

--- On **Thu, 28/1/10, Dr. John Dayal <catholicunion@gmail.com>** wrote:

From: Dr. John Dayal <catholicunion@gmail.com>  
Subject: European Union cancels Orissa trip  
To: "JohnDayal" <johndayal@googlegroups.com>  
Date: Thursday, 28 January, 2010, 10:41 AM

A European Union delegation's visit to Orissa has been scrapped at the last minute after a dispute with the federal government over where the team could go.

The delegation wanted to visit Orissa's Kandhamal district, the epicenter of anti-Christian violence in 2008, but the government reportedly confined it to Bhubaneswar, the state capital.

The delegation canceled the four-day trip this evening (Jan. 27), saying it was not worth visiting only the capital.

John Dayal, a member of the National Integration Council and secretary general of the All India Christian Council, expressed deep surprise at the government's action.

The federal and Orissa state governments have repeatedly asserted that there is 'total peace' in Kandhamal and proper legal processes are being carried out, Dayal says.

'If this indeed be so, what then is there to hide from the view of the world?' he asked.

'The real culprits of the anti-Christian pogrom have got away' Dayal said.

The visit would have helped the team assess the progress of relief and rehabilitation for the victims as well as the effectiveness of the fast track courts set up to try cases against those accused of violence against Christians.

The 10-member diplomatic team was to have been led by Ramon Moreno, deputy chief of mission in the Spanish embassy in New Delhi.

The mission was only approved after more than a year of negotiations with the federal government. The team was scheduled to meet Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, who heads the Catholic Church in Orissa, on Jan. 28.

Dhirendra Panda, a human right activist in Orissa, criticized the government's actions. 'The very fact the government refuses the international community to visit Kandhamal shows it has something to hide,' Panda, a secularist Hindu, told UCA News.

Panda is demanding an explanation for the ban on visiting Kandhamal, especially after it claimed it the situation had returned to normal. The government stance will

damage the country's image around the world, he says.

Father Dibyasingh Pariccha, a lawyer working among the riot victims, says the government fears the diplomat's visit would expose the fact that people are still deprived of basic amenities.

Bipra Charan Nayak, convener of Sampradayika Hinsa Prapidita Sanghathan (associations of survivors of Kandhamal communal violence), says the government did not dare to show to the world the injustice meted out to a certain sections of its people.

The European Union was vocal in its concern about the riots from the moment they broke out on Aug. 24, 2008. French President Nicolas Sarkozy confronted Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at an India-EU summit in 2008.

Singh then said the violence against Christian minorities in Orissa was a national shame.

Source: UCAN