

# Anti-Christian Death Threats Force Closure of Children's Center

A local Gospel for Asia-supported children's education and health care center in a cluster of villages in eastern India has been forced to close because anti-Christian extremists marched on the facility, demanded its closure and issued death threats to the staff.

The ultimatums of violence and death took place Saturday as protesters shouted anti-Christian slogans to prohibit the programs offered by the Bridge of Hope Center to 100 impoverished low-caste and Dalit children.

"It breaks our hearts to see adults who should be the protectors of these children become the roadblocks to their future and hope of a better life," says K.P. Yohannan, founder and international director of Gospel for Asia.

The local children's center opened Aug. 31 in a rented building. In addition to free daily education, its most recent special event on Saturday was a free medical camp for the children.

Following the medical camp and other activities, a group of angry protesters grew to 300, some of whom were carrying weapons. They demanded the landlord stop renting the property and shouted threats at the staff.

An hour of trying to reason with the angry mob that the programs offered to the children were improving their education and health proved fruitless.

"We will not allow any Christian activity in our village, even if it is social work," the protestors shouted at the staff,

and, "We will not allow any work of Christians in this area. If you do not obey, we will take your lives." On Sunday, the Bridge of Hope center was forced to close.

The center's closure means a loss of free education, food and medical care to more than 100 local children, mostly Dalits who cannot receive education elsewhere and will otherwise remain illiterate. The minority high caste often opposes education to low castes and Dalits.

Of India's 1.2 billion people, one-fourth are "untouchables." The Dalits, who are considered subhuman, less valuable than farm animals and therefore not even part of the lowest of the caste system, are segregated, treated as slaves and mercilessly abused. In many places, they are denied access to safe water, education and choice of faith and occupation. More than 20 million boys and girls are trapped in social evils like child labor and prostitution in order to support their families.

Gospel for Asia supports Bridge of Hope centers across South Asia specifically to minister to the needs of Dalit and low-caste children. In addition to education and health care, the children receive a hot meal daily and instruction on basic life-saving hygiene. More than 60,000 children have been served.

Gospel for Asia is calling for prayer for the children in this local area and for the staff who have been driven away.

"We will do all we can to ensure that these children will continue to have the future they deserve," Yohannan says.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Bridge of Hope centers and how to pray.