



NIA Court Awards Life Imprisonment in Conversion Case

Why in News?

Recently, a special [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\) court](#) in Lucknow sentenced Islamic scholar and 11 others to life imprisonment in an illegal [religious conversion case](#).

Key Points

- **Charges and Convictions:**
 - The convicts were charged under **Section 121A (conspiring to commit certain offences against the state)**, **Section 123 (concealing with intent to facilitate a design to wage war)**, **Section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups based on religion)**, of the [Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021](#).
- **Arrest and Allegations:**
 - Islamic Scholar was arrested in 2021 by the [Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad](#) from Meerut for allegedly running a **nationwide** syndicate for **illegal religious conversion**.
 - He was accused of promoting enmity, disturbing India's sovereignty and integrity, and receiving **funds from international organisations** to facilitate conversions.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- The NIA is the **Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency** of India mandated to investigate all the offences affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of India. It includes:
 - Friendly relations with foreign states.
 - Against atomic and nuclear facilities.
 - Smuggling of arms, drugs and **fake Indian currency and infiltration** from across the borders.
 - The offences under the statutory laws enacted to implement international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the [United Nations](#), its agencies and other international organisations.
- It was constituted under the [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\) Act, 2008](#).
- The agency is empowered to deal with the investigation of **terror related crimes across states** without special permission from the states under written proclamation from the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- **Headquarters: New Delhi**

Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021

- The law contains stringent provisions with regard to fraudulent or forced conversions.
- It provides for **20 years' imprisonment or life sentence** if it was found that conversion had taken place under threat, promise of marriage or conspiracy. It was placed in the category of most serious crime under the Bill.
 - The bill allows **any person to register** an [First Information Report \(FIR\)](#) in cases related to [religious conversion](#), not only parents, victims, or siblings.
- These cases would not be heard by any court below the sessions court. Bill has also made the crime [non-bailable](#).

- Anyone wishing to convert of their own volition for the purpose of marriage must submit an application to the concerned district magistrate two months in advance.

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