A MEMORANDUM TO THE HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA BY
UNITED CHRISTIAN FORUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India
Greetings of Peace from the Christian Community of India

We are writing this Memorandum to you with a deep sense of pain and anguish at the recent spurt of violence inflicted on the Christian Community. Since January 1998, there has been more violence against the Christian community than in the fifty years of India's independence. Nuns have been raped, priests executed, Bibles burnt, Churches demolished, educational institutions destroyed and religious personnel harassed. Even the dead body of a Christian was not allowed to rest in peace. A corpse was dug out from a graveyard in Gujarat. This State alone has counted more than forty cases of violent atrocities in less than six months of 1998.

As you know, other communities have also experienced such violence. The Sikhs faced it for more than a decade. The Muslims continue to experience it in several parts of the country. Dalits and tribals undergo not only physical but also institutional violence.

We are all aware of the forces behind these acts of violence. The National Commission for Minorities Various Commissions of Enquiry at the Director General of Police Gujarat have identified the organisations and their associates who are spreading the venom of communalism to their vested interests. Wherever Christian communities and others are involved at the grassroots with developmental work and education among the marginalised, the violence is more vicious.

The state has failed to do its duty protecting the life, dignity and property of the victims. At many places, it seems as if the Central and State governments have tacitly supported the communal groups. How is it otherwise that the State Governments have not to any action against the virulent and anti-national statements of the these organisations in which they have preached hatred, fanaticism and violence. The erstwhile government of Rajasthan did not act against those threatened the ethnic and religious cleansing of Christians in Banswara district of Rajasthan.
Such incidents of violence are a result of a mindset which threatens the unity and integrity of the country. Ours is a country of plurality. The Constitution guarantees freedom of Religion; language and culture. It is now for all of us to unite in the spirit of the Constitution to fight against the communal forces that are bent on dividing the country. Let us work unitedly in the spirit of the Constitution to build a nation of equality, liberty and fraternity. Parliament has a crucial role in this. We therefore demand that:


2. Parliament, the Government of India, the Prime Minister and the Home minister unequivocally denounce Communalism and the Communal Organisations which have been identified for their role in the violence against Minorities, and specially for the violence on the Christian Community.

3. The Centre and State governments give categorical assurances for the Safety, Security and Honour of all Minorities, their Clergy and Religious personnel, their Institutions and their Laity.

4. State governments take urgent steps to investigate the cases of violence against the Christian community, and to take steps under the law of the land to bring the guilty to book without fear or favour, and without bias. Police and administration cease their attempts to pervert the investigations by seeking to implicate Christians, and stop persecuting and terrorising innocent people, specially in villages and rural areas.

5. The Government denounce all attempts to foist on the country a philosophy of One nation. One People One Culture mitigates against the Plural Heritage of India. And that Government take urgent steps to counter the poisonous and virulent propaganda by Communal Organisations and their Mouthpieces which construct a Mythology of Hate, and which projects the Minorities as aliens in their own homeland. The government also immediately end the blatant bias in the Official media of Doordarshan and All India Radio.
5. Parliament be vigilant against attempts to subvert Human Resource Development, Education, History and Culture, and to take steps to nurture the Plural Heritage of Religious, Cultural and Linguistic diversity and richness of this Great Nation.

7. Parliament, the Centre and the State governments take urgent steps to end the Overt and Covert bias, and to ensure Equity, Fairplay and Justice, in the implementation of laws, specially those dealing with Land and Buildings, Regulations for Educational institutions, rules on grant of Visas and Passports, and other Acts which are often used as instruments of discrimination.

8. Parliament Enact Legislation to give Statutory Powers to the National Commission for Minorities that are required to make it into an effective watchdog of the Rights of the Minorities in India.

9. Parliament ensure that the National Minorities Development Finance Corporation is made an effective instrument of Economic development of all minorities.

10. And, Most Importantly, Parliament Enact urgently Legislation to give to Dalit Christians the Constitutional Rights that were taken away from them in 1950. Only this will end the sorry saga of violence against the Christian Community, and restore the Secular Guarantees of Freedom of Faith enshrined in the Constitution of India

11. Parliament, we are sure, will not disappoint the Minorities, and particularly the Christian Community of India.

Your fellow citizens of the Christian Community.

Archbishop Alan De Lastic    Bishop Issac Mar Philoxenos and    Bishop Karam Masih.
Sd/-                        Sd/-                        Sd/-
Rev. Richard Howell         Fr. P.A. Phillip           Fr. George Periena
Air Marshal Denzil Keelor, PSVM John Dayal