

## **India's Anti Conversion Laws Persecute Christians**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

C/O

Embassy of India

2107 Massachusetts Avenue,

NW Washington, DC 20008

Prime Minister Modi,

India has been home to Christianity since the Apostle Thomas brought the gospel to the region 2,000 years ago. The church, however, has been under violent attack and abuse from Hindutva radicals over the last two decades – this has increased significantly since you took power in 2014. The radical Hindu nationalists perpetrating the attacks are empowered by anti-conversion laws that have passed in several states across India. These laws erode the religious freedom guarantees in India's constitution.

Recently, nearly a dozen states have amended or enacted anti-conversion laws under the guise of protecting religious freedom. These laws intrude on individual freedoms by empowering the government to track, check, and even disapprove of religious conversions. The laws empower a bureaucrat to decide whether an individual's decision to become a Christian is a valid conversion, or a fraudulent one rooted in deception and trickery.

In many instances, people who want to change their faith to Christianity must let government officials know of their decision. Officials investigate the matter and decide whether to approve or disapprove the conversion.

Hindutva radicals use a false notion of mass conversions to Christianity as their primary justification for passing these laws throughout the country. Extremists allege that Indian Christians are fraudulently converting poor Hindus to Christianity. These laws further cultivate a climate of impunity for these radicals to attack, harass, discriminate, and oppress Christians in every state that has enacted these laws.

India's Christian population has remained at 2.3% for years. The first census that reported this was in 1951. The most recent census, from 2011, still lists the total

number of Christians at 2.3%, which begs the question—where are these mass conversions if the Christian population has stayed the same?

States that have anti-conversion laws on the books include Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. They empower persecutors to pursue their radical agenda to make India an exclusively Hindu country. They embolden the attackers to persecute Christians with impunity.

We demand that you publicly denounce Hindutva, which is the root cause of these unjust laws. And that you pursue a policy of true religious freedom that allows Indians to freely choose and propagate their religion free of government interference.

We eagerly await your reply.

(undersigned)