



The aicc Update

A report on activities of the aicc in November 2006

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For questions, please contact:

Sam Paul, Secretary, Public Affairs
e: office@sampaul.net
p: +91-40-27868908

Albert Lael, National Administrator
e: albertlael@gmail.com
p: +91-40-27864632



The All India Christian Council, birthed in 1998, exists to protect and serve the interests of the Christian community, minorities, and the oppressed castes. The aicc is a coalition of thousands of Indian denominations, organizations, federations and lay leaders. Find in-depth information at www.aiccindia.org.

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Highlights

Summary: The Bible teaches that a person should be willing to suffer personally, but always advocate for others who are oppressed or needy. Justice is a common theme and requires action.

Why advocate? Isn't "turning the other cheek" more Biblical?

When Christians are beaten, shouldn't we urge them to turn the other cheek? Aren't we supposed to suffer for Jesus? Why should we speak against oppression of Dalits? Why pursue justice for persecuted Christians?

There are several reasons we should be advocates for those who are victimized. It's true that most Scriptures do not talk about protecting yourself from evil. Instead the Bible teaches individual Christians to "turn the other cheek" and suffer for the sake of Christ's name.

However, at the same time, the Bible teaches each of us to protect and help *other people* who are harmed by evil doers. Psalm 82 says, "Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (also see Prov. 31:8-9, Luke 12:29, Heb. 13:3). So you should *rarely* seek justice for yourself, but you must *always* seek justice for others who are weak, hurt, and needy – especially for fellow Christians (Gal. 6:10)!

In the Old Testament, we see many examples of God's prophets calling people to create just and righteous societies (Isa. 10:1-4, 58:3-12; Jer. 5:26-29, 22:13-19; Amos 2:6-7, 4:1-3, 5:10-15). The prophets insisted on both a fair legal system (which does not favor a particular caste or class) and a fair economic system (which does not tolerate perpetual poverty).

Jesus commanded us to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:35-40). So who is our neighbor? By deed and parable, Jesus taught us that anyone in need is our neighbor (Luke 10:29-37).

In India, most of the needy and poor are Dalits. God identifies with the poor (Ps. 146:5-9), and says that those who "are kind to the poor lend to the



Lord” (Prov. 19:17), while those who oppress the poor “show contempt for their Maker” (Prov. 14:31). Jesus said that those who don’t care for the needy and imprisoned will depart eternally from God (Matt. 25:31-46).

But what is justice? One author has said justice is exercising legitimate power to ensure benefits and penalties are distributed fairly and equally in society so that all groups have their rights met and obligations enforced. In short, it is restoring the world to the way God intended it to be.

Justice is not an abstract philosophy, but an action. It describes how God interacts with the world (Deut. 32:3-4, Ps. 145:17). He saved Israel from Egypt. He gave specific laws to protect the poor and vulnerable. His prophets constantly confronted the rich and powerful and told them to care for the weak. He sent Jesus to triumph over evil.

Justice is a major attribute or characteristic of God (Jer. 9: 23-24). If we want to be like God, we must be just and act justly as well. Justice is one of the most frequent topics Bible. There are only 90 mentions of sexual sin – a topic that many churches teach much about – but the Greek and Hebrew words for justice occur over 1,000 times in the Bible!

The Bible *doesn't* emphasize equality for all. It is true that we are all created in the image of God. We are equal in our nature or worth. But a special concern or bias must be shown by society for special groups. Why? Because some groups are more frequently the victims of injustice than other groups are. Because the condition of the oppressed violates God’s good intentions for the world.

Religious freedom, including the right to change one’s religion, is just because the Creator gave human beings liberty. This is a foundational right that must be respected by governments. Similarly, while it is not the primary role of government to provide everything that humans need for their well-being, governments must ensure that people are not unjustly deprived of essentials.

We exhort all aicc members with the words of Proverbs 3:27, “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.”

[Read more here and here](#)

Dalit abusers rarely sentenced

India’s government enacted the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in 1989. But it has proved to be a lame duck. The conviction rates of people who attack Dalits are extremely low.

[One recent article](#) says that almost 70% of offenders go completely free. Put another way, only one out of four people who attack a Dalit are convicted. Per statistics by India’s National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the total number of reported cases of murder,

NewsNote: The Justice Sachar Committee, which looked into the social, economic and educational state of Muslims in India, **recommended reservations for Dalit Muslims**. A similar group, the Justice Mishra Committee, is looking at the status of Christians. Union Minority Affairs Minister A.R. Antulay has urged the Union Government to include Dalit Muslims and Christians in the reserved category of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

[Read more](#)

Summary: Three recent articles show that, in spite of strong laws, people who attack Dalits are rarely convicted.



rape, kidnapping, etc. have gone up this last year. The author also notes that reported attacks against Dalits are highest in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number.

[Another article](#) disagrees slightly and says that the National Crime Records Bureau reported most cases of crimes against Dalits in Uttar Pradesh followed by Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. More important, of the recorded cases, only one in five was pursued in a court of law. Out of those cases, less than 3% ended in a conviction. The number of acquittals is six times more than the number of convictions.

Karnataka is a good example of increasing reports and court proceedings, but few results. [A recent article](#) from The Hindu says that, for the approximately 1200-1300 cases reported every year over the last five years, convictions have been negligible. Only 24 convictions were made in 2002 and just five in 2005. There have been no convictions in 2006. Justice for Dalits continues to be delayed despite good laws with good intentions.

aicc Past & Upcoming Events

aicc Past Events

November 2006

- 18-23rd: aicc Secretary, Public Affairs, Sam Paul, briefed several United Kingdom MPs and was interviewed on Premier Christian Radio
- 19th: Fact finding team led by aicc's Sam Joseph visits Khairlangi, Maharashtra, where four Dalits were brutally murdered on Sept. 29
- 22nd: Fact finding team led by aicc's M.D. Jose visits Dublia village in Ranchi district, Jharkhand, to learn about attacks on two Christian families. Compass Direct wrote a news story based on the report.
- 25th: Christian Solidarity Worldwide hosts a "Day of Prayer" for India at a major church near London. aicc President Joseph D'souza spoke.
- 28th: An aicc press conference in Delhi announced the dharna (protest) planned for Dec. 11. The All India Confederation of SC/ST Organisations also said it would support benefits for Christians from Dalit backgrounds.

aicc Upcoming Events

- December 11, 2006: A day-long dharna (protest) at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi organised by aicc to press for Scheduled Caste status for Dalit Christians.
- January 30-February 1, 2007: Conference on Theology of Persecution, co-sponsored by aicc and Voice of the Martyrs Canada. To be held at OM India campus, Secunderabad, for pastors. If interested, contact us since space is limited.
- March 18-31, 2007: Celebrating the anniversary of William Wilberforce's anti-slavery legislation in the UK. In partnership with Christian Solidarity Worldwide, aicc will participate in tentative political hearings before the European Union and British officials on the "modern slavery" of Dalits. They will also launch media and print initiatives to raise awareness.



- April 2007: India's Supreme Court to hear a long-pending case examining the rights of Dalit Christians.

Attacks against Christians

Executive Summary:

The aicc recorded 16 cases of harassment or outright violence against Christians in November 2006. Of the confirmed attacks listed, there were:

- 7 in Andhra Pradesh
- 2 in Karnataka
- 2 in Jammu & Kashmir
- 1 in Gujarat
- 1 in Rajasthan
- 1 in Madhya Pradesh
- 1 in Bihar
- 1 in Assam

Attacks reported

List of Violence Against Christians in India

Note: All care has been taken to crosscheck the reported cases with credible newspaper reports and police files. State governments don't collect information about violence against the Christian community.

November 2006

- 1st – Gujarat: The High Court of Gujarat warned local authorities who allegedly fabricated a case against a Christian pastor in Divya village of Dahod district. Arul Daniel and other Christian workers were attacked in late September and police refused to accept their FIR. Then police accused the Christians of shooting at policemen and arrested them. [Read more](#)
- 6th – Karnataka: Hindu extremists forced Christians in a remote village of Bevainahalli in Chitradurga district to bow before Hindu deities and put a vermilion mark on their foreheads. Two Hindu priests and a group of 25 RSS and Bajrang Dal activists forced Christians out of their homes, slapped them, and urged them to reconvert. Aicc is appealing to the state government for action. [Read more](#)
- 9th – Andhra Pradesh: Pastor Praharsi, an independent pastor, was forced to flee for his life. Earlier, he was beaten by a mob at Nachupally village in Birkur mandal of Nizamabad district while conducting a prayer meeting in a home. He and two other Christians notified police which provoked the attackers to return and threaten to burn down the pastor's home. The pastor fled from the village. Aicc is attempting to help the pastor in the matter. [Read more](#)
- 10th – Rajasthan: Police refused to respond to a pastor's report about a recent attack. Hindu fanatics beat Pastor Prakash, of Good Shepherd Community Church, and his father at Berapuda village on October 29, 2006 and forbid any prayer gathering in the village. The pastor filed a case at Bhamol Police Station, but no arrests have been made. [Read more](#)
- 12th – Jammu & Kashmir: A Good Shepherd Community Church pastor in Kathua was harassed by activists of Bajrang Dal. About 25 men carrying swords and knives interrupted the church service. When police took the pastor to the police station, they refused to file an FIR on his behalf. Aicc is assisting the pastor. [Read more](#)
- 13th – Gujarat: The High Court of Gujarat will hear a complaint by tribal Christians of Surat district against their village head. The village leader had ordered them to demolish their house church after an ongoing dispute. Aicc representatives are involved in the legalities and say that police have harassed tribal Christians since late September. [Read more](#)
- 13th – Gujarat: A state court sentenced a businessman to life



imprisonment – in reality, a maximum of 14 years – and fined him 1,000 Rs. (\$22) for killing his Catholic driver. On December 24, 2004, the driver, Robinson Joseph Swami, asked for an advance to celebrate Christmas. The boss was so angry that he poured petrol on Swami and lit a match. Swami died six weeks later and the accused still hadn't been arrested. Aicc then took up the case.

[Read more](#)

- 14th – Assam: Nine tribal Christian families in four villages of Kokrajhar district were evicted by members of Bodo Religious Bathou (an indigenous tribal religion). Several people were arrested and the families have been welcomed back by most villagers.

[Read more](#)

- 15th – Karnataka: Subash Kalappa Chougale, a worker for Pioneer Ministries in Karnataka state was taken into police custody on false charges of rape. A co-worker said that Subash had stopped to pray for four girls who were used by a local Hindu fanatic group to frame him. Subash is in prison and suffering from police beatings, said EFI reports.

[Read more](#)

- 15th – Andhra Pradesh: A group of Hindu activists harassed foreign visitors at a hotel in Rajahmundry. They accused the visitors of converting Hindus to Christianity. They also sought details about their visa status and the purpose of their prolonged stay. Several Christian meetings were canceled as a result.

[Read more](#)

- 16th – Andhra Pradesh: Around 30 people vandalised St. Ann's School in Armor of Nizamabad district and threatened the nuns. Vehicles parked on the campus and furniture in the classrooms was damaged. Radical Hindus appeared upset that a student had been told he had to wear his uniform instead of black clothes after taking ayyappa diksha. No arrests have been made and aicc is monitoring the situation.

[Read more](#)

- 19th – Andhra Pradesh: The High Court in Chennai ruled that Christian Dalits are not entitled to the special benefits provided under the Constitution for Scheduled Castes. According to media reports, the court was ruling on a case of a Dalit born to Hindu parents who had converted to Christianity and later re-converted to Hinduism.

[Read more](#)

- 17th – Andhra Pradesh: Two churches were burned by Hindu fanatics in different parts of Andhra Pradesh. The wooden doors of a church in Dubbaka village of Nizamabad district were torched. Police are investigating. A month earlier, the Jesus Worship church was completely destroyed in Roadduvalasa village in Vijayanagaram district. One person has been arrested and charged.

[Read more](#)

- 20th – Andhra Pradesh: The distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature at a Government Junior College by members of a church-based group, including a visiting American, triggered an argument between the college principal and VHP and Hindu Dharma Prachara Samiti leaders at Buttaigudem village in West Godavari district. Police

NewsNote: A major nationwide study revealed that people prefer to vote along caste lines in elections. KC Suri, professor of Nagarjuna University, presented the findings of his research at an international conference in Bangalore organised by the Socio-Economic and Environmental Studies and International Academy for Creative Teaching.

[Read more](#)



are investigating since both sides filed FIRs and held protests.

[Read more](#)

- 23rd – Andhra Pradesh: Australian evangelist John Carter and his team called off a prayer meeting scheduled to be held at a stadium in Visakhapatnam. VHP activists had earlier asked police to stop the visiting Australians from conducting religious meetings since they were here on tourist visas, said The Hindu newspaper.
[Read more here and here](#)
- 22nd – Jammu & Kashmir: Bashir Ahmed Tantray, a 50-year-old engineer, was killed by two unidentified militants in Mamoosa village, Barmullah district. Bashir became a Christian about a decade ago and worked with various Christian organizations. Since he was a prominent Christian activist and was accused in media reports of performing conversions, people believe he was killed because of his religion.
[Read more](#)
- 26th – Chhattisgarh: The state High Court stopped the government from taking over a welfare project entrusted to a church agency more than a decade ago. The Raigarh-Ambikapur Health Association, a Catholic endeavor, manages the Integrated Child Development Service. Letters from state authorities in October and November said the Government was taking over the project but didn't give any reason.
[Read more](#)
- 29th – Gujarat: The state's High Court ordered government authorities and Western Gujarat Electricity Co. Ltd. not to destroy a Catholic school. The school's administration was given a notice to leave in late October. Then the High Court intervened. The next hearing is December 11, 2006. The court came down heavily on the company for plotting to demolish Shri Sacchidananda Gurukul Vidhyalaya. Aicc is helping litigate the case.
[Read more here and here](#)
- 29th – Bihar: A pastor's wife was raped in Elha village in Rohtas district. Hindu extremists allegedly encouraged the attacker in order to disrupt the Christian activity in the village. Police are searching for the criminal, according to Compass Direct.
[Read more](#)
- 30th – Madhya Pradesh: Pastor Hatey Singh Gundiya and Pastor Gokul Gundiya were beaten by RSS activists while waiting at a bus stand. The men have filed an FIR against their attackers, said Compass Direct.
[Read more](#)

NewsNote: Four years after the communal riots in Gujarat, at least 106 displaced families from the Naroda-Patiya neighborhood, one of the epicentres of the riots, are afraid to move back. The Hindustan Times reports that, in districts across the state, some 5,300 families (about 26,000 people) continue to live in 47 settlements. Most are poor Muslims.

[Read more](#)

Attacks against Dalits

Attacks reported

List of Discrimination Against Dalits in India

Note: All care has been taken to crosscheck the reported cases with credible newspaper reports and police files.

November 2006

- 1st – Orissa: Dalits in Kendrapara announced plans to forcibly enter temples on November 19, 2006. Recently, a priest reprimanded a Dalit boy for trying to enter the Jagannath temple at Keredagarh village. Dalits, under the banner of the Ambedkar-Lohia Vichar Manch Muduli,



declared they would challenge the ban, said the Times of India.

[Read more](#)

- 1st – Orissa: A local court sentenced a school teacher to 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of 40,000 Rs. (\$890) for raping a minor Dalit girl about a year ago. The fast track court convicted teacher Suleman Tirkey for the November 25, 2005 rape.

[Read more](#)

- 4th – Bihar: Two Dalit women were allegedly gang-raped at Lakhampur Sonedipi village in Begusarai district. An FIR was lodged by the kin of the two women. The victims were sent to Sadar Hospital in Begusarai for medical examination.

[Read more](#)

- 7th – Uttar Pradesh: A local court fined a man 2,000 Rs. (\$45) and sentenced him to 10 years in prison for raping a 15-year-old Dalit girl in Budhana town. Mr. Naeem was found guilty under the Indian Penal Code. Allegations filed under the SC Atrocities (Prevention) Act were dismissed. The girl was raped at gunpoint near Muzaffarnagar on November 16, 2002, according to the prosecution.

[Read more](#)

- 7th – Maharashtra: After massive public protests, the Maharashtra Government ordered a CID inquiry into the murder of four members of a Dalit family in Kherlanji in Bhandara district on September 29, 2006. They are also setting up a fast track court. Only the father survived the attack, allegedly due to the Dalit family's boldness in village disputes of land and honor. Several people have been arrested, but activists are angered by the mismanagement of the case by police.

[Read multiple stories at www.aiccindia.org](#)

- 11th – Rajasthan: A fact-finding team of the Centre for Dalit Rights, visited Beeladi village of Chittaurgarh district after an attack on tribal Bheels. The team found the families had been ostracized with neighbours refusing to have any transactions and denying them entry into public places. The police and district administration are pressing for compromise with the aggressors, said The Hindu.

[Read more](#)

- 13th – Maharashtra: Hindu activists created communal tensions between backward castes and Dalits in Bhandara city. They protested the rape and murder of a 10-year-old OBC girl by a Dalit criminal in October. The criminal is still at large, said DNA India. Activists held a bandh (strike) to distract the public from the Kherlanji murder of four Dalits.

[Read more](#)

- 16th – New Delhi: A 26-year-old Dalit man was shot dead in New Usmanpur in northeast Delhi. The murder was allegedly committed by the family of a Jat girl whom he married two years ago. The girl's family is reportedly on the run after the honour killing and no arrests have been made so far, said the Times of India.

[Read more](#)

- 16th – Andhra Pradesh: The Union Cabinet licensed several Dalit women in the village of Machnoor in Medak district for an hour-long programme from the country's first full-fledged Community Radio

NewsNote: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for an equal presence for minorities in

Government as well as in private sector jobs on Nov. 2, 2006. He also discussed the need for **increasing access to professional courses for Muslim girls**. He said the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) would soon get Constitutional status.

[Read more](#)

Station. Set up here by a non-governmental organisation, Deccan Development Society, there are at least three such community radios set up with UNESCO assistance, said The Hindu newspaper.

[Read more](#)

- 18th – Tamil Nadu: A Madurai village, Kodikulam, auctioned its president, a poor, illiterate Dalit woman whom the villagers were forced to elect because the post was reserved for a Dalit woman. The village had decided that the highest bidder could use Ms. Balamani as a ‘rubber stamp’ for signing contracts for the village and keep the commissions. A 36-year-old man was the winner with a bid of 2.16 lakh Rs. (\$4,816), said the Indian Express.
[Read more](#)
- 22nd – Karnataka: Police arrested a young man for trying to rape a Dalit woman at Golipadav village near Irde in Puttur.
[Read more](#)
- 22nd – Bihar: A Dalit was beaten to death and another seriously injured by upper caste land-owners in Jehanabad district. The Dalits allegedly refused to work in the upper caste fields. FIRs were filed in the case.
[Read more](#)
- 22nd – Madhya Pradesh: A 16-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly burnt to death by a youth at Sahalwada village near Hoshangabad. She had allegedly refused to withdraw a complaint of rape against him, said Zee News. Politicians are demanding an investigation.
[Read more](#)
- 24th – Uttar Pradesh: A pregnant Dalit woman was allegedly raped by two upper caste youths in front of her three-year-old child at Tewra village in Muzaffarnagar district. Police have registered a case.
[Read more](#)
- 27th – Gujarat: A chief engineer in the Central Water Commission, Gandhinagar, named Radhe Shyam Goel was arrested for allegedly molesting a woman employee in his office.
[Read more](#)
- 29th – Maharashtra: A Dalit youth was beaten to death as violence and arson marred Dalit protests that erupted in parts of Maharashtra against alleged vandalisation of a statue of B.R. Ambedkar.
[Read more](#)
- 29th – Gujarat: Several women who are filing to become candidates in upcoming elections faced threats and harassment from upper castes.
[Read more](#)

NewsNote: Dalit issues were highlighted at the Indian Social Forum, a five-day event in Delhi on 9-13 November 2006. About 50,000 delegates from Asia and Africa interacted and exchanged ideas, said NDTV reports.

[Read more](#)

Resources of Note

Resources

On November 21, 2006, the first international conference on the rights of Dalit women convened. Participants called on the governments of Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to support Dalit women in asserting their rights and ensure they are brought on par with the overall development of the general population within five years.

[Read “The Hague Declaration on the Human Rights and Dignity of Dalit Women”](#)