



INDIA: FREEDOM OF RELIGION

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Cover: Children playing in the ruins of their destroyed homes, after anti-Muslim violence broke out in 2013. Mohammadpur Raisingh village, Muzaffarnagar. See 'Hate speech' section.

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CSW is a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India is the second most populous country in the world, with more than 1.25 billion people in 2013. Its economy is the tenth largest in the world and it is the world's largest democracy. In 2014 the country held its 16th Lok Sabha ('Assembly of the People') election.

The economic outlook was bleak as India entered election season. A Pew survey¹ found that 70% of Indians were dissatisfied with the direction of their country's development and were worried about inflation, unemployment and an underperforming government. India used to be seen as an emerging geopolitical player, but is now faced with a weak economy and an unclear national vision. The economic data provides further evidence of the situation, with an average growth rate of 4.6% over 2010 to 2014 compared to growth rate figures exceeding 9% over 2005 to 2007. The government led by the Indian National Congress had been unable to put in place business reforms to help revive the economy.

The elections provided an opportunity for India to get its economy back on track. Narendra Modi, one of the candidates, had a track record of governing the State of Gujarat with an average growth rate of 10% during the period 2006 to 2012, against the national average of 8%. Mr Modi's party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), went on to win the elections. In what was touted as a historical win in Indian politics, more than 50% of seats in the Lok Sabha were won by BJP candidates. With just two seats in 1984, the BJP today has a strong majority of 282 seats, giving the party the power to control the future of the nation without reference to coalition parties. The clear majority in Parliament's lower house means more reforms and more growth, and is seen as positive news for investors. Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister of India on Monday 26 May 2014.

While the economy is recovering gradually under the new regime – the World Bank anticipates growth of 6.7% in 2015,² there are rising concerns over escalating human rights violations and threats to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Lack of action by the previous, secular government, exacerbated the culture of impunity and the lack of justice for victims of FoRB violations.

In 2014 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) found that the most significant threat to pluralism in India was from the extreme Hindu nationalist ideology, Hindutva. The BJP is known to have close ties to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak

Singh (RSS),³ a Hindu nationalist group with the ultimate aim of making India a Hindu state. Recent events have shown that with the BJP in power, the door has been opened for the RSS to have a prominent role in the running of the largest democratic country in the world.

This report will focus on the rise in FoRB-related human rights violations since the BJP government took office. During the first four months of 2015, over 600 incidents of violence against religious minorities were reported, grim reminders of past violence in Gujarat in 2002, in Kandhamal in 2008, and in Muzaffarnagar in 2013, where the victim-survivors have yet to receive justice. In addition to the rise in communal violence, there are increasing concerns around hate speech and *ghar wapsi* (literally 'homecoming' ceremonies, where non-Hindus are re-converted), along with continued fears for the protection of human right defenders.

India's constitution declares the country a secular state in the Preamble, and designates freedom of religion as a fundamental right and prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion (Article 15). Other relevant articles in the constitution include the protection of the right to FoRB in Article 25(1) and the protection of the freedom to manage religious affairs in Article 26.

India's obligations under international law includes its accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which protect the right to freedom of religion or belief and the rights of persons belonging to minority religions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the government of India:

- Act swiftly to stop acts of violence committed in the name of religion, against individuals, groups and places of worship;
- In order to operate as a credible guarantor of freedom of religion or belief for everyone, India should not identify itself exclusively with one particular religion or belief at the expense of equal treatment of followers of other faiths;
- Develop a national action plan for how to prevent violence committed in the name of religion and other forms of religious persecution;

3 The RSS was formed in 1925 and believes in 'character building' through *shakhas* (branches), aimed at spreading its ideals throughout the nation. It espouses the Hindutva ideology, and operates through various allied organisations aimed at reaching out to various sections of society. The number of *shakhas* is on the rise since the BJP came to power, growing from 37,125 in 2013 to 39,396 in July 2014.

1 Pew Research Centre, 'Indians Reflect on Their Country & the World', 31 March 2014 www.pewglobal.org/2014/03/31/indians-reflect-on-their-country-the-world/

2 World Bank (2015), *Global Economic Prospects: Having Fiscal Space and Using It* www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/GEP/GEP2015a/pdfs/GEP15a_web_full.pdf

- Continue to work towards the introduction of a comprehensive framework to deal adequately with communal and targeted violence;
- Actively pursue reform of the Indian Police Service, in particular by introducing legislation to reduce political interference, establishing mechanisms to increase accountability, providing training on key human rights areas, and significantly improving working conditions;
- Address the significant lacunae in the delivery of justice and compensation to victims of communal violence in India by examining the legal and judicial process, including:
 - Ensure that First Information Reports (FIRs) are effectively investigated and prosecuted, particularly those which have been ignored;
 - Include sexual and gender-based violence in FIRs;
 - Proactively prevent programmes planned by Hindutva forces within the state, especially those that are divisive and that incite violence against religious minorities;
 - Provide protection to victims and witnesses before, during and after the trial process.
- Ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work within a national framework properly supported by the appropriate legislative and regulatory texts, taking into account regional and national specifics, and remove the obstacles that some national laws may place in the path of legitimate activities to promote and protect human rights engaged in by human rights defenders, with a view to providing them with more effective protection.

To the United Nations:

- Encourage India to ratify treaties to which it has acceded, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). India should also fully implement the ratified International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- Continue to hold India to account and make them aware of their existing obligations under international law.

To the United States, EU and EU member states:

- Raise concerns regarding widespread hate campaigns by state and non-state actors;
- Insist that justice is done for the victim-survivors of communal and targeted violence in India who continue to live in fear due to the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators, who have not been prosecuted;
- Urge the federal government of India to push states with anti-conversion laws to repeal these laws or amend them to conform with internationally recognised human rights standards;
- Continue to hold India to account and make them aware of their existing obligations under international law;

- Urge India to train police and judicial officers on human rights including freedom of religion, expression and speech;
- Urge India to ensure human rights defenders are protected;
- Encourage India to create or support active commissions for minorities and for human rights in each state, to be transparent and independently appointed.

The 2014 report⁴ of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief provides useful recommendations for various stakeholders in addressing the challenges and the root causes of violations of FoRB. The Special Rapporteur extends the recommendations to include religious communities, civil society and the media, some which should be adopted by stakeholders in India. Our recommendations therefore include:

To civil society organisations in India:

- Continue to collect information on the situation of FoRB;
- Find ways to systematically use the information collected as part of an early warning system;
- Continue to play a role in overcoming the culture of silence in the face of violence committed in the name of religion, thereby sending a signal of solidarity with targeted individuals and groups;
- Work together, including creating common platforms, thereby demonstrating stronger commitment to FoRB, with the aim of creating further solidarity across all religious and cultural divides, to support human rights defenders.

To the media:

- Undertake careful fact-finding to counter negative media campaigns that target religious minorities;
- Help restore the faculty of empathy by making people aware of groups facing systematic discrimination;
- Take note of the Kathmandu recommendations on communal issues:
 - In the event of communal violence on a mass scale, the media should not propagate the false assumption that crimes targeting minorities are entirely or spontaneously the result of public anger. Instead, the media should investigate the possibility of political instigation, evasion of responsibility or administrative complicity, which often includes the claim that episodic violence is the result of public anger. The pattern over the years shows that public anger needs to be addressed, but is in itself not a sufficient condition for violence against communities.
 - Media organisations should bear in mind that hate speech is defined under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), signed by all the countries of South Asia, as incitement not only

4 UNGA (2014), Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, Human Rights Council Twenty-eighth session, Agenda item 3 – Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, Including the right to Development

to violence but also to discrimination and hostility. Accordingly, the media should oppose all statements, policies and actions that alienate minorities or escalate communal tensions.

- Every media organisation should have an ombudsman to deal with the grievances of readers/viewers. During periods of communal tensions, swift responses from the ombudsman may serve as a safeguard to ensure that the media is part of the solution rather than the problem.
- Media organisations' recruitment policies should be designed to ensure that journalists at all levels reflect the demographic diversity of their countries, in terms of religion, region, language, caste, ethnicity and gender.
- Every media organisation should have a code of ethics dealing with, among other things, their responsibility to protect minorities against violence, discrimination and hostility. The code of ethics should be imparted to all journalists and strictly enforced in order to maintain the credibility of the organisation.
- While recognising and embracing new media initiatives such as blogs, citizen journalism and social media, media organisations should exercise due diligence in reporting information from such sources, especially when this is likely to have repercussions for communal harmony.
- All countries in South Asia should have statutory media regulatory councils that are independent of government control, with representation of journalists and civil society, preferably headed by a serving judge of the Supreme Court or the high court of the land and empowered to intervene urgently and effectively, especially when media organisations are found to have violated professional ethics in dealing with sensitive issues of religious and targeted profiling, hate speech and violence. These councils should have jurisdiction over journalists and organisations across all media platforms, whether print, television or online. This will comprehensively and qualitatively enhance constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and inclusivity by protecting the civil and cultural rights of religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and especially of the women and children of these groups.
- Media councils, associations and organisations should compile case studies to raise awareness among journalists of the various ways in which they may fall prey to communal propaganda in their cultural context, and create an institutional memory to respond to such challenges.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

In 2014 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) raised the issues of communalism, and the threats faced by human right defenders, in its report *India: Communalism in an election year*.⁵ Data collected over the past year since the BJP took office show rising incidents of violations of freedom of religion or belief. Human rights and civil society groups have documented at least 43 deaths in

over 600 cases of violence, 149 targeting Christians and the remainder targeting Muslims, between May 2014 and March 2015.⁶

GHAR WAPSI (HOMECOMING)

We will bring back our brothers who have lost their way. They did not go on their own. They were robbed, tempted into leaving...Now the thief has been caught and the world knows my belongings are with the thief. I will retrieve my belongings, so why is this such a big issue?

Mohan Bhagwat, RSS chief, in response to the issue of ghar wapsi⁷

The 42nd amendment of the Indian constitution makes it clear that India is a secular republic, and freedom of choice is a fundamental right of every one of the country's 1.25 billion people. Article 25(1) declares that 'all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion'.

Since the BJP's electoral victory, senior individuals from the Hindu nationalist parties have been making bold remarks about their aspirations for India. A senior Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) official has openly stated⁸ that the time has come when there is a government that is committed to protecting the interests of Hindutva. The chief of the RSS further stated that Hindu values should be spread across India in order to save India from foreign religious teachings, and that the creation of a Hindu *rashtra* (nation) is inevitable. Reports suggest that the president of the VHP wants to make India 100% Hindu, up from the current Hindu population of 82%.

These statements make it clear that secularism has been taken hostage by communal politics and religion-based nationalism. Moreover, CSW has observed that there have been 'homecoming' ceremonies across the country, where converts from Hinduism are re-converted to Hinduism. These ceremonies are spearheaded by offshoots of the RSS, who claim to be 'protectors' of Hinduism. They attempt to justify these ceremonies by claiming that all

6 Dayal, John (2015), *300 Days: Documenting Sangh Hate and Communal Violence Under the Modi Regime* www.kractivist.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Modi-300-days-Use-for-Printing-1-1.pdf

7 *Indian Express*, 'RSS leader Mohan Bhagwat justifies 'ghar wapsi', says will bring back our brothers who have lost their way', 21 December 2014 <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/politics/bhagwat-dares-oppn-says-if-dont-like-conversion-bring-law-against-it/>

8 *Economic Times*, 'Vishwa Hindu Parishad says Hindu values will be restored in country', 21 December 2014 http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-12-21/news/57280817_1_vishwa-hindu-parishad-world-war-ashok-singhal

5 CSW, *India: Communalism in an election year*, 1 February 2014 www.csw.org.uk/2014/02/01/report/2586/article.htm

Indians were once Hindus, but were later converted to Christianity and Islam through force or allurements. The rhetoric behind these statements is that the Hindu nation is a victim of conversion by foreign intruders. The nation must therefore reclaim what it has lost; and the only way the identity and culture of Hinduism can be preserved is to carry out *ghar wapsis*. These nationalist groups have made it clear that they will not stop these ceremonies until every Christian and Muslim is 'welcomed' back into Hinduism. The majority of the *ghar wapsis* targeted the Dalit⁹ and Adivasi¹⁰ communities, who converted to Christianity in order to escape the caste hierarchies in Hinduism.

Ghar wapsis are carried out with impunity. In December 2014 it was planned to reconvert 4,000 Christians and 1,000 minority families in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. According to reports,¹¹ the re-conversions were intended to take place on Christmas Day, to emphasise the significance of Christians leaving their faith on a major Christian holiday. However, these reconversions were eventually prevented by police.

Reconversion ceremonies which did take place in December 2014 included 300 Muslims converted from Islam to Hinduism in Agra, where the Uttar Pradesh State Minorities Commission described the mass reconversion as an 'act of fraud and a dubious exercise, which has no connection with the serious business of change of faith'. The Hindu community in Agra condemned these reconversions. In the same month 30 Dalit Christians were reported to have been re-converted to Hinduism in Kerala. The government of Kerala subsequently ordered an investigation into whether any laws were broken. At the time of writing there is no update on the investigation.

Conversion campaigns include scaremongering among Hindu voters using the term 'love jihad'. This term illustrates the (unproven) belief that Muslim men are marrying Hindu girls with the aim of converting them to Islam – at least 500 cases of conversion through marriage are believed to have taken place. A story published by the *Guardian* shows how the concept of love jihad is being used to promote Hindutva and rally Hindu voters for the BJP.¹² Groups promoting Hindutva have organised their own campaigns to arrange the marriages of Hindu men to

Muslim women, using slogans such as 'Bring a daughter-in-law, save a daughter'.

Another strategy to promote Hindutva is to promise food in exchange for reconversion. Christians attempting to claim their rations of rice, allocated under the Public Distribution System, have been refused their rations; they are harassed and told to renounce their faith. There have also been cases where Christians have been told that their ration cards will not be renewed if they do not make a donation of Rs. 2,000 (approximately GBP20) to the village goddess.

Social exclusion is one of the RSS's primary tactics to victimise minorities, by denying them their basic human rights. Acts of intimidation and violence are used to threaten Christians in an attempt to force them to convert to Hinduism; Christian families are often subsequently ostracised in their villages.

Freedom of religion acts, commonly known as anti-conversion laws, exist in Odisha (enacted 1967), Madhya Pradesh (1968), Chhattisgarh (1968), Arunachal Pradesh (1978), Gujarat (2003), Himachal Pradesh (2006) and Rajasthan (2008), and remain highly controversial. Three of these laws were initiated by the BJP. Asma Jahangir, the former UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, stated, "There is a risk that 'freedom of religion acts' may become a tool in the hands of those who wish to use religion for vested interests or to persecute individuals on the ground of their religion or belief. While persecution, violence or discrimination based on religion or belief need to be sanctioned by law, the Special Rapporteur would like to caution against excessive or vague legislation on religious issues which could create tensions and problems instead of solving them."¹³

The laws are ambiguous, and worded in a way that presumes that individuals are incapable of making their own informed decisions regarding matters of faith. They are also unconstitutional, since the Indian constitution guarantees freedom of religion or belief. CSW documented various concerns relating to the application of these laws in its 2014 report, including the fact that the vague wording of the laws leaves them vulnerable to misuse.

BJP president Amit Shah, Home Minister Rajnath Singh and the RSS leadership agree that there should be a national anti-conversion law, reasoning that if non-Hindus do not like anti-conversion bills then they should stop converting people. However, the central government is not competent to enact such laws, the Supreme Court having ruled in 1977 that anti-conversion laws fall within the purview of 'public order', which is a matter for each state individually.

9 Dalits number 201 million, or 16% of India's population, according to the 2011 census. They are at the bottom of the hierarchical caste system.

10 The Adivasis are known as 'Scheduled Tribes', and numbered 104 million according to the 2011 census.

11 Pure Politics, 'RSS Plans "Reconversion" of 5,000 Minority Families', 10 December 2014

12 *Guardian*, "'Love jihad' in India and one man's quest to prevent it", 29 January 2015 www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/29/love-jihad-india-one-man-quest-prevent-it

13 Paragraph 50, UNGA (2009), Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir, Human Rights Council Tenth Session, Agenda item 3 – Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right of Development

Under the BJP government the state has been silent on the behaviour of those promoting Hindutva, and has made its stance on conversions clear. It was quoted as saying "No one can derail the government from its development agenda."¹⁴ This is concerning given that the state has an obligation to protect human rights, and by virtue of its silence on the issue encourages further abuse in the application of the law.

HATE SPEECH

Under international human rights standards, which are to guide legislation at the national level, expression labelled as 'hate speech' can be restricted under articles 18 and 19 of the ICCPR on different grounds, including respect for the rights of others, public order, or even sometimes national security.

Rabat Plan of Action, 2012¹⁵

Section 153(A) of the Indian penal code criminalises the promotion of 'enmity between different groups on the ground of religion'. Section 153(B) further affirms that 'imputations and assertions prejudicial to national integration' are equally a crime. Despite this, groups that subscribe to Hindu nationalist ideologies have made inflammatory remarks and fallacious allegations about Muslims and Christians, in meetings, through social media and in their publications.

Statements made publicly include describing the need for forced sterilisation of Muslims and Christians,¹⁶ exhorting conversions into Hinduism through marriage,¹⁷ blaming the rise of communal tensions in western Uttar Pradesh on the increase of a particular minority religion in the state,¹⁸ calling for Hindus to fight back, calling for Muslim voting rights to be revoked, stating that mosques are not religious places of worship and may be demolished at any time, that India is facing a battle between *asuras* (demons) and *devs* (gods), and that Indian society is under attack from Muslims and Christians.

14 Outlook India, 'Conversions: No One Can Derail Govt's Development Agenda, Says Shah', 21 December 2014 www.outlookindia.com/news/article/conversions-no-one-can-derail-govts-development-agenda-says-shah/873793

15 United Nations (2012), Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence', www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/Rabat_draft_outcome.pdf

16 *Times of India*, 'Hindu Mahasabha leader advocates forced sterilization to restrict Muslim, Christian population', 12 April 2015 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Hindu-Mahasabha-leader-advocates-forced-sterilization-to-restrict-Muslim-Christian-population/articleshow/46895042.cms>

17 India Today, 'Love Jihad row: Yogi Adityanath's hate speech caught on camera', 27 August 2014 <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/love-jihad-row-yogi-adityanath-provocative-speech/1/379262.html>

18 *Hindustan Times*, 'BJP leader Adityanath makes hate speech again', 8 September 2014 www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/controversial-bjp-leader-yogi-adityanath-at-it-again/article1-1261310.aspx

BJP MP Unnao Sakshi Maharaj proclaimed that "Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse was a patriot." Although this statement was in fact an embarrassment to the government, as Prime Minister Modi has referred positively to Gandhi in most of his speeches, it created a perception that secularism is not welcome.

The RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has repeatedly asserted that everyone in India is Hindu, including Christians and Muslims, because India is a land of Hindu people. In another speech he claimed that Mother Teresa's good acts were not done with good intentions, but rather with the motive of converting Hindus. Al Jazeera reported¹⁹ the following cases of hate speech during the election:

- Pravin Togadia - Vishwa Hindu Parishad: Faces 19 cases registered in more than 12 different cities
- Akbaruddin Owaisi - Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen: Faces 11 cases
- Varun Gandhi - BJP: During campaigning for the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, allegedly made anti-Muslim remarks
- Uddhav Thackeray - Shiv Sena Chief: Allegedly made inflammatory speeches against migrants from Bihar and its people
- Raj Thackeray - Maharashtra Navnirman Sena: Has several FIRs against him with accusations of violence and hate speech

As stated above, Hindu nationalist groups use love jihad to create strife through hate speech, urging young Hindu men to marry Muslim and Christian brides so as to 'return' them to Hinduism. A call by the RSS for girls to be trained on the meaning of the term, so that they will not be 'trapped' into marrying Muslim men, is also an attempt to create insecurity and religious tension between communities.

BJP Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) have been accused of inciting riots and violence through hate speech. Testimonies from victim-survivors of the Muzaffarnagar riots show that hate speech had been rife in the area for more than a year; yet they did not believe that their friends and neighbours would wish to kill them, so they were shocked when the communal violence took place.

"Two years before the incident, there was hate speech and planning of the attacks. Hate speech has been used since the BJP won the elections – they say that Muslims are getting together to stall progress."

"Muslims either go to Pakistan or to the grave."

19 Al Jazeera, 'Getting away with hate speeches in India', 24 April 2014 www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/04/getting-away-with-hate-speeches-india-201442474555948198.html

"The children used to play and whilst they were playing, they were told to eat whatever they could as after the 8th [the day of the attack] they would be sacrificed."

The BJP leadership has been slow and ineffective in bringing the perpetrators of these crimes to justice. This has created a culture of impunity, posing a very real threat to freedom of religion or belief in India.

VIOLENCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

2 deaths in 149 cases of violence in the year. Desecration and destruction of home churches, violation of Constitutional rights of Freedom of Faith and assault on pastors dominate persecution list. But most cases go unreported, unrecorded by police. Chhattisgarh tops the list. Government silence encourages political groups espousing aggraving religious nationalism.

Persecution of Christians: The Indian Report for 2014²⁰

Communalism and communal violence have occurred in India since Partition in 1947.²¹ Examples include Gujarat (2002), Kandhamal (2008), Rajasthan (2011), Karnataka (2013), Muzaffarnagar (2013), Trilokpuri (2014), Uttar Pradesh (2014) and Bihar (2015). The Christian and Muslim minorities are often the targets of these attacks.

CSW's 2014 visit to Muzaffarnagar and Odisha to meet with victim-survivors of the communal violence that took place in 2013 and 2008 respectively, revealed that justice has yet to be done for the families of the victims. The testimonies gathered also indicated a strong link between hate speech and the communal violence which took place, particularly in Muzaffarnagar.

"Our families have been living there for so long – now we have been forced to leave the village. We lived peacefully for a long time and never imagined something like this. We had some really good houses in the village. They have now been burnt down or demolished."

"No, I do not think I will be able to go back to the village. We don't get respect and honour, therefore there's no point in returning. Ten percent of the village were Muslims...following the incident, all the Muslims were driven out."

"On the morning of the incident, my son had a high fever and I took him to see the doctor. When I returned to the village, it was under attack and when they did not find anyone to murder, they started to burn houses. My wife tried to run away from the house. Three or four men followed her and raped her. I was with my son, I was not there at that time. I only found out 15 days later that my wife had been raped. She did not tell me because of the stigma of being raped. I made a police report but it was only filed after six months, following a court order."

In some of the villages where the Muzaffarnagar victim-survivors now reside, compensation has not yet been paid to all the affected families – in one village, 100 out of the 336 families affected have yet to be compensated, and in another 25% of families have not yet received compensation.

The scars of the 2002 Gujarat communal violence, along with the communal violence of Kandhamal and Muzaffarnagar, remain fresh in the minds of the victim-survivors. The pattern of these incidents of violence is well documented: cases remain unresolved and the victim-survivors must wait for compensation for an unspecified amount of time. In the district of Muzaffarnagar, 534 cases were registered and 6,264 people accused in total. However, during the investigation, the Special Investigation Cell dropped charges against 2,544 of the accused. In the district of Shamli, 29 cases were registered and 226 accused. Charges were dropped against 112 of the accused, following an investigation. Around 200 cases have been submitted to the courts as of December 2014.

The investigation of these cases has been slow, and meanwhile Christians and Muslims continue to be attacked. The Indian Report of 2014²² shows that 54% of incidents against Christians were in the form of intimidation and threats, with 24% involving physical violence. One in ten cases involved gender violence. Cases continue to be registered by civil society and human rights groups.

Some cases of communal violence taken place alongside deliberate policies of exclusion on the basis of religion; the highest number of these cases is in the state of Chhattisgarh.

Chhattisgarh as a focus state²³

Christians in Chhattisgarh, especially in the Bastar area, have been faced massive politically inspired opposition, which has manifested itself in the form of physical violence and social discrimination. The apathy, impunity and partisanship of the administration at various levels has compounded the

20 South Asia Citizens Web, 'Hate Crimes Against Christians in India: A Report on 2014', 17 February 2015 www.sacw.net/article10638.html

21 CSW, India: Communalism in an election year, 1 February 2014 www.csw.org.uk/2014/02/01/report/2586/article.htm

22 South Asia Citizens Web, 'Hate Crimes Against Christians in India: A Report on 2014', 17 February 2015 www.sacw.net/article10638.html

23 South Asia Citizens Web, 'Hate Crimes Against Christians in India: A Report on 2014', 17 February 2015 www.sacw.net/article10638.html

human tragedy, and the gravity of the violation of Constitutional guarantees of Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Association and Movement, and most important, the Freedom of Religion and Belief.

The current wave of incidents against Christians first came into light in May 2014 when Christian families were denied ration and ration cards after they refused to bow down to the demands set by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). The VHP had asked each Christian family to contribute 200 rupees per member towards Hindu festivities initiated by the VHP in Sirisguda village. The Christians who had always contributed money during village festivals by their free will could not comply as the money demanded was too much, and the Christians are poor. This resulted in their being denied food for more than 2 months. The village leadership kept silent. When Christians reported this matter to the district authorities, activists of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, which is also very active in the region, beat them up. The Gram Sabha, the village council, of Sirisguda passed a resolution outlawing non-Hindu faiths from the village. A section of the Panchayat Raj Act (129 G) was used to adopt a resolution proscribing all religious activity in the village areas which did not adhere to the Hindu faith. Even the Collector of the District, Mr. Ankit Anand, who is the highest civil servant and administration of the region, admitted was against the law.

Since then, according to media reports, more than 60 villages have passed similar resolutions in the area. There have been frequent reports between July 2014 and now of Christians being beaten up in Bastar District in various places including Sirisguda, Be-lar, Gadiya, Parapara etc.

In the first three months of 2015, 55 incidents of discrimination and hostility against Christians were reported²⁴ (see Appendix). The number of these cases is expected to rise, exacerbated by police inaction and failure to arrest the perpetrators.

ATTACKS ON MINORITY PLACES OF WORSHIP

One of the key concerns about the current leadership in India is its affiliation to the ideologies of extreme right-wing nationalist groups. Since the BJP took office, attacks on religious minorities by agents of these nationalist groups have been on the rise. The 'Hindutvisation' of public space is becoming more and more apparent, with an increase in attacks on places of worship, where religious symbols are destroyed or desecrated - acts which contravene international conventions (see below).

1981 Declaration of the General Assembly

Article 6(a): The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief includes the freedom to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes.

Human Rights Council resolution 6/37

9(e) The Human Rights Council urges States to exert the utmost efforts, in accordance with their national legislation and in conformity with international human rights and humanitarian law, to ensure that religious places, sites, shrines and symbols are fully respected and protected and to take additional measures in cases where they are vulnerable to desecration or destruction.

St Sebastian Church in East Delhi, one of the largest churches in the area, was destroyed by fire in December 2014. Reports stated that "The altar, Bible, cross and entire interior were reduced to ashes. A call was made at 6am to the police who only arrived at 9am. There was no senior police official who came to the site until later in the afternoon. Forensic teams only came in the evening. The police station was not far from the church. The police had initially refused to register the First Information Report (FIR) until there were demonstrations in the streets."²⁵

The police set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the attack; however, so far there have been no arrests. Archbishop Anil Couto delivered a memorandum to the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the governor of Delhi calling for a judicial enquiry by a serving or retired High Court judge, and an internal police inquiry to identify officers guilty of dereliction of duty.

The latest reports indicate that attacks on churches are being referred to as burglaries; the Delhi Police Commissioner reported that 206 temples, 30 *gudawaras*, 14 mosques and three churches were burgled in 2014.²⁶

One of the key concerns relating to the BJP's electoral victory is that sporadic violence against religious minorities may give way to long term structural violence on religious institutions. The rise in attacks on places of worship has created an atmosphere of insecurity among religious minorities.

In February 2015 the Prime Minister and the Home Ministry requested that the police resolve the case of St Sebastian Church and tighten security in places of worship; nevertheless attacks on churches have continued.²⁷

25 NDTV, 'After Delhi Church Fire, Archbishop Appeals to PM Modi to Ensure Safety', 2 December 2014 www.ndtv.com/india-news/after-delhi-church-fire-archbishop-appeals-to-pm-modi-to-ensure-safety-707289

26 *Indian Express*, 'In report on church attacks, Bassi told Centre: Theft in 206 temples last year', 17 February 2015 <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/in-report-on-church-attacks-bassi-told-centre-theft-in-206-temples-last-year/>

27 'Christian Persecution in India' blog <http://christianpersecutionindia.blogspot.co.uk>

24 Speak Out Against Hate <https://speakoutagainsthate.crowdmap.com/main>

CONTROL OVER MINORITY EDUCATION

According to India's Ministry of Human Resource Development, education is the most important tool for social and economic transformation, and all minorities have the right to establish and administer education institutions of their own.

However, this has not been consistently applied. In Chhattisgarh, 22 Catholic schools run by missionaries in the tribal region of Bastar were required to erect images of Hindu deities. Students were forbidden to address their teachers as 'Father', as was their custom; the term was replaced with 'Pracharya' or 'Up-pracharya', meaning 'sir'. The reason given was that students could be confused by the use of the term 'father' to refer to someone who is not their biological father.

The 'saffronisation' of school curriculums is another way Hindutva nationalism is spread. In June 2014 the Gujarat state government issued a circular to 42,000 primary and secondary schools ordering them to use books written by an RSS educational theorist. These books have been heavily criticised by historians as being extremely inaccurate.

The RSS has been campaigning to rid the education system in Rajasthan of western influence (for example, the work of Isaac Newton) and to introduce nationalist historical figures. For example, a February 2015 directive from the Rajasthan government instructed both public and private schools to carry out *surya namaskar* prayers and meditation, involving chanting mantras; their objective is to instil a sense of nationalism based on ancient Indian culture. Christian and Muslim schools have objected to this directive on the basis that it conflicts with India's claim to secularism.

In the state of Haryana, in March 2015, the government made the *Bhagavad Gita* (Hindu scriptures) a compulsory subject from Class V (10 and 11 year olds) to XII (12 and 13 year olds). The Haryana Education Minister explicitly stated that it was the intention of the government of Haryana to 'saffronise' the education system and that there was no harm in this.

The government must respect India's constitution, which provides for the rights of minorities to establish and administer education institutions of their choice. These provisions need to be fully utilised for the benefit of weaker sections in society as promulgated by Article 30(1).

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

"The incorporation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders into national laws and policies is crucial to ensuring a safe and enabling environment for the work of human rights defenders."

Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Dr Heiner Bielefeldt, has remarked²⁸ that the space for secularism is shrinking, and freedom for civil society activism is being constrained. India's Intelligence Bureau (under the Ministry of Home Affairs) produced a report in June 2014 alleging that "a significant number of Indian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been noticed to be using people centric issues to create an environment, which lends itself to stalling development projects". The report mentioned several campaigns targeting the government on economic and development issues.

Sweeping measures to clamp down on NGOs that operate with foreign assistance have affected the work of civil society. Following the Intelligence Bureau's report, the Ministry of Home Affairs barred NGOs with international links from receiving foreign funds by suspending their licence for six months and freezing their bank accounts.²⁹

There are significant concerns that human rights defenders, and foreign corporations which provide them with funding, are becoming targets for state repression. This is exacerbated by nationalist groups who are calling on the government to curb the work of foreign NGOs in the country, claiming that foreign involvement is not conducive for India's development. The report named the US and several European countries as principal donors to Indian NGOs.

The report has been used to criminalise dissent and attack freedom of expression, as described below:

"I have been subject to hate mail and threats. My friends are now afraid to help me or support me. Human rights activists, especially some of us who are working on issues of freedom of faith and marginalised communities, feel ourselves under great pressure. The pressure on NGOs also effectively means a limiting of our movements and activities. I have repeatedly been called anti-national and traitor, even on television news during debates and discussions. That is shameful. It is also terrifying for my family." *Human rights defender, New Delhi*

"Human rights defenders are always on the side of the poor, the marginalised, the minorities and other vulnerable sections of society. In doing so they have

²⁸ Interview by Vishal Arora, 20 March 2014

²⁹ NGOs which have experienced this include Greenpeace India and the Ford Foundation.

to take on those in power, the rich and others with vested interests. Naturally when the evil designs of these people are exposed they do everything in their power to stop them. But the HRDs in India will never give up on the protection and the defence of the constitutional rights of those who need them the most." *Human rights defender, Ahmedabad, Gujarat*

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) 2010 restricts the work of human rights defenders, as do income tax regulations (see below). Reports indicate continued harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders, a situation highlighted in 2011 in the UN Special Rapporteur's report. The US government has expressed its concerns over the crackdown on the activities of both local and international NGOs using the FCRA.

All NGOs that receive funds are required by law to register³⁰ and submit periodic reports³¹ of their activities to the Ministry of Home Affairs, under Section 12(4)(f) of the FCRA. Where the acceptance of donations prejudicially affects the harmony of religious, racial, social, linguistic, regional groups castes or communities, or on the grounds of public interest, then foreign contributions will be withheld.

The FCRA is currently being applied in a case that has been brought by the Gujarat government against Teesta Setalvad and her husband Javed Anand for receiving funds from the Ford Foundation, an international NGO barred by the government.

In addition to the FCRA, the Finance Bill 2014 brought in a series of amendments to sections of the Income Tax Act which cover tax exemption for NGOs, trusts and charitable institutions. These amendments give sweeping powers to the government to withdraw tax benefits or revoke these organisations' registration status.

According to reports in the *Indian Express*,³² Section 12AA of the Income Tax Act originally permitted revocation of registration by a principal commissioner or commissioners of Income Tax in only two situations: if the department found that the activities of the organisation were 'not genuine' or if the 'activities were not being carried out in accordance with the objects of the trust or institutions'.

The Finance Bill 2014 proposes four more grounds for revocation, if the institution's activities are being carried out in such a manner that:

- its 'income does not tenure for the benefit of general public'
- 'it is for benefit of any particular religious community or caste'

- 'any income or property of the trust is applied for benefit of specified persons like author of trust...'
- its 'funds are invested in prohibited modes'

The amendment is vague, with no clear definitions of the terms 'benefit of general public' or 'prohibited mode'.

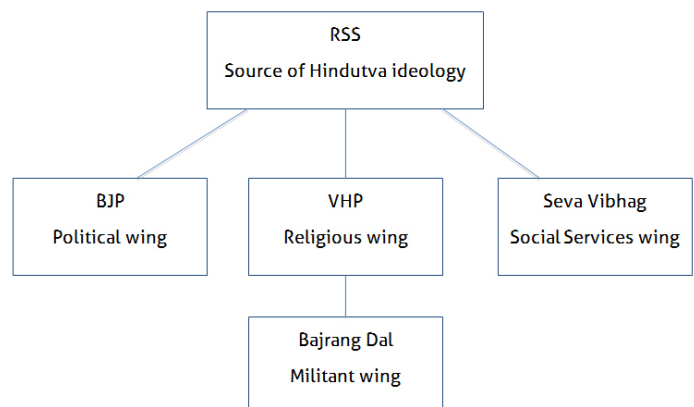
CONCLUSION

Three months after the BJP's electoral victory, the momentum for Hindu nationalism was increasing, with the creation of nearly 2,000 RSS *shakhas*. Emerging majoritarianism has given a platform to voices of hatred, leading to unsettling scenarios among India's religious minorities (see Figure 1). The BJP's silence on these issues has provided a platform for organisations associated with the government to further suppress religious freedom in India. Religious minorities' constitutional rights are under threat.

Hindutva is being propagated through several channels – *ghar wapsis* (homecoming ceremonies); hate speech; attacks on minority communities; attacks on religious institutions; through the education system; and the restrictions on civil society.

India is the world's largest democracy, but its success cannot be measured in purely economic terms, without respect for human rights.

Figure 1: Organisational structure of the Sangh Parivar³³



33 Center for Religious Freedom (2003), 'The rise of Hindu extremism and the repression of Christian and Muslim Minorities in India', Freedom House

30 FCRA (2010), Chapter III

31 FCRA (2010), Chapter IV

32 *Indian Express*, 'Budget makes it easier for Govt to shut down NGOs and trusts', 11 July 2014 <http://indianexpress.com/article/business/business-others/budget-makes-it-easier-for-govt-to-shut-down-ngos-and-trusts/>

APPENDIX

This Appendix collates report from trusted sources known to CSW. Names marked with an asterisk (*) have been changed.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
1	Church asked to vacate premises	28 March 2015	Swar Tehsil, Rampur, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	The leader of Maswasi village, along with Hindutva fundamentalists, came to the Salvation for Asia Church and asked them to vacate the premises that they had hired for church services. The Church still has two more years left on the lease. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
2	Church attacked and set on fire	26 March 2015	Kunnamkulam, Thrissur, Kerala	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	Suspected Hindu extremists set fire to the Church of God building, and the pastor's car and two motorbikes, in the early hours of the morning. The incident took place after the pastor distributed leaflets advertising a Vocational Bible School. A police report has been filed and the investigation is ongoing.
3	Christians attacked	25 March 2015	Belwaghat Village, Maharajganj, Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	While Pastor Nikhil and 15 other Christians were holding a prayer meeting in a house belonging to one of the Christians, a mob of about 20 people broke into the house and brutally beat them, falsely accusing them of converting Hindus. A police report has been filed at Kothibhar police station.
4	Christians attacked	25 March 2015	Agra, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats Physical violence Gender violence	While Pastor Kamal* and three other Christians were holding a prayer meeting in a house belonging to one of the Christians, a mob of Hindu fundamentalists attacked them, not sparing the women. Later the police took the Christians, including four women to Sadar police station; the fundamentalists surrounded the police station.
5	Church attacked	21 March 2015	New Panvel, Greater Bombay, Maharashtra	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	St George's Catholic Church was attacked in the early hours as unidentified men hurled stones into the church, damaging the glass surround on the statue of St George. According to CCTV footage the attack was carried out by two people riding pillion on a motorbike.
6	Church set on fire	20 March 2015	Thiruvavur, Tamil Nadu	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	The arson attack took place at the Jesus Loves Prayer House at 11.30pm. Two days before the incident, fundamentalists had objected to repairs that the church was conducting and had threatened the pastor. The police intervened to ensure that the repair work was not obstructed. A police report has been filed at Peralam police station.
7	Church attacked during Bible convention	20 March 2015	Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols Gender violence Physical violence	A mob of Hindu fundamentalists vandalised the Cathedral Church and St Thomas's School premises, where a Bible convention was being held. At least 200 Christians were present at the convention. The mob smashed flowerpots, broke furniture, and falsely accused the Christians of converting Hindus.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
8	Christians falsely accused	16 March 2015	Multai, Betul, Madhya Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	Hindu fundamentalists falsely accused a pastor and three local Christians of converting Hindus after they prayed in the village. The police arrested the Christians. At the time of writing, the Christians have not been granted bail.
9	Construction of church opposed	16 March 2015	Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	An independent church led by Brother Rakesh* has existed for 20 years in a small hut, with 50 members. They had begun construction of a church building, but the construction was opposed by fundamentalists. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
10	Nun raped	15 March 2015	Ranaghat, Nadia, West Bengal, 741200	Intimidation/threats Gender violence	A 71-year-old nun in a convent school was gang raped, and injured so badly that she required surgery. The elderly nun was assaulted when a mob raided the Convent of Jesus and Mary, reportedly stole more than Rs. 8 lakhs (GBP7,900/USD12,400) and vandalised its chapel.
11	Christians asked to leave village	15 March 2015	Rayapara, Dankuni, Hooghly, Murshidabad, West Bengal	Intimidation/threats	Eleven families were asked to leave the village by Hindu fundamentalists. Ten families who own houses are still in the village, and the other family, who were living in rented accommodation, have moved out of the village and are staying with the pastor of another church. Five days earlier, on 10 March, a mob had attacked the Christians in the village during a prayer meeting. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
12	Church under construction vandalised and cross replaced with Hanuman idol	14 March 2015	Kaimri village, Hisar, Haryana	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	A church under construction was vandalised and the cross replaced with an idol of Hanuman. Father Subhash Chand of Believers' Church lodged a complaint against 14 people, following which a case was registered by police under sections 147 (punishment for rioting), 153(A) (promoting enmity between different groups), 295 (injuring or defiling a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class), 380 (theft in a dwelling house) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Police said that on 6 March a group of youths entered the plot where the church was being built, and forcibly installed a Hanuman idol there. Earlier, on 11 February, fundamentalists had attempted to destroy the cross on the church building under construction.
13	Pastor and Christians beaten by mob	10 March 2015	Rayapara, Dankuni, Hooghly, Murshidabad, West Bengal	Intimidation/threats Gender violence Physical violence	A pastor and four other Christians were attacked and beaten by a mob of Hindu fundamentalists while they were praying with the pastor's mother-in-law. They were in the house of one of the Christians who attended the Agape In Action Church. A mob of about 200 people took the Christians to a nearby temple and tried to force them to perform Hindu rituals. When they refused to comply, they were beaten. The women were beaten by other women from the community. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
14	Christian man opposed for his faith	9 March 2015	Farmana Badshahpur village, Rohtak, Haryana	Intimidation/threats	Fundamentalists from the village gathered outside the Primary Health Centre where Mr Manmohan* was employed, and protested him being a Christian and attending the Uddar ka Jeevan church in Kalanaur. They threatened him, warning him not to share his faith or go to church. Later they opposed his employment by the Health Centre, and he was fired. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
15	Christian man and his sons beaten for their faith	8 March 2015	Jholapara village, Tarkaguda, Bastar, Chhattisgarh	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	Mr Nirmal*, who attends the Bastar For Christ Movement Church, and his two sons were severely beaten by his Hindu fundamentalist relatives. Mr Nirmal's sister, her son and others tried to force him and his sons to give up their Christianity. When they refused to renounce their faith, they were beaten. Their attackers took possession of a portion of agricultural land belonging to Mr Nirmal. They filed a false FIR against Mr Nirmal and his two sons, accusing them of threats and violence. The case was registered under IPC sections 34, 294, 323 and 506, on 8 March 2015. When Mr Nirmal and his sons approached Badanji police station, the police refused to accept the complaint. The men were arrested and later released on bail.
16	Church attacked and threatened	8 March 2015	Jhajjar, Haryana	Intimidation/threats	Fundamentalists vandalised the Anant Parmeshwar ka Mandir Church. There were no injuries. The police later intervened and settled the matter between the church and the attackers, but the church has continued to receive threats from the fundamentalists ordering them to stop their worship.
17	Christians threatened and asked to leave their church	8 March 2015	Sector 35, Faridabad, Haryana	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	Bethania Church's morning worship service was disrupted by Hindu fundamentalists. They threatened and beat the Christians, but no injuries were reported. The Christians were forced to leave the premises, and went to a neighbouring church to continue their worship. The church has been in the area for 24 years. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
18	Pastor falsely accused of conversion	7 March 2015	Barwani, Madhya Pradesh	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	Pastor Lalsingh was arrested near Julwania police station at 3.30pm on false allegations, made by other villagers, of conversion during a prayer meeting. The police attempted to transfer him to Rajpur police station, fearing that the Hindu fundamentalists would attack them. However, the mob surrounded the police station, stopping the police from going to Rajpur to complete the formalities. All allegations were subsequently proved false, and the accused was released the next day.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
19	Burial service disrupted	6 March 2015	Paali near Faridabad, Haryana	Intimidation/threats Gender violence Physical violence Desecration of religious symbols	Pastor Pal* and 70-80 other Christians had gathered at Paali Christian Cemetery for a burial service. When they began digging the pit for the coffin, fundamentalists on 12 motorbikes arrived and stopped the digging, saying that the soil could not be used to bury a Christian. The mob grew to about 700 people with local villagers joining in. They started damaging vehicles, including the ambulance that was carrying the body, and chased the Christians away from the burial site. The police arrived and escorted the pastor and three other Christians who had stayed with the body to another Christian cemetery in Faridabad Sector 19, where the ceremony was completed. Two Christians are reportedly still in hospital. The disputed burial site had recently been designated as a Christian cemetery by the government of Haryana, and six burials had already taken place there.
20	Pastor denied permission to conduct church services	2 March 2015	Nagapalli Anai (Dam) area, Pennagaram Taluk, Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu	Intimidation/threats	Pastor Mani* of the Holy Bible Revival Church was denied permission to conduct church services in the area. The local <i>tehsildar</i> (administrative official) issued a statement denying him entry to the area, without citing any explanation. Local groups had opposed his church in January 2015.
21	Christian prayer stopped by protesters	1 March 2015	Jobat, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	Hindu fundamentalists gathered outside a prayer hall, falsely accusing Christians of converting Hindus. Around 300 Christians were in the Church of North India's prayer hall on Jhabua Road when the fundamentalists arrived at 10am, nearly an hour after the Sunday prayer meeting began, hurling insults until the police arrived. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
22	Christians beaten by police	25 February 2015	Shanti Nagar, Gurjar ki Thadi, Jaipur, Rajasthan, 302001	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	Hindu fundamentalists forced their way into a house where 20 members of the Hebron Church of Hyderabad were staying, who had come to Jaipur. The police pushed the Christians into two jeeps and took them to the Mansarovar police station where they were kicked and pushed around. They were made to open their hands and were hit with a <i>patta</i> . Photographs show evidence of serious injuries to their palms and wrists. At least six people were seriously injured.
23	Church vandalised	24 February 2015	Mangalore, Karnataka	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	St Joseph's Church was vandalised during the night. Its window panes and door were damaged, though the statues within remained untouched. A police report was filed.
24	Two Christians arrested	24 February 2015	Pithora, Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh	Gender violence Charged under FoR Act	Reverend Tandi of the Church of North India and Pastor Das of the Believers Church were arrested and held in custody after false allegations of conversion were made against them. No further developments have been reported at the time of writing.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
25	Statue desecrated	22 February 2015	Navelim, Margao, South Goa, Goa	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	Unidentified assailants vandalised the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, breaking its glass surround.
26	Church repairs stopped	22 February 2015	Swaminathapuram, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu	Intimidation/threats	New Life Assembly of God Church had begun to repair their church's roof and a mob arrived to stop the work, objecting to the church's presence in the area. A police report was filed.
27	Church set on fire	13 February 2015	Akaltara, Janjgir, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	Reverend Father Yeswer Lahre held a prayer meeting in the Believers Church from 11am to 3pm. After the prayer meeting was over, he locked the church and went back home. At around 6.30pm he received a phone call informing him that the church doors were on fire. By the time they succeeded in putting out the fire, half of the main church door had been damaged. An FIR was filed but no further action has been taken at the time of writing.
28	Pastor threatened by fundamentalists	13 February 2015	Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	Fundamentalists threatened Pastor Ravi Rana, telling him to stop leading his church. On 4 November 2014 he and six other Christians were attacked by a mob of over 250 people, who entered their homes, stripped them naked and stole goods worth Rs. 2 lakh. A report was filed with Bikhiriya police station on the same day. No further action has been reported at the time of writing.
29	Christian meeting disrupted	12 February 2015	Dantewada, Chhattisgarh	Intimidation/threats	A meeting held by evangelist Ravi Abraham, for which permission had already been granted, was disrupted and forced to close down.
30	Four Christian women beaten and a woman stripped	8 February 2015	Chatra, Jharkhand	Intimidation/threats Gender violence Physical violence	Hindu fundamentalists broke into a house at about 4pm and attacked a prayer meeting. They dragged four women out in to the road, beat them, shouted abuse, and stripped one woman. They also threatened to impose a fine on the Christians if they did not renounce their faith. An FIR was filed against the attackers and the police promised to give protection to the Christians.
31	Pastor told to stop holding prayer meetings	7 February 2015	Bhadohi, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	Hindu fundamentalists threatened a pastor, telling him to stop holding prayer meetings in the area. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
32	Church asked to close down	7 February 2015	Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Telangana	Intimidation/threats	Seven Hindu fundamentalists threatened Pastor Lata* and her husband, forcing them to close the Shalom Church of the Victory Ministries. The fundamentalists claimed that the church land did not belong to the pastor and her husband, despite the fact that she bought the land legally and has been working in the village since 2002. There had been an incident with the fundamentalists on 26 January 2015, which the pastor had reported at Meerpet police station, but the police refused to file the report. She tried to report the latest threats, but the police refused once more to file a report.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
33	Christians attacked	7 February 2015	Malkangiri, Odisha	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	About 40 Christians of the Khoya tribe were attacked and beaten by Hindu fundamentalists, and forced to bathe in the river as part of a Hindu ritual. The fundamentalists also filed a false complaint against the Christians alleging physical violence.
34	Church threatened	7 February 2015	Theni, Tamil Nadu	Intimidation/threats	A worship service in a church run by Rhema Revival Ministries, Diocese of Cumbam Valley, was interrupted by a mob of Hindu fundamentalists who threatened the church leaders, telling them to stop holding church services in Bumiakoundampatti. Rt Rev Dr S. Gnanaprahasam, the Bishop of the diocese, condemned this incident and filed a report at Allinagaram police station.
35	Church threatened	2 February 2015	Bhadohi, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	A group of Hindu fundamentalists threatened staff at the Khetalpur Vishwavani Church, telling them to stop all prayer meetings and church services immediately. They told the pastor they would beat him if he held a church service the following Sunday. The church has been in the area for the past 17 years. A report was filed at Aurahi police station and the police provided the church with protection on the following Sunday.
36	Church vandalised	2 February 2015	Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, Delhi	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	Unidentified assailants jumped over the wall of St Alphonsa's Church and broke open the church's main gate at around 3am. They ransacked the sacristy cupboards, opened the tabernacle and emptied the ciborium.
37	Prayer meetings stopped	31 January 2015	Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	Pastor Ranjeet* has been holding a prayer meeting in his house every Sunday for the past five years without any problems. On 25 December 2014 the police stopped the Christmas celebrations and forced him to sign a letter saying he would not hold any further prayer meetings in his house without permission.
38	Pastor and his wife brutally beaten	25 January 2015	Bhadohi, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats Gender violence Physical violence	Tensions had been high in the area for the past three days, and the pastor had decided not to hold the Sunday church service after taking advice from the local police. In spite of these precautions a mob came to the pastor's house and brutally beat him and his wife, kicking his wife in the stomach.
39	Christian attacked for putting up picture of Jesus	25 January 2015	Palghar, Maharashtra	Intimidation/threats Physical violence Desecration of religious symbols	Mr Subodh* is a mechanic who runs a garage for welding and spray painting. A group of men took down the picture of Jesus he had in his garage, and threatened to kill him if he put the picture up again or reported the attack to the authorities. No police report has been filed at the time of writing.
40	Church premises written off as government property	23 January 2015	Shimla, Himachal Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	The Central Public Works Department wrote off the premises of the Shimla CNI Church as government property. The premises have belonged to the church since 1993, and regular services have been held there since then.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
41	Priest arrested on false allegations	23 January 2015	Jaipur, Rajasthan	Intimidation/threats	The priest of Jodhpur Methodist Church was arrested on allegations of rape. He is being held in Jaipur Central Jail, although the allegations have not been proven.
42	State official stopped from preaching faith	23 January 2015	Chennai, Tamil Nadu	Intimidation/threats	Local authorities banned one of its administrative officers from propagating his faith, claiming this would contravene the rules of the Indian Administrative Service and could create communal disharmony.
43	Permission to hold Sunday service revoked	21 January 2015	Malkajgiri, near Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Telangana	Intimidation/threats	Local authorities denied a church permission to hold Sunday services, after being influenced by Hindu fundamentalists. The church has applied for and received permission for all such meetings in various venues over the past year.
44	Construction of Christian school and hospital stopped	21 January 2015	Navapur, Dulia Sakri, Nandubar, Maharashtra	Intimidation/threats	Local villagers, influenced by Hindu fundamentalists, stopped the construction of a school and a hospital by Alpha Ministries. An FIR was filed, but the Sakri Court ruled against Alpha Ministries. At the time of writing the case is at the Aurangabad High Court.
45	Violence incited against Christians	21 January 2015	Tuticorin, Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	Bibles were thrown into the road in front of the Office of the District Collector by members of Munnani, a Hindu religious and cultural organisation, in an attempt to incite violence against Christians. A police report is being prepared at the time of writing.
46	Prayer meeting attacked	19 January 2015	Mannanthala, Trivandrum, Kerala	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	Six people attacked a prayer meeting of the Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church, beating the pastor and the three other Christians present. A police report was filed at the Trivandrum Medical College police station.
47	Christians threatened	18 January 2015	Chinchwad, Pune, Maharashtra	Intimidation/threats	Hindu fundamentalists threatened a community of Christians who were praying on a Sunday morning in rented premises. Sister Megha* and the others were threatened and told they would not be allowed to gather as a church, starting from the following Sunday. A police report was filed at the Chinchwad police station and the police have promised protection to the Christians.
48	Church denied premises for Sunday worship	18 January 2015	Abhay Khand 1, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh	Intimidation/threats	Amarpali School authorities, influenced by local Hindu fundamentalists, told members of a church who have been meeting there on Sundays since 2010 that they will no longer be allowed to do so.
49	Church set on fire	16 January 2015	Tadur village, Mahbubnagar, Telangana	Intimidation/threats Desecration of religious symbols	The Parimala Beautiful Church was mainly a temporary structure made of thatch, bamboo and tarps. The church was torched by unknown assailants following a prayer meeting which finished at 7.30pm. By the time church members, police and a fire engine arrived, more than half of the building had been reduced to ashes. A police report was filed and an investigation is ongoing.
50	Church vandalised	14 January 2015	Vikaspuri, New Delhi, Delhi	Desecration of religious symbols	Unidentified assailants broke into the Lady of Graces Church at 4.30am and toppled the statue of the Virgin Mary. The incident was captured on CCTV.

	Incident	Date	Location	Category	Description
51	Pastor and Christians attacked	11 January 2015	Jhankhan, Dhanbad, Bihar	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	A mob attacked a church service in Pastor Rakesh's* home and beat the Christians. A case was filed against five Christians, falsely accusing them of converting Hindus. The church has held services in the area for the past two years.
52	Church attacked and vandalised	11 January 2015	Madhav Nagar, Jehanabad, Bihar	Intimidation/threats Physical violence Desecration of religious symbols	Pastor Kaushal* was leading his church's Sunday service at the Prarthna Centre, where about 150 Christians had gathered. A mob of over 60 people broke into the centre shouting "Jai Shri Ram!", a slogan used by Hindu nationalists. They beat the pastor and a 55-year-old elder of the church, Mr Jai.* The other Christians were chased away, and three people were injured including Pastor Mohan.* The attackers tore up Bibles and broke the chairs, fans and PA system. They stole Pastor Kaushal's mobile phone and keys, and Rs.7,000 in cash. A police report was filed, although the police were initially unwilling to accept the report.
53	Christians threatened for getting baptised	5 January 2015	Lait Narayan Mitra village, Darbhanga, Bihar	Intimidation/threats	Mobs of Hindu fundamentalists went to the homes of eight Christians who had recently been baptised at Agape Church, and threatened them. The church has been in the area for the past six years, and local fundamentalists have been spreading false rumours about it. A police report was filed.
54	Church service stopped and Christians beaten	4 January 2015	Kawandar Village near Kodenar, Jagdalpur, Bastar, Chhattisgarh	Intimidation/threats Physical violence	After eight Christian families were beaten up on 26 December 2014, a church service was attacked on 4 January by a mob of 24 Hindutva activists. The service was being led by a local Christian, as pastors from outside the village were forbidden to enter the area. The service leader and other members of the church were beaten and threatened. A police report was filed.
55	Crib at church burnt out	2 January 2015	Sector 6, Rohini, New Delhi, Delhi	Desecration of religious symbols	A Christmas crib in the grounds of the Church of the Resurrection was discovered burnt out. Although short circuiting was initially suspected, CCTV footage showed a flammable substance being thrown into the crib at around 2.30am. It seems likely that a flammable substance would have had to be used to set the crib on fire, as it had been raining overnight.