



## A Look at How Hindu Extremists Have Persecuted Indian Christians

SINGAPORE — For years, Christians in India have been enduring vicious attacks by Hindu extremists on account of their faith. In particular, the Christmas and Easter seasons have become a period of unrest and uncertainty for these Christians facing accusations of fraudulent and forced conversions by their Hindu persecutors, as well as charges of worshipping a “foreign God.”

24NewsHD TV channel reported in December last year that Hindu extremists openly threatened Indian religious minorities like Christians and Muslims, declaring them enemies of Hinduism during a speech to thousands of followers in Jodhpur.



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In January 2022, *Morning Star News* reported that a group of eight people, including two women, broke in to the house of Pastor Rakesh Babu, a Christian pastor living in North India, assaulting him and slitting his wife’s throat over allegations that he was attracting people to Christianity. The attackers threw the pastor to the ground, beat him with wooden sticks, and attempted to strangle him.

“I did not see if they were carrying a knife, but the object used for slitting my wife’s throat was done with a sharp object, and from the deep wound, it appears to be a knife,” Babu testified.

“The moment they slit my wife’s throat with the sharp object, she fell down unconscious.”

Notwithstanding being bloodied from various wounds, Babu tried to escape, but the assailants caught up with him and the brutal assault persisted. Fortunately, Babu’s son begged the attackers to let his father go.

“My son came and wept before the assailants — he pleaded with them to not hit me,” Babu said. “While he was pleading, I got an opportunity to escape, and I hid myself in a Christian home.”

“If my son wouldn’t have come, and I would have not escaped, they would have killed me,” he added. “If I had fallen unconscious in the muddy puddle, I would be dead, because they were chasing to kill me.”

With more villagers gathering due to the commotion, the attackers fled after loudly warning him to stop leading church services, Babu said.

On the night of the attack, Babu proceeded to the police to report it. Yet, he claimed, the police refused to register his complaint and sent him and his wife to a hospital for first aid. When Babu and his wife and brother went again to the police, officers again declined their request to register a complaint.

“It was only when a senior officer came and scolded them that they registered our complaint,” Babu said. “We were in very bad condition physically.”



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Two assailants were brought to the police station, but “were released the next day,” he elaborated. “It was an eye-wash.”

Although the police eventually registered Babu’s complaint, they altered his account, Babu claimed. His handwritten complaint indicated that eight “anti-Christians” attacked them and intended to kill them, but “Despite clear words in my complaint letter, the police changed the words,” Babu said.

“An officer dictated to my son, and he was scolding my son and making him write the words he was saying. They even forced him to write that the attack was caused due to a land dispute between me and the assailants, and that the place of attack was my farmland, which is completely a lie.”

Yet Babu was too exhausted to dispute with the police, and gave in to the police’s version of the incident.

“My wife, my brother and I were badly wounded — we were groaning in pain,” he said. “My wife’s deep cut was bleeding. She and my brother were fainting with pain and hurt. We had not slept all through the night but were running from the police post to the hospital and then to the police station. I knew we were not treated fairly, but I gave in and signed the document confirming the story.”

Similarly, International Christian Concern reported that in the state of Odisha, a mob of about 100 people assaulted three Christian families and raided and desecrated homes during an Easter service last year. The attackers supposedly beat the congregation with sticks, wounding multiple women and children.

“These Christians are enduring continued hostility from the radical Hindus,” the local pastor was cited as saying. “Sometimes the Christians were denied electricity, other times they were denied rations (subsidized food grains) and other times water, work ... but they persisted in faith, despite what they have gone through,” he added.

In nearby Chhattisgarh, Hindu groups forbade the burial of a Christian who died, alleging that the corpse would defile the land. The body had to be taken to another village 25 kilometers away for burial, and “The family went through torture and humiliation for three days,” revealed a local Christian who requested anonymity. “The Christians in the village face social boycott for practicing their Christian faith. They are really tested, and they are treated as less than human,” he added.

Such attacks are by no means rare in Hindu-majority India.

Since Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed power in May 2014, the belligerent attitude adopted by the National Democratic Alliance government, led by Modi’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), toward non-Hindus like Christians has provoked Hindu extremists in various parts of India to attack Christians, according to advocates of religious rights.

Thousands of Christian groups focusing on social work and alleviating poverty found their licenses to obtain foreign money suspended in 2022 by the Indian government. In November of the same year, the Texas-based Global Hindu Heritage Foundation (GHHF) hosted its gala dinner. Raising some eyebrows, the dinner’s agenda called for the demolition of “illegal” churches in India and the conversion of Indian Christians and Muslims to Hinduism.

Operating in Frisco, Texas, for 15 years, the GHHF has a long track record of provoking hatred against Christians and Muslims. Critics have asserted that the group’s longevity reflects the rise of Hindu nationalism in America against religious minorities in India.

In 2021, the number of violent incidents against Christians escalated to 486, up from 279 in 2020,



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based on reports from the United Christian Forum, an India-based group.

Moreover, a report on Nikkei Asia pointed out that violence against Christians has been increasing in New Delhi, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, and Chhattisgarh since 2018, with perpetrators blaming the Christians for pressuring Hindus to convert.

“Fueled by religious nationalism, targeted attacks against Christians have escalated in both frequency and intensity in an alarming way and met with a terrifying silence from the central government,” the report cited Mervyn Thomas, chief executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, as saying.

Based on a report by Pew Research Center, government limitations on religion and the level of social hostilities toward religion in India have risen considerably in recent years. The report emphasized that India’s anti-conversion laws have drastically impacted minority religious groups. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, state police accused 271 Christians of attempting to convert people and “spreading lies about Hinduism.”

To incite emotions against Christians, Indian politicians have also made remarks criticizing religious minorities. Additionally, law enforcement officials have been embroiled in cases targeting religious minorities, the same report stated.

According to India’s official census conducted in 2011, Christians comprise a mere 2.3 percent of the population of the country, while Hindus make up 79.8 percent and Muslims 14.2 percent.

India ranked 10th on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of the countries where it is most challenging to be a Christian, as it did in 2021. The country ranked 31st in 2013, but its position dropped even further after Modi became the prime minister. Open Doors highlighted that Hindu converts to Christianity are “especially vulnerable to persecution” and face constant pressure to return to Hinduism.



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