

Anti-Christian Extremists Use Religious Festivals to Harass Christians

In one South Asian state, Christians in two different villages have been harassed and intimidated by anti-Christian extremists who are using their religious festivals as opportunities to humiliate the believers.

Problems started for Pastor Jakson Kinar when people in his village erected a statue of a local goddess directly in front of the place where his little congregation meets.

"The followers of the goddess would start worshiping and singing loudly in front of the idol to disturb our services," the Gospel for Asia-supported missionary explained.

Then, when an annual religious festival was underway, the villagers put up a stage with loudspeakers and increased their harassment of the Christians.

"It is difficult to stand up to them," the pastor indicated, "because prominent people in this village are supporting them.

"That's why I am asking everyone to pray for these people, that God will speak to their hearts and transform them."

Similar Problems

Pastor Jakson's call for prayer was echoed by fellow worker, Bagirathi Singh, who is pastor of a church in another part of the state. His congregation of 34 believers is experiencing similar difficulties.

"Since our church started to grow rapidly, some of the political leaders from this village started threatening the believers, warning them not to attend services," he said.

“These same people are also withholding government services our believers are supposed to receive.”

During local religious festivals, the persecution comes in another, more insidious way—by demanding they continue contributing money to pay for the religious festival, even after they choose to follow Jesus. Some of the believers have paid the money out of fear.

“This is very troubling to our believers and to the church,” Pastor Singh said.

Time for Prayer

“Imagine what it would be like to be forced to give money to a group that was opposing everything you tried to do,” said GFA President K.P. Yohannan.

“And then try to imagine how you would feel if every time you went to church, the opponents—with local political backing—were waiting outside your church with loudspeakers, chanting and singing against you. “This is truly a time we need to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our brothers and sisters, holding them up in prayer before God’s throne of grace.

“Please pray with me for our faithful workers and believers in this area, and for those who oppose them, that they will be transformed by the power of God’s love.”