



To,

Mr. Narendra Modi,  
Prime Minister of India  
New Delhi

18 July 2018



**Sub: Intimidation of witnesses & lawyers representing the 8-year-old Muslim girl**

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.

Though an increasing number of rape cases are 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 in the same year. Many of the recent cases of sexual violence appear to be targeted attacks against minority communities, especially Muslims, Dalits and tribal communities.

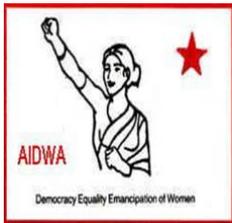
A culture of impunity for rapists, accompanied by sexist comments devaluing women, has created a vicious context for the rising rapes in India. The father of a Dalit girl in Unnao, who was raped by an elected official from your party, was arrested and then died mysteriously in police custody.

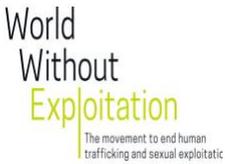
Today, we are writing to you regarding the intimidation of witnesses and the lawyers representing the 8-year-old Muslim girl, from a community of nomadic shepherds, who was brutally raped and murdered in Kathua, in the state of Jammu & Kashmir in India this year.

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 are trying to hamper the investigation and demoralize the police in Jammu and Kashmir by asking for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take over.

They have politicized the case by presenting it falsely as a case against the Hindu community. They are even hounding the entire nomadic shepherd community of Bakarwals that the little girl belonged to.

In a blatant attempt to subvert the trial, parallel media trials, backed by your party affiliates, professing the innocence of the accused, and maligning the lawyer and the witnesses, are being held. These politically motivated campaigns have created a





National Organization for Women  
Central Phoenix - Inez Casiano Chapter



hostile atmosphere in the public domain against the victim, her family, her community and her lawyers.

We urge your government to take immediate and meaningful action to ensure that justice is served in the Kathua rape and murder case. 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.

We also urge you to address the larger systemic problem of sexual violence within the country.

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 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 in 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 will hamper investigations, affect the trial, demoralize the police in J & K and will 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 crimes 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.

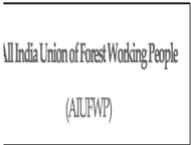


We hope you will do everything in your power to send a strong message that sexual violence will not be tolerated irrespective of which community the victim belongs to. Your positive action will send a strong message that sexual violence will not be promoted or tolerated in India.

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

Sincerely,

*Organizational Signatories (Till Date)*



1. Ruchira Gupta, Founder & Tinku Khanna, Director, Apne Aap Women Worldwide
2. Niki Kandirikirira, Director of Programmes, Equality Now
3. Memory Kachambwa, Executive Director, African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
4. Malini Bhattacharya, President & Mariam Dhawale, General Secretary, All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)
5. Kavita Krishnan, Secretary, All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA)
6. Ashok Choudhary, General Secretary, All India Union of Forest Working People (AIUFWP)
7. Zakia Soman, Co-founder, Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan
8. Victor P Joseph Raj, Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL)
9. Dakxin Bajrange, Chhara
10. Teresa C. Ulloa Ziaurriz, Regional Director, Coalition against Trafficking in Women LAC
11. Taina Bien Aime, Director, Coalition against Trafficking in Women, USA
12. Teresa Omondi, Executive Director, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya)
13. Japleen Pasricha, Feminism in India
14. Dr. Indu Prakash Singh, President, Forum Against Corruption & Threats
15. Joanne Smith, Girls for Gender Equity
16. Drisha Fernandes, Iniciativa Pro Equidad de Genero, Colombia
17. Rainatou Sow, Make Every Woman Count
18. Kamayani and Ashis, National Alliance for People's Movement
19. Patrick A. Trueman, President & CEO, National Center on Sexual Exploitation
20. Annie D. Raja, General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)
21. Diana Post, National Organization for Women (NOW)
22. Roma, Secretary, National Trade Union Initiative (NTUI)
23. Kavita Srivastava, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)
24. Dorchen Leidholdt, Secretary, Sanctuary for Families
25. Secretariat, Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)
26. Rachel Moran, Space International
27. Stephanie Futter-Orel, Executive Manager, WAVE Network (Women Against Violence Europe)
28. Uma Mishra-Newbery, Women's March Global
29. Ritu Menon, Women Unlimited

30. Lauren Hersh, National Director, World Without Exploitation

*Individual Signatories (Till Date)*

1. Anindo Banerjee, Social activist
2. Ananya Vajpeyi, Scholar
3. Angana Chatterjee, Scholar, University of California, Berkeley
4. Cynthia Stephens, Independent Writer and Researcher
5. Devaki Jain, Economist
6. Ela Bhatt, Founder, Self Employed Women's Association for India (SEWA) and member, The Elders
7. Gloria Steinem, Founder, Ms Magazine, writer and feminist campaigner
8. Harsh Kapur
9. John Dayal, Social activist
10. Jyotsna Chatterjee, founder, Joint Women's Programme
11. Kiran Desai, Writer
12. Mrinal Pandey, Editor, National Herald
13. Nandita Haksar, Lawyer
14. Nandana Sen, Writer and Actor
15. Ruth Manorama, Dalit women's social activist, President, National Association of Women's Organizations
16. Sigma Huda, Chairman, Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons
17. Sruti Rya Ganguly, documentary film-maker
18. Sonia Jabbar, environmentalist
19. Samita Sen, Professor,
20. Ujjaini Halim, Social activist
21. Vimal Thorat, Co-convenor, National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights
22. Zoya Hasan, Professor and Political Scientist

Please note more names and signatures are coming in as we are typing this letter. We will send a follow-up letter with more signatures to demonstrate our deepest concern

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,