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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Association Mauritanienne pour la promotion du droit, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 May 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Grave Situation Faced by Christians in India

Our organization has concerned about the grave situation faced by Christians in India which threatens their existence. The threats to the life and properties of Indian Christians and their persecution in India has risen over the past years, pushing it up the league of countries where the practice of faith is a high-risk activity. The world's second most populous country has also risen up the ladder on a World survey on religious and ethnic intolerance.

India experienced an escalation of attacks on its Christian minority in recent years and the rise of extremism is a direct threat to various other minorities of India as well. There is a clear pattern of rising religious intolerance across the India which affects millions of Indian Christians. Religious radicals attempt to forcibly convert people to Hinduism, the dominant faith in India, often turning to violence when community discrimination and non-violent oppression does not succeed in imposing their religious beliefs on minority Christians. These Christians are often from the lower castes and the north eastern states like Meghalaya and Nagaland who already face huge socio-economic problems. They are an easy target for extremist Hindu zealots.

In this year a Fierce anti-Christian campaign targets India's indigenous people in Jhabua district Madhya Pradesh. Hindu leader Kamalesh Malviya told a meeting on 26 Jan of the village council in Amba village in tribal-dominated Jhabua district. "There is no space for religious conversion and healing prayers among the indigenous people, and those who have converted to Christianity should be opposed," Hindu groups are campaigning across Jhabua district for Christians to return to Hinduism, which they say is the parental religion of all Indians.

Another incident on 22 Jan 2021 a village court in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand has ordered families who converted to Christianity to be caned, fined and excommunicated from the community. Three Korwa tribal families from Khala village of Dhurki in Garhwa district embraced Christianity. Korwa are officially categorized as a "particularly vulnerable tribal group" in India. More than 24 Korwa families have allegedly converted to Christianity over the past year.

The Korwa language is on the verge of extinction and there are only about 6,000 Korwa people left in Garhwa district.

However, an anti-conversion law passed in Jharkhand in 2017 stipulates that religious conversion by force or allurement provides for up to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 rupees (US\$800).

If anyone wishes to convert, they need to inform the top district official of the reasons and the place of conversion or face prosecution. More severe punishments can be imposed for using force to convert minors and women as well as members of tribal minorities and lower castes.

Hindu nationalists often accuse Christians of using force and surreptitious tactics in pursuing conversions, often storming into villages and leading "reconversion" ceremonies in which Christians are compelled to perform Hindu rituals.

Jharkhand has 1.4 million Christians, mostly tribal people, out of a population of 33 million.

Our organization request this Council to urge the government of India to respect freedom of religious rights and also to ensure protection of minorities from racial discrimination.

We look forward to a positive response from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteurs (SR) on freedom of religion or belief, Special Rapporteurs (SR) on minority issues and Special Rapporteurs (SR) on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

LE CONSEIL UNIVERSEL DES DROIT DE L'HOMME, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.