

Baptist groups urge Indian officials to stop mob violence

January 10, 2025

Baptist conventions, councils and associations representing thousands of churches were among the groups who urged Indian President Draupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to act decisively to stop violent mobs who have targeted Christians and other religious minorities.

More than 400 individual Christian leaders and 30 church groups sent the appeal the last week in December, [calling on the president and prime minister](#) to order the “swift and impartial investigation of incidents against religious minorities.”

“Rising hate speech, especially from elected officials, has emboldened acts of violence against Christians. Mobs disrupt peaceful Christian gatherings and threaten carol singers with impunity,” the letter to the president and prime minister stated.

The [message to Murmu and Modi](#) noted the Religious Liberty Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India reported more than 720 incidents targeting Christians in 2023 through mid-December, and the United Christian Forum, which operates a toll-free helpline for Christians facing persecution, reported 760 incidents through the end of November.

“Alarming, during this Christmas season—a time for peace and joy—at least 14 attacks were carried out against Christian gatherings across India,” the letter stated. “It saddens us deeply that almost all political leaders from the highest in the Union government and the states have chosen not to condemn them.”

The letter noted the misuse of anti-conversion laws by Indian states have

led to the unjust arrest and harassment of more than 110 ministers.

Continued violence in Manipur

It also pointed to an [ongoing crisis](#) in the northeastern state of Manipur, where more than 250 people have been killed, at least 350 churches have been destroyed, and thousands have been displaced since May 2023.



Christians hold a banner during a rally in solidarity with the people of northeastern Manipur state, in Ahmedabad, India, Sunday, July 23, 2023. (AP Photo/Ajit Solanki)

“The wounds of divided communities run deep,” the letter stated. “Manipur yearns for healing and reconciliation.”

In Assam, the [Magical Healing](#) (Prevention of Evil) Practices Act, 2024, along with the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, have been used to arrest more than a dozen pastors, church workers and other Christians, the letter noted.

The letter also noted while Hindus are permitted to distribute and sell the Bhagavad Gita or other religious literature on street corners and in marketplaces, “Christians are routinely beaten up if they distribute the Bible, or even a small part of it.”

Other systemic issues raised in the letter include “perpetuating historic injustices” through exclusionary policies denying Scheduled Caste status to Dalit Christians and demanding that Christian tribes be removed from the Scheduled Tribes list, undermining their constitutional protections.

In addition to urging top government officials to investigate incidents targeting religious minorities, the letter also called on the president and prime minister to:

- Issue clear guidelines to state governments about protecting constitutional rights to religious freedom.
- Initiate regular dialogue with representatives from faith communities.
- Protect the constitutional right to freely profess and practice one’s faith.

“We appeal to you, Honourable President and Honourable Prime Minister, to ensure equal rights for all, fostering an environment where every Indian feels safe, respected, and free to practice their faith.”

Broad-based endorsement

Endorsing groups included the Angami Baptist Church Council, the Arunachai Baptist Churches Council, the Chakhesang Baptist Church Council, the Evangelical Baptist Church of Odisha, the Fellowship of Naga Baptist Associations, Madras English Baptist Church, the Manipur Baptist Convention, the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, North Bank Baptist Church Association, the Nyishi Baptist Church Council, Rongmei Baptist Church Association, Tangkhui Naga Baptist Convention, Tangsa Baptist Churches Association, the Deccan Association of Telugu Baptist Churches, the Western Odisha Baptist Churches Council and the Western Sumi Baptist Akukuhou Kuqhakulu.

Other groups include the Church of the Nazarene, the Council of Evangelical Churches in India, the Evangelical Church of God, the Federation of Catholic Associations of the Archdiocese of Delhi, the National Christian Council, the National Church of India, the Synod of Pentecostal Churches and the United Christian Forum.

Individuals included Zelhou Keyho, general secretary of the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, and J Chiranjeevi with the Council of Baptist Churches in India.



Wissam al-Saliby

Wissam al-Saliby, president of the 21Wilberforce human rights organization, expressed concern about violence in India and affirmed Christians in India for their appeal to the nation's president and prime minister.

"21Wilberforce is very concerned by the constant communication of incidents of violence we receive from friends and partners in India," al-Saliby said.

In December, Christians celebrating Christmas in Odisha state were attacked, he noted. Videos posted online showed women who were accused of religious conversion being [tied to a tree and beaten](#).

"I'm grateful that the Christians in India are speaking up and engaging with their government," al-Saliby said. "21Wilberforce is coming alongside them and supports their efforts to bring about religious freedom for all and

a more inclusive and tolerant society.”