



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

Church Forced Underground by New Crackdown in Central India

By ICC's India Correspondent

09/27/2021 Washington D.C. (International Christian Concern) - Madhu Damor* is a Christian who lives in the Jhabua District of India's Madhya Pradesh state. Recently, Madhu received a notice from the Tehsildar, the district's tax officer, demanding he prove the legitimacy of his 2009 conversion to Christianity with the appropriate documentation.

The notice from the Tehsildar troubled Madhu because anti-Christian sentiments are rising in the Jhabua District. For over a month, radical Hindu nationalist groups, including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal,

have held events to pressure the local government to crack down on Christians.

Thirteen other Christians in the Jhabua District received similar notices from the Tehsildar. The notices said, "If you are converted forcibly, or by inducement, you need to report to me in my office (Tehsildar) on 22 September 2021 at 12:00 p.m. along with the appropriate documents." "The common thing for all of us is that we conduct worship in our homes," Madhu told International Christian Concern (ICC). "We are the leaders of house churches. This clearly shows that we are targeted because we lead worship services for small groups of congregants who voluntarily embrace Jesus."

On August 27, Bajrang Dal and VHP activists gathered in Kalyanpura village, located in the Jhabua District, and declared their intention to make Jhabua a "conversion-free" district. According to media reports from this gathering, the activists gave an ultimatum to the local government, demanding a crackdown on Christians, or else the groups would perpetuate their brand of violence. "On September 22, when I appeared at the Tehsildar office, I was interrogated regarding if I had the proper proofs to say that I was a Christian," another Christian leader from Jhabua, who wished to remain unnamed, told ICC. "I was further questioned about why I conduct house prayers and convert people to Christianity."

"There are hardly any worship services taking place for nearly a month now in our area," the leader continued. "People are afraid of attacks from the radical Hindu nationalists, and these notices from the Tehsildar are legitimizing the actions of the radicals. Where can we go for help?"

On January 9, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government of Madhya Pradesh enacted a new anti-conversion law. Officially known as the Freedom of Religion Act, this new law has been the impetus for a new surge in persecution in Madhya Pradesh.

In the six months following the enactment of the new law, ICC documented 47 incidents of persecution against Christians in Madhya Pradesh. The documented incidents from these six months account for more than the number of incidents recorded in 2019 and 2020 combined.

Similar stories of crackdowns and persecution have been reported across Madhya Pradesh. In the Ratlam District, house churches are being shut down due to pressure by radical Hindu nationalists.

"The church here in Ratlam is more or less underground," a local church leader told ICC. "We are gathering for prayers and worship secretly. We know the consequences if we are found worshipping, so we split into small groups and pray inside homes, making sure no one is watching us."

"I was caught by radical Hindu nationalists while I was in the market," the leader continued. "They threatened to kill me if I continued to lead prayers." Despite the threats and growing crackdown, the Christians of Madhya Pradesh remain strong in their faith. Many are reflecting on what originally brought them to Christianity to help them through this dark period.

"I am a better person after I became a Christian in 2009," Madhu said. "I went through so much pain because of an illness no doctor could treat. When I prayed with faith in Jesus, I was healed. Since that day, I have never looked back."

A simple farmer, Madhu uses his free time to lead prayers and share his testimony. Now he is being treated like a criminal for these activities.

"We have experienced the love of Christ, and nothing can separate us from that," Madhu continued. "Neither notices nor threats and physical violence. We will continue to follow Jesus, and we are ready to die if needed."

*Name changed for security reasons.