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Chhattisgarh Nuns Granted Bail in Trafficking Allegation Case

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– Categories: Crime



Two Catholic nuns and a Christian man accused of trafficking three tribal women in Chhattisgarh have been granted bail by a special court, following their arrest in late July.

Police said the arrests took place on July 25 at Durg railway station after members of the Hindu nationalist group Bajrang Dal claimed the women were being taken to Uttar Pradesh for forced religious conversion. The complaint was filed by Bajrang Dal member Ravi Nigam, leading to charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Chhattisgarh Religious Freedom Act.

The accused were identified as Sisters Preeti Mary and Vandana Francis, along with tribal Christian Sukhman Mandavi. Authorities reported they were accompanying the women to Agra, where they were scheduled to work in the kitchen of a Catholic hospital.

The three women, Sukhmati Mandavi, Lalita Usendi, and Kamleshwari Pradha, told reporters they had accepted the jobs with the consent of their families. They alleged that at the station, they were threatened and pressured by certain individuals to sign statements against the nuns and Mandavi. These allegations have not been independently confirmed, and police have not stated whether an investigation into these claims is underway.

Video footage from the station shows a crowd confronting the group in the presence of police officers. In a separate recording from inside the railway police station, a woman identified as Jyoti Sharma of the Durga Vahini Matrushakti, a women's wing of the Bajrang Dal, is seen inspecting the group's belongings.

A lower court rejected their bail request on July 30. Because the case involves allegations under state religious freedom laws, it was placed under the jurisdiction of a National Investigation Agency (NIA) special court in Bilaspur, though there is no confirmation that the NIA itself is formally investigating. On August 2, the NIA court granted bail with conditions, including the surrender of passports and personal bond requirements.

The arrests triggered protests in multiple states, including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and in the capital, New Delhi. In Narayanpur district, home to the three tribal women, local rallies reportedly drew more than 3,000 participants, many calling for action against those accused of intimidation and assault at the station.