

Why Christians Are Rejoicing Over This 'Secular' Ruling

"By the grace of God," religious freedom is now the law of the land in a country that once shackled Christians.

Nepal approved a new constitution earlier this month, declaring the formerly Hindu nation to be a secular country, which ignited rejoicing for Christians anxious to evangelize.

"[The] gospel will be spreading fast because [the] new constitution declares that every human [can] believe in God as they like," says Pastor Dhan Lama of Good News Church in Nepal. Lama also conducts healing crusades.

The declaration thrills Lama, who is planning a crusade in the capital city of Kathmandu. The pastor expects 300,000 to participate over a three-night span. Throughout his crusades, Lama says has seen the crippled walk and cancer totally eradicated, among other miracles. Such healings could have been prosecuted under the old law.

Indeed, the new constitution decrees each person shall be free to profess, practice and preserve his or her religion according to his or her faith and distance himself or herself from any other religion.

"[We are] 100 percent ... free to preach [the] gospel any time and anywhere because of [the] new constitution mention," Lama says. "[The] Rule of Nepal decided not to make [or] change religion by force or temptation or attraction. However we can preach openly [with] freedom [and] security and [safety] by Nepal government."

Before the constitution passed, Christians fretted over the potential consequences of a new governing document.

Article 31(3) states that “any act to convert another person from one religion to another, or any act or behavior to undermine or jeopardize the religion of another [will be] punishable by law,” *Charisma News* previously reported. Christians fear this will pave the way for an “anti-conversion clause” to be written into the penal code, which could result in prison sentences or hefty fines for “offenders.”

Lama says the clause deals with forced conversions; anyone who converts out of his or her own free will will not be subject to punishment.

Christians aren't the only Nepali residents rejoicing in the new rule.

“The previous constitutions were made at the ruler's disposal and overshadowed by the interests of the monarchy and the army,” political analyst Sanjeev Pokharel tells CNN. “For the first time in history, Nepalis are sovereign in the true sense of the term.”

The same article quotes a tweet from the Nepali prime minister: “It is a matter of pride for all Nepalis that the constitutional assembly has approved the people's constitution.”

However, protesters and police have clashed in recent days over the law. Reuters reports 40 people were killed in the violence.

Neighboring India also expressed disappointment in the constitution's passing.

“We are concerned that the situation in several parts of the country bordering India continues to be violent,” read a statement from India's ambassador to Nepal. “We urge that issues on which there are differences should be resolved through dialogue in an atmosphere free from violence and

intimidation, and institutionalized in a manner that would enable broad-based ownership and acceptance.”

India is governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party, which has come under fire for not doing enough to halt Christian persecution.

However, Christians like Lama are thrilled at the power the government is now giving the gospel.

“God is doing great work and miracles in Nepal country,” Lama says, and that can lead to a global revival.