

# Archbishop, bishops court arrest in Delhi

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UCA in India <http://www.ucanindia.in/news/archbishop-bishops-court-arrest-in-delhi/23063/daily>  
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Police use water canon against the protestors

police station as they marched on defying police orders.

This is the first time since 1997 that Bishops and Church leaders have been arrested while protesting for dalit cause.

Among the arrested were Church of North India General Secretary Alwan Masih, Ecumenical Fellowship of India's Reverend Vijayesh Lal and National Council of Churches of India's Roger Gaikwad.

Those arrested also included Mary John, Delhi Minorities Commission Member A C Michael, National Integration Council Member John Dayal and Member of Parliament Anwar Ali.

The dalit and their leaders demand the repeal of the 1950 Presidential Order that denied statutory benefits for dalits of Christian faith.

Indian constitution guarantees reservation of seats in government jobs and educational institutions for the social benefits of suppressed classes but Christians and Muslims are denied such benefits on the ground that their religions do not follow caste system.

The 1950 order originally excluded Sikhs and Buddhists but they were later included for the benefits. Following protests, the benefits were extended to Sikhs in 1956 and to the Buddhists in 1990.

The leaders of Muslims and Christians say the order is unconstitutional as it denies equal rights and discriminates their people on the basis of faith.

## New Delhi:

The Delhi police today cane-charged and water cannoned Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi, several other bishops, nuns, pastors as they led a rally in Parliament Street demanding to end the discrimination against dalit Christians.

Several priests and nuns and lay leaders were injured badly in the police action. Christian leaders then courted arrest and were taken to parliament street

"The law itself is unconstitutional and while the governments after government have been turning a deaf ear to the demand of Christians, now they are going to the extent of brutally beating up our priests and nuns and now arresting us too," said Archbishop Couto.

In the past 63 years several such peaceful protests were conducted across the nation.

"But today the police badly beat up priests, dressed in their official priestly attire and nuns, who were peacefully marching from Jantar Mantar towards the Ashok Road circle," said press release from archdiocese of Delhi.

"The lawyers are getting ready to file a criminal case against the police for their brutal action," it said.