



ADF INTERNATIONAL

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**UPR Outcomes (India), Item 6**

Mr. President,

Despite its constitutional protections for freedom of religion or belief, freedom from religious discrimination, and freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship, state-level legislation in India implies a different story. The Freedom of Religion Act, passed in Himachal Pradesh in 2006, forbids attempts to convert other individuals from one religion to another. The Act qualifies this by saying that the prohibition applies to the use of force, inducement, or any other fraudulent means.

The truth is that these qualifications are so vague that they could refer to anything. This is in violation not only of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, but also India's own constitutional order. For this reason, the national government must take steps to nullify this and any analogous laws that exist on any level within its legal system.

This includes laws deployed against seven Christian pastors in Madhya Pradesh, who spent more than three months in prison, having been released last month on the High Court's orders. They were accused of kidnapping and violence against children, as well as forced conversion, just for accompanying sixty children to a Christian summer camp with the full consent of their parents. Christian ministers, like Pastor Gurumurthy Madi, have also been murdered by guerilla groups, and State authorities have subsequently failed to properly bring perpetrators to justice and compensate surviving family members in accordance with the law.

None of these occurrences are isolated incidents. The widespread hostility towards non-Hindus is fueling many such cases of societal and legal discrimination towards Christians and other minorities, in violation of India's obligations under Articles 2 and 26 of the ICCPR. This must urgently be addressed.

Thank you, Mr. President.