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INDIA CSW urges India to reverse “culture of impunity” for religious violence

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) today released a [briefing](#) which highlights the pattern of communal violence against Christians in India, and urges that a culture of impunity needs to be reversed to ensure inciters and perpetrators of communal violence expect to be brought to justice.

The briefing, ‘Communalism, anti-Christian violence and the law’, focuses on the aftermath of communal violence in Orissa in 2008, and the “regular, frequent attacks” on Christians concentrated in six other states, typically in the form of well-targeted mob violence. It argues that the government should address systemic problems underlying this violence, and that a proposed law to deal with communal violence should not be passed unless further, meaningful consultation is held with affected communities.

The briefing also calls for the repeal of anti-conversion laws in force in five states, saying they are unnecessary, contrary to international law and have a damaging effect on religious minorities. Additionally, the penalization of Dalits who change religion should also be redressed.

Dr John Dayal, a member of the Indian government’s National Integration Council (NIC) and Secretary General of CSW partners, the All India Christian Council (aicc), said: “India has a proud tradition of religious diversity, but it is deeply sullied by communal violence. The government needs to do more to tackle underlying problems, and the current form of the bill on communal violence is a let-down which will do little to help victims”.

Shabnam Hashmi, NIC member and Director of high-profile campaign group, ANHAD, said: “Communalization of the minds and hearts in India has reached unprecedented levels. Continuing attacks on Christians and Muslims in various states need urgent attention and affirmative actions by the Indian government to stop violence and targeting of these communities”.

Tina Lambert, CSW’s Advocacy Director, said: “India boasts strong democratic institutions and an excellent body of legislation protecting human rights. However, much more needs to be done to tackle the culture of impunity which exists for perpetrators of communal violence. This is evident not only in the aftermath of the 2008 anti-Christian violence in Orissa and earlier cases of mass violence, such as the 2002 anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat, but also in the regular, frequent attacks on Christians in certain states which are consistently met with indifferent, negligent or biased responses.”