

PRESS RELEASE: Stop Arresting Women in Dowry Cases demands SIFF

Contributed by Administrator

Monday, 03 March 2008 - Last Updated Monday, 10 March 2008

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Save Indian Family Foundation

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PRESS RELEASE

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March 8th is the International Women's Day (IWD). It's the day, when women's struggles are remembered and their achievements are celebrated. Unfortunately, the women's struggles still continue as thousands of innocent women are harassed, abused and even jailed every year in the name of executing laws meant for protecting women. The patriarchal law enforcement system denied justice to women for a long time and today it participates in harassment of women in the name of implementing laws meant for protecting women. Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF) is conducting awareness campaigns in Bangalore, Delhi and Hyderabad to show the disastrous impact of draconian laws on innocent women.

Every year 30,000 innocent women get jailed without evidence or investigation in dowry cases. Many of these women are elderly, many are pregnant and many have small kids in their arms. Thousands of unmarried young girls are also arrested and sent to jail. In the name of protecting women, the patriarchal society takes pride in arresting and jailing so many women without any evidence or investigation. Are these women a threat to society that they have to be arrested and bail has to be denied? Jailing of 30,000 women and girls in a year means one woman is jailed in every 20 minutes. Many more thousands of women live in the constant fear of getting dragged to police stations, getting arrested and jailed. Many of these women approach SIFF helplines for counseling as they have no where else to go.

It is often assumed that only men get victimized in false dowry cases. This is not true. The reality is that a woman is arrested in every 20 minutes. The real victims of dowry harassment never go to police and it's the innocents who get jailed. Indian supreme court has warned about unleashing of "legal terrorism" if the arrest of innocents is not stopped. Often, elderly widowed women are abused and threatened by the male relatives of the estranged daughter-in-law so that she gives in to their demand of lacs of money and property.

Recently, a 92 year old woman was dragged to police station and the court, when a criminal case is filed against her. She was considered "guilty till proven innocent". Another woman was arrested in a dowry case and is taken in train from Delhi to Lucknow along with her 6 month old kid. Is this empowerment of women? In another occasion, police reached to a school to arrest a class 9th school girl, who was listed as an accused in a dowry case. Is this what President calls about initiatives for "girl child" in India?

Recently, an auto-rickshaw driver attempted suicide in Bangalore after being abused and made to run around police stations. In his house there was one widowed mother, a widowed sister and widowed wife of his brother. He was the sole breadwinner of the family. Three widowed women and the children were dependents on him. By God's grace he survived. If he had passed away, then who would have taken care of these innocent women and children? The patriarchal system has no right to harass a man, who is the only breadwinner in a family with women and children.

In spite of lofty claims made by minister for women and child welfare Renuka Chowdhury about women's empowerment, it is a fact that she is completely silent about plight of thousands of women and children, who get jailed without trial in dowry cases every year. She has no answer to these atrocities committed by a patriarchal system, which finds it mandatory to jail women and children

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without bail even as criminals and molesters get bail at the drop of hat. The entire women's movement in India is hijacked by a few fund chasing pawns of western agencies, which drive the agenda of women's movement in India.

President of India, Pratibha Patil recently talked about "complete legal equality" for women. So, why Government is arresting innocent women and young girls without evidence or investigation? Women's activists of SIFF will submit memorandums to President of India and Governor of Karnataka to stop arrest of women in dowry cases.

Stop Arresting Women in Dowry Cases demands SIFF and its Women's Activists:

- 1) STOP Arresting Women and girls in anti-dowry cases. Women can be arrested only when they are convicted after trial in a competent court. Arresting innocent women without any basis is simply an act of cowardice by a Government, which can not implement any law properly.
- 2) Any police official arresting women in dowry cases must face disciplinary action.
- 3) The DV act's scope must be extended to include protection orders and restraining orders on male relatives of a daughter-in-law, who abuse and threaten the women of the family.

Women's movement started with sincere women, who wanted to achieve gender equality. Today the women's organizations are hijacked by fund chasing fringe elements, which campaign for biased draconian laws without considering its consequences on innocent women and children in families. The women activists of SIFF work hard to expose these motivated organizations, which betray women while collecting funds for women's welfare.

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Join the activity to Stop the Legal Terrorism In India :

- **2nd March, 2008, Dharna at Vidhan Shabha, Lucknow.**
 - **3rd March, 2008, Press Conference at Bangalore Press Club.**
 - **5th March, 2008 , Press Concerence and Seminer at Hydrabad.**
 - **8th March, 2008 , All India Dharna and Protest In Delhi at Jantar Mantar.**
 - **8th March, 2008 , Dharna and Protest In Ahmadabad by ABPAVS.**
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Women Against Misuse of Women-Protection Laws

Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF) is a voluntary self-help group formed with the twin objectives of promoting family harmony and fighting legal terrorism (carried out through the misuse of women-protection laws). SIFF is observing International Women's Day for the first time this year.

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On this occasion, we, the women members of SIFF are organizing a Press Conference and Seminar on Wednesday, 5th March 2008, at Basheerbagh Press Club, Hyderabad, to highlight the consequences of women's empowerment gone awry. Through this event, we would like to bring to light the plight of the "forgotten women", who have actually been disempowered and whose basic human rights are being violated by the police and judiciary in the name of women's rights, protection and empowerment. We seek to highlight the woes of thousands of mothers and sisters who have been ignored and written off by organizations claiming to work for women's welfare.

Over the last 60 years many policies have been instituted in the country in the name of women's liberation and empowerment. Special laws have been passed specifically in the name of women's protection such as IPC Section 498A (law against marital cruelty and dowry harassment) and Domestic Violence Law. Unfortunately, there are no safeguards to prevent misuse of these protective provisions.

These "women-protection laws", which are in essence wife-protection laws, assume that wives are always honest victims and would never jeopardize their own family life by making false claims of abuse. The draconian law, IPC Section 498A, in particular, allows the arrest of the husband and his male and female relatives, irrespective of their age, marital status or even health condition, solely on the basis of allegations of a wife, without any evidence or investigation.

Owing to this blind assumption and due to the absence of inherent checks and balances to prevent misuse of the laws, many innocent mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and other female relatives of husbands are arrested and harassed through long-drawn trials that last several years.

Several authorities have noted that in close to 98% of cases filed under Section 498A, the accusations are false and that the complaints were only filed with ulterior motives.

Nevertheless, minor girls, pregnant women, married and unmarried sisters, ailing mothers and even aged grandmothers have been sent behind bars and prosecuted based on mere allegations. Young mothers are either torn away from their children or imprisoned along with them leaving indelible scars on the minds of the mothers and the children.

Many mothers and sisters are heart-broken to see their sons and brothers lose their youth, their health, their jobs, all their earnings, and sometimes even their lives, as they are mercilessly tortured by their estranged wives, aided by lawyers, police and the judiciary. Some women have ended their lives unable to bear the humiliation of being accused and arrested, and the trauma of making endless trips around the courts.

Noted activist Madhu Kishwar acknowledged that IPC Section 498A is heavily misused, and that a significant proportion of individuals who approach "Manushi" these days are mothers-in-law and husbands who are falsely accused.

Renowned IPS officer Kiran Bedi admitted that many poor and illiterate mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, who are falsely charged under IPC Section 498A are languishing in prison every year.

The Supreme Court of India has labeled the misuse of IPC Section 498A as "legal terrorism".

The Delhi High Court recently stated that IPC Section 498A is the most abused provision.

The World Health Organization, in its report on India clearly cited Section 498A as one of the major reasons for the "Increasing Abuse of the Elderly in India".

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Recently, the National Human Rights Commission noted that the Tihar jail is overflowing with people falsely accused under dowry cases.

A look at the crime records shows that every 20 minutes an innocent woman is arrested under IPC Section 498A.

In addition to penalizing innocent women, a large backlog of false cases in our highly corrupt and inefficient legal system prevents genuine victims of abuse from obtaining justice. Through IPC Section 498A the police and the legal fraternity are protecting those women who indulge in perjury, blackmail, extortion and harassment of their husbands and in-laws.

Despite having such compelling evidence that more harm than good is being done to women through IPC Section 498A, none of the leading women's organizations, law makers nor the Ministry for Women and Child Welfare have taken any measures to arrest misuse of this law.

All the warnings, requests, recommendations and demands from several quarters to amend IPC Section 498A have fallen on deaf ears. Even before fixing the flaws in IPC Section 498A the Domestic Violence Law was introduced in 2006 with similar loopholes and without public discussion. Misuse of the Domestic Violence law began very soon after its introduction, and under its provisions a number of elderly mothers-in-law have been thrown out of their own homes by their daughters-in-law.

It is customary for women's organizations to trivialize the extent of misuse of these laws by women and to exaggerate statistics of dowry harassment, dowry death and domestic abuse. It is also customary for women's rights activists to deny domestic abuse against our fathers, brothers and sons. However, recent data from the National Crime Bureau indicates that nearly twice as many married men, compared to married women, commit suicide every year, unable to withstand verbal, emotional, economic and physical abuse and legal harassment. While every death of a young married woman is converted into a case of dowry death leading to immediate arrest of the husband and in-laws, large-scale suicides of men do not cause any outrage in the society.

Is the pain of a mother who lost a son to domestic abuse or legal terrorism any less than that of a mother who lost a daughter? How many more mothers and sisters should lose their sons and brothers before measures are taken to alleviate their sufferings?

Aren't mothers and sisters women? Don't they deserve a life of dignity and respect?

Does penalizing innocent mothers and sisters under false cases bring justice to genuinely abused women?

Does women's empowerment mean destroying family harmony and creating a fatherless society?

Is protection of women's rights synonymous with gross violation of basic human rights?

Is legal terrorism the solution to all women's problems?

These are the questions we ask the public, women's organizations, police, legal fraternity, bureaucrats and politicians in our Press Conference and Seminar on the occasion of International Women's Day 2008. We will also be submitting a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India stating our demands to the Government on this occasion.

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[Stop arresting women in dowry cases : NGO :Deccan Herald Page4](#)

Bangalore dhns: The Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF). an NGO plans to submit a memorandum to REsident Patil and Governer Ramesh Tahkur to stop arrest of women and children in dowry cases

Lata Pai from SIFF said , women must be arrested only when they are convicted after trial and not without basis like now. elderly widowed women are often abused and threatened that they would be booked under false dowry cases by male relatives of estranged daughter in law so that she gives in to their demands of money and property , she added

[On Women's Day, do spare a thought for men - Latest News ...Ahmedabad, March 5](#)

After suffering in silence for long, husbands are on the march. And the last one to join their ranks is an NRI businessman who hails from Bhavnagar.

Sixty-nine-year-old Deepakbhai Patel (name changed) is involved in a bitter matrimonial dispute. Back in Gujarat, his wife has filed around 70 cases of dowry and domestic violence and property in Bhavnagar and Ahmedabad. The charges are all trumped up, he says, the purpose just to teach him a lesson. That was when an acquaintance in Kuwait told him about an Ahmedabad-based pan-India organisation of men persecuted by disgruntled spouses.

Deepakbhai says: "The Akhil Bharatiya Patni Atyachaar Virodhi Sangh (ABPAVS) gave me strength. I met many men who were similarly wounded, whose wives had lodged frivolous cases against them. I found the resolve to soldier on."

Dalsukh Patel, a US-based NRI businessman, is in a similar quandary. His wife has filed a dowry case against him and is even in possession of his house in Ahmedabad. "I have to live in a dharamsala, my own house is out of bounds for me. But I will fight to get my name cleared. The support of the Sangh had toughened my resolve," he says.

The ABPAVS, a organisation of tortured husbands founded in 1994, has seen a small but steady rise in the number of NRIs joining its fold. Of its 32,000 members, 13 are from abroad. Three joined last year, 10 this year.

Dashrath Devda, founder president of the ABPAVS, who was inspired from his own traumatic experience after his wife filed a false dowry case against him, says: "The number of NRI men has definitely increased. There are many more who still have to come out of the closet. In our society, it is not easy for a man to say that he gets beaten by his wife."

The ABPAVS members does not only include men, but also mothers and sisters of

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such men.

"The anti-dowry legislation is so clearly loaded in favour of women that men have little chance of fighting it," Devda says.

"Dowry is a big problem, but men being falsely implicated in it is no small issue."

The domestic violence law can so easily be misused by a vengeful wife. "We have among our members IAS and IPS officers, doctors, engineers and people from all walks of life. The problem of being exploited by wives is far graver than it is believed to be," he says.

Membership of the organisation comes after a background check. Men with a history of alcoholism, or violently behaviour are usually shown the door.

Complete personal details of the members, including the cases filed against them, is kept.

To create more awareness and sensitivity in the society about their plight, the ABPAVS is holding a demonstration where over 250 members are expected to attend on March 8 — International Women's Day.

As Devda, who was a driver by profession, says: "The laws right now are like Maruti Esteem for the women. At least have a small run-down Maruti 800 for the men."

[Celebrating womanhood : The Hindu](#)

Pls find the link for photos for the 8th March Dharna, at Jantar Mantar, Delhi on International Women's Day

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/23782115@N02/>