



# Open Doors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

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To the Office of the UN  
High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Universal Periodic Review  
UNOG-OHCHR  
1211 Geneva 10  
**Switzerland**

Ermelo, 20 November 2007

Reference: adp07.010

Concerning the Universal Periodic Review of India

Dear Madam/Sir,

The United Nations General Assembly, adopting Resolution 60/251, created a Human Rights Council and decided to undertake a Universal Periodic Review for all member states. Open Doors International warmly welcomed the decision of the General Assembly.

Theoretically, the UPR could be an effective tool to bring the ideal of full enjoyment of all human rights to all human beings, closer. With the proof of the pudding being in the eating, likewise, the value of the UPR is in its implementation. Open Doors International hereby takes the opportunity of being involved in the process focusing on the position of religious minorities in the Republic of India.

Open Doors International is a Christian NGO established in 1955 and focusing on violations of the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief. India is one of the countries monitored by the organization.

India is a vast and diverse country. It is therefore of little use to speak about India in general terms. As far as the right to freedom of religion is concerned, we would like to focus on the states Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Rajasthan. These are the states where the right to freedom of religion and belief is most frequently violated. Incidents reported include beatings, evictions, demolishing of property, looting, and murder. Perpetrators quite often belong to extremist Hindu groups. We know of quite a few incidents where victims were refused the right to file a First Incident Report by local police officers. As many Christians belong to the outcasts (Dallits), they need the protection of the Indian government and state authorities against these kinds of violations of the Indian Rule of Law.



As a briefing on all incidents reported, even if we limit ourselves to the six states mentioned, would exceed the 5-page limit, we are just characterizing the reports received. We are, however, more than willing to provide you further details if need be.

For your reference, the All India Christian Council monitoring the situation in all Indian states documented 190 incidents in 2007, so far. Over 2006 they reported 178 incidents and over 2005 165.

In its voluntary pledge and commitments preceding the election in the Human Rights Council, India stated, "in a truly pluralistic society, the growth and well being of citizens can only be guaranteed through a culture of protection and promotion of human rights," and rightly so. This culture of protection and promotion of human rights, however, is still a distant dream to the religious minorities in the states mentioned above.

India also pledged to strive for the full realization of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. We cannot but warmly welcome this commitment of the Indian Government. We would like to learn what concrete steps the Indian Government is taking to foster religious freedom in the country.

In four out of 28 Indian states, "anti-conversion legislation" is in power namely Orissa (1967), Chhattisgarh (1968), Madhya Pradesh (1968), and Himachal Pradesh (2007). This legislation prohibits conversion by force, or by inducement, or by any other fraudulent means.

Similar legislation has also been approved in Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat but is yet to be implemented.

Every supporter of the right to freedom of religion or belief will oppose conversion by force, inducement, or any other fraudulent means. The terms used however, have not been defined properly. Therefore, the law can easily be abused to file false complaints. Furthermore, these laws indirectly convey the message that fraudulent conversion is a serious problem that should be addressed hereby feeding distrust against religious minorities engaged in proselytizing. This runs counter to the pledge of the Indian Government to strive for full realization of human rights.

We are convinced of the commitment and good will of the Indian Government and we sincerely hope that the information provided above will be instrumental in fostering the climate of religious tolerance and thereby improve religious freedom for all Indian citizens, especially those living in the states mentioned.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Arie de Pater  
(Director Advocacy)