



"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

~ The words of Jesus
John 15:19 ESV

INDIA: Multiple Threats Against Christians in West Bengal

Sources: Matters India, AsiaNews

In the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, Christians have been facing ongoing intimidation and violence from militants with apparent ties to the Hindu nationalist organization, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP).

On the afternoon of July 26th, Christians had gathered at a home in Chararoypur Majer Para village when a mob suddenly stormed the meeting. The attackers not only destroyed Bibles, hymn books and other religious items, but they also physically assaulted the worshippers. Before leaving the crime scene, the assailants marked areas of the house with saffron-coloured paint – a Hindu symbol of fire and purification that is commonly used by nationalist groups.

In a separate incident on July 31st, the pastor of Grace Community Church in Sandeshkhali was confronted by a man dressed in a saffron robe who identified himself as a VHP official. Accusing the pastor of receiving foreign funding, the man demanded that he leave the region.

The next day, the same saffron-robed man led a mob into a parish compound in the village of Nazat. During the confrontation, he issued a seven-day ultimatum to the local priest, ordering him to leave the vicinity. According to video footage of the incident, the man pointed his finger at the priest and shouted: "Go away to America or New Zealand! They are funding you from there to do all this. Pack up your bags and leave from here!"

Other recent incidents in the same area suggest a coordinated campaign against Christians throughout the region. Commenting on the situation, Bishop Shyamal Bose stated: "[Hindu nationalists] are trying to frighten the Christian community. However, we remain steadfast in our faith and commitment to serving society with love, peace and dignity. We will not be intimidated by threats or acts of harassment." For previous reports addressing persecution in India, see our [country profile](#).

- ***Pray that believers encountering threats, violence and intimidation will be strengthened by God's presence, remain steadfast in their faith, and continue to demonstrate Christ's love and grace to those around them.***



A scene from West Bengal.
Photo: Unsplash

- ***Ask the Lord to surround pastors and Christian families with His protection, comfort and peace as they faithfully serve Him despite opposition.***
- ***Pray that local authorities will uphold justice, safeguard the rights of all citizens, and take appropriate action to prevent further acts of harassment and violence.***

INDIA: More Christians Sentenced Under Anti-Conversion Laws

Sources: Morning Star News, Barnabas Aid

Recently, seven Christians – six of whom are pastors – were convicted under the anti-conversion laws of Madhya Pradesh and sentenced to five years in prison. Each believer also received a fine of 100,000 rupees (approximately \$1,500 CAD).

The situation began at a birthday party for a five-year-old girl in April 2024. The parents had invited a select number of guests, which did not include a cousin named Angad Singh Maravi. Apparently angered for being left out, Angad gathered a mob together and accused the Christian guests of luring local residents for the purpose of converting them. The mob caused a commotion and threatened to inflict violence on the believers.



One of the imprisoned pastors.
Photo: Morning Star News

As tensions escalated, police were called to the scene. Upon arriving, however, the officers arrested six pastors and another believer who had been invited as guests to the party. The host, Suday Singh Maravi, explicitly stated that no religious propaganda or conversion activities were taking place.

On June 12th of this year, all seven believers were convicted and sentenced. Although they intend to appeal against the ruling, the amount required for bail is beyond what any of them can afford. Other Christians have since rallied to help raise the necessary funds so that the detained believers can be released while awaiting their appeal hearing.

Several Indian states have anti-conversion laws that are frequently misused for personal gain or to target religious minorities. Further information on the challenges facing our Christian brothers and sisters in India may be accessed at our [country profile](#).

- ***Lift up these seven believers in your prayers, asking the Lord to strengthen their faith, encourage their hearts, and provide each one of them with the financial resources needed for bail and legal expenses.***
- ***Pray that the appeals court would rule in the Christians' favour, leading to their soon release and vindication, so that justice will prevail.***
- ***Also remember the families of these detained men as they endure this painful time of separation from their loved ones – plus, the resulting financial hardships – asking the Lord to manifest His comfort, peace and provision in each of their lives as well.***
- ***Pray that governing leaders in Madhya Pradesh and other states of India will not only recognize the harm being caused by the anti-conversion laws, but that they would ultimately use this realization to govern with wisdom and fairness – ensuring greater protections are provided for religious minorities throughout the country.***

PAKISTAN: Further Acquittals in Christian Couple's Murder Case

Sources: International Christian Concern, Morning Star News

In 2014, Shahzad Masih and his wife Shama were falsely accused of burning the Quran. Militant Muslim leaders had incited villagers to attack the young Christian couple, resulting in a frenzied mob of hundreds participating in a series of torturous events that culminated in the believers' tragic deaths. Shama, who was five months pregnant at the time, was brutally killed along with her husband and thrown into a burning brick kiln. (VOMC's initially posted *Persecution & Prayer Alert* about this fatal incident may be [reviewed here](#).)

While more than 100 people were initially charged in connection with the murders, most of these participants were later released. In November 2016, a court in Lahore determined that five members of the mob were mainly responsible for carrying out the horrific crimes. Each of these key perpetrators were given the death sentence; nine other involved individuals received lesser prison terms.



Shahzad Masih and his wife Shama.
Photo via Morning Star News

Over the past decade, the convictions have been challenged through a series of appeals. Two of the convicted attackers who were initially sentenced to death were subsequently acquitted. In the most recent decision, which took place on July 9th, the Supreme Court overturned the convictions of the remaining three men, citing inconsistencies and weaknesses in the evidence presented against them. The court noted that threats of violence against the witnesses had contributed to the conflicting testimonies. While expressing sympathy to the family of Shahzad and Shama, the judges stated that their final ruling was based strictly on the legal merits of the case.

The recent acquittals have renewed concerns among church leaders and human rights advocates regarding the investigation and prosecution of cases involving mob violence in Pakistan. They continue to call on governing leaders to strengthen legal measures so that all who participate in such heinous crimes of brutality are held accountable for their actions.

In a recent episode of VOMC's *Closer to the Fire* podcast, host Greg Musselman interviewed Rev. Salim Arthur about the ongoing problem of false blasphemy allegations in Pakistan. This informative video interview can be viewed at our [country profile](#).

- ***As the family members of Shahzad and Shama once again face the painful memories of this tragedy, please pray that the comforting assurance, peace and presence of the Lord would rest upon each of them. This especially pertains to the couple's three surviving children.***
- ***May the realization that justice will ultimately be served – and that those responsible for committing the crimes are indeed accountable to God Himself, the Righteous Judge – provide them added consolation.***
- ***Intercede on behalf of the perpetrators, in hopes they will respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction within their hearts, repent of their violent actions, and turn to Him for mercy, forgiveness and eternal salvation.***
- ***Remember the many Christians in Pakistan who have otherwise been impacted by false blasphemy allegations, praying that they would stand firm in their faith, experience God's guidance and protection, as well as the daily renewal of their strength and hope through His ongoing grace and empowerment.***

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