

Christian children threatened and abused in series of attacks in India

Country/Region: India, South and East Asia

Christian children were chased by knife-wielding Muslims who threatened to kill them, and a pastor had chilli powder thrown in his eyes by Hindu extremists who gagged and bound his son.

These are just two of a number of violent anti-Christian incidents that took place in India over the last three weeks.



Christian children in India are vulnerable to persecution

Around 100 radical Muslims forced their way into a prayer meeting at a Christian couple's home in Nutangram village, West Bengal state on 30 March. They beat up a number of the Christian men and women, and chased them all, along with their children, carrying a knife. The Muslims threatened to kill the Christians, and as the latter ran for their lives, the children were crying in fear; their attempts to escape were blocked by the Muslims, who physically and verbally assaulted them. A crowd of around 500 Muslims watched in amusement as the Christians were tormented in this manner for around an hour and a half.

On Easter Sunday, the Rev. Ratnababu and his family were attacked in their home in Andhra Pradesh by Hindu extremists. Some gagged and bound his son, Madhu, while others threw chilli powder in the pastor's eyes before assaulting him and his wife. Rev. Ratnababu has previously been subjected to persecution, including numerous death threats and three attempts to torch his church. Despite his being the victim, Hindu extremists have prompted the police to arrest him twice.

In another recent incident, school children were used by Hindu extremists to trace families who had been attending church services in Akkarapettai, Tamil Nadu. The radicals were angered by a noticeable drop in the numbers of people attending a Hindu festival, and found out that they had been going to church instead.

On 2 April, the Hindus went to a government school and announced a reward for children who had Christian literature in their homes. They then harassed the children who said that they did, and summoned their parents, threatening to expel them from the village if they continued going to church. The next day, they searched houses for Bibles and Christian literature, tearing up the texts that they found. The offenders told one family who boldly said that they were worshipping Christ to vacate their house, and locked twelve Christian families out of their homes for three days.

The Indian police are often complicit in acts of anti-Christian persecution by others, and sometimes they harass Christians directly themselves.

This happened to the Rev. Rajesh on Easter Sunday. He had just finished conducting a prayer service at his home in Chamrajnagar, Karnataka, when the police turned up. They asked him under what authority he had conducted a service at his home before insulting him and ordering him to vacate the property.

Later that day, the pastor along with five other church leaders and a parishioner, Babu, went to the local police station to file a complaint. As they were speaking to a police officer, around 100 Hindu extremists burst into the police station and attacked the Christians. Babu received head injuries that required 24 stitches. The police failed to intervene while the assault took place.

Elsewhere, in Maharanjanj, Uttar Pradesh, Hindu extremists armed with iron rods raided a Christian meeting on 7 April. They accused the leaders of carrying out forced conversions and started to beat them up. They also attacked a recent convert who had given the church land worth 1.2 million rupees (£14,700; US\$23,200). Pastor Ram Chander Vish Prasad and his wife were injured, along with some other believers. Four people were arrested but released without charge on the same day.

Sajan George, President of the Global Council of Indian Christians, said that the country's Christian minority was living in a "climate of terror".