

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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## **NEPAL: Pastor sentenced to one year in prison for missionary activities**

### **Pastor imprisoned for missionary activities**

HRWF (04.08.2022) – In July, Pastor Keshav Acharya was sentenced to one year in prison for attempting to convert Hindus in Nepal. Authorities originally arrested him for supposedly spreading COVID-19 misinformation. After they released him on bail, they arrested him two more times and accused him of attempting to coerce Hindus to convert to Christianity.

In November 2021, a court had sentenced him to two years in jail and a fine of 20,000 rupees (US\$166) for violating the Himalayan country's repressive anti-conversion law.

The sentence from the court in Dolpa district in Pokhara region of western Nepal on 30 November came about a week after it found Pastor Keshav Raj Acharya from Abundant Harvest Church guilty of proselytization.

The evangelical pastor was first arrested on 23 March 2021 by police in Kaski district after a YouTube video of him went viral on social media. In the video it was said that Covid-19 could be healed through Christian prayer.

Pastor Acharya denied uploading the video on the internet and he was released on bail about a month later.

However, he was immediately rearrested without a warrant, sent to prison and then charged under the anti-conversion law, accused of proselytizing and distributing Christian tracts in Dolpa district.

### ***Anti-missionary legislation***

Nepal is a former Hindu kingdom. The 2015 constitution declared the state a secular democracy.

Proselytization is a serious criminal offense, which began with adoption of the new constitution in 2015. Article 26 (3) of the constitution says: "No person shall behave, act or make others act to disturb public law and order situation or convert a person of one religion to another or disturb the religion of other people ... such an act shall be punished by law."

Nepal's government amended the Penal Code in 2018 and made conversion a criminal offense. Anyone found guilty of conversion and even encouraging conversion can be imprisoned for up to five years and fined up to 50,000 rupees (\$416).

About 81 percent of Nepal's 29 million people are Hindu, Buddhists account for 9 percent, Muslims 4.4 percent and Christians 1.4 percent, according to the 2011 census.

*Photo : Pastor Keshav Raj Acharya was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 20,000 rupees (US\$166) for violating Nepal's anti-conversion law. (Photo: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)*

**Further reading about FORB in Nepal on HRWF website**

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**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268