

**Hon'ble Sir/Madam,**

**Sub:** BEHAN BETI BACHAO →Demand for proactive and preventive approach to combat and curb atrocities against women/girls/infants.

**Ref:** Does this require reference? Read any newspaper/news portal anywhere and you will see reports of some atrocity against women/girls/infants which can make anyone hang their head in shame

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I am a Citizen of this country, writing to you with great hope and expectation to protect the women of India, our mothers, sisters and daughters.

Gruesome crimes against women seem to have only increased with the passage of time. In spite of adequate legal provisions under the statute, women are feeling more and more unsafe in India. This has created a fear psychosis among the people and is a cause of grave concern.

Incidents of rape and similar crimes against females can be controlled to a great extent if certain measures are taken on a regular basis in a timely manner. We are really pained by the act of rape but nothing happens beyond that. This is a matter of grave concern for all citizens. Many of us have dealt with it directly or indirectly, maybe as a friend or family member, as a lawyer, as a doctor, as a social worker, and so on. We are writing this letter to you with the hope that appropriate measures will be taken as detailed below so that such incidents do not happen in future and women in our country can live with dignity.

The immediate and long-term corrective actions required are as under:

## **AT INVESTIGATION/TRIAL LEVEL**

- a)** Police should have regular Beat Marshals and Patrol Squads.

Normally, such Beat Marshals and Patrol Squads are visible for a couple of weeks after any gruesome crime. However, it is necessary that there should be permanent Beat Marshals and Patrol Squads rather than just as a reaction for a limited period after an incident.

- b)** The charge sheet in any/all criminal offences against females should be filed on an urgent basis and all compliances envisaged under the Indian Evidence Act should be done correctly so that no technical loopholes are left for the advantage of the accused. The charge sheet should be filed normally within a period of 15 days from the date of registration of the FIR.

- c)** Offences against minors should be heard on a day-to-day basis and the endeavour should be to complete the trial within 3 months but in any case within a maximum period of 6 months from the date of registration of the FIR.

- d)** Fast Track Courts should be set up if necessary so that these trials can be concluded within a maximum period of six months i.e. 180 days, and the guilty can be punished as per law.

- e)** Investigating officers must be trained well with adequate staff and infrastructure support so as to be able to conduct **proper** and **timely** investigation.

- f)** Every Police Station should have one Legal Officer with good experience in criminal **trial** to advise officers on legal aspects of the cases so that the charge sheet stands the scrutiny of a court of law.

**g)** The State must ensure state-appointed advocates in rapes and for victims of other crimes are efficient in the discharge their duties to ensure the perpetrators of such crimes are prosecuted appropriately. The State must appoint more experienced advocates for this purpose.

**h)** Judges appointed for hearing matters of such sensitive nature should have to undergo mandatory preparation sessions and workshops to ensure they are not apathetic and dismissive or applying their own personal or religious biases to the case.

#### **AT THE VICTIM'S LEVEL**

**a)** There is need to have tie-ups with local NGOs that work with victims.

**b)** Counselling should be provided to the victims and police should adopt a humane and friendly approach towards them and their family members.

**c)** Rehabilitation policies for children subjected to sexual abuse should be strengthened. Therapy must be included in it to treat trauma and care of the child must be taken to ensure the child itself does not grow up to display violent or troubled tendencies in adulthood.

**d)** Victims of abuse are often left vulnerable to further abuse. Hence they should be properly rehabilitated and have access to greater number of shelters, health care centres, and financial aid resources. Educational and employment opportunities and childcare services should be extended more generously from the government.

## AT POLICY LEVEL

- a) Officers at the Police Station should be **promoted based on their results like case-solving capacity** and number of police officers in every Police Station should be increased so that the ratio of policemen to the population improves.
- b) States should adopt **Reforms suggested by the Administrative Reforms Commission**. In particular the **Malimath Committee report for police reforms** should be implemented so that the primary function of the State, i.e. maintenance of law and order, is not compromised.
- c) The State must introduce legislation to make marital rape a crime under the IPC. This will save the lives of hundreds of women trapped in abusive relationships while being legally and financially tied to their husbands.
- d) The State must appoint officers for public institutions at the ground level to make sure laws and reforms do not remain on paper but are actually working for the welfare of the people.
- e) The gap between the laws for women's and children's safety and their implementation is massive. This can only be checked through regular training of junior officers and checks by superior officers. Educating the police force about the gravity of these crimes and making sure they understand the power and responsibility that comes with their role is important. A deep understanding of laws such as Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences should be embedded in them along with radical social transformation measures needing to be initiated by the State.

## **AT COMMUNITY LEVEL**

- a)** Mandatory educational initiatives, workshops and camps must be conducted and encouraged at schools to spread awareness about and promote the concept of Gender Equality. Crimes against women are widespread only due to the sexism prevalent in the country and the belief that women are inferior. If boys are taught kindness, empathy and gender equality values from a young age they are less likely to grow up to objectify women or display violent tendencies towards them.
- b)** Mandatory self-defence/martial arts workshops that can teach at least the basics of protecting oneself must be conducted in schools regularly for girl children. Crime will continue as long as its perpetrators are at large, but the State must take measures like these to ensure girls and women can at least defend themselves.
- c)** Along with instant crisis response training, police officers must be trained to lose personal bias and prejudice against victims of rape. This will encourage women to come forward and report crimes against them. Often police officers indulge in victim blaming and slut-shaming women based on their clothing choices or what time of the day they choose to step outdoors. This only creates an environment that benefits perpetrators of crime. Officers found to be indulging in such behaviour must be punished severely.
- d)** Gender equality camps, drives and initiatives for adults must be conducted frequently and effectively in all localities to sensitize the community about crimes faced by women and the importance of providing a secure and nurturing environment for girls to grow up

in. Indian society is still home to a staggering number of people who are convinced that rape and sexual harassment is the victim's fault. They have to be taught to hold predatory men accountable for their actions instead of the victims. This large-scale change of mindset can only be brought forth through the baby steps of educational initiatives for both children and adults.

- e) Advertisement of state emergency helplines for women should be more widespread and the helplines more efficient.** Women should be made aware of the facilities, rights and remedies available for them through the State. Again, this can be done through canvassing and campaigning and workshops for children and adults at schools, residential communities, workplaces, and so on.
- f) Widespread advertising of guidelines and campaigns to sensitize the community on how victims of violent crimes should be treated** must be carried out to try to abolish victim-blaming and the stigma surrounding rape, sexual harassment and other crimes and to inform the community of the role it can play in the rehabilitation of victims back into society. Cruel treatment, abuse and continuance of stigmatized behaviour towards victims should result in severe penalties.
- g) Large scale drive to employ more women in police force, including giving increasing representation to women from weaker sections of society, be initiated.** This strengthens women as a class of people by providing them dignified employment and a means of remuneration. And it will also encourage more female victims of crime to come forward and report the offences to female officers.
- h) The government must strive to create an environment that makes women feel heard and secure with adequate safe spaces.** They

should be able to access help as quickly as possible wherever required. The State must ensure they are not shamed or dismissed but are protected. The State must promote these ideas through the use of various tools of media and also raise awareness about its initiatives through advertising, canvassing and campaigning.

- i) Stricter censorship of content showing blatant sexism and misogyny in media, including rape, stalking, etc which must not be glorified.** Media should be made aware of its role and responsibility in influencing the minds of the citizens and the State must enforce stricter authority in this regard.
  
- j) Police officers who are caught being perpetrators of such crimes should face strict punishment** and there should be easy access to the forums and helplines where complaints against them can be registered.
  
- k) In public transport (trains), the male police officers appointed for women's safety in the women's compartments are usually predatory themselves.** It is difficult to feel safe when the officers themselves indulge in lewd, indecent behavior. The appropriate authorities must check such behaviour more efficiently. And information about forums where complaints can be registered against them should be made more accessible to public knowledge.
  
- l) Installation of more CCTV cameras on the roads and functioning streetlights.**
  
- m) Awareness of child sexual abuse has to start at the school and family level.** Most child abuse usually begins from inside the family. Parents and other caregivers have to be encouraged and taught to speak up about it and report offences instead of hiding them to

save the family "reputation". Again, this can only be done through education! For both, adults and children. Thus, as mentioned, the need for State-mandated campaigns in schools, workplaces, residential localities etc.

As an active Citizen, I request you to look into the points raised above and ensure that our mothers, sisters and daughters are protected and positive steps are taken in this regard.