News



Sr. Lucy Kalappura ministers to people in Dwarka, near Mananthavady in the Wayanad District of Kerala, India, in 2019. (Saji Thomas)

by Matters India

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A Catholic nun who has exhausted all avenues of appeal against her dismissal from her congregation stemming from her activism in a rape case involving a Catholic bishop says she will not leave her convent until an Indian court decides on her petition.

The Franciscan Clarist Congregation on June 13 ordered Sr. Lucy Kalappura to vacate the convent in Kakkamala in the Wayanad district of Kerala after the Vatican's Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura categorically dismissed her revision petition against her dismissal.

"My case will come up in the Indian court in June or July this year," Kalappura told Matters India on June 14 through a WhatsApp voice message.

Kalappura said the court could not take up her case because of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown.

"The judge was not available so far," she said.

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Two years ago, a court in Wayanad reportedly stayed Kalappura's eviction from the Kakkamala convent. The Kerala High Court on July 9, 2018, granted her police protection.

Commenting on the Vatican's latest action, Kalappura told reporters, "The letter is in Latin, but the covering letter spells out the decision. The details will be available only after the letter is translated, but it is dated 2020."

"The recent revision of church laws regarding abuse of minors, vulnerable adults and fraud gave us hope," she added. "But it seems the papal head is not getting a clear picture."

Kalappura said she will continue her battle against the "corrupt practices" of the church. The 55-year-old nun alleged that she was targeted after she demanded the arrest of Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar, who was accused of raping a nun multiple times from 2014 to 2016. The case is being tried in a court in Kottayam.



Sr. Lucy Kalappura in 2019 (GSR file photo)

Kalappura had joined a September 2018 demonstration near the Kerala High Court in Kochi organized by supporters of the nun who says she was raped. The congregation allegedly moved against her after this public protest.

Mother Ann Joseph, the superior general of the Kerala-based Franciscan congregation, wrote to Kalappura on June 13 explaining that the Vatican tribunal's May 27, 2020, judgment "means that there is no further legal remedy available to you to challenge your dismissal within the Catholic legal system."

Joseph's letter further pointed out Kalappura has exhausted all the three levels of appeal within the Catholic legal system.

"I would like to bring to your kind attention the fact that your right to continue as a member of the FCC is now definitively and irrevocably extinguished, and hence you lost your right to use the suffix FCC to your name and you no longer have the right and duty to wear the religious habit of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation hereafter," the superior general asserted.

Joseph also told Kalappura that the congregation cannot allow a "non-member" to live in its convents and her continued stay in the convent is unlawful.

"There are only two exceptions possible: (1) our workers can be permitted in the quarters demarcated for them; (2) in our guest rooms attached to our houses, if any, our guests can be permitted to stay for a while. You are no more a member of FCC, and you are not one of our invited guests and you are not in the list of our workers," the superior general said in the letter.

Kalappura told members of the media June 14 that it had been two days since she received a letter from her higher-ups that her appeal to the Vatican was dismissed.

"How is it possible when the letter that I was given was dated May 27, 2020? I was not even heard by the Vatican, which is a denial of natural justice. I have been asked to move out from the convent where I am staying in a week's time. I am not going to move out," she added.

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