



3.29.2012

## INDIA | CSW welcomes murder conviction in Orissa, urges further progress

---

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the conviction and sentencing of Kartik Paramanika for the murder of Ramesh Digal, by a fast-track court in Orissa on March 24. This is the first conviction for any of the murders carried out during widespread communal violence against the Christian community in August-September 2008.

On August 25, 2008, at the height of the violence, Paramanika led a mob to Petapanga village, where he killed Ramesh Digal and burnt down his house. The victim, Ramesh Digal, had worked as a cook in a school at which Paramanika was headmaster.

Paramanika was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder. He was also sentenced to five years for arson, and given a fine of 5,000 rupees.

In other recent news from Orissa, a man named Saira Nayak was threatened with death and then abducted after giving evidence in court about a rioting, arson and theft case on March 27. He was rescued by police, but they failed to arrest the abductors.

Dr. John Dayal, a member of the Government of India's National Integration Council, said, "Justice remains the critical issue in Kandhamal where a combination of circumstances, including lacunae in investigations and coercion of witnesses, has resulted in a long series of acquittals. This conviction will help begin to rebuild faith in the judicial system. We must also congratulate the public prosecutor for securing this major success."

David Griffiths, CSW's South Asia Team Leader, said, "This conviction comes against a backdrop of witness intimidation and widespread allegations of failures by the police and the judicial system. It is very significant as the first murder conviction, but more need to follow, and the Government still needs to ensure the protection of highly vulnerable witnesses. India's Universal Periodic Review at the UN will provide a forum for other states to probe India on its human rights situation, and questions of justice and impunity are likely to be raised. But, India will also increasingly be looked to for leadership and best practice on dealing effectively with communal violence. We welcome the Government's effort to pass a law dealing with the specific contingencies of communal and targeted violence, which has been drafted in collaboration with civil society groups, and we strongly encourage them to complete this process."