News



Indian police stand outside the premises of the Missionaries of Charity home in Ranchi, where Sr. Concelia Baxla, then 62, was arrested July 5, 2018, on suspicion of child trafficking. (CNS/Reuters)



by Thomas Scaria

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Mangaluru, India — June 24, 2026

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Church leaders in India have expressed relief after a court acquitted a Missionaries of Charity nun and a laywoman in a child trafficking case.

The civil court in Ranchi, capital of the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand, on June 18 found Sr. Concelia Baxla and Anima Indwar not guilty in the 2018 case.

"Finally, truth has prevailed," said Apostolic Carmel Sr. Maria Nirmalini, who heads the Conference of Women Religious of India. She said the case had been an ordeal for the Missionaries of Charity congregation, particularly for Baxla, who directed a shelter home for unwed mothers in Ranchi.

Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas of Daltonganj, a diocese in Jharkhand, described the judgment as a "triumph of truth, perseverance and faith." The prelate, who was the auxiliary bishop of the Ranchi Archdiocese when the case was registered, said the acquittal was the result of years of prayer, suffering and perseverance.

The case centered around allegations that Baxla, who is now 70, was involved in selling children for adoption from the home she managed. The case led to the police raid of 17 Missionaries of Charity homes in Jharkhand. The Missionaries of Charity congregation was famously founded by Mother Teresa.

Baxla was arrested July 4, 2018, on allegations from the state child welfare committee that the nun and an aide of the home had sold a 14-day-old baby for 50,000 rupees (then $730) to a childless couple. The nun was granted bail in September 2019.

Advertisement

"Changes in policies and legislations now allow detention of anyone facing such allegations," Nirmalini told Global Sisters Report on June 19.

She said the Baxla case triggered intense scrutiny of the Missionaries of Charity institutions, especially "Shishu Bhavan" (children's homes) across India.

Nirmalini said the Conference of Women Religious of India welcomed the "landmark judgement" which cleared misconceptions spread by "some vested interests" about Christian missionaries' service in India.

She, however, said she hopes that in response to the case, the government does not amend the law that controls the flow of overseas contributions to the country. "If that happens, the work for the poor will be affected," she said.

Nirmalini also said that NGOs and church institutions are under constant pressure from government agencies with regard to the use of funds received for specific projects. "They allege that we use the money for conversion, which is absolutely baseless," she said.

Mascarenhas said the Baxla case had far-reaching consequences for the Missionaries of Charity nuns' ministry.

"Following the arrests, authorities closed another Missionaries of Charity home in Jharkhand that housed 24 infants, while several other institutions faced investigations and harassment," he said in a June 18 statement.



Fr. Manoj Vengathanam, president of the Conference of Religious India's Jharkhand region, said the acquittal has brought relief from years of suspicion and hate campaigns by Hindu radical groups in the state.

"It was such a humiliation and pain for the religious community in Jharkhand to accept that a Mother Teresa nun was jailed on false accusations," said the member of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. "Although the court has cleared the allegations, the damage it caused is unparalleled," he told GSR.

Salesian Fr. Paul Cheruthottupuram, who maintains close links with the Missionaries of Charity, told GSR that Hindu radicals often target the nuns with false propaganda, such as forced conversions.

"Everyone, including the mainstream media, celebrated the allegations against [Baxla], but few have bothered to publish her acquittal," he said.

Throughout the controversy, the Missionaries of Charity nuns continue to receive international recognition and solidarity.

Recently, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio visited the congregation's headquarters in Kolkata, eastern India.

Later, U.S. Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said on X that such meetings remind everyone that the "US-India partnership is built not just on strong policies but also on shared values and the spirit of selfless service that transcends borders."