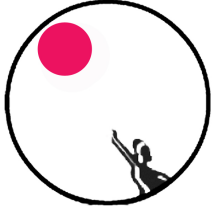




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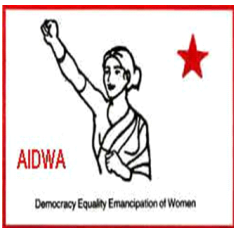
Mr. Narendra Modi,
Prime Minister of India
New Delhi

16 July 2018



Dear Mr. Modi,

We the undersigned and our civil society partners and individuals around the world, work to defend the human rights of victims of sexual exploitation, prevent violence against women and girls and demand the prosecution of perpetrators.



Despite an increasing number of rape cases being reported every day, survivors of sexual violence struggle to obtain justice within the Indian legal system. Between 2015 and 2016 alone there was an alarming 82% rise in reported rapes of children. Another 133,000 rape cases were pending trial. Many of the recent cases of sexual violence appear to be targeted attacks against minority communities, including Muslims, Dalits and tribal communities.



A culture of impunity for rapists, accompanied by sexist comments devaluing women, has created a vicious context for the rising rapes in India. The father of a Dalit girl in Unnao, who was raped by an elected official from your party, was arrested and then died mysteriously in police custody.

Today, we are writing to you regarding the intimidation of witnesses and the lawyers representing the 8-year-old Muslim girl, from a community of nomadic shepherds, who was brutally raped and murdered in Kathua, in the state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), India.



In an attempt to delegitimize the investigation done by the J & K police, the lawyers of the accused rapists are demanding an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Despite the brutal nature of the crime committed by powerful men against an innocent child, some groups are running media campaigns and holding rallies in support of the perpetrators. These rallies are attended by members of your party.



They have politicized the case by presenting it falsely as a case against the Hindu community. They are even hounding the entire nomadic community of Bakarwals that the little girl belonged to. In spite of the pressure, her family has continued their fight to obtain justice for their daughter.



A politically motivated media campaign, backed by your party affiliates, attacking the lawyer and the witnesses has further created a hostile atmosphere in the public domain against the victim. Parallel media trials are being held professing the innocence of the



accused and maligning the lawyers and witnesses, with the intention of prejudicing the natural course of justice. This is a blatant attempt to subvert the trial. Such public rallies in support of the accused by those associated with your party must be stopped.

Now that Governor's rule has been imposed in J & K, your government is directly responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the State of J & K.

The impediments that victims and survivors of sexual violence face in accessing justice is in clear violation of India's constitutional and international obligations. India is party to a number of international human rights instruments that affirm the State's responsibility to protect women and girls from sexual violence including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We urge your government to take immediate and meaningful action to ensure that justice is served in the Kathua rape and murder case and to address the larger systemic problem of sexual violence within the country.

We call upon the Indian government to take the following actions:

- Take steps to ensure that a fair trial of the Kathua rape and murder case can take place in an unbiased atmosphere
- Provide protection to all those associated with the case including the witnesses, victim's family and lawyers.
- Stop politically motivated media campaigns and rallies held to support the accused or malign the lawyers and witnesses and allow the law to take its own course
- Resist the continuing demands of the accused to shift the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) despite the fact that no fault can be found with the investigation done by the J & K police. Any attempt to shift the investigation at this late stage would further hamper investigations and affect the trial and demoralize the police in J & K and would only benefit the accused
- Effectively enforce and implement existing laws on sexual violence and allocate adequate resources to combat sexual violence.
- Implement all the recommendations made by the Justice Verma Committee, including police reforms, reforms in the management of cases related to crime against women, and education reforms, most of which are yet to be implemented.
- Address impunity at all levels, by bringing perpetrators of all such crimes to justice, without political bias.
- Issue a clear directive from your office that the harassment, character assassination, arrests of any lawyers and witnesses in the trial will be punishable as tampering and intimidation.

We hope you will do everything in your power to send a strong message that sexual violence will not be tolerated irrespective of which community the victims belong to. Your positive action will send a strong message that sexual violence will not be promoted or tolerated in India.



Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

All India Union of Forest Working People
(AIUFWP)



1. Ruchira Gupta, Founder & President, Apne Aap Women Worldwide
2. Kavita Krishnan, Secretary, All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA)
3. Malini Bhattacharya, President & Mariam Dhawale, General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)
4. Kavita Srivastava, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)
5. Victor P Joseph Raj, Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL)
6. Annie D. Raja, General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)
7. Kamayani and Ashis, National Alliance for People's Movement
8. Ashok Choudhary, General Secretary, All India Union of Forest Working People (AIUFWP)
9. Roma, Secretary, National Trade Union Initiative (NTUI)
10. Dr. Indu Prakash Singh, President, Forum Against Corruption & Threats
11. Zakia Soman, Co-founder, Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan
12. Ritu Menon, Women Unlimited
13. Dakxin Bajrange, Chhara
14. Japleen Pasricha, Feminism in India
15. Divya Srinivasan, Equality Now
16. Uma Mishra-Newbery, Global Women's March
17. Rachel Moran, Space International
18. Lauren Hersh, National Director, World Without Exploitation
19. Teresa C. Ulloa Ziaurriz, Regional Director, Coalition against Trafficking in Women LAC
20. Diana Post, National Organization for Women (NOW)
21. Joanne Smith, Girls for Gender Equity
22. Patrick A. Trueman, President & CEO, National Center on Sexual Exploitation
23. Dorchen Leidholdt, Secretary, Sanctuary for Families
24. Stephanie Futter-Orel, Executive Manager, WAVE Network (Women Against Violence Europe)
25. Secretariat, Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)
26. Memory Kachambwa, Executive Director, African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
27. Rainatou Sow, Make Every Woman Count
28. Teresa Omondi, Executive Director, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya)

Copy to: NN Vohra, Governor of Jammu and Kashmir (J & K), Rajnath Singh, Union Minister of Home Affairs Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Minister of Law and Justice,