

NATIONAL DALIT CHRISTIANS WATCH



June 2026
Quarterly Newsletter



LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR

Dear Friends,

It gives NDCW immense joy to witness our sustained efforts against discrimination bearing fruit, guided by our motto: "Christ and Caste Cannot Go Together."

Dalit Christians continue to face discrimination from birth to death due to the persistence of caste-based attitudes within society. Those who convert to Christianity (or Islam) often lose eligibility for Scheduled Caste reservation benefits, although they may qualify under Other Backward Classes (OBC) or other categories depending on state policies and individual circumstances.

Today, we are sharing the story of a Dalit Catholic who was denied burial in a common Catholic cemetery solely because of caste discrimination.

NDCW took up this injustice and successfully initiated legal proceedings under the provisions relating to untouchability. The matter reached the High Court and is now being pursued before the Supreme Court through the dedicated efforts of one of our Governing Body members, Advocate Franklin.

The fight to eradicate discrimination is a lifelong journey. Every step towards justice strengthens our hope and commitment. We are grateful to witness our collective efforts bringing positive change and reaffirm our resolve to continue working until every person is treated with equal dignity and respect, in keeping with the true values of the Gospel.

Warm Regards
General Secretary – NDCW

Long-Standing Struggle for Equality: Dalit Catholics Secure Burial Rights in Kottapalayam

Trichy, July 22, 2026

For decades, Dalit Catholic Christians in Kottapalayam, Tamil Nadu, have faced caste-based discrimination in various aspects of church life, including participation in religious celebrations, access to common facilities, and burial rights. Despite constitutional guarantees and repeated appeals for equality, discriminatory practices continued to deny the community equal treatment within the Church. The issue came into national focus when the funeral of an 89-year-old retired Dalit Christian teacher was delayed for three days after members of the dominant caste objected to his burial in the common parish cemetery. Following the intervention of civil authorities and the enforcement of an existing court order affirming equal burial rights, the burial was finally conducted with dignity. The incident serves as a reminder that caste discrimination continues to exist within sections of the Christian community and underscores the urgent need for the Church to uphold equality, justice, and human dignity for all its faithful.

NDCW congratulates **Advocate Franklin Caesar Thomas** for his unwavering legal advocacy and tireless efforts over many years in supporting the Dalit Catholic community of Kottapalayam in their struggle for equal rights. His dedication has contributed significantly to this important step towards justice and has inspired many in the ongoing movement to eradicate caste discrimination within the Church.

Messages of support and solidarity

Mr Michael Peria: Congratulations! for finding the right place for the Dead Dalit Christians. Can we also find the right place for the LIVING Dalit Catholics. Let our Indian Catholic Church be an example, that there is no Caste discrimination among ourselves. What does the statistics say;

1. Number of DALIT Catholics in India.
2. Number of DALIT WOMEN Religious
3. N.O D Religious brothers
4. N.O.D Priests
5. N.O.D Bishops

Lolly D'Silva: Christians in the South still keep their caste status... See Marriage ads.. Want Catholic Brahmin bride. In churches the low caste sit on carpets in front... So I'm not surprised they are not allowed in cemetery...

Pushpa George: Why go all the way to Tamilnadu? Here in Telangana there is a church where they don't allow whom they consider as lower in caste to worship. They have another smaller church I have heard.

Teresa from CNACD: Thanks for letting us know of the hard work of this particular case of caste discrimination. All the hard work by NDCW and advocate Franklin to win the right for Dalit Catholics to be buried in the Common graveyard. Winning this case and going public to the Supreme Court would be a land mark and lead to Churches obeying rather than causing discrimination and degrading their own people. The sad fact is that it should be settled at local level rather than such hardship and cost in order to reach the Supreme Court.. • Manju, Thank you for all the hard work of NDCW. Our prayers and good wishes are with you.

- **Binoy from Kerala:** Thank you for sharing Also congratulations to all for taking such efforts.
- **Fr Shailendra SJ:** Great effort
- **Adv Selvi:** Proud of you, May God bless every work of your hands...

Alpa from Gujarat: Proud of you and your persistent efforts to bring justice to the one's who need it the most. 🌸

Sabrina Francis: Congratulations and hope that you bring peace and hope to those who deserve the most.



Congratulations to Rev. Dr. Devasagayaraj Zackarias

The National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW) extends its heartfelt congratulations to Rev. Dr. Devasagayaraj Zackarias on his appointment as the Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Office for Scheduled Castes/Backward Classes (SC/BC), New Delhi.

We are confident that his leadership, dedication, and commitment to social justice will strengthen the Church's mission among Dalit and Backward Class communities. At this significant moment in the struggle for equality and dignity, we wish him God's abundant blessings, wisdom, and strength as he takes on this important responsibility. NDCW looks forward to continued collaboration in promoting justice, inclusion, and the rights of Dalit Christians across India. We wish him every success in his new ministry.



The Justice K. G. Balakrishnan Commission has completed its report examining the long-standing demand to extend Scheduled Caste (SC) status to Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims. The Commission was constituted by the Government of India to study whether members of these communities, who continue to face caste-based discrimination even after changing their religion, should be granted SC status. The completion and submission of the report marks an important milestone in the ongoing struggle for equal constitutional rights, social justice, and recognition. While the Commission's recommendations have not yet been made public, Dalit Christian organizations and human rights advocates hope that the report will contribute to meaningful policy decisions that address decades of discrimination and exclusion.



Three church leaders murdered in Manipur, India

The National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW) expresses its profound grief over the tragic killing of three Baptist church leaders in Manipur on 13 May 2026. Rev. Dr. Vumthang Sithou, Pastor Kaigoulun Lhouvum, and Pastor Paogoulen Sithou lost their lives when unidentified armed assailants ambushed their vehicles while they were returning from a peace and reconciliation gathering in Kangpokpi district. The attack, which also left several others injured, has deeply shocked the Christian community and all those committed to peace and justice. The loss of religious leaders who dedicated themselves to dialogue, reconciliation, and community service is a painful reminder of the continuing violence and insecurity in Manipur. NDCW joins churches, civil society organizations, and people of goodwill in mourning the victims, praying for their families, and calling for a thorough investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice. We also renew our appeal for lasting peace, reconciliation, and the protection of all communities in the region.



Awareness Seminar on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls

The National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), in collaboration with PARA and the SCBC Commission, organized an Awareness Seminar on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls on 27 June 2026 in Eluru, Andhra Pradesh. The seminar brought together 67 participants to enhance awareness about the importance of voter registration, electoral rights, and the process of updating electoral rolls. The resource persons, Mr. Mohammad Subhan and Mr. Ramesh Patnaik, provided valuable insights into the SIR process and encouraged participants to actively engage in ensuring accurate and inclusive electoral rolls. The programme was sponsored by Bishop Jaya Rao Polimera, Chairman of the SCBC Commission, whose support contributed significantly to the successful conduct of the seminar.

Highlights of the General Secretary's Engagements



Babasaheb Ambedkar Reading Circle (BARC), National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), All India Feminist Alliance (ALIFA) are jointly organizing a session on

DALIT CHRISTIANS: FAITH, RESISTANCE, AND THE ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

Speakers:

- Percy Kaki
Visual Artist
- Sr. Manjula Devarapalli
National Secretary,
National Dalit Christian Watch
- Ravali Pidaparthi
Co-founder,
Esther India Foundation
- Vennela Mocherla
PhD Scholar,
University of Hyderabad

Moderator:

- Likky Raju

Date : 5 PM, 16th May, 2026,
Saturday
Venue: Lamakaan, Hyderabad



Sr. Manjula Devarapalli, National Secretary of the National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), participated as a panel speaker in a public discussion titled "Dalit Christians: Faith, Resistance, and the Ongoing Struggle for Justice," held on 16 May 2026 at Lamakaan, Hyderabad. The programme was jointly organized by the Babasaheb Ambedkar Reading Circle (BARC), the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), and the All India Feminist Alliance (ALIFA). The discussion brought together activists, scholars, and community leaders to reflect on the lived realities of Dalit Christians, the persistence of caste discrimination within the Church and society, and the ongoing struggle for justice, dignity, and equal rights. Representing NDCW, Sr. Manjula highlighted the need for collective action, greater awareness, and sustained advocacy to eliminate caste-based discrimination and uphold the constitutional and human rights of Dalit Christians.



NDCW Observes Dalit History Month 2026

The National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), in collaboration with the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and the Telangana Council of Churches (TCC), observed Dalit History Month 2026 by organizing a programme titled "Celebrating Our History, Identity Beyond Caste" on 30 April 2026 at the CSI Medak Diocese Office, Secunderabad. The event brought together church leaders, activists, and members of the Dalit Christian community to celebrate Dalit history, identity, and resilience while reaffirming the commitment to equality, justice, and human dignity. The programme also reflected on the continuing challenge of caste-based discrimination within the Church and society and called for collective action to build an inclusive and caste-free Christian community.

NCCI **NDCW** **TELANGANA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

Join us in Observing
Dalit History Month 2026

**Celebrating our
History, Identity
beyond Caste**

30th April 2026
4:00pm - 6:00pm
Venue : CSI-Medak Diocese Office,
Secunderabad

Dalit History Month, observed every April, is a global initiative that commemorates the history, struggles, achievements, and contributions of Dalit communities. It serves as an opportunity to celebrate Dalit identity, honour the legacy of those who fought against caste oppression, and renew the commitment to social justice, equality, and human rights.



Consultation on the FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026

Representatives of churches, Christian organizations, legal experts, and civil society groups gathered for a consultation on the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment (FCRA) Bill, 2026 to discuss its potential implications for faith-based organizations in India. The consultation provided a platform to examine how the proposed amendments could affect charitable, educational, healthcare, and social development initiatives carried out by Christian institutions across the country. Participants emphasized the need to safeguard the constitutional rights of civil society organizations and to ensure that legislative changes do not hinder their long-standing service to marginalized and vulnerable communities. The meeting also reaffirmed the importance of collective advocacy and constructive dialogue in protecting the freedom of organizations committed to humanitarian and social justice initiatives.



NDCW National Secretary Participates in Solidarity Programme for Examination Reforms

Sr. Manjula Devarapalli, National Secretary of the National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), participated in a solidarity programme organized by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) in support of students demanding justice and comprehensive reforms following the NEET paper leak controversy. The event, which brought together students, activists, civil society organizations, and concerned citizens, called for greater transparency, accountability, and fairness in India's examination system. Renowned education reform advocate Sonam Wangchuk, the chief guest of the programme, addressed the gathering and emphasized the importance of restoring public trust in the country's education system through transparent and accountable reforms. By participating in the programme, Sr. Manjula expressed NDCW's solidarity with students and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to justice, equal opportunities, and democratic values.



Sr. Manju, National Secretary of the National Dalit Christian Watch (NDCW), had the privilege of meeting His Eminence **Cardinal Anthony Poola**, the first Dalit Cardinal of the Catholic Church in India. Cardinal Poola serves as the Archbishop of Hyderabad and is a respected leader within the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), where he contributes significantly to the Church's mission of promoting justice, inclusion, and the dignity of all people. His life and ministry continue to inspire hope, particularly among the marginalized and oppressed.

Snapshots of Services

Meeting with
Aam Aadmi
Party National
Convenor, Shri
Arvind Kejriwal
Photos shared
by
Sunnybawa008



Meeting with Religious Leaders
Photos shared by Dimple.



Supporting Students Protesting the NEET Paper
Leak
Photos shared by Dimple.



#Masihdalfoundationofinda
#RamanHansMinistry#VBS
photo by Sunnybawa008



All India Students' Strike conducted by
Smt. Ratna Shree Gadde.



Congratulations to all the NDCW team members who actively participated in, supported, and encouraged the Gen Z protest demanding justice in the NEET examination paper leak issue. We also extend our appreciation to everyone who stood in solidarity with the efforts of the Cockroach Janata Party. Your commitment to raising your voices for transparency, accountability, and the rights of young people reflects the values of justice and democratic participation that NDCW upholds.

Your dedication, courage, and collective action are truly inspiring. Every effort, whether on the ground or behind the scenes, contributes to building a more just and equitable society.

Thank you for your hard work, solidarity, and unwavering commitment. Together, let us continue to stand for truth, justice, and the dignity of every person.



CBCI Observes National Day of Prayer Amid Concerns Over Proposed FCRA Amendment Bill

On 28 June 2026, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) observed a National Day of Prayer across the country in response to concerns over the proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment (FCRA) Bill, 2026.

The CBCI expressed apprehension that the proposed amendments could affect the Church's charitable, educational, healthcare, and social service ministries, which have long served the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable communities across India. Through special Masses, Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary, fasting, and prayer services, the faithful prayed for the nation, its leaders, and the continued freedom of the Church to carry out its mission of service. The CBCI also encouraged dioceses and institutions to submit memoranda to public representatives, expressing their concerns through peaceful and democratic means.



The struggle for justice is not merely a social responsibility—it is a Gospel calling. As we reflect on the stories and events shared in this newsletter, may we be renewed in our commitment to stand with those who continue to face exclusion and discrimination. Let us strengthen one another through faith, solidarity, and hope, believing that every act of justice, no matter how small, contributes to God's vision of equality and peace.

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" – Micah 6:8

