

Hindu Extremists Refuse to Let Christians Buy and Sell in India

Three months of intimidation and assaults in two villages in eastern India has left four Christians hospitalised and others injured, two houses damaged, and the entire Christian community unable to do business or draw water from the town well, church leaders say.

The boycott of the Christians of Dangarguda village, led by some Hindu nationalist residents, began in April, said Rev. K. Raju of the Malkangiri Life Development Society.

“The Christians were prohibited from buying and selling and from fetching drinking water from the public well because of their faith in Christ,” Raju told World Watch Monitor.

Christians in the village started drinking from the river, according to the Evangelical Fellowship of India. Heavy rains, however, muddied the river, making it unfit to drink.

In many parts of huge and diverse India, Christians and Hindus live together peacefully. In some regions, however, nationalist Hindus enjoy popular and bureaucratic support in their campaign to make India a purely Hindu society.

In Odisha state, where the village of Dangarguda is located, India's foremost nationalist political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, shares power with the more secular Biju Janata Dal party.

Antagonism in the village boiled over into violence on June 8 when a woman, Mongli Madhi, was attacked as she tried to fetch drinking water from the public well.

‘The extremists did not allow Mongli to take water from the

public well, beat her up and broke her water buckets and pots," Raju said.

They returned the following day, going to Mongli's house and beating and even biting her, said Bethel Church Rev. Bijay Purusu. He said she sustained injuries on her back, right hand and neck.

Bethel Church Pastor Rev. Bijay Purusu, standing, and Mudha Madhi, in the Malkangiri District Headquarters Church Pastor Rev. Bijay Purusu, standing, and Mudha Madhi, in the Malkangiri District Headquarters Hospital.

The next day, June 10, area Christian leaders reported the matter to the village head, who took no action. Later the same day, a group shouting anti-Christian slogans attacked village Christians with swords, axes, chains and other weapons.

The victims were beaten nearly unconscious, and the attackers poured water on them to revive them when they were about to pass out. One victim, Mudha Madhi, was unconscious for about three hours.

The mob damaged two houses belonging to Christian families.

Four Christians—Iрма Madhi, Mangli Madhi, Mudha Madhi and Sambru Khurami—suffered cuts and bruises and were bleeding profusely when they were rushed to the hospital. Three of the victims have been released, but Irma Madhi remains hospitalised.

The remaining Christians fled the village, taking shelter in Christian homes in a neighbouring village.

"This is the month of an agricultural time and we do not know how long they can stay in the homes of other people as they are all struggling for their livelihood," Purusu said. Most have since returned to their own homes.

The latest assault came on June 22 in nearby Goudaguda

village, when a group beat up a Christian couple, Bina Madhi and his wife, Ermi Madhi, and church member Jagarnath Maekani as they unsuccessfully tried to drive the Christians off their farmland.

“The extremists, led by Laxmi Markani, swelled up and told the Christians to leave the village, claiming that there is no place for them and there is no need for Christians to have cultivation land,” Purusu said.

The attackers used bamboo sticks, but the victims were not seriously hurt. They filed a complaint at Malkangiri Police Station. No arrests have yet been reported.

Police have registered a First Information Report against the attackers.