News
Q&As



Sr. Ranit Pallassery, a member of the Missionaries of Jesus in the Diocese of Jalandhar, India, accused Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar of repeated rape. He was acquitted of the charges. Ranit recently spoke about her experiences to Asianet, a Malayalam language TV channel in Kerala, southwestern India. (Courtesy of Ranit Pallassery)



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Until Jan. 10, 2026, the name of a Catholic nun who had accused a bishop of rape remained private, as Indian law forbids publicly identifying a victim of alleged sexual assault.

However, on that day, almost eight years after reporting her accusation, Sr. Ranit Pallassery appeared on a local television station in the southwestern Indian state of Kerala to share her experience and describe her frustration over the silence of the church and the country's justice system.

The nun, a former superior general of the Missionaries of Jesus, a congregation under the Diocese of Jalandhar in the northern Indian state of Punjab, had accused Bishop Frankco Mulakkal of raping her 13 times between 2014 and 2016 at her convent in Kerala's Kuravilangad village, during his official visits.

The allegations became public in 2018, after the nun described her experience to the Kerala police, who questioned her in connection with a case that Mulakkal filed against her and her family.

Mulakkal was arrested in September 21, 2018, and charged with wrongful confinement, rape, unnatural sex and criminal intimidation. He denied all charges.

A trial court in Kerala on Jan. 14, 2022, acquitted Mulakkal of all charges. The judge ruled that the prosecution had failed to prove the allegations, according to news reports. Senior Advocate Rebecca John at the time called the verdict a "travesty" that put the victim on trial, The Tablet reported.

Pope Francis in 2023 accepted Mulakkal's resignation; he retains the title "bishop emeritus."

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After the 2022 verdict, Pallassery and the Kerala government appealed Mulakkal's acquittal in the Kerala High Court, which has yet to take up the appeal.

On Jan. 15, Pallassery shared with Global Sisters Report her reasons for speaking to the media and going to court against the bishop, who was the patron of her congregation.

GSR: You were invisible until now. What compelled you to end your silence?

Pallassery: I wanted to end this forced exile despite being a victim of a cruel crime like repeated rapes, but [I] didn't know when [or] how to do it. The immediate trigger was the public appearance of a woman film star in Kerala, a victim of a similar crime. She appeared in the media soon after a trial court acquitted the man accused, a movie actor. Her gesture gave me the courage to shed my invisibility and tell the world that I am alive and fighting for justice.



Sr. Ranit Pallassery, a member of the Missionaries of Jesus (left), with her supporters, Srs. Alphy Pallasseril (her own sister) and Ancitta Urumbil. (Courtesy of Ranit Pallassery)

Was there any other motivation from within the church or your congregation?

Yes, definitely. Many things have happened over the years, but I cannot tell the media everything, as the case is still before the high court. But I want people to know that I am continuing my fight even after my congregation stopped my monthly maintenance allowances for me and my two companions.

When did the congregation stop your allowances, and why?

Each of us received 5,000 rupees (US$60 in 2023), but they stopped in November 2023 after we refused their pressure to take a leave of absence from the congregation. They wanted to get rid of us.

How have you managed in the past two years?

God's grace kept us alive. We started tailoring and embroidery, vegetable cultivation, and a small poultry farm for eggs to support ourselves. Some good people, such as the Sisters in Solidarity (a group of Catholic women including some nuns), Save Our Sisters (a group formed to support them), and others who knew our situation, supported us. Our families also helped us.

Didn't you inform the church authorities, especially the then apostolic administrator of Jalandhar?

Yes. I also wrote to the apostolic nuncio to India and the relevant dicasteries in Rome. But there was no response from any of them.

People say you only reported the abuse after your relationship with Mulakkal soured.

This is not correct. I explained this in court. I shared my ordeal first with my spiritual director, a nun, then the local parish priest. … I wrote to the apostolic nuncio to India and important offices in the Vatican and even to Pope Francis. I got no reply from any of them.

[However,] I realized my complaints had begun to work as my tormentor became more vicious in torturing me. He filed a false case against my family members and me, alleging that we had planned to kill him either in Punjab or in Kerala. He wanted me to withdraw my complaints to the church authorities.



Sr. Ranit Pallassery, left, and Sr. Ancitta Urumbiland prepare a screen print to be used on bags while Sr. Alphy Pallasseril looks on in their convent at Kuravilangad, southwestern Indian state of Kerala. (Courtesy of Ranit Pallassery)

So, you went public since you did not get justice from the church?

Exactly. I tried my best to get justice from within the church. When the police summoned my brother in the case that Mulakkal filed against me through his public relations officer, a priest, I wrote two letters to the nuncio seeking his intervention. I also told him that I would be left with no choice but to go to the police if the church did not intervene. No reply came.

If the nuncio or any other responsible church official had assured me of justice, the matter would not have come to public attention. My only request was to let me live far away from my tormentor, but nobody in the church listened to me.

Do you think your case shows that women cannot expect justice from the church hierarchy even in a heinous crime like rape?

If my charges were against a priest, the church would have most likely fired him. But my complaint was against a bishop. The hierarchy wants to protect the bishop who wields enormous power within the church.

What is the status of your appeal in the high court?

It is pending a hearing. I will continue my legal fight even to the Supreme Court (the top appellate court in India).

As a Catholic, have you forgiven Mulakkal? Do you pray for him even as you continue your legal fight for justice?

I am yet to come to terms with the pain of torture. I want to pray for him and forgive him, but I am still not able to do so.

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This story appears in the **Bishop Mulakkal trial** feature series. View the full series.