



Aug 27, 2018 | Written by jcsawm | 0

The Church in India on August 25 organized programs in various parts of the country to observe the tenth anniversary of the anti-Christian violence in Kandhamal, a district in Odisha state.

More than 1,500 people attended a function in Bhubaneswar the capital of Odisha.

“We feel the pain of what happened but no anger. Our religion does not allow us to keep anger,” said Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, secretary general of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India (CBCI), one of the prelates who attended the program at St Joseph’s High School grounds in Bhubaneswar.

Bishop Mascarenhas thanked God for “the gift of faith” of Kandhamal martyrs and prayed for a change of heart of the perpetrators of the violence. The prelate also prayed for justice for the victims and the “grace for all Indians to live

in peace and harmony,”

The theme of the event was “Praying for peace, reconciliation, and harmony.” The CBCI and the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, Odisha, jointly organized the program.

A new book on Kandhamal, “Flames of Faith in Kandhamal,” was released on the occasion.

The book’s author Father Udayanath Bishoyi, a native of Kandhamal and professor of theology, prayed for peace in Kandhamal.

In New Delhi, more than 300 people attended a prayer meeting organized the Delhi archdiocese and the Indian unit of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF). They prayed for the survivors of Kandhamal violence and justice for them. The meeting also prayed for the nation, its leaders, judiciary, law enforcers and the flood-affected people of Kerala.

Kishore Digal, a Kandhamal survivor and a pastor, shared what he and his family experienced during the riots and afterwards.

Human rights activist Father Ajay Kumar Singh explained the current situation in Kandhamal and the state government’s reluctance to pay enhanced compensation to the survivors as ordered the by Supreme Court in 2016. He noted that some people who attacked Christians in Kandhamal were their friends and associates.

New Delhi also witnessed a national “Convention and Exhibition” on Kandhamal violence on August 25.

A group of artists and photographers attended the event pegged “Kandhamal: Never Again” at Constitution Club.

The event captured the ten years since of impunity, communal terror, intimidation, impunity, complicity, an elusive justice, no rehabilitation, and broken lives. The images of paintings and pictures will show the sheltered calmness of the fields and the forests hide a brutal past and an uneasy present.

Some photos exhibited were by photographer and journalist Joe Athialy, who works with the Centre for Financial Accountability. He contributes photos in National Geography Magazine

On August 23, Swami Agnivesh, eminent social activist and Hindu reformist leader, released the Hindi translation of the investigative book ‘Who Killed Swami Laxmanananda?’ by veteran journalist Anto Akkara at a function in New Delhi. A documentary on “Innocents Imprisoned” was screened at the program.

Violence against the Christians of Odisha erupted in Kandhamal district with untold savagery, with Hindu right-wing groups blaming Christians for the August 23, 2008, murder of Hindu leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, despite Maoist rebels claiming the assassination.

More than 100 people were killed and at least 64,000 displaced.



According to local sources, although over 3,300 complaints were made to the police, only 727 cases went to trial in fast-track courts, where more than 88 percent of the accused were acquitted.

Source: Matters India

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