

# INDIA'S ANTI-CONVERSION LAWS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

William Stark & Matias Perttula

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International Christian Concern  
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## INTRODUCTION

Religious freedom is a fundamental right guaranteed to all Indian citizens by the country's constitution and laws. However, the religious freedom rights of India's religious minorities, including Christians, have been in severe decline since the political rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014 and its enactment of the Hindutva ideology.

Since 2014, attacks on religious minorities have dramatically increased and policies have been enacted that curtail religious freedom. In 2020, the religious freedom situation in India deteriorated to such a degree that the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended India be designated a Country of Particular Concern ("CPC"), a designation reserved for the world's worst violators of religious freedom.

State-based Freedom of Religion Acts, more popularly known as anti-conversion laws, are among the most sinister policies enacted by BJP-led governments that have increased hostility against India's religious minorities. In the nine states that have enacted these laws, all of them led by the BJP, the laws have been used to spread disinformation about minorities and provide legal cover for radical Hindu nationalists and their activities.

On January 9, 2021, Madhya Pradesh became the

latest state to enact an anti-conversion law. The enactment of this law unleashed a new wave of persecution for the state's Christian minority.

International Christian Concern (ICC) studied the effects of the enactment of Madhya Pradesh's anti-conversion law from January to June 2021. During this time, ICC documented the instances of persecution experienced by the state's Christian community and the number of churches closed as a result. ICC also surveyed over 500 Christians regarding the enactment of the new anti-conversion law and its effects on their community.

Taken together, these bodies of evidence show the enactment of the anti-conversion law in Madhya Pradesh had a significantly negative effect on the state's Christian community. The law dramatically increased the number of persecution incidents endured and led to an overall climate of fear for the state's Christians.

Unfortunately, the enactment of other anti-conversion laws have had similar effects on Christian communities in other states. For this reason, the international community, including the United States of America, must be utilized international pressure to repeal these laws and advocate for the recovery of religious freedom in India.

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN INDIA

Religious freedom is a fundamental right guaranteed to all Indians by the country's constitution and laws. According to Article 25 of India's constitution, citizens are free to profess, practice, and propagate the religion of their choice.

This has been the law of the land for the last seven decades.

In recent years, however, religious freedom has come under increasing attack by radical Hindu nationalists and followers of the Hindutva ideology. Laws have been passed and policies enacted that target religious minorities and limit religious freedom. Extremists have been allowed to terrorize minorities with impunity. Above it all, a nationalistic political platform has been used to normalize and justify the growing religious intolerance that has taken hold of India.

Many of these discouraging developments have taken place under, and been implemented by, the current political structure ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and their leader Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Since taking power in 2014, attacks on religious minorities have increased, hate speech used by BJP politicians has become normal, and religious freedom overall has suffered.

In 2020, the religious freedom situation in India deteriorated to such a degree that the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) recommended India be designated a Country of Particular Concern ("CPC"), a designation reserved for the world's worst violators of religious freedom. In its 2020 Annual Report, USCIRF said:

*"In 2019, religious freedom conditions in India experienced a drastic turn downward, with religious minorities under increasing assault. Following the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) re-election in May, the national government used its strengthened parliamentary majority to institute national level policies violating religious freedom across India, especially for Muslims. The national government allowed violence against minorities and their*

*houses of worship to continue with impunity, and also engaged in and tolerated hate speech and incitement to violence."*

In 2021, USCIRF once again recommended India be designated a CPC as many of the issues highlighted in the 2020 Annual Report continued to escalate.

According to the USCIRF, *"The government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), promoted Hindu nationalist policies resulting in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom."*

Many of the policies highlighted by USCIRF focused on the treatment of India's Muslim population. This included the passage of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the religious violence that followed.

USCIRF reported:

*In February, the worst Hindu-Muslim mob violence in more than three decades erupted in Delhi. More than 50 people died, and 200 others were injured, mostly Muslims. Mobs sympathetic to Hindu nationalism operated with impunity, using brutal force to single out Muslims, attack mosques, and destroy homes and businesses in majority Muslim neighborhoods. The Delhi Minorities Commission investigated and found that the violence and allegations of police brutality and complicity were "seemingly planned and directed to teach a lesson to a certain community which dared protest against a discriminatory law."*

While much of USCIRF's Annual Report focused on the deteriorating religious freedom situation for India's Muslims, a similar situation is faced by the country's Christians. For Christians, the normalization of social hostility against their community is among the most dramatic changes in measuring India's decline of religious freedom.

According to the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), documented attacks on Indian Christians have more than doubled since the BJP's rise to power. In 2014,

EFI recorded 147 violent attacks on Indian Christians. In 2019, after five years of BJP rule, EFI recorded 366 violent attacks.

In 2020, EFI recorded 327 violent attacks on Indian Christians. While this number is a decline when compared to 2019, it is important to remember that COVID-19 lockdowns affected the country for several months and likely suppressed the activities of religious extremists.

EFI's data has been corroborated by others reports. The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) reported at least 328 incidents of targeted violence against Christians in 2019. Like EFI, ADF's 2019 data represented an increase in violence when compared with previous years.

However, the incidents reported by EFI and ADF likely only represent a portion of the violence experienced by India's Christian community. Most incidents go unreported due to fear of reprisal and a lack of confidence in India's justice system. In many cases, representatives of India's local law enforcement play important roles, either active or passive, in attacks on Christian individuals and communities.

To illustrate the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, a report released by ADF documented 247 instances of persecution in just the first eight months of 2019. According to ADF, First Information Reports (FIRs), a report filed by police to initiate an investigation, were only filed in 28 of the 247 cases documented.

The data collect by EFI and ADF shows a clear pattern of the increasing social hostility experienced by Indian Christians. However, what the data does not show is how genuinely terrifying it is to endure these incidents of violence.

*"They came prepared to burn us,"* Pastor Hanok Steven told ICC in an interview. *"I saw someone from the group taking petrol out of the fuel tank of motorbike and heard others shouting for the petrol to be used to burn us."*

On November 4, 2020, five Christians were brutally attacked by religious extremists in the Meerpet neighborhood of Hyderabad, India. The attack resulted in the Christian victims sustaining multiple serious injuries.

According to Pastor Hanok, a Christian woman named Sadhya invited several church members, including himself, to a prayer meeting. Before the meeting, Sadhya received permission from her Hindu landlord to hold the meeting in her home.

At around noon, only minutes after the Christians gathered at Sadhya's home, 15 extremists broke into the house and attacked the Christians with wooden clubs and sticks. The landlord joined the extremists and helped drag Pastor Hanok out of the house, where he was further assaulted and threatened with being set on fire.

*"I was panicked as all of this was going on,"* Pastor Hanok recalled. *"For 30 minutes, the attack continued, but we eventually managed to run in different directions and reached the police station."*

As a result of the attack, three Christians were seriously injured, and Pastor Hanok's car was damaged. A Christian man named Janaiah had his eardrum completely shattered, and a Christian woman named Annamma lost six teeth.

Across India, similar reports of hostility against Christians are being reported on a near daily basis. Unchecked inflammatory rhetoric used by BJP leaders and the widespread impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators are among the leading reasons why social hostility against Christians continues to increase across India.

For India's religious minorities, the last seven years of BJP rule has seen their rights curtailed and their communities under increasing attack. This decline has been recognized by the international community, leading to bodies like USCIRF recommending India be designated a CPC.

Under the current leadership of the BJP, India is forfeiting religious freedom in exchange for nationalistic policies used by politicians to maintain and expand power. The consequences of this exchange are being felt most by India's religious minorities. International action must be taken to help India reverse this exchange and, once again, uphold the religious freedom rights its citizens are guaranteed by the constitution.

## INDIA'S FREEDOM OF RELIGION ACTS

A way India's Christians have seen their religious freedom rights curtailed has been the proliferation and abuse of anti-conversion laws. Officially called Freedom of Religion Acts, anti-conversion laws have been enacted in nine of India's 29 states.

According to these laws, religious conversions must be regulated by the state government. Individuals seeking to change their religion must have their conversion approved by the state after an investigation and waiting period. Fraudulent conversions, often labeled forced conversions, are criminalized.

Hindu nationalists frequently use the specter of fraudulent mass conversions to Christianity and Islam to justify the enactment of anti-conversion laws. According to these nationalists, Christians and Muslims are accused of converting poor Hindus to Christianity and Islam in mass by fraudulent means.

In the case of forced conversions to Christianity, nationalists accuse Christians of using aid, money, and other items of value to induce non-Christians into converting to Christianity. In recent years, this narrative has cast suspicion on all charitable work led by Christians in India and has even led to the expulsion of international non-profits such as Compassion International.

Due to growing religious intolerance and the normalization of religiously motivated violence, many radical Hindu nationalists view all religious conversions to non-Hindu faiths as fraudulent. In an increasing number of cases, radical Hindu nationalists equate all non-Hindu religious activity with forced or fraudulent conversions. This assumption of guilt has been the catalyst for many violent attacks on Christians simply exercising their religious freedom rights.

In May 2018, eight Christians, including six men and two women, were arrested at a train station in Madhya Pradesh. They were accused of kidnapping and attempting to forcefully convert the 60 children they

accompanied to a summer Bible camp. All the children came from Christian families. Also, their parents gave consent for their children to travel to and attend the camp.

Despite these facts, the eight Christians were charged with attempted forced conversions under Madhya Pradesh's Freedom of Religion Act 1968, the state's anti-conversion law.

For the next two and a half years, the eight Christians had to fight a prolonged legal battle to prove their innocence. On February 18, 2020, the eight Christians were finally acquitted of all charges.

*"It was a life-threatening situation for me and my family during this prolonged trial,"* Lallu Babor, one of the eight Christians, told ICC. *"Apart from the struggles I went through in jail for three months, my wife and two kids had no hope of survival without me around."*

*"All I know is that we did survive,"* Babor continued. *"The false charges were proven to be false. We thank God for that. The people who beat us and framed these false charges against us knew eventually the charges would be proven false."*

In many cases, however, radical Hindu nationalists simply use the anti-conversion laws as legal cover to persecute religious minorities.

In 2017, Jharkhand, a state located in India's northeast, enacted an anti-conversion law soon after the state government was taken over by the BJP. Within a year, ICC documented the arrest of at least 63 Christians on false forced conversion charges in Jharkhand.

Unfortunately, false accusations of forced conversions continue to be reported against Christians in Jharkhand. On September 23, 2020, the Christian community of an entire village was arrested by police after radical Hindu nationalists falsely accused them of engaging in forced conversions.

*“There is still tension in Gagari village,”* Pastor Majendra Nayak told ICC. *“The anti-conversion law is the easiest weapon that Hindu radicals use against us. It is the most dangerous.”*

*“Even when the Christians gather and pray as a group, it is portrayed as a conversion ceremony by radicals,”* Pastor Nayak said. *“The police immediately accept the mere accusation as evidence and make arrests.”*

The Christians of Gagari village were eventually released after police could not gather adequate evidence to support the charges.

False accusations of forced conversion are used by radical Hindu nationalists to justify physical assaults on Christians. In most cases, local police arrest the Christian victim, who has been clearly assaulted, simply because radicals claim the Christian was involved in religious conversions.

Currently, anti-conversion laws have been enacted in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand. BJP-led governments in Haryana, Assam, and Karnataka have all publicly called for anti-conversion laws to be enacted, explicitly citing

the issue of fraudulent mass conversions to Christianity and Islam as a justification.

India's population data, however, does not support the conspiracy of mass conversions to Christianity and Islam used to justify anti-conversion laws. This is especially true regarding Christianity. In 1951, the first census after independence, Christians made up 2.3% of India's population. According to the 2011 census, the most recent census data available, Christians still make up 2.3% of the population.

To date, no individual has ever been convicted of the crime of forced conversion. This is notable as some anti-conversion laws have been in force since the late 1960s.

Despite the lack of convictions and the unsupported narratives used to justify anti-conversion laws, BJP-led governments continue to push the proliferation of anti-conversion laws. The expansion of anti-conversion laws, and the false narratives about religious minorities used to justify their enactment, have significantly contributed to the deterioration of religious freedom in India.

## **MADHYA PRADESH CASE STUDY**

On January 9, 2021, the BJP-led government of Madhya Pradesh approved an ordinance entitled The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Ordinance 2020. The ordinance, which was later passed into law by the Madhya Pradesh legislature on March 8, replaced the Madhya Pradesh's Religious Freedom Act of 1968, and is considered by BJP lawmakers the *“most stringent”* anti-conversion law in India.

According to this new law, individuals seeking to change their religion must apply to the district administration 60 days in advance. Religious leaders facilitating religious conversions also must inform the district administration of the conversion 60 days in advance. If the provisions of the ordinance are not followed,

individuals could face a sentence of three to five years in jail and a financial penalty of 50,000 rupees.

The law also criminalizes forceful religious conversions with a jail term of one to five years' imprisonment and fine of 25,000 rupees. These punishments are increased to two to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 rupees for individuals caught forcefully converting minors, women, or individuals belonging to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe.

Like other states, the approval of the new anti-conversion laws in Madhya Pradesh unleashed a new wave of persecution for the state's Christians. *“It was like a cyclone hit our state,”* a pastor from Madhya Pradesh, who wished to remain anonymous, told in

February 2021.

According to the Hindustan Times, 28 people, most of them Christian, were arrested and charged under the new anti-conversion law in just its first month. Data collected by the Hindustan Times showed that eight cases in total were registered, four cases against nine Muslims, and another four cases against 19 Christians.

Beyond the arrests, radical groups like the Bajrang Dal and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang used the law's enactment to launch a campaign of terror. This campaign left many Christians injured, at least 19 arrested, and countless churches shut down.

*"We are experiencing a dangerous situation,"* a pastor from the Ratlam District, who wished to remain anonymous, told ICC in February 2021. *"We are not allowed to have fellowship, worship, or share our faith. We read in the news that this is part of making India a Hindu nation by 2021."*

*"I have not led any worship service for my congregation for the last four weeks,"* the pastor continued. *"There are 30 other pastors in the area where I serve, and none of them are conducting worship for their congregations as well. We read in the newspapers that pastors are being charged under this new law for conducting worship. These pastors are repeatedly denied bail."*

*"Pastors from other districts in Madhya Pradesh, whom I know quite well, are also being violently attacked,"* the pastor continued. *"They are being victimized for merely conducting worship services."*

*"It feels like we have lost our freedom to worship and assemble as Christians,"* the pastor concluded.

At the time of interview this pastor, all but two churches, both built in the British colonial era, were shut down in Ratlam. Among the church shut down were the Believers Church, Glory Church, CFI Church, Gospel Church, and Emmanuel Church.

In response to this wave of violence, ICC began documenting the effects of the new anti-conversion law on Madhya Pradesh's Christian community. This included documenting incidents of persecution and the closure of churches due to the new law and the wave of persecution that followed.

ICC also conducted a survey of more than 500 Christians in Madhya Pradesh. This survey measured the Christian community's concern for their safety, their perception of the anti-conversion law and its effects, as well as their feelings towards the BJP-led government.

When putting these bodies of evidence together, Madhya Pradesh's anti-conversion law has had a negative effect on the religious freedom of the state's Christian community.

Following the enactment of the anti-conversion law on January 9, ICC began tracking the incidents of persecution experienced by Christians in Madhya Pradesh. Documented incidents were grouped into six categories including intimidation, physical assault, false allegations, arrest, church closure, murder, and rape.

From January 1 to June 30, ICC documented a total 48 incidents of persecution experienced by Madhya Pradesh's Christian community effecting more than 4,200 individuals. In addition to these incidents of persecution, ICC also documented the closure of at least 47 churches through direct intimidation or the general fear of the increasing violence.

The incidents documented by ICC show a clear increase in violence when compared to previous years. According to EFI, a total of 25 incidents of persecution were documented in Madhya Pradesh in 2020. Stepping back another year, EFI documented a total of 15 incidents of persecution in Madhya Pradesh in 2019.

While the 48 incidents of persecution documented by ICC are concerning enough, it is likely these 48 incidents represent a suppressed number of incidents. Madhya Pradesh was under strict COVID-19 lockdown orders from March 25 to June 8. It is reasonable to assume that the activities of radical Hindu nationalists perpetrating incidents of persecution were suppressed by these strict lockdowns.

This point is more obvious when breaking down the incidents by month. In January, the month the anti-conversion law was enacted, ICC documented 25 incidents of persecution. This initial spree of violence can be directly linked with the enactment of the law and the encouragement felt by radical Hindu nationalists who used it as a legal cover for their activities.

After this initial spree of violence, documented incidents in February and March were steady at 7 incidents in February and 9 incidents in March. However, the number of documented incidents fell sharply after the COVID-19 lockdowns were initiated with a total of 7 incidents being documented between April and June.

In addition to documenting the increased violence experienced by the Christian community of Madhya Pradesh, ICC also measured the community's perception of what was happening to them following the enactment of the new anti-conversion law.

ICC surveyed over 500 Christians in Madhya Pradesh in June 2021. Respondents were asked a series of 10 questions regarding their personal safety, the safety of their religious leaders, their perception of the new anti-conversion law and its effects, as well as their thoughts about the BJP's role in the increased violence. In addition to these 10 questions, ICC also asked several demographics questions.

When asked about their concern for their personal safety as Christians, 70.86% of respondents reported they were concerned, 26.85% reported they were not concerned, and 2.29% reported they were neither concerned nor not concerned. Out of all responses, *"Very Concerned"* was the most selected response at 63.24%.

The response to this question shows that an overwhelming majority of Christians in Madhya Pradesh are concerned about their personal safety as Christians. This dramatic result only increased when the survey focused on personal safe while attending a worship service, either at church or at home.

When asked about their concern for their personal safety as Christians while worshipping at church or at home, 78.66% reported they were concerned, 17.88% reported they were not concerned, and 3.46% reported they were neither concerned nor not concerned. Again, *"Very Concerned"* was the most selected response at 65.58%.

The results of these two questions show that Christians in Madhya Pradesh are very concerned for their personal safety as Christians, especially while attending worship services. This make sense when one considered

worship gatherings are a time when Christians are most publicly exposed and many incidents of persecution targeting Christians happen as they gather for worship.

Next, respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their perception of the new anti-conversion law and its effect.

When asked about their perception of the anti-conversion law itself, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the following statement, *"The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act protects the religious freedom of Christians."* In response to this question, 63.17% of respondents disagreed, 25.42% agreed, 3.87% were neutral, and 7.55% responded that they did not know.

The response to this question shows that the majority of Christians feel the recently enacted anti-conversion law does not protect their religious freedom rights as guaranteed by India's constitution. This negative perception of the anti-conversion law is further confirmed when respondents were asked about the law's effect on their safety and the aggression of radical Hindu nationalists.

When asked to rate the safety of Christians in Madhya Pradesh following the enactment of the anti-conversion law, the majority of respondents, 53.78%, reported Christians were unsafe following the enactment of the law. 31.86% reported Christians were safe, 8.86% reported Christians were neither safe nor unsafe, and 5.52% reported they did not know. Out of all the possible responses, the most selected response was *"Very Unsafe"* at 43.65%.

These responses were further supported when respondents were asked to rate the safety of pastors and church leaders following the enactment of the anti-conversion law. In response to this question, 56.53% of respondents reported that pastors and church leaders were unsafe, 28.36% reported that pastors and church leaders were safe, 9.59% reported that pastors and church leaders where neither safe nor unsafe, and 5.52% reported they did not know. Again, the most selected response was *"Very Unsafe"* at 45.30%.

Taken together, the responses to these two questions show a majority of Christians in Madhya Pradesh feel

the enactment of the new anti-conversion negatively effected the safety of their community.

A likely reason for this perception is the increased aggression Christians in Madhya Pradesh experienced from radical Hindu nationalist following the enactment of the anti-conversion law. In addition to documenting the increase in incidents of persecution, ICC also surveyed Christians in Madhya Pradesh regarding this issue.

When asked to rate their agreement with the following statement *“Since the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, radical Hindu nationalists have become more aggressive against Christians”*, 69.61% of respondents agreed, 21.36% of respondents disagreed, 2.56% were neutral, and 6.45% said they did not know. This shows that the vast majority of Christians in Madhya Pradesh feel that radical Hindu nationalists became more aggressive following the enactment of the anti-conversion laws, likely effecting their perception of the law itself and its effects.

Finally, the survey’s respondents were asked about their perception of the current government and its protection of Christians’ religious freedom rights.

When asked to rate their agreement with the following statement, *“The current government of India, led by Prime Minister Modi and the BJP, protects the religious freedom rights of Christians and other religious minorities,”* 71.08% disagreed, 18.05% agreed, 3.87% were neutral, and 7% said they did not know. The results of this question clearly show that Christians in Madhya Pradesh do not feel protected by the current

government.

The results of this question are partially explained by a survey question that asked respondents to report the number of times they heard or read anti-Christian statements from government leaders. The responses to this question were quite staggering.

Out of all the respondents, 88.03% reported hearing or reading government leaders make at least one anti-Christian statement since the beginning of 2021. Respondents were given the choice of selecting 0, 1-3, 4-6, 7 or More, and I Do Not Know. The most selected result was 7 or More with 52.67%.

What the result of these two questions show is that the anti-Christian statements being made by government leaders are likely contributing to the lack of confidence Christians have in the current government’s ability to protect their religious freedom rights. Taken into consideration with the increased violence following the enactment of the anti-conversion law, it is wholly understandable that Christians, in Madhya Pradesh at least, doubt the ability or willingness of the current government to protect their rights.

Taking these two bodies of evidence together, the increase in documented violence against Christians in Madhya Pradesh and the results of the survey, it is easy to see the enactment of the new anti-conversion law negatively affected the Madhya Pradesh’s Christian community. Similar effects have been seen in other states following the enactment of an anti-conversion law and are the primary reason why the proliferation of these laws must be curtailed.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As religious freedom declined across the globe, the Trump administration made unprecedented efforts to prioritize international religious freedom as core US foreign policy priority. Under the leadership of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Ambassador Brownback, the Department of State launched a series of initiatives that helped advance religious freedom around the world

and carved out a space for the United States as the key leader in this issue. Still, religious persecution has continued, including in India—a prime example of why the Biden administration must continue to emphasize religious freedom and pressure India even more than the Trump administration did.

NGOs, governments, and other human rights entities

have consistently reported on the declining state of religious freedom in India. Specifically, since Prime Minister Modi came to power in 2014, the amount of persecution has increased significantly and a growing number of states across India have adopted anti-conversion laws that empower radical Hindu nationalists adhering to *Hindutva* ideology.

Anti-conversion laws do not secure the freedom of religion for Indians, but rather take away their ability to fully exercise their rights without government hindrance. The legal structures set forth by these laws make state administrators the final decision arbitrators between legitimate and a nonlegitimate conversion, taking this authority from the individual where it rightly belongs. The constitution of India guarantees freedom of religion to all citizens, included the right to propagate one's faith and change religions.

Considering these realities, the US policy approach to India must combine broad policies and targeted, specific actions. ICC makes the following policy recommendations:

First, the Department of State must prioritize religious freedom, minority rights, and the repeal of anti-conversion laws in its bilateral conversations with India and should pressure the Modi administration to condemn specific instances of violence against religious minorities. These should be standing agenda items in every bilateral meeting between the two countries. Diplomatic pressure is most effective when it is consistent and ongoing and offers measurable steps and goals for improvement.

Second, the Department of State should adopt the recommendation of USCIRF and designate India as a CPC. In addition, the US should publicly impose measured economic consequences on India for its behavior. Robust messaging from high profile US leadership provides a public pressure point to which Indian leadership will be compelled to respond. Further, calling attention to these issues raises the public profile

of India's decline and will draw further public and political scrutiny to Indian human rights violations.

As part of this effort, the US should implement targeted sanctions and visa bans on persons known to persecuting religious minorities. The Global Magnitsky sanctioning authority and others provide an array of measured economic responses on individuals and move away from broader sanctioning powers that could negatively impact the country as a whole. In addition to individual sanctions, entity level sanctions should be considered as well, including on the Bajrang Dal, the RSS, the VHP, radical members of BJP leadership, and Hindu Munnani.

Third, the US government should monitor Hindu extremism in America, which is peddled through various front organizations that maintain close ties to *Hindutva* organizations across India and advocate for *Hindutva* policies and ideologies.

Fourth, the US should work with the International Religious Freedom Alliance to encourage India towards greater religious freedom. This new multilateral institution should work together to put pressure on India. As a collation with ties in India, the Alliance can encourage appropriate change.

Fifth, the US should pressure India to allow the USCIRF Commissioners to make an official trip to India. For years, Indian leadership has denied USCIRF official access to India to conduct a comprehensive review of religious freedom conditions in India. The Indian agreement to allow USCIRF for an official visit would be a significant step in the right direction.

Finally, the US should create incentives for local, regional, and national governments to punish perpetrators of religiously motivated minority hate crimes. These incentives should include a rewards-based system for actions taken by Indian officials to curb religiously motivated attacks.

## APPENDIX A: MADHYA PRADESH PERSECUTION INCIDENT TRACKER

#	Date	Location	Category	Brief Description	Number Affected
1	January 1st, 2021	Manpur, Seoni District	Intimidation, Church Closure, Physical Assault.	A mob of 35 people attacked the pastor of Shalom Church, stopping the church service and closing the church indefinitely.	50
2	January 2nd, 2021	Muswada, Jhabua District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	A mob of 40 people from the VHP attacked a Sunday church service, beat Pastor Bahaddur and congregants, and took the pastor to the police station. An FIR was filed and the pastor was later released on bail.	100
3	January 4th, 2021	Kalapani, Ratlam District	Church Closure, Intimidation, Physical Assault.	Extremists attacked Christians during worship and forced them to shut down their church.	35
4	January 10th, 2021	Jobat, Alirajpur District	False Allegation, Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 30 people confronted a Christian congregation, alleging the forced conversion of tribal people. The mob threatened to beat and imprison the church pastor and his congregation if they continued to preach Jesus in nearby villages.	50
5	January 10th, 2021	Tokrijhilal, Alirajpur District	Intimidation, Church Closure, Physical Assault.	A mob attacked the pastor of Shalom church, stopping the church service and closing the church indefinitely.	170
6	January 10th, 2021	Kakadkuwa, Dhar District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 30 people confronted Pastor Ramesh Masaniya and forced him to end all prayer meetings and ministry activities.	230
7	January 10th, 2021	Indra, Jhabua District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	On the way to a prayer meeting, police stopped a group of Christians and forced them to stop their ministry. Local police were reportedly following the instructions of the local RSS.	80
8	January 10th, 2021	Puniyawat, Alirajpur District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Church Closure.	A mob of 20 people attacked a pastor and his congregation. Many believers were injured, including one believer who broke his leg. The congregation is no longer allowed to gather for prayer.	300

#	Date	Location	Category	Brief Description	Number Affected
9	January 10th, 2021	Alirajpur, Alirajpur District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	A mob of 30 people attacked a prayer meeting and threatened Christians, forcing them to close all ministry activities.	100
10	January 10th, 2021	Sanimath, Dhar District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	A mob of 50 people attacked a church during a prayer meeting and beat the pastor and congregants. They took the pastor to police station and he was released on bail after a few days. The church has been closed since.	70
11	January 10th, 2021	Antrwaliya, Jhabua District	False Allegation, Church Closure, Intimidation.	After a false allegation of forced conversion, police officials warned a pastor and his congregants to stop all church activities. The church was closed for at least two months.	200
12	January 10th, 2021	Badawara, Katni District	False Allegation, Intimidation, Church Closed	A mob of 30 people stopped a church prayer service and falsely accused Christians of forcibly converting poor people. The church has now been closed for two months.	40
13	January 10th, 2021	Antrwaliya, Jhabua District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	Police interrupted a prayer meeting and told Christians that they couldn't hold services without permission.	200
14	January 12th, 2021	Jobat, Alirajpur District	False Allegation, Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 30 people interrupted a pastor while he was giving baptisms. The group threatened to report allegations of forced conversion against the pastor and his congregation. The Church was forced to close down.	50
15	January 14th, 2021	Temachigaon, Alirajpur District	False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure, Physical Assault, Intimidation.	A mob, including leaders from the Yuva Jagarti Association, interrupted a prayer service at a house church and beat the pastor. They then filed an FIR against the pastor and nine other believers. All ministry activities have been stopped since.	70
16	January 16th, 2021	Apuva, Alirajpur District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 35 people stormed a church and threatened the congregation. All ministry activities have been closed since.	150

#	Date	Location	Category	Brief Description	Number Affected
17	January 17th, 2021	Sanimath, Dahar District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	A mob of 50 people interrupted a prayer meeting and beat the pastor, then put him in prison. An FIR was filed against the pastor and he was later released on bail. All church services have stopped, and the criminal case is ongoing.	70
18	January 17th, 2021	Alirajpur, Alirajpur District	Physical Assault, Intimidation.	A mob of 40 people attacked a prayer meeting at a church, broke musical instruments and chairs, and beat the pastor and congregants. The pastor and many Christians were injured.	80
19	January 17th, 2021	Varsieoni, Balaghat District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 40 RSS members came to a church and threatened the pastor, forcing the church's closure.	240
20	January 17th, 2021	Goalbadi, Jhabua District	False Allegation, Church Closure.	In the month of January 2021 police gave warnings along with Local leaders of RSS 40 people to the church and pastor, stopped church services and ministry, not able to go anywhere for the ministry, even house prayers are not allowed, all the fanatic groups of people not allowing any ministry activities, all are stopped now	50
21	January 17th, 2021	Kodiyaapada, Alirajpur District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 30 people attacked a church threatened its members, forcing the church's closure.	25
22	January 18th, 2021	Talabodi, Ratlam District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	A mob of Hindus attacked a church and forced its closure.	50
23	January 18th, 2021	Mahu, Indore District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 35 people stormed shalom church and attacked the pastor, forcing the church to close indefinitely.	105
24	January 24th, 2021	Morjar, Ratlam District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	Religious nationalists forced Pastor Panalal to close down his church. Hindu radicals threatened the pastor that his children would be denied school admission if he did not denounce the Christian faith.	25

#	Date	Location	Category	Brief Description	Number Affected
25	January 27th, 2021	Bagholi, Balaghat District	False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	Chhattarsingh Katre, a Christian, was holding a prayer meeting when a mob of 50 people took the pastor to a police station and filed an FIR against three people, alleging forced conversion. Bail is currently pending in high court.	300
26	February 4th, 2021	Naiti, Jhabua District	False Allegation, Church Closure.	A group of 30 RSS members, joined by police, went to a church and threatened the pastor and his congregants with allegations of forced conversion. The church has been closed down since.	35
27	February 7th, 2021	Alirajapur, Alirajapur District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of 30 people attacked a pastor and his church and threatened them, forcing them to stop all ministry activities.	200
28	February 7th, 2021	Jambukhera, Alirajpur District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	A large mob, including leaders of the Yuwajanjati Association, attacked a Sunday worship service, beat the pastor, broke musical instruments, and damaged property, and took the pastor to the police station where an FIR was filed.	120
29	February 7th, 2021	Bhandakhapur, Alirajpur District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	A mob of 40 people, including leaders of the Yuwa Janjati Association, attacked a Sunday worship service, beat the pastor, broke musical instruments, and damaged the church roof. They then took the pastor to the police station where he was held overnight.	140
30	February 7th, 2021	Tutimoundi, Ratlam District	Church Closure	Hindu radicals opposed having a Church in the village and forced its closure.	28
31	February 8th, 2021	Mudhpur, Ratlam District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	Hindu radicals arrived at a prayer meeting held by Christians, and forced the Pastor to halt all Church services due to not having permission.	40
32	February 8th, 2021	Vorampura, Gwalior District	Church Closure, Physical Assault, Intimidation.	Hindu radicals broke into a house Church and beat congregants, threatening them to shut down the Church in the village.	20
33	March 8th, 2021	Richkotra, Ratlam District	Church Closure	The new Freedom of Religion Act passed by legislature motivated the closure of a church, due to the fear of the 10-year jail penalty and 50,000 rupees.	90

#	Date	Location	Category	Brief Description	Number Affected
34	March 8th, 2021	Dokriya Panda, Ratlam District	Church Closure	The new Freedom of Religion Act passed by legislature motivated the closure of a church, due to the fear of the 10-year jail penalty and 50,000 rupees.	20
35	March 8th, 2021	Bast, Ratlam District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	A pastor was threatened to stop ministering, or face severe consequences.	14
36	March 8th, 2021	Udar, Ratlam District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	A pastor was threatened to stop ministering, or face severe consequences.	10
37	March 8th, 2021	Morar, Gwalior District	False Allegation, Church Closure, Intimidation.	After the enactment of the anti-conversion law, local RSS leaders threatened Pastor Kamlesh and forced him to close down his church.	70
38	March 12th, 2021	Haldata, Ratlam District	Church Closure, Intimidation.	A mob of Bajrangdal activists stormed a worship service and demanded the closure of the church.	30
39	March 14th, 2021	Unmeriya, Jhabua District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	A mob of 30 people interrupted a Sunday service, claiming that the church land belonged to the government. The church is now closed.	200
40	March 20th, 2021	Kadwali, Ratlam District	Intimidation, Church Closure.	A mob of Bajrangdal activists stormed the private home of a pastor and told him that he needed permission to hold prayer meetings, and demanded that he end Church worship services.	30
41	March 28th, 2021	Karudubadi, Jhabua District	Physical assault	A mob of religious nationalists stormed Shankar Damor's house and physically beat his wife and son for refusing to deny their Christian faith.	3
42	April 4th, 2021	Bhopal, Bhopal District	Arrest, Church Closure, False Allegation.	Rajendra Dwivedi was arrested at his home with no prior notice. He was charged under 295 A, for deliberately hurting the sentiments of people with different faiths. His Church was then closed down.	100
43	April 6th, 2021	Betma, Dhar District	Physical Assault, False Allegation, Arrest, Church Closure.	Pastor Mana Damor and his wife were jailed under the new anti-conversion law in Madhya Pradesh. Religious nationalists accused them of religious conversions, and attacked the pastor and his congregation.	3

#	Date	Location	Category	Brief Description	Number Affected
44	May 9th, 2021	Jhabua, Jhabua District	Intimidation, Physical Assault.	Three people trespassed onto a Pastor's property, damaged his fence and threw stones at his house. They threatened the pastor and his family, giving them the ultimatum to either leave the village or denounce their Christian faith.	5
45	May 30th, 2021	Bajna, Ratlam District	False Allegation	A Christian doctor was suspended from working with COVID-19 patients due to allegations of attempted forced conversion. Dr. Sandhya Tiwari, who was hired as part of the Madhya Pradesh State's "Kill Corona" Program, is now facing criminal charges after offering prayers of healing to her patients affected by the virus.	1
46	May 31st, 2021	Ratlam, Ratlam District	False Allegation, Intimidation, Arrest.	Ramesh Damor (name changed), a 22-year-old Christian, was taken to the police station along with his father and two brothers, on a false forced conversion complaint filed by radical Hindu nationalists of alleged conversion activities.	3
47	June 2nd, 2021	Gwalior, Gwalior District	False Allegation, Intimidation.	A family dispute over funeral rites escalated to a forced conversion accusation.	1
48	June 26th, 2021	Umariya, Jhabua District	False Allegation, Physical Assault.	Members of the RSS forcibly burned the dead body of Christian woman. While the woman's son, Pastor Hatesing, prepared for her funeral, he was attacked by a mob and denied the opportunity to pray for his mother and conduct her last rights. The RSS did this because they believed that she was forced to convert and therefore shouldn't be buried and prayed over.	5

## APPENDIX B: MADHYA PRADESH SURVEY

### English Survey

1. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being not concerned at all and 5 being very concerned, rate how concerned are you for your personal safety as a Christian in India?
  - a. 1 – Not Concerned at All
  - b. 2 – Not Concerned
  - c. 3 – Neither Concerned or Not Concerned
  - d. 4 – Concerned
  - e. 5 – Very Concerned
  - f. Do Not Know
2. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 being very concerned and 5 being not concerned at all, rate how concerned are you for your personal safety when gathering for worship at church or home?
  - a. 1 – Very Concerned
  - b. 2 – Concerned
  - c. 3 – Neither Concerned or Not Concerned
  - d. 4 – Not Concerned
  - e. 5 – Not Concerned at All
  - f. Do Not Know
3. Since the beginning of this year (2021), how many times have you heard or read anti-Christian statements from government leaders in India?
  - a. 0
  - b. 1-3
  - c. 4-6
  - d. 7 or More
  - e. Do Not Know
4. Since the beginning of this year (2021), have you feared that your ration card or government reservations would be taken away from you because of your Christian faith?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very safe and 5 being very unsafe, rate the safety of Christians in Madhya Pradesh since the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act.
  - a. 1 – Very Safe
  - b. 2 – Somewhat Safe
  - c. 3 – Neither Safe or Unsafe
  - d. 4 – Somewhat Unsafe
  - e. 5 – Very Unsafe
  - f. Do Not Know
6. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 very unsafe and 5 being very safe, rate the safety of pastors and church leaders in Madhya Pradesh since the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act.
  - a. 1 – Very Unsafe
  - b. 2 – Somewhat Unsafe
  - c. 3 – Neither Safe or Unsafe
  - d. 4 – Somewhat Safe
  - e. 5 – Very Safe
  - f. Do Not Know
7. Rate your agreement with the following statement: “The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act protects the religious freedom rights of Christians.”
  - a. 1 – Strongly Disagree
  - b. 2 – Disagree
  - c. 3 – Neutral
  - d. 4 – Agree
  - e. 5 – Strongly Agree
  - f. Do Not Know
8. Rate your agreement with the following statement: “The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act was enacted by the state government to target Christians.”
  - a. 1 – Strongly Agree

- b. 2 – Agree
- c. 3 – Neutral
- d. 4 – Disagree
- e. 5 – Strongly Disagree
- f. Do Not Know

9. Rate your agreement with the following statement:  
 “Since the enactment of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, radical Hindu nationalists have become more aggressive against Christians.”

- a. 1 – Strongly Disagree
- b. 2 – Disagree
- c. 3 – Neutral
- d. 4 – Agree
- e. 5 – Strongly Agree
- f. Do Not Know

10. Rate your agreement with the following statement:  
 “The current government of India, led by Prime Minister Modi and the BJP, protects the religious freedom rights of Christians and other religious minorities.”

- a. 1 – Strongly Agree
- b. 2 – Agree
- c. 3 – Neutral

- d. 4 – Disagree
- e. 5 – Strongly Disagree
- f. Do Not Know

11. Age

- a. 18-25
- b. 26-35
- c. 36-50
- d. 51+
- e. Prefer Not to Answer

12. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer Not to Answer

13. Education Level

- a. Primary
- b. Secondary
- c. College
- d. University
- e. Prefer Not to Answer

मध्य प्रदेश सर्वेक्षण

1. 1 से 5 के पैमाने पर, 1 का संबंध बिल्कुल नहीं है और 5 बहुत चिंतित हैं, आप भारत में एक इसाई के रूप में अपनी व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा के लिए कितने चिंतित हैं?  
ए. 1 – कोई चिंता नहीं  
बी. 2 – चिंतित नहीं  
सी. 3 – न तो कोई दिलचस्पी और न चिंता  
डी. 4 – चिंतित  
इ. 5 – बहुत चिंतित  
एफ. पता नहीं है
2. 1 से 5 के पैमाने पर, 1 का संबंध बहुत चिंतित है और 5 का संबंध बिल्कुल भी नहीं है, आंकलन करें कि चर्च या धर में आराधना के लिए एकत्रित होने पर आप अपनी व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा के लिए कितने चिंतित हैं?  
ए. 1 – बहुत चिंतित  
बी. 2 – चिंतित  
सी. 3 – न तो कोई दिलचस्पी और न चिंता  
डी. 4 – चिंतित नहीं  
इ. 5 – कोई चिंता नहीं  
एफ. पता नहीं है
3. इस वर्ष (2021) की शुरुआत के बाद से, आपने भारत में सरकारी नेताओं से इसाई विरोधी बयान कितनी बार सुना या पढ़ा है?  
ए. 0  
बी. 1-3  
सी. 4-6  
डी. 7 या अधिक  
इ. पता नहीं है
4. इस वर्ष (2021) की शुरुआत के बाद से, क्या आपको डर है कि आपके राशन कार्ड या सरकारी आरक्षण को आपके इसाई विश्वास के कारण आपसे छीन लिया जाएगा?  
ए. हाँ  
बी. नहीं
5. 1 से 5 के पैमाने पर, 1 – बहुत सुरक्षित और 5 – बहुत असुरक्षित होने के साथ, मध्य प्रदेश में धर्म की स्वतंत्रता अधिनियम के लागू होने के बाद से मध्य प्रदेश में इसाईयों की सुरक्षा दर।  
ए. 1 – बहुत सुरक्षित  
बी. 2 – कुछ हद तक सुरक्षित  
सी. 3 – न तो सुरक्षित और न ही असुरक्षित  
डी. 4 – कुछ हद तक असुरक्षित  
इ. 5 – बहुत असुरक्षित  
एफ. पता नहीं है।
6. 1 से 5 के पैमाने पर, 1 बहुत असुरक्षित और 5 बहुत सुरक्षित होने के साथ, मध्य प्रदेश में धर्म के अधिनियम की स्वतंत्रता के बाद से मध्य प्रदेश में पास्टर और चर्च के अगुवों की सुरक्षा दर।

- ए. 1 – बहुत असुरक्षित  
बी. 2 – कुछ हद तक असुरक्षित  
सी. 3 – न तो सुरक्षित और न ही असुरक्षित  
डी. 4 – कुछ हद तक सुरक्षित  
इ. 5 – बहुत सुरक्षित  
एफ. पता नहीं है।

7. अपने समझौते को निम्नलिखित कथन के साथ दर्ज करें: “मध्य प्रदेश धर्म स्वतंत्रता अधिनियम इसाईयों के धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता अधिकारों की रक्षा करता है।”

- ए. 1 – दृढता से असहमत  
बी. 2 – असहमत  
सी. 3 – निष्पक्ष  
डी. 4 – सहमत  
इ. 5 – पूर्ण सहमती  
एफ. पता नहीं है

8. निम्नलिखित समझौते को रेट करें: “ इसाईयों को निशाना बनाने के लिए राज्य सरकार द्वारा मध्य प्रदेश धर्म स्वतंत्रता अधिनियम बनाया गया था।”

- ए. 1 – दृढता से सहमत  
बी. 2 – सहमत  
सी. 3 – निष्पक्ष  
डी. 4 – असहमत  
इ. 5 – पूर्ण रूप से असहमत  
एफ. पता नहीं है

9. अपने समझौते को निम्नलिखित कथन के साथ दर्ज करें: “मध्य प्रदेश धर्म स्वतंत्रता अधिनियम के लागू होने के बाद से कट्टरपंथी हिंदू राष्ट्रवादी इसाईयों के खिलाफ अधिक आक्रामक हो गए हैं।”

- ए. 1 – दृढता से असहमत  
बी. 2 – असहमत  
सी. 3 – निष्पक्ष  
डी. 4 – सहमत  
इ. 5 – पूर्ण सहमति  
एफ. पता नहीं है

10. अपने समझौते को निम्नलिखित कथन के साथ दर्ज करें: “प्रधान मंत्री मोदी और भाजपा के नेतृत्व वाली भारत की वर्तमान सरकार, इसाईयों और अन्य धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों के धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता अधिकारों की रक्षा करती है।”

- ए. 1 – दृढता से सहमत  
बी. 2 – सहमत  
सी. 3 – निष्पक्ष  
डी. 4 – असहमत  
इ. 5 – पूर्ण असहमत  
एफ. पता नहीं है

11. आयु

ए. 18 – 25

बी. 26 – 35

सी. 36 – 50

डी. 51+

इ. जवाब देना पसंद नहीं

12. लिंग

ए. पुरुष

बी. महिला

सी. जवाब देना पसंद नहीं

13. शिक्षा स्तर

ए. प्राथमिक

बी. माध्यमिक

सी. महाविद्यालय

डी. विश्वविद्यालय

इ. जवाब देना पसंद नहीं

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