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INDIA | Christians Beaten During Meeting

A Christian prayer meeting at Praise the Lord Church in Kanjappalli, Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu was attacked by Hindu nationalists on May 3.

At approximately 1:30 p.m. on May 3, six men, who belong to a Hindu nationalist group known as Hindu Munani, disrupted the meeting and threatened Pastor Philip Rangasamy, who heads the church. The men then threatened to kill the Christians if they continued praying before assaulting them.

Among those who were injured are Mr. Ayyanar, 38, whose hand was fractured, and Mrs. Angathal, 70, who sustained head injuries. Items belonging to the church, including Bibles and song books, were destroyed.

Local sources say the perpetrators have been arrested after Pastor Rangasamy registered a First Information Report (FIR). Sources also report that efforts are being taken by the Hindu Munani to post bail for the perpetrators. Pastor Rangasamy has stated that this was the second time their prayer meeting was disrupted. The first incident occurred Feb. 10 when the same group of men disrupted another meeting with force and threatened him with violence if he did not obtain permission to conduct church services.

“It is heart-rending to see that the government has ignored repeated calls from human rights activists about the rising religious intolerance in the state. The church has been conducting prayer services for last 13 years,” Nehemiah Christie, Director of Legislation & Regulations of the Synod of Pentecostal Churches in Tamil Nadu, said. “We had highlighted the impunity surrounding non-state actors on this church since the first incident took place on 10 February. We even shared the video footage of the intrusion then with the police and sought the help of officers to take action against the perpetrators but nothing was done. The apathy and neglect by the police has now resulted in more people being hurt with risks of more attacks taking place. This is becoming a routine

feature all across the state of Tamil Nadu. I call on the government to take stern action those police officers for their disregard to protect and preserve the rule of law.”

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “We urge the state and central governments to prosecute those who incite hatred and perpetrate violence against religious minorities. The freedom to assemble and pray is a fundamental right of every Indian citizen, which is enshrined in the Indian constitution. We urge the police to uphold rule of law and take seriously the concerns that have been raised by local human rights defenders.”