

Market Drayton Churches Together: Prayer for Persecuted Christians - 13 Sept. 2018

INDIA

10 Sept: Mission Network News

Hindu nationalists push for India to be a “Hindu Rashtra”; Christians at risk

mnnonline.org/news/hindu-nationalists-push-for-india-to-be-a-hindu-rashtra-christians-at-risk

Hindu leaders and delegates from all over the globe convened in Chicago, Illinois for the 2018 World Hindu Congress from September 7-9. At first glance, the event seemed like a peaceful gathering of influential Hindus. However, there were several concerning messages below the surface.

Organizers for the event included the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) of America, an organization classified as a “militant religious outfit” by the Central Intelligence Agency. Leaders of the VHP have called for violence against religious minorities in India, and members have even carried out extremist attacks in defense of Hindu nationalist ideals.

According to News India Times, conference convener Abhaya Asthana stated, “When people hear the word Hindu conference they think it’s a spiritual conference. There will be no spiritual discourses.... The aim is to use the essence of Hindu philosophy, dharma, to inform how we come together (in the diaspora) as men, women, and youth — in politics, education, and commerce.”

The concept of Hindus living in the diaspora is a dangerous one. To have a diaspora, one must believe there is a rightful homeland for your group.

Hindu nationalists claim India is their homeland, and as such, all non-Hindus ought to be driven out or forced to convert. In 2010, 94 percent of the world’s Hindus lived in India.

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have further advanced these Hindu nationalist ideals — or Hindutva. BJP leaders have announced their goal to make India a “Hindu Rashtra” (Hindu nation) by 2024.

This goal of a “Hindu Rashtra” in India has gravely jeopardized the safety of Indian religious minorities, including Christians.

Todd Nettleton with The Voice of the Martyrs USA says, “If you look at the most predominantly Hindu nation in the world, which is India, absolutely the pressure has been ramping up. In fact, just this past weekend, we had a guest from India on our VOM Radio podcast and his group has tracked persecution. They say, at this point, over the last six months there has been a persecuted Christian on average every single day. So it’s now every 24 hours somewhere in India a Christian is being persecuted.

“That is motivated and really put into practice by a government that has embraced this Hindu nationalist ideology that every Indian should be a Hindu, and if you’re not a Hindu, you ought to leave or you ought to be punished and influenced to become a Hindu.

“So when this congress comes together in Chicago and talks about expanding the influence of Hinduism, obviously for those of us who live in free countries, that should raise some red flags for us.”

India is ranked on Open Doors’ World Watch List in 11th place for “extreme persecution” of Christians. Recently, International Christian Concern surveyed 1,000 Indian Christians across eight states. Their findings showed 68.8 percent of believers in India feel discriminated against and that their safety is significantly threatened. Also, 85.61 percent reported sensing an increase in violence from Hindu radicals against their communities, families, and places of worship.

The growing popularity of anti-conversion laws in Indian states has further increased Christian persecution.

According to Nettleton, another thing their guest on VOM Radio recently shared is “one of the things this [anti-conversion] law says is, if you are going to talk to someone about changing their faith — let’s say we’re going to give a Gospel of John to somebody and we’re going to talk about the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ — this law says six months before you have that conversation, you’re supposed to go before a magistrate and say, ‘Hey, on this particular day I’m planning to talk to this particular person about changing their religion.’ Which if we even think about that, that just seems so ridiculous.

“But then, of course, if you do talk to someone about their religion, the police can come in and say, ‘Wait a minute, you didn’t go to the magistrate six months ago and tell him you were going to have this conversation. You broke the law.’

“It’s just an impossible standard and it is a Hindu nationalist government that is pushing this kind of law and these kinds of regulations out all across India as a way to persecute Christians and stop the spread of the Gospel.”

In the wake of the 2018 World Hindu Congress in Chicago, Nettleton reflects, “I hope many of the delegates from around the world see what a country that has religious freedom looks like and think, ‘Wow, this is actually kind of cool. Maybe we should bring home some of these concepts of religious freedom instead of some of the concepts of adding the influence of Hinduism in our country.’”

Meanwhile, there is good news. Hindu men and women are being reached out to by their Christian neighbors in India and around the world, and are being transformed by the beauty and power of the Gospel. The best thing we can do for now is pray.

“What we can do is certainly pray that in the spiritual realm, God’s power will reign even over...those living in Hindu-majority countries [and] coming to faith in Christ out of that Hindu background. Pray that they will be rooted in God’s Word, rooted in their faith, and able to withstand the persecution that they face.”

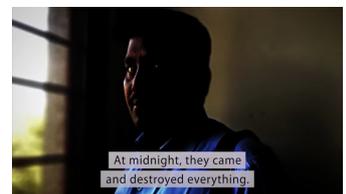
Also, Nettleton asks, “We can pray for our brothers and sisters, I think particularly of India — praying for them to come to faith, praying for Christians to have boldness, even though they know, ‘Yes, sharing my faith in Christ could get me arrested, it could get me beaten up, I still need to do that. God has still called me to do that.’ So praying that they will have boldness to do that in spite of the persecution and the oppression that they face.”

29 August: Open Doors

His church in India was destroyed three times - but Sujit won't give up

"I have seen miracles happen in Jesus' name, and have clearly witnessed God transform the lives of many people. I was able to lead 60 people to Christ in and around the village I live in."

Video and text at: opendoorsuk.org/news/stories/india-180829



For more information please visit: churchestogether-marketdrayton.org.uk/p4pc

12 Sept: Union of Catholic Asian News Police in India lay charges against 270 Christian 'liars'

ucanews.com/news/police-in-india-lay-charges-against-270-christian-liars/83299

Police in India's Uttar Pradesh state have charged more than 270 Christians with "spreading lies about Hinduism and drugging people to try and convert them to Christianity."

Christians in Jaunpur district said on Sept. 10 that the move showed religious bias and was an attempt to terrorize Christians. Police in the district filed the charges against 271 Christians of a Pentecostal church last week after being directed to do so by a local court.

The court directive followed a complaint lodged by activist group Hindu Jagran Manch that Christians were propagating misinformation about the Hindu religion and attempting to convert people during Sunday services. Pastors Durga Prasad Yadav, Kirit Rai and Jitendra Ram were named on the charge sheet while the others were not identified.

The Hindu group said it went to court after the Christians refused to stop conducting Sunday prayer services despite repeated warnings. The group's lawyer, Brijesh Singh, told the court that for the last few years the Christians had been urging people in surrounding districts to come to their church in the village of Bhundly and attend prayer services.

"After prayers every Sunday and Tuesday, the priests used to tell lies about the Hindu religion and convince people to embrace Christianity. They also used to give prohibited medicine and drugs to visitors and convert them while they were under their influence," the Indian Express newspaper quoted Singh as telling the court.

Local pastor A. Anil told ucanews.com that the allegations were "absolutely false and baseless." Christians have been worshipping there for the past 15 years and never had any problem until the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, the pastor said.

Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu guru-turned politician, leads the party in the state. Adityanath is also head priest of Gorakhnath Math, a Hindu temple in Gorakhpur, a town in the Hindu-majority state of some 200 million people.

Shibu Thomas, founder of Persecution Relief, an ecumenical forum that records incidents of persecution against Christians in India, told ucanews.com that hard-line Hindu activists had been threatening the pastors and their congregation against holding prayer meetings.

Opposition grew when the prayer meetings began to attract crowds when people claimed to be "healed by prayers."

"The allegation of drugging people to convert people to Christianity is absurd — no one would do such a thing in Christianity," Thomas said.

9 Sept: International Christian Concern Three Pastors Severely Injured in Attack on Spiritual Retreat in India

persecution.org/2018/09/10/three-pastors-severely-injured-attack-spiritual-retreat-india

International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) severely injured three pastors in an attack on Saturday, September 8. The attack took

place under the close watch of local policemen in Premnagar, located in the Bareilly District of India's Uttar Pradesh State, where Christians were holding a two-day spiritual retreat. Pastor Ashok Benjamin, Pastor Vijay Masih, and Pastor Shivcharan were among those injured in the assault, sustaining wounds to their heads, hands, and lower backs.

Local sources told ICC that a mob of 50 radicals under the leadership of Pawan Arora, the district chief of the VHP, and a few policemen attacked a hall where approximately 25 Christians were meeting for a two-day spiritual retreat. While hurling verbal insults at the Christians, the mob savagely beat the three pastors who were leading the retreat.

"All of this happened in the presence of the police," Pastor Masih, a 36-year-old pastor who was gravely injured in the attack, told ICC. "The police did not come to our rescue. Rather, they joined the mob in accusing us of doing forcible conversions."

"I have terrible pain in the lower end of my spinal cord," Pastor Masih continued. "The whole area is swollen as they kicked me there with force. Now, I am unable to walk."

"Over a dozen people hit me with stones on my head, kicked me, and punched me," Masih said, describing the attack. "I was in shock and did not know what to do. Their intention was to kill us, but God saved us from the mouth of death."

"They want to kill my husband because he is a pastor and about Jesus," Sandra Ashok, Pastor Ashok Benjamin's wife, told ICC. "My husband received multiple fractures to the nose and [a] clot in the eye. They also hit him on the head. He was bleeding heavily from his nose and also his head."

After the attack, Pastor Benjamin was able to stand witness in the police station amid a large crowd. As he reported the attack, still covered in his own blood, the police asked him what he was doing at the retreat.

"Our lives are in danger with the negative publicity we receive, claiming we do forcible conversions," Pastor Masih explained. "Still, I will not stop preaching Jesus."

Although there was pressure from VHP members, the police did not file forced conversion charges against the three injured pastors. Instead, the police forced the Christians and radicals to agree to a compromise.

Two other anti-Christian attacks led by Hindu radicals took place in Uttar Pradesh in the past week. On September 2, police arrested pastors in Faizabad after they were falsely accused of forced conversions. The police kept the pastors in police custody for more than five hours, but later released them due to a lack of evidence.

William Stark, ICC's Regional Manager, said, "We here at International Christian Concern are extremely concerned by the continued attacks on Christians in India, especially in Uttar Pradesh. Every day, new reports of persecution are being documented. Many Christians fear this may be the new normal for their community as Hindu radicals have been allowed to attack Christians and other minority communities with impunity. India must take steps to counter this growing wave of intolerance and violence. Until then, the attacks will likely continue to increase in both number and severity."

Other recent reports from India:

8 Sept: Morningstar News - Hindu Extremists, Media Attack Large Church in Uttar Pradesh, India
morningstarnews.org/2018/09/hindu-extremists-media-attack-large-church-in-uttar-pradesh-india

6 Sept: The Voice of the Martyrs Canada - Church Attendance Dwindling in the Face of Threats
vomcanada.com/in-2018-09-06.htm

Dates of next meetings: Thursday 11 Oct at 7:30pm - Wollerton URC Schoolroom, Wood Lane

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church - Saturday 17 Nov. 10am - 1pm, St. Mary's Parish Rooms