

False Accusations, Persecution Testing Educators Faith

In a heart-wrenching incident that exposes the challenges faced by Christians in India, police in central India recently arrested a Christian educator, Liju Kuriakose, and falsely accused him of human trafficking and fraudulent conversion.

The incident unfolded on July 26 in Manikpur, Chhattisgarh state, as Kuriakose was escorting a group of eight Christian students to a Bible institute. The baseless charges have cast a harsh spotlight on the ongoing persecution faced by believers in the country.

Kuriakose was apprehended by police after boarding a bus in Manikpur, en route to safely accompany the students to the railway station. It is being reported that the police officers coerced the students, including minors, to provide false statements suggesting that they were being trafficked. However, the students, valuing their faith and integrity, steadfastly refused to lie about Kuriakose, who had traveled from Kerala to ensure their secure journey to the Bible institute.

As one of the youths, Govardhan, recounted, "We all had vehemently refused and told the police that we have been Christians for a while and are not new converts. We cannot tell lies about the brother who came all the way from Kerala to help us." Despite their courage, their resistance led to their detention by the Child Welfare Committee.

Kuriakose's intent was to safeguard the students, ages 15 to 22, and hailing from tribal Christian families, on their journey from Manikpur to the Bible institute in Kochi, Kerala

state. The circumstances took a distressing turn when Kuriakose was seized by an unidentified individual, prompting the bus to be stopped at Manikpur police station.

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The subsequent hours turned into a harrowing ordeal for Kuriakose, who faced violent interrogation and physical abuse. His efforts to establish his innocence were met with hostility, as he was treated as if he were a criminal. Despite the challenges he endured, Kuriakose's steadfast faith and resilience continued to shine through.

In the midst of this trial, Kuriakose's experience resonates with the words of 1 Peter 4:12-13: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice insofar as you share in Christ's sufferings, so that you may rejoice and be glad also in the revelation of His glory."

Kuriakose's story is not an isolated incident but a reflection of the larger context of persecution faced by Christians in India.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and National Democratic Alliance government's hostile stance toward non-Hindus has emboldened extremists to target Christians across the country. This trajectory of increased hostility has been documented by Open Doors, which ranks India as the 11th most difficult place for Christians to practice their faith.

As the legal battle continues, Kuriakose's story serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by believers who stand firm in their faith amidst adversity. His unwavering commitment to the truth and his dedication to the well-being of the students he was accompanying exemplify the strength of

faith that transcends trials.

While persecution persists, Kuriakose's journey reminds Christians of the need to remain steadfast in their convictions, echoing the powerful message of Romans 8:37: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

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James Lasher is Staff Writer for Charisma Media.