

Dismantle the structures of sexual violence, NOT the protesters' tent!

We, concerned individuals, are absolutely horrified to see the violence unleashed by the government and police today, to suppress the powerful grassroots support for our brave wrestlers and their struggle against Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who stands accused of sexual harassment of women wrestlers stretching back over a decade. The wrestlers have been protesting since 18th of January, 2023. They had given a call to all women's organisations, activists and all other civil society organisations to join a Mahila Samman Mahapanchayat outside the new parliament building today, i.e 28 May 2023. Thousands of women from Delhi and nearby states responded to the call. Fearing the collective strength of Indian women - the police pre-emptively blocked all border roads, shut down proximal metro stations, and cordoned off roads. This is how scared a patriarchal State is of the sight of the women of India standing shoulder to shoulder with each other. Despite this crackdown, the government was unable to block the flow of solidarity; activists and concerned citizens found ways of trying to reach the protest site. But in a rerun of how people's protests have been stifled in the past few years, many women have been taken into custody and many have been subjected to physical and verbal violence by the police. As we write this statement with fury, we learn that the wrestlers' tent at Jantar Mantar has been dismantled, and the wrestlers have been taken into custody. Not only has their minimum demand of holding proper inquiries not been met, but they and the thousands from across India, speaking up with them for justice to women, are being treated like criminals; while the actual criminal, Brij Bhushan, remains scot-free. Fittingly for this anti-women regime, this is happening even as a new parliament building is being inaugurated by a Prime Minister whose 'Beti Bachao' slogan never rang hollower.

This parliament belongs to all of us; it belongs to the women of this country, as does the right to demand justice against sexual violence!

We stand in complete solidarity with the wrestlers, and the people who have been detained.

We demand: Immediate arrest of BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, accused of sexual violence in many cases including POCSO Immediate release of the detained wrestlers and activists Stop trampling on peoples' constitutional right to protest against injustice