

India blocks foreign funds for Mother Teresa's charity

by [Krutika Pathi](#) in the [January 26, 2022](#) issue



People gather beside a portrait of St. Teresa to collect free food outside the Missionaries of Charity headquarters in Kolkata, India, on August 26, 2021. (AP Photo/Bikas Das, File)

India's government has blocked Mother Teresa's charity from receiving foreign funds, saying the Catholic organization did not meet conditions under local laws and dealing a blow to one of the most prominent groups running shelters for people living in poverty.

The Home Ministry said in a statement that the Missionaries of Charity's application for renewing a license that allows it to get funds from abroad was rejected on Christmas Day.

The ministry said it came across “adverse inputs” while considering the charity’s renewal application. It did not elaborate.

The charity’s troubles come in the wake of a string of attacks on Christians in some parts of India by Hindu right-wing groups, who accuse pastors and churches of forced conversions. The attacks have been especially prominent in the southern state of Karnataka, which has seen nearly 40 cases of threats or violence against Christians this year, according to a report from the Evangelical Fellowship of India.

On December 27, 2021, the chief minister of West Bengal state, Mamata Banerjee, sparked outrage when she tweeted that the government had frozen the charity’s bank accounts. But the government soon clarified that it had not frozen any accounts.

The charity confirmed in a statement that the government had not frozen its accounts but added that its Foreign Contribution Regulation Act renewal application had not been approved.

“Therefore . . . we have asked our centers not to operate any of the (foreign contribution) accounts until the matter is resolved,” it said.

Earlier in December, the Missionaries of Charity, which Mother Teresa started in Kolkata in 1950, found itself under investigation in the western state of Gujarat following complaints that girls in its shelters were forced to read the Bible and recite Christian prayers. The charity has denied the allegations.

The charity runs hundreds of shelters that care for the people who Mother Teresa described as “the poorest of the poor.”

India is home to the second largest Catholic population in Asia after the Philippines, but the roughly 18 million Catholics represent a small minority in the largely Hindu nation of nearly 1.4 billion. Critics say religious tensions have grown under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government, with more frequent attacks against minorities.

Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in 1979, and Pope Francis declared her a saint in 2016, two decades after her death. —Associated Press