

Statement Submitted for the Record by
Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC)
to
The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
Hearing on Worldwide Attacks on Christianity

January 13, 2026

The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for its hearing on worldwide attacks on Christianity. IAMC is a Washington, DC–based civil rights and advocacy organization committed to defending religious freedom, pluralism, and democratic values in India and globally.

This testimony draws on IAMC’s documentation of anti-Christian violence in India during the Christmas season of 2025, as well as data compiled by Indian Christian organizations and civil society groups.

Escalating Violence Against Christians in India

Violence against Christians in India has increased sharply over the past decade, with a particularly steep rise since 2014, attributed to the mainstreaming of the far-right Hindu nationalist ideology under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). According to data compiled by Christian organizations, incidents rose from 139 in 2014 to more than 830 in 2024, representing an increase of nearly 500 percent over ten years.¹ As of November 2025, the United Christian Forum, a New Delhi-based faith coalition that tracks attacks on Christians, recorded over 700 incidents targeting Christians in the first eleven months of the year alone.²

The Christmas season of 2025 provides a recent and illustrative case study of this broader trajectory. In the weeks leading up to December 25, Christians across multiple Indian states faced coordinated intimidation, disruption of worship, vandalism of religious symbols, and physical assault.³ These incidents were frequently justified through allegations of “forced

¹ <https://thewire.in/communalism/attacks-against-christians-increased-by-500-since-2014-rights-groups>

² <https://worldidea.org/report-by-christian-body-shows-sharp-rise-in-violence-against-community-in-2024/>

³ <https://cjp.org.in/not-merry-not-peaceful-how-fear-vigilantism-and-state-silence-marked-christmas-2025/>

religious conversion,” despite the absence of evidence, and targeted ordinary religious and cultural expression.

Misuse of Anti-Conversion Laws

A central driver of persecution is the misuse of anti-conversion laws, now in force in more than a dozen Indian states. While these laws are presented as a means to prevent “forced religious conversions”, the text of the laws rely on vague definitions of “force,” “fraud,” and “allurement,” effectively criminalizing enabling the harassment of religious minorities, particularly Christians.

Christian pastors and worshippers have been arrested for conducting prayer meetings, offering spiritual guidance, or providing basic social services. Even during the Christmas season of 2025, allegations of forced conversion were repeatedly invoked to justify police action or vigilante interference, despite the absence of evidence. This legal framework has emboldened extremist groups and normalized intrusion into religious life. A 2024 report documented an average of four to five attacks on churches and pastors per day, underscoring the scale and regularity of such abuses.⁴

Beyond legal action, these laws have reinforced social stigma and facilitated broader patterns of persecution, extending beyond physical violence to include social and economic exclusion. In several tribal regions, Christian families have been denied access to village wells, expelled from ancestral homes, and prevented from burying their dead in public cemeteries.⁵

Organized Mobilization and State Inaction

A defining feature of anti-Christian violence in India is the repeated involvement of the same far-right Hindu militant organizations across states. Groups such as the Bajrang Dal, Vishva Hindu Parishad, and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are consistently named by victims, witnesses, and media reports across incidents. Although these organizations portray themselves as independent cultural bodies, their ideological alignment with the ruling BJP is well established.⁶ In several cases, BJP officials have been directly implicated in acts of harassment or violence, underscoring the proximity between vigilante mobilization and political power.

These groups propagate narratives portraying Christians as “foreign” or “predatory,” narratives that have increasingly entered the public sphere and are echoed by political leaders and amplified by sympathetic media outlets. Over the past decade, such framing has contributed to the normalization of hostility toward Christian communities and the justification of vigilante action.

Equally significant is the failure of state institutions to respond effectively. Law enforcement authorities frequently fail to intervene during attacks, even when violence occurs in public view.

⁴ <https://efionline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Final-RLC-Yearly-Report-2024.pdf>

⁵ [No Rest, Even in Death: Christians in India and the growing targeted violence in Chhattisgarh | CJP](#)

⁶ [Exposing the largest far-right network in history | The Caravan](#)

Recently, those arrested for vandalizing Christian property were released on bail and publicly celebrated by extremist groups with garlands, slogans, and processions, reinforcing perceptions of impunity.⁷ In other cases, authorities obstruct lawful religious activity through administrative measures. By acting on allegations made by extremist groups while failing to protect Christian victims, state authorities have fostered an environment in which vigilante violence is tacitly encouraged.

Christmas 2025 as a Case Study

During the Christmas period, churches across states were disrupted during prayer services, carol gatherings were obstructed, and Christian presence in public spaces was treated as illegitimate. In Rajasthan, members of Hindu extremist groups entered a church during an ongoing service and verbally abused worshippers, accusing them of being involved in forced conversion.⁸ In Uttar Pradesh, groups gathered outside churches on Christmas Eve chanting anti-Christian slogans to intimidate congregants.⁹

Public visibility associated with Christmas was also targeted. In Delhi, Christian women wearing Santa caps were harassed in a public market.¹⁰ In Odisha and Assam, vendors and schools displaying Christmas decorations were confronted, vandalized, or forced to remove festive items after being told that such expressions had no place in a “Hindu nation.”^{11 12} In Uttarakhand, a Christmas celebration scheduled at a government-run hotel was cancelled following pressure from Hindu nationalist groups, while in Uttar Pradesh, the state government kept schools open on Christmas Day, reversing a long-standing holiday.^{13 14}

Several incidents escalated into physical violence. In Madhya Pradesh, a visually impaired Christian woman attending a Christmas programme was verbally and physically assaulted by a BJP official in the presence of police officers who did not intervene.¹⁵ In Chhattisgarh, mobs affiliated with Hindu militant organizations stormed a commercial mall, vandalized Christmas decorations, and assaulted staff during a protest against alleged religious conversions.¹⁶ In Kerala, children singing Christmas carols were harassed and intimidated, while in Uttar Pradesh a pastor and his wife were targeted with accusations of conversion.^{17 18}

⁷ [Raipur mall vandalism: Accused get hero's welcome with garlands, procession- The Times of India](#)

⁸ [RSS, Bajrang Dal Disrupt Sunday Mass in Rajasthan church, priest rejects conversion allegations](#)

⁹ [In Bareilly, VHP-Bajrang Dal Protests Outside Church, Chants “Christian Missionaries Murdabad”](#)

¹⁰ [Bajrang Dal accuses Christian women in Santa hats of proselytisation, forces them to leave](#)

¹¹ [‘Yeh Hindu rashtra hai’: Santa hat sellers on road harassed in Odisha | India News](#)

¹² [Assam: Tension at Nalbari school after VHP, Bajrang Dal allegedly vandalise Christmas preparations](#)

¹³ [Haridwar hotel cancel Christmas event after protest by Hindu groups](#)

¹⁴ [School Holiday on December 25, 2025: Schools Closed in THESE States](#)

¹⁵ [Visually impaired woman manhandled by BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh speaks out](#)

¹⁶ [Mobs with rods, hockey sticks vandalise Raipur mall- The Times of India](#)

¹⁷ [BJP-RSS member arrested in Kerala for attacking children's Christmas carol group](#)

¹⁸ [The Observer Post on Instagram: "A video showing a Christian pastor and his wife being harassed](#)

These incidents reflect identifiable patterns of interference with worship, criminalization of Christian visibility, and mob violence carried out with little fear of consequence, shaped by deeper structural, ideological, and institutional factors affecting Christians in India.

Recommendations

In its 2025 annual report, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reiterated its recommendation that India be designated a “Country of Particular Concern” (CPC) for egregious and unaddressed violations of religious freedom. The events of December 2025 underscore the urgency of this designation.

The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) condemns the violence against India’s Christian community and characterises it as part of a systematic campaign to marginalise religious minorities. In response, IAMC urges the following:

- The United States Secretary of State should use the findings of this report to accept USCIRF’s recommendation and designate India as a Country of Particular Concern.
- The United States Government should impose targeted sanctions on extremist organizations, including the Bajrang Dal and the Vishva Hindu Parishad, as well as on individuals involved in or responsible for inciting and enabling violence against Christians.
- In India, the respective state governments should ensure the immediate arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the Christmas 2025 violence and provide adequate security for Christian institutions and places of worship.

Conclusion

The Christmas 2025 violence illustrates how attacks on Christians in India have become increasingly normalized, organized, and shielded from accountability. These incidents must be understood as part of a sustained pattern of persecution enabled by law, ideology, and institutional failure. IAMC respectfully submits this testimony to assist USCIRF in advancing its mandate to protect religious freedom worldwide.
