




Prominent Indians sign petition against draconian anti-conversion bill

So far 26,435 people have signed the petition and it is garnering more signatures as the days roll by.



News Desk | Published: 14th February 2022 5:44 pm IST



 Bengaluru: Members of Christian community and supporters hold placards during a protest rally against the 'Anti-Conversion bill', which was tabled yesterday during the Winter Session of Karnataka Legislative Assembly, in Bengaluru, Wednesday, Dec. 22, 2021. (PTI Photo/Shailendra Bhojak)

In view of the fact that the Anti-Conversion Bill is scheduled to be tabled in

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Karnataka Upper House, prominent Indians including noted documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, activist Medha Patkar and others have demanded for repeal of all anti-conversion laws in India.

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The petition was initiated by the National Solidarity Forum (NSF), a network of groups and individuals who started acting in response to the Kandhamal Genocide on the Adivasi Christians and Dalit Christians in 2007-2008.

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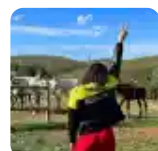
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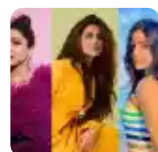
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The demand notes that there isn't a need for a new anti-conversion Law is not necessary since the Indian Constitution has enough provisions for the same. The signatories further stated, "Wherever the anti-conversion law, ironically officially called Freedom of Religion Act, was passed, it became a justification for the persecution of the minorities and other marginalized identities."

The further observed that the attacks on the minorities grew sharply in recent years since this law was used as a weapon targeting the dignity of Christians and Muslims

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particularly belonging to Adivais, Dalits and women. The petition called for joining hands to defend the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution and protection of human rights of the minorities and other marginalized sections in India.

Ajay Kumar Singh, a Co-Convenor of NSF stated: `A Dalit converted to Christianity or Islam loses the reservation and protection from the State. The Dalit does not lose any reservation and protection if he or she converts to Sikhism, Jainism or Buddhism. It is a reality that the discriminatory dalit identity does not change no matter which religion one belongs to. . There are stringent penal for restricting the dalit and adivasi to convert to Christianity or Islam. This law itself acts as an inducement to remain in Hinduism and violates the individual's right to choose one's own religion. It treats them as objects, who cannot

decide for themselves.'

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'The law disrespects women, and places restrictions for a woman to choose her partner. It is conceived with a notion that women in India are not in a position to think on their own and act on their own. This law is highly patriarchal. It is not acceptable,' said Vidya Dinkar, human rights activist and a core team member of NSF.

Thousands of people have already responded to the petition immediately by endorsing it and thousands of endorsements are pouring in. The petition is available [here](#).

Many political parties like

Congress, Janata Dal, Aam Aadmi Party, Welfare Party, Socialist Party (India) and other political organisations have already come forward strongly against the anti-conversion bill and the need to protect the Indian Constitution and the secular tradition in India.

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Names of prominent signatories is noted below:

The initial signatories for the petition to the President of India included nationally well known citizens like Admiral L Ramdas (Former Chief of Naval Staff of the Indian Navy), Mallika Sarabhai

(Accomplished dancer & choreographer), Medha Patkar (NAPM), Anand Patwardhan (Film Maker), Mani Shankar Aiyar (Former Minister), Prof. Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd (Writer, Academician), Rev. Peter Machado (Archbishop of Bangalore), Margaret Alva, Former Governor of Goa, Gujarat and Uttarakhand), Teesta Setalvad (Advocate, Civil Rights Activist), K. Satchidanandan (Writer, Poet, Former Secretary of Sahitya Akademi), Annie Raja (National Federation of Indian Women), Prof. Ram Puniyani, Harsh Mander (Author, Social Activist), Kavita Krishnan (AIPWA), Dr. John Dayal (Senior Journalist, Human Rights Activist), Sandeep Pandey (General Secretary, Socialist Party of India), Tehmina Arora (Human Rights Activist), Brinelle D'Souza (Centre for Health and Mental Health, TISS), Susmit Bose (Musician), Irfan Engineer (Centre for Study of Society and Secularism), Vidya Dinkar

(Human Rights Activist) and others.

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