

by Catholic News Service

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Police have arrested an employee of a Catholic hospital and slapped conversion charges on him and a Catholic nun for allegedly hurting religious sentiments of Hindus in southern India's Karnataka state.

Ucanews.com reported the charges came after Hindu activists barged into Sanjo Hospital in Mandya district and beat up its public relations officer, Solomon George, said Fr. Josekutty Kalayil, who is helping the hospital deal with the case.

George and Sr. Nirmal Jose, hospital administer, were accused of denigrating Hindu gods and attempting to convert Hindus, Kalayil told ucanews.com March 4.

George was granted bail March 3, two days after he was arrested, but the case continues in court, said the priest, who is helping the hospital deal with the case.

Kalayil told ucanews.com the case started with an elderly man being admitted to the hospital with a complaint of high blood pressure March 1. The next day, he sought to leave the hospital against medical advice.

"He saw a Bible in his room and asked about it when George visited him as part of routine work. George explained about the Bible and said he could read it if interested, and left the room," the priest explained.

"The man immediately summoned his son, a member of a Hindu group. He came in with some 20 people and began to accuse the hospital of conversion."

More people joined them later, and they began to attack George.

Police were called and but they charged George and Nirmal with conversion and hurting religious sentiments following the complaints of Hindus. George was arrested and taken to jail.

Hospital officials suspect the attackers belong to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a militant Hindu umbrella organization of groups wanting to turn India into a Hindu nation.

The 100-bed hospital is now functioning as usual, said an official of the Medical Sisters of St Joseph congregation, which manages the hospital in Mandya Diocese.

Karnataka is governed by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, whose members support the idea of turning India a Hindu-only nation. They accuse Christian missionaries of using educational and health services as a façade to convert poor people to Christianity.

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