

Salvationists in India Northern Territory

Families hide in forest to escape violence.

In the India Northern Territory, The Salvation Army is attempting to provide safe haven and basic necessities for Salvationists and other Christians who have been victims of recent violence.

In addition to the destruction of two prayer halls, one officer's quarters and the Paburia boys' home, 100 houses from three corps have been destroyed and over 100 families are still hiding in the forest. International Headquarters has stated that until the situation returns to normal, no exact count can be determined of how many Salvationists have been killed or wounded.



The boys' home

Forty young boys, ages 6 – 15, lived in the boys' home in Paburia; they attended a nearby government school. They were at the home due to poverty and other family matters.

For three days following the attack, the boys—along with Major Paul Kumar Sahani and his family—stayed hidden in the forest in drenching rain without food or shelter. On the fourth day, when the situation was unbearable, they surrendered to the leaders of the Hindu community. They were allowed to stay in a local school, where a teacher gave them food. After contact with the district magistrate, the group was escorted to a government-established relief camp. From here the children were later reunited with their parents. Apart from the clothes they were wearing, they had lost everything.

Currently the Sahanis are residing at the Angul DHQ compound, where they are safe. Because of curfew restrictions, however, life in Orissa is not normal.

Future plans

Discussions are underway regarding reconstruction and rehabilitation in the area, which will commence at some future time; three officers will oversee this work.

The situation in the area remains tense, and reports have emerged of violence against Christians in other states of India.

The Chief Secretary of the India Northern Territory thanks Salvationists around the world for their prayer support.

Please continue to remember all Christians in this troubled area—especially our Salvationist comrades and Army leaders directing the relief work.

From a report by Chief of the Staff Commissioner Robin Dunster.