Christian News | 15 November 2026 | English article

Kerala High Court Orders Police to Watch Patriarch of Antioch Visit Over Visa and Court Orders

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"The Kerala High Court has ordered the State Police Chief to keep watch over the visit of Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and supreme head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, after a court petition warned he might break Supreme Court orders and the conditions of his visa by leading worship at St Mary's Church in Manarcad today, Sunday 15 November 2026"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

The Kerala High Court has ordered the State Police Chief to keep watch over the visit of Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and supreme head of the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church, after a court petition warned he might break Supreme Court orders and the conditions of his visa by leading worship at St Mary's Church in Manarcad today, Sunday 15 November 2026. Justice Kunhikrishnan issued the interim direction on Friday 13 November, telling police to make sure the Patriarch does not violate previous court orders or his visa conditions during his Kerala visit.

Picture the scene at Manarcad this morning. Worshippers in white gather outside the old cathedral in Kottayam district as the bells ring for Holy Qurbana, the Syriac Orthodox Eucharist.

Among them stand police officers, sent not to stop the prayer but to watch it. A visit meant to mark 150 years of church history has arrived with a court order hanging over it.

Kerala High Court Patriarch Of Antioch Order: What The Judge Directed

The petition came from Mathew, a member of the Orthodox faction, who feared the Patriarch would conduct religious activities at St Mary's Church (Cathedral), Manarcad, in violation of Supreme Court orders. Mathew belongs to one side of a church dispute that has run for decades, and he went to court because he believed the Patriarch's planned visit to Manarcad crossed a line the Supreme Court had already drawn.

Justice Kunhikrishnan did not ban the visit. He directed the State Police Chief to ensure the Patriarch does not violate the earlier orders or his visa conditions while he is in Kerala. It is an interim direction, made while the case is still being heard, and it puts the police in the middle of a dispute between two Christian communities who share the same saints, the same liturgy and, in some places, the same church buildings.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment a complaint withdrawn under threat -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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