

SAHR Annual Minority Report

Status of Minorities in India - 2011



When we hear the term minorities it has a very wide definition and a broad spectrum in India. It encompasses religious and linguistic minorities and several segments within each of them. India also has a large population of the Dalit community (Scheduled Caste) spreading into various religious sects. In this report we are confining ourselves to acts of violence against religious minorities and the Dalit community.

Christians

The year 2011 has been the worst for Christians in India, with at least 1000 incidents recorded, according to a report released by the Catholic Secular Forum.

The report, Rising Anti-Christian Violence — 2011, highlights about 250 of the "most heinous crimes of targeted violence" against Christians in India, with data gathered from government records, media reports and help of activists and NGOs from different parts of the country.

Karnataka heads the list of top 10 persecution states, followed by Orissa where half a dozen martyrs died for refusing to yield their faith. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Jammu & Kashmir follow the list.

Importantly, the report categorizes the nature of the crimes with the list including death and murder, grievous injuries, rape/molestation, destruction of churches/houses and Christian property, desecration of bibles/religious articles, Christians jailed and arrested, church workers insulted/threatened, foreign missionaries deported, and more.

Justice Michael Saldanha, the former judge of the Bombay and Karnataka high courts, said he had evidence of a thousand cases of religious liberty violations in Karnataka alone.

He said, "the very large scale on which persecution is conducted almost daily by official agencies, even beats other BJP ruled states like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, etc. Thousands of false cases are registered with the alleged connivance of the authorities, at the instance of the politicians to consolidate the majority vote."

Ram Puniyani, a secular activist based in Mumbai is of the opinion that Hindutva affiliates had now clearly turned their attention to Christians, as they found the community to be soft targets, with little fear of retaliation.

While attacks are widespread and in both urban and rural areas but they are more to be seen in the tribal, adivasi and backward areas. The pretext on which these attacks take place is the whole conversion theory and that it is taking place by force and fraudulent measures.

Dalit Community

The data on the atrocities committed on Dalits in 2011 is still not available and what we found was very limited and largely referring to 2009-2010. We are thus, hereby attaching an official government data released in tabular form, which gives us an understanding of the incidences and acts of violence against Dalits in 2010, in every state and Union Territory. The source is:

<http://ncrb.nic.in/CII2010/cii-2010/Table%207.2.pdf> (Table attached)

Muslims

Communal violence free India is still a dream. Although 2011 appeared that it may be less violent, but during the middle and end of the year some incidences took place, once again shaming India. However, one can, on the positive side say that large riots which used to take place earlier have not taken place now. The reason being that for people to come out on the streets and indulge in wide scale violence one needs a highly emotionally charged atmosphere which cannot be generated so easily. The incidences which we highlight in this report give a clear indication of the involvement of the police in various states and inaction on the part of the State Governments.

February, Uttar Pradesh - In February this year, communal clashes had erupted in Sahaspur area of Moradabad district of Uttar Pradesh when a procession of Eid Miladun Nabi was passing through. Rather than controlling the clashes the security forces and infamous PAC unleashed a reign of terror on local Muslims – they were beaten, their homes looted and hundreds of them were made named accused for the rioting.

PVCHR sent a fact-finding team to the affected area the team came out with the stories of shameful khaki terror and brutality. The team found that an FIR was lodged against 27 persons by name and hundreds of unknown persons all belonging to the Muslim minority at the Bilari police station.

May, Uttar Pradesh - There have been large scale police atrocities on Muslim families in Bhatta Parsaul, a village in Gautambudhanagar during the farmers' agitation against the land acquisition. According to Peace Party, Muslim families were especially singled out and mercilessly beaten. The party has alleged that even women were not spared. More than dozens were illegally put into jail and around same number of people sustained bullet injuries and multiple fractures

Peace Party highlighting the gory picture and sordid affair of police atrocities in the village, added that most of these Muslim families targeted by police had nothing to do with the agitation because they are very poor and are mainly daily wagers.

The Peace Party is a political party which was launched in 2009. The party has got a strong base among Muslims in eastern UP. Trying to expand its base to western UP, the party has joined the front of small parties led by Rashtriya Lok Dal for 2012 assembly elections.

June, Bihar - There was brutal killing of poor labourers by the Bihar police in Forbesganj on 02 June 2011. The police did not even spare a pregnant woman and an infant.

The crime of these wretched souls was that they had dared stop a wealthy industrialist who, with the connivance of the administration, was permanently blocking the road that these poor labourers had been using for years for their daily business.

September, Rajasthan - In the first ever indirect admission of the police atrocities on Meo Muslims, during the communal violence in Gopalgah Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot criticized the role played by the local police and administration in dealing with the riot, which broke out after clashes between Gujjars and Meo Muslims on September 14.

Gehlot was on his first visit to the riot hit area of Gopalgah in Bharatpur district in Rajasthan, in which 8 people died and more than 30 were injured. His visit was the second most important visit from the state government, after the visit of the home minister Shanti Dhariwal, but Dhariwal's visit had only worsened the matter because of his alleged remarks favoring the role of local police during the riot.

The Chief Minister sent a strong message of strict punishment to the culprit police officers, and said that mistakes and acts of irresponsible mischief by the local administration during the riot will not be tolerated.

The CM came under immense pressure from the Central Congress leadership to deal with the culprits behind the communal violence. The Gopalganj violence was third incident of communal violence in a row in just last one year, because of which a section in the Congress party thinks that the Modi regime is increasingly being seen as an anti-minority regime.

With the assembly elections in Rajasthan and UP which also shares few bordering districts with Rajasthan, in 2012, the Congress party doesn't want to be seen as anti-Muslim party.

October, Uttarakhand - Muslim leaders unanimously condemned police firing at a crowd of Muslims who were protesting against the desecration of Holy Quran in Rudrapur town of Udham Singh Nagar district in Uttarakhand. Four people were killed and scores wounded in the firing on October 2. The Muslim leaders had demanded the state government to punish guilty police officials and to give proper compensation to the affected families.

Shahi Imam of Delhi Jama Masjid, Maulana Ahmad Bukhari while condemning the incident demanded high level inquiry and proper rehabilitation of the victims. He made an important statement, "Muslims should not adopt violent ways in response to the provoking acts by miscreants because they first provoke Muslims then as per pre-planned programme they destroy properties and lives of Muslims with the help of communal minded Police. If there is anything wrong, consult to regional Muslim leaders who should take it to the authorities".