

Protests Erupt After Lawmaker Offers Cash Rewards for Attacking Christian Leaders

India's Catholic bishops have issued a sharp rebuke of Maharashtra state authorities for their inaction after a ruling party legislator publicly offered cash rewards for assaults on Christian leaders.

In a statement released Monday, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) decried the failure to prosecute BJP MLA Gopichand Padalkar following his June 17 speech in Sangli District, in which he pledged up to ₹500,000 (approximately \$5,756 USD) for those "bashing up missionaries" and ₹1.1 million (about \$12,663 USD) for attacks on Christian leaders.

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The CBCI expressed "deep anguish and alarm over the growing climate of hostility and violence directed against minority communities in the country," calling Padalkar's remarks "a clear instance of incitement to religiously motivated violence, amounting to a grave offense under Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023."

As reported by The Christian Post, the bishops added that Padalkar's tiered reward system "warrants immediate and decisive legal intervention, particularly when the incitement is explicit, direct and poses an imminent threat to public order."



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Open Doors has ranked India 11th on its 2025 World Watch List of countries where Christians face the most severe persecution.

Despite widespread protests, including a six-hour demonstration on July 11 in Mumbai's Azad Maidan attended by thousands of Christians and prominent political figures, the CBCI lamented that "law enforcement authorities have reportedly failed to register even a First Information Report (FIR). This inaction stands in stark contrast to the swift legal response often seen against students, activists and opposition leaders for far less serious expressions, such as social media posts or peaceful dissent."

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Church leaders from across India have condemned Padalkar's rhetoric. The Rev. Vijayesh Lal of the Evangelical Fellowship of India warned, "No elected representative should ever incentivize attacks on any citizen based on their faith," while Raphael D'Souza, former president of the Bombay Catholic Sabha, noted the "lack of response" even as the state assembly sat in session. BJP representatives have distanced the party from Padalkar's statements, labeling them his "personal views" and "highly irresponsible."

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Let us join in prayer for all Christians enduring persecution around the world, asking God to grant them hope and strength amidst their trials, and to move the hearts of those in power toward justice and compassion.

James Lasher is staff writer for Charisma Media.

NFL Player Reveals Angelic Encounter That Changed His Life

Sometimes life's most pivotal turns come in the midst of routine. You know the scene: an open practice field, the steady thud of a football meeting cleats and an athlete locked in on perfecting one more kick. Nothing about that afternoon hinted at a life-altering encounter, until every goalpost faded away, and something deeper broke through.

It was on Sports Spectrum with hosts Matt Forte and Jason Romano that Atlanta Falcons punter Bradley Pinion unfolded the rest of the story. He spoke candidly about how a random visit to his high school field became the backdrop for his spiritual awakening, tracing it all back to a journey that began long before that afternoon.

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Pinion grew up "going because my family was going, but it wasn't because of my choice," he said of his church-filled childhood. When his parents divorced, he found refuge in football, confessing, "At that point in my life, my god was football. It was my escape."

As recruitment offers rolled in, he reached a crossroads not just about where to play college ball, but whether to test this "God guy" he'd only heard about in Sunday school. "I remember thinking in my head, let me test this God guy and see what He's about," he recalled, even praying aloud during a solo drive in his '94 Sonoma.



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That test led him to the practice field instead of the weight room, just another decision, until a stranger in a Clemson-orange shirt approached and asked, "Are you the kicker at Northwest Parish High School?" What felt like a two-hour conversation instead lasted minutes, yet it cut to the core. The man shared Proverbs 23:7, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," then slipped away.

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Pinion tried to resume kicking but "shanked everything left and right," finally retreating to his truck in tears. "I cried the whole way home," he said, and it was in that moment of brokenness that he believed "God sent an angel to me because I said that prayer."

His heart may have flipped in an instant, but his life aligned more gradually. "I felt my heart transforming before my actions did," Pinion admits, noting it took until college's junior year to fully unite belief and behavior. Since then, he's leaned into vulnerability, leading mission trips with Compassion International, opening his locker room to honest conversations, and living out the very freedom he found that day on the field.

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We may never predict where or when God will send someone our way to redirect our steps. But when He does, through a stranger's timely word, an inner nudge in a lonely moment or an unplanned meeting on an otherwise ordinary day, the impact can echo through every choice that follows.

James Lasher *is staff writer for Charisma Media.*

Beloved Nickelodeon Icon Honors Daughter's Faith at Birthday Baptism

Kel Mitchell, best known for lighting up Nickelodeon as a breakout star on *All That*, *Kenan & Kel* and in the *Good Burger* movies, recently celebrated a truly memorable milestone with his youngest daughter, Wisdom "Wizzy," on her eighth birthday.

As a youth pastor at his church, Mitchell had the privilege of assisting in her baptism, marking not only her birthday but the day she publicly chose to follow Jesus.

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Mitchell's wife, Asia Lee-Mitchell, shared her pride on Instagram: "Baptized in Christ. Wizzy did something I am beyond proud of. She gave her life to Christ and asked to be baptized for her Birthday! I am so blessed to be her mommy." She went on to thank their church home for making Wizzy feel free "to learn, love and express her faith in Jesus" and prayed that "she never forgets this day."