

NON GOVERNMENT

WHITE PAPER

ON THE VIOLENCE IN THE KANDHAMALA DISTRICT

**PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE FACT FINDING TEAM
LED BY DR JOHN DAYAL WHICH VISITED THE KANDHAMALA DISTRICT, ORISSA ON 29TH
DECEMBER – 3RD JANUARY AND FROM 1ST JANUARY TO 3RD JANUARY 2008**

RELEASED AT BHUBANESWAR 5TH JANUARY 2008

NON GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER ON THE VIOLENCE IN THE KANDHAMALA DISTRICT

**PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE FACT FINDING TEAM
LED BY DR JOHN DAYAL WHICH VISITED THE KANDHAMALA DISTRICT, ORISSA ON 29TH
DECEMBER – 3RD JANUARY AND FROM 1ST JANUARY TO 3RD JANUARY 2008**

RELEASED AT BHUBANESWAR 5TH JANUARY 2008

Index:

1. Introduction: A tragedy that was waiting to happen and a tragedy that could repeat itself. Conclusions from the facts as the Fact Finding Team found them.
2. Significance to Orissa state, Nation, and Church in India -- issues of grave concern
3. Fact Finding Team Composition
4. Tour programme; Phulbani aborted visit 29-30 December 2007, and the second visit and 1st to 3rd January 2008
5. Narrative
6. Main Findings of simultaneous violence
7. Suggestions to Union and Orissa Government and Church;
8. Annexure : Illustrative case histories

1. A tragedy that was waiting to happen and a tragedy that could repeat itself. The following are urgent conclusions from the facts as the Fact finding team found them.

1.1 The Events in the Kandhamala hill district of Orissa in the Christmas Week from 22nd December to 1st January 2008 are a story of a tragedy foretold, of political and official condoning, if not actual support to the activities criminals and political activists spreading bigotry, the ideology of hate and violence. It is also a painful narrative of police and administrative indifference, repeated complicity and consistent incompetence. And finally it is the documentation of an utter collapse of the law and order machinery on 24th, 25th, 26th and 27th December 2007. So much in a state where Christians number about 2 per cent, less than the national average.

1.2 There is an urgent Caution, and a Warning in the Kandhamala developments: Unless everyone – Union Government, Orissa Government and its agencies, and religious, social and development agencies wake up and act in concert, there is more tragedy waiting to happen. Like a coalfield fire, passions and tensions are simmering, wounds are suppurating. Only a Judicial Enquiry by a Supreme Court Judge, assisted with the findings of a criminal investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigations, meets the ends of justice.

1.3 It is beyond doubt that the violence was premeditated, pre-planned and the work of a well disciplined group to ensure simultaneous eruption across the Kandhamala district within hours of the first incident, and to sustain it for five days despite the presence of the highest Police officers in the region. It is clear that the attackers were, in the main, upper castes non-tribals and non-Dalits, migrated from other districts of Orissa and other states, though some youth of the suppressed communities had been persuaded to join the mobs. The role of the Rasthriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, Bajrang Dal, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram and their extension organisations must be subject of an intensive investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigations.

1.4 The sequence of events is quite clear. The Christian community and its institutions were targeted for more than 48 hours with the police looking on, and being physically present at the spot in many cases. The anti Christian violence continued till 27th December 007. The anti Hindu violence in Brahminigaon took place more than 60 hours after the first Church was burnt down.

1.5 There are unique, unprecedented and possibly dangerous elements to the Kandhamala violence of Christmas Week 2007, although the state has an unhappy history of recorded and unrecorded persecution of Christians, including the burning alive of Australian leprosy mission worker Graham Stuart Staines and his sons Philip

and Timothy, and Fr Arul in 1999, attacks in Rakia block of the Kandhamala and other parts of the hill tracts of Orissa.

- 1.6 This is the first time at least one Hindu Oriya non-tribal house cluster has been destroyed by arsonists, affecting perhaps a total of 97 families in the villages of Brahminigaon and Godapur.**
- 1.7 This is the first time that there has been reported incident of an exchange of fire between the police and a mixed group of tribals, non tribals and outsiders in Bamunigaon on 27th December 2007. It is in fact a dubious first for India in which Christians' involvement is alleged. This by itself must be subjected to close study by academics and state organisations, as also by the Christian leadership.**
- 1.8 This is the biggest recorded case of such a allege number of Christian houses burnt, in Brahminigaon and Barakhama, other than Churches, convents and Hostels which have been targets of violence in other states, most notably in Gujarat 2002, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, and occasionally even in New Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Kashmir. We have recorded over 200 cases of violence across the country before the outbreak in Kandhamala in Orissa.**
- 1.9 The burning of medical centres and hostels speaks of a criminal disregard for humanity and the welfare of the people. We were told of several instances where nuns said they and their patients were in need of food and medicines.**
- 1.10 This is the first time in history since Independence that may be 3,000 Christian men, women and children are forced to live in two refugee camps, eating boiled rice not fit for human consumption because of the quantity of sand and grit, and living in the cold wit no toilets, precious little medical care and no woolens. In the camp in Brahminigaon, they share this misery with their Hindu brothers and sisters. The irony is not lost. In the Super Cyclone and other natural disasters that devastated the state of Orissa in the past, Christian NGOs and Church groups were almost always among the first to set up relief camps and rehabilitation projects for the common people irrespective of the consideration of religion and ethnic identity.**
- 1.11 The quality of violence against the Christian faith must be recorded so that lessons can be learnt. It has to be seen to be believed. Hate so deep and pungent does not augur well for the country, and of course, poses an immediate threat to the ideals of secularism and freedom of faith the right to life and the right to dignity enshrined in the Constitution of India. Church buildings are broken, nuns manhandled, priests chased away, convent cows killed as their straw is set afire. These are heinous crimes. The ravishing of statues of Mary, grinding her face under foot till nothing remains but shreds, desecrating the Host which Catholics hold to be the Body of Christ, and vandalizing of ritual holy material before setting everything**

on fire speaks of a ideologically cultivated venom that has percolated deep and will need deep political and social activism to quell, defeat and eliminate.

- 1.12 The police force of the district failed on all counts. Government must ensure that in future police action is not thwarted by roadblocks, however big the tree that has been felled, communication failure and lack of mobility. It is a matter of regret for the people of the state, and shame for the Orissa Police authorities, that several incidents of grave violence and heinous crime were committed while the police look on. This happened in more than one block headquarters**
- 1.13 It is a matter of regret that till 3rd January when we spoke to the last police officer before leaving the district, we recorded an extremely partisan, even bigoted, behavior in senior field police officers of the rank of Circle Inspector and Sub Divisional Police officer. Senior development officers of the rank of Commissioner in their language to the victims, and to us, displayed a condemnable cynicism and bias towards a minority community. We are happy to record that junior and young tehsildars rushed in the last days show a more humane nature.**
- 1.14 There is a continuing reign of terror. Many villages are now villages of women. The men are in hiding. Elsewhere, entire villages are deserted. Steps must be taken to create a situation in which the people can return to their homes and not live in terror.**
- 1.15 Despite four days of extensive investigation, we have not been able to speak authoritatively of the number of dead killed by arsonists, in clashes, in police firings, or of injuries. Two dead in Brahminigaon and two dead in Balliguda are confirmed by the police -- the one killed in police firing remains unidentified. Any one dead body just confirms a single death, but does not tell how many others may have died whose bodies have not been recovered by the authorities.**
- 1.16 Similarly, only major Church buildings, particularly of the Catholic Church and the Church of North India and the Baptist church can be easily counted because they are along the roadside in major crossroads and towns. Independent Evangelical churches and mission stations of major denominations exist in villages which have still not been reached.**
- 1.17 The State Government's claims of an overlay of the issues of Maoist activities in the region, the agitation of the Kuis, and the Christmas Week violence is not tenable. The presence of Maoist or Naxalite and the Kui movement are real in some blocks, but the nature of the violence against Christians is in a group by itself. Whatever overlay does exist could have been overcome and much violence prevented if the authorities had not given permission to the hartal, or closures, on Christmas Day, a date with which they are, and ought to be, familiar as educated persons.**

- 1.18 Attempts are also being made to present the incidents as a Tribal versus Christian conflict. The evidence is to the contrary.** The relations between Christian tribals and Christian Non tribals, Christian Dalits and Dalits of other faiths, as well as between Christians belonging to the tribal and Dalit communities remain cordial as they have been historically. **The issue that remains pertinent is the targeting of Dalit and Tribal Christians by political-religious fundamanentalists.**
- 1.19 It is clear that Christians, both Tribals and Panos, and Dalits of various religious persuasions, are particular victims of violence. Persons opposed to the demand by a section of the community to seek Scheduled status have mobilised and hijacked some of the youth of their followers to join the mobs in various hamlets and town. The issue of Scheduled Tribe status must be amicably resolved with the help of a judicial or similar commission, and through appropriate enquiry without delay.**
- 1.20 The government must, also, sympathetically consider the classification of a group of people who are being discriminated twice over because of their religion.** This is a group which was listed as a Scheduled tribe under the British government, and then listed as a Scheduled caste by the State administration. Those of them professing the Christian faith are denied protection of the law, and access to affirmative action programmes of the government, on both counts. They do not get Scheduled Caste Reservation and other privileges because hey are now Dalits. And they do not get the privileges their Dalit brothers and sisters get because as Christians, they are no longer supposed to be even Dalits. They remain in an inhuman, un-Constitutional limbo, discriminated against just for their religious beliefs. **This discrimination must end forthwith if the guarantees under the United Nations Charter and the Indian Constitution of Freedom of Faith are to have any meaning.**
- 1.21 The Government of India, the Supreme Court of India and other State agencies must take notice, and learn their lesson. Peace committees as being constituted are not the answer. They have lost credibility. Victims have lost faith in committees constituted of their persecutors. Truth and Reconciliation and an entirely unbiased State are the answer. Every one has a role to play in this.**
- 1.22 Keeping in view the deep distrust that victim communities have of the local police officers, Central Police Forces must remain in the area will confidence is restored.**
- 1.23 Peace and reconciliation will be possible only with justice and truth. The guilty must be identified, prosecuted with all the might of the State.** Biased officials, as much as corrupt officials, are responsible for the lack of development in the Kandhamala region. They must be identified so that they are never again in command positions where they can join with communal political elements pursuing their agenda of hate. There are many wise suggestions contained in the Justice Wadhwa Commission report that enquired into the murders of the Staines family, as

also in other commissions set up in the aftermath of communal incidents in other states. They need to be implemented, specially those relating to the police and the administration, and fundamentalist organisations, if Orissa is to remain peaceful.

1.24 Orissa does not have forums such as a State Minorities Commission which can move fast to restore confidence. The State Minorities Commission, as recommended by the national Minorities commission, must be set up soon with statutory powers.

1.25 Relief too must consist of materials and compensation according to national standards set in states which see communal violence and persecution, and it must also contain compassion, fairness and transparency.

1.26 Irrespective of the slogan Swami Lokhanananda Saraswati, who has made Kandhamala his home in recent years with an avowed objective of purging the region of every Christian presence, Christians are not Enemies of the people of India, or of the State. To say that, as he says repeatedly even in the presence of the police, “Whosoever converts to Christianity becomes an enemy” is a crime under the law of the land. To say “Christians will not be tolerated.’ And to say it on National satellite channels is equally a crime. Action must be taken in the interests of justice and protecting the Constitution. This saintly gentleman is obviously not just above the law, but is the Law in the area, judging by the attitude of the Police and local administrative officers towards him.

1.27 National TV channels and segments of the local media need to do some introspection if in their reportage of the Kandhamala developments, they have observed the Code of Ethics of the Editors Guild of India, and practices observed in their reporting. Secularism, fairness and truth must remain part of the training of your media persons in Media insitutions as week as in Print, Television and Cyber-media Organisations as an on-going process. It is interesting to note that Video interviews of Lokhanananda Saraswati were made by a private videographer, a known activist of the RSS, within the premises of a medical centre of another RSS activist, the tape then telecast without further corroboration. In the tape Lokhanananda Saraswati repeatedly said, “When people become Christians, they become enemies, they become enemies of the nation. I will NOT tolerate this” [translated from the Hindi/Oriya]. This statement, assiduously propagated, went a long way in fanning the fires.

1.28 THE STATISTICS OF THE VIOLENCE:

1. Deaths – Police confirm three deaths – One in the police firing [Unidentified, but unofficially listed as Christian by the police] and two [one Hindu, One Christian] Two each in Barakhama and Brahminigaon. Human Rights activists understand that six persons have died in the police firing in Brahminigaon. The bodies have not been found, presumed taken away by the

mob. There have been no deaths reported in the arson though several priests and nuns had a close encounter with death.

- 2. Missing: There are persons reported missing from almost every hamlet. This is the subject of long term investigations. Many have fled out of fear of the police. Some are in safety with relatives. Others are in police custody with the police not admitting or confirming this. It will take many weeks before a count becomes possible.**
- 3. ARSON: FIRE WAS THE INSTRUMENT OF CHOICE. The arsonist mob was well motivated, well armed and had come prepared with weapons and iron cutting instruments. The following is a preliminary list of the properties/places destroyed and desecrated:**

CHURCH INSTITUTIONS DESTROYED [Total - 71]

PARISH CHURCHES [Total - Five]

Balliguda
Brahminigaon
Sankharakhole
Pobingia
Paddangi

VILLAGE CHURCHES [Total - 48]

Bodagan-Balliguda
Balliguda town
Kamapada – Balliguda
Mandipanka- Godapur
Jhinjirguda- Bamunigaon
Ulipadaro – Bamunigaon
Goborkutty-Kattingia
Kulpakia- Nuagam
Dohapanga-Balliguda
7 [Seven] churches, Sirtiguda, Balliguda
4 [Four] churches in Phiringia
7 [Seven] churches in Phulbani
4 [Four] churches in Ruthungia
4 [Four] churches in Kalingia
2 [Two] churches in Tikabali
4 [Four] village Churches – Nuagam
3 [Three] more village church
Boriguda (Padangi)
Bakingia (Raikia)

Dalagam
Iripiguda

This list of village churches is not exhaustive for reasons of topography and accessibility

CONVENTS [Total - 5]

Balliguda
Pobingia
Phulbani
Brahminigaon
Sankharakhole

PRESBYTERY [Total – 4]

Balliguda
Pobingia
Brahminigaon
Padangi

HOSTELS [Total - 7]

Pobingia 2 [Two]
Balliguda 2 [Two]
Brahminigaon 2 [Two]
Minor Seminary (Balliguda)

3.1.6 OTHERS: [Total – 2]

- 3.1.6.1 Vocational Training Centre (Balliguda)
- 3.1.6.2 Sarshnanda, leprosy centre (Pobingia)

3.2 HOUSES DESTROYED / BURNT AND LOOTED [Total – Over 500]

- 3.2.1 400 Houses destroyed and looted in Barakhama, Tractors, cycles, motorcycles / shop goods burnt
- 3.2.2 31 Christian Houses burnt in Brahminigaon
- 3.2.3 67 Hindu Houses Burnt in Brahminigaon Oriyasahi
- 3.2.4 30 Christian houses burnt in Ullipadar [Brahminigaon]

[Arson in Phirignia, which continues, is political involving supporters and opponents of former Orissa minister Padmanabha Behera and the Caste issue]

3.3 SHOPS /OTHER PROPERTIES DESTROYED [Total - 126]

- 3.3.1 Brahminigaon 81
- 3.3.2 Godapur [25]

3.3.3 Barakhama [20]

3.4 Vehicles and Other properties destroyed : Survey not yet done

3.5 Animals Killed:

3.5.1 One Cow, Black Jersey milch cattle, Balliguda Convent consequent to arson

[TOTAL PROPERTIES DESTROYED IN ARSON AND MOB VIOLENCE – 697]

RELIEF CAMPS: Government of Orissa has set up two relief camps in Barakhama and in Brahminigaon in school buildings. The conditions in both camps are inhuman and shameful, particularly the utter lack of regard for the needs of women, children and the ill. Despite its experience of natural calamities, the government has not learnt lessons in immediate succor and assistance to the distressed and needy. We find incomprehensible that the Union Home Minister and the Orissa Chief Minister came in a helicopter to Barakhama, came to the Relief camp, and chose to sit under a shamiana or tent and talk to the people across a rope. They did not walk down a few meters to the class rooms where injured and sick people were lying down. Nor did they even bother to look at the cooked rice, full of grit, which the people had to eat for want of anything else.

2. SETTING UP OF THE FACT FINDING COMMITTEE:

The first act of violence [see narrative and sequence of events, below] violence took place on the morning of 24th December 2007 in the small town of Brahminigaon, which has a Police Station, the office or the Revenue Office and other institutions. This is a major entry point to the entire Kandhamala hills region and an important market place. Some Christians own shops and are comparatively better off than others. They have mobile phones, as does the parish priest whose Church was the first to be burnt down. They informed Archbishop Raphael Cheenath and his office, and they in turn informed others including Dr John Dayal in New Delhi. Dr John Dayal and others immediately informed the national media in New Delhi and Mumbai. But it was Christmas Eve and News Planners were focussed on the celebratory and commercial aspects of the Holiday season. The event did not get the coverage it deserved.

Church and Civil Society groups however were alerted, in swift order, the offices of the Prime Minister, President and Union Minister were informed as was the office of the Chief Minister of Orissa. The Prime Minister was not initially available, but a delegation called on Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil on 27th December 2007. President Mrs. Pratibha Patil was met with by the Bishop of the Andamans and Nicobar Islands, and eventually Archbishops Cheenath and Archbishop Vincent Concessao of Delhi met with

the Prime Minister. Two public rallies and candle light vigils were taken out in New Delhi as also in Mumbai, Bhubaneswar and other cities.

At those rallies, it was decided that the facts of the Kandhamala had to be ascertained in detail and without bias.

At a meeting of Christian and other activist groups in Bhubaneswar, the fact finding group was set up

The fact finding team consisted of

- 1. Dr John Dayal, Member, National Integration Council, Government of India, Senior Editor and Political Columnist, and well known national Human Rights activist with experience of many People's Tribunals and fact finding Missions.**
- 2. Advocate Nicholas Barla, Lawyer and Human Rights expert from Rourkela with experience in Police and social conflicts in the State.**
- 3. Mr Hemant Nayak, social scientist and Human Rights and Development activist, Bhubaneswar.**

The team was facilitated by many persons at various stages.

The team made two visits to the district. The first visit was aborted at the Phulbani offices of the Police superintendent on 29th December 2007 after having visited affected churches and Convents in some of the area. The second visit was from 1st January to the night of 3rd January 2008 and covered almost every affected area barring one.

It is important to record the circumstances of the first visit. We believe that Truth must prevail, and that facts, if unearthed early, naturally quench doubts and ensure that rumours are not given currency. We noted in our Press statement in Bhubaneswar on 30th December 2007: I report with deep sorrow and anguish that I and a five member Fact Finding Team that had gone to the Phulbani area of Kandhamala district on Saturday, 29th December 2007, was forcibly expelled by Inspector General of Police Pradeep Kapoor who ordered the Phulbani Town Police Inspector to ensure that I left the district that night. The Town Police Inspector then made us follow an armed police escort for a one and a half hour drive through the night darkness till we reached the border of Ganjam district, where he left us. We could return to Bhubaneswar by 4 am today, 30th December 2007, deeply distressed and feeling very frustrated with the experience. The fact finding team was set up at a meeting of activists in the Swosti Hotel in Bhubaneswar on 28th December 2007 to get an authentic first hand account of the developments and the violence in the Kandhamala district because rumours, absence of authentic media reports and often inaccurate government accounts of the casualties, had left the people confused. There were also fears that lack of authentic information would impact on the confidence building measures and the peace process. I was requested to lead the Fact Finding Team in view of my experience in Gujarat, Nandigram, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan the Northeast. As a matter of abundant precaution, I wrote to the Director General of Police, Orissa, on 28th December 2007. I, inter alia, said "I am a

Member of the National Integration Council, Government of India, and the National President of the All India Catholic Union. I am part of a Fact Finding team set up by civil society and Human Rights groups to assess the situation in the violence affected areas of Orissa for us to be able to formulate People's initiative for confidence building and peace. The team, consisting of six persons including me, intends to leave Bhubaneswar on the morning of 29th December 2007 and return in the evening of 31 December 2007. We will have a night halt in Phulbani. We will appreciate any assistance and facilitation we can get from the Orissa Police and in particular from the Police forces of the District. I am sure your office will take the necessary steps, and inform the District Police of the area." We drove to Phulbani on 29th December; reaching safely and without any problems, by about 5 p.m. En route we were able to assess the damage done to the NISSWAS School of Social Work set up by Dr. R K Nayak, IAS retired and currently a Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. We also saw the damage done to the Carmelite Convent and the Carmel English School. Nuns we interviewed told us how attempts were made to set the convent on fire even as the Nuns were cowering in a room where they had locked themselves in. Two sisters who could escape injured themselves in the process. Later, we went to the Offices of the Police Superintendent to discuss with them our onward journey to Balliguda that evening or early next morning, and to see if there was need for Curfew Passes, which are normally given to Media and other groups. The Inspector General of Police, Mr Kapoor, the Divisional Commissioner and the Deputy Inspector General of Police were present in the room. I was questioned in some detail, always very politely, by Mr Kapoor who wanted to know about my membership of the NIC, my credentials as a journalist and the books I had authored. He also photographed my colleagues and me with his Mobile Telephone camera. I gave a patent reply to every single question. I also pointed out that this was not a government enquiry, but that I would prepare a report I would submit to the authorities and which would also help facilitate the National Minority Commission members who are scheduled to visit the spot on 6th January 2008. I reminded the police were a peaceful group, and our team included an Advocate, apart from interpreters and with expertise in ethnic studies. Mr Kapoor was ever polite, but remained adamant. My colleagues felt they were being interrogated in a police station. Mr Kapoor said he would not allow me to proceed, or even to remain in Phulbani. He said it would not be safe for me, or for the persons with whom I would stay. He said the Rapid Action Force had been deployed in Phulbani town and I had to draw my inference from this fact about the situation and tension in the place. I told him there was no way we would be crashing police barriers. It was not for fear of our lives but in deference to the rule of law that we would go. He was apparently not satisfied. He called the Phulbani police officers and ordered them to escort me out. The Kandhamala region needs not just media coverage and government relief operations. The rescue, relief and rehabilitation programme has to be done in a transparent manner. Already there have been too many complaints of police and administrative apathy, complicity and even aggressive force against one community, the victim community. Independent fact finding teams and the information they give help in maintaining transparency and positively contribute to the peace process. I hope we will be able to visit and record the situation in every affected village as an important part of building long term peace, harmony and in ensuring relief, compensation and rehabilitation. -- John Dayal."

I am very happy the fact Finding team could visit the Kandhamala region again from 1st January 2008 without police escort, without police protection, without official cooperation and with no help other than the goodwill of all people – Christians and Hindus alike.

3. CALENDAR, CHRONICLE AND NARRATIVES OF VIOLENCE:

3.1 SEQUENCE OF ERUPTION OF VIOLENCE BY DATE - dateline --

Church youth and Ambedkar Banika Sangh take permission for Christmas Celebrations. Officials approve. Police C-Inspector and SDO inspect site and approve. Promise protection from 23rd December

23rd December 2007 – Hindu youth tell Church women and youth not to put up Christmas decorations. Christians show government permission.

24th December 2007 – 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. – Mob forces shops and haat weekly traditional market to close. Police intervenes to get shops opened. Mob attacks market-goers. Christmas pandal on road is destroyed. Two Christians [Sillu and Avinash] are shot and injured

2 p.m. Rumours of attack on Lokhanananda Saraswati attacked in Dasingbadi

6.30 p.m. Evening Church attacked in Balliguda, Convent [cow killed in convent in arson], Seminary, CNI Church, Pentecostal church and burnt. No police action. No curfew.

25th December 2007 – Attacks take place in Brahminigaon, Pobingia, Srasananda, Barakhama, Budaguda, Nuagaon, Tikkawali

26^h December 2007 --

28th December 2007 --

VIOLENCE AFFECTED REVENUE BLOCKS, KANDHAMALA DISTRICT:

- 3.2.1 Daringbari Block
- 3.2.2 Balliguda Block
- 3.2.3 Phiringia Block
- 3.2.4 Phulbani Block
- 3.2.5 Tikabali Block
- 3.2.6 Khajuripoda Block
- 3.2.7 Nuagaon Block
- 3.2.8 Gumsar Udaigiri Block
- 3.2.9 Tumudibandha Block
- 3.2.10 Kothaghar Block

3.2 CHRONICLE OF THE KANDHAMALA VIOLENCE Dec 2007

Sl no.	Name of the place	Date	Time	Narration
1.	Brahminigaon	9.12.2007		Swami Lokhanananda Saraswati commonly referred to as Swamiji, had come to Brahminigaon and had a secret meeting with the Bighneswaro Banika Sangh who are the members of RSS and VHP. The situation was tensed in and around Brahminigaon on that onwards.
2	Brahminigaon	19.12.2007		Permission for Christmas Celebration was obtained from the Sub Collector and CI Office Balliguda.
3.	Brahminigaon	21.12.2007		SDPO visited Brahminigaon. The Christian elders met the SDPO and apprised him of the situation., he also assured his participation in the celebration. He also had called the leaders of both the parties, the Hindus and Christians, but the Hindus did not come for the meeting.
4.	Bhubaneswar	21.12.2007- 23.12.2007		The Arya Samaj of Bhubaneswar organized a three days YOGA PROGRAMME of Baba Ram Dev at Capital High School, Unit III of Bhubaneswar. In 25 to 30 buses of people were brought from Kandhamala for the purpose. On 22 nd December all the presidents of RSS from each Panchayat of Kandhamala District had a secrete meeting from 11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. to an unknown place. On 23 rd evening the yoga class was over and all of them back to their respective places. And on 24 th morning onwards the attacked begun in the different Church communities.
5.	Kandhamala Dist. Headquarter	22.12.2007		The Christian Jana Kalyan Samaj of Kandhamala met the collector and S.P. and handed over written statement against the BANDH called on 25 th and 26 th December at Kandhamala, but to allow the Christians to Observe the Christmas.
6.	Brahminigaon	22.12.2007		The S.P. had come to Brahminigaon to enquire about the situation, learnt the matter but did not put any force there.
7.	Brahminigaon	23.12.2007	1.30 p.m.	Dr. B.R Ambedkar Banika Sangh of Brahminigaon together with six Sarpanches of the area have appraised the situation and have sent fax message to S.P , Phulbani. And met him at Brahminigaon. Dr. Ambedkar Banika Sangh of Brahminigaon went to the police station and discussed about the tensed situation in the area. They also discussed about the secret plan of performing Yagyan (puja) by Swami Lokhanananda Saraswati and VHP leaders in front of the church.
8.	Brahminigaon	23.12.2007	6.30 p.m.	One of the members of the Vanika Sangha of Brahminigaon phoned Superintendent of Police Mr. Narasingh Bhol and requested for police force in the village.
9.	Brahmunigaon	24.12.2007	6.00 a.m.	The Sarpanches of six Gram Panchayats together with Village heads went to the police station and requested to allow the market to be opened, which the RSS and Bajrang Dal people were opposing.
10.	Brahmunigaon	24.12.2007	7.00 a.m.	The ASI came to the market and told the people to open the market.
11.	Brahmunigaon	24.12.2007	8.30 a.m.	The weekly market was going on. Suddenly the RSS leader Mr.

				<p>Bikram Rout, Dhanu Pradhani and others came and threatened the sellers and buyers to stop marketing. They also ordered the shopkeepers to close down their shops and there were already tussled between them. One of the buyers was beaten up by the Bikram and group. The Christian People were in need of buying some of the important articles as 25th was Christmas day.</p> <p>Some of the Christian members were making Christmas decoration, big pandal for worship, crib, sound system etc for the night worship. The same miscreants came there and asked the community to close down and they threatened not to have any celebration. Here also some tussle between both the groups took place</p> <p>Bikram and others RSS, VHP, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram Bajrang Dal members came with guns, swords, iron rods and other lethal weapons and attacked on the Christians around 10 a.m. The Christians were unarmed and ran away to the forest to save their lives. On the process two were injured by bullet shot. Some are injured by other weapons.</p> <p>The police was inactive, did not take prompt action on the miscreants and all this took place in the present of the police. The police station is just 400 yards from the Church.</p> <p>All the Christians ran away to the forest including the priest and nuns leaving theirs all belongings.</p>
12.	Dasingbadi	24.12.2007	10.45 a.m.	<p>Swami Lokhanananda Saraswati who is known as SWAMI at Jalespatta of Tumudibandha P.S., Dist Kandhamala was going to Brahmunigaon by his vehicle. One private bus was going ahead of his vehicle. Due to narrow road and due to technical fault of the bus it stood on the road at Dasingbadi near upper primary school Dasingbadi.</p> <p>There is a small village Church in Dasingbadi a little distance on the road side and the Christian youth were busy in decorating their village church for the Christmas. Christmas music was going on.</p> <p>Lokhmananda hearing the sound apparently asked his bodyguards and his driver to go and have it stopped. The security guards and the driver (who are govt. security men) went to the spot, got into an argument with the Christian youth, and at some time pulled down the decorations and the sound boxes etc even as the Christian youth confronted them.</p> <p>There is no evidence of a physical assault on Lakhmananda Saraswati. Because of the controversy surrounding this incident, there is need for a Central Bureau of Enquiry specifically into this as part of a general probe.</p> <p>Then with his vehicle he went to Daringbari and showed his security men to medical officer Dr. Pradhan at Daringbadi Community Health Center. There he stayed for two days in the family planning office looked after by Dr. Pradhan (who is also a Bajrang Dal member) There the I. I.C. of Daringbari Mr. Pradhan provided 8 to 10 police man guarding him. The IIC has advised Mr. Laxamananda not to go to Brahmunigaon.</p> <p>Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan and Mr. Surendra Sahoo who both are of Daringbari went to meet Lokhanananda. Lokhanananda, hearing the incident, that there was tussle between his security men and the Christian youths at Dasingbadi. They also felt sad about the incident and proposed to have peace meeting and</p>

				<p>resolved the issue. But Lokhanananda said “KRANTI NO THILE SHANTI NAHI , Mote kichhi mado hoi nahi” (in English “without revolution no peace, I am not hurt”) in the present of the I.I.C. and other local leaders.</p> <p>On 25th December at about 1 p.m. he left Daringbari community hospital by block jeep through Soroda road.</p> <p>One RSS boy Muna Sahoo who is having video camera he took the interview and statement of Lokhmananda which was telecast on satellite television channels in the media.</p>
13.	Balliguda	24.12.2007	7.30 p.m.	<p>At About 7.30 p.m. more than 400 miscreants, kumkum on their foreheads, chanting “Jay Sri Ram” most likely the Bajrang Dal and RSS members with guns, Swords, axes, Pharsa and other lethal weapons in their hands broke opened the main gate of the church, abusing the few Christian youths who were busy in decorating and giving the last touches for the worship on the birthday of their Lord Jesus. There was stoning.</p> <p>They came running towards the youths shouting “SALLE CHRISTIAN MANONKU JEEVAN RE MARI DIYO, GIRJA DHANSA KORO” means “kill the Christians, destroy the church.” The youths together with priest, nuns, hostel boys, seminarians seeing the barbarous nature of the crowd ran to the jungle to save their lives.</p> <p>Then they collected all the furniture, worship materials, hostel godowns, furniture and all the belongings and set them fire that became assess within few minutes.</p> <p>The schools, hostels, the sisters residence which is in another compound was also ransacked and put in to fire. The sisters and the hostel girls had very difficult time to save themselves.</p> <p>One of the sisters was caught and man handled very badly.</p> <p>A cows died as a consequence of the arson.</p> <p>All this took place in the presence of the police officials’ right from the Tahsildar, BDO, Sub Collector, IIC etc.</p>
14.	Barakhama	24.12.2007	4.00 p.m.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Christian community already knew that some incident would take place, they started their worship at 4 p.m. itself. 2. A group of hoodlums about 2000 people having red marks on their foreheads, armed with swords, axes, pharsa etc. chanting “Jay Sri Ram, Christian manonku mari diyo(Kill the Christians), Girija dhanso koro (Destroy the churches) etc. destroyed the Pentecostal church, which is in the eastern part of the village. 3. Seeing the mob and the flames the Christians of the village started running towards forest to save themselves. 4. The people whose houses are burnt mostly of the Christian community and now are sheltered in the Barakhama high school. 5. The male members of the family are staying in the jungle and officials demanding their females to bring their husband else they would not receive relief materials. On the other hand when the male members are coming to the camp from the jungle, the police are booking them on the falls cases and arresting them. The FIRs are not accepted by the OICs.

15.	Brahmunigaon	25.12.2007	10.00a.m. 11.45 a.m.	<p>1. First the mob entered the village Church of Ulipodor and destroyed and burnt 30 Christian houses and also beat them very badly.</p> <p>2. The mob entered the main gate of the church breaking the grills, houses, Church, the priest residents and other places and put fire and thus irreparable damage was done to the Christian community as a whole.</p>
16.	Pobingia	25.12.2007	9.00 am	The mob entered the Church of Pobingia and instantly burnt the Church, Presbytery, Boys Hostel, Convent and girls Hostel .
17.	Brahmunigaon	25.12.2007	2.00 p.m.	1. The miscreants once again gathered and entered in to the market and burned the shops and houses of the Christian community.
18.	Bodagan	25.12.2007	Night	Church was attacked
19.	Kamapada	25.12.2007	Night	Church was attacked
20.	Kulpakia	25.12.2007	Night	Church was attacked
21.	Sirtiguda	25.12.2007	Night	7 Churches were burnt .
22.	Phirignia	25.12.2007	Night	Church was attacked
23.	Srasa Nanda	25.12.2007	10.00 p.m	In the presence of Magistrate and 22 police personnel the church was attacked and burnt.
24.	Ruthungia	25.12.2007	Night	8 village churches were burnt.
25.	Kalingia	25.12.2007	day	Village Church was burnt.
26.	Tikapali	25.12.2007	day	Village Church was burnt.
27.	Nuagaon	25.12.2007	Night	9 Village Churches were burnt.
28.	Dalagaon	25.12.2007	Night	Village Church was burnt.
29.	Iripiguda	25.12.2007	Night	Village church was burnt.
30.	Krutumgarh	26.12.2007		1. The non Christian tribals of Krutumgarh collected Rs. 50/- from each family. They had the YAGYAN (puja) in the village. After the puja they were dancing with weapons like swords, sickle, pharsa etc.
31.	Padangi	26.12.2007	Night	1. Boriguda Village Church was burnt.
32.	Sankharakhole	26-12-2007	Night	1. The mob entered the Church of Sankharakhole and attacked the Church, Convent, Priest residence
33.	Brahmunigaon	27.12.2007	12.15 p.m	<p>1. There are differing accounts even by the victims as to how the Oriya-sahi houses were burnt. Some say villagers of local area burnt houses in Paikosahi Others say it was outsiders, even from outside the district.</p> <p>The police are not giving still a coherent account as to which direction the mob came to the walled where civilians had taken shelter, or were being kept, and the premises of the police station nearby. This is not an open area, and involved rough ground, a narrow road and many houses. Because this is in the nature of an encounter between a mob and the police, with an exchange of fire, this needs a separate enquiry under the law.</p> <p>There is also need for a through probe as to what happened to civilians injured in the police firing as many rounds were fired. The police admit to one uniformed person injured.</p> <p>There was police force and it opened fire on them and two were killed and the crowd was dispersed.</p>

THANKS: This Fact Finding Team's work would not have been possible but for the assistance provided all through by many individuals, organisations and institutions.

Institutions and organisations we wish to thank in particular are the Catholic Bishops Conference, the Archdioceses of Delhi and Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Dioceses of Rourkela and Berhampur, the All India Christian Council, the All India Catholic Union, the United Christian Forum New Delhi. Individuals include Archbishop Raphael Cheenath, SVD of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Archbishop Vincent Concessao of Delhi, Catholic Fathers Dominic Emmanuel, Madhu Chandra and Advocate Mary Scaria in Delhi and Bernard Bhubaneswar in, Mrityunjay and Madan in Bhubaneswar, Dr Pran Parichha for his motivation and his assistance with the media. Special thanks are due to Mumbai Film Director Mahesh Bhatt and Maharashtra State Minorities Commission Vice Chairman Dr. Abraham Mathai for making it possible to meet with the Chief Minister and facilitating the Team's interactions with government functionaries. Many Christians and Hindus, tribals and non tribals, government servants and others, who were of help, wish to remain anonymous, and we honour their sentiments as we thank them. Thanks must also be expressed to two brave drivers who did not care for rumours and drove our SUV with care on the terrible roads. And most of all, we wish to thank the Press -- the Print and the Electronic Media -- in new Delhi and Bhubaneswar whose interaction, assistance and coverage brought focus on the violence, and hopefully, will also help in the healing of the wounds of the Kandhamala hills.

4. ANNEXURE:

4.1 Illustrative Testimonies of key witnesses / victims

4.1.1 Text of the oral testimony of Catholic Father Rabi Sabhasundar, Parish Priest, Bamunigaon, and a born in the district, who saw his parish church attacked, vandalized and then set on fire in the Brahminigaon:

“The Church of Our Lady of Lourds, Bamunigaon, Kandhamala District, Orissa consists of around 1630 of 217 families. Like any other year this year 2007, the people of Bamunigaon were preparing and getting ready to celebrate Christmas. So they had put up Christmas Crib (Pandal) in front of Christian shops where they used to do usually in every year. The Christmas Crib (Pandal) was decorated with all light and sound and with all the necessary decorative articles. For the Pandal making and celebration, a committee (Ambedkar Banika Sango) had already got the permission from the Collector, Sub-Collector and SP. With the prior permission as they were proceeding with all the preparation, on the eve of Christmas celebration, in order to disrupt the celebration the committee of Banika Sango of Hindu group along with the president of RSS Mr. Bigram Rautho 40 year of age son of Kishore Rautho, Nuagam, Ps. Bamunigaon, and Mr. Dhanu Pradhani s/o Bainath, Jhinjiriguda, Bamunigaon went to the police station and complained repeatedly to SI not to have weekly market in Bamunigaon. On Monday 24th December, 2007 at 10 am, the RSS president Mr. Bikram along with his RSS members and Hindu business people went to market place and forcibly stopped the people not to have market on that day. Meanwhile the SI of Police Station along with 5 Sarpanch of the locality and majority of the village customers came to the market place and convinced the Mr. Bikram and his team to carry out the market. However, soon after the departure of the SI, Mr. Bikram and his team physically harassed many villages people those who

had come to the market. Some were thoroughly beaten with sticks and iron bars. They also showed the weapons to attack them. With the short period of time nearly 200 people came running to the Crib with guns, spears, axe, and many other tradition weapons and they completely destroyed the well decorated Crib. Along with this they also broke, looted and burnt all the shops of Christian people. At the same time some people pour the petrol and burnt three motor bikes of Christian people. Angry mob also burnt one generator, light and sound system and other decoration articles of people of Digapainy, Gajapati district, who were hired and employed by their owner for the Christmas celebration. In the process of destroying the Crib one boy of 15 years of age was shot with a gun. Whereas another boy of 12 years of age was very badly attacked and hurt on the head with a sharp edged sword. Seeing the pitiful condition of this boy when his parents were coming to rescue him, both of them were beaten and hurt with iron bar and by tradition weapons. Seeing this fearful attack, many Christians of the locality and many village customers those who had come from near by villages run for their lives. Taking the advantage and disperse of the helpless people, all the more Mr. Bikram together with his RSS members, Hindu business people and many other Hindu people destroyed the shops of Christian people one after the another. On 24th December, 2007, instead of celebrating the Midnight Mass, most of the Christians with their small children and babies went to the near by forest and had a sleepless night and took shelter on that sever cold dark night. On 25th December, 2007, many people those who took shelter in the forest came to their houses thinking that the atrocity will be stopped. But the atrocity still continued on that day too. At 10 am. around four to five hundred RSS people, Hindu business people of the locality and many other Hindu people those who came from near by Hindu villages marched towards the Christian Street with a slogan “Jai Sri Ram”, Jai Hanuman and they were also shouting and abusing with all kinds of bulgur and threatening words like ‘Magyasala’, ‘Padry Manongku Jalidio’, ‘Semango Church ebang Anustano Pudidio, Christian manongu Hatao’, and burnt most of the houses and looted their properties. After having completely destroyed the houses and properties they forcibly entered the Church campus with the guns, petrol, diesel, kerosene, bombs, and many other traditional weapons and broke and burnt the doors, windows, statues, altar, and many other musical instruments, lights and sound, furniture and many other church and religious articles including Bible and completely desecrated the church. Meantime some of them entered the presbytery and burnt the Father’s residence including their two motor bikes, one generator, steel and wooden almirhars and all the documents and furniture and looted several lakhs of properties. After the complete destruction of the church and the presbytery the angry mob went around in search of priests and nuns to harass and burn them alive. Hearing and seeing the destructive behavior of the RSS people, three priests, one deacon, one regent, two brothers, five sisters of Holy Cross Convent, and four domestic workers run to the near by jungle together with many Christian people to save their lives. It is a matter of great sadness that all these atrocities, and destruction was done in the presence of police force. Till today priests, nuns and people are in forests and other near by villages with great fear and anxiety. Though the government has lunched to give relief to the people of both the communities, unfortunately one community of Hindu people are given relief and Christians are neglected. When Christian mothers go to ask for the relief, government relief officials harass them and telling them to bring their husbands. After having experienced the

atrocities and harassment from both Hindu community and the government officials, the Christian people continue to live with fear and anxiety. We don't know how long this atrocity and violence will persist.”

4.1.2 Statement of Sr. Zerina, CSST, eye-witness, Principal, Carmel School, Phulbani:

“The School is situated just about two kilometers away from the Superintendent of Police and Collector's offices in Phulbani. There are 550 students in our school. The school was started in 1989. There are 98% Hindu students and only 2% Christians in the school. There are 4 Sisters, 4 Christian's teachers, 13 Hindu teachers 2 Christian staff and one Hindu accountant in the school. Sister Zerina is principal since last two years after completing her M.A. B.A. Bed in 2006. I got news on 23rd December that something would happen and she also learnt about the Bandh 25th and 26th December. I wanted to go to Bhopal for a meeting the same evening but one of the shopkeepers told her not to go the next day or at night. The sisters decided not to go to Bhopal for meeting. On 24th some local people came and greeted us at 6.30 pm. They also reported that there automobile tyres were being set on fire at Madiguda chowk, just 200 meters away from the school. The same time The Parish priest Fr. Mathew phoned and up said there would be no Holy Mass in the Christ Jyoti parish church. Sr. Zerina also received a phone call from Sr. Christa from Balliguda, saying the problem was escalating. The deputy collector, Shri Arun Parichha, rang up to tell us that there was some problem in Brahminigaon. He said the vehicle of the RSS leader has been attacked and there will be more problem and he has seen the law and order. At about 8 p.m. Sr. Christa from the Convent in Balliguda rang up Sr. Zerina saying the convent of Balliguda had been set on fire. She asked us for our prayers. The sisters and I panicked. At about 8.30 pm we got the news from Sr. Christa from Balliguda saying they were safe, but feeling suffocated because the premises were filled with smoke. That was the last connection we had with our sisters from Balliguda. On 25th around 9.30 a.m. one Hindu teacher Mr. Sarangdhar came to the school about my travel plans. Fr. Bijya Nayak from Krotamgarh also rang up and warned us of a possible attack on school, convent and parish. We rang up a neighbour, Mr. Paul Raj from Sadhan to ask for help from police. Meanwhile Sr. Christa also rang up and advised as to leave the place taking all the important document. At 11.00 a.m. I went for prayer, there were total of four Sisters, 2 maid servants and 2 girl hostlers who were also with us the convent. At this moment Sr. Rohine shouted “They have come inside.” The mob was shouting “**Jay Sriram**” and “**Kill the Christian**”. They all carried swords and other weapons. On seeing the crowd Sr. Rohine and Sr. Hemanti jumped over the convent wall and ran for their lives. One of them sprained her leg in the process. After 15 minutes of the attacked some policemen are came to our school. There has been damage the school, and the school bus.”

4.1.3 Statement of Fr. Laxmikanta Pradhan , Catholic Church Balliguda

“On 24th evening around 7.30 p.m. a huge group of Hindu fundamentalist/ Rahudise with kumkum on their foreheads and carrying lethal weapons like sword, guns, iron rods, axes in their hand rushed to our church abusing the priest and sisters in very filthy language. They broke the main gate and entered the church compound, started breaking all the

Christmas decorations, pandal and worship materials. Then they wanted to kill some of the Christian who were busy in preparing the Christmas celebrations. We ran for our life, and took refuge in the jungle. From the hill we could see the flames rising from our Church, residence and hostels. Later we found the church and all the worship materials were burn down. In the residence and hostels also we found that everything was burned down.