

The Business Committee of the Thirty-Fifth General Synod recommends this proposed resolution be sent to a Committee of the General Synod.

A RESPONSE TO CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN INDIA

A Resolution of Witness

Submitted by the New York Conference

SUMMARY

This resolution gives voice to the plight of Christians and Muslims who have been persecuted by the Hindu Nationalist movement and bears witness to the violence inflicted on churches and individuals in an attempt to suppress their voice. It further advocates for religious freedom throughout the world, specifically in India.

BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING

We believe all people are created in God's image and thus should be treated equally and justly. We are responding to violence against people that have been oppressed and marginalized because of their religious faith tradition.

Scripture grounds us in the affirmation that ALL creation is good, and humanity is the crown of that creation, bearing the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The image of God includes all of humanity, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, orientation or religious belief, practice and/or observances.

As members of one large family, (i.e. all of humanity) we recognize that when one suffers all of humanity experiences pain. We, the body of Christ, cry out for solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the world who are not allowed the freedom to practice out their religious traditions with respect and dignity. We declare that in the diversity that exists in all of humanity, there should be the freedom to worship and share in religious practices of any kind without fear of retribution by one's government or majority political party.

Only with such freedom unmarred by religious nationalism can the full image of God become visible.

1st Corinthians, chapter 12, states clearly that there are many in the body of Christ, but all are equal and equally important. Verses 14-15 state: "the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body." In verses 25b-26, we are called to "have the same care for one another, and if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:14-15, 25b-26) If part of the body of Christ is

35 suffering extreme hardship and persecution, we are compelled to stand with them and call for
36 justice.

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38 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

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40 **WHEREAS** since 2014, the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has led to intensified attacks
41 on Muslims, Christians, and indigenous groups. These actions have been driven by the Hindutva
42 ideology, and government-backed anti-conversion laws. Inflammatory hate speech by political
43 leaders have also played a role in fueling a surge in violence and discrimination;¹ and

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45 **WHEREAS** in the North East State of Manipur, India, where the state government is led by
46 India's Hindu Nationalist ruling Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP), there has been significant
47 violence since May 2023 toward Christians living there. Months of sustained violence has
48 resulted in thousands of homes destroyed, targeted attacks of places of worship and over 70,000
49 individuals have fled to neighboring states and countries;² and

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51 **WHEREAS** India has enacted anti-conversion laws in nine states, including Uttar Pradesh and
52 Madhya Pradesh. These laws, often targeting Christians and Muslims, provide legal cover for
53 Hindu nationalist groups to harass, imprison, and intimidate religious minorities. Under the guise
54 of preventing ‘forced conversions,’ these laws have been used to suppress religious freedom.
55 Despite Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guaranteeing religious liberty, minorities face
56 ongoing repression;³ and

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58 **WHEREAS** Christian communities and other religious minorities have been relentlessly
59 attacked. In Manipur state there was significant ethnic violence reported in 2023. “The tribal and
60 predominantly Christian Kuki community faced the brunt of violence from the majority Meitei
61 community. More than 200 people were killed, and more than 50,000 people were displaced;”⁴
62 and

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64 **WHEREAS** Religious minorities such as Christians and Muslims live under constant fear and
65 threat in India, the largest democracy in the world. Supported by the National and State
66 governments, the Hindu Nationalist movement commits egregious religious rights violations in
67 India;⁵

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69 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that The Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church
70 of Christ condemns all violations against religious minorities in India, including the demolition
71 and burning of churches and schools in the North Eastern state of Manipur.

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73 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of
74 Christ stands in solidarity with the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA
75 (NCC), which passed a “Resolution on the Persecution of Religious Minorities, in India and
76 Beyond” in October 2024⁶ and The United Methodist General Conference, which passed a
77 similar resolution in April 2024 condemning violence against religious minorities in India.⁷

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79 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that, along with the United States Commission on International
80 Religious Freedom (USCIRF)⁸, the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
81 urges the United States government to:

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- 83 1. "Designate India as a 'country of particular concern,' or CPC, for engaging in systematic,
84 ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International
85 Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).
- 86 2. Advance human rights for all religious communities in India and promote religious
87 freedom, dignity, and interfaith dialogue through bilateral engagement and in multilateral
88 forums.
- 89 3. Take appropriate action against Indian government agencies and officials responsible for
90 severe violations of religious freedom.
- 91 4. Condemn ongoing religious freedom violations.
- 92 5. Support religious organizations and human rights groups targeted for their advocacy of
93 religious freedom.

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95 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Thirty-Fifth General Synod of the United Church of
96 Christ calls upon the members of the United Church of Christ to:

- 97 1. Contact their respective US Congressional representatives to bring this violation of
98 religious minorities to the attention of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC).
- 99 2. Urge the Indian government to repeal discriminatory laws like the Citizenship
100 Amendment Act (CAA) and anti-conversion laws.
- 101 3. Hold perpetrators of religious violence accountable through international pressure.
- 102 4. Support U.S. legislation that conditions India's participation in trade agreements on its
103 human rights record.

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105 **FUNDING:** The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance
106 with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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108 **IMPLEMENTATION:** The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries
109 or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/11/india-increased-abuses-against-minorities-critics>

² <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/2024%20Annual%20Report.pdf>, page 31.

³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/india/>

⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>

⁶ <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/common-witness-ncc/resolution-on-the-persecution-of-religious-minorities-in-india-and-beyond/>

⁷ <https://religionnews.com/2024/05/09/united-methodist-church-passes-historic-resolution-on-persecuted-indian-christians/>

⁸ <https://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/India.pdf>, page 31.