

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide a brief overview and update of the country information available regarding the targeting of Christians generally in Kerala, Karnataka & Tamil Nadu by the RSS and Hindu extremists.**
- 2. Are there any references to St Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Churches in Kozhikode District, in reports on attacks on Christians by the RSS or Hindu extremists?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide a brief overview and update of the country information available regarding the targeting of Christians generally in Kerala, Karnataka, & Tamil Nadu by the RSS and Hindu extremists.**

Overview

Kerala, Karnataka & Tamil Nadu are neighbouring states located in the South of India (see map – Attachment 1). While reports indicate that anti-Christian violence involving the RSS and Hindu extremists commenced in the state of Orissa, information provided by government and non-government agencies indicate that an increasing number of attacks on Christians have occurred in other Indian states, including Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Insights into contributing factors leading to the spread of anti-Christian violence across India are provided in a report by the *Christian Science Monitor*, dated 24 September 2008. The report states:

While Hindu nationalists claim that the unrest is caused by missionaries forcing conversions on Hindus, Christians - and most secular observers - say the violence is politically motivated, designed to win votes for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The BJP has grown to be the main opposition in the last two decades - a triumph many attribute to its focus on Hindutva, an ideology that holds India is a Hindu nation and religious minorities outsiders.

But wretched poverty and a lack of basic necessities - from education to healthcare - have also played their part in what many describe as the worst anti-Christian violence in India since independence in 1947.

The rioting began in the eastern state of Orissa in August, following the murder of a hard-line Hindu priest. Police accept the claims of responsibility from Naxalite rebels - atheist Maoists - but Hindu groups blame Christians.

Allegedly led by the Bajrang Dal, a militant youth wing of the Hindu nationalist Vishnu Hindu Parishad (VHP) group, mobs went on the rampage in the district of Kandhamal, torching churches and homes and displacing tens of thousands of terrified Christians, many of whom are still in camps. More than 20 died.

By this month, the anti-Christian agitation had spread to the central state of Madhya Pradesh, to Karnataka and Kerala in the south, and to Uttar Pradesh in the north. Some of the worst cases have occurred in Karnataka, which earlier this year voted in its first BJP government.

Mohammed Shafi Qureshi, chairman of the National Commission for Minorities, says he perceives a clear link between BJP ascendancy in Karnataka and the violence. "What we found was something unbelievable," he says of his recent fact-finding trip to the state. "The mobs devastated churches and homes, beat up nuns, and the police were nowhere to be seen. The state government was responsible for this. If the BJP hadn't come to power, this never would have happened."

The BJP says it has no hand in violence against any religious minorities. And hard-line Hindu nationalists from the Bajrang Dal and the VHP deny that the violence is politically motivated. "There was no violence," says Gauri Prasad Rath, the general secretary of the VHP in Orissa. "If there was any, it was because of the fraudulent conversions Christians are doing. They burned their own churches."

Hindus and Christians in India have a long history of peaceful coexistence, but there have long been claims that Christians here are forcibly converting Hindus and threatening India's identity. In some regions, conversions are taking place in large numbers. Especially in impoverished places like Kandhamal [Orissa], which is heavily populated by animist tribes - a traditionally nature-worshipping ethnic group that is among India's poorest - the lure of institutional Christianity, which often offers education and healthcare, has proved especially strong.

Christians officially constitute less than 3 percent of India's 1 billion-plus population. Many church leaders themselves say that the proportion is a couple of percentage points under-reported in censuses.

Recently, tensions between poor Christian and Hindu communities nationwide have been exacerbated by Christian converts' calls for the benefits afforded dalits - Hindus at the bottom of the caste system - to be extended to dalit Christian converts. In Kandhamal, Christians have been agitating for the right to continue receiving benefits, including government jobs and

university places. The issue has proved a rallying cry for political Hindu groups - as has the issue of forcible conversions. Many of the 12 states currently governed or co-governed by the BJP have introduced "conversion laws," which impose stiff prison sentences and fines on anyone found guilty of forcing a person to switch faiths.

But Ravi Nair, executive director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Center, says that convictions are extremely rare. "It seems there's a certain paranoiac exaggeration of conversion activity in India."

Unfortunately, convictions over religious violence are also rare. Last March, a United Nations freedom-of-religion investigator warned that the scarcity of prosecutions and "political exploitation of communal tensions" put India at risk of more violence.

Now, Christian leaders fear this injustice may soon ignite violence within their own communities. "Young people are beginning to ask, is the government protecting us?" says Sam Paul, national secretary of public affairs for the All India Christian Council, an umbrella group of churches. "Or do we need to form into groups to defend ourselves? I really, really hope that doesn't happen." (Ridge, M. 2008, 'Anti-Christian attacks flare in India', *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 September - Attachment 2).

The US State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2008* for India, describes the nature of attacks on Christians in various states across India:

According to AICC [All India Christian Council], the highest number of reported attacks occurred in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. In these incidents Christians alleged that Hindu extremists disrupted prayer meetings, destroyed or damaged places of worship, vandalized property, assaulted pastors and lay persons, confiscated and destroyed religious material, and attempted to intimidate Christians from attending religious services. There were also reported incidents where Christians physically attacked by others were further victimized when the police arrested them rather than the attackers. Christians also claimed that authorities filed false charges of conversion by force and allurement, and that police were biased in how they registered complaints, doing so promptly only when the accused was a Christian (US Department of State 2008, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2008 - India*, September, Section II - Attachment 3).

Reports of specific incidents of attacks by the RSS and Hindu extremists on Christians living in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are provided below.

i. Kerala

Several recent research responses provide comprehensive up-to-date information regarding the current situation facing Christians in Kerala in relation to attacks by the RSS and Hindu extremists. These show that while Kerala has a significant Christian population, there have been an increasing number of attacks on Christians and Christian churches in recent years:

- *Research Response IND34372* includes information on the killing of Christian activists involved in anti-liquor movements by Hindu extremists (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response IND34372*, 4 February – see Questions 2-3 – Attachment 4).
- *Research Response IND34032* investigates the general situation for Catholics, attacks by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS; National Volunteers' Organisation) and anti-Christian violence, particularly in the area of Trivandrum (also known as

Thiruvananthapuram), the capital city of Kerala (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response IND34032*, 30 January – see Question 3 – Attachment 5).

- *Research Response IND34133* discusses the size of the Christian community and the extent of religious toleration in Kerala, attacks on the “Divine Retreat Centre”, attacks on Christians, and police protection (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response IND34133*, 23 December – Attachment 6).

No further updates on this information are available in the sources consulted.

ii. Karnataka

A 2008 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) briefing on religious violence and discrimination against Christians in India provides insights into the situation regarding attacks on Christians in Karnataka by Hindu extremists during 2007. The report draws attention to a lack of adequate police protection for Christians, noting that in some cases police themselves have been directly implicated in these attacks.

A consistent pattern of religiously-motivated violence against Christians was recorded throughout 2007, particularly in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.

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Police inaction or complicity was a pervasive problem throughout 2007, with perpetrators of religiously-motivated attacks commonly receiving little more than a superficial censure. In numerous cases, particularly in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, police refused to register the complaints of Christians or arrested the Christian victims instead of their attackers. In some cases, police were directly implicated in violence against Christians. Ineffectual or discriminatory police responses were most common in states under the governance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which espouses a Hindutva agenda.

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The state of Karnataka had a particularly high rate of reported anti-Christian violence, with Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh also registering a large number of attacks. The nature and severity of the attacks varied, but included murders, mob beatings, arson attacks and vandalism of houses, church buildings and schools. Both individuals and large Christian gatherings were targeted. The vulnerability of the attacked Christians is demonstrated by the numerous attacks that took place within homes, and the fact that women were among the victims of violence.

Many incidents suggested that religious discrimination is deeply entrenched within the police system, with attacks being committed with tacit or active police complicity. Ineffectual police responses were common, but at their worst in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. CSW also heard testimony in 2007 of anti-Christian prejudice among police officers in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh states. Police inaction in response to incidents of anti-Christian violence was pervasive: the majority of attacks were committed with impunity, or with only a superficial censure being given to the perpetrators of violence. Perpetrators were commonly released on police bail and faced no effective punitive action. Police frequently refused to register the complaints of Christians or arrested the Christian victims instead of their attackers; these phenomena were particularly common in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. In an incident in Bangalore, Karnataka, on 9 July, two Christian men were paraded naked by Hindu extremists and forcibly taken to the police station, where they were arrested for ‘promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion’ (IPC 153). Following the attempted murder of a Christian and the vandalism of a house church in Mandwa village, Chhattisgarh, on

19 November, police detained the Christian plaintiffs for 24 hours and failed to register their complaint.

In some cases, police were directly implicated in violence against Christians: for example, in Tadas village, Karnataka, on 15 July, a police sub-inspector disrupted a house church meeting and beat two Christians with his baton, shouted obscenities at them and took them to the police station for questioning. In Savalgi village, Karnataka, on 23 November, five Christians were beaten by police officers opposed to their Christian charitable work. In a particularly egregious incident of police violence in Kerala on 14 May, officers reportedly nailed the penis of a Dalit Christian man with a steel pin.

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In several incidents in Karnataka, Hindu extremists perpetrated violent attacks against Christians, accusing them before police of illegitimately converting people, to which police responded by arresting the Christians instead of their assailants.

Numerous examples of specific incidents in which Christians in Karnataka were targeted by Hindu extremists are provided in Section 6.12 (pp.30-42) of the report (Christian Solidarity Worldwide 2008, 'India - Religious Violence and Discrimination against Christians in 2007', Christian Solidarity Worldwide website, March, pp.3, 11-12, 30-42 <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=report&id=91> – Accessed 24 February 2009 – Attachment 7).

Briefings by *Compass Direct News* provide regular updates on the situation facing Christians in relation to attacks by Hindu extremists. Excerpts from the most recent reports are presented below.

19 December 2008, *Compass Direct News* reported:

Karnataka, December 19 (*Compass Direct News*) - Hindu extremists from the Bajrang Dal on Dec. 14 attacked a Christmas program of Christian social organization Helping Hands and accused the director of forcible conversion in Bangarapet, Kolar. The intolerant Hindus disrupted the program of the organization, which helps rural women and children, and accused Samuel Moses of trying to forcibly convert women and children, reported the Evangelical Fellowship of India. The extremists burned gospel literature and took Moses and his accountant to the Bangarapet police station. The Christians were detained in the police station for about nine hours, with the incident publicized on local broadcast and print media. The Christians were later released without charges. Police Inspector Chinnana Swami told *Compass* that the Christians were detained for questioning but police found no forcible conversion and the case has been closed.

Karnataka - Hindu extremists allegedly belonging to the Hindu extremist Rakshane Vedike on Dec. 8 attacked a pastor, accusing him of forceful conversion in Ibrahim Pura, Bellary. The Global Council of Indian Christians reported that at 5 p.m Assembly of God pastor N. Satyam and another Christian were on their way home from a prayer meeting organized by convert Krishna Veni when a mob of about 25 extremists led by Sidesh Mallesh and Mahendra Bhatt dragged the Christians from an auto-rickshaw, cursed them in foul language, beat them and falsely accused the pastor of forceful conversion. The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) reported that police arrived and took the Christians to the police station, where about 100 Christians later protested against the violence. The Christians were released without charges at 11:30 p.m., and the matter was settled peacefully between the two parties, EFI reported.

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Karnataka - Hindu extremists on Nov. 26 accused pastor Vantakesh Nayak of forceful conversion and beat him along with four other Christians in Davanagere. The All India Christian Council reported that the Christians had gone to a nearby village to open up a new shop with prayer when the extremists stormed in and assaulted them, tearing their shirts. The intolerant Hindus filed a police complaint of forceful conversion against the pastor in Honnali police station. Investigating Officer Jai Laxman told Compass that the Christians were detained only as a preventative measure, that they have been released and that the case is closed.

Karnataka - Police disrupted a Sunday worship service on Nov. 2 in Bagalkot, halted it and warned a pastor not to conduct future services, according to the Christian Legal Association. Officers told pastor Basappa Adapur of Shalom Full Gospel Association not to conduct another worship meeting without obtaining prior permission from the Deputy Commissioner. Hindu nationalists in the area have been known to harm Christians who did not inform police that they were meeting for worship, according to police, so for their own security Christians must get permission to meet. Police also collected information on the 25 Christians attending the church ('Recent Incidents of Persecution' 2008, *Compass Direct News*, 19 December – Attachment 8).

31 January 2009, *Compass Direct News* reported:

Karnataka – Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) extremists on Jan. 11 forcibly entered the home of Christian converts in Amrthmahal Kavalu hamlet, near Tiptur town in Tumkur district. They verbally abused the four Christians there, burned their Bibles and forced them to the Honnavalli police station, according to the Global Council of Indian Christians. Identified only as Shankarappa and his wife Leelamama, and Shivappa and his wife Manjamma, the two brothers and their wives are the only Christians resident in the village. They worship at Calvary Gospel Centre in Tiptur town. The church's pastor, Joy Jacob, told Compass that at around 10:30 p.m. nine local Hindu extremists barged into the house using foul language, falsely accused the Christians of forcible conversions and tore up and burned two Bibles. They threatened to burn down the Christians' house if they continued to worship at the Calvary Gospel Centre. Police arrived and took the Christians to the police station as the extremists shouted Hindu chants along the way. On Jan. 12 about 9 a.m., Jacob went to the police station to register a complaint but officers refused to accept it. They instead arranged a compromise agreement, with the Christians forgiving the assailants. – NC

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Karnataka – Four suspected Hindu extremists on motorbikes beat teacher James Victor Menezes, 52, a teacher at St. Legory's School in Merlapadavu village near Mangalore on Jan. 7, reported the Daijiworld Media Network. Father Charles Menezes of the school told Compass that he strongly suspected the hand of Hindu extremists in the attack. On Jan. 2 the Catholic school had distributed Bibles; officials had announced that the Bibles were intended only for Christians, but a few others also picked up copies. The next day, protestors appeared in front of the school from Hindu groups, including the Srirama Sene (Army of Lord Ram). "The protestors falsely accused the schoolteachers of distributing Bibles to Hindus," Fr. Meneze said. The beaten school teacher said he filed a complaint with the Kankanady police station, reportedly informing police that he would be able to identify the attackers, as they had also taken part in the protest. At press time no arrests had been made. – NC

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Karnataka – Police on Jan. 4 arrested a pastor on a false complaint of forcible conversion by Hindu extremists in Kanakapura Taluk, Ramnagar district. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that nearly 25 extremists belonging to the Hindu extremist Bajrang Dal stormed the worship service of the India Christian Revival Mission, verbally abused the congregation and chased them from the building. The extremists repeatedly slapped and kicked the pastor, identified only as Paul, and his son Barnabas. The intolerant Hindus dragged them both outside and took them to the Kanakapura police station, where they filed the false complaint of forcible conversion against the pastor. A GCIC representative told Compass that police detained the Christians at the station until about 7:30 p.m., when GCIC intervention resulted in a compromise between the pastor and the assailants. Having forgiven them, the pastor declined to press charges, and police gave assurances that adequate protection would be extended to the church in Kanakapura. – NC

Karnataka – Hindu extremists on Jan. 1 burned a house church of the Resurrected God’s Ministry in Malai Bennur, Davangere district. The Christian Legal Association reported that the extremists burned the church in the early morning hours and threatened a pastor identified only as Gangadhar that they would burn his family alive if he took the matter to authorities. The Deccan Herald News Service reported that one section of the church built with areca leaves was gutted in the fire, while the other side of the church was partially burned. This incident was reportedly the second attack on the church, with the earlier incident taking place on Nov. 11, 2007. Superintendent of Police Sandip Patil told Compass that one person had been arrested under Section 436 of the Indian Penal Code for intent to destroy a house with fire or explosives. – MS, NC (Carvalho, N. and Sailo, M. 2009, ‘India Briefs: Recent incidents of persecution’, *Compass Direct News*, 31 January - Attachment 9).

Additional information regarding incidents of a similar nature is available in September, October and November 2008 briefings by *Compass Direct News* (Carvalho, N. and Sailo, M. 2008, ‘India Briefs: Recent incidents of persecution’, 18 November - Attachment 10; ‘Recent Incidents of Persecution’ 2008, *Compass Direct News*, 31 October - Attachment 11; ‘Murder, Rape, Arson Continue’ 2008, *Compass Direct News*, 24 September - Attachment 12).

According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, the link between BJP ascendancy in Karnataka and attacks on Christians cause many to fear that anti-Christian violence will “spread further in the run up to national general elections, scheduled for May” (Ridge, M. 2008, ‘Anti-Christian attacks flare in India’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 September - Attachment 2).

iii. Tamil Nadu

Research Response IND17783 provides relevant background information regarding the targeting of Christians in Tamil Nadu by the RSS and Hindu extremists in the period leading up to February 2006. The response investigates the situation of Christians in Tamil Nadu, RSS attitudes towards Christians, freedom of worship in India, and state laws regarding conversion and proselytising by Christians (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IND17783*, 6 February – Attachment 13).

Up-to-date information regarding anti-Christian violence in Tamil Nadu is available from a variety of sources. It is interesting to note, however, that searches located fewer reports of attacks in this area than for Kerala and Karnataka.

A 2008 Christian Solidarity Worldwide briefing entitled ‘India - Religious Violence and Discrimination against Christians in 2007’ provides the following information on attacks occurring in Tamil Nadu:

6.19.1. Hosur area, Dharmapuri district, 5 May: pastor attacked by Hindu extremists

Independent pastor, Paul Chinnaswamy, was attacked by eight Hindu extremists who broke into his home. They hit him in the thigh with a screwdriver, pushed his face into a wall and hit him in the ribs. The assailants also threatened his wife and four-year-old daughter and warned the pastor not to tell the police about the incident. They also broke into a cupboard and stole money intended to pay an electricity bill, falsely claiming that it had been given by foreigners to fund conversions.

This was not the first time that the family had been attacked. On 22 April, Chinnaswamy had been beaten as his kitchen was vandalised by extremists protesting against his work. The attack forced the pastor's 24-year-old son to move out of his family home, fearing for his life. However, Pastor Chinnaswamy did not lodge a police complaint.

6.19.2. Hosur area, Dharmapuri district, 16 July: pastor's house demolished by Hindu extremists

Pastor Paul Chinnaswamy and four family members were forcibly evicted by Hindu extremists, who then vandalised their house. This was reportedly the third attack on the pastor in 2007. Due to fear for his life, Pastor Chinnaswamy did not file a complaint with the police.

6.19.3. Tamil Nadu, 29 July: pastor's brother crushed to death with boulders in alleged retributive attack; wife and mother-in-law remanded in custody

The brother of previously-attacked Pastor Chinnaswamy, identified as Amos, was attacked and killed, allegedly by two Hindu extremists involved in the assault on his brother. It was suspected that this was a retributive attack, after Amos had angrily condemned the attacks on his brother. The attackers arrived at his home by scooter, pulled down a small hut in front of Amos' house and hit his head and back with a log. When he fell to the floor, they crushed his head with large boulders. They threatened to kill his wife and mother-in-law if they too did not throw stones at his body. The women fearfully complied. The police arrested the two women, accusing them of his murder and remanded them to judicial custody (Christian Solidarity Worldwide 2008, 'India - Religious Violence and Discrimination against Christians in 2007', Christian Solidarity Worldwide website, March, pp.51-52 <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=report&id=91> – Accessed 24 February 2009 – Attachment 7).

A February 2008 briefing by *Compass Direct News* notes the following incident in which a Dalit pastor was attacked along with his wife and five children:

Tamil Nadu - Local residents believed to be Hindu extremists launched an attack on the house church of an independent Dalit pastor, identified only as 70-year-old Abraham, on January 18 in Tamil Nadu state's Salem district. Dr. Sajan K. George of the Global Council of Indian Christians said a pastor's neighbor, identified only as Govindhan, along with a few other residents, stormed the house church in Tharamangalam area in Salem and assaulted the Dalit pastor as he was preparing for a Friday fasting prayer meeting. The attackers also assaulted the pastor's wife and five children, four of whom are minors. While Pastor Abraham went to police to report the attack, members of his church, who were not aware of the attack, arrived at his house for the meeting and the same group of extremists attacked them. At least three of the Christians, identified only as Ravi, Anaal, and the pastor's son Prakash, were injured. Ravi's hand was fractured and Anaal and Prakash sustained head injuries. Ravi and Anaal were treated at the Mettur Dam Government Hospital. Police registered a case against Pastor Abraham's neighbor and arrested four people (Carvalho, N. and Arora, V. 2008, 'India Briefs: Recent Incidents of Persecution', *Compass Direct News*, 26 February - Attachment 14).

A number of attacks on Christian churches were also reported in Tamil Nadu in the latter part of 2008. For example, a report located on the Combat Law website reported:

September 26, 2008, Hindu activists damaging a statue of Baby Jesus in Dharmapuram town in Erode district in the southern part of the state.

The attack in Erode. The panes of the cupola were smashed with a stone, police said, adding that the glass on a portrait of apostle St Thomas placed inside it was also found broken. The place of worship belongs to the Karthigappally St Thomas Orthodox Cathedral, which falls under the Malankara Orthodox Church. After the Tamil Nadu attack on Friday, tension gripped Dharmapuram. Police beefed up security at churches, mosques and temples in the district after the attack.

In Tamil Nadu, it was the fourth attack on church property. It came barely a day after a statue of Virgin Mary was damaged in Karavali in Nagercoil. On Tuesday, unidentified people damaged an idol at St Joseph's Church in Arapalayam in Madurai. Last week, two Hindu Munnani members were arrested for pelting stones at a church in Namakkal ('Attack on Christians: August 24 to September 29, 2008' 2008, Combat Law website http://www.combatlaw.org/print.php?article_id=1231&issue_id=42 – Accessed 20 February 2009 – Attachment 15).

A report available on the AndhraNews.net website, dated 7 October 2008, notes:

Dharmapuri (TN)/Bangalore, Oct 7: Attacks on Christians have now spread to Tamil Nadu. Miscreants have broken statues inside a Christian school in the state's Dharmapuri District.

The incident took place inside the 'Our Lady high School' at Mathagondapalli near Thali in Dharmapuri District on Saturday night.

The school authorities have filed a complaint with the police.

"Some unknown persons entered the school and damaged the statues. Our police team has entered the school and registered a case. We will investigate," said Vijayram, an inspector at the Thali Police Station.

Police have also beefed up security at churches, mosques and temples in the wake of the attack.

This is the fifth attack on church property in Tamil Nadu. It came barely day after a statue of Virgin Mary was damaged at Karavali in Nagercoil city.

Last week, some unidentified people damaged an idol at St Joseph's church at Arapalayam in Madurai. Before that, two Hindus were arrested for pelting stones at a church in Namakkal District.

The attacks on Christians have left at least 20 people dead and dozens of churches damaged.

Hindus with fundamental leanings have said they are determined to fight Christian missionaries for 'converting' Hindus to Christianity.

Christian missionaries claim that Hindus convert willingly to escape the discrimination of the caste-system.

Brinda Karat, a politburo member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), blamed BJP-led State Governments for justifying the violence against Christians and for trying to divert attention from real issues.

"No action has been taken against them on the basis of prima facie visual evidence. Where is the question of conversions in justifying this violence against the community? There is no link between the two. This is a false link, which is being given a judicial sanction. This is not something which can be acceptable," said Brinda.

Violence began in Orissa with the murder of a Hindu leader Laxmanananda Saraswati in August that sparked weeks of deadly clashes, a killing which is also blamed on Maoist rebels. The violence against Christians in Orissa was followed by similar attacks in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala ('Attacks on Christians spread to Tamil Nadu' 2008, AndhraNews.net website, 7 October <http://www.andhranews.net/India/2008/October/7-Attacks-Christians-67887.asp> - Accessed 24 February 2009 – Attachment 16).

On 31 October 2008, *Compass Direct News* reported:

Tamil Nadu - Hindu extremists attacked a church and damaged a statue of Mary on Oct. 9 in Ganapathy, Coimbatore. The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) reported that the assailants entered the church premises, broke the glass cabin and damaged the six-foot tall statue. The incident sparked protest among Christians, resulting in about 100 church members gathering on the road demanding protection and the immediate arrest of the Hindu extremists. Police have arrested three extremists, said the GCIC, and at press time calm had returned to the area ('Recent Incidents of Persecution' 2008, *Compass Direct News*, 31 October – Attachment 11).

2. Are there any references to St Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Churches in Kozhikode District, in reports on attacks on Christians by the RSS or Hindu extremists?

A broader search for attacks on Orthodox churches generally in Kerala located a September 2008 report noting an attack on the Jacobite Syrian Church Mor Sabore Afroth Cathedral in Nedumbassery. The report states:

Kochi , Sept 21 (ANI): The ongoing attacks on churches are fast spreading to other parts of Kerala as two very ancient churches window, door and a Jesus statue were found broken in Nedumbassery area in Kerala on Sunday.

One is a Catholic church and the other one is a Jacobite Syrian Church Mor Sabore Afroth Cathedral, according to the police officials the attacks may have taken place on Saturday night or early morning on Sunday.

No one has been arrested so far.... (Samuel, J. 2008, 'Ancient churches under attack in Kerala', *Thaindian News*, 21 September http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/india-news/ancient-churches-under-attack-in-kerala_10098239.html - Accessed 24 February 2009 – Attachment 17).

The attack was also reported by the All India Christian Council (AICC):

Kochi: Two churches, that stand on adjoining compounds one of them among the oldest in India, were vandalized by unidentified people in the early hours of at Akapparambu in Nedumbassery panchayat, about 35 km from Kochi city 21 September 2008.

According to reports, a seven-foot statue of Christ in the cemetery of the 467-year-old Garvasis and Prothasis Church, belonging to the Syro-Malabar Church denomination, was broken and the pedestal was knocked off.

The Mar Sabore, a Syrian Cathedral Church, which was adjacent to it was also desecrated. It was the cleaning employee at the cathedral who first noticed that the holy chamber in which the sandalwood cot of St. Paulose Mar Athanasius Valiya Thirumentni was kept was damaged.

Fr. Paulose Arackaparambil, vicar at the cathedral church while talking to the media said the glass windows must have been smashed between 11 pm and 5 am. The cathedral, said to have been built in 825 AD, is one of the ancient churches of the Jacobites ('New Attacks in Orissa, Karnataka, Punjab, and Kerala' 2008, All India Christian Council (AICC), 21 September - Attachment 18).

In January 2004, *AsiaNews* reported an attack on the Orthodox St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, stating:

Thiruvananthapuram (AsiaNews/Ucan) - Police in Kerala (southern India) are convinced that increasingly frequent attacks against Christians are aimed at igniting tensions in the area. Last Wednesday night, a group of unidentified people set fire to the Orthodox St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church in Thiruvananthapuram (south of New Delhi). The altar, curtains and two chairs were burnt, but nothing was stolen nor were there damages to religious articles. Police found the name of two Hindu groups written on a window near the altar. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its armed wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) were the fundamentalist groups named in the graffiti: both have been held responsible for acts of violence against Christians in northern India in recent years. Police suspect that the inscriptions were "a deliberate attempt to divert the investigations".

This is the third attack against Christians in Kerala in little more than a month. On August 28, Fr Job Chittilappilly was killed. Police arrested a RSS activist, saying that the youth had admitted to having killed the priest for "anti-Hindu activities". The following day, however, police stated that the young man's confession was not valid, as he had been under the influence of drugs. The Church called for a more thorough investigation and police say they have set up a special team to work on the case ('New attack against Christians in Kerala' 2004, *AsiaNews*, 1 January <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&page=9> - Accessed 25 February 2009 - Attachment 19).

Reports indicate that attacks on Orthodox churches have also occurred in Tamil Nadu. For example, on 26 September 2008 a report located on the Combat Law website notes that Hindu extremists had attacked the Karthigapally St Thomas Orthodox Cathedral in Tamil Nadu ('Attack on Christians: August 24 to September 29, 2008' 2008, Combat Law website http://www.combatlaw.org/print.php?article_id=1231&issue_id=42 - Accessed 20 February 2009 - Attachment 15).

List of Sources Consulted

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UNHCR Refworld <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW) <http://www.hrw.org/>

Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org/

Asian Human Rights Commission <http://www.ahrchk.net/index.php>

Christian Solidarity Worldwide website www.csw.org.uk/

Compass Direct News www.compassdirect.org/

Christianity Today www.christianitytoday.com/

Region Specific Links

Thaindian News <http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/>

Combat Law website <http://www.combatlaw.org/v7i6.php>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

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