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Your excellency,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the freedom of religion and belief in India.

In recent years, religious minorities in India have suffered from a significant increase in attacks, harassment, violence, and oppression. They are not sufficiently protected by authorities, and judicial developments in many states serve to diminish their religious freedom and promote hostility towards religious minorities.

The increase of attacks on religious minorities is connected to the authorities' limitations to religious freedom. Anti-conversion laws have been adopted in many states, many of which conflict with religious freedom as expressed in the International Covenant in Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Many states have adopted laws so vague as to effectively prohibit the sharing of one's faith to others, or marrying a person of another faith. Examples are attempts of conversion "by marriage or for a marriage" and the concealing of one's "religion with intention to marry" as expressed in Haryana's 2022 Prevention of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act. Vague laws make way for undue suspicion about conversions and provide a motive for attacks on religious minorities.

Ten states require individuals intending to or involved in converting to report to the government in an unduly invasive manner. The Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act 2022, for example, requires a public notification of, and public call for, any objections to a conversion. This conflicts with the General Comment no. 22 to the ICCPR's article 18, stating that "no one can be compelled to reveal his thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief". Seven states have, moreover, shifted the burden of proof on anyone accused of violating anti-conversion laws, requiring them to prove their innocence. That clearly conflicts with a fundamental principle of justice, namely the presumption of innocence until otherwise proven guilty.

On the basis of the failure of the authorities to protect religious minorities from attacks and the abovementioned judicial conflicts with important human rights and the rule of law, I humbly ask for your intervention in ensuring that:

- The government and local authorities take measures to protect religious minorities from attacks;
- Religious freedom as expressed in central human rights conventions to which India is a part is realised on the state level. This includes in particular the rights to change one's religion or belief and to not be compelled to reveal one's thoughts or adherence to a religion or belief.

Sincerely,