

Radical Hindus in India Beat 20 Christian Pastors

Twenty Christian pastors were beaten by suspected Hindu radicals in India's southeastern state of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday after radicals accused the pastors of forcefully converting Hindus to Christianity.

As a result of the attack, seven of the 20 pastors required hospitalization because of the severity of the injuries they sustained. Christians have staged peaceful protests to encourage local authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Twenty pastors from Telugu Baptist Church gathered at a church in Hyderabad, a major city located in Andhra Pradesh, for their monthly prayer meeting on Wednesday. According to witnesses, about 50 Hindu radicals broke into the church building and began "brutally attacking" the pastors with sticks and metal rods, causing severe injuries. Six of the pastors were dragged into the streets by the enraged mob, where they were beaten unconscious and verbally abused by their attackers. Seven of the pastors, identified by BosNewsLife as Timothy, Kumar, Krupaiah, Roberts, Rosaiah, Lazarus and Thinothy, were rushed to the hospital for serious injuries.

The mob of Hindu radicals is suspected to be connected with the Hindu nationalist group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). RSS had no immediate comment regarding the attack when the right-wing group was contacted by media sources.

This vicious attack comes weeks after another Hindu nationalist group, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), lost control of the government of Andhra Pradesh's neighboring state, Karnataka. Under BJP's rule, an atmosphere of impunity for

Christian persecutors allowed Karnataka to become one of the most dangerous places for Christians to live in India. Christians in Andhra Pradesh are concerned that the persecutors in Karnataka are now moving into their state.

“We are deeply concerned that anti-Christian attacks are taking place in [Andhra Pradesh]. After Karnataka, such violence against Christians has started in Andhra Pradesh,” John Dayal, secretary general of the All India Christian Counsel (AICC), told media sources after the attack.

Fearing the creation of an atmosphere of impunity similar to the one that exists in Karnataka, Christians in Andhra Pradesh are staging peaceful protests, demanding the government to take swift action to bring the perpetrators to justice. While condemning the attack itself, the AICC has called on the local government to take “stern action” against the culprits.

“Attacks on Christians in southern India, especially those on Christian leaders, have unfortunately been increasing over the past year,” says William Stark, International Christian Concern’s regional manager for Africa. “Members of Hindu nationalist groups like RSS and BJP use India’s anti-forced conversion laws as a pretext to curb the spread of Christianity by intimidating Christian leaders and terrorizing new converts.

“In areas where these groups hold power in the local government, Christians are allowed to be attacked with impunity. For years, local authorities acquiesced and sometimes actively encouraged this sort of behavior. Decisive action must be taken. Such heinous acts must not be allowed to spread to new areas in India.”

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