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Minority leaders protest “extraneous elements” at meet

MUMBAI (ICNS) -- Christian and Muslim leaders have protested the attendance of “extraneous elements” at a national workshop that discussed granting of Scheduled Caste status to dalits converting to Islam and Christianity.

Supporters of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and associated groups vociferously attended the workshop organized by the National Commission for Minorities and the **Tata Institute for Social Sciences at Mumbai in Aug. 19.**

"We are surprised at the adversarial structure of the Workshop based on participation of elements that are extraneous to the issue and have no locus standi," said a joint statement issued by Christian and Muslim leaders.

"We reaffirm that the demand for justice under the Constitution of India by the Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims is addressed to the Government of India and not to political or religious groups. Our appeals and arguments are directed towards the National Commission which is an instrument of Government of India", the joint statement said.

"We are surprised at the confrontation sought to be generated in the Workshop between communities, between elements of a community, and by certain political elements who seem to have been specially invited for this purpose", the joint statement added.

The signatories to the joint statement included Bishop Deva Sahayam, Church of South India, Chennai, Father Lourdusamy, former Executive Secretary of Indian Catholic Bishops' Commission for Scheduled Castes and its present executive secretary Father Philomen Raj.

Others who signed the statement include John Dayal, Member, National Integration Council, Advocate Edward Arokiadoss of All India Catholic Union, Father J. X. Bosco, a senior Jesuit priest and Dr M. Ezaz Ali.