

Draft of Coalition for Safe University pamphlet

Sexual harassment seems to have become an intrinsic part of Delhi University's environment and culture. But more alarming still, is the hostility shown by DU authorities towards anyone who dares to make a formal complaint. Ordinance XV D, born out of long struggles and a lengthy democratic process, in accordance with Supreme Court guidelines in the Vishakha judgement, is one of the most sensitive policies in the country. However, its implementation has continuously been obstructed by the authorities.

This is illustrated in three recent incidents of sexual harassment, which we believe are representative of such cases.

- It is almost a year now since an enquiry committee on the rape case of April 2006 in Hindu College submitted its report and recommendations to the Principal of the College but no action has been taken on it. The fact that the complainant is poor and not a University student has added weight to the neglect of the report.
- The shocking incidents of sexual harassment of female students and colleagues in the Punjabi department by Prof. Arshi have been enquired into by a committee that submitted its report to the VC nine months ago. No disciplinary action whatsoever has been taken against him. The accused continues to exercise his power and position, punishing those research students whom he suspects to have testified against him. Since he continues to sit on selection committees he makes appointments, punishing some and rewarding others accordingly.
- In the Gandhi Bhavan sexual harassment case involving its Director, Prof. Bidyut Chakrabarti, who is also the Head of Dept. of Political Science as well as Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, the University authorities have chosen to flagrantly violate the University's own statutes in order to shield the accused. The complainant, an employee of Gandhi Bhavan had to struggle even to get a committee set up under Ordinance XV D. It was only after the media picked up the case that the Apex Committee decided to act. Why was the complainant faced with such a situation? Why did all DU authorities from the VC downwards, choose to ignore the complaint? Even now, over a month after the Enquiry

Committee's report was submitted to the VC, he has refused to table the report before the Executive Council, as directed by ordinance XV D.

Clearly the VC and his team have either not read the clauses of Ordinance XV (D) or have decided that they will pay no heed to it. What is very clear is that the university authorities are trying to scuttle the sexual harassment policy of Delhi University by subverting the structural solutions that the University community has put into place through sustained struggles.

These separate cases show that despite having a comprehensive Ordinance with autonomous structures, bodies and provisions like the Apex Committee and the College Complaints Cells to deal with sexual harassment in the university, the processes of implementing the recommendations are being stalled due to the power nexus between the authorities and the accused. The Apex Committee does not itself have the authority to execute the recommendations of the Enquiry Committee. This lacuna needs to be addressed immediately by the university community by fixing a time period for implementation of reports. Speedy implementation must become an integral part of the whole process.

VIOLETIONS OF XV D

- Complainant in Gandhi Bhavan case has had to file an RTI petition to obtain the copy of the report when this is her right. One month after the RTI petition she has still not received the report. *Whereas* DU handbook on sexual harassment makes it clear that, "A copy of the final report must be handed to the complainant and
- A counter enquiry has been instituted by the university against the complainant on a charge made by Prof. Bidyut Chakrabarti. This was done during the course of the enquiry of the charges made against him. *Whereas* Delhi University policy on sexual harassment state, "*The UUC/CCC/CPCC/ACC should make efforts to ensure that the complainants and witnesses are not further victimised or discriminated against while it is dealing with the complaint. The committee shall take action against anyone who intimidates the complainant or members of the committee, during or after the enquiry* (Page 11, DU Policy).
- The job status of the complainant is being sought to be affected by her complaint. *Whereas* the University's Policy on Sexual Harassment says "*Filing of a grievance/complaint shall not adversely affect the complainant's status/job, salary/promotion, grades etc.*" (Page 11, DU Policy).
the accused" (Page 22, DU Handbook).
* Prof. Chakrabarti and Prof. Arshi did not step down from their respective positions of power. *Whereas* the University policy on sexual harassment states that a person who is accused is to step down from office during the enquiry; the policy states "*the UUC/CCC/CPCC/ACC can ask the college/ university to suspend the alleged harasser from an administrative post/classes if his/her presence is likely to interfere with the enquiry*" (Page.11, DU Policy).

We appeal to the university community to be alert about the Ordinance. We call upon everyone in the University to set in place College Complaints Cells and to elect to them, people who are aware of the issue of sexual harassment.

**Please join us for a demonstration on Friday the 17th of August, 2007, outside the
VC office at 11.30 a.m.**

Coalition for Safe University

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