

Nun who worked for tribal rights hacked to death in eastern India

NEW DELHI - Church leaders in Kerala state have expressed shock and outrage over the killing of Sister Valsa John, who campaigned for tribal rights in eastern India.

Sister John, 53, a member of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, was hacked to death at her home in a remote area of the east Indian state of Jharkhand. Earlier reports had said the nun had been shot dead.

The Asian church news agency UCA News cited unspecified reports that a mob of around 50 people gathered outside Sister John's home early Nov. 16, shortly before her death.

Church officials in Kerala visited Sister John's family in Vazhakkala, near Cochin, Kerala's commercial hub, to offer condolences. Then Archbishop George Alencherry, major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, paid tribute to the slain nun and called for those responsible for her death to be brought to justice.

Sister John gave "her life to the poor and fought a long battle to try and safeguard their rights," the archbishop said. She showed "the world how to care for the poor and dedicated her life to the church and her faith."

UCA News said family members believe the nun was killed by people connected to a mining company she was campaigning against.

Archbishop Maria Soosa Pakiam of Trivandrum said of Sister John: "With her exemplary life and courage to fight evil, Sister John has shown us that we need to rededicate our lives for our faith and work for the poor."