

Why Over 80% of Christians Are Afraid for Their Safety in India

According to a recent article in The Christian Post, over 1,400 incidents of persecution against Christians in India have been reported since 2014—the year Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party rose to power.

Save the Persecuted Christians, which advocates on behalf of 300 million Christians facing heavy persecution worldwide, has been alerting believers here in the U.S. about the growing violence against Christians in India. In fact, year by year, India has climbed higher on the World Watch List for Christian Persecution from Open Doors USA, jumping to No. 10 overall in 2019. The concerning ranking has come as a result of reports of violence against Christians in a heavily Hindu-influenced nation, where serving Jesus Christ is not only frowned upon, but dangerous.

“India is largely a Hindu country, but American Christians might be surprised to know that 65 million of our brothers and sisters in Christ live and worship there as well,” said Dede Laugesen, executive director of Save the Persecuted Christians. “As we see attacks over the past five years heighten, we must not only raise awareness and pray for these Christians in India but also work to hold the persecutors accountable for their human rights and religious liberties violations. It was particularly concerning that last month, Prime Minister Modi was celebrated here in the U.S. at a rally in Houston attended by hundreds of high-ranking U.S. leaders, with no mention of the atrocities being committed against Christians in his country.”

Acts of violence against Indian Christians are increasing year over year. The Christian Post also reported that 16 out of the 29 states in India “regularly witness attacks on Christians,” and every month of 2019 saw more incidents of persecution against Christians in India than the same month in 2018. For example, 219 attacks on Christians were reported through August 2019; in 2018, 156 attacks were recorded during the same time, and 100 churches were also closed last year.

A survey last year of 1,000 Indian Christians from across the country regarding the rise of religious intolerance. It found that over 80% of Christians were “concerned” for their safety as a Christian in India. A further 85% of Christians agreed that minorities are less protected under the current administration of Prime Minister Modi and the BJP.

The Christian Post article also quoted Sunita Viswanath, co-founder of Hindus for Human Rights, who condemned the rise of Hindu extremism in India. “No matter what the India prime minister may say on a stage in Houston shared with an American president before 50,000 Indian Americans and the whole world watching, everything in India is not fine,” she said.

India has risen from No. 31 in 2013 to No. 10 in 2019 on Open Doors’ annual World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian.

The mission of Save the Persecuted Christians is to save lives and save souls by disseminating actionable information about the magnitude of the persecution taking place globally and by mobilizing concerned Americans for the purpose of disincentivizing further attacks on those who follow Jesus.

According to Aid to the Church in Need’s biannual report on Religious Freedom in the World, over 300 million Christians experience persecution. According to Open Doors USA World Watch List, 245 million Christians are victims of high to extreme levels of persecution (such as torture, rape, sex-

slavery, expulsion, murder and genocide), an increase of 14% over 2018. Open Doors also estimates that 1 in 9 of the world's Christians experience persecution and that every month 345 Christians are killed, often in public and without regard to gender or age; 219 Christians are abducted and imprisoned indefinitely without trial; and 106 churches are demolished.

Save the Persecuted Christians has developed a dedicated news aggregator—to capture current instances of persecution and to provide readers with an easy way to share these heartbreaking stories with others. Stories are categorized and resource reports are easily accessible.

With so much of the world's Christian population, such as believers in India, being attacked, imprisoned and/or exiled for their beliefs, the need has never been greater for the sort of grassroots campaign STPC's SaveUs Movement is working to foster. Its efforts are modeled after a miraculously successful one that helped free another population suffering from heavy persecution—Soviet Jews—by penalizing those in the Kremlin responsible for such repression. Through this movement, Save the Persecuted Christians endeavors to provide American policymakers with the popular support they need to effect real change worldwide and alleviate systemically the suffering being experienced by so many of those following Christ. {eoa}