

A RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN INDIA

A Resolution of Witness

TEXT OF THE MOTION

WHEREAS since 2014, the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has led to intensified attacks on Muslims, Christians, and indigenous groups. These actions have been driven by the Hindutva ideology, and government-backed anti-conversion laws. Inflammatory hate speech by political leaders have also played a role in fueling a surge in violence and discrimination;¹ and

WHEREAS in the North East State of Manipur, India, where the state government is led by India's Hindu Nationalist ruling Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP), there has been significant violence since May 2023 toward Christians living there. Months of sustained violence has resulted in thousands of homes destroyed, targeted attacks of places of worship and over 70,000 individuals have fled to neighboring states and countries;² and

WHEREAS India has enacted anti-conversion laws in nine states, including Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. These laws, often targeting Christians and Muslims, provide legal cover for Hindu nationalist groups to harass, imprison, and intimidate religious minorities. Under the guise of preventing 'forced conversions,' these laws have been used to suppress religious freedom. Despite Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guaranteeing religious liberty, minorities face ongoing repression;³ and

WHEREAS Christian communities and other religious minorities have been relentlessly attacked. In Manipur state there was significant ethnic violence reported in 2023. "The tribal and predominantly Christian Kuki community faced the brunt of violence from the majority Meitei community. More than 200 people were killed, and more than 50,000 people were displaced;"⁴ and

WHEREAS Religious minorities such as Christians and Muslims live under constant fear and threat in India, the largest democracy in the world. Supported by the National and State governments, the Hindu Nationalist movement commits egregious religious rights violations in India;⁵

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ condemns all violence against and violations of the rights of religious minorities in India.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ stands in solidarity with and holds in prayer the poor, the marginalized, and religious minority communities facing severe discrimination and violence in India.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ joins with the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC), which passed a “Resolution on the Persecution of Religious Minorities, in India and Beyond” in October 2024⁶ and The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, which passed a similar resolution in April 2024 condemning violence against religious minorities in India.⁷

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, informed by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)⁸, the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges the United States government to:

1. “Designate India as a ‘country of particular concern,’ or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).”⁸
2. Advance human rights for all religious communities in India and promote religious freedom, dignity, and interfaith dialogue through bilateral engagement and in multilateral forums.
3. Condemn ongoing religious freedom violations.
4. Support religious organizations and human rights groups targeted for their advocacy of religious freedom.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon the leaders and members of the United Church of Christ to:

1. Contact their respective US Congressional representatives to;
 - a. Bring violations against religious minorities to the attention of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) to hold perpetrators of religious violence accountable.
 - b. Urge the Indian government to repeal discriminatory laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and anti-conversion laws.
 - c. Encourage the Indian government at the Central and state levels to ensure that the rights granted in the Indian Constitution to all religious minorities in India to practice, profess, and propagate their religious faith to be upheld.
2. Hold the poor, marginalized, and religious minority communities in India in prayer.
3. Encourage Global Ministries to continue to be in dialogue with our global partners in India around these issues and to share their concerns and suggestions with the wider church.

FUNDING: The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

78 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
79 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/11/india-increased-abuses-against-minorities-critics>

² <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>, page 31.

³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/india/>

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>

⁶ <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness-ncc/resolution-on-the-persecution-of-religious-minorities-in-india-and-beyond/>

⁷ <https://religionnews.com/2024/05/09/united-methodist-church-passes-historic-resolution-on-persecuted-indian-christians/>

⁸ <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/India.pdf>, page 31.