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To

Hon. Sushil Kumar Shinde  
The Honourable Minister for Home Affairs,  
Government of India,  
New Delhi.

*Sub.: Request submitted, by the Catholic Diocese of Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu – to fully withdraw the order of prohibition to draw foreign funds by the said diocese vide order No: II/21022/58 (480)/2011/FCRA-MU dated 09-02-2012 from MHA and the order of suspension vide order No:F.II/21022/58 (0480)/2011/FCRA-MU dated 25.09.2012 – reg.*

Respected Sir,

Greetings from the Catholic Diocese of Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu!

The diocese of Tuticorin was established in the year 1923. The Catholic Diocese of Tuticorin is the second largest diocese in Tamilnadu, having a Catholic population of around 4.5 lakhs. The said Diocese is comprised of the district of Tuticorin and part of the district of Tirunelveli. The said diocese has established a time-tested and traditional administrative machinery, to discharge its religious, charitable and social functions, especially for the welfare of the minority Catholic Community and the marginalized and the poor of the society at large, particularly the dalits in our area.

Even before the registration of the society, the diocese of Tuticorin, as a Religious Body of the Catholic Community existed and was involved in multifarious activities in the public interest. All these 90 years, it has enjoyed unblemished record, because of sound financial administration including its accountability in respect of foreign contributions. The Petitioner Society is involved in the development of the people, and the nation building, through its involvement in the field of *education, health, social development, relief and rehabilitation* during and after disasters, apart from its *pastoral and religious* activities.

The diocese runs the following institutions for charitable and humanitarian services:

Schools and Technical Institutes	-	261
Orphanages	-	27
Hospitals	-	13
Dispensaries	-	9

Home for Destitute Children	-	4
Home for the Disabled	-	4
Home for the Aged	-	2
Rescue Homes for Women	-	2
Destitute Homes	-	1
Home for the Mentally Retarded	-	1
De-addiction and Rehabilitation Centre	-	1
Leprosy Rehabilitation Centre	-	1

All these institutions are maintained efficiently by the free service rendered by 230 priests and thousands of nuns, apart from the other paid employees. All of them are maintained by the diocese.

St. Joseph's Charity Institute, at Adaikalapuram, benefits 1200 resident inmates, who belong to the categories of mentally retarded women, orphans and semi-orphans, youth under educational and employment formation. This is the first orphanage and charitable institute in Tamil Nadu established in 1858. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and former Chief Minister K.Kamaraj have visited this centre and have appreciated our charitable works.

Because the activities of the Petitioner Society are well founded in the historical and traditional charitable services of the Catholic community, millions of people, especially the weaker sections, the children, the women, the old-aged, the disabled, the dalits, the victims of various diseases and disasters have greatly benefitted for nine decades. These current beneficiaries irrespective of caste and creed are thousands in numbers.

It will be pertinent to mention that the petitioner's involvement and integrity has never at any time intended to prejudice the sovereignty and security or the territorial integrity of India. On the other hand, the petitioner by its activities has contributed for the public interest, communal harmony and nation building. It can be verified from the past records of the Petitioner Society. It remains unblemished and clean in respect of transparency and accountability for around nine decades.

The returns and the reports filed under the Income Tax Act, 1951 and Foreign Contribution (Regulations) Act, have been done on time and have been found to be in order. By no stretch of imagination, anyone can allege that the said Catholic Community of Tuticorin diocese is subverting public interest.

While facts being so, there seems to be some misinformation and consequently a certain misunderstanding that the actions of the diocese have been prejudicial to the public interest. Possibly a connection was misconstrued between the diocese and those who are protesting against Koodangulam Nuclear Power Plant and thereby an allegation that the diocese is involved in the protest.

Hence they sent a questionnaire of 32 questions in Nov.2011, which we duly answered giving required data, for the past 6 years. From Jan 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> of 2012, two officials from Ministry of Home Affairs came to check our accounts and the related documents on the spot. They did so and expressed satisfaction that no funds received from abroad was diverted outside the Society or the projects-objectives. But on February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012 the Ministry of Home affairs sent an order cited above, to freeze the operation of FCRA Account. In July 2012 once again the Ministry of Home Affairs sent 3 persons to do the ground-check on the same documents, from July 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> of 2012 and that was also complied with.

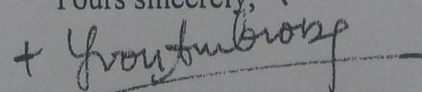
Again as per your order dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012, the Central government suspended our FCRA Regn. Certificate bearing No.076030031 R, with immediate effect for a period of one hundred and eighty days. The diocese of Tuticorin, for the past nearly 16 months, has been waiting for your good will gesture, of lifting the order of prohibition and suspension. We have not obtained any relief in all these past 16 months.

We maintain that it is an unfounded allegation that the diocese is acting against the public interest of the nation. Hence we submit that the freezing of our Bank account of FCRA was unwarranted. As such, the period of suspension has also expired, as already more than 180 days are over from 25.09.2012. Therefore it will be proper, if the authorities can consider the withdrawal of both the orders of prohibition and suspension.

Unless the Hon'ble Minister for Home Affairs, intervenes in the above problem, advising the appropriate authorities not to unnecessarily harass the Christian community and to withdraw the negative injunctions issued in respect of the traditional and respectable Catholic Diocese of Tuticorin, the Christian community will be greatly prejudiced.

Therefore we humbly request the intervention of the Hon'ble Minister for Home Affairs in the matters referred above and grant appropriate relief to the Christian Community, affected by such actions of the executives for the past 16 months. This has greatly affected the day today activities and welfare of the minority Catholic community of the Diocese of Tuticorin. Therefore it is quite urgent and essential to regularize our Foreign Contribution Number, to the original position, and to restore our regular activities.

We firmly belief that the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, will accept our request and grant us proper relief helping the Christian Community, so as to continue our services, to the beneficiaries, in the field of Education, Health and Social Services in the Diocese of Tuticorin. Kindly do the needful.

Yours sincerely,  
  
(Most Rev. Dr. Yvon Ambroise  
Bishop of Tuticorin)

Copy to : Honourable Prime Minister  
Hon'ble Mrs.Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of UPA