

DEC. 2024



# NATIONAL DALIT CHRISTIAN WATCH



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER:  
CHRISTMAS EDITION

Christmas  
is doing a little  
something extra for  
someone!

- Charles M. Schultz



WANT TO KEEP CHRIST IN  
CHRISTMAS ?

INSPIRE THE HOPELESS, STAND  
FOR EQUALITY,SEEK JUSTICE FOR  
THE OPPRESSED

# 2024: THE YEAR OF BULLETS AND BALLOTS



The year (2024) we will bid adieu in the next few days has been momentous. The world has been on tenterhooks with wars and a fast-deteriorating situation in West Asia. Also, a record number of over 60 countries, covering nearly half of the global population (49%), cast their votes to elect new governments amidst anger over failing economies and division over cultural issues. Disillusionment against the political class has been widespread.

At the global level, wars in Gaza and Ukraine have dominated headlines. In Gaza alone, it is estimated over 20,000 have been killed, including 5,000 children. Far from any peaceful resolution, the ongoing wars have already fast escalated into new theatres of violence in Lebanon, Syria and Iran. It's been nearly three years for the war in Ukraine and there are no signs of ending.

Closer home, in India, Manipur remains on the boil, with no sight of normalcy anytime soon. People of all ages and communities live in the shadow of fear, with their lives and livelihoods completely destroyed. The Christian community in Manipur has been the worst hit—as Kukis, who are largely Christian, have been at the receiving end of violence. Properties of churches and church-affiliated organisations have been vandalised.

Manipur has hardly made it to the electoral discourse, when India voted back to power the Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), albeit with a reduced majority. The wave of hatred towards religious and other minorities and marginalised seen in the last decade shows no signs of abatement—as the state lets those spreading hatred and unleashing violence go scot-free. Crony capitalism and the capture of media by oligarchs seem complete both the world over and in India. The scourges of gender discrimination, casteism and religious intolerance continue to rear their ugly heads.

Amid this gloomy scenario, it is worth asking this Christmas season: If there's hope for this world beset and buffeted by what appears to be insurmountable challenges? Yes, our sole hope lies in our Prince of Peace, our Lord and Saviour Lord Jesus. It is our fervent hope and prayer from all of us at the National Christian Watch (NDCW) for peace to return to our dear world. Like with the First Christmas in Bethlehem 2024 years ago, we hope the shadows of gloom, despair, injustice and discrimination fade away to make way for peace and joy to return to our dear planet.

From all of us at NDCW, we wish each one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sr. Manju Devarapalli  
National Secretary, NDCW

# HIGHLIGHTS OF NDCW



NDCW organized a two-day training program for the national team at the People's Action for Rural Awakening (PARA) organization in Ravulapalem, near Rajahmundry, on November 17th and 18th. The event provided the team with a valuable opportunity to meet and collaborate. Dr. Richard, the Chairperson of NDCW, gave an orientation on the NDCW constitution and shared the organization's future goals.

The team also worked on several key initiatives, including drafting activities of NDCW from 2016 to the present, addressing discrimination in both the Southern and Northern regions, reviewing DCD articles and newsletters, and evaluating financial matters. Over the two days, the team developed a comprehensive one-year action plan. Additionally, the team had the chance to meet with the PARA (People Action for Rural Awakening) team, gaining insight into their work in the community.

The training program was successfully organized, with all team members engaging effectively in their roles and contributing to a productive and insightful two-day session.



# HIGHLIGHTS OF NDCW





"On December 10, 2024, Sr. Manjula Devarapalli CM, the National Secretary of the National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), participated in the National Conference on End Manual Scavenging: Freedom from Caste and Caste-Based Occupations. She presented a thought-provoking paper on the given theme, emphasizing the urgent need to eradicate manual scavenging and liberate communities from caste-based occupational stigmas."





"Championing the cause of justice and equality, NDCW joins hands with various organizations to advocate for extending SC status for Dalit Christians and eradicating religion-based discrimination. Our National Secretary took an active role, powerfully voicing support for granting SC status to Dalit Christians."



Mr. Bablu, North Region Coordinator, represented NDCW at a national conclave bringing together stakeholders from across India committed to human rights, dignity, and collaboration for social justice. He had an opportunity to meet the Senior Manager of Efficore and Mr. Rohit Barala, Chair of the PUSH Network, during this significant gathering.



The North Region Coordinator attended and represented NDCW at the Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG) Conclave. The Conclave focused on critical issues such as political prisoners, misuse of UAPA and PMLA, misuse of official agencies (e.g., ED, CBI), and the role of the judiciary. This gathering provided a platform to engage with pressing concerns affecting democratic and constitutional values.



As part of the preparation for the protest scheduled for November 26th, titled **"Peaceful Protest Against Rampant Persecution,"** organized by the **Christian Fellowship Delhi & NCR**, Bablu, North Regional Coordinator of NDCW, has taken significant steps to ensure its success. He successfully coordinated and mobilized 50 security and volunteer leaders from diverse institutions and associations, including the Kuki Students' Association. An orientation program for volunteers was organized at Vidya Jyoti to ensure they are prepared for their roles during the protest. Bablu also coordinated with pastors from various parishes, bringing together well-educated and dedicated Dalit Christian leaders who are committed to the movement. Many of these leaders have expressed interest in joining and contributing to the ongoing efforts of NDCW.







The North Region Coordinator had the opportunity to meet Mr. Kapil Keshari, Director of the Purvanchal Rural Development Social Institute and a prominent advocate for social welfare. He shared valuable insights on empowering Dalits and Dalit Christians. Their conversation focused on collaborative strategies for social upliftment and justice, highlighting his inspiring dedication to the cause.



The North Regional Coordinator represented NDCW at the South Asia Freedom Forum on Religious or Belief. He also had the opportunity to share about caste and discrimination.





The 46th United Christmas Celebration was held on December 18th, 2024, bringing together Christian denominations from across the region to celebrate Christmas under one roof. The event was graced by the Honourable Telangana Governor, whose presence added to the significance of the occasion. The National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), invited to be part of this celebration, was honored to participate alongside the Governor. Our National Secretary, Sr. Manju Devarapalli, represented NDCW at the event, underscoring our commitment to unity and shared celebration.



A consultation meeting organized by MAIN (Migrant Assistance and Information Network), focusing on "Migrants Assistance in Distress Situations". The resource person for the meeting was Rev. Fr. Martin Puthusserry SJ, Director of MAIN, Delhi. Our National Secretary represented NDCW at this event, sharing concerns about the difficulties migrants face, likely bringing attention to issues like caste-based discrimination, lack of access to basic rights, and strategies for advocacy and capacity-building for marginalized communities.



Mr. Ashu Peter Matto, NDCW Convenor from Jammu & Kashmir, successfully organized a joyous Christmas celebration at the Raj Bhawan, Governor House. The event was graced by the presence of Rev. Bishop Ivan Pereira, priests, and members of the Church of North India (CNI) Jammu-Srinagar Diocese, along with representatives of the All Jammu and Kashmir Christian Society (AJKCS).

The Lieutenant Governor commended the Christian community's contributions towards fostering a peaceful, selfless, compassionate, and caring society.

This celebration not only marked the festive spirit of Christmas but also highlighted the commitment of the Christian community to societal harmony and upliftment.



# BEHIND THE FIGURES: A Tale of Inequality



The Anthropological Survey of India has identified 6,325 castes. A report from the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) highlighted that caste discrimination remains prevalent in many Christian denominations in India, particularly in the treatment of Dalit Christians within church communities. Dalit Christians make up approximately 18-20% of the total Christian population in India. Despite embracing Christianity to escape caste-based oppression, practices such as segregated burial grounds and unequal treatment within church communities demonstrate the persistence of this injustice. Recent data shows alarming regional disparities, with Tamil Nadu accounting for 40-45% of reported atrocities against Dalit Christians, followed by Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka. Leadership representation within the church also reflects significant inequities, with Dalit and Adivasi bishops making up only a small fraction of the total dioceses. These statistics highlight the urgent need for introspection and action to promote inclusivity and dismantle caste-based biases within religious institutions.



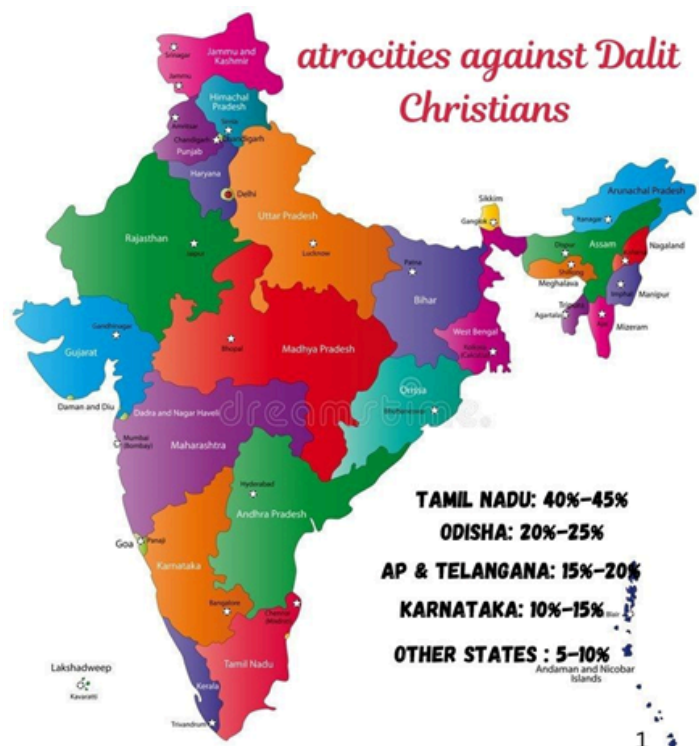
Till death do us part: Dalits are buried on the other side of the wall in this cemetery

By Swaminathan Natarajan BBC Tamil

**Many in India have embraced Christianity to escape the age-old caste oppression of the Hindu social order, but Christianity itself in some places is finding it difficult to shrug off the worst of caste discrimination.**

In the town of Trichy, situated in the heart of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, a wall built across the Catholic cemetery clearly illustrates how caste-based prejudice persists.

Those who converted to Christianity from the formerly "untouchable" Hindu caste groups known as Dalits are allocated space for burial on one side of the wall, while upper-caste converts are buried on the other side.



The latest data provided by Dalit Christian Liberation Forum (DCLF) on Dalit and Adivasi bishops across various states highlights the representation within the church. This information is crucial for understanding the diversity and inclusivity within religious leadership.

- **Dalit Bishops: 14 + 2 (including coadjutor and auxiliary)**
- **Adivasi Bishops: 17**
- **Caste Bishops: 59 + 3 (including auxiliaries)**
- **Vacancies: 5**
- **Total Dioceses: 95**

### **States with Major Atrocities against Dalit Christians:**

#### ***Tamil Nadu:***

Dalit Christians face frequent discrimination within the church and in society, with instances of physical violence, denial of burial rights, and social ostracization.

#### ***Andhra Pradesh and Telangana:***

Reports of discrimination and violence against Dalit Christians, especially related to land rights and religious freedom.

#### ***Odisha:***

Known for attacks on Christians, such as the 2008 Kandhamal riots, where Dalit Christians were particularly targeted.

#### ***Karnataka:***

Rising cases of violence against Christians, including Dalit Christians, under the pretext of anti-conversion laws.

#### ***Kerala:***

Although Kerala has a significant Christian population, Dalit Christians still face caste-based exclusion and unequal treatment within church structures.

The data showcased here represents just the beginning. NDCW is committed to delving deeper into the realities of atrocities against Dalit Christians. In the coming year, our team has meticulously planned to conduct state-level meetings aimed at gathering comprehensive and relevant data.



# 2024

## January

**11th January**

We successfully organized a Capacitation Training Program in Trichy, aimed at empowering youth with essential skills in fact-finding, advocacy

We successfully organized a Capacitation Training Program in Jalandhar, Punjab, aimed at empowering youth with essential skills in fact-finding, advocacy

**27&28th  
January**

## March

**1st March**

Empowering Youth: Capacitation Training Program in Villupuram

RE-VISITING 2024



**9th &10th March**

We organized the Dalit Christian Intellectual Conclave in Bangalore, a pivotal gathering aimed at revitalizing Dalit Christian perspectives within the church.

Empowering Youth: Capacitation Training Program in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha

**11th March**

**19th-21st March**

NDCW organized a comprehensive Workshop on Proposal Writing for its national team in Chennai.

**April**

**20th April**

Empowering Youth: Capacitation Training Program in Kerala

We organized the Dalit Christian Intellectual Conclave in Delhi, on the theme "Dalit Christianity: Inclusivity and Exclusivity."

**21st April**

**27th-29th April**

Dalit Christian Writers Conference, Hyderabad

# RE-VISITING 2024

## May

Capacitation Training Program Held in Andhra Pradesh

**6th May**

**18th May**

Capacitation training Program in Telengana

## June

**17th & 18th June**

National Dalit Christian Watch Holds Youth Empowerment Program in Jammu and Kashmir

NDCW organized an Inter-Faith Intellectual Conference in Srinagar. Prominent intellectuals from various religious groups participated

**20th June**

**July**

**18th July**

The South Region Stakeholders Meeting was successfully convened in Madurai.

**August**

The North Region Stakeholders Meeting was successfully convened in Delhi .

**17th August**

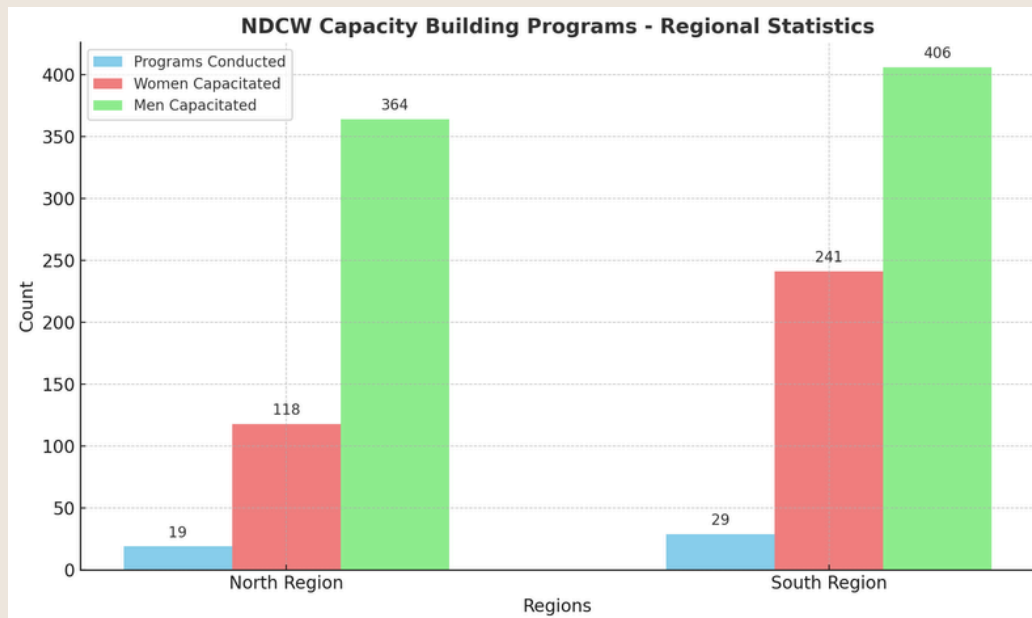
**November**

**18th &19th November**

NDCW organized two days training program for National team members in Rajamundry

## NDCW's Milestone Achievements

The National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW) has been at the forefront of empowering Dalit leaders through impactful capacity-building programs. These initiatives have been pivotal in equipping individuals with the tools to lead, advocate, and foster social transformation.



### Overall Impact

Programs Organized Across Regions: 48

Total Women Empowered: 359

Total Men Empowered: 770

Total Leaders Capacitated: 1,129

These numbers reflect NDCW's unwavering commitment to creating a cadre of strong, capable Dalit leaders. Each program represents not just a statistic but a story of empowerment, resilience, and progress. By enabling leaders to rise above systemic barriers, NDCW continues to champion the cause of equality and justice for marginalized communities.

This journey of empowerment is a testament to the collective effort towards building an inclusive and equitable society.

**Let's take a moment to celebrate these achievements as we look ahead to an even brighter 2025!**

# Hope, Empowerment, and New Beginnings



As we celebrate the joyous season of Christmas and step into a New Year filled with hope, let us remember the true essence of this time—the spirit of love, equality, and justice. This season invites us to reflect on our shared responsibility to stand with the marginalized and work towards an inclusive and equitable society.

