



8.21.14

INDIA | Church of England, Partners Observe Kandhamal Day

The Church of England and its Ecumenical partners will be observing Kandhamal Day on Aug. 25 to mark the sixth anniversary of communal violence in Kandhamal in Orissa State of India.

The Kandhamal communal violence claimed an estimated 100 lives, displacing around 56,000 people and saw the destruction of 295 churches and worship places.

In a statement, Bishop Humphrey Southern, Bishop of Repton, who chairs the Derbyshire Partnership of Churches with the Church of North India, remarked that “Kandhamal Day is being observed to raise greater awareness of the communal violence in Orissa, and by recognizing this day, we are encouraging the Indian government to take the necessary actions to ensure that justice is done for the victim-survivors and work towards ensuring that such atrocities do not happen again. The need for this is all the more urgent in a world where persecution and ethnic cleansing on the basis of religion continues to be so horrifically apparent in Iraq and elsewhere.”

A recent visit by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) to Orissa revealed that after six years there has been no justice for the people of Kandhamal. The scars of this violence continue to plague Christians in the State as they endeavor to rebuild their lives. The National Solidarity Forum in India noted “we have observed and created enough pressure on the fact that the economic justice of relief and compensation has been minimal from the part of the Government. We hereby express our deep shock at the process of the criminal justice delivery system which is still not provided to the victims and survivors of Kandhamal violence in Orissa.”

The statement continues, “The Church of England with its Partners call for solidarity and prayers for the victims in recognition of Kandhamal Day. We need to build the confidence of minority communities being persecuted for their faith and to remind the government of its responsibilities to the people of Kandhamal. We urge everyone to remember the people of Kandhamal in their prayers, candle light vigils, with the hope that such communal violence will not be repeated in the future.”

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “We stand with the survivors of communal violence in Orissa and human rights defenders in marking Kandhamal Day, and echo their call for the Indian government to bring the perpetrators to justice and end the cycle of impunity that fuels these crimes. We also call on the government to protect religious minorities and their right freedom of religion or belief, as guaranteed in the Indian constitution.”