



ALL INDIA CATHOLIC UNION

Founded in 1919, Registered under Societies Registration Act 1850
Representing the Catholic Laity of India through 120 Diocesan Units Nation-wide

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PRESS STATEMENT

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AICU CONDEMNS MOB ATTACK ON SANTALI BIBLE CONVENTION, DEMANDS ACCOUNTABILITY FROM WEST BENGAL GOVERNMENT

The All India Catholic Union expresses its shock and anguish at the mob attack on St Louis Parish Church in Jalalkhali, on the outskirts of Krishnanagar in West Bengal's Nadia district, on the evening of 9 October 2026. The attack disrupted a four-day Mega Santali Bible Conference organised by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Krishnanagar, which had drawn more than 1,900 registered participants on its opening day, among them Santali-speaking Christians who had travelled from different parts of the state.

According to eyewitness accounts and press reports, a group of about 200 people, allegedly associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, gathered near the church chanting provocative slogans. Some then entered the premises carrying bamboo poles and bricks, vandalised decorations and banners, pelted the prayer hall with stones and assaulted worshippers. The glass protecting a statue of Jesus Christ was broken and at least six people were injured. Local Catholics who came out to protest were themselves attacked.

Bishop Nirmol Vincent Gomes of Krishnanagar has described the assault as premeditated and the worst violence his diocese has known and the Diocese has lodged a formal complaint with the Krishnanagar police, invoking Article 25(1) of the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion. Church representatives deny any unlawful conversion and point out that the gathering was a regular programme for baptised Christians. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad has claimed that conversions were taking place, apparently justifying entering a place of worship, assault worshippers, damage religious property or close a gathering by force. Jalalkhali is not an isolated event. It follows a pattern of hostility that has intensified since the Bharatiya Janata Party took office in West Bengal in May 2026 under Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari.

The India Hate Lab in a 22 September report documented at least 60 incidents targeting Christians in 13 districts between 13 May and 20 September, of which 52 were raids on private prayer meetings, homes and churches, and eight involved physical assault, mob violence or vandalism. Alt News separately recorded 35 incidents between 1 July and 20 September. These figures give serious grounds to ask whether the state's police and administration are protecting the constitutional rights of Christians, AICU National Vice President Alexander Anthony in Kolkata has said. He said the AICU has planned a protest in the state.

The individual cases are troubling in their detail. On 6 September, a mob of about 25 people entered a Christian home in Nandapurya village, Paschim Medinipur, where Pastor Sukhendu Singh was leading a prayer service, took him to a local party office, and allegedly released him only after he signed an undertaking and declared on video that Christianity is a foreign religion.

On 20 September, about 50 men allegedly linked to the Bajrang Dal broke into a Sunday service at a house church in Dekhali Jalpai village in Purba Medinipur, assaulted worshippers including a minor and wrote "Ram" on the doors. In July, a mob attacked guests at a wedding thanksgiving service in Palbari, West Midnapore, while officers reportedly looked on, and it was the officiating pastor who was then arrested on a conversion charge rather than the assailants. State Christian groups have complained to the National Human Rights Commission, the West Bengal Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Minorities, noting that FIRs have been registered in only 13 of the dozens of reported cases, usually after extraordinary effort and legal intervention. Victims in other cases say police were reluctant to accept written complaints.

An opposition fact-finding team led by Rajya Sabha member Sagarika Ghose has reported that Christians are being pressed to "return" to Hinduism, denied burial rights and obstructed in developing their own property or reaching irrigation for their crops. The AICU warns that West Bengal risks joining Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh among the states with the worst records of anti-Christian violence. The silence of the Chief Minister and the Union Home Minister has led many Christians to suspect that senior officials and the ruling party tolerate the violence. We cannot recall Bengal's Christians facing such fear before. The AICU notes with particular concern that perpetrators have invoked the change of government. In Panskura on 3 September, members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal told a Christian gathering that conversion would not be allowed in "New Bengal". In Barasat on 12 July, members of the Hindu Jagaran Manch threatened Salesian Sisters and said their work would not be tolerated now that the party was in power. Such talk turns a political transition into a licence for vigilantes, and it places the burden on the state to show that it governs for every citizen. Articles 14, 21 and 25 of the Constitution protect Christians as they protect every other community. Christians form about 0.72 per cent of the state's population according to the 2011 Census.

The All India Catholic Union therefore calls upon the Government of West Bengal and the State Police to take the following steps without delay"

1. Police should publish the status of all FIRs filed over attacks on Christian congregations and give victims copies of their complaints, and the reluctance to register complaints must end.
2. District administrations should consult pastors, dioceses and house-church networks, and take preventive measures where threats are credible.
3. An independent review should examine the incidents in Nadia, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur, South 24 Parganas and other districts, including any police failures and the arrest of victims in place of assailants. We stand in solidarity with the Diocese of Krishnanagar, the Archdiocese of Calcutta and every congregation in West Bengal living in fear. We also stand with the Santali Christian community, whose right to worship in its own language is a constitutional right and not a provocation.
4. The AICU urges the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Minorities and the West Bengal Human Rights Commission to take suo motu cognisance and order a high-level independent inquiry, and we ask the Union Government to ensure that religious freedom is upheld in every state.

Alexander Anthony