ALL INDIA CATHOLIC UNION

Founded in 1919, Registered under Societies Registration Act 1850
Representing the Catholic Laity of India through 120 Diocesan Units Nation-wide

AICU Administration Office, D. T.C.Building, 6th Floor, Office No.604 A, EDC Complex, Patto, Panaji, Goa - 403001

PRESS STATEMENT

All India Catholic Union Condemns Continued Detention of Dr. Randall Sequeira and Laxman Naik; Demands Immediate Release

New Delhi, 2 November 2026

The All India Catholic Union (AICU), Asia's largest association of the Catholic laity, founded in 1919, reiterates its strongest condemnation of the arrest and continued judicial custody of Dr. Randall Sequeira and Dalit activist Laxman Naik.

More than two weeks after they were picked up from Dr. Sequeira's residence in Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi, Odisha, around 10.45–11 p.m. on 16 October 2026, both remain in Rayagada Sub-Jail facing grave charges of attempt to murder, rioting with deadly weapons, dacoity and provisions of the Arms Act, linked to Kashipur Police Station arising from the 6–7 April clash in Kantamal village over an approach road for the proposed Sijimali bauxite mine.

Neither was named in the original FIR (which listed 26 individuals and a category of unnamed "others"). Their subsequent addition, the late-night arrest without reported warrant or proper documentation, seizure of phones, and overnight detention without immediate access to family or lawyers continue to raise serious questions of due process.

Reports indicate Dr. Sequeira already held anticipatory bail in a related matter, and accounts from custody describe conditions that raise further concerns about procedural fairness.
Dr. Sequeira, originally from Mangaluru and raised in Mumbai, is an alumnus of St. John's Medical College, Bengaluru, and holds an MD in Internal Medicine from Sawai Man Singh Medical College, Jaipur. Since 2017 he has provided accessible healthcare—often free or low-cost—through camps and direct outreach in remote tribal settlements of Kalahandi, Rayagada and neighbouring areas, treating pregnant women, malnourished children, and patients with malaria, tuberculosis and other illnesses where government services remain scarce.

His parents, Alex and Nancy Sequeira, travelled from Mumbai to Rayagada and have publicly demanded his release, stating that he has done nothing wrong and was targeted for perceived sympathy with communities opposing mining.

Hundreds of Adivasis, Dalits and members of people's movements have gathered in Muniguda and elsewhere demanding the release of Dr. Sequeira, Laxman Naik and others.
Media coverage has highlighted the pattern of severe, non-bailable charges against those supporting resistance to bauxite mining projects involving Vedanta and Adani interests in the Sijimali and Kutrumali hills.

This occurs in Fifth Schedule areas where gram sabha consent under PESA and the Forest Rights Act remains essential, as underscored by the Supreme Court's 2013 Niyamgiri judgment.

Civil society groups including the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan and Medico Friend Circle have described the charges as fabricated and the arrests as part of a wider crackdown that has seen dozens of cases and over a hundred people jailed in recent years.

The AICU views the criminalisation of a doctor for performing his professional duty—including treating those injured in police action and for standing with communities asserting constitutional rights as an assault on medical ethics and democratic values.

The AICU calls upon the Government of Odisha and the Union Government to:

Ensure the immediate release of Dr. Randall Sequeira and Laxman Naik on bail or otherwise, and the withdrawal of charges not supported by credible evidence;

Order an independent review of the investigation to examine whether the arrests constitute misuse of criminal law to intimidate those supporting tribal and Dalit rights;

Uphold the constitutional rights of Adivasi communities to free, prior and informed consent regarding projects affecting their lands, forests and livelihoods.

The All India Catholic Union stands with Dr. Sequeira, Mr. Naik and the communities they serve. A country that honours those who heal the poor must not imprison them.

———

Released to the media by AICU National Spokesman Dr. John Dayal.Contact: +91 9811021072 | john.dayal@gmail.com