

Press Release:

Demand by women's groups and concerned individuals for urgent reform of law relating to sexual assault, and seeking accountability of the NCW. Petition signed by 92 organizations and 546 individuals.

Dated: July 23, 2012

A delegation of women representing women's groups and individuals from across the country met this morning with Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of the UPA and presented her with two memorandums concerning the issue of violence against women in the country.

The first memorandum was directed at the Criminal Law Amendment Bill which proposes amendments to the existing provisions on rape and sexual assault. The women's groups demanded that the proposed amendment define rape as a gender specific crime in recognition of the fact that rape is primarily a crime perpetrated by men against women, and is accompanied by specific consequences for women. In light of this, they opposed transforming rape into a gender neutral offence. The need for introducing a gradation in sexual assault offences was also highlighted as necessary, to enable law to respond appropriately to aggravated assault such as public stripping and parading to less severe forms of molestation. The delegation emphasised that the age of statutory consent be 16 years and not 18 years as was being proposed, so as to penalise only non-consensual sex between young persons. The delegation emphasised that any amendment at this stage must aim to introduce holistic reform for victims of sexual assault, including that related to victim and witness protection as well as provision of criminal injuries compensation for victims. Partial reforms at this stage would not just be belated, but also tokenistic if they failed to take into account the holistic duty the state bears to provide redress to victims of sexual assault. They demanded that the government must consult with women's groups in order to address all the shortcomings of the law, so as to integrate all the concerns prior to presenting the Bill to the Parliament.

The delegation also pressed for institutional reforms of the National Commission for Women, pointing out its consistent failures in upholding women's rights and responding to widespread and gross violations of women, as highlighted recently by the NCW's response to the Guwahati case. They stressed the urgency of putting in place a transparent, democratic and non partisan selection process for members and the Chairperson of the Commission. Further they also demanded a comprehensive review of the performance of the Commission. And finally in light of recent events, they demanded that the current Chairperson be replaced immediately.

Smt. Gandhi keenly heard all the issues and acknowledged the concerns. She assured the delegation that she would look into the matter and ensure that women's groups were consulted by the nodal Ministry to give their critical inputs into the Bill before it is finalised.

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS ENDORSING THE PETITION

ORGANISATION	NAME OF THE REPRESENTATIVE	PLACE
1. AALI	Seema Misra	Lucknow
2. Action Aid	Sandeep Chachra	Delhi
3. AIPWA (All India Progressive Women's Association)	Kavita Krishnan	Delhi
4. Akshara	Nandita Shah	Mumbai
5. All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch	Asha Kowtal	Delhi
6. Anandi	Jahnvi Andharia	Gujarat
7. Anwasha		Guwahati
8. Anweshi	Ajitha	Kerala
9. Asmita	Vasanth Kannibaran	Secunderabad
10. Assam Mahila Samata Society		Guwahati
11. Assam Mahila Sangha		Guwahati
12. Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti		Tezpur
13. Barak People's Human Rights Committee		Silchar
14. Behavioral Science Centre	Prasad Chako	Ahmedabad
15. Breakthrough	Sonali Khan	Delhi
16. CEHAT (Centre for Enquiry Into Health and Allied Themes)	Sana Contractor	Mumbai
17. Chhattishgarh Prachar Evam Vikas Sansthan	Anil Kumar Mishra	Surguja – Chhattishgarh
18. Commutiny –the Youth Collective	Manak Matiyani	Delhi
19. CREA		Delhi
20. Delhi Forum	Bhargavi Dilip Kumar	Delhi
21. Centre for Organisation Research and Education	Dr. Immanuel Zarzosang Varte	Manipur

22. Eastern India Women's Association		Guwahati
23. EKTA	Bimla Chandrasekhar	Chennai
24. Falguni	Paryavaran Mitra	Ahmedabad
25. Feminist Approach to Technology	Gayatri Burgohain	Delhi
26. Forum Against Oppression of Women	Sandhya Gokhale	Mumbai
27. Foundation for Social Transformation		Guwahati
28. HAQ: Centre for Child Rights	Bharti Ali, Enakshi Ganguly Thukral	Delhi
29. Healthwatch Forum UP	Tithi Nandy	Lucknow
30. Housing and Land Rights Network	Miloon Kothari	Delhi
31. Indraprastha Public Affairs Centre		Delhi
32. Jagori	Suneeta Dhar	Delhi
33. Jagori Grameen	Abha Bhaiya	Delhi
34. Jagrut Kamgar Manch	Girija Gupte	Mumbai
35. JTSA (Jamia Teachers' Solidarity Association)	Manisha Sethi	Delhi
36. Kriti Team	Aanchal Kapur	Delhi
37. LABIA	Chayanika Shah	Mumbai
38. Lawyer's Collective	Indira Jaising	Delhi/Mumbai
39. Loreto Shillong Alumni Forum		Shillong
40. Madhavi Kuckreja	Vanangana	Lucknow
41. Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti		Guwahati
42. MARG (Multiple Action Research Group)		Delhi
43. Marwari Yuva Mancha		Delhi
44. MASUM	Ramesh Awasthi	Pune
45. MKSS	Aruna Roy	Rajasthan
46. Nari Mukti Sangram Samiti		Guwahati
47. National Alliance on Maternal Maternal Health and Human	Sandhya YK	Lucknow

Rights, India		
48. Nirantar		Delhi
49. Nirdhan Kisan Vikas Mandal(NKVM)	Dr.Aswanikumar	Muzaffarpur, Bihar
50. Nirtajan Birudhi Aikyo Mancha		
51. North East Network		Guwahati
52. Olakh	Nimisha Desai	Vadodara
53. OXFAM	Nisha Agarwal	Delhi
54. Parichiti, A society for empowerment of women		Kolkata
55. Partners for Law in Development	Madhu Mehra	Delhi
56. Penkoottu		Kozhikode, Kerala
57. Pennurimai Iyakkam	D.Gabrielle	Chennai
58. People's Union for Civil Liberties	Kavita Srivastava	
59. Point of View	Bishaka Datta	Mumbai
60. Pragatishil Nari Sanstha		Guwahati
61. Program for Social Action	Bhargavi Dilip Kumar	Delhi
62. Purva Bharati Trust		Jorhat
63. PWESCR (Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)	Preeti Darooka	Delhi
64. Rastriya Gramin Bikas Nidhi		Guwahati
65. SAHAYOG	Jashodhara Dasgupta	Lucknow
66. Saheli Women's Resource Centre	Vani Subramaniam	Delhi
67. SAHR WARU: Women's Action and Resource Unit	Sheba George	Ahmedabad
68. Samrakshan Trust		Meghalaya
69. Sangat South Asia		Delhi
70. Sangram	Meena Seshu	Maharashtra
71. Sanlaap	Indrani Sinha	Kolkata
72. Shishu sarothi		Guwahati

73. SNEHA (Society for Nutrition Education and Health Action)	Pouru Wadia	Mumbai
74. Snehalaya		Ahmednagar
75. Society for Sustainable Development	Arun Jindal	Karauli (Rajasthan)
76. SPADE		Guwahati
77. St Mary's Past Pupil's Association, Gauhati Club		Guwahati
78. SWATI (Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives)	Poonam Kathuria	Ahmedabad
79. Swayam	Anu Kapoor	Kolkata
80. TARSHI	Prabha Nagaraja	Delhi
81. Tezpur District Mahila Samiti		Tezpur
82. TISS- NE		Guwahati
83. VAMP (Vaishya Anyay Mukti Parishad)	Meena Seshu	Maharashtra
84. Vidyarathi Yuvjan Sabha	Pyoli Swatija	Delhi
85. Vimochana		Bangalore
86. Voluntary Health Association of Assam		Guwahati
87. Wing Assam		Guwahati
88. Women Development Centre		
89. Women Legal Aid Cell		
90. Women Power Connect		Delhi
91. WRAG (Women's Research and Action Group)	Saumya Uma	Mumbai
92. Zubaan	Urvashi Butalia	Delhi