

INDIA: Tamil Nadu, a Protestant pastor arrested, accused of burning Hindu gods

The half-destroyed images were found in the church enclosure of the Rev. John Britto, near Coimbatore. The complaint came from a neighbor who alerted the Hindu radicals. Sajan K George: "More and more often extremists are venting violence on pastors and faithful".

By Nirmala Carvalho

AsiaNews (08.11.2019) – <https://bit.ly/34Imsn3> – A Pentecostal pastor from Tamil Nadu was arrested on charges of insulting Hindu religious sentiments. A neighbor reported him after finding the burnt images of some Hindu gods in the fence at his church near Coimbatore. Sajan K George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), told AsiaNews: "We cannot have independent confirmations whether it was really the pastor who burned the images, or whether they were placed there by people with ulterior motives. If this were the case, it would be unacceptable and wrong to lack respect for the faith of others".

The reverend is called John Britto, he is 53 years old and is originally from Madurai. According to the newspaper The Hindu, on 2 November the neighbor would have found the burnt remains of Hindu gods and would have lulled other people. Later the complaint was lodged by an activist from "Hindu Munnani" [a Hindu local organization founded to protect Hindu

religion and monuments, ed.].

Sajan K George protests: "Some members of the Hindu extremist group Munnani are venting violence against shepherds in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. The fundamentalists guard the reverends and Christian churches. In the past, they raided prayer centers, abusing community members. They beat ministers of the cult, even harassed women with obscene words, turned the church upside down and finally grabbed the Bible, setting it on fire in the middle of the road".

He continues, "in March 2018 there was a great protest in the church of Our Lady of Perpetual Aid in Anjalnagaron to denounce religious fanaticism against the Christians of Madurai. 5 thousand people took part in the meeting. The forum approved a resolution to stop violence in the name of religion".

All religions, conclude the Christian activist, "teach their faithful to respect the religion of others. There must be respect for all religious beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, we are instead witnessing a growing intolerance towards the Christian faith".