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## Kerala Catholic Council Challenges Charges Against Nuns in Chhattisgarh

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The Kerala Region Latin Catholic Council (KRLCC) has strongly criticized the recent arrest of two nuns in Chhattisgarh, alleging that the charges of forced religious conversion were added after the fact to justify their detention. In an official statement, the council called the arrests unjust and accused authorities of misusing the law in a manner that violates the constitutional rights of religious minorities.

According to KRLCC leaders, the incident reflects a troubling trend in the misuse of anti-conversion laws, which they claim are increasingly weaponized against Christian communities. The council emphasized that both nuns were reportedly taken into custody based primarily on their religious clothing, raising concerns of religious profiling and bias.

The council also took issue with remarks made by the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, which appeared to endorse the actions of the arresting authorities. KRLCC officials argued that such political statements can fuel public anxiety and contribute to a climate of fear among minority groups, particularly those engaged in religious and charitable service.

The statement urged the Union government to intervene immediately, secure the release of the nuns, and ensure accountability for those involved in the arrest. It also called for legal safeguards to prevent similar incidents in the future, suggesting that any misuse of the law must be met with strict legal consequences.

Citing figures from the United Christian Forum (UCF), a Delhi-based human rights monitoring organization, the KRLCC noted that violence against Christians has seen a rise in recent years. From 2014 to 2024, UCF documented 4,316 incidents of violence targeting Christians across India. The council highlighted an increase from 733 cases in 2023 to 834 reported cases in 2024 alone.

KRLCC vice-president Joseph Jude and general secretary Fr. Jiju George Arakkathara called for stronger protections for clergy and faith-based service workers, arguing that their contributions to society must not be overlooked or criminalized due to bias or misinformation.

The council's statement adds to a growing list of concerns raised by civil society groups calling for constitutional safeguards to be upheld and for cases involving alleged religious conversion to be handled lawfully and impartially.