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Seminarians and priests inside the police station (Matters India)

Police detained a group of Catholic seminary carolers in the Satna district of Madhya Pradesh state Dec. 14 following allegations they were seeking religious conversions.

The group of 30 seminarians and two priests were detained as they traveled along the main road of the town of Satna visiting Christian institutions and singing carols, a normal exercise in this district at this time of year.

The police took them to the Civil Lines police station following a complaint from right-wing Hindu activists, who accused them of being involved in religious conversions, a charge often leveled against Christians to target them.

Later, police took into custody another group of eight priests who went to the station to inquire about the seminarians.

“The situation outside the police station was so hostile that we cannot reach to the police station for helping our brothers and priests inside,” Fr. M Rony, the director of social work for Satna diocese, told Matters India.

Right-wing Hindu activists, the priest said, have created a siege around the police station, “virtually denying us entry to the police station.” He also said that the Hindu activists had set fire to the vehicle the group of eight priest used to go to the station.

The seminarians and priests were still inside the police station after midnight.

The carolers come from St. Ephrem’s Theological College in Satna, about 280 miles northeast of Bhopal, capital of Madhya Pradesh.

The college trains priests primarily for the mission dioceses and religious congregations of the Syro-Malabar Church in northern India. Groups of seminarians have caroled in neighboring villages during the Advent and Christmas season since the college opened in 1992.

[Matters India is a news portal focusing on religious and social issues in India.]

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