

Jury Convicts Four in Rape and Murder of Christian Woman in India

Four men were today convicted of the fatal gang rape of a medical student in Delhi—a story that has grabbed the world's attention. Meanwhile, a little further south, the case of a Christian woman who suffered the same fate has gone relatively unnoticed.

The 30-year-old was raped and killed on August 29 in Bakoudi village in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

The woman, whose name has not been released to protect her family's security and privacy, was found the next morning by her mother-in-law.

Witnesses told World Watch Monitor she had suffered multiple stab wounds to her torso and had been strangled with her own sari.

Two suspects, both Hindus, have been arrested. Mahesh Dohre, 23, who worked with the victim's husband, and Durgesh Potfode, 25, are residents of Bakoudi. They have both been released. It is unclear whether they will face further official charges.

The local Christian community has been shocked by the event and expressed concerns about its vulnerability to local authorities.

It is uncertain whether the attack took place because of the woman's faith, but Christian women often report threats in the area.

Christians comprise a tiny fraction of the population of Madhya Pradesh (the 2001 census put the figure at around 170,000 people, or 0.3 percent) and only 2.3 percent of the

total population of India (2011 census).

In the vast and diverse country, Christians often live freely. However, India ranks among the 50 countries where life as a Christian is most difficult, according to Open Doors International, a global ministry that serves Christians who are pressured because of their faith.

The country is No. 31 on Open Doors' 2013 World Watch List, largely because of a streak of Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva, that envisions India as a purely Hindu state.