



"Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness."

~ Corrie ten Boom

INDIA: Call for Death Penalty for Coercive Religious Conversions

Sources: International Christian Concern, The Hindu, Catholic News Agency, Mission Network News

The Chief Minister for the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh has publicly announced plans to impose the death penalty on those convicted of forced or fraudulent religious conversions. In a public meeting for International Women's Day on March 8th, Mohan Yadav equated such conversions with child molestation, stating that both crimes warrant the imposition of capital punishment. Later that evening, the state government released a statement affirming the announcement made by Mohan.



Mohan Yadav, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.
Photo: India Prime Minister's Office ([GODL-India](#))

The state's Religious Freedom Act, which came into effect in 2021, is intended to protect people from being forcefully or fraudulently converted from one religion to another. Similar anti-conversion laws are also presently being enforced within ten other states throughout India. Unfortunately, such laws have been widely abused. Militant groups have stirred up violent mob attacks against Christians, falsely claiming that the believers were involved in bribery and other ways of tricking people into converting. For more information, including reports concerning the numerous incidents of persecution that have taken place against those allegedly accused of coercive conversions, see our [country profile](#).

- ***Pray that this intended change to Madhya Pradesh's legislation will not be instituted, and that followers of Jesus will no longer be falsely accused under India's anti-conversion laws.***
- ***Ask the Lord to intervene on behalf of believers who are currently facing legal challenges due to false allegations, praying that they will be cleared of all charges.***
- ***May the country's governing leaders come to respect the constitutional rights of all India's citizens, which includes permitting religious freedom to adherents of Christianity.***

- ***Despite the threat of opposition and false charges, may our Christian brothers and sisters throughout this South Asian nation receive guidance, courage and strength as they endeavour to continue living in ways that please the Lord.***

PAKISTAN: Brutal Attack on Christian Worker

Sources: CLAAS-UK, Aid to the Church in Need, UCA News, Morning Star News

A 22-year-old Christian man was brutally attacked by his supervisor at a paper mill in Sharaqpur, Punjab, when he refused to renounce his faith in Christ. Having sustained severe injuries to his throat on March 21st, Waqas Masih was hospitalized in Lahore where his condition has been reported as critical but stable.



Waqas Masih.

Photo: HARDS Pakistan via Morning Star News

According to the young man's father, Waqas encountered pressure to convert to Islam for over a month. Throughout this time, he repeatedly refused to give up his Christian faith and continued to quietly perform his work duties. "Muslims often invite Christians to [convert to] Islam, and we simply don't respond," stated Waqas' mother, Bushra Bibi.

On the day of the attack, a supervisor named Zohaib Iftikhar called Waqas into a room at the mill. While there, he demanded to know why the Christian believer refused to accept Islam. When Waqas stood firmly for his beliefs, Zohaib pulled out a utility knife and slashed the young man's neck before fleeing the scene.

After collapsing, Waqas was rushed to a local hospital and then transferred to Lahore for surgery. When the attacked believer later regained consciousness, he was able to write a statement explaining that he had been falsely accused of desecrating an Islamic textbook by touching it with "unclean" hands (a term often used in Pakistan to reference those belonging to other religious groups). Following the violent incident, the manager of the factory filed a police report, and Zohaib has since been arrested. The factory owner denies that there was any desecration of Islamic texts or photographs.

Regrettably, blasphemy accusations are often used to justify violence against Pakistani followers of Jesus. Recently, VOMC's Minister-at-Large, Greg Musselman, travelled to Jaranwala – a community located 90 kilometres from Sharaqpur – where mob violence in August 2023 resulted in the destruction of hundreds of homes after two Christian brothers were falsely accused of blasphemy. View the [video-recorded testimonies](#) of those who were affected by this devastating mob attack. For other reports on the persecution of Christians in Pakistan, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***Pray for Waqas' complete physical healing, also asking that this faithful young man and his family would tangibly sense our Heavenly Father's peace, love and comforting presence with them.***
- ***In the aftermath of the attack, prayerfully ask God to guide the authorities in their***

investigation so that justice will be upheld.

- ***Continue to remember Christians throughout this nation who have been falsely accused of blasphemy, praying that these traumatized believers will receive needed support, protection and emotional healing.***

INDONESIA: Churches Encounter Community Opposition

Sources: Morning Star News, International Christian Concern, Tribunnews.com, Telisik.id

Churches in Indonesia frequently receive opposition from hostile community members and local leaders, particularly when they are seeking to build or utilize a worship facility. Christians in at least three separate communities are presently facing opposition for these reasons.



A church in Indonesia.

In the village of Paccerakkang, South Sulawesi Province, the Toraja Christian Church of Lanraki had been meeting in the home of a congregation member for two years. Due to the growth of this church, the believers applied for an official permit

to build a facility that would accommodate their expanding congregation. Initially, the permit process was going well. However, on February 4th, a banner was installed in the community declaring that nearby residents were strongly opposed to the construction – along with all other religious-related activities in the area. Despite the opposition, leaders of the church remain determined to continue meeting with local residents in order to obtain approval for the construction.

In Bandung, West Java, a protest was held against members of a Catholic church on March 5th, opposing the use of a particular building for worship services. When the facility was first built, the congregation did not have a church permit – a process that can take months or years to complete. Therefore, the building was designated as a multi-purpose facility that would be used not only for worship but other community activities as well. However, local protestors are now demanding that the building not be used for worship, even though it is owned by the Catholic church and the official permit application is currently in process.

Another separate incident took place on March 10th, when community leaders were meeting to discuss an application for the construction of a church building in Wakatobi, Southeast Sulawesi Province. During the meeting, a demonstration involving community members who were opposed to the construction plans resulted in near chaos. Ultimately, the application was rejected for allegedly failing to meet Ministry of Religion regulations. Furthermore, the opposing community leaders asserted that, since the Wakatobi police occasionally provided a place for Christians to hold their worship services, the construction of the church building was unnecessary.

The registration process for churches in Indonesia can be onerous. For one church in Bogor, it took more than 15 years to receive approval from the government ([read more](#)). For other reports on the challenges facing Christians in Indonesia, go to our [country profile](#).

- ***Pray that the members of these three churches, and others throughout Indonesia who are likewise experiencing opposition, will officially be permitted to gather together for worship and fellowship.***
- ***In each case, may God touch the hearts of the opposing community leaders so that they would realize their need to support those who are seeking ways to rightfully practise their faith.***
- ***Pray that the Christians residing within these communities would seize every opportunity they receive to share the love and grace of Jesus with those around them, so that many more spiritually needy people will come to faith in Him.***

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