



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 17, 2020

## Violence Against India's Christians Reaches Record Levels

Christians in India suffered “a record number of violent attacks” last year, with much of the blame being placed on the Hindu-nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reported the [Sunday Telegraph](#).

Before Modi came to power in 2013, India didn't even make Open Doors International's top 30 nations for Christian persecution. Since then, violent attacks on Christians have increased 220 percent, according to the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF). Today, India is the 10th most dangerous country for Christians and is considered less safe than Syria, Iraq, and the Central African Republic.



ADF says 2019 saw “a record 328 violent attacks against Christians,” but “only 36 resulted in police filing a case,” and none “has yet resulted in prosecution,” wrote the *Telegraph*. In addition, “more than 300 Christians were detained without trial for their faith and countless businesses, homes and schools were looted, burnt down and vandalized,” and “churches have been torched.” Worse still, “the police will commonly arrest the victim and charge them with trying to convert Hindus — a charge which can be punishable by seven years['] imprisonment.”

“Meting out much of the violence is an all-male paramilitary youth wing linked to Mr. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP),” says the *Telegraph*. “Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have been accused of fueling religious conflict with mob attacks using heavy iron-bound bamboo sticks known as lathi.”

Christians make up 2.3 percent of India's population and can trace their religious roots back to A.D. 52, when the apostle Thomas, who no longer doubted, began preaching the gospel there. “Yet, activists say the survival of Christianity in India has never been under such a threat,” the newspaper observed.

“The increase in violence can mostly be explained by the cycle of incitement and impunity often perpetrated by members of the BJP and other Hindu nationalist organizations operating in India,” William Stark, International Christian Concern's regional manager for South Asia, told the *Telegraph*.

“Essentially, to be Indian is to be Hindu. Those who are not Hindu are thus viewed as foreigners and with suspicion.”

The cycle described by Stark can be vividly seen in the story of Jai Singh, pastor of a church in the village of Bitchpuri. On Christmas Day, police prevented an RSS-led mob from carrying out a violent assault on Singh's church, but they did not prosecute any of the would-be assailants. Eleven days later, the mob returned; this time, they beat Singh and his 15-year-old son and dragged the pastor to the village square.

“They hit me with their fists and then took me into the temple and beat me with sticks, before stretching my legs back as far as they would go,” Singh told the *Telegraph*, which added that “he



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suffered two broken feet, as well as permanent nerve damage in his legs.”

According to the paper:

The police broke up the beating after an hour but then arrested Pastor Singh, accusing him of breaking the law by distributing church funding to Christians in Bitchpuri.

He was held in jail, without access to his epilepsy medication for three days, before local Christians raised his [\$112] bail.

Pastor Singh said he was surprised to be released as the mob had threatened the police and law courts not to accept bail for Christian leaders. He was unsurprised to hear that no arrests were made.

“The local political leaders are telling the police to turn a blind-eye to attacks on Christians and not prosecute the perpetrators,” he explains.

“They don’t give you any trouble if you are a Hindu.”

Physical attacks aren’t the only type of persecution Christ-followers are facing. Christians have reported being excluded from Hindu-owned shops, forced out of their communities or hit with illegal taxes to remain, denied access to village wells, deprived of their crops, and refused burial plots for their relatives.

Despite his release, Singh is hardly safe. His “attackers have now filed a criminal case against him for attempted conversion,” reported the *Telegraph*, “but he remains resolute.”

“We are living in constant fear and after hearing about the attack, many local believers renounced their faith,” he said.

“But for me it just made my faith stronger and I pray to God to forgive the people who attacked me.”

*Photo: AP Images*



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