

# **Injustice continues for Christians in Orissa state in India**

February 8, 2010

The Evangelical Fellowship of India is deeply concerned for the victims of communal violence in Kandhamal, Orissa. Many villages continue to remain tense and sensitive to violence, evident from the recent outburst of protests in both Bhubaneswar and Kandhamal, in the wake of the visits of the delegation of European Union to the region. In one incident in Kandhamal, Orissa, stones were pelted at a Christian house in Badimunda village under the Tikabali Police on February 2, 2010 to protest against the visit of the EU delegation.

## **Status of Compensation**

According to the District administration, of the 4,600 houses damaged during the riots, 1,981 houses had been rebuilt, while 4,435 families had received the first installment of the house building assistance and 2,868 the second installment. Of the total 196 institutions including churches and prayer houses, about 100 had received financial assistance for repairs.

However, the government has failed to provide adequate compensation for the rebuilding of homes. The compensation fixed for completely damaged houses presently is Rs 50,000, though the reconstruction cost of even a simple house is Rs. 85,000 or more. Similarly the administration arbitrarily designated fully destroyed houses as partial-damaged category with much lower relief.

## **Status of Cases**

Approximately 3223 complaints were filed by victims of the communal violence. The police however registered approximately 831 cases and have filed subsequently over 300 charge sheets.

As of Jan 2010, 159 cases were committed to the Fast Track Courts, which were set up in March 2009. There are 81 cases in FTC 1 and 78 cases in FTC 2 presently, some of which have been disposed of. There have been convictions in only 22 cases with 89 persons being convicted, while in over 36 cases there have been acquittals with as many as 251 have been acquitted for want of evidence. Many witnesses have complained repeatedly of threats, coercion and even inducement.

The Christian Legal Association, an initiative of the EFI, has provided legal assistance to the victims of the communal violence in Kandhamal since September 2008. The Kandhamal office presently has a team of five lawyers and six activists.

## **Prayer Points:**

1. For peace and reconciliation in Kandhamal, Orissa.
2. For protection and wisdom for the lawyers assisting the public prosecutors.
3. That the government authorities would be sensitive and responsive to violence against religious minorities taking necessary steps to curb the violence.

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*Evangelical Fellowship of India (established 1951) is a charter member of World Evangelical Alliance, an accredited NGO with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*

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