

# All Mother Teresa children's homes in India inspected amid baby-selling scandal

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## India orders examination of all institutions run by her charity after claims against two staff

India has ordered the immediate inspection of all childcare homes run by the Missionaries of Charity, the Catholic congregation established by [Mother Teresa](#), after employees at one shelter were accused of selling babies for adoption.

The inspections were announced by the ministry for women and childhood development after a Missionaries of Charity home in Jharkhand state was shut this month following the arrest of a nun and a social worker employed there.

Sister Konsalia Balsa and social worker Anima Indwar were accused of having already sold three babies from the home, which provides shelter for pregnant, unmarried women.

They were accused of trying to sell a fourth baby, a two-month old boy born in March, for about £1,325. The parents, a couple from Uttar Pradesh state, were told the proposed adoption was legitimate and that the money was for hospital expenses.

"Taking cognisance of the recent cases of illegal adoptions carried out by Missionaries of Charity in Jharkhand, [minister for women and children] Maneka Gandhi has instructed the states to get childcare homes run by Missionaries of Charity all over the country inspected immediately," the ministry said in a statement.

The Missionaries of Charity, established in 1950 by Mother Teresa - now [Saint Teresa of Calcutta](#) - declined to comment on the inspections but earlier said the congregation was appalled by the baby-trafficking claims.

"We are completely shocked by what has happened in our home in Ranchi," a statement from the order said. "It should have never happened. It is against our moral convictions. We are carefully looking into the matter."

Police say Balsa has confessed to her role in the trafficking case but the bishop of Ranchi, the Jharkhand state capital, said this week the confession was extracted under pressure and [accused the police](#) of "treating the whole of Mother Teresa's organisation as a criminal gang".

Political leaders in West Bengal state, where the order is based, have also claimed the case is part of an anti-Christian agenda pushed by the ruling Bharatiya Janata party, which has a Hindu nationalist ideology.

The Missionaries of Charity stopped facilitating adoptions in [India](#) in 2015 after government reforms that removed obstacles for single, divorced or separated people to adopt children.

India has more than 230,000 children in official and unofficial shelters, according to the [National Commission for Protection of Child Rights](#), but estimates of the number of orphans in the country are as high as 30 million.

Despite a waiting list of about 15,000 parents, only 2,671 adoptions took place between the beginning of 2016 and March this year because the process is notoriously slow, requiring a clearance from a court that can take up to four years to be delivered in India's overburdened legal system. The result is a thriving and lucrative hidden market in babies.

Officials admit they do not know the size of the market. In February last year, police in West Bengal arrested the heads of an adoption centre [who they accused](#) of selling at least 17 children to couples in Europe, the US and Asia.

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### **Michael Safi**

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