

Deadly Persecution Arises in Orissa

INDIA (INS)—Intense violence and persecution has broken out in Orissa, India, ever since a leading Hindu militant was killed by assailants in late August. In reaction to his death, militants have launched assaults against Christians across Orissa, even though no Christians have been implicated in the killing. More than 40 churches have been destroyed, at least 12 Christians have been killed, and some young girls were raped. Many Christians have abandoned their homes to escape to safe locations.

Orissa Follow-Up is a Christian ministry based in this region that is helping out Christians facing persecution. OFU is assisted by **Intercede International**.

In Orissa's Kandhamal district, "the reconversion drive in the villages by the villagers still continues," reports D. B. Hrudaya, leader of OFU. "The Lord is cleansing the church and He will continue to purify. Many senior believers are tempted to deny faith and express their desires to be assimilated into Hinduism. This kind of forceful reconversion is one of the agendas of [extremist Hindus]. Though one might question the validity of Christian faith whether consciously or in order to save the life, many people may become prey to this drive. Believers

have not been adequately educated to become martyrs for Christ. The situation is tense across the state of Orissa while some elements are trying to keep the violence alive.

"My own relatives and my fellow Christian brothers and sisters are in the forest or in the relief camp. In their hometown they are strangers. In their homeland they have no right to choose what is best for them."

Hrudaya gave an explanation of how Hindu militant Swami Saraswati, who died in August, had helped to stir up violence in Orissa recently. "During his 45 years in Kandhamal (1964-2008) he was able to create several incidents and tension all over Kandhamal and beyond. Time and again he blamed the Christian community for conversion. The fact is that Kandhamal district has over 3,000 churches. In Kandhamal district the churches are found in walking distance and cycling distance. For this reason Swami took the oath to reconvert people back to Hinduism. On December 25 last year he created tension in Kandhamal for which about 800 homes were destroyed and over 70 churches were damaged or broken down."

"The situation in Kandhamal district is yet to be brought under control," reported Hrudaya recently. "The deployment of police and paramilitary force is inadequate. In the remote villages, violence remains grave and unchecked. Thousands of people with their helpless and innocent children are fleeing to the jungles as safer. *Some Christians have been forced to flee their homes, in fear for their lives.*



Many Christians have been severely injured in Orissa, India.

places. Thousands of homes have been destroyed and domestic goods have been looted by the Hindu [militants].

"All sorts of imaginable threats and abuses are being inflicted to denounce Christianity or else face the dire consequences."

Now the suffering Christians who have lost everything are desperately in need of food, water and other basic needs, explains Hrudaya. "The damage in Kandhamal district is so huge that the government can never be able to completely restore in the lives of 'atrocized' Christians in the state of Orissa. The economy is broken, the spirit is broken and brotherhood is broken, but Jesus' love remains forever and ever."

OFU requests Christians to:

- Pray that God would intervene in the situation, protecting His people from possible dangers and death.
- Pray for God's wisdom for OFU as it plans and implements relief efforts for persecuted Christians in Orissa.
- Pray that militants who have caused this violence will be brought to justice.
- Pray that peace will be restored in the entire state and for the demonstration of God's love through His people.

