

FRANCISCAN CLARIST CONGREGATION

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Peace & Joy

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“You will be hated by all because of my name” (Mk. 13:13)

Dear Rev.

With the sentiments of deep sorrow I am writing this letter to you so that you may get the exact details about the brutal incident that happened to our dear sisters at Sukhliya, Indore. I know you will be eager to know what had happened over there. Our sisters have almost got over the shock and pain now. We received immense support and prayer from people all over the country during this agonizing experience we were going through. I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to each one of you for your prayer, support and solidarity towards us. It is very much certain that we stand for Christ, for peace and love. Our motto is to be living icons of peace. Therefore I urge you and request you to pray for those brethren who attacked and persecuted our sisters and bless them as our Master Jesus has taught us.

A true description about the attack on FCC sisters on 25th October 2007

We, the sisters of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation have a convent at Sukhliya in the Diocese of Indore in MadhyaPradesh. This is a Juniorate house for the Mission Provinces known as Shanthi Dham. There are four senior sisters and 42 Junior sisters in this house this year. On 25th October 2007 five of our sisters- Sr. Jincy (40), *the Junior Mistress, (Delhi Province)* Sr. Sayoojya (27, Delhi), Sr. Anna Maria (26, Noida) Sr. Pavithra (27, Noida) and Sr. Sweta (26, Bhopal) went to our driver Mr. Anil's house for Rosary at his invitation. He is a Catholic, lives at Bhagirathpura, which is a small village, three kilometers away from our Convent. He stays in a rented room of a Hindu family. In the Month of October sisters used to go for Rosary to various Christian houses. On this particular day they started their prayer meeting at 7.30 pm. While the prayer was going on they heard some strange noise outside and shouting of the people. Some people demanded them to come down (the prayer was on the first floor). They threatened to set the entire house on fire if the sisters failed to obey, so they went down to save those inside, including 15 women. When they came down, they saw a group of people around hundred in uniforms (*Khaki shorts, white shirt and lati*) shouting abusive language and started to beat the sisters. Among them one was a lady and others were men. Many of them were strangers but they could identify some of them like Mehanda Mohan, Shiv Charan, Manju etc. Without asking anything they started to beat them with hands and *Lati*. It is strange that the woman among the crowd was the first one to slap them. They snatched away their cross on the neck, veil and pulled their habits. The sisters shouted for help, nobody could do anything. Mr. Anil, the driver was so helpless. By shouting some slogans (*Jaya Shree Ram* etc.) they took them in procession to the nearby 'Police Chowki'.

All of them were badly injured and they made them to walk 25 minutes. The angry mob on both sides watched them and shouted slogans. They accused them of conversion. They also threatened them saying, they will burn them pouring kerosene.

When they reached the 'Police Chowki', police came for their rescue. Since their jeep was already smashed, the police took them to Banganga Police Station in their own vehicle. By this time, the news spread and sisters from our convent and fathers (Pallotine) came to the police station. After preliminary enquiry, police reached them safely, back to the convent in the police jeep at 11.30 pm.

One of them got head injury, one sister got left foot sprain, and the other three got minor injuries. Then our sisters proceeded to the M.Y. Government Hospital Indore, for the treatment of the sisters. There we found delay in completing the official formalities. Therefore, at 1.30 am, we had to take our sisters to the Robert's Nursing Home to get the treatment. The head injury of Sr. Jincy is treated by putting stitches and injured leg of Sr. Sayoojya was placed in plaster cast.

On 26th October our sisters went to the police station to file FIR. Unfortunately, the police authorities insisted us not to file FIR because of the *Global Investor's Meet* which was going on in Indore. They compelled our sisters to postpone everything for the next day. Instead of filing FIR, they received their complaint letter. After that the sisters went to Aurabindo Medical College for the medical investigation and are undergoing treatment. On 26th evening after the intervention of the Director General of Police of Bhopal (DGP), the FIR is filed and they received a copy of it at 10. 30 pm.

Meanwhile, something strange happened in our convent at Sukhliya at 12. 30 pm, on 26th October, 2007. A group of people (25 young men) came to the convent and threatened us to vacate our house within 4 days; otherwise consequences will be great. They may burn our house and kill all the sisters. They also accused us of conversion by giving money and books. In connection with this we filed an FIR, on the same day at Hiranagar Police station, where our convent is situated. We have got police protection since then. We are very grateful to the police department for showing their concern and providing police protection in the convent campus.

The Catholic Community and the Diocese of Indore expressed their shock on this heinous incident towards the nuns. Rt. Rev. Dr. George M. Anathil SVD, Bishop of Indore requested all the catholic schools and institutions to remain closed on 27th October to protest against this incident. In order to show their solidarity, *The United Christian Forum*, organized a protest rally on 28th October, at 3.pm at Gandhi Statue near Regal Square Indore.

Inter Religious peace prayer

An Inter Religious peace prayer was conducted at 3.00 pm on 28th October 2007 at Gandhi Chowk, Indore. The leaders from Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist Religions and representatives from other Associations gathered near the statue of Gandhiji and prayed for peace. Rev. Fr. Prasad, the President of CRI – Indore, Fr. Soosai G. (*Vicar General of Indore diocese*), Rev. Fr. Durai Raj, S.V.D (*Provincial*), L.S. Herdenice (*Convener Secular Marg*), Promod Tandon (*City Congress President*), Rev. Fr. Anand Muttungal (*PRO*,

Madhya Pradesh Chattisgarh), Saji Abraham (*Secretary All India Christian Council*) were some of the participants. There were readings from Holy Scriptures like Bible, Quran, BhagavatGita, and Gurugranth.

Everyone present there, expressed their sympathy and solidarity with the sisters who were attacked. The aim of this meeting was not to hate or show anger to those brethren who attacked them but to promote peace in everyone's heart. The representatives from various religions, in their divine wisdom spoke about the importance of believing in one God who is Good and merciful, and loving one another instead of hating and persecuting each other. Mrs. Archana who spoke on the issue expressed her deep felt sorrow on this tragic incident. She said that every woman should have the right to get protection in this country. It is really sad and shameful that in a country like India where women used to be respected and cared for, are now threatened and beaten up. She pressed the urgent need for women to stand firm and united. Rev. Fr. Anand invited everyone to be an instrument who can give light to humanity since God is light. All through the two hour prayer meeting the sisters were called Sadhvis, Hindi term for women, who lead a life of renunciation. During the prayer service, Bhajans sung, were so touching and it was highly appreciated. After the meeting some of the above mentioned leaders came to our convent and expressed their sympathy and support

To express the concern and solidarity in this incident, Catholic Church in North India has arranged a candlelight procession on 1st November in the State capital of Bhopal

This is not an isolated incident in the diocese of Indore. Many times missionaries are harassed on the basis of conversion and other kinds of accusations. In 1995 one of our sisters, Sr. Rani Maria was also brutally murdered on this basis at Udayanagar. We are very sad in facing such incidents in a democratic country like India. We request all the Political and Legal authorities to ban this kind of inhuman activities against women and to the Christian Communities

Soliciting your continued support and prayer for our missionary sisters, especially for those sisters in Shanti Dham , Indore,

Yours Sincerely in Christ



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