle inspector, Yadagiri Raju, and the police sub-inspector, Anil Kumar, denied calling Pastor Anand to the police station, or any knowledge of the assault. It is unknown whether any action was taken against the perpetrators.

*6.1.6. Thumnalapalli, Srirangapuram area, Nalgonda district, 21 March: Christian severely assaulted by men espousing anti-Christian hatred*

An unidentified group brutally beat Samuel Bandaru, a Christian worker, on his way home from a Lenten prayer meeting. The attackers covered his face with a mask and beat him for three hours, while taunting him that Jesus was a 'foreign God' and accusing him of being a terrorist. They dragged him to a school yard where they tried to strangle him, brutally beat him and threatened him with a knife to his throat. They also vandalised his bicycle.

The Mothey Police Station registered a complaint against the group; however, no one was arrested.

*6.1.7. Metpally, Karimnagar district 4 April: seven Christians attacked; arrested for 'forcible conversions'*

Seven Christians were attacked by a mob of 300 VHP extremists as they were distributing Gideon Bibles. Although no serious injuries were inflicted, the assailants burned around 200 Bibles and damaged three microphones.

The Christians were then arrested by state police on a complaint previously filed by their attackers, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. All seven were released the following day. It is not known whether the police took any action against the attackers.

*6.1.8. Anantapuram, Anantapur district, 8 April: pastor assaulted for 'forcible conversions'*

A pastor was mobbed at his home by BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal extremists over allegations of the 'forcible conversion' of local students. The extremists entered Pastor Evangeline's house by force, and found his wife talking to twenty students about Christianity. They began verbally abusing the couple, refused to allow the students to leave and then assaulted the pastor. They then ransacked the house. The pastor and his wife assured the extremists they were merely conducting their Sunday worship service, and not converting anybody.

The extremists later went to the police station and tried to lodge a complaint against the pastor for 'forcible conversions', but police refused and asked them to file a nuisance complaint against the pastor instead. No complaint was registered against the attackers.

*6.1.9. Sarkaruthoppu village, Chittoor district, 11 April: Christian girls attacked by Hindu extremists, accused of 'forcible conversions'*

RSS, BJP and ABVP extremists attacked a team of Christian girls as they were returning to their accommodation from an outreach mission, and accused them of attempting 'forcible conversions'. Joined by a larger crowd, including some Muslim women, they burnt the Christian literature and threatened them with serious consequences if they continued with their activities.

The case was filed at Kurabalakota Police Station against the individuals involved but no further action is known to have been taken.

*6.1.10. Kabeernagar area, Hyderabad, 15 April: Christians (including three-year-old girl) attacked by Hindu extremists*

A group of Hindu extremists launched an attack on a group of Christians, including women and children attending a Sunday morning worship service at the Bethel Church. Covering Pastor Ravi Paul's face with a paper, they beat him with their fists and wooden clubs, causing injuries and damaging one eye. The assailants also injured a three-year-old girl and another man, before threatening to kill Pastor Paul. The attackers fled as local villagers came to their assistance.

The victims filed a complaint in the Sanathnagar Police Station. The police began investigating the case; the outcome is not known.

*6.1.11. Narayankede area, Medak district, 21 June: pastor attacked by Hindu extremists; forcibly taken to Hindu temple and tonsured*

Pastor John Peter, of Bible Centred Ministries, was attacked by Hindu extremists after he was warned earlier in the day against preaching the gospel. The pastor was dragged by his assailants to a Hindu temple, but refused to bow before an idol. His attackers tore his clothes, shaved his head and beat him until he fell unconscious. The pastor was then left in a forest area. When he regained consciousness, Peter was able to walk sixteen miles to Papannapet village, from where he was able to travel home.

Pastor Peter declined to file a case against his assailants.

*6.1.12. Kanipackam, 5 July: pastor attacked at home by Hindu extremists accompanied by police*

A group of Hindu extremists, allegedly members of the VHP, forcibly entered the house of Pastor Swaminathan Devakumar, where they kicked and punched him in front of his family. Accompanied by police, the extremists also damaged furniture and destroyed Bibles.

Police then charged the pastor with 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A) and violating a recent ban on non-Hindus visiting twelve temple towns. The pastor was later treated for internal injuries. The aicc demanded an inquiry into police behaviour, but no further action is known to have been taken.

*6.1.13. Hyderabad, 16 July: church leaders attacked by Hindu extremists; one arrested for 'forcible conversions'*

A pastor named Isaac and his associate, Yedbez, were attacked by five men as they were returning home from praying with a Christian at his house. The attackers, allegedly members of the RSS, beat the pastors, causing minor injuries. Pastor Isaac was able to escape, but Yedbez was dragged by his assailants to the police station where they lodged a complaint against him for alleged 'forcible conversions'.

Police arrested Yedbez, but later released him on bail.

*6.1.14. Tadoor, Mahabubnagar district, 8 August: female Christians threatened by Hindu extremists; targeted by media disinformation*

A team of female Christian workers, accompanied by Pastor Joseph of the Mennonite Brethren Assembly, were threatened on their return from a period of practical training in Nagarkurnool village, where they had conducted social activities and literacy classes. The group stopped at a tea shop in Tadoor where schoolchildren gathered around them. The team distributed Christian literature to the children, but a group of young Hindu extremists threatened them.

Local media also came to the scene and took photos of the Christians. These photos were later printed with false statements about the pastor and women, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'.

It is not known whether the police became involved.

*6.1.15. Nizambad, 22 August: Christian attacked after accidentally breaking Hindu image*

RSS extremists were suspected of having initiated an attack on a Christian shopkeeper named Justin by his neighbour, after he had accidentally tripped and broke an image of a Hindu god outside his business. Local shopkeepers intervened, preventing further violence.

The shopkeeper's neighbour filed a police complaint, on the basis that he had deliberately broken the image to insult the Hindu god Ganesh. Police arrested the shopkeeper, who was reportedly released on bail on 25 August.

*6.1.16. Anand Nagar, Amberpet, Hyderabad, 9 September: pastor attacked by large group of Hindu extremists*

RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal extremists disrupted the Sunday worship of Bethel Gospel Church at Anand Nagar. Around 300 believers were assembled for worship when a mob of around 30 extremists entered the church, shouting Hindu chants. They approached Pastor Kanukolanu Sudhakar and physically assaulted him, then began verbally abusing the Christians with religiously offensive language. One of them took the microphone from Pastor Sudhakar's hand and struck him on the head, causing him to bleed. They also destroyed furniture and damaged musical instruments and the sound system.

Pastor Sudhakar filed a complaint at the Amberpet Police Station. On 10 September, police arrested eleven of the extremists and released them on bail the same day. Both parties agreed not to pursue the issue any further.

*6.1.17. Krishnaraopet, Adilabad district, 21 October: Christians harassed after refusing to eat meat offered to a Hindu goddess*

Local Hindu residents of Krishnaraopet attempted to force Christians to eat meat offered to a Hindu goddess. They were distributing the meat offered to goddess Durga to the local people, but when Pastor Bikku Lal and some of his church members refused to take it, some began to physically assault the Christians.

Police at Mamidala Police Station refused to file the Christians' complaint. When they returned to the area they were further harassed. Villagers tore the clothes of some of them and mocked their Christian faith.

Police did eventually file a complaint, but no arrests are known to have been made.

*6.1.18. Bhiwani, 14 November: two Christians attacked; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

RSS extremists beat up two Christians, named as Jai Vir and Matthew, from the Believers Church of India. A local shop owner called Rajkumar, who claimed to be an RSS leader, noticed they were distributing Christian literature near the Baptist church and called fellow RSS members in order to attack the Christians. Media representatives were called and portrayed the incident as involving in 'forcible conversions'. The assailants beat the Christians continuously for two hours, burnt their literature, attempted to throw the victims into a fire and invaded the church compound. A member of the local church had heard their plans and informed local police. Officers took the two Christians to the police station and

later the Hindu extremists lodged a false complaint of 'fraudulent' and 'forcible' conversions against them. Rajkumar Jindal, who brought the file against the Christians, started beating them at the police station.

A rally was held in front of the church the following day and a counter-FIR was filed by the two victims against eight men, including, Rajkumar, Mukesh Gaur, Rajkumar Jindal, Rishi Parmar and Ram Avatar Sharma. RSS extremists gathered for a protest rally outside the church on 16 November to demand that Christian activities stop and that the church be closed, at which they repeated, "security to Hindu religion is the security to the nation".

Five of the eight accused surrendered at the police station toward the end of the rally but were bailed out after a short time. Three of the accused, including Rajkumar Jindal, were not arrested until aicc reported on the incident.

## **6.2. Assam**

### *6.2.1. Bashbari village, Kokrajhar district, 6 February: convert beaten for refusing to 're-convert' to Hinduism*

Hindu villagers beat a Christian convert and vandalised his home because he refused to 're-convert' to Hinduism. Rahbindra Narzaree converted to Christianity after marrying a Christian woman two years before. Since then, the couple faced ongoing pressure and ostracism by Hindu villagers. At a village council meeting, Narzaree was called upon to convert back to Hinduism. The couple were attacked with sticks when he refused. They took refuge from their attackers in the local police sub-station and then moved to Narzaree's brother's house.

No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

### *6.2.2. Chand Mari, Guwahati, 29 June: Christian former RSS member beaten to death following warnings about conversions*

Hemanta Das was beaten by unidentified assailants thought to be Hindu extremists. Das was previously a supporter of the RSS, but converted to Christianity a few years ago. His work with RESCUE, a local Christian organisation, resulted in a series of threats, warning of dire consequences if he tried to convert others.

Das succumbed to his injuries and died in hospital on 1 July. A murder case was filed with the police, but the attackers are not known to have been identified.

## **6.3. Bihar**

### *6.3.1. Patna, 28 January: Christian meeting attacked by RSS mob*

A mob of approximately 50 RSS extremists forced entry into a prayer hall and attacked the pastor and a number of Christians. The mob was shouting Hindu slogans and devotional chants as they began assaulting the Christians from the Manav Mukti Mission. The extremists caused injuries to ten Christians and also burnt Bibles, songbooks, and other property from the prayer hall.

Pastor Bharat Kumar from the mission filed a complaint with the police. Twenty five people were named in the complaint, nine of whom are known Bajrang Dal extremists, including some leaders. No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.3.2. Chhapra area, Saran district, 11 October: five Christians beaten by Hindu extremists during attack on Christian function*

Twenty Bajrang Dal extremists stormed a Christian gathering in the area of Chhapra. They vandalised the hall, its furniture, a sound system and VCD players, and beat five Christians, including Pastor Raghu Pathi. The extremists had warned Pastor Pathi two days earlier against carrying out the function between 3-11 October. The organisers continued to hold the meeting after the attack under police protection. A local Bajrang Dal leader, Asho Tiger, issued a statement threatening Christians with further attacks if they conducted such meetings again.

The Chhapra Police Station registered a complaint against the attackers, but no further action is known to have been taken.

#### **6.4. Chhattisgarh**

*6.4.1. Pandri, Raipur, 2 February: pastors' conference attacked by Hindu extremists*

Approximately 25 Dharam Sena extremists attacked a pastors' conference, injuring at least ten of the participants. The extremists forced their way into the Singh Palace banquet hall, run by a Christian called Jay Prakash. They shouted "Jai Shri Ram" (translated as, 'Hail Lord Ram'), beat the Christians with sticks and verbally insulted them, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. They also damaged property and stole a laptop, two mobile phones, digital cameras and cash from participants. Two non-Indian participants, identified only as Jack and Coli, were dragged at least one kilometre from the banquet hall and beaten by the extremists.

Jay Prakash registered a complaint with the police, and participants were able to identify certain members of the mob, although not all those identified were included on the complaint. This included the district president of Dharam Sena, Kishore Kothari. Prakash suspected he was a target for Dharam Sena because he helped Pastor Jagdalla to be granted bail after his arrest in December 2006.

*6.4.2. Devasari village, Sarguja district, 8 February: Christian attacked; arrested for 'forcible conversions'*

A small group of extremists, allegedly from the RSS, attacked an evangelist from the Friends Missionary Prayer Band and took him to the police station, where he was arrested for 'forcible conversions'. Anil Khakkar was attending a house church meeting when the mob of extremists arrived. They beat him, before taking him to the nearby police station and filing a complaint against him for 'forcible conversions' of Hindus.

No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

#### *6.4.3. Raipur, 19 February: pastor's wife beaten by Hindu extremist; police refused to act*

Kanti Sharma, the wife of a pastor, was beaten by an extremist, Jogi Sahu, allegedly associated with the Dharam Sena. Sahu, who was part of a mob that had attacked Pastor Sharma in December 2005, arrived at the house with his two brothers while the pastor was temporarily away. The attackers dragged Kanti by the hair and beat her in front of local residents, leaving her with swollen eyes and a bleeding nose.

Pastor Sharma returned to the house and stopped the attack. He took Kanti to the police station to register a complaint; however, police officers refused. The couple had to wait at the police station for two hours for the police inspector to arrive, before going to the hospital for treatment.

The police denied that the attack was religiously motivated, linking it to an incident earlier that day, in which Kanti intervened to stop Sahu harassing a girl at the community water spout. However, local Christians argued that that incident was merely a pretext for an attack on the pastor and his family.

#### *6.4.4. Bhidibhoda village, Raigarh district, 20 February: prayer meeting attacked by alleged BJP members*

A group of Hindu extremists, linked to the BJP, disrupted a prayer meeting, and attacked and threatened the attending Christians, including three pastors, Elisha Baker, Balbir Kher and Nan Sai. The local BJP chief, Panat Ram, complained to the police that 'forcible conversions' were taking place at the three-day prayer meeting. The police investigated, and found the complaints to be unfounded. Ram and other BJP extremists then went to the meeting, where they assaulted the Christians and threatened to kill them if they continued with their activities.

The pastors filed an FIR against the attackers. It is unknown whether any action was taken.

#### *6.4.5. Surgi village, Rajnandgaon district, 25 February: pastor accused of 'forcible conversions' and threatened with death; sister kidnapped*

A mob of around 80 extremists, allegedly with ties to Bajrang Dal and the VHP, surrounded Pastor T.N. Jose's home and forced him to sign a statement, saying he had come to the village to convert people to Christianity and that he was leaving the village of his own free will. They threatened to cut him into pieces if he did not leave the next day. Pastor Jose went to stay with a relative in a neighbouring town. The extremists then kidnapped his sister and locked her in a room, stating they would not release her until they found out where Pastor Jose was staying, but they released her that evening.

Local Christians informed police and asked for protection for the pastor and his family. The police response is unknown.

*6.4.6. Sarguja district, 3 May: Christians assaulted by Hindu extremists; police failed to act until sit-in*

A group of Hindu extremists attacked twenty Christians who had gathered at the home of Dr Vijay Pradhan, beating them with clubs before fleeing the scene. One Christian suffered a broken leg, and several others sustained injuries.

The Christians went to the police station later that night to lodge an official complaint, but police refused to register it until threatened with a sit-in by the general secretary of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum. It is not known whether any arrests were made.

*6.4.7. Bhilai Nagar, Durg district, 1 July: pastor and congregants attacked by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'; police refused to act*

Approximately 50 Dharam Sena extremists forcibly entered the Sunday worship service of the Living Grace Ministries Church. They accused Pastor Mannepalli Ramanaiah Israel of offering money to Hindus, to enable 'forcible conversions'. They then beat the pastor and two church members, Ravi Kumar and Radhika, with iron rods and sticks. The three were punched and kicked, resulting in internal injuries. Their assailants kicked Bibles and stole musical instruments from the church.

The victims gave the names of their attackers to the police, who refused to register a complaint.

*6.4.8. Raipur, 6 July: pastor beaten by Hindu extremists in televised attack; arrested by police*

Pastor Vikas Masih was beaten by Dharam Sena extremists in Raipur, who put a garland of shoes and slippers around his neck and took him to Telibandha Police Station in Raipur. The incident was filmed by a local news channel, and televised the same day. Masih had been threatened by his attackers the previous day, on his way back from a prayer meeting.

At the police station officers made sure he received first aid but still arrested him for 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A). A magistrate remanded him in judicial custody. Police said they arrested Kishore Kothari, chief of the Dharam Sena, as well as four others, for the attack. However, they were quickly released on bail.

*6.4.9. Raipur, 29 July: Christians assaulted and threatened with death by Hindu extremists during service; pastor arrested*

Approximately twelve Hindu extremists stormed a Sunday worship service at Maranatha Worship Church, shouting anti-Christian slogans and insulting those present. The attackers slapped Pastor Shoba Ram, snatched Bibles and hymn books from the Christians, and vandalised audio equipment and furniture in the church. They also sprinkled the Christians heads with a red substance commonly used by Hindus to mark their foreheads, and threatened to kill them or drive them from the state.

The attackers were led by Ralu Singh, a relative of Pastor Ram, who strongly objected to the conversion of the latter four years previously. Pastor Ram was dragged out of the church, where he was punched before being forcibly taken to the local police station. He was

charged for 'obscene acts and songs' (IPC 294) and trespassing. Ram was kept in custody for an hour before he was released on bail.

*6.4.10. Baba Deep Singh Nagar, Bhilai, Durg district, 5 August: church attacked by Hindu extremists; pastor and elder beaten*

About 50 Hindu extremists disrupted the Sunday worship service of a church in Baba Deep Singh Nagar and attacked the pastor and an elder. The mob, led by Rajesh Thabre and Sudeep Banerjee, allegedly from the Bajrang Dal, used sticks to beat Pastor Babula Chandra Paik and church elder Adi Narayan. They shouted anti-Christian insults, accused the pastor of 'forcible conversions', tore up Bibles and vandalised the church.

The Supela Police Station registered a complaint against Thabre, Banerjee and others, but no arrests are known to have been made.

*6.4.11. Sanjay Nagar, Kanker district, 23 September: pastor assaulted by RSS extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

An mob comprising an estimated twenty RSS extremists and 25 local residents surrounded the church where Pastor Pradyuman Meshram was preaching, shouting anti-Christian slogans and demanding that the service should stop. They forcibly entered the prayer hall and beat Pastor Meshram. As he fell to the ground, they kicked him and continued to verbally abuse him, accusing him of being involved in 'forcible conversions'. The extremists also damaged congregants' motorcycles, parked outside.

Police detained the attackers and Pastor Meshram filed an FIR. No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.4.12. Raipur, 22 October: church stoned in apparent protest against baptisms*

The Dharam Sena organised a demonstration with clubs in front of the Civil Lines Police Station in response to a convention held at the Church of God in Raipur, where 38 baptisms had taken place. They had made a complaint to the police about the baptisms on the previous day, but after taking testimonies of those baptised the police had found no cases of 'forcible conversions'. Unidentified persons stoned the church at about 11.30pm.

An FIR was registered by the pastor of the church for an 'act endangering life or personal safety of others' (IPC 336).

*6.4.13. Timnar village, Narayanpur district, 2 November: Christian service attacked by Hindu extremists; police refused to register case*

Around fifteen Hindu extremists disrupted a prayer service at the India Church Growth Mission in Timnar village. They insulted the Christian faith and beat congregants, robbing them of their wallets and watches. Six women and seven men sustained injuries to their arms, legs and ribs.

Pastor Wesley Nagaranjan went with others to Narayanpur Police Station to file a complaint, but police refused to register it. Two days later, the extremists disrupted a

service and slit the tyres of bicycles parked outside the house. Police still refused to register any complaints.

*6.4.14. Mandwa village, Bastar district, 19-20 November: church attacked; pastor's relative murdered*

A mob allegedly led by Bajrang Dal extremists, demolished a house church and beat the pastor, Suduru Kashyap, and other Christians. The following day, Aayatu Kashyap, a young relative of the pastor, was found dead in a nearby jungle. Christians in the area claimed that he had been kidnapped by the extremists and murdered, when they identified him as a relative of the pastor.

In the original attack, extremists arrived in a jeep and warned Pastor Kashyap against conducting worship services. They vandalised the church, tied up the pastor and his associates and severely beat them. According to local Christians, the extremists tried to kill the pastor by crushing his head with a large stone. They also alleged that the extremists had abducted Aayatu Kashyap after discovering that he was related to the pastor, murdered him and left his body in the jungle nearby. Knife wounds were evident on the body.

When Pastor Kashyap and his associates went to the Kodenar Police Station to lodge a complaint, they were detained for 24 hours without food and water and later released without their complaint being registered. The superintendent of police of Bastar district, G.P. Singh, confirmed the incidents but denied that Hindu extremists were behind the attack and killing. Police were treating the murder as a separate incident.

Four days after the attack, fifteen people were arrested. A case was registered against the accused under the following sections of the IPC: 147, 148, 149, 452, 447, 294, 295(a), 427, 323 and 506. A team of 30 constables was deployed to Mandwa village to provide security. It is not known whether police registered a case for the death of Aayatu Kashyap.

## **6.5. Delhi**

*6.5.1. New Delhi, 14 April: Christian attacked by Sikh in marital controversy*

A Sikh man, and some relatives, beat his daughter and her would-be fiancé in response to her conversion to Christianity in January 2006. Her father had asked one of her church elders not to encourage her attendance at church. Anticipating trouble, she had filed a complaint in the Tilak Nagar Police Station. That evening, her father called her fiancé, brother-in-law and the elder to a restaurant in central Delhi to resolve the matter. Upon meeting, her brother-in-law suggested they go to an open space in order to talk more easily; at the India Gate gardens they beat the Christian elder and forced the Christian woman away in their vehicle. It is believed that she was taken by her parents to Hoshiarpur city in Punjab state.

*6.5.2. Kalyanpuri area, 28 October: speaker and attendees attacked at large Christian meeting*

At least 30 Hindu extremists disrupted a Christian meeting and physically harassed the speaker, the Rev. Ivan Moses, in Kalyanpuri. Around 250 people were gathered listening to

the speaker, when the extremists intruded into the meeting and shouted anti-Christian slogans. They began physically assaulting Moses and other Christians on the stage.

When police arrived, they arrested a few of the attackers. The organisers did not press charges against the extremists.

*6.5.3. Pitampura, New Delhi, 5 December: Catholic church construction attacked by mob fearful of conversions*

At least 150 unidentified people damaged a Catholic church under construction in New Delhi. They physically harassed the foreman, damaged a generator and other machines, scattered building materials and threatened to break the bones of the site foreman and labourers. They told them that they feared that people would convert to Christianity if the church were built and also threatened further attacks if their demands were not met.

The parish priest, Alphonse D'Cruz, filed a police complaint and sought police protection.

## **6.6. Goa**

*6.6.1. Salcette, 18 August: Catholic church and school vandalised by suspected Hindu extremists*

Suspected Hindu extremists vandalised a Catholic church compound in Salcette. The vandals broke two crosses at the Church of Assolna and damaged glass panes of a school on the compound. Water and electricity pipes, lamps and a septic tank were also destroyed.

It is not known whether the church reported the incident to the police.

## **6.7. Gujarat**

*6.7.1. Ambapani village, Navsari district, 28 October: Christian farmer attacked by villagers; pastor threatened*

A Christian farmer, Bharat Bhai, was attacked and warned against attending his church by Hindu villagers. He was attacked while he was returning from his field with his family. Later that day, the attackers went to the church and threatened the pastor, threatening to kill the Christians if they came together for worship.

Police refused to register the victim's complaint. Bhai then wrote to the National Human Rights Commission for intervention. No further action is known to have been taken.

*6.7.2. Baidiya village, near Vadodara, 19 December: Catholic priest and students seriously injured in attacks after social awareness play*

Two Catholic priests, Monty Rodrigues and Damien Sladen, and students from Don Bosco School in Kawant, were staging a social awareness play at Baidiya village when around 25 people reportedly linked to the VHP starting attacking Christians and threatening to kill

them. Thirteen people, including two priests, a nun, staff and students were attacked. The attackers cut off the finger of one priest and seriously injured the hands and back of another.

The attackers also insulted Christianity, beat a small boy in front of the large audience and demanded that the group leave the village, threatening to pour gasoline onto them and set them on fire. The Christians left, but the same group assaulted them again on their way home. Fr Sladen, Ramesh Durairaj (a member of staff at the school) and two male students were seriously injured. They were rushed to Baroda for medical treatment.

52-year-old Fr Rodrigues escaped and alerted the police in Kawant. He later said in a statement about the police complaint that he was asked to sign, that 'it was not according to the real facts that we had told them. They wrote according to their own whims and fancies. Therefore we refused to sign'. Fr Rodrigues signed a more factually accurate complaint after receiving legal aid, and authorities registered a case against 25 extremists. No further action is known to have been taken.

## **6.8. Haryana**

### *6.8.1. Thosam, Biwani district, 4 February: female GFA missionaries attacked by extremists and police*

Four GFA women missionaries were attacked by RSS and Bajrang Dal extremists. Mira, Rashi, Geeta and Savita had been harassed by the RSS in the weeks leading up to the attack, in which, 30 RSS and Bajrang Dal extremists came to their home. The police forced them to vacate the house and leave the area. When the women told them that they were unable to leave immediately, police physically assaulted them. Birendra Singh, the station house officer of Thosam Police Station beat them with sticks and threatened to kill them if they did not leave.

Upon hearing the news, Pastor Vijaya K.P. and Raj Kumar rushed to the police station, but upon arrival were beaten by the extremists, in the presence of the police. Pastor Vijaya suffered a head injury and the other victims suffered back and abdomen injuries. They were taken to the headquarters of Believers Church for medical treatment.

The incident was reported to the superintendent of police, but the deputy superintendent of police claimed that no FIR had been registered against the attacks or Birendra Singh, who denied the attack.

## **6.9. Himachal Pradesh**

### *6.9.1. Kangra district, 21 January: orphanage attacked by Hindu extremists*

A large mob of Hindu extremists, allegedly from Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena and the VHP, surrounded the home of Pastor Timuhias Behal and demanded the closure of his orphanage. The mob shouted anti-Christian slogans and accused the pastor of 'forcible conversions' and forced child labour. They also protested against his church.

Pastor Behal called the police, who dispersed the mob and lodged a complaint against those involved. No further action is known to have been taken.

Some of the extremists filed a complaint against Pastor Behal, accusing him of sexually abusing the orphans and of their 'forcible conversions' to Christianity. As a consequence of the complaints the district collector began an investigation of the orphanage. The district collector found no faults at the home, but Pastor Behal continued to receive threats from the extremists, demanding he close the orphanage and leave the area.

*6.9.2. Mandi district, 25 February: missionary attacked by Hindu extremists; police refused to investigate*

Raju Kumar, a missionary, was beaten by Hindu extremists, and then prevented from registering a complaint against his attackers by police. The extremists forced their way into Kumar's house and took him to the police station to complain about his Christian activities. When they left the police station they attacked him, leaving him seriously injured.

On the following day, Kumar went to the police station in nearby Joginder Nagar to report the attack, but the police refused to register his complaint. Kumar later went to the district police headquarters to submit his complaint; however no action is known to have been taken against the attackers. Instead, Kumar was told he must seek permission from the district magistrate to continue his Christian activities. He submitted a written request, but by April, no action was known to have been taken.

*6.9.3. Shirad valley and Krotal village, Manali district, 8 April: Easter services at two churches disrupted by Hindu extremists; pastor beaten until unconscious; police refused to accept report*

A mob of 60 Bajrang Dal and VHP extremists entered a house church meeting in Shirad valley, being attended by around 25 Christians. They began shouting abuse and fraudulent claims, demanding that the church pastor, Yona Babu, renounce his faith and burn a Bible. When he refused, they beat him until he was unconscious. The extremists then warned the church members to denounce their faith or face similar punishment, before fleeing the scene with the church's books and musical instruments. The VHP mob then went into another house church at Krotal village and stopped a prayer meeting, to threaten members of the consequences of continuing to gather together.

Babu later attempted to report the incident at Kullu Police Station, but was refused. A letter of complaint addressed to the district collector of Manali was submitted, but despite this, no action is known to have been taken to trace the culprits.

*6.9.4. Kullu, 23 May: two missionaries attacked by RSS extremists*

Forty members of the RSS attacked Bernard Christopher and Ravinder Gautam, two TMS missionaries. They threatened them with death should they refuse to leave Kullu city, and beat them. They also tansured the men, and forced them to drink from the Ganges river and to clean a Hindu temple, before writing and signing a false report of their 'activities'; reportedly concerning an argument they had with local Hindu priests over the authenticity of Hindu idols. The pair refused assistance from the GCIC with registering a police complaint and left the city instead.

*6.9.5. Joginder Nagar, Mandi district, 27 May: three Christians assaulted by RSS extremists*

Prem Singh and his son Gyan Singh, were slapped by RSS leader, Munshi Sharma, while returning from a church service. Sharma and others warned them against attending church in the future. When Gyan Singh lost his temper and slapped Sharma back, they badly beat him. The following day, RSS members assaulted the pastor, Anil Kumar.

When Kumar went to file a complaint with the police against the RSS, he was informed that Sharma had already filed one against Gyan Singh. The police were reportedly working with both parties to reach a compromise.

**6.10. Jammu and Kashmir**

*6.10.1. Rikwaza village, Kupwara district, 6 March: pastor beaten unconscious by alleged Islamists*

Pastor Ashir Uddin was beaten with steel rods and wooden sticks by masked men, allegedly Islamist militants. Uddin, who works for Salem Voice Ministries, was returning home from a prayer meeting when the mob began beating him. He was found unconscious by local villagers, who took him to the hospital, where he was treated for a broken leg.

The police registered a case against 'unidentified people', although nobody is known to have been arrested.

*6.10.2. Jammu, 4 November: two Christians beaten by apparent Shiv Sena extremists*

Two Christians were attacked by at least four Hindu extremists in Jammu. The Christians were on their way to meet a pastor in Arnia when the extremists approached them in a vehicle, which had 'Shiv Sena' inscribed on it. They brutally beat the Christians, Rinku and Santosh.

Police refused to register a complaint against the attackers but they helped the Christians and the Shiv Sena extremists reach a compromise, and the Christian victims received a written apology from their attackers.

**6.11. Jharkhand**

*6.11.1. Gara Lodhma parish, 24 May: Catholic priest and sister attacked by alleged Hindu extremists*

Fr George Minj and Sr Teresa Kindo were attacked by five alleged Hindu extremists while returning from a prayer meeting. Their attackers shouted and ordered them to stop at which point they began beating them until another vehicle approached. The attackers showed no interest in stealing their possessions, but were seemingly determined to kill Fr Minj. The driver of this vehicle subsequently took the two to hospital, where they received treatment.

Police recognised the attack as a 'serious issue', and registered a case against the unidentified attackers.

*6.11.2. Near Sahoda village, Ranchi district, 19 September: Christian shot dead, allegedly in religiously-motivated murder*

Ajay Topno, a Christian worker, was found dead with bullet wounds in a jungle area on 19 September. He had disappeared on 16 September on his way to visit Sahoda village, and his wife had alerted the authorities. Local reports indicated that police believed he was shot dead by local criminals under the direction of villagers, who were angry at the conversion of three families to Christianity. It was claimed that Hindu extremist group, Adivasi Sarna Samiti, may have incited the attack by calling upon the villagers to target Christian missionaries instead of converts, and singling out Topno.

The outcome of the police investigation is not known.

**6.12. Karnataka**

*6.12.1. Leggari, Bangalore, 7 January: pastor and two Christians attacked in church by RSS extremists*

Three RSS extremists attacked Pastor Robert Kennedy and two other Christians after a church service. The attackers, who were unknown to the pastor, sat in the congregation during the usual church service and after everyone else had left, they attacked the three men. They were all injured, and the pastor required nine stitches to his head.

The pastor registered a complaint at the local police station. No action is known to have been taken.

*6.12.2. J.P. Nagar, Bangalore, 11 January: Christian couple attacked; forced from home*

Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal attacked Pastor David Paul and his wife Prasanna Kumari, and forced them from their home. Local Christians were too frightened to offer assistance and so the next day the couple rented a room in another area of Bangalore.

*6.12.3. J.P. Nagar, Bangalore, 15 January: Christian couple attacked; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

A mob of Hindu extremists broke into the house of Pastor David Paul and his wife Prasanna Kumari, for a second time. They beat them again, ransacking the house and accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. Pastor Paul denied these allegations and demanded to be taken to the police station. The extremists verbally abused the couple for another hour.

The couple were taken to the police station and questioned for nearly two hours before their release.

*6.12.4. Gokul village, Dharwad district, 19 January: pastors attacked by Hindu extremists; arrested by police*

Two pastors, Raj Shekhar and Raja Naik, were attacked by a mob of Hindu extremists and then arrested by the police. The extremists, carrying saffron flags, surrounded the house where a prayer meeting was being held and shouted insults. They called the police and accused the pastors of forcibly converting people, before entering the house and attacking the pastors and other Christians present.

The police arrived and took the pastors and two Christian women to the police station. Pastor Naik was released immediately but the others were detained for five hours. No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

*6.12.5. Hiriur, Chitradurga district, 17 February: pastors beaten by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

Alleged RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal extremists beat pastors and other Christians, made accusations of 'forcible conversions' and vandalised a prayer hall. The attack took place at a two-day meeting in a prayer hall in Harishchandra Ghat. The attackers assaulted Pastor Amul Raj, two guest speakers, Pastor Alanghamani and Pastor Ravi, another called Sridhar and other Christians. No one was injured in the attack; however, Pastor Raj continued to receive threats on the phone.

Police action is unknown.

*6.12.6. Horamavu Agara village, Bangalore, 7 March: church attacked; pastor detained; police refused to register complaint against attackers*

A mob of around 60 extremists entered the Smurna Holy Church, shouting threats and Hindu slogans. They threw stones around the church, which broke several panes of glass.

They took Pastor Raj to the Hennur Police Station to accuse him of 'forcible conversions'. He was detained on 8 March until the evening, and the police refused to register a complaint against the extremists.

*6.12.7. Horamavu Agara village, Bangalore, 10 March: pastor beaten with wooden clubs in follow-up attack*

Three days after extremists raided the Smurna Holy Church, three men assaulted Pastor Raj with wooden clubs, about a mile from his home. The attackers fled after three women witnessed the incident and cried out.

Initially, the police refused to accept a complaint by Pastor Raj against the attackers; however, a complaint was eventually lodged. No further action is known to have been taken by police.

*6.12.8. Bhelahalli village, Bangalore, 16 March: two Christians attacked by Hindu extremist mob with sticks and axes*

About 40 Hindu extremists attacked a pastor, John Selvan and his brother, Vijay Selvan, in Bhelahilli village, in the late evening, while they were returning from a prayer meeting. Armed with sticks and axes, the attackers stopped their motorcycle, and started to beat them. They released John Selvan, saying they would only release Vijay Selvan once the senior pastor of the church had been brought to them. However, they capitulated and released Vijay Selvan also, warning him against holding church services in the area. The men did not sustain serious injuries.

*6.12.9. Moodbidri, Dakshina Kannada district, 27 March: pastor attacked; accused of 'forcible conversions' and arrested*

A mob of extremists attacked a pastor in his home, before lodging a complaint accusing him of 'forcible conversions'. The extremists entered Pastor Athishay Raj's home while he was conducting a prayer meeting, forced the other Christians to leave and attacked the pastor.

They then lodged a complaint against him, and he was arrested by the police. The police refused to register the pastor's complaint against his attackers.

*6.12.10. Gokak, 21 April: Christian children's event attacked by Bajrang Dal; pastors accused of 'forcible conversions'*

Around 30 Bajrang Dal extremists attacked Christians at Anmol Hotel during a children's festival organised by Pastor Jhamkandi and Pastor Devaiah, falsely accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. The attackers broke up the festival, which was attended by approximately 300 children, damaging hotel furniture and beating the two pastors.

Police brought the situation under control upon their arrival, taking complaints before arresting people on both sides, and taking them to court later that day where they were released on bail.

*6.12.11. Rajanukunte village, Bangalore district, 22 April: house church attacked by Hindu extremists with complicity of police; pastors arrested*

A mob of 50 Hindu extremists, allegedly members of the RSS, surrounded a house church and started shouting abuse at Christians. Upon arrival, the police took two pastors of Holy Assembly Church into custody. On the way to the police station, some of the extremists began to beat and verbally abuse the pastors and the four Christians accompanying them. Police did not intervene. At the police station, officers shouted at the men while the extremists accused the pastors of forcibly converting people and encouraging them to cease performing Hindu rituals and remove Hindu deities from their houses.

This continued until 3am, at which point the pastors were arrested and charged with 'promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion' (IPC 153A) and 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A). They were released on bail on 25 April.

*6.12.12.Kushal Nagar, Kodagu district, 13 May: service attacked by Bajrang Dal members*

Approximately 25 extremists, reportedly members of the Bajrang Dal, interrupted a Village Mission India service run by Pastor J. P. George, and used wooden clubs to injure Christians attempting to access the pulpit. The attackers beat the pastor with the clubs and a microphone stand, telling him to stop converting people to a foreign religion. They also destroyed the church sound system and furniture. The pastor and another church member sustained injuries.

Police were reluctant to register a complaint and complied only when the GCIC contacted the local sub-inspector.

*6.12.13.Pandavapura village, Mandya district, 13 May: pastor attacked by Hindu extremists; arrested by police*

A mob of around 30 Hindu extremists attacked Pastor Honsula Raj during a service. They waited outside the prayer hall, holding wooden clubs and insulting Christians, before walking up the aisle of the church. They forcibly took the microphone from the pastor and slapped him, causing him to fall to the ground, where they kicked him in the head and abdomen. They also attacked the other Christians present, before taking the pastor to the police station to register a complaint of 'forcible conversions' against him. His wife, Geeta, fainted at the sight of her husband being beaten. Raj and his wife were charged with 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A) and 'forcible conversions'. Circle Inspector Sibbalangappa refused to register a counter-complaint against the assailants.

On 4 June, representatives of the Pastors' Fellowship of Bangalore and Mysore met with police to request the withdrawal of the false charges against Geeta Raj, who moved to a safer location following the charges, with their eighteen-month-old son.

Pastor Raj was assaulted again on 16 June at his home by around 25 members of the RSS and was reportedly too afraid to file any charges. Inspector Sibbalangappa later suggested that the second attack may have been instigated by Raj's refusal to disclose the location of his wife.

*6.12.14.Bangarpet, Kolar district, 21 May: pastor and elder attacked by Hindu extremists while distributing gifts to children at Bible school*

A pastor and elder were attacked by members of the RSS and Bajrang Dal whilst distributing gifts on the last day of a children's program at the Vacation Bible School. The Hindu extremists destroyed the gifts and beat the pastor and elder, accusing them of using fraudulent means to convert children.

The pastor and elder were arrested following a complaint filed by the extremists, but were later released as a result of the intervention of other Christian leaders.

*6.12.15.Hesaregetta, 8 June: Christian former RSS member attacked, stripped naked and humiliated by Hindu extremists*

Pastor Laxmi Narayan Gowda was confronted by a mob of approximately 50 Hindu extremists, allegedly of the Bajrang Dal in the evening who threatened him and told him to

leave the city. It is thought that the attack was a reprisal against Gowda's conversion to Christianity from Hinduism fifteen years earlier, before which he was a member of the RSS. The mob returned after a short interval, its number having swelled to around 250 people, although it reportedly continued to grow to approximately 1,000. The mob cornered the pastor and beat him before his wife and children, also damaging equipment and burning dozens of Bibles. The pastor was then doused with kerosene before someone threw a burning Bible at him. The mob stripped the pastor naked before attaching a board to his chest which read 'I am the one who was converting people'. He was then paraded through the suburbs of Bangalore for over an hour, until a relative was able to alert the police who intervened.

Pastor Gowda was admitted to hospital with some swelling and bruising. Police stated that the victim did not want to file a complaint against his attackers. It was also claimed that most members of the mob were local people who did not belong to any extremist groups. A local source interpreted the attack as being premeditated by an unidentified lawyer, who suggested to those involved that if they attacked as a mob, they would not be prosecuted.

#### *6.12.16. Siddapur, 18 June: Christian books burnt by Hindu extremists*

500 copies of a book entitled, *The Life History of Jesus Christ* were confiscated and burnt by a mob of Hindu extremists from the Hindu Jagarana Vedike and the BJP from a girls' primary school in Siddapur. They claimed that the books were being used to convert schoolchildren to Christianity. The protest was carried out under the leadership of MLA Vivekananda Vaidya, who also told reporters that the matter would be taken to the education minister, and action be taken by the authorities.

#### *6.12.17. Koteshwara village, Udupi district, 25 June: Catholic priest attacked by Hindu extremists*

Fr Silvester Pereira, a Roman Catholic priest, was attacked by members of the Bajrang Dal at a medical check-up with four companions at Surgeon Hospital. Four Hindu extremists, allegedly members of the RSS, confronted the men as they were waiting for a doctor, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. The extremists shouted anti-Christian slogans before severely beating the priest, who was left with serious injuries. One of his companions who tried to intervene was also injured.

Although the police initially refused to register a case, Fr Pereira was able, with the help of another priest, to register an FIR against his assailants. The local police arrested local Bajrang Dal leader, Ramanna Shetty, but later released him on bail.

#### *6.12.18. Sunderplaya village, Kolar district, 29 June: pastor attacked by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'; arrested by police*

The Rev. P. Ravi was left with injuries after he was beaten by Hindu extremists whilst assisting people in the Kolar Gold Field area.

Ravi's attackers later filed a false police report against him, claiming that the pastor had been involved in 'forcible conversions' and insulting Hindu gods. He was promptly arrested, and police prevented contact between the pastor and his lawyers. Ravi was released on bail the following day. No action is known to have been taken against his attackers.

*6.12.19. Baloga village, Belgaum district, 4 July: Christian couple severely assaulted by Bajrang Dal members; police refused to register case*

Dyamappa Chalawadi and his wife Geetha were beaten by alleged Bajrang Dal member Subhas Chalawadi and fifteen others. The mob forced their way into the home of the couple, and Dyamappa was dragged out and assaulted: he was kicked and the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet were beaten with wooden sticks. Geetha was pulled by her hair and pushed against a wall. The assailants threatened that they would both be killed if they continued with their Christian prayers.

Police refused to register a complaint against the attackers, reportedly stating that “there were no bleeding injuries”.

*6.12.20. Belthur, Bangalore, 4 July: two pastors attacked by large mob; accused of ‘forcible conversions’*

Pastors Moses and Samuel of the Pentecostal Atmanesar Church were attacked by Hindu extremists, allegedly belonging to the Bajrang Dal, as they were returning home from a Bible meeting. Moses and Samuel were on a dark stretch of road when they were accosted by the men, who slapped and punched them while insulting their faith and accusing them of converting poor villagers to a foreign religion. More than fifty others joined in the attack, which lasted almost an hour. The incident ended with the extremists threatening to kill the two pastors should they return to the area.

The pastors were admitted to a hospital for treatment, but were reportedly too afraid of the consequences to lodge a complaint with police.

*6.12.21. Sira, Tumkur district, 5 July: Seventh Day Adventist missionaries attacked by Hindu extremists*

A team of ten of Seventh Day Adventist missionaries was attacked by a group of at least 50 Hindu extremists, while visiting the area to provide charitable services. The missionaries had been invited to the house-warming ceremony of a local Christian. However, the house was stormed by the extremists, who beat the missionaries with knives, chains and wooden sticks. At least four sustained head, stomach and shoulder injuries.

No police involvement was reported.

*6.12.22. Wilson Garden area, Bangalore, 8 July: two Christian workers beaten and paraded half-naked by extremists; arrested by police*

Around ten Hindu extremists, allegedly members of Ram Sena, beat two Christian workers and paraded them half-naked to a police station in Bangalore. The victims, G. Mohan and M.G. John were dragged out of the house of another Christian, Nanda Gopal, and were assaulted. Police arrested the Christians for ‘deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings’ (IPC 295A) and ‘promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony’ (IPC 153A).

The attackers were not arrested, and the Christians were later released on bail.

*6.12.23. Hutha colony, Shimoga district, 13 July: pastor threatened by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions' and questioned by police*

Pastor Calvin Jeffrey Vedarathna was threatened by Hindu extremists, allegedly belonging to the Bajrang Dal. The pastor was attending a small prayer and fellowship meal at the house of a fellow Christian when it was interrupted by a Hindu neighbour, Satish, accompanied by five others. Pastor Vedarathna was threatened with serious consequences should he return to the house again.

Satish reportedly accused the pastor of 'forcible conversions', and he was questioned by police for an hour, before being released. No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

*6.12.24. Tadas village, Haveri district, 15 July: Christian leaders beaten by police sub-inspector; no punitive action known*

Police sub-inspector V. K. Manjappa disrupted the Sunday service at a house church and summoned Pastor Ravi Benjamin and evangelist Vijay outside, where he beat the two men with his baton and shouted obscenities at them, before taking them to the police station for questioning. The men were released three hours later, and Manjappa denied physically assaulting them.

On 16 July, the Rev. Jamkhandi, director of Christian Outreach Ministry of India, along with a large group of Christians met with the police superintendent to demand the suspension or transfer of Manjappa for his harassment and intimidation of Christians. However, no further action is known to have been taken.

*6.12.25. Sagar taluk, Shimoga district, 29 July: pastor and congregants severely assaulted by alleged Bajrang Dal extremists*

A group of fifteen Hindu extremists, reportedly Bajrang Dal members, disrupted the Sunday worship service of a church in Sagar taluk. Armed with wooden clubs, cricket bats and knives they physically assaulted Pastor Thankan and then began to beat the Christians and vandalise the church property.

Francis D'Souza was stabbed in his left shoulder, Sanju Kumar in his right arm and Manjula Joseph suffered major bleeding after being beaten on the head. The assistant pastor, named as Dennis, was hit with cricket bats, and another congregant required ten stitches on his head after being stabbed with a knife. The injured were taken to Sagar Government Hospital.

Five of the attackers were arrested and charged for 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A) and 'every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object' (IPC 149).

*6.12.26. Bijapur district, 9 August: pastor and wife attacked; arrested on fabricated charges of 'forcible conversions'*

A group of Hindu extremists, allegedly members of Ram Sena, beat Pastor Victor Paul and filed a complaint of 'forcible conversions' against him in Bijapur district. Pastor Paul and his wife, Glory Shanti, were distributing tracts to houses in Jala Nagar. They were in the home of Ashok Halleppagol, when the attackers entered and began to interrogate them. They took the tracts from Halleppagol's hand and then verbally abused him and punched him on the face. They dragged the pastor and his wife to the local police station, where they filed fabricated charges of 'forcible conversions' against them.

Pastor Paul and Shanti were arrested and charged with 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A); however, they were released on bail on the following day.

*6.12.27. Ganeshpur, Belgaum district, 15 August: Christian building attacked*

During a late-night attack, around twelve suspected Hindu extremists threw stones at Kalwari Prayer Centre in Ganeshpur, causing damage to the prayer hall, house and nursery.

Pastor Sajan Philips filed a police complaint, but no arrests are known to have been made.

*6.12.28. Jakkur, Bangalore, 19 August: four Christians attacked by mob during church service*

Around 50 people beat four members of a congregation of 30 worshipping at the Indian Pentecostal Church of God. The attackers came in and bolted the doors behind them and beat the four Christians. When they managed to escape, the assailants chased after them. According to Pastor Thomas Koshy, the attackers had previously warned them against conducting services and had threatened the congregants.

A church member filed a police complaint, but the attackers suggested that they would attempt to beat the pastor again. The owner of the building in which the church met asked the pastor to vacate the premises.

*6.12.29. Davangere, 21 August: Christian students attacked by RSS extremists; detained by police*

A large group RSS extremists attacked six female and twelve male students from the Full Gospel Church, while they were at a picnic. Around 50 RSS extremists arrived on bicycles, motorbikes and cars and began to hit and kick the students. They swore at them and insulted them, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. They then dragged the students identified as Parasuram, Ramesh, Vani Jyothi, Pushpa, Vijay, Shilpa, Prasan, Nirmala and Chandra, to the Vidyanaagara Police Station where they filed a complaint of 'forcible conversions' against them.

Police claimed that they held the students 'for keeping peace', and released them on 27 August. The case against the students was officially closed and no known action was taken against the attackers.

*6.12.30. Bangalore, 22-25 August: pastor kidnapped and attacked twice; accused of conversions*

On 22 August, Pastor Mark Jaikumar was kidnapped from an orphanage he was visiting near Bangalore. The kidnappers insulted his faith, accused the pastor of converting the orphans, tore his shirt and attempted to strangle him whilst one attacker took a stone to crush his head. They fled when the headlights of an approaching vehicle beamed onto them.

Pastor Jaikumar was abducted again three days later, from the Divine Gospel Church compound in Chelekere village. He was blindfolded, insulted and mocked by his kidnappers who used offensive language to insult the Christian faith. They threatened that the pastor's 'forcible conversions' would cease once they had murdered him. He managed to escape after the bus on which one of his kidnappers had taken, had broken down.

It is not known whether police took action on this case.

*6.12.31. Raji Nagar Malur, Kolar district, 26 August: pastor and congregant attacked by Hindu extremists*

At least 25 Hindu extremists violently attacked a house church in Raji Nagar Malur, where they stabbed a church member named Venkattarajappa on his hand and hips, and beat Pastor Emmanuel Venkatesh and the owner of the house, M.S. Thimmakka. The house in which the attack took place was also vandalised in the process. The injured were admitted to Malur Hospital.

After initially attempting to defend the perpetrators, Circle Inspector Shiva Kumar later filed a complaint against them. No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.12.32. Bommasandra, Bangalore, 6 September: pastor verbally abused and beaten*

Six Hindu extremists beat Pastor Abey C. Mathew of the Christian Ministry Church in Bommasandra. The extremists, led by Narayana Swamy, forcibly entered the church compound, shouted anti-Christian abuse, and slapped, punched and kicked Mathew and a congregation member Joseph Abraham. Mathew and Abraham were treated for injuries at Baptist Hospital.

Mathew filed a complaint at the Hebbagudi Police Station, but no arrests are known to have been made.

*6.12.33. Madhikare village, Bangalore, 6 September: pastor beaten and tied to tree by Hindu extremists*

Around ten Hindu extremists beat Christian evangelist P. Ananthappa while he was giving Christian tracts to a villager in front of his house in Madhikare village. They warned him not to return to the village to preach Christianity, and tied him to a tree for at least three hours. They subsequently chased him out of the village, and he went to a hospital to receive treatment for his injuries.

He refused to file a police complaint as he considered that it would impair his ability to work in the village.

*6.12.34. Geddalhalli village, Bangalore, 10 September: Bible college principal severely assaulted by RSS; police refused to register case*

Around 35 RSS extremists attacked Angam Haokip, the principal of a Bible college in Geddalhalli village. At 8am, they stopped his vehicle and asked if he was a pastor. When he confirmed that he was, they beat him, attempted to crush his legs with boulders and kicked him on the nape of the neck. His back and chest were injured. The attackers also vandalised his vehicle.

The police refused to accept his complaint, and informed him that a complaint had been lodged against him for 'rash driving'.

*6.12.35. Banaswadi area, 20 September: two Christian women attacked by Hindu neighbours*

A Christian woman named Hoovu Jayanti and her guest, Uma, were attacked in her house by Hindu neighbours in the Banaswadi area. The unidentified neighbours were angry at her conversion to Christianity; she had previously sold flowers in a Hindu temple. Uma was visiting Jayanti along with her daughter. Both Jayanti and Uma sustained minor injuries.

No action is known to have been taken by police.

*6.12.36. Kodlipet, Kodugu district, 30 September: pastor and associates severely assaulted by Bajrang Dal members*

A pastor and his associates were attacked by Bajrang Dal extremists in Kodlipet during a worship service. The extremists were armed with iron rods and pipes and forcibly entered the Indian Pentecostal Church shouting curses. They physically assaulted Pastor Freddy P. Cherian and Pastor Benny George. Pastor Cherian's father was knocked down by a blow to the head with an iron rod, and the attackers continued to beat him as he lay bleeding. The pastor was accused of trying to convert a group of people to Christianity. Pastor Cherian was treated for a fractured right arm at a hospital in Bangalore and was given eighteen stitches on his head.

An FIR was filed against the extremists, naming eight people. According to media reports, two men were arrested.

*6.12.37. Mangalwadi village, Hassan district, 4 October: two Christian workers beaten by Hindu extremists; police refused to register complaint*

A group of about twenty Hindu extremists beat two Christian workers conducting a prayer meeting at Janamuni Memorial Church in Mangalwadi village in the Holenaresipura area of Hassan district. The extremists forcibly entered the prayer meeting and attacked Sudhir and Isaac, accusing them of 'forcible conversions'. First aid was administered to the victims at the Saligram Government Hospital.

On 5 October, the Christian workers went to the Holenaresipura Rural Police Station, but the police refused to register their complaint. A policeman threatened their attorney, saying that his father was a powerful politician and he could have the Christians imprisoned.

*6.12.38. Mayasandra village, Tumkur district, 7 October: pastor and colleague attacked by more than 100 extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

More than 100 extremists launched an attack on Christian workers during a service being led by Pastor P.M. Simon. They reportedly beat him and the local co-ordinator of his radio ministry for an hour and a half, accusing them of the 'forcible conversions' of Hindu villagers. Pastor Simon received serious injuries and was admitted to the Adi Chunchunagiri Hospital.

The police registered a complaint against the attackers but no arrests are known to have been made.

*6.12.39. Kollegal area, Rampura, Mysore district, 11 October: pastor beaten by Hindu extremists; pressurised to 're-convert' to Hinduism*

VHP extremists attacked Pastor Ganesh Murthy, after accusing him of 'forcible conversions'. He was distributing tracts and praying for people upon request, when a group of at least fifteen men stopped him. Pastor Murthy explained what he was doing, but the group physically assaulted him and attempted to convert him to Hinduism, promising they would take care of his family financially if he did so. They dragged him to the nearest police station, where he was detained on charges of 'forcible conversions'. When the pastor refused to convert to Hinduism, the extremists spread false rumours against him, seemingly in an attempt to instigate the villagers to attack him.

Pastor Murthy was released but continued to be under investigation.

*6.12.40. Chikkaningahalli, Hassan district, 18 October: pastor harassed and threatened by Bajrang Dal members; police refused to register complaint*

Pastor Vijay Kumar was threatened by Bajrang Dal extremists in Chikkaningahalli. Hindu villagers were collecting contributions for some temple festivities when they approached five Christian families. When the families refused to contribute money or participate in the festival, the local extremist groups, accompanied by villagers, accosted Vijaya Kumar on his pastoral visit to the village. They threw him off his bicycle and then caught him by the collar. They angrily questioned him about the behaviour of the Christians in the village, accusing him of 'forcible conversions'. The extremists warned him against going to the village again, and threatened to kill him if he refused to obey their orders.

Police refused to register any complaint by Pastor Kumar, but registered a complaint filed by villagers against the pastor for 'forcible conversions'.

*6.12.41. J.P. Nagar, Bangalore, 15 October: pastor tricked; accused of 'forcible conversions' and beaten by Bajrang Dal members*

Hindu extremists attacked Mani Kumar, a Christian worker, who had gone to visit his friend in S.N. Nagar but he was not home. A group of youths approached him and asked him to come with them to a nearby village, Itheri, to preach Christianity. When they reached the village, the youths called Bajrang Dal extremists who came and beat him up, accusing him of 'forcible conversions'. Kumar sustained injuries to the head, legs and arms, was rushed to a hospital for treatment.

Police registered a complaint against the attackers, but are not known to have taken any further action.

*6.12.42. Nandeshwar, Gadag district, 8 November: Christians attacked by Hindu extremists; detained by police*

Around 25 Hindu extremists, led by Shankar Tavarappa, stormed into a prayer meeting attended by around fifteen Christians at the house of Dharma and Mangalavva Singh. They beat up Pastor Yelumalai Nayak and other congregants, including women, and warned them not to conduct prayer services in their house again.

The extremists filed a false complaint of 'forcible conversion' against the pastor and the couple at the Mundargi Police Station. Police detained them and then released them at 2am on the next day. Mangalavva Singh was hospitalised with internal injuries at the CSI Basel Mission Hospital in Gadag-Betgeri; she was discharged on 10 November. On 11 November, at 10am, Pastor Nayak and Dharma Singh were summoned for questioning at the Mundargi Police Station. They were released at 6pm without any charges brought against them.

No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

*6.12.43. Malai Bennur village, Davangere district, 11 November: congregation attacked by Hindu extremists; police initially refused to register complaint*

A group of 30 RSS and Bajrang Dal extremists forcibly entered the house church of Pastor Durgappa Gangadhar. They shouted abuse and stopped the service. The assailants then photographed the congregation of 70 people, threatening to harm them if they continued practising their faith.

Inspector Brijesh Matthew of Malai Bennur Police Station refused to register a complaint against the extremists. He shouted at the Christians and accused them of disrupting the peace in the village. The police later accepted the complaint, but no action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

*6.12.44. Ananda Nagar, Old Hubli, 18 November: church attacked by Hindu extremists; Christians detained by police*

At least 22 Hindu extremists, allegedly members of the Bajrang Dal and the VHP, led by a local villager, Raghavendra, stopped Christian worship at Praise of Righteous Ministry. As they entered they chanted a Hindu chant, "Jai Hanuman" (translated as, 'victory to Lord Hanuman'). They then slapped Pastor Gokhavi and struck him with the microphone which he had been holding. They punched and kicked the Christians, and threw chairs at them. They also tore several pages from the Bible and insulted the Christian faith and damaged musical instruments and the sound system. Outside the church, they piled up hymn books and Bibles and burned them. Injured in the attack were the pastor's wife, Rekha Gokhavi, and Somu, Satish, Anand and Shivanda.

Police photographed the burning of the Bibles and hymn books and took the injured Christians to the local police station, where the extremists registered a complaint of 'forcible conversions' against Gokhavi. The Christians were released at 6pm. No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

*6.12.45. Indira Nagar area, Bangalore, 19 November: Christians attacked; severe negligence by the police*

Hindu extremists attacked Shaijus Philip and four other Christians as they were preaching. The extremists filmed the attack as they beat them and verbally abused their faith. They called the police from the Indira Nagar Police Station in order to falsely accuse the Christians of committing various crimes. The police arrested the five Christians for 'hurting religious sentiments of Hindus' and also filed a case against the attackers. The police forced the Christians to sign the complaint filed against them, with the threat of dire consequences if they demanded anything. The attackers went free and the Christians were taken to the local magistrate who remanded them to judicial custody where they remained in the Central Jail of Bangalore for five days.

The jail guard took some money from them and ordered them to remove their trouser belts and they found sleeping difficult due to the cold temperature and mosquito infestation. Police forced them to sweep and clean the jail and beat Richard, one of the Christians. They were given dry rice on two plates as their breakfast and had to drink tap water from the washroom.

*6.12.46. Savalgi village, Bagalkot district, 23 November: five Christians attacked by four police officers opposed to charitable work*

Four police officers beat an evangelist, Solomon Nayak, after questioning him and accusing him of intending to allure villagers to convert. The officers from Savalgi Police Station had come to Nayak and four other Christians as they were organising the launch of the Sanjeevani Rehabilitation Centre (SRC). The officers slapped him and beat the other Christians repeatedly with their batons. After an hour, the police left with the warning that the SRC would be closed down if there were complaints from the villagers.

*6.12.47. Balupette village, Hassan district, 25 November: three Christians severely beaten by Hindu extremists; arrested by police*

About twenty Hindu extremists stormed a worship service at Christ Vision Church in Balupette village. They threatened the congregants and chased them away. After burning the Bibles, the extremists then dragged out two pastors, C.J. Joemon and C.J. Jojo, and another congregant, G. Anil, to the junction half a kilometre away. They stripped them, tied them to a pole and beat them.

When police arrived, they took the three victims to the police station and charged them with 'forcible conversions'. They were also initially refused medical aid. The two pastors were later released on bail. No action is known to have been taken against the attackers.

*6.12.48. Gurdahali, Bangalore, 16 December: church damaged by Hindu extremists*

A group of about twenty Hindu extremists desecrated St Anthony's Church, as Christians were gathered at the Sunday worship service. The extremists forced their way into the church, disrupting the prayer service, and assaulted the congregants and damaged the church property.

A case was registered at the Byatarayanapura Police Station. No known arrests were made.

### **6.13. Kerala**

#### *6.13.1. Thodupuzha, Idukki district, 14 May: Dalit Christian tortured by police*

A Dalit Christian identified as Chacko, was assaulted by officers at the Karimkunnam Police Station where he had gone with his wife Kuttiyamma to make a complaint against Kaniyamparambil Manoj and his wife. The complaint stated that the families had quarrelled, culminating in Manoj and his wife forcing their way into Chacko's home and beating him and Kuttiyamma. In order to reach a mutual understanding, police called both families to the station. However, Manoj and his family were soon released.

Chacko was held at the station where he was beaten by police, who also nailed his penis with a steel pin. This was later removed by doctors at the District Co-operative Hospital. Chacko was later visited by the circle inspector of police for Thodupuzha, who initiated an investigation into the incident, although the police reportedly wished to resolve the matter without going to court.

#### *6.13.2. Tiruvallam area, Thiruvananthapuram, 4 September: six Christians injured in attempted murder by RSS members; police arrested attackers*

Around fifteen RSS extremists attacked six Christians near Parasuram temple in the Tiruvallam area of Thiruvananthapuram. Carrying sharp weapons, the extremists assaulted the Christians, identified as Jose, George, Santhosh, Bijoy, Jaykrish and Hari, who were seriously injured.

On 6 September, police arrested two RSS extremists, Sreekumar and Lalu. A court remanded them in judicial custody on charges of attempted murder.

#### *6.13.3. Mananthavady, Wayanad district, 14 October: pastor and his wife assaulted; police arrested attackers*

Hindu extremists attacked Pastor T.C. Joseph and his wife, Ammini, at their residence at 2.30am. The attackers disconnected the phone and power supply, broke open the door and beat them up. The couple were later taken to hospital with severe injuries.

The police rushed to the spot and arrested two people. Police searched for other culprits.

### **6.14. Madhya Pradesh**

#### *6.14.1. Devera village, Sidhi district, 2 January: nine Christians attacked by Bajrang Dal*

A mob of Hindu extremists, allegedly associated with the Dharam Sena, attacked a group of nine Christians while they were visiting the home of Tez Bali. The Christians had come from New Delhi to celebrate the New Year with Nahum Das, a local Christian. Breaking the lock of the room where the Christians were hiding, they beat two members of the

group, Shyam Sunder and Ram Deen, causing them injuries to the chest and legs, and damaging their car.

The police from rescued the Christians when Das called them, and were initially reluctant to register a complaint, but did so after the intervention of a government official. No action is known to have been taken against the attackers. The extremists lodged a counter complaint against the Christians for 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings' (IPC 295A) and for 'forcible conversions', under the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act.

*6.14.2. Lanji village, Balaghat district, 9 January: church vandalised; Christians threatened with death by Bajrang Dal*

Bajrang Dal extremists threatened to kidnap and kill sixteen Christians, after having earlier entered the church and painted graffiti and anti-Christian slogans on the walls. They forced entry into the church and threatened the Christians. Pastor Mahindra reported the incident to the police. Despite his request for an investigation, this was reportedly halted as the extremists asked the pastor to reach a compromise.

*6.14.3. Damoh district, 1 April: Christians beaten during Sunday school procession*

Two Christians were severely beaten by unidentified Hindu extremists, while leading a procession of Sunday school children from local churches. The group stopped at a shop for a drink after the procession, at which point a number of extremists began questioning the Christians. When one of the Christians refused to answer a question, the extremists began beating them, using bamboo and sugarcane sticks and whatever else was available. They warned the Christians to hold no further processions.

The attackers fled the scene when locals started gathering. The two Christians sustained serious head injuries and were admitted to a local mission hospital. No FIR was known to have been registered.

*6.14.4. Thandla, Jhabua district, 16 April: Catholic houses attacked by Hindu extremists following minor dispute*

Approximately 300 alleged BJP members attacked houses in a Catholic parish, throwing stones at them. The attack was reportedly in retaliation after a minor exchange of hostile words between a Hindu and a Catholic boy. When some Catholic youths protested against the attack, the BJP extremists attacked with swords and batons, causing injuries to eleven Christians.

Upon their arrival, police used tear gas to disperse the mob, before registering a case against four Catholics for disturbing the communal peace and harmony. One Catholic youth was released on bail and a counter-FIR was registered against the mob.

*6.14.5. Narayanpur village, Chhatarpur district, 14 May: local missionary forcibly taken to police station by Shiv Sena members; charged with 'forcible conversions'*

A group of around 70 Shiv Sena activists filed a complaint against Pastor Kunal Pasricha, a Christian worker of the Indian Evangelical Mission, after forcibly taking him to the police station on fabricated accusations of 'forcible conversions'.

Police charged Pasricha, along with another local Christian man, with creating enmity between religious communities (IPC 295A) and with 'forcible conversions' under the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, although they reportedly later claimed this was to protect him from a potential mob attack, fearing religious tensions in the area. They refused to take any complaint from Christian leaders about the attack. Both men were released on bail on 19 May.

*6.14.6. Khandwa, 3 June: pastor attacked by RSS members; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

Pastor Bheem Singh was attacked by approximately 25 RSS extremists as he returned home from a Sunday morning worship service. The attackers accused Singh of 'forcible conversions', shouted derogatory remarks against Christianity and insulted members of his family.

*6.14.7. Sehore district, 16 June: pastor beaten by RSS members; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

A prayer meeting was stormed by approximately 40 members of the RSS, who confined Pastor Teras Khaka to his house and beat him for three hours. The mob then forced the pastor into a jeep and he was driven away.

Pastor Khaka later submitted a complaint against the RSS, but it is not known whether it was registered officially. The RSS lodged a counter-complaint against the pastor for alleged 'forcible conversions'.

*6.14.8. Rewa district, 2 July: three pastors and their wives attacked with weapons by Bajrang Dal members; accused of 'fraudulent conversions'*

Pastors Amos Singh, Prem Masih and Ram Mal were attacked by extremists of the Bajrang Dal with iron rods and sticks after a prayer meeting. When the pastors' wives attempted to intervene, the assailants held knives to their throats. Furniture and audio equipment was also vandalised during the assault, which took place at the Evangelical Church of India. The pastors and their wives had been invited to the church for two days of meetings hosted by the pastor and a Christian police inspector, Shri Bhonsle. The extremists also accused Bhonsle of helping Christians to convert Hindus through fraudulent means.

Police arrested four people in connection with the attack, but they were quickly released on bail.

*6.14.9. Dohania village, Dindori district, 14 July: three evangelists beaten; questioned by police*

Three evangelists were attacked by approximately fifteen extremists, allegedly members of the Dharam Sena. The three men were standing at a bus stop when their assailants approached, accompanied by two policemen. The extremists took the evangelists' bags and emptied them, finding gospel tracts and booklets of Bible stories. They then slapped the men, and verbally abused them. The attackers claimed that they had been watching the three men closely, and fabricated accusations against them of 'forcible conversions'.

Police questioned the evangelists for nearly four hours, before warning them not to return to the village.

*6.14.10. Bahera village, Detalath, 15 July: Christians harassed by Hindu villagers*

A screening of 'Daya Sagar', a film about the life of Jesus Christ, was interrupted by a group of approximately twelve drunken villagers, allegedly prompted by the Bajrang Dal. The villagers verbally abused the organisers of the screening and other Christians. On the following day, as a Christian named Ramu returned to his home from visiting Pastor Khushwaha's house, the villagers threatened to burn down his house if he attended any more Christian meetings.

Pastor Khushwaha attempted to register a complaint against the assailants on 18 July, but police refused. He did not hold a worship service on the following Sunday, due to fear of the potential consequences. Hindu villagers submitted a complaint against local Christian police inspector, Shri Bhonsle, accusing him of supporting 'forcible conversions' in the village.

*6.14.11. Statna, 18 July: four Christians assaulted in Catholic community*

Twelve men, armed with cricket stumps and clubs, forced their way into a room in the Eucharistic Covenant Community, a Catholic religious community. Six of the men attacked the four Christians, leaving them injured: Emmanuel Vadakedathaparambil required eight stitches to the side of his head; Xavier Pottanamuzhi suffered fractures in one leg and both hands; Ajish Pullatkudiyil's breathing was impaired; and Yohannan Thadathil sustained swollen legs and arms. The attack was suspected to have been religiously-motivated.

Police registered a complaint against the twelve assailants but no further action is known to have been taken.

*6.14.12. Dhar district, 29 September: pastor beaten by Hindu villagers; pastor and Christians arrested*

Hindu villagers beat a pastor and filed a complaint against him, his wife and four other Christians, accusing them of 'forcible conversions' by allurement in an unknown location in Dhar district. Police arrested Pastor Subhash Chouhan, his wife, their children and four others under the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act and several sections of the IPC.

The police did not file a complaint against the attackers but arrested the Christians for making a frivolous complaint. They were released on bail two days later.

*6.14.13. Amlai, Shahdol district, 2 October: Mar Thoma pastor harassed in church by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

About twenty Hindu extremists disrupted a Christian meeting and harassed a pastor of the Mar Thoma Church in Amlai. The extremists, allegedly belonging to the Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena, were carrying sticks as they entered the church, and started shouting anti-Christian slogans. They approached the pastor of the church, the Rev. Joji Oomen, and holding his cassock they accused him of 'forcible conversions'. The pastor explained that the meeting was held merely to discuss the social work of the church, but the extremists persisted with their allegations.

People at a nearby church informed the area superintendent of police, who immediately came. No arrests were made, and the pastor was advised by the police not to hold any large meetings and that he should inform them before conducting even a small meeting.

*6.14.14. Hosalli colony, Gundelpet, 4 November: pastor beaten; accused of 'prostitution' after visiting female congregant; police refused to file complaint*

A pastor was beaten by four Hindu extremists who also filed charges of 'prostitution' against him. The 50-year-old pastor, M. Thankaraj had visited a woman from his church who had previously visited him for prayer and counselling. As a result of the attack, he received injuries on his head, right hand and chest. The attackers then forcibly took him to the police station and filed the complaint against him for 'prostitution' on what are believed to have been spurious grounds.

Police registered the complaint against the pastor, but refused to file his complaint against the attackers. The pastor was admitted to the Gundelpet Government Hospital.

## **6.15. Maharashtra**

*6.15.1. Gulmohar area, Nagpur, 8 February: Christians attacked while showing film, after threats from Hindu extremists*

Three Christian workers were attacked by unknown assailants while showing a Christian film. One of the men, identified only as Satpute, had to be taken to hospital, where four of his teeth were removed as a result of the injuries to his mouth. The other two victims, the Rev. Ravi Shambhakar and Ramprakash Sahu received minor injuries. The Christians had previously been threatened by Hindu extremists.

The attack was reported to the police; however, it is unclear whether they had registered the complaint, and the attackers also threatened to lodge a counter complaint.

*6.15.2. Nursery Baugh, Vasai, Thane district, 16 July: Christian convert severely beaten by Hindu extremists; house demolished*

Approximately a dozen Hindu extremists, led by Sagar Mhambre, stormed the house of Christian convert Arjun Pashi. The attackers were armed with wooden clubs, which they used to beat Pashi repeatedly; they also slapped him and verbally abused him for his Christian faith. Pashi's wife was pushed against a wall as she tried to protect their

belongings. The attackers destroyed all the furniture, before demolishing the house. They threatened Pashi with further violence if he continued in his Christian faith.

Fearing further persecution, Pashi did not register a complaint with the police. However, pressure from the aicc led to Mhambre agreeing to rebuild the house within a week.

#### *6.15.3. Dapodi area, Pune district, 25 August: pastor's car pelted with stones*

Alleged Hindu extremist youths attacked Pastor Peter David Silway from the Vineyard Workers' Church in Dapodi area, Pune district. A local edition of The Indian Express newspaper reported on 4 September that his car was pelted with stones by two youths on motorcycles on the bridge between Dapodi and Bopodi. Pastor Silway filed a complaint at Bhosari Police Station; the police response is not known.

#### *6.15.4. Kuttal village, Thane district, 4 November: congregants attacked by Hindu extremists during worship service; pastor accused of 'forcible conversions'*

Extremists from the VHP, the VKP and Bajrang Dal forcibly entered the worship service of the Mumbai Diocesan Missionary Movement. They shouted anti-Christian slogans, then brutally beat several members with wooden clubs and their fists. They damaged Bibles and flung chairs around. Some of the extremists approached Pastor Suresh Suttar and slapped him, accusing him of 'luring' poor tribals in order to convert them.

The injured required hospital treatment and injuries included swollen arms and legs, a bruised and swollen chin, bruises and grazes to the temple and forehead and a bruised chest. The victims included Vishnu Barad and his wife, Aruna Barad, together with Vandhana Barad, Nirmala Barad, Ramdas Ahad and Neelesh Barad.

When Pastor Suresh Suttar went to the police station to file a complaint against the extremists, officers detained him and it is not known whether they took his complaint. They were unable to find any evidence for charges of 'forcible conversions' and so released him the following day.

## **6.16. Orissa**

#### *6.16.1. Gunthaput village, Koraput district, 4 April: church property destroyed by Hindu extremists in ostensible land dispute*

A mob of 300 Hindu extremists, some of whom were reportedly RSS members, demolished a church building and the residential quarters of the Rev. Labi Chetty, ostensibly in protest against the construction of a boundary wall on land which they claimed did not belong to the church. The attackers, reportedly hired, ransacked and demolished the buildings in front of the state police and district administration. Once the destruction was completed, the attackers raised a banner stating that no centre of Christian worship would be allowed in the village.

Nine people were later arrested.

*6.16.2. Adigara village, Kandhamal district, 6 May: Christian worker attacked by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

Pabitra Mohan Kata, an independent Christian worker, was attacked by a mob of approximately 60 extremists as he was returning home. His assailants were reportedly followers of the VHP figurehead, Swami Lakhmananda Saraswati. Until 1995, Kata had supported the extremist groups in the area. His attackers falsely accused him of taking money from missionaries, converting to a foreign religion, and 'forcible conversions'. They beat him until the police arrived.

The police initially refused to register Kata's complaint, and instead threatened to charge him with 'forcible conversions'. They later conceded at the request of local Christian leaders who spoke out on his behalf.

*6.16.3. Ramannaguda village, Gajapati district, 2 June: two pastors beaten by RSS members*

Two pastors of the Good Shepherd Community Church were beaten with bamboo sticks by four members of RSS as they prepared for a prayer meeting. The attackers, allegedly drunk, falsely accused the pastors of 'forcible conversions'. One pastor was left with serious injuries. The village *sarpanch* had openly supported the Christian minority (representing around seventeen families in the village), but was in the fields at the time of the attack.

The pastors did not plan to press charges, but asked local police to work with them to reach a compromise with their assailants in a peaceful manner.

*6.16.4. Gelabaza, Deogarh district, 1 July: priest severely attacked by Hindu extremists with crude explosive*

Fr Chandu Markose, a priest from the Church of South India was assaulted as he was returning home after conducting a service. Around twenty Hindu extremists representing the Hindu Jagaran Samukhya wearing saffron bands around their heads shouted a Hindu devotional chant, "Hail to the Mother Goddess", and cursed Christianity as they waylaid the priest. Fr Markose was slapped, punched and kicked, and his attackers threw a crude explosive device at him, which caused fractures in his toes and minor injuries to his arms, back and stomach. The priest was able to reach home, and was taken to hospital by his family where emergency surgery was performed on his left foot.

No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.16.5. Kendrapara district, 2 October: two pastors attacked by RSS members; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

About twelve RSS extremists beat Pastor Pradip Hialo, while he was distributing Christian tracts at the main bus stand of Kendrapara district. They accused the pastor of 'forcible conversions' and issued anti-Christian insults. They then took him to the police station and filed charges against him under the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act. He was released on bail later the same day. The same attackers telephoned Pastor Raghav Digal and tricked him into meeting them. Upon his arrival they attacked him. He sustained a deep cut near his eyebrows and other head injuries.

Police registered a complaint against the attackers, and an investigation was opened. No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.16.6. Bhadrak Government Hospital, Bhadrak district, 27 October: pastor attending to the sick attacked by Hindu extremists; accused of 'forcible conversions'*

Around 40 Hindu extremists beat Phiroj Lima while he was distributing tracts and praying for the sick at the Bhadrak Government. The attackers told the ward patients relatives that Lima was trying to 'forcibly convert' them. They then phoned the police, who arrived quickly and took Lima to the police station. The extremists followed the police vehicle shouting anti-Christian slogans.

Police released Lima three hours later. No further action against the attackers is known to have been made.

**6.17. Punjab**

*6.17.1. Lehragaga, Sangrur district, 10 April: church converted to gurdwara by Hindu extremists; restored by local Sikh leaders*

Hindu extremists attacked a church and converted it into a Sikh gurdwara after the church pastor was arrested. The reported 100 extremists involved were members of the Bajrang Dal. Upon entering the church, they broke the furniture, removed the musical instruments, burned the Christian literature and replaced it with the scriptures of the Sikh faith. Pastor Malok Singh was falsely accused of rape by the extremists and taken into custody by the police on the same day, but released on bail on 19 April. Local Sikh leaders later removed the Sikh writings and restored the church.

Police filed a complaint against the extremists, but no arrests are known to have been made.

**6.18. Rajasthan**

*6.18.1. Nanpuri Bazar, Jaipur 29 April: Christian preacher attacked by masked Hindu extremists in televised attack*

A group of masked intruders attacked a Christian preacher, Walter Massey, in Jaipur. They used sticks and whatever else they could find, to attack him in front of his wife and child. His wife, Joyce, later reported that three persons coming to meet him, almost immediately started assaulting him after the door was opened. More men, covering their faces, joined in the attack. They also broke utensils and furniture. They dragged Massey, who was seriously bleeding, out of the house and a neighbour, who witnessed this, rushed to the Sodala Police Station. Massey was admitted to the emergency ward of the Sawai Man Singh Medical College Hospital.

The attack was filmed, and some TV channels broadcast it. A case was registered but no known arrests were made. Veerendra Singh, the main assailant and an employee of the state government and Sangh Parivar supporter, was suspended.

*6.18.2. Chavand, Sarada, Udaipur district, 4 August: Catholic priest's residence destroyed; VHP suspected*

At around 2am, around 200 masked men suspected to belong to the VHP demolished a priest's house which was under construction. Fr Paul Ninama was away and was therefore unharmed; however, the attackers assaulted two watchmen on duty, injuring them. This was the second attack in which the priest was targeted.

No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.18.3. Vardha village, Dungarpur district, 7 August: Christian film screening stormed by RSS and police; Christians accused of 'forcible conversions'*

RSS extremists stormed the showing of a Christian film, 'Daya Sagar' in Vardha village; they forced Believers Church workers to stop the screening, summoned local police and accused the Christians of 'forcible conversions'. The police detained Akash Kumar, Shantilal Kalasua, Pastor Ruplal Nathat and Pastor Iswarlal Kasota, and allegedly beat the Christians. They also confiscated film equipment.

The four were released the following day. Police relinquished the equipment on 13 August and apologised to the Christians.

*6.18.4. Rohanwadi village, Banswara district, 30 November: pastor attacked by alleged Hindu extremists; police initially refused to register case*

Hindu extremists beat a Pastor Ramlal Gracia while he was standing by a shop in Rohanwadi village, Banswara district. Three young men, believed to be Hindu extremists, arrived by motorcycle and started verbally abusing him for his faith. When he defended his right to choose his faith, they beat him and ran away.

The incident was reported to Sallow Part Police Station but the police duty officer refused to register an FIR. The police station claimed that the investigation continued without the registration of an FIR. Additional Deputy Superintendent Gangra Meena said that he would take the complaint lodged by the victim and take action accordingly.

**6.19. Tamil Nadu**

*6.19.1. Hosur area, Dharmapuri district, 5 May: pastor attacked by Hindu extremists*

Independent pastor, Paul Chinnaswamy, was attacked by eight Hindu extremists who broke into his home. They hit him in the thigh with a screwdriver, pushed his face into a wall and hit him in the ribs. The assailants also threatened his wife and four-year-old daughter and warned the pastor not to tell the police about the incident. They also broke into a cupboard and stole money intended to pay an electricity bill, falsely claiming that it had been given by foreigners to fund conversions.

This was not the first time that the family had been attacked. On 22 April, Chinnaswamy had been beaten as his kitchen was vandalised by extremists protesting against his work.

The attack forced the pastor's 24-year-old son to move out of his family home, fearing for his life. However, Pastor Chinnaswamy did not lodge a police complaint.

*6.19.2. Hosur area, Dharmapuri district, 16 July: pastor's house demolished by Hindu extremists*

Pastor Paul Chinnaswamy and four family members were forcibly evicted by Hindu extremists, who then vandalised their house. This was reportedly the third attack on the pastor in 2007.

Due to fear for his life, Pastor Chinnaswamy did not file a complaint with the police.

*6.19.3. Tamil Nadu, 29 July: pastor's brother crushed to death with boulders in alleged retributive attack; wife and mother-in-law remanded in custody*

The brother of previously-attacked Pastor Chinnaswamy, identified as Amos, was attacked and killed, allegedly by two Hindu extremists involved in the assault on his brother. It was suspected that this was a retributive attack, after Amos had angrily condemned the attacks on his brother. The attackers arrived at his home by scooter, pulled down a small hut in front of Amos' house and hit his head and back with a log. When he fell to the floor, they crushed his head with large boulders. They threatened to kill his wife and mother-in-law if they too did not throw stones at his body. The women fearfully complied.

The police arrested the two women, accusing them of his murder and remanded them to judicial custody.

**6.20. Uttar Pradesh**

*6.20.1. Indrapuram, Ghaziabad district, 2 January: Christian team attacked by Hindu extremists*

A team of seven Christians belonging to the Brethren Assembly were attacked by a mob of around 60 VHP extremists, who damaged their vehicle and severely injured four members of the group. The Christians were giving out literature and evangelising, when they were stopped by ten local men who asked them to leave. The Christians left the area immediately but did not take their vehicle with them. When they returned half an hour later to retrieve the vehicle, the mob of extremists was waiting and attacked them. The vehicle was smashed and turned upside down and four members of the group, V.P. Paulose, Samuel John, George Thomas and George, were seriously injured.

Some local media representatives arrived and reported the extremists' allegations that the Christians had offered money to locals so they would convert to Christianity, although the Christians asserted that these allegations were baseless.

The police arrived and dispersed the crowd; however, they did not register a case. They also took the vehicle to the police station from where it was later released. No action is known to have been taken against the attackers, and the Christian team remained fearful of another attack.

*6.20.2. Sikandara area, Agra, 1 May: Christian school vandalised; staff member attacked by Bajrang Dal members*

Seven members of the Bajrang Dal arrived on motorcycles and attempted to break into the Grameen Mission School during a board meeting. A school guard who tried to stop them was beaten. The board members were not injured as they were able to lock themselves into the meeting room. The extremists vandalised school property instead.

Police sent the guard for a medical examination, before arresting two suspects.

*6.20.3. Sukhpura village, Ballia district, 29 May: Christian families threatened with arson by Hindu extremists; one subject to attempted 're-conversion'*

A community of six Christian families was threatened, with an arson attack on their houses if they refused to stop worshipping God, by around sixty members of the Hindu Jagran Manch. They also attempted to 're-convert' one Christian to Hinduism, by sprinkling him with water from the Ganges river.

Local police intervened and registered a complaint on behalf of the Christians, naming four people who had allegedly instigated the incident.

*6.20.4. Mohanlalganj area, Lucknow district, 15 August: pastor and Bible student attacked by alleged RSS extremists*

Around 30 suspected RSS extremists beat Pastor Santosh and Bible student Babu Lal from the Believers Church in the Mohanlalganj area. Those attacked were distributing literature. They were hospitalised after receiving head, chest and stomach injuries.

Police filed an FIR only after the intervention of the CLA. No arrests are known to have been made.

*6.20.5. Kachwa Bazaar area, Mirzapur district, 17 August: surgeon and pastor beaten by Hindu extremists during programme for Dalits*

Around 100 Bajrang Dal and RSS extremists physically assaulted Dr Raju Abraham, chief surgeon of Kachwa Mission Hospital, and Pastor Joy during a programme organised for Dalit children and their parents. Dr Raju Abraham had been warned the previous day by twenty extremists that he would be killed if the programme continued. The RSS had already filed a complaint with the police, but an enquiry concluded that the program was lawful. During the attack, the extremists vandalised property and equipment and assaulted several people.

An FIR was filed against the attackers detailing several charges, including assault and disturbing the peace.

*6.20.6. Madiyon village, Lucknow district, 16 September: church set on fire by Hindu extremists*

Around 150 Hindu extremists, led by local Shiv Sena leader Narendra of Bholi village and local RSS leader Pawa Giri, set fire to the home of Pastor Birendra Singh and his wife where

nearly 100 church members were gathered. Pastor Singh and his wife, Bhawana, were severely beaten. The others, many of whom were infirm, managed to flee the fire, which destroyed the veranda extension and its contents, including musical instruments, Bibles and carpets.

Having heard of the planned attack, Pastor Singh had made a formal complaint, but police failed to provide protection. Pastor Singh lodged a complaint at Madiyon Police Station on the day of the incident. Three were arrested, but were later released on bail after appearing before the magistrate.

## **6.21. West Bengal**

### *6.21.1. Bhupathinagar area, East Midnapore district, 1 September: wife of Christian worker attacked by alleged CPI(M) supporters*

Alleged supporters of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) beat the wife of an independent Christian worker in the Bhupathinagar area. The attackers are thought to have come to the house of Biman Patro with the intention of attacking him. When they found he was not at home, they beat his wife Sushma Patro: they threw her to the ground by pulling her hair then hit her on the head with a stick and kicked her in the stomach several times. She was knocked unconscious. A relative intervened in the attack, and she was admitted to Purba Medinipur District Hospital for two days.

When the incident was reported, police at Bhupathinagar Police Station arrested a few people, who were released within a few hours. Sushma Patro had lodged a complaint regarding earlier threats on the day of her attack, but the police took no action to protect her.

## **7. Notes**

### **7.1. Acronyms**

ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
aicc	All India Christian Council
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CLA	Christian Legal Association
EFI	Evangelical Fellowship of India
FIR	First Information Report
GCIC	Global Council of Indian Christians
GFA	Gospel for Asia
IPC	Indian Penal Code
NCM	National Commission for Minorities
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
TMS	Transfiguration Mission Society
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
VKP	Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad

### **7.2. Reporting sources**

All India Christian Council (CSW partner)  
Assist News Service  
Compass Direct News  
Evangelical Fellowship of India  
SVM News  
The Hindu