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Communal violence in India

The Government of India is in the process of drafting legislation to prevent, control and deal with the aftermath of communal violence. In doing so, India is taking a proactive approach to tackling this severe problem which has afflicted Muslim and Christian communities. The Communal Violence (Prevention, Control and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill is welcomed in principle by groups which have been affected by communal violence, but there are concerns that the draft was not as effective as it could be. Specifically, it defined communal violence too narrowly, it risked insulating officials from punishment where they are involved in communal violence, it did not set out substantial measures to protect victims and witnesses, and it did not address the need for a uniform scheme of compensation.

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief visited India in 2008, and recommended that 'any specific legislation on communal violence should take into account the concerns of religious minorities and must not reinforce impunity of communalised police forces at the state level', and the bill is now being redrafted in consultation with representatives of minorities.

Following the substantial EU interest in the 2008 communal violence in Orissa, will the Commission reinforce the message of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in 2008 to the effect that the Government of India should 'take into account the views of religious minorities' when drafting this legislation, and encourage the Government to make this pioneering piece of legislation as strong and effective as possible?