by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

New Delhi — December 16, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Indian Catholic leaders suspect the police investigation initiated against a Missionaries of Charity-run orphanage in Gujarat state may be intended to denigrate the globally renowned institution founded by St. Teresa of Kolkata.

Ucanews.com reported police in Vadodara launched an investigation into the Nirmala Shishu Bhavan shelter Dec. 13 after a complaint was registered by a government official alleging violation of the state's anti-conversion law.

Archbishop Stanislaus Fernandes, apostolic administrator of the Baroda Diocese, called the police action "an attempt to denigrate our institutions as instruments of (religious) conversions."

For years, local social welfare authorities praised the home as a model for the care and welfare of children and physically challenged people, he said. The prelate urged the faithful to pray for the nuns and his diocese.

Church leaders say the institution may have come under official scrutiny for the same reasons as so many others run by Christians across the country.

Anti-conversion laws passed by the federal and provincial governments and vigilante groups have been unleashed on minority communities ever since the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in India in 2014, they said.

The probe "is part of a well-orchestrated strategy to denigrate the name of St. Mother Teresa, an Indian icon for her dedicated service to humanity, especially the

dying destitute, handicapped and orphaned who are ignored by society," said Jesuit Father Cedric Prakash, a human rights activist based in Gujarat.

The Missionaries of Charity congregation, founded in 1950 in Kolkata, has spread out across the globe with close to 5,000 nuns managing more than 750 care homes, of which 243 are based in India.

The congregation will fight the case legally, ucanews.com reported.

Father Prakash said government authorities and right-wing groups targeting the congregation are well aware that most of those living at the shelter are Hindus.

"Their strategy is to spread false information about the shelter homes or orphanages and create distrust and confusion among people, especially the secular Hindus who support the nuns' good work," he said.

In 2018, all child care homes in India run by Missionaries of Charity were inspected by the federal Ministry of Women and Child Development following allegations of illegal adoptions.

A separate investigation was initiated into the foreign donations received by Missionaries of Charity in Jharkhand state in 2019 after it was claimed nuns were diverting funds for unspecified objectives.

Advertisement