



# Targeted Violence Against Christians in India During Christmas 2025



The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) is a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy organization with chapters across the United States. A 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit established in 2002, IAMC is the largest advocacy and human rights organization representing the Indian Muslim diaspora.

The core mission of the Indian American Muslim Council is as follows:

- To defend the fundamental and civil rights of all;
- To preserve the pluralistic and democratic ethos enshrined in the constitutions of the United States and the Republic of India;
- To facilitate increased interfaith and inter-community understanding in the United States, with the goal of safeguarding American society and institutions from hateful ideologies responsible for violence in India;
- To increase awareness about India in order to improve cultural and trade relations between the United States and the Republic of India.

Phone: 1-800-839-7270  
Email: [media.info@iamc.com](mailto:media.info@iamc.com)  
[www.iamc.com](http://www.iamc.com)

# Executive Summary

---

The Christmas season of 2025 saw a marked escalation in intimidation and violence against Christians across India, with incidents reported in multiple states in the weeks leading up to December 25. These acts were commonly justified through allegations of “forced religious conversion” of Hindus, despite a lack of evidence. Incidents targeted ordinary religious worship and public expression.

The incidents documented in this report reveal consistent interference with religious worship, the criminalization of Christian visibility in public space, and acts of mob violence carried out with little or no deterrence. These trends reflect a broader environment shaped by rising Hindu majoritarianism, the misuse of anti-conversion laws, and the repeated involvement of extremist groups. State responses were frequently inadequate, marked by police inaction and administrative obstruction.

This report presents evidence intended to inform policy action and accountability measures aimed at protecting religious freedom and minority rights in India.

# 1. Christmas 2025 as a National Flashpoint

---

While attacks on Christians in India occur throughout the year, the Christmas season of 2025 marked a particularly visible escalation. Beginning in early December and intensifying in the days leading up to December 25, acts of intimidation by Hindu extremist groups were reported across the country.

Civil society organizations described Christmas 2025 as a “national flashpoint for majoritarian assertion,” in which violence was deployed to signal that Christian visibility in public space was unacceptable.<sup>1</sup> These actions were frequently justified under the familiar pretext of preventing “forced religious conversions.” Yet in case after case, no evidence of coercive conversion was presented.



cjp.org.in

This surge in violence around Christmas demonstrated how religious festivals are increasingly used to challenge minority presence in public space and restrict the visible practice of non-Hindu faith. The incidents documented during this period underscore both the heightened vulnerability of India’s Christian community and the growing influence of Hindu nationalist ideology on the exercise of religious freedom and the response of state institutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Not Merry, Not Peaceful: How fear, vigilantism, and state silence marked Christmas 2025 | CJP

## 2. Organized Mobilization, State Complicity, and Legal Scaffolding

---

The surge in violence during the 2025 Christmas season was not an isolated development, but the continuation of a longer trajectory of persecution against India's Christian community. Data compiled by Christian organizations illustrates a sustained and sharp rise in attacks over the past decade. The Evangelical Fellowship of India's Religious Liberty Commission recorded an increase in incidents from 601 in 2023 to at least 830 in 2024, while the United Christian Forum reported 706 incidents in the first eleven months of 2025 alone.<sup>2</sup> Most strikingly, the National Christian Convention documented a rise from 139 incidents in 2014 to 834 in 2024, an increase of nearly 500 percent over ten years.<sup>3</sup>



(L-R) Tehmina Arora, Michael Williams, Minakshi Singh and Vijayesh Lal. Photo: Alishan Jafri

Since the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the far right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014, the rise of Hindu nationalism has provided an ideological and legal scaffold for this persecution. Anti-conversion laws, now implemented in more than a dozen Indian states, have become a central instrument in targeting Christians. These statutes employ vague definitions of “force,” “fraud,” and “allurement,” allowing routine religious activity to be criminalized. Pastors have been arrested on baseless charges, sometimes for offering education or basic healthcare, while church gatherings have been disrupted and families displaced under the threat of prosecution.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Report by Christian body shows sharp rise in violence against community in 2024 in India

<sup>3</sup> <https://thewire.in/communalism/attacks-against-christians-increased-by-500-since-2014-rights-groups>

<sup>4</sup> EFIRLC Report – Systematic Targeting of Christians in India: January to July 2025

During the Christmas season, allegations of forced conversion were repeatedly invoked despite the absence of evidence.

Beyond legal action, these laws have legitimized social stigma and emboldened vigilante groups by shifting the burden of proof onto minority communities. Over the past decade, public narratives have increasingly portrayed Christians as “foreign elements” or “predators” seeking to undermine Indian culture, presented as synonymous with Hinduism. This language is echoed by political leaders and amplified by sympathetic media outlets. The persecution of Christians has therefore extended beyond physical violence to include social and economic exclusion. In several tribal regions, Christian families have been denied access to village wells, expelled from ancestral homes, and prevented from burying their dead in public cemeteries.<sup>5</sup>

A defining feature of the Christmas 2025 violence was the repeated involvement of the same far-right Hindu nationalist organizations across states. Militant groups such as the Bajrang Dal, Vishva Hindu Parishad, and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh were named by victims, witnesses, and media reports in incident after incident. Although these organizations portray themselves as independent cultural bodies, their ideological alignment with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is well established.<sup>6</sup> In several cases, local BJP officials were directly implicated in acts of harassment or violence, underscoring the proximity between vigilante mobilization and political power.

Equally significant was the failure of state institutions to respond. Police were present but did not intervene in a number of incidents, including during an assault of a visually impaired woman in Madhya Pradesh and a vandalism of a mall in Chhattisgarh.<sup>7</sup> Opposition leaders later accused the BJP-led state government of “support[ing] hooliganism” after those arrested for vandalizing Christmas decorations were released on bail and celebrated by Bajrang Dal members with garlands, slogans, and a procession.<sup>8</sup> In other cases, authorities obstructed religious activity administratively, including by refusing carol program permissions in Madhya Pradesh<sup>9</sup> and keeping schools open on Christmas Day in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>10</sup>

By acting on allegations made by extremist groups while failing to protect Christian victims, state authorities have fostered an environment in which vigilante violence is tacitly encouraged.<sup>11</sup>

---

5 No Rest, Even in Death: Christians in India and the growing targeted violence in Chhattisgarh | CJP

6 Exposing the largest far-right network in history | The Caravan

7 Visually impaired woman manhandled by BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh

8 Raipur mall vandalism: Accused get hero's welcome with garlands, procession - The Times of India

9 Court intervenes after police block carol singing in Jhabua diocese | Matters India

10 School Holiday on December 25, 2025: Schools Closed in THESE States

11 Not Merry, Not Peaceful: How fear, vigilantism, and state silence marked Christmas 2025 | CJP

### 3. Patterns of Violence During the Christmas Season

---

The attacks against Christians during the Christmas season of 2025 followed identifiable and recurring patterns across multiple Indian states. These incidents can be broadly categorized into three overlapping forms: disruption of worship and prayer, criminalization of festive visibility, and mob violence and physical assault.

#### Disruption of Worship and Prayer

One of the most common tactics employed by far-right Hindu actors during December 2025 was the disruption of religious services and prayer gatherings. In Dungarpur, Rajasthan, members of India's largest Hindu paramilitary organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Hindu militant organization Bajrang Dal stormed St. Joseph's Catholic Church during an ongoing service. Parish members were verbally abused, accused of forced religious conversions, and warned that prayer at the church would no longer be tolerated.<sup>12</sup>



mattersindia.com

Similar scenes unfolded in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, where right-wing groups assembled outside churches during Christmas Eve services, chanting Hindu religious prayers and slogans such as “Christian missionaries murdabad (meaning “down with” or “death to” Christian missionaries).”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> RSS, Bajrang Dal Disrupt Sunday Mass in Rajasthan church, priest rejects conversion allegations | Matters India

<sup>13</sup> In Bareilly, VHP-Bajrang Dal Protests Outside Church, Chants “Christian Missionaries Murdabad” – Hindutva Watch

In Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, four Catholic parishes were denied permission to host caroling events after police refused to accept program applications. Only after the parishes approached the Madhya Pradesh High Court were they allowed to proceed.<sup>14</sup>

## **Criminalization of Festive Visibility**

Beyond worship, the public visibility of Christmas itself became a target. In Delhi's Lajpat Nagar market, Christian women wearing Santa caps were harassed and filmed by members of the Bajrang Dal, accused of promoting their religion in a public space.<sup>15</sup>

In Bhubaneswar, Odisha, street vendors selling Santa hats and Christmas goods were confronted by men who declared that India was a "Hindu nation" and warned that such items had no place in the country.<sup>16</sup>



**TOI News Desk / TIMESOFINDIA.COM**

In Nalbari, Assam, Hindu militants from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal tore down Christmas decorations at St. Mary's School, set them on fire, and vandalized stalls selling festive items while chanting Hindu nationalist slogans.<sup>17</sup>

In Trivandrum, Kerala, a Christmas program organized for postal department employees was cancelled after organizers refused demands that an RSS-associated anthem be included in the celebrations.<sup>18</sup>

---

15 Bajrang Dal accuses Christian women in Santa hats of proselytisation, forces them to leave

16 'Yeh Hindu rashtra hai' Santa hat sellers on road harassed in Odisha | India News

17 Assam: Tension at Nalbari school after VHP, Bajrang Dal allegedly vandalise Christmas preparations

18 In Kerala, row erupts after BMS postal employees union pushes for 'Patriotic Carol'

In Haridwar, Uttarakhand, a Christmas celebration scheduled at a hotel operated by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department was cancelled after Hindu nationalist groups warned that “events related to foreign culture” would not be tolerated “on the banks of the Ganges.”<sup>19</sup>

In Uttar Pradesh, the state government announced that schools across the state would remain open on December 25, reversing a long-standing Christmas holiday. The decision was widely interpreted as a symbolic downgrading of Christian religious observance under a Hindu nationalist administration.<sup>20</sup>

## **Mob Violence and Physical Assault**

Several anti-Christian incidents involved physical violence. In Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, a visually impaired Christian woman attending a Christmas program was verbally and physically assaulted by Anju Bhargava, a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) official. The assault occurred in full view of police officers, who did not intervene. Video footage captured Bhargava twisting the woman’s arms while insulting her faith.<sup>21</sup>



The Jabalpur unit of the BJP has issued a show-cause notice to Bhargava asking her to explain her actions. (Photo Enhanced using AI)

In Raipur, Chhattisgarh, Hindu militant mobs affiliated with the VHP and Bajrang Dal stormed the Magneto Mall during a strike called against the spectre of forced conversions. Christmas decorations were vandalized, and mall staff were assaulted as security personnel struggled to contain the crowd.<sup>22</sup>

19 Haridwar hotel cancel Christmas event after protest by Hindu groups

20 School Holiday on December 25, 2025: Schools Closed in THESE States

21 Visually impaired woman manhandled by BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh speaks out

22 ‘What is your caste?’: Mobs with rods, hockey sticks vandalise Raipur mall - The Times of India

These attacks followed earlier violence in Chhattisgarh's Kanker, where a Hindu mob opposed the burial of a Christian man's father on village land, going as far as to exhume the body and arson a local prayer hall.<sup>23</sup>

In Palakkad, Kerala, a group of children singing Christmas carols, some of them as young as ten years old, were harassed and intimidated by a group of men who were reportedly affiliated with the RSS.<sup>24</sup> In Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, a pastor and his wife were harassed and accused of converting Hindus to Christianity.<sup>25</sup>

These incidents did not occur in isolation but reflect deeper structural, ideological, and institutional factors shaping the current environment for religious minorities in India.

## 4. Public Responses

---

Some public figures have expressed concern over the attacks. Television journalist Rajdeep Sardesai condemned the violence, warning that assaults on Christian groups across India demonstrate the corrosive effects of normalized hateful propaganda on civil society, and criticized police authorities for acting as complicit bystanders.<sup>26</sup> Indian National Congress parliamentarian Shashi Tharoor expressed "deep concern over the rising fear and anxiety among Christians in India," noting that attacks were occurring in multiple parts of the country.<sup>27</sup> Kerala Chief Minister M. Pinarayi Vijayan similarly warned of pressure and threats from RSS-affiliated organizations aimed at preventing Christmas celebrations, stating that any encroachment on constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights was unacceptable.<sup>28</sup> Dolphy D'Souza, spokesperson for the Bombay Catholic Sabha, said the attacks were not isolated law-and-order issues but struck at the core of the Constitution, including freedom of conscience and the right to worship without fear.<sup>29</sup>

However, such statements remain exceptions rather than the norm, and at the executive level there has been no sustained effort to hold perpetrators accountable or to publicly repudiate extremist groups.

---

23 Mob vandalises prayer hall over burial dispute in Bastar - The Hindu

24 BJP-RSS member arrested in Kerala for attacking children's Christmas carol group

25 The Observer Post on Instagram: "A video showing a Christian pastor and his wife being harassed"

26 NewsToday With Rajdeep Sardesai: Xmas Hate Normalising?

27 <https://x.com/ShashiTharoor/status/2004108224149270894?s=20>

28 CM Vijayan slams attacks on Christmas celebrations

29 Hindu Nationalists Attack Christmas Celebrations Across India - International Christian Concern

## 5. Recommendations

---

In its 2025 annual report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reiterated its recommendation that India be designated a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) for egregious and unaddressed violations of religious freedom. The events of December 2025 underscore the urgency of this designation.

The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) condemns the violence against India’s Christian community and characterises it as part of a systematic campaign to marginalise religious minorities. In response, IAMC urges the following:

- The United States Secretary of State should use the findings of this report to accept USCIRF’s recommendation and designate India as a Country of Particular Concern.
- The United States Government should impose targeted sanctions on extremist organizations, including the Bajrang Dal and the Vishva Hindu Parishad, as well as on individuals involved in or responsible for inciting and enabling violence against Christians.
- In India, the respective state governments should ensure the immediate arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the Christmas 2025 violence and provide adequate security for Christian institutions and places of worship.

The persecution of Christians in India is a sustained human rights crisis with global ramifications. Silence and inaction risk normalising a model of majoritarian governance that undermines pluralism, rule of law, and democratic accountability.





## **Peace, Pluralism and Justice**

1100 15th St NW  
WASHINGTON DC 20005