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INDIA | US Government Urged Not to Sideline Concerns of Religious Minorities During Visit

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is urging the US government to ensure that the concerns of India's religious minorities are not sidelined in discussions with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his official visit to the US.

Prime Minister Modi arrives in the US today, Sept. 26. During his four-day visit, he will reportedly meet with President Barack Obama and various members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, in addition to addressing the United Nations General Assembly.

Since May 2014, there have been over 600 incidences of communal violence against religious minorities, and victim-survivors of these and past incidences of communal violence have yet to receive justice, or adequate compensation for their loss. CSW is calling on the Indian government to develop a comprehensive framework to deal with outbreaks of communal and targeted violence, to actively pursue reform of the Indian Police Service, and to address the delivery of justice and compensation to the victims of communal violence through an examination of the legal and judicial process.

CSW's recent briefing on India notes how the scars of a massacre in 2008 continue to plague the Christians in Odisha State, who live in a climate of insecurity, and in fear of further attacks. The lack of will by state institutions to deter future communal violence means the plight of religious minorities, not only in Odisha, but the rest of India, is deeply worrying.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW is urging the US government to raise the issue of widespread hate campaigns by state and non-state actors against religious minorities in talks with Prime Minister Modi, and to insist that justice is done for the victim-survivors of violence against religious minorities. We are encouraging our US-based supporters to email their representative in Congress in order to encourage them to discuss the concerns of India's religious minorities with the Prime Minister. With the India-US relationship identified by President Obama and the Secretary of State as one of the US' top four foreign policy priorities; we need to seize this opportunity to ensure that the rights of India's religious minorities are on the agenda of this maiden visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the country."