

# Religious Freedom Week 2024

## Pray—Reflect—Act

### June 26—India

**Pray** for our Christian brothers and sisters in India, who face harassment and violent attacks.

#### **Reflect**

Traditionally, many cultures and religious communities have thrived alongside one another in India which, according to its Constitution, was established as a “socialist, secular, democratic republic” so that all citizens were to be treated equally regardless of religious identity. But since 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have promoted a Hindu nationalist ideology so that to be Indian is to be Hindu. Consequently, Muslims (about 14% of the population), Christians (slightly over 2%), and other religious minorities face discrimination and find themselves under attack. A civil society organization reported a four-fold increase in attacks against Christians between 2012 and 2022. In the state of Manipur, the minority Christian population has faced harassment and attacks at the hands of Hindu nationalists. Since May 2023, around 300 churches have been set on fire, and 100 other buildings belonging to Christian groups have been destroyed. Around 50,000 people have been displaced by the hostilities. Hate speech, particularly against Muslims, is on the rise and violence is committed against minorities with impunity as police do little to protect those being persecuted and may actually participate in the attacks. Incitement to violence escalated as the May 2024 elections loomed. In response, the Catholic Bishops Conference of India has called the faithful to prayer and peaceful engagement as citizens, while also demanding that the government uphold the Fundamental and Minority Rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

#### **Act**

Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) was founded by Pope Pius XI in 1926 as an instrument of love and a sign of hope for those in need scattered throughout the historic but unstable lands of the ancient Eastern churches—the Middle East, Northeast Africa, India and Eastern Europe. Connect with CNEWA at [cnewa.org/](http://cnewa.org/).



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