



"One Body, One Voice" John 17:23

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India
Room No. 152,
South Block,
New Delhi, 110001

28 AUG 2008

SEEKING INTERVENTION OF ARMY / CENTRAL FORCES TO PROTECT CHRISTIANS IN ORISSA

Honourable Prime Minister,

This is to express deep concern at the still continuing carnage against the Christian community, mostly Dalits and Tribals, in the Kandhamal district of Orissa and in several other districts including the state capital of Bhubaneswar since 23rd August 2003 following the killing of Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati and four of his associates, reportedly by Maoist groups.

Our local contacts and media reports have informed us that ten persons have already been killed in the ensuing violence. The Evangelical Fellowship of India, our member in India, in a press release released on August 26 stated that "there have been already over fifty eight instances of violence in which more than 400 Christian houses are gutted down by fire in Kandhamal including 150 houses in Rupagaon alone"

Media reports have also indicated that VHP leaders are making statements implicating Christians in the murder of the VHP leader, in spite of the police indicating that Maoist were involved. This is very irresponsible and is fuelling communal sentiments in Orissa

No violence can be justified, for whatever the reason. However, for the last several months, the Government of Orissa has allowed some fascist and fundamentalist forces to terrorize the poor, the



"One Body, One Voice" John 17:23

marginalized and the minorities of the State. These forces have carried on their virulent propaganda and their violent acts with apparent immunity.

The Christians of Kandhamal are still nursing their wounds from the Christmas 2007 violence, with hundreds of them still living in a refugee camp in Barakhama. Most of the more than one hundred churches then destroyed remain in ruins, and the burnt houses are still to be fully rebuilt. And yet local Sangh leaders have targeted the community in a second wave of macabre violence.

This is to request you to use your powers as Prime Minister of India, and the tremendous force of your good office, to impress on the Central Government to rush adequate Union forces, including contingents of the Armed Forces if required, to restore law and order and governance in the state of Orissa particularly in the Kandhamal region.

The consequences of any further delay, may be catastrophic for the Christian community in the State in particular, for peace in Orissa in general, and for the reputation of India as a secular country.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe
International Director/CEO
World Evangelical Alliance