



PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

Pray for the Persecuted Christians in INDIA

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the Body also.

(Hebrews 13:3)



India

Total Population: 1,380,004,385

Self-Proclaimed Christian Population: 6% – **Evangelical Witness: 1%**

Largest Religion: Hinduism - 74%

Death Rate: 7.25/1000 per year: Just today: 27,411

Churches in Southern India Canceling Christmas Due to Increased Threats by Radicals

By ICC's India Correspondent

12/09/2021 Washington, D.C. (International Christian Concern) -Many churches in India's Karnataka state are canceling their regular Christmas programs due to concerns over rising attacks by radical Hindu nationalists. For some churches in the Belagavi District, the situation has become so dangerous that they have canceled Sunday gatherings and completely shut down church operations.

"We are in a critical situation," Pastor Yellappa, head of an independent church in Gokak, told International Christian Concern (ICC). Pastor Yellappa

was forced to shut down his house church after his landlord received multiple threats from radicals.

"The landlord told me to vacate the house with immediate effect," Pastor Yellappa explained. "The radicals put pressure on the landlord."

"I've given up the work that I have been building for the last nine years," Pastor Yellappa continued. "I feel sorry for my congregation."

"In the last nine years, I was attacked a number of times and arrested three times," Pastor Yellappa said. "But I never thought a situation would come where I had to shut down the church. This is the situation for all the house churches. It is very uncertain and only God can help us."

Across Karnataka, radical Hindu nationalists have been emboldened by the state government's plan to enact an anti-conversion law. For months, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politicians have accused Christians in Karnataka of illegally converting Hindus to Christianity with no evidence. These accusations and the BJP's championing of the proposed anti-conversion law have led to a dramatic increase in attacks on Christians and their places of worship across the state.

"Several house churches have decided not to have any Christmas programs," a local church leader, who requested anonymity, told ICC. "Of all the house churches in the district, which there are nearly 300, more than half are shut down due to fear and intimidation. This might even get worse leading up to Christmas. We need prayers."

This situation was confirmed to ICC in an interview with Pastor Andani, head pastor of a Pentecostal church in Kanadala.

"Only 50 of the 200 members are coming to the church in the last two weeks," Pastor Andani told ICC. "I am not sure how many will turn up next Sunday. I was told by my church members that in three villages the RSS has told Christians not to attend church on Sundays."

"This is a difficult situation for me as a pastor," Pastor Andani continued. "I am even restricted from visiting my church members and praying in their houses. If this continues, all the church work will have to be done secretly."

Adding to the already tense situation, Pastor Andani reports local radicals are organizing a rally to protest religious conversions. This rally will only further embolden those intimidating Pastor Andani's church community.

"I don't know the date of the rally, but I do know I will be the prime target," Pastor Andani said. "There is only one church in Kanadala village."

The Winter Session of Karnataka's Legislative Assembly is scheduled to start on Monday, December 13. Many believe the BJP-led government will propose and enact the controversial anti-conversion law during this session. This belief has contributed to the recent spike in anti-Christian sentiments.

Historically, the enactment of anti-conversion laws has been a trigger point for increased attacks on Christians and their places of worship. Radical Hindu nationalists use these laws a legal cover for anti-Christian operations. Radicals simply accused Christians of engaging in illegal religious conversions as a justification for mob violence, physical assaults, and destruction of property. For Christians in Karnataka, this Christmas season is likely to be filled with challenges and opposition.