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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Indigenous People of Africa Coordinating Committee, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[7 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



India's Christians Living In Fear

India experienced an escalation of attacks on its Christian minority in recent years and the rise of extremism is a direct threat to various other minorities of India as well. There is a clear pattern of rising religious intolerance across India which affects millions of Indian Christians.

Religious radicals attempt to forcibly convert people to Hinduism, the dominant faith in India, often turning to violence when community discrimination and non-violent oppression does not succeed in imposing their religious beliefs on minority Christians. These Christians are often from the lower castes and the northeastern states like Meghalaya and Nagaland who already face huge socio-economic problems. They are an easy target for extremist Hindu zealots.

It was a stifling July 2021 afternoon when the crowd moved into the small district of Lakholi, in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, and gathered outside the house of Tamesh War Sahu. Sahu, a 55-year-old volunteer with the Home Guard who had begun following Christianity more than five years previously, had never before had issues with his neighbours. But, more than 100 people descended from surrounding villages were shouting Hindu nationalist slogans outside his front door. Sahu's son Moses, who had come out to investigate the noise, was beaten by the mob, who then charged inside. As the men entered the house, they shouted death threats at Sahu's wife and began tearing posters bearing Bible quotes down from the walls. Bibles were seized from the shelves and brought outside where they were set alight, doused in water and the ashes thrown in the gutter.

Sahu's family was not the only one attacked that day. Four other local Christian households were also targeted by mobs, led by the Hindu nationalist vigilante group Bajrang Dal. Since the beginning of the year, there have been similar attacks across Chhattisgarh, the Indian state with the second-highest number of incidents against Christians. In some villages, Christian churches have been vandalised, in others, pastors have been beaten or abused. Congregations have been broken up by mobs and believers hospitalised with injuries. The police, too, stand accused of making threats to Christians, hauling them into police stations and carrying out raids on Sunday prayer services.

My organization request this Council to ask the government of India to respect freedom of religious rights and also to ensure the protection of minorities from racial discrimination.
