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Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar, India, is led away for questioning by police Sept. 21, 2018. on the outskirts of Cochin. A state court in southern India has denied bail to Bishop Mulakkal who is accused of raping a nun on grounds that he could influence witnesses if released from jail. (CNS photo / Sivaram V, Reuters)



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The case against Bishop Franco Mulakkal, which began in 2018 after a nun accused him of raping her multiple times, went to trial in August 2020. Here is a timeline of significant events.

2018

June 27: Police in Kottayam in the state of Kerala, India, register a First Information Report against Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar, based on a Missionaries of Jesus sister's accusation that Mulakkal subjected her to rape and sodomy 13 times from 2014 into 2016 at her Kuravilangad convent.

Sept. 8: Five sisters in the nun's congregation begin a sit-in demonstration at Vanchi (Boat) Square near the Kerala High Court in Kochi, alleging police inaction in the case. They also demand the arrest of Bishop Franco Mulakkal. The nuns are supported by the Save Our Sisters Movement, which was formed to support the accuser.

Sept. 20: The Vatican accepts Bishop Franco Mulakkal's request to be relieved of his religious duties temporarily. Pope Francis appoints Bishop Agnelo Gracias, a retired auxiliary bishop of the Bombay Archdiocese, to take over Mulakkal's duties.

Sept. 21: Kottayam police arrest Mulakkal on charges of raping a Missionaries of Jesus nun and a court sends him to judicial custody in Palai. The bishop was interrogated for three days and jailed. He is the first Catholic bishop in India to be arrested in a sexual abuse case.

Oct. 15: The Kerala High Court grants bail to Mulakkal in the nun rape case. The court orders him to meet the investigating officer regularly.

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2019

April 9: The police file a 2,000-page charge sheet in the Judicial First Class Magistrate Court in Palai, a town in the Kottayam District of Kerala.

Nov. 30: Judge G. Gopakumar of the Additional District and Sessions Court in Kottayam, Kerala, accepts the charge sheet.

2020

March 16: The Kottayam district court rejects Mulakkal's petition to dismiss the rape case against him. Mulakkal's lawyer had filed the petition Jan. 25, 2020.

June 16: The defense team appeals to the Kerala High Court to overrule the district court's refusal to dismiss the case. The defense's appeal is again rejected, this time at the state level.

July 13: District Judge G. Gopakumar in Kottayam, Kerala, issues an arrest warrant without bail against Mulakkal, who failed 14 times to appear for trial proceedings in the rape case.

Aug. 5: The Supreme Court of India rejects Mulakkal's appeal to dismiss the rape case against him. The Chief Justice of India told the prelate, "You don't have a case. There is no merit in your plea."

Aug. 13: The trial begins when the district court in Kottayam, Kerala, formally charges Bishop Franco Mulakkal of Jalandhar in the alleged rape of a Catholic nun. The trial court reads out the charge sheet that accuses Mulakkal of raping the former superior general of the Missionaries of Jesus congregation 13 times from 2014 into 2016 and threatening her by using the power of his office.*

Sept. 16: The testimony in the nun rape case begins in the Additional District and Sessions Court in Kottayam, Kerala, after restraining the print and electronic media from publishing matters related to the closed proceedings. On that day, the accuser appeared in the court as the first witness in the case.*

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2021

October 1: Cardinal George Alencherry, head of the Syro-Malabar Church, appears in the Additional District and Sessions Court in Kottayam, as one of the 84 witnesses

in the case.

Nov. 12: The Kerala High Court orders the transfer of the judge hearing the nun rape trial. It triggers widespread condemnation and he is quickly restored as trial judge.

Dec. 29: The trial process is completed in the rape case.

2022

Jan. 10: The Kottayam district court sets Jan. 14 as the date to give its verdict.

Jan. 14: The Additional District and Sessions Court in Kottayam acquits Bishop Franco Mulakkal on charges of wrongful confinement, rape, unnatural sex and criminal intimidation. Mulakkal praised God for the decision and thanked his supporters. Prosecutors and the nun's supporters say they were shocked by the decision and plan to appeal.

**This timeline has been updated since publication to clarify key dates.*

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This story appears in the **Bishop Mulakkal trial** feature series. [View the full series.](#)