

National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development
Catholic Bishops' Conference of India
CBCI Centre, 1, Ashok Place, New Delhi – 110001
Email: jpdcommission@gmail.com, Tel: 011-23366127, Fax: 23364615

January 5, 2008

Protection of the Rights of the Christian Minorities in Orissa

To
All the Bishops
All the Religious Superiors
All the Priests, Brothers and sisters

Your Eminence/ Grace/ Excellency, Dear Fathers / Brothers and Sisters,
Greetings of Peace to you in New Year, from CBCI Commission for Justice, Peace and Development!

Starting from the eve of Christmas and till 27 December 2007, a reign of terror was unleashed on the Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa. In the violence that engulfed them, some of them were killed and thousands of them have been terrorized into fleeing their homes and into taking shelter in the woods. Churches were vandalized. Christian institutions were attacked. The shops and houses of Christians were looted and torched. The timing of the attack makes the purpose of the perpetrators obvious: to hinder, obstruct and prevent the Christmas celebrations and above all to terrorize them into abandoning their religion. Their *modus operandi*, which seems to be a premeditated one, is nothing different from that of the religious extremists. Therefore, the CBCI Commission for Justice and Peace requests you to join in the following response.

Actions Requested

1. Organize inter religious Peace Marches-at the parish-level and at the diocese-level - protesting the attack on Christians
2. Please organize signature campaign in parishes or send letters - expressing your concern and request the authorities to
 - Protect the rights and the lives and the properties of Christians in Orissa
 - Provide immediate relief and adequate compensation to the victims
 - Ensure peace and harmony in the State and to freely practise one's faith

Let us remember the words of Martin Luther King Jr who said: *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere*. Let us *act now!*

Yours for Justice and Peace,

Bishop Yvon Ambroise
Chairperson, CBCI Commission for Justice, Peace and Development

P.S. Kindly send a circular letter from your office to all the parishes / institutions to send as many signatures as possible and post them to the concerned offices directly. Send us a report of the same to Fr. Nithiya, CBCI Centre, 1, Ashok Place, New Delhi-110001 or by email to <jpdcommission@gmail.com>

Model letter to be sent to the Prime Minister, Chief Minister, and Governor of Orissa

(Please collect signatures of as many people as possible during/after the Peace March, through the institutions and send to the PM's Office)

Protection of the Rights of the Christian Minorities in Orissa

To

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister's Office, South Block
Raisina Hill, New Delhi 110 011, India
Fax: (+) 91-11-2301 9545 / 2301 6857
Email: manmohan@alpha.nic.in / pmosb@pmo.nic.in

Honourable Prime Minister,

We write with deep concern over the communal violence that engulfed the district of Kandhamal in Orissa since the eve of Christmas. The violence has led to the death of persons; injury to many and thousand of people rendered homeless and penniless. Many houses have been torched and looted. Hundreds of them have fled to the woods. The victims of this violence have been Christians. The timing of the attack and the way it has been carried out reveal that there is a dangerous attempt by some forces to eliminate Christians and to annihilate Christianity.

The State has failed in its duty to protect the rights of Christians to protection of life and personal liberty and to freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion – the very rights enshrined in the Constitution of our country (Articles 21 & 25) and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR Articles 18 & 27) to which the Government of India is a party.

In this context, we appeal to you, Sir, to initiate suitable measures so as to

- Protect the rights and the lives and the properties of Christians in Orissa
- Provide immediate relief and adequate compensation to the victims as per ICCPR Article 2.3.1
- Ensure peace and harmony in the State so that people may live without fear and freely practise their faith.

Thanking you,
Yours truly,

(Signatures)

Copies sent to:

Shri. Shivraj Patil Home Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs North Block, Raisina Hill New Delhi 110 011 Fax: (+) 91-11- 2309 2979 Email: sypatil@sansad.nic.in	Shri. Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa Chief Minister's Office Bhubaneswar-751001 Orissa Fax: 0674-2400100 Email: cmo@ori.nic.in	Shri Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, Governor of Orissa Raj Bhawan, Bhubaneswar, Orissa Fax: 0674-2536582
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