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Indian Christians beaten 'with rods and sticks'

World Watch Monitor (17.10.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2yxVgul> - A Christian man involved in church work across ten villages in the southern Indian state of Telangana was severely beaten earlier this month, a source told World Watch Monitor.

The victim, known as Pastor Seviya, "was attacked by five Hindu extremists with rods and thick sticks ... until he became unconscious", the source said. The pastor was "in a critical stage for many days" in hospital because of head injuries sustained during the attack on 5 October. He had blood clots on the brain and bleeding from his ears, added the source.

A similar incident on 13 October left another church leader "bleeding profusely" and later hospitalised and needing 12 stitches to his head.

Pastor Khel Prasad Kurre was attacked by Hindu extremists in Chhattisgarh state on his way home after visiting a member of his church, a source told World Watch Monitor.

Kurre said three or four men called out to him while he was riding his motorcycle. When he stopped, the men rushed towards him and started beating him with sticks. Kurre shouted for help, and when people from the village arrived, his attackers fled, also stealing his phone.

When Kurre later reported the incident to the police, he was informed that his attackers had earlier visited the station to report that he was converting people to Christianity. Kurre said police officers threatened to arrest him on charges of luring people into Christianity and that this put him off filing an official complaint against his attackers.

Chhattisgarh is one of eight Indian states to have passed so-called 'anti-conversion laws', which ostensibly seek to eliminate forced conversions from one set of beliefs to another, but in reality dissuade all conversions.

Five of these states are led by the BJP – the Hindu nationalist party led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In Jharkhand, the most recent state to pass the law, senior church leaders recently called on the prime minister to help control the "[ideological hatred](#)" of [the state's BJP chief minister](#), who, a day before the bill was passed, published advertisements in daily newspapers using pictures of Mahatma Gandhi and a quote ridiculing missionaries carrying out "fraudulent conversions".

In two states 'anti conversion' laws are not active, while in a third, Himachal Pradesh, parts of the law were repealed after a court challenge was brought by the Evangelical Fellowship of India.

Death penalty sought for 24 Indian Hindus over Gujarat massacre

The Express Tribune (06.06.2016) - <http://bit.ly/25JnTwI> - Indian prosecutors sought the death penalty on Monday for 24 Hindus convicted over a massacre during religious riots in 2002 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was chief minister of the state where it happened.

Judge P.B Desai heard submissions from the prosecution as well as lawyers representing the 24 convicted over the killings, before adjourning final sentencing until Thursday.

The 24 were found guilty last week of playing a role in the massacre of 69 Muslims who were hacked and burnt to death as they sheltered at a residential complex in the city of Ahmedabad, in Gujarat state.

It was one of the single worst massacres of the week-long violence that left more than 1,000 people dead in total.

Public prosecutor R.C Kodekar told the court on Monday some of the victims were women and children.

"The crime is rarest of the rare as the victims were hacked to death and then burnt by the accused," Kodekar told the court.

"The victims were killed only because they belonged to the minority community.

"The accused had targeted innocent people, so they must get the maximum punishment prescribed in law," Kodekar said.

Judge Desai last week convicted 11 people of murder and another 13 of lesser offences following a years-long trial. Another 36 were acquitted for lack of evidence.

The judge also ruled the massacre at the Gulbarg Society complex was a spontaneous attack, rejecting claims of a pre-planned conspiracy against Muslims.

Defence lawyer Abhay Bharadwaj said the 24 should be given minimum sentences given the judge's rejection of criminal conspiracy.

The riots have long dogged Modi, who has been accused of turning a blind eye to the violence.

The Hindu nationalist premier was cleared in 2012 by a Supreme Court-ordered investigation of any wrongdoing.

The violence was triggered by the death of 59 Hindu pilgrims in a train fire on February 27, 2002, that was initially blamed on Muslims.
