

Preserving Justice and Maintaining Order

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Since the Orissa State government performed its duty to maintain law and order low key Christmas celebrations were held in the state of Orissa. Many lament that even the ethnic cleansing of Christians could have been avoided had the government acted earlier, to control the wicked designs of evil people. However Christmas celebrations just didn't pass off peacefully, but also "ushered in tremendous confidence among the affected people of Kandhamal," writes Father Joe Xavier. The hope is that the government will continue to provide security.

Civil Society Peace Meetings

The civil society organised a peace meeting in K. Nuagaon and Phulbani on 25th December. The leaders highlighted the importance of peace, harmony and coexistence of Dalits and Adivasis. It was emphasised not to demonize the communities or become victims of fundamentalist forces.

About 4000 primary school teachers and 2000 youth have committed themselves for the peace process in Kandhamal. The street plays enacted by social peace activists covering 11 blocks have helped promote social harmony. The activists of Naba Nirman Samiti, Sarvodaya Groups and the Primary Teachers' Federation worked very hard to promote peace process.

Thousands joined in prayer and still continue to pray for peace in Orissa and all over India. About 150 pastors spent two days in prayer and fasting on December 19th and 20th at YMCA, Bhubaneswar. Let us continue to pray.

What next?

The four month old camp life existence of the innocent vulnerable and weak cannot continue for long. Serious questions still have to be addressed. Even if the people return to their villages, how will they be accepted? Will they be forced to convert to Hinduism? How do we ensure peace, justice and coexistence? For many their houses lie in ruins. It will be extremely difficult to earn their daily bread.

It is imperative for the state government to continue to provide security and maintain law and order. It has the goodwill of civil society. It should not betray again the confidence of poor citizens who happen to be Christians.

The citizens for peace must continue to hold public institutions, policies and programs of government accountable for preserving justice and maintaining order.

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