



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

Sixtieth session

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Agenda item 4

**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention**

### **Written statement submitted by World Evangelical Alliance, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status\***

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[4 August 2025]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **India: Religious Minorities Face On-Going Discrimination and Violence**

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is a network of churches in over 140 nations that have each formed an evangelical alliance and over 100 international organizations joining together to give a world-wide identity, voice, and platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians worldwide.

### **Violence against Christians in India in 2025**

The WEA submitted a written statement for HRC58 documenting 745 incidents of violence against Christians in 2024. This pattern of violence has continued against Christian minorities in 2025. The WEA urges the Human Rights Council to make recommendations to India to take stronger measures to protect religious minorities in accordance with India's support of numerous recommendations during its UPR review in 2023. (1) The WEA also encourages India to take appropriate action to implement these recommendations.

### **Documented Pattern of Violations**

The Religious Liberty Commission of the Evangelical Fellowship of India has documented 334 incidents of systematic targeting against Christian communities across India between January and July 2025. These verified cases represent a sustained pattern of violations affecting Christians in 22 states and union territories, with incidents occurring consistently every month.

Uttar Pradesh recorded 95 incidents while Chhattisgarh documented 86 incidents, together accounting for 54% of all violations. These states have emerged as areas where Christian families face immediate violence and prolonged legal challenges under anti-conversion laws. The systematic nature across multiple states indicates widespread challenges to religious freedom requiring urgent attention.

The incidents reveal a coordinated pattern of targeting that employs both legal mechanisms and social pressure to suppress Christian religious expression. Threats and harassment account for 107 incidents, while false accusations and arrests represent 116 cases, together comprising two-thirds of all documented violations. This data demonstrates that intimidation and misuse of legal processes are primary methods being employed against Christian communities.

Physical violence affected 42 incidents, while worship services were disrupted in 29 cases, often occurring strategically during Sunday gatherings to maximize psychological impact on entire congregations. Also disturbing are the 13 cases involving denial of burial rights, with 92% occurring in Chhattisgarh alone, where Christian families are prevented from honouring their deceased according to their faith, even on private property.

The timing patterns reveal deliberate targeting, with many incidents strategically occurring during Sunday worship services, indicating systematic monitoring and disruption of Christian religious gatherings. This represents a fundamental breach of constitutional guarantees protecting religious freedom and assembly. (3)

### **Escalating Violations and Institutional Concerns**

Multiple serious incidents in July 2025 demonstrate escalating violations. Six pastors in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, were severely beaten with wooden batons inside Durg jail after identifying themselves as pastors. They had been taken to the police station along with other Christians, after members reportedly belonging to the Bajrang Dal had laid siege on their church building and had disrupted the worship service on 20 July 2025. Despite documented complaint and photo evidence of custodial violence, charges against the pastors remain active while no action has been taken against those responsible or those who laid siege to the church.

On July 25, 2025, two Catholic nuns from Kerala, Sister Preeti Mary and Sister Vandana Francis, were arrested at Durg Railway Station while accompanying three young tribal women to employment opportunities in Agra. Despite written parental consent and proper documentation, they were charged under trafficking and anti-conversion laws following complaints by members of a Hindutva group. (5) Video footage shows the nuns being threatened by Jyoti Sharma of Durga Vahini Matrushakti inside the police station while officers stood by. (6) One woman later reported being coerced into false testimony, alleging threats against her family if she refused to comply. (7) While the nuns have been released on bail, the WEA joins many in India who are deeply concerned that nuns are subjected to such treatment in India.

## **Misuse of Anti-Conversion Laws**

Anti-conversion laws, ostensibly designed to prevent coercive conversions, are being systematically exploited to criminalize legitimate religious activities and social service work. The vague language enables arbitrary application, with Christians facing potential imprisonment of up to 10 years for constitutionally protected activities. The pattern reveals legal frameworks that were intended to protect religious freedom are being used to restrict it.

## **Impact on Religious Freedom and Community Life**

These violations create serious consequences extending beyond immediate victims to entire communities and the constitutional promise of religious freedom. Christian families face physical violence, legal challenges, and social isolation through denial of burial rights and community exclusion, often forcing displacement from ancestral villages. The systematic suppression has created a climate of fear forcing self-censorship among Christian communities, undermining the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom.

## **Need for Immediate Intervention**

The documented evidence indicates urgent need for intervention to restore constitutional protections. Law enforcement agencies must fulfill their constitutional duty to protect all citizens regardless of faith. The systematic misuse of anti-conversion laws requires immediate review to ensure alignment with constitutional principles. Authorities must ensure extremist groups cannot disrupt religious gatherings and intimidate communities with impunity.

The denial of burial rights represents such a fundamental violation of human dignity that it requires immediate intervention. The 13 documented cases likely represent only a fraction of actual violations, as many go unreported due to fear of reprisals. The systematic nature indicates organized efforts to suppress religious freedom that require urgent attention to restore constitutional protections for all religious minorities.

## **Recommendations to the Government of India**

In this context, the World Evangelical Alliance makes the following recommendations to the Government of India:

- Comply with India's human rights commitments under the international law and take action on recommendations and concerns expressed in the 2009 Report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief following her mission to India in 2008 (8); namely, guarantee the peaceful exercise of constitutionally protected rights – including the right to assembly and the right to profess and practice the religion of one's choosing – which is threatened by state anti-conversion laws and would be threatened by a national anti-conversion law.

- Implement the commitments it supported in its recent UPR (9) to protect and ensure the rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities (151.326) and to further strengthen laws to protect religious minorities (151.325).
- Implement the commitment it supported in its recent UPR (10) to hold accountable public officials who advocate religious hatred (151.89).
- Ensure that constitutional guarantees protecting burial rights and religious practices are enforced uniformly, with immediate intervention to prevent the harassment of Christian families seeking to honor their deceased according to their faith.
- Advise the state governments, especially Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Odisha, to repeal the Freedom of Religion laws that are being systematically misused to harass religious minorities and restrict legitimate worship activities.
- Prosecute police officials who fail in their constitutionally mandated duty to enforce the law of the land, by being complicit in attacks against religious minorities, and by shielding the attackers or otherwise thwarting due process of law.
- Take swift action under existing criminal law provisions against organizations and groups involved in orchestrating hate campaigns and violence against Christians, including prosecution for hate speech and incitement to violence.

### Recommendations to the International Community

- The WEA asks the members of the Human Rights Council to take note of the deteriorating situation with the freedom of religion or belief in India, and to address with India the country's situation of freedom of religion or belief and protection of minorities.

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(1) UPR of India, 4th cycle, 41st session. A/HRC/DEC/52/108, Recommendations 151.64, 151.65, 151.89, 151.120, 151.122, 151.325, 151.326, 151.328, and 151.331.

(3) The Constitution of India, 26 January 1950, Art. 25 and Art. 19(a).

(5) Ejaz Kasar, "Chhattisgarh court grants bail to two Kerala nuns in human trafficking-religious conversion case," The New India Express, 2 August 2025. Available at: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Aug/02/chhattisgarh-court-grants-bail-to-two-kerala-nuns-in-human-trafficking-religious-conversion-case>.

(6) 'I'll smash your face': Video shows Bajrang Dal member abusing nuns in Chhattisgarh, The News Minute. Available at: <https://www.thenewsminute.com/kerala/ill-smash-your-face-video-shows-bajrang-dal-member-abusing-nuns-in-chhattisgarh>.

(7) Jayprakash S Naidu, "Twist in Kerala nuns' arrest: Chhattisgarh woman says statement was coerced, police didn't listen," The Indian Express, 31 July 2025. Available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/arrest-of-two-kerala-nuns-in-chhattisgarh-was-coerced-to-give-adverse-statement-says-woman-at-centre-of-conversion-row-10160094/>.

(8) Report by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, 26 January 2009, pp. 16-17. Available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/10/8/add.3>.

(9) UPR of India, 4th cycle, 41st session. A/HRC/DEC/52/108.

(10) UPR of India, 4th cycle, 41st session. A/HRC/DEC/52/108.