

Christian and Dalit communities attacked in Gujarat

Contributed by Correspondant
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Members of the Christian and Vankar communities of a village in Gujarat have been attacked, leaving many of them seriously injured. The injured have been admitted to hospital. On behalf of the Christian Community, the All India Christian Council (aicc) has protested and demanded that the culprits be arrested immediately. According to aicc National Executive Member and Joint Secretary Samson Christian, the attack took place in Bhoomas village in Mahudha Taluka of Kheda district, Gujarat. The incident took place while New Year was being celebrated during the intervening night of 2 and 3 November 2005. The Takurs were playing Bhavai (a cultural programme) by erecting a shamiyana. The members of the minority Christian and Vankar communities went to watch the programme. Without any provocation, the Takurs, numbering around 150, attacked Christians and Vankars with swords, sticks, sickles and pipes. They used foul language, belittling their religion. They threw stones at them, snatched their ornaments and beat them up in public. The attackers were led by Ramanbhai Sanabhai Patel (Ex-President of the Congress in Nadiad Taluka Panchayat). The Christians and Vankars ran away to save their lives but the attackers chased them to their houses, beat up their women and children and misbehaved with them. Babubhai Jethabhai and Kashiben Ramanbhai, who were badly injured, were later admitted to Civil Hospital in Nadiad.

Hanokhbhai Somabhai Vankar, the leader of the community, took the victims to Mahudha police station around noon on 3 November 2005 to file a police case. But the policemen on duty refused to take the complaint. So they went to the District Superintendent of Police of Kheda and submitted the complaint. The police official in turn directed the policemen in Mahudha to file the complaint and do the needful. The Police Inspector of Mahudha Police Station subsequently registered an FIR (No 152/2005 according to IPC 337, 504, 394, 147, 148 under the Atrocity Act 3(1), 10, 3(2), 5). In spite of registering the complaint, the police have failed to arrest the culprits. It may be recalled way back in 1986 the Takurs and Patels of the village had attacked the Christians over the issue of filling water. At that time the Christians had asked for police protection. When the police arrived, the Takurs and Patels attacked the police by pelting stones at them and overturning the vehicle. Additional police force had to be called in to bring the situation under control. The police protection remained in the village for six months. The aicc has sought immediate arrest of Rameshbhai Sanabhai Patel and other attackers and adequate protection to the Christians living in the village.