

Muslim Extremists Threaten to Burn Christian Women

Four months after a recent convert to Christianity from Islam in eastern India's West Bengal state was stripped and beaten, about 50 Muslim extremists yesterday disrupted a prayer meeting held in her home, threatening to burn it down if she did not return to Islam, area Christians said.

The extremists warned Selina Bibi of Motijil village in Murshidabad district that if she did not return to Islam, then she must either leave the area or see her house burned down. At her baptism at Believers Church four kilometers from her home on March 29, a large crowd of Muslim extremists disrupted the service, said a pastor identified only as Bashir.

"I pleaded with them to let me at least finish the worship service before they attack us," he told Compass.

When word of her conversion to Christianity reached her village, another extremist group from Motijil led by Jamal Shaike disrupted the service. Shaike and the others verbally abused the Christians, and he ordered his son who was present at the service to leave immediately, Bashir said.

The pastor said that on April 5, two Muslim women along with members of the extremist group summoned Selina Bibi to one of their homes and forcefully stripped her naked.

"The radicals believe that when any person from the Muslim community becomes Christian, they get Christian marks on their body," Bashir said. "When the radicals could not find such marks, they started beating her up."

The Muslim extremists later gathered at the local mosque and resolved to ostracize her until she returned to Islam. She lives only with her two teenage sons.

Selina Bibi told Bashir that her body bore the marks of suffering for the sake of Christ, and that she was being treated like a criminal.

“She was not allowed to buy goods from the store, nor was she allowed to sell any vegetables,” he said. “They have also restricted her from procuring water from the village well. In spite of the persecutions she constantly faces from the radicals, she has started conducting a Bible study for ladies every Thursday at her home.”

After the extremist threats yesterday, study member Naseema Bibi said she and some of the other women attending the meeting went to the Murshidabad police station to file a complaint. Police called both parties, and they agreed in writing to allow each other to practice their respective faiths, and that police would prosecute any further attacks or disturbances, she said.

Burn Threat

In Natungram, Murshidabad district, Muslim extremists held three Christian women for an hour on July 21, threatening to beat and burn them alive if they continued worshipping Christ, area Christians said.

Moyazan Bibi and Aimazan Bibi of Believers Church told Compass that at 5:30 p.m. they had set out to visit a widow, Suryja Bibi, to share the message of Christ at her invitation. As they reached her house, a large mob of Muslim extremists led by Fakir Shaike, Sajahan Shaike, Manuwar Shaike, Samsul Shaike, Ahamed Shaike and Jalal Shaike blocked their way, pushed them around and verbally abused them for their faith in Christ as they threatened them.

“The extremists called us infidels and held us captive, threatening that they will call a public meeting to socially boycott us,” Aimazan Bibi said. “The extremists angrily shouted that we should not return to our homes, while they

continued to mock and push us around.”

The extremists rushed Suryja Bibi, asking her why she invited “infidels” into her home as they were pushing her. One of the assailants twisted her hand, the Christian women said.

“She was injured, but by God’s grace it was not broken,” said Bashir, founder and pastor of the Believers Church. “They warned Suryja Bibi never to call the Christians to her home again or leave the area and they also threatened all the villagers with the dire consequences they will face if they attend Christian meetings or talk to any one of them.”

Suryja Bibi tried to file a police complaint the next day, July 22, but the local Muslim head and other extremists stopped her, threatening to harm her, area Christians said.

Bashir said Suryja Bibi showed interest in hearing more about Christ, and that he met her and her daughters Mamoota and Darju at his house church fellowship on July 19.

“Since then, the radicals have warned them not to attend any Christian service or talk to any Christians or else they will be burned alive,” he said.

Naseema Bibi informed Bashir of the incident by phone, and he called police, he said.

“I also tried to call Aimazan,” he said. “At that time she could not take my call, as some radicals were trying to snatch her mobile phone from her.”

Moyazan Bibi said she pleaded with the assailants.

“I asked the attackers what crime have we done for them to torture us in this manner?” she said. “But the enraged extremists brutally pushed us around, furiously shouting at us to convert back to Islam or face dire consequences.”

After holding and harassing the Christian women for about an

hour, the extremists fled in fear after they learned that Bashir had contacted the police, the women said.

The area was still tense at press time, with Suryja Bibi and her family unable to attend any Christian meetings as the extremists are closely monitoring them and are prepared to pounce on them at the slightest opportunity, Bashir said.

"We are trying to contact Suryja Bibi, but the radicals are not allowing any Christian to contact or meet her," he said. "But we are praying for her safety."

Aizama Bibi and Moyazan Bibi, who two years ago began trusting Christ as their Savior, told Compass that last December the extremists tried to chase them away from the village, threatening to burn them and their houses. They were not allowed to sell and buy in the area and were kept from using the public bathroom and the water well.

The extremists also burned the crops field of Aimazan's husband, Gaffar. The Christians reported the matter to police, and officers warned the Muslim extremists not to disturb the Christians again.

The Evangelical Fellowship of India last year reported that Muslim extremists in Natungram on Nov. 28, 2010, ostracized another member of Believers Church, keeping Chanda Bibi and her family from selling and buying. They also warned the family to stop attending church services and threatened to impose a fine on her if her family continued to follow Christ.