



*October 2019*

Briefing on the Situation of

# **Religious Persecution of Christians and Muslims in India**



## Table Of Contents

I.	General Information.....	3
II.	The Caste System and Christianity.....	3
III.	Cow Slaughter Laws .....	4
IV.	Anti-Conversion Laws/Forced Conversions.....	4
V.	Arbitrary Arrests .....	5
VI.	Violence.....	6
VII.	Christian NGO Work in India .....	8
VIII.	Recommendations .....	9

## **I. General Information**

Being one of the largest nations in the world geographically, as well as the nation home to the second highest population, India is home to followers of a variety of religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Judaism. Although there are followers of each of the above religious doctrines in India, by far the majority are Hindu, and Open Doors reveals that in 2019 so far, approximately 73% of India's population are Hindu. These religions have coexisted in relative peace for quite some time, however, since the 1990s, radical members of the Hindu majority have abandoned their relative tolerance towards their peers of other religious affiliation.

Radical violence toward religious minorities in India is backed by, if not stimulated by, the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who runs the Hindu-dominated Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Since his election in 2014, it seems that radical Hindu violence and persecution directed at religious minorities has only increased, and little has been done by the BJP, including Prime Minister Modi, to address or condemn such heinous cruelty.

Moreover, The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's (USCIRF) 2019 Annual Report explained that religious persecution is further institutionalized within the educational sector, where Hindu radical schools use texts promoting religious intolerance to indoctrinate students. Some of these students have even gone on to start student organizations aimed at carrying out such intolerance in the form of utilizing "intimidation and violence in colleges to silence their secular or non-Hindu classmates and shut down events that challenge their viewpoints"<sup>1</sup>

## **II. The Caste System and Christianity**

The caste system has historically placed Indian Christians at the bottom of society in terms of social welfare, economic and educational provision, and relative importance.

In Article 15 of the Constitution of India, it directly states that no individuals, regardless of religious identity, shall become victims of discrimination in society, the workplace, educational institutions, and more sectors of Indian society,

However, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order of 1950, Paragraph 3 states "notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 2, no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste." Within the Constitution of India, numerous articles (Article 46) promote the protection of educational and economic interests, political representation, and equality in all affairs, however only for members of Scheduled Castes. This means religious minorities, including Christians and Muslims, are denied these protections and promotions by the government of India.

It is a fact that most Christian families and individuals rank within the lowest strata of the Indian caste-system. In fact, according to Open Doors, a proportion of these Christians are on the list of individuals or groups of people that are not worthy of a space within the caste system. These individuals and groups are referred to as "untouchables," and are subjected to social attitudes resulting in, "severe social and economic disabilities and cultural and educational backwardness"<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF Annual Report 2019, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> The National Commission for Minorities, Dalits in the Muslim and Christian Communities Report, p. 72.

### III. Cow Slaughter Laws

In India, where the majority religion is Hinduism, a religion in which cattle are revered as a sacred animal, anti-cow slaughter laws have been established in a number of states; however, they are often used to directly arrest non-Hindus, most notably Christian and Muslim farmers who have previously been “legally involved in the dairy, leather, or beef trades for generations”.<sup>3</sup>

While many Indian Christians are routinely subject to violence at the hands of Hindu radicals, they also face arbitrary arrests under charges of forced conversion by police officials who were tipped off by their peers, more often than not the same Hindu radicals that are beating and killing Christian worshippers.

During Open Doors World Watch List 2019 reporting period from November 1, 2017 to October 31, 2018, 207 Christians in India were “detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-related reasons.’ There have been situations in which Muslims and Christians were lynched by Hindu radicals for working in the cattle industry or even purchasing beef.<sup>4</sup>

This relatively recent development of the use of violent tactics to ‘punish’ cattle herders and other religious minorities is the result of what these Hindu cow protection vigilantes claim to be a weakness of the national government to enforce the prohibition on cow slaughter and smuggling that is omnipresent in most states of the nation.<sup>5</sup> Despite what the Hindu radicals believe to be a lack of implementation of the cow slaughter ban, government officials, including police officers and higher-up officials of the BJP party of India have made little to no efforts to prevent or condemn the lynching and violence that has increasingly targeted religious minorities. In fact, the police officers have often been either inactive on investigating and trying the Hindu mobs conducting the lynchings, but more often than not they are even involved in covering up these murders, Human Rights Watch reports.

### IV. Anti-Conversion Laws/Forced Conversions

*“...[T]he fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief includes the right to change one’s faith to another or to no faith at all. This right includes the ability to manifest one’s beliefs through expression intended to persuade another individual to change his or her religious beliefs or affiliation voluntarily.”<sup>6</sup>*

Despite this tenet, also affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 18, eight Indian states have ratified anti-conversion laws: Odisha (formerly Orissa), Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand.<sup>7</sup> These laws prohibit any form of coerced or forced conversion, however, USCIRF explains that often times these laws are so broad that they are often applied to criminalize any form of conversion, even if it is done freely. Moreover, all Christians are in some way considered suspicious by their peers and by government officials as they are often believed to be attempting to convert those around them.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF Annual Report 2019, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> The Evangelical Fellowship of India, Status of Christianity in India in 2018 Report,

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, Violent Cow Protection in India Report 2019.

<sup>6</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF Annual Report 2019, p. 174.

<sup>7</sup> The Law Library of Congress, State Anti-conversion Laws in India, 2018, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Open Doors Analytical, India WWR Country Dossier 2019, p. 12.

Another common occurrence is the attempt of Hindu radicals to force Christian and Muslim converts to renounce their new faiths and return to Hinduism. Even when Christians and Muslims face such pressure from the Hindu radicals, they often times make the decision to return to their Hindu faith for fear of discrimination and persecution. This practice is referred to as “homecoming.”<sup>9</sup>

The laws are discriminatory and not reciprocal. Even though the anti-conversion laws specifically prohibit forced conversions, Hindus are not apprehended for their attempts to get Christians and Muslims to renounce. Yet when Hindus willingly convert on their own to Christianity or Islam and encourage their peers to convert in a consensual manner, they are criminalized using these laws along with other Christians or Muslims.

## V. Arbitrary Arrests

While many Indian Christians are routinely subject to violence at the hands of Hindu radicals, they also face arbitrary arrests under charges of forced conversion by police officials who were tipped off by their peers, more often than not the same Hindu radicals that are beating and killing Christian worshippers. During Open Doors World Watch List 2019 reporting period from November 1, 2017 to October 31, 2018, 207 Christians in India were “detained without trial or sentenced to jail, labor camp, sent to psychiatric hospital as punishment or similar things for faith-relate reasons.”<sup>10</sup>

Below are some of the most noteworthy incidents of arbitrary arrests in recent years:

### Noteworthy Incidents

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Incident Description	Source
07/22/2016	Pastor Ram Pal Kori and another church member Nand Lal were arrested on false charges of forced conversion only 12 hours after they were beaten and harassed by Hindu radicals.	<a href="https://www.ucanews.com/news/attacked-christians-jailed-in-central-india/76669">https://www.ucanews.com/news/attacked-christians-jailed-in-central-india/76669</a>  <a href="https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/08/anti-christian-violence-in-india-at-an-alarming-level/">https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/08/anti-christian-violence-in-india-at-an-alarming-level/</a>
12/14/2017	A group of 32 Christian Christmas carolers were arrested for supposedly attempting to evangelize. A few Catholic priests visited the police station to question the arrests, and their car was destroyed by Hindu radicals.	<a href="http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/India-WWR-COUNTRY-DOSSIER-January-2019-update.pdf">http://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/India-WWR-COUNTRY-DOSSIER-January-2019-update.pdf</a>  <a href="https://www.persecution.org/2017/12/15/32-christians-in-india-attacked-and-arrested-for-singing-christmas-carols/">https://www.persecution.org/2017/12/15/32-christians-in-india-attacked-and-arrested-for-singing-christmas-carols/</a>

<sup>9</sup> Open Doors Analytical, India WWR Country Dossier 2019, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Open Doors Analytical, India WWR Country Dossier 2019, p. 12.

<p>09/23/2018</p>	<p>Ten pastors and their families were arrested during Sunday worship after Hindu radicals falsely reported to the police that they were forcibly converting individuals to Christianity</p>	<p><a href="https://www.csw.org.uk/2018/10/03/press/4092/article.htm">https://www.csw.org.uk/2018/10/03/press/4092/article.htm</a> <a href="https://www.christianpost.com/news/india-police-arrest-10-pastors-families-in-mass-raid-on-churches.html">https://www.christianpost.com/news/india-police-arrest-10-pastors-families-in-mass-raid-on-churches.html</a></p>
<p>06/12/2019</p>	<p>A group of Christians were arrested for publicly preaching in a moving train in Tamil Nadu about how they were saved and encouraging other passengers to convert.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.persecution.org/2019/06/22/indian-christians-arrested-allegedly-disturbing-public-peace/">https://www.persecution.org/2019/06/22/indian-christians-arrested-allegedly-disturbing-public-peace/</a></p>
<p>07/01/2019</p>	<p>Four Christian men named Sonu Kumar, Rakesh Maurya, Satnam aka Munna, Shribaghwan aka Munna were falsely arrested for trying to forcibly convert peers in their village. They were released later the same day and charges were dropped.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Uttar-Pradesh,-four-Christians-arrested-for-'forced-conversions'-45899.html">http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Uttar-Pradesh,-four-Christians-arrested-for-'forced-conversions'-45899.html</a></p>

## VI. Violence

Although there is at least some violence directed towards Christians in almost every state within the nation, by far the most dangerous state for Christians and religious minorities is Uttar Pradesh, where, not only were there recorded 94 incidents of violence towards Christians in the state within the last four months of 2018, but there were only 50 violent acts towards Christians in the entire year of 2017.

Although some of the discrimination that Christians face in India is not physically violent, such as verbal harassment and interruption of worship, the majority of persecution is of violent nature, such as “honor killings, acid throwing, beatings by mobs, executions” and murder.<sup>11</sup> The Evangelical Fellowship of India recorded that in 2018, there were 38 reported incidents of arbitrary arrests, 81 incidents of interrupted worship, 53 accounts of physical violence, and 44 incidents of verbal harassment.<sup>12</sup> Open Doors reports that in that same year, during the reporting period of November 1, 2017 to October 31, 2018, 10 Christians were killed, almost 12,512 were physically attacked, and 98 Churches were ambushed. This is why, on their 2019 World Watch Report, Open Doors ranked India number 10 on a list of 73 nations where it is dangerous to be a Christian, just below Iran and above Syria and Nigeria.

The most recent statistics regarding violence in India, from the first six months of 2019, were received from the United Christian Form (UCF) who reported, “158 incidents of violence against Christians in 23 states of India, in which 110 women and 89 children were injured.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Open Doors Analytical, India WWR Country Dossier 2019.

<sup>12</sup> The Evangelical Fellowship of India, Hate and Targeted Violence Against Christians in India, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> News Agency, Fides. “Violence Against Christians in 23 States of India.” Zenit Articles, Zenit, 8 Aug. 2019, <http://www.zenit.org/articles/violence-against-christians-in-23-states-of-india/>.

Below are some of the noteworthy violent incidents that have occurred in recent years:

### Noteworthy Incidents

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Incident Description	Source
09/19/2018	While attending a Jesuit-school sponsored event, five Christian women were kidnapped at gunpoint and transported to a nearby forest where they were beaten and gang-raped	<a href="https://www.ucanews.com/news/five-women-from-jesuit-school-gang-raped-in-india/82640">https://www.ucanews.com/news/five-women-from-jesuit-school-gang-raped-in-india/82640</a> Open Doors Analytical WWR Country Dossier: India January 2019
09/20/2018	A group of Hindu radicals cut the throat of and hanged Pastor Gideon Periyaswamy from his roof after he reported them to the police a week earlier for harassing him	<a href="http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Tamil-Nadu,-Pentecostal-pastor-found-hanged.-He-had-received-threats-42889.html">http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Tamil-Nadu,-Pentecostal-pastor-found-hanged.-He-had-received-threats-42889.html</a> Open Doors Analytical WWR Country Dossier: India January 2019
01/13/2019	During a Sunday service at church, police officers arrested 6 worshippers and took them back to the local station. There, female pastor Sindhu Bharti was burned by the officers with boiling water until she fell unconscious.	<a href="https://morningstarnews.org/2019/03/report-shows-57-percent-jump-in-aggression-against-christians-in-india/">https://morningstarnews.org/2019/03/report-shows-57-percent-jump-in-aggression-against-christians-in-india/</a>
02/11/2019	Christian convert Anant Ram Gand, father of four girls, was killed and decapitated a week after he was urged by neighbors to renounce Christianity to avoid the harassment that he and his family were receiving	<a href="https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/india-christian-convert-killed-and-left-on-the-road-beheaded/">https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/india-christian-convert-killed-and-left-on-the-road-beheaded/</a> <a href="https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/india-christian-convert-killed-and-left-on-the-road-beheaded/">https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/coe/india-christian-convert-killed-and-left-on-the-road-beheaded/</a>
04/10/2019	A group of radical Hindus attacked and killed a Catholic man they believed had slaughtered a cow, which is considered a sacred animal to Hindus	<a href="https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-muslims-protest-over-indian-cow-vigilantes/84985">https://www.ucanews.com/news/christians-muslims-protest-over-indian-cow-vigilantes/84985</a> <a href="http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Jharkhand-Christian-killed-over-sacred-cows.-Msgr.-Mascarenhas:-Tragedy-for-Humanity-46773.html">http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Jharkhand-Christian-killed-over-sacred-cows.-Msgr.-Mascarenhas:-Tragedy-for-Humanity-46773.html</a>

<p>05/15/2019</p>	<p>Muslim man Nayeem Ahmed Shah accused of cow theft was shot in the head and killed by Hindu radicals. His friend Yasin Hussein was also injured in the incident</p>	<p><a href="https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/17/muslim-man-killed-in-new-suspected-india-cow-lynching.html">https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/17/muslim-man-killed-in-new-suspected-india-cow-lynching.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.firstpost.com/india/nayeem-ahmad-shah-who-was-killed-by-cow-vigilantes-in-jammus-bhaderwah-was-carrying-no-animal-during-attack-claims-relative-6646081.html">https://www.firstpost.com/india/nayeem-ahmad-shah-who-was-killed-by-cow-vigilantes-in-jammus-bhaderwah-was-carrying-no-animal-during-attack-claims-relative-6646081.html</a></p>
<p>06/17/2019</p>	<p>Accused of theft of a motorcycle, Muslim man Tabrez Ansari was beaten for 12 hours and forced to yell Hindu phrases. He died four days later, but the murder charges were dropped when the autopsy revealed that he died from cardiac arrest</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/25/world/asia/india-hindu-muslim-beating.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/25/world/asia/india-hindu-muslim-beating.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/tabrez-ansari-lynching-police-drop-murder-charges-against-11-citing-autopsy-report-1597490-2019-09-10">https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/tabrez-ansari-lynching-police-drop-murder-charges-against-11-citing-autopsy-report-1597490-2019-09-10</a></p>

## VII. Christian NGO Work in India

The extreme hardships that many Christians face in this nation has drawn the attention and outreach of numerous Christian NGOs to address such realities as “discrimination, poverty, illiteracy, inadequate public healthcare and malnutrition.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite the tremendous attempts by NGOs to alleviate social and economic hardships for Christians, it is difficult for them to receive money from foreign donors, as any and all monetary gifts must be reported to the national tax officials, who in turn question the NGOs and find loopholes to reject the gifts, therefore leaving these organizations with little to no funding. This is detrimental to the NGOs who struggled to even receive authority to operate within India. More often than not, international and domestic NGOs are rejected from working in India, and those that have been operating can be shut down for “any activities detrimental to the national interest”.<sup>15</sup> USCIRF reports that approximately 20,000 NGOs have attempted to and applied to provide aid and have been subsequently and repeatedly denied. In 2017, a well-known and successful United States’ operated Christian NGO called Compassion International that has been assisting at least 100,000 Indian children was shut down by the government for fear that they would attempt to evangelize the kids.<sup>16</sup>

In some instances, Christian NGOs have even been the target for violence by Hindu radicals. The Evangelical Fellowship of India reports that on September 8 of 2018, three radical men trespassed on the property of Christian NGO Rashtriya Susamachar Samiti, where they physically assaulted the members attending the meeting. The beatings were so severe that one of the leaders of the NGO was excessively bleeding.

<sup>14</sup> Open Doors Analytical, India Country Dossier January 2019.

<sup>15</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF Annual Report 2019, p. 179.

<sup>16</sup> United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, USCIRF Annual Report 2019, p. 179.



## VIII. Recommendations

*“The Charter of Fundamental Rights begins with non-discrimination on account of religion, race or caste...the Assembly granted autonomy to religious minorities...when we deny the power of love to people on grounds of religion and caste, the Constitution weeps.”<sup>17</sup>*

Former Chief Justice and current judge of the Supreme Court of India,  
Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud.

It is with the above statistics and information in mind that we make the following recommendations to the Government of India:

- Repeal the anti-conversion laws or, alternatively, implement stricter regulations on the laws' application in order to prevent religious minorities from being unjustly detained for (1) converting to another religious identity, or (2) promoting their religious identity and attempting to evangelize their peers peacefully in accordance with international law.
- Hold accountable Hindu radicals and other societal actors who have through violent and coercive means forced religious minorities to renounce their faiths.
- Effectively and completely investigate and convict members of Hindu radical mobs and other societal actors who have either admitted to or been confirmed to have lynched or murdered Christian and Muslim individuals for cattle-related reasons.
- Publicly condemn mob lynching.
- Effectively train and equip police forces to recognize, prevent, when possible; and end violent incidents by societal actors against individuals on account of their free religious practice protected under international law.
- End the use of biased and religiously intolerant texts and lessons in schools, and instead, promote a curriculum that encourages religious tolerance and diversity, teaches interpersonal conflict management, and incentivizes peace-building organizations among students.
- Publicly condemn any and all forms of religiously driven violence, discrimination, and persecution in accordance with international religious freedom norms protected under Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Monitor and eliminate any violence inducing speech within the rhetoric of the Bharatiya Janata Party and any other government public speaker.
- Expand the Scheduled Cast Order to include religious minorities as Scheduled Castes in order to provide them protection from acts of discrimination and violence, in accordance with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989.

---

<sup>17</sup> “Politics India Constitution Lynched When Person Lynched for Food He Had: Justice Chandrachud.” SabrangIndia, 13 Feb. 2019, <http://sabrangindia.in/article/politics-india-constitution-lynched-when-person-lynched-food-he-had-justice-chandrachud>.

## **18. Contact:**

### **Stichting Jubilee Campaign Nederland**

Postbus 84  
4200 AB Gorinchem

Tel. +31 183 820 200

Email [info@jubileecampaign.nl](mailto:info@jubileecampaign.nl)

Website [www.jubileecampaign.nl](http://www.jubileecampaign.nl)