**PRESS RELEASE**

**Hundreds of feminists, activists, scholars across India condemn BJP’s divisive ‘communal campaign’ in the aftermath of tragic murder of dalit youth Nagaraju in Hyderabad**

**Demand Action against accused: Extend Support to Ashrin Sultana & Nagaraju’s family:**

**Call upon states to bring in legislations to protect inter-caste and inter-faith couples**

**14th May, 2022:** The brutal killing of dalit youth Nagaraju ten days back in Hyderabad has attracted nation-wide condemnation. About 350+ feminists, scholars, activists from across India have issued a statement calling for **strict action in the case under the SC and ST (PoA), 1989** as well as **action against the concerned police for failure to protect the couple**, despite complaints since January, 2022. They have asked the state government to ensure full **support and protection to the wife of the deceased Ashrin Sultana and the family** of the deceased. The **statement also decried the selective ‘outrage’ of the BJP and its affiliated outfits** on this issue and its nefarious attempts to create communal polarization, while it has barely shown concern in the cases of killings of numerous other Dalits in similar circumstances.

The activists said that the BJP has been using this tragic case as ‘*yet another plank to demonize the entire muslim community*’, across Telangana and elsewhere. The statement read, “*As the BJP is on a spree of getting ‘anti-conversion’ laws passed across the country and raising the false bogie of ‘love jihad’, we think* ***it is time for the non-BJP governments, to not only actively counter these unconstitutional moves, but also bring in enabling legislations at the state level protecting inter-caste, inter-faith relationships****”.*

The activists felt that all governments, political parties and civil society have a role and responsibility to work towards reducing caste, faith and gender-based crimes against consensual adults. The called for the ‘*need to challenge the scourge of caste and patriarchy across all religions, so that our young people, especially Dalits, women and marginalized genders can enjoy their human rights, as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution’*.

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| ***Some of the signatories to the statement include:***  ***G.G. Parikh*** *(Freedom Fighter and Janta Trust),* ***Teesta Setalvad*** *(Citizens for Peace and Justice, Maharashtra),* ***Prof. Rosemary Dzuvichu*** *(Nagaland University),* ***Hasina Khan*** *(Bebaak Collective),* ***Manjula Pradeep*** *(National Council of Women Leaders, Gujarat),* ***Maimoona Mollah*** *(AIDWA),* ***Kavita Krishnan*** *(AIPWA),* ***John Dayal*** *(Writer and activist Delhi),* ***Anuradha Talwar*** *(Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samiti, West Bengal),* ***Uma Chakravarti*** *(Feminist and Filmmaker),* ***Sandeep Pandey****, (Socialist Party-India, Uttar Pradesh),* ***Prof. Rama Melkote*** *(Retd Academic, Osmania University, Telangana),* ***Kavita Srivastava,*** *(PUCL Rajasthan),* ***Aruna Gnanadason*** *(Indian Christian Women's Movement, Tamil Nadu),* ***Madhu Bhushan*** *(Gamana Mahila Samuha, Karnataka),* ***Madhuri*** *(Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Madhya Pradesh),* ***Ashish Kothari*** *(Environmentalist, Pune),* ***Vani Subramanian*** *(Independent Filmmaker, Delhi),* ***Chennaiah Poguri (****National Alliance of Agriculture allied Workers Union, Andhra Pradesh),* ***Anand Patwardhan*** *(Film Maker),* ***Dr. Gabriele Dietrich*** *(Penn Urimay Iyakkam, TN),* ***Prof. Ayesha Kidwai*** *(JNU, Delhi),* ***Ramesh Patnaik*** *(All India Forum for Right to Education),* ***Manshi Ashe****r (Kangra Citizens Rights Group, Himachal Pradesh),* ***Apeksha Priyadarshini*** *(Bhagat Singh Ambedkar Students Organization, JNU),* ***Prasad Chacko (****National Dalit Watch),* ***Dorothy Fernandes*** *(Ashray Abhiyan, Bihar),* ***Prof. Lyla Mehta*** *(Institute of Development Studies, UK),* ***Roop Rekha Verma (****Retd Prof, Lucknow University),* ***Rita Manchanda (****South Asia Forum for Human Rights),* ***Eric Pinto*** *(Environmentalist, Goa),* ***Kamayani*** *(JJSS, Bihar),* ***Chayanika Shah (****Forum Against Oppression on Women, Mumbai****) Dr.******Sujatha******Surepally*** *(Dalit Women’s Collective, Telangana),* ***Prof. Nandita Narain*** *(Delhi University),* ***Kalyani Menon Sen (****Feminist Researcher, New Delhi),* ***Sagari******Ramdas*** *(Food Sovereignty Alliance),* ***Vidya Dinkar*** *(INSAF),* ***Akash Bhattacharya*** *(All India Peoples' Forum)* ***Arundhati******Dhuru*** *(National Alliance of People’s Movements),* ***Charu Govindan*** *(Voice of People, Tamil Nadu),* ***Vinay Sreenivasa*** *(Advocate, Bengaluru) and others.* |

***Write to*** [***napmindia@gmail.com***](mailto:napmindia@gmail.com) ***for queries. Read the full statement, with list of all signatories below:***

**Statement by all-india feminists, democratic activists and groups on**

**the murder of dalit youth Nagaraj in Hyderabad**

**Countering BJP’s communal politics:**

**Condemning casteist prejudices and patriarchal practices across religions**

**14th May, 2022:** We the undersigned feminists, democratic activists and groups have been observing with utmost concern the developments in Telangana, ever since Mr. B. Nagaraju, a dalit youth was mercilessly killed on the night of 4th May for marrying his long-time lover Ashrin Sultana. Different sources including Ashrin have indicated that her brother and relative resorted to killing Nagaraju, because he belonged to a non-muslim faith, but more so because was a dalit. The caste location of the deceased assumes significance since Ashrin’s brother disapproved of the relationship, despite Nagaraju’s proposal to convert to Islam.

We are all deeply aghast at the crime committed against Nagraju and expect the Telangana Govt. to arrest the remaining accused as well and conclude the investigation promptly under the SC ad ST (PoA), 1989, so that an appropriate court of law can pass sentence. We are also in complete empathy with young Ashrin as well as the family members of Nagaraju who have been traumatized to no end, because of this gruesome incident. We join feminist and civil society groups of Telangana in their demands to the state government to provide all necessary support, financial, legal, medical care and immediate protection to Ashrin and the family of the deceased in these difficult circumstances. We also demand action against the concerned district police who failed to ensure adequate protection to the couple, and apprehend the accused in time, despite being in receipt of complaints about the threat to life.

While this incident has led to intense debates on questions of faith, caste and gender across social and political circles, the BJP and its affiliates have been quick to manipulate and present this case as one of a ‘religious atrocity by muslims against a hindu’ and have been working overtime both across Telangana and elsewhere to use this as yet another plank to demonize the entire muslim community, based on this incident, in which not just the accused, but one of the victims is also a muslim woman!

Across India, the BJP’s track record with regard to upholding the rights of Dalits, women and other marginalized sections is well-known. Some of the highest numbers of crimes have been where the party is in power. It is, therefore, a cruel joke that the BJP, which has been bothered in the least, all these years, when dalit youth were murdered for entering into inter-caste relationships, is now suddenly in ‘campaign mode’ in the Nagaraju - Ashrin case, across Telangana, trying to eke out communal dividends from a tragic end to an inter-faith, inter-caste marriage. We condemn the BJP’s toxic anti-minority politics, its disdain for Dalits and its patriarchal approach to the right of individuals, especially women to love or marry as per their choices.

This is in no way to exonerate non-BJP parties (whether or not in power) who also have an equal responsibility to work towards reducing caste, faith and gender-based crimes against consensual adults. The Telangana Govt. has much to answer as well for its poor response in controlling crimes against Dalits, since 2014. A high-powered Committee under the Chief Minister must immediately review all cases of atrocities against Dalits in the state and ensure action in all of them.

As the BJP is on a spree of getting ‘anti-conversion’ laws passed across the country and raising the false bogie of ‘love jihad’, we think it is time for the non-BJP governments, to not only actively counter these unconstitutional moves, but also bring in enabling legislations at the state level protecting inter-caste, inter-faith relationships. The painful end to the powerful love life of Nagaraju and Ashrin must be a moment of reckoning and reflection for all religions which, in practice, have been disapproving of inter-caste and inter-faith relationships. Unless we are able to challenge the scourge of caste and patriarchy across all religions, our young people, especially Dalits, women and marginalized genders would not be able to enjoy their human rights, as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sl. No.** | **Name** | **Organization / Professional Affiliation** | **State** |
|  | Nisha Biswas | Kolkata | West Bengal |
|  | Simona Sawhney | IIT Delhi | Delhi |
|  | Sarah Mathews | Sankalp Women's Support Alliance | Telangana |
|  | Shefali Jha | Anveshi | Telangana |
|  | Ashalatha S | Makaam | Telangana |
|  | Varsha Bhargavi | Where Are The Women | Telangana |
|  | Anuradha Talwar | Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity | West Bengal |
|  | Sajaya Kakarla | Women &Transgender orgs JAC | Telangana |
|  | Teesta Setalvad | Citizens for Justice and Peace | Maharashtra |
|  | Padmaja Shaw | Rtd. Professor, Osmania University | Telangana |
|  | Maria Tabassum | Educationist and Social Activist. Director Madina and Global group of Institutions | Telangana |
|  | R.Venkat Reddy | Samaajik karyakaryala vedika | Telangana |
|  | Anita | Anekataa | Karnataka |
|  | Deepthi.S | Dalit women's collective | Telangana |
|  | Chayanika Shah | Forum Against Oppression of Women | Maharashtra |
|  | Suneetha A | women and transgender joint action | Telangana |
|  | Uma | Editor and writer | Delhi |
|  | Bhamati S | Filmmaker | Delhi |
|  | Lissy | Telangana Domestic Workers Union | Telangana |
|  | Aasha Ramesh | Social women's right activist & researcher | Karnataka |
|  | sumitra | Ankuram | Telangana |
|  | Prof.Rosemary Dzuvichu | Nagaland University | Nagaland |
|  | Varna Sri Raman | PinPoint Ventures LLP | Delhi |
|  | Apurwa Yagnik | NA | Rajasthan |
|  | Rituparna Sengupta | Independent researcher | West Bengal |
|  | Jeroo Mulla | Sophia Polytechnic | Maharashtra |
|  | Reena Mohan | Concerned Citizen | Delhi |
|  | Samata Biswas | NA | West Bengal |
|  | Dorothy Fernandes | Aashray Abhiyan | Bihar |
|  | Ali Asghar | ASEEM | Telangana |
|  | Nandan Saxena | Filmmaker | Maharashtra |
|  | Aparna | Social worker | Telangana |
|  | Kiran Vissa | [kiranvissa@gmail.com](mailto:kiranvissa@gmail.com) | Telangana |
|  | Pragnya Joshi | PUCL | Rajasthan |
|  | Satyavati Kondaveeti | Individual | Telangana |
|  | Srishti | Filmmaker | Uttarakhand |
|  | KhalidaParveen | Amoomat socirty | Telangana |
|  | Mahnoor Yar khan | Nil | Telangana |
|  | Jasveen Jairath | Human rights activist | Telangana |
|  | P.Shankar | Dalit bahujan Front(DBF) | Telangana |
|  | Sharifa Siddiqui | Counselor | Telangana |
|  | Puli.kalpana | DBF | Telangana |
|  | Akhil Mythri | NIAS | Karnataka |
|  | Prasad Chacko | National Dalit Watch | Ahmedabad |
|  | Sabah Qadri | Help hyd | Telangana |
|  | Farhana khan | Educationist social activist | Telangana |
|  | K. Padma | Advocate | Andhrapradesh |
|  | Anuradha Banerji | Saheli women’s resource centre | - |
|  | Rama Melkote | Prif.retd. Osmania University | Telangana |
|  | Syed Majid Shuttari | Socio-political Activist | Telangana |
|  | Sayantan Datta | [TheLifeofScience.com](http://TheLifeofScience.com) | Telangana |
|  | sujatha surepally | dalit womens collective | telangana |
|  | N Venugopal | Editor, Veekshanam | Telangana |
|  | Tithiya Sharma | GatherSisters | Delhi |
|  | Tashi Choedup | Buddhist Monastic | Telangana |
|  | B. Anuradha | Writer and Activist | Telangana |
|  | Ajeet | Independent Researcher | Maharashtra |
|  | Shaik Salauddin | Social Activist | Telangana |
|  | Vaneeta Bhattacharyya | Neredu Valley Meditation and Healing Center | Andhra Pradest |
|  | Nadir Cazi | None | Maharashtra |
|  | Sarath Cheloor | NAPM Keralam | Keralam |
|  | Jaya Lakkineni | VEDIKA | Andhra Pradesh |
|  | Bhandaru Vijaya Kumari | Writer | TELANGANA |
|  | Aravinda Potluri | Concerned citizen | Telangana |
|  | Vvjyothi | Journalist | Telangana |
|  | Bhandaru Vijaya Kumari | Writer women&transzendar organisations jac | TELANGANA |
|  | Manjula Pradeep | National Council of Women Leaders | Gujarat |
|  | Vvjyothi | Journalist | Telangana |
|  | Bhandaru Vijaya Kumari | Writer, Women &Transzendar organisation Jac | TELANGANA |
|  | Girija | Voice for gender justice | Telagana |
|  | Afsar Jahan | Advocate | Telangana |
|  | P Singh | Nil | Delhi |
|  | Meena Gopal | FAOW | Maharashtra |
|  | Sandhya gokhale | Forum Against Oppression of Women | Maharashtra |
|  | Adv.Ansar indori | NCHRO | Rajasthan |
|  | Pritha Paul | Student | West Bengal |
|  | Rohit Prajapati | Activist | Gujarat |
|  | Aakar Patel | Columnist | Karnataka |
|  | Meena Saraswathi Seshu | Vidhrohi Mahila Manch | Maharashtra |
|  | Pritha Chakrabarti | Krea University | Andhra Pradesh |
|  | Apeksha Vora | Independent | Maharashtra |
|  | Sudheer | Cinema | Maharashtra |
|  | Mridula Manglam | University of Allahabad | Uttar Pradesh |
|  | Hiren Gandhi. | DARSHAN | Gujarat. |
|  | Adv Shalu Nigam | Independent researcher | Delhi |
|  | Smriti Nevatia | NA | Maharashtra |
|  | Seethalakshmi | Independent Researcher | Telangana |
|  | Bandari Laxmaiah | Struggle Association for Annihilation of Caste Inequalities | Telangana |
|  | Madhu Bhushan | Women's rights activist. Gamana Mahila Samuha | Karnataka |
|  | Zero Mulla | scn | Maharashtra |
|  | Sreeharsha thanneeru | Rythu Swarajya Vedika | Telangana |
|  | Vijay Rukmini Rao | Feminist, Development Consultant | Telangana |
|  | B.Girija | Social activist | TELANGANA |
|  | Javed Ameer | None | Gujarat |
|  | vani subramanian | independent film maker | delhi |
|  | Javed Ameer | None | Gujarat |
|  | Shanthabai | Individual | Karnataka |
|  | RASHID NARAIN SHUKUL | Student | ON |
|  | Samina Mishra | Independent | Delhi |
|  | Nikhat Fatina | Civil rights activist | Telangana |
|  | Shakun Doundiyakhed | Individual | Karnataka |
|  | Jyothi.b | Chaitanya mahila sangham | Telangana |
|  | Tasneem Azmi | Lawyer working alone | Maharashtra |
|  | Ruqhiya Begum | Educator | Telangana |
|  | Apeksha Priyadarshini | Bhagat Singh Ambedkar Students Organization, JNU | Delhi |
|  | Chun | HW | TN |
|  | Aparna | SFI | Kerala |
|  | Himadri Sekhar Mistri | JNU | Delhi |
|  | Uma Shankari | Farmer | Telangana |
|  | Sonal Radia | Educator | Maharashtra |
|  | Varghese Theckanath | Social Activist | Telangana |
|  | Kuriachan C P | Professional Affiliation | TELANGANA |
|  | Jose | HRF Vizag | Andhra Pradesh |
|  | Kuriachan C P | Professional | TELANGANA |
|  | Noella De Souza | Psychotherapist | Maharashtra |
|  | Puthenpura Job, 12-2-25/8, housing board colony, Amalapuram, East Godavi Dt. A. P. | PARA, Ravulapalem. | Andhra Pradesh |
|  | Namita | JNU | DELHI |
|  | Sr.Poonam CJ | Chirag | Bihar |
|  | Sr.Poonam CJ | Chirag | Bihar |
|  | Madhuri | Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan | Madhya Pradesh |
|  | Thirumala | Advocate | Telangana |
|  | jacob mathecken | Retd | Telangana |
|  | Deepa Vasudevan | Sahayatrika | Kerala |
|  | Vishwanath | Progressive Students' Association | Bihar |
|  | Venkat Maroju | Boston Study Group | Telangana |
|  | Prema | RHoSS | Assam |
|  | Jacob Kavumkal Varghese | Education | Karnataka |
|  | Bernadine Joseph | Stella Maris College | Outside US |
|  | Meera Sanghamitra | National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) | Telangana |
|  | Pyoli | Lawyer | Delhi |
|  | Deepika Joshi | PUCL | Chhattisgarh |
|  | Lalitha Krishna | Film producer | Maharashtra |
|  | KALYANI MENON SEN | Independent researcher | Haryana |
|  | Arul valan | Thurumbar Liberation Movement | Tamil nadu |
|  | Adv. Sr. Justine Gitanjali Senapati | Advocate | Odisha |
|  | Dr. Gabriele Dietrich | Pennurimai Iyakkam | Tamil Nadu |
|  | GURPREET KAUR | Researcher | Delhi |
|  | Rajan Barrett | Dept of English, Faculty of Arts. | Gujarat |
|  | aruna burte | individual | maharashtra |
|  | P.Kiranmayi | Professional | Telangana |
|  | Dunu Roy | Hazards Centre | Delhi |
|  | Ashima Roy Chowdhury | Feminist Activist, Saheli | New Delhi |
|  | Padma | Operarator | Ap |
|  | Bro Jose Daniel | Sodara (Society for Developmental Education and Rural Action) | Telangana |
|  | vandana kulkarni | free lancer | maharashtra |
|  | Sagari Ramdas | Food Sovereignty Alliance | Telangana |
|  | Varghese Manimala | Capuchin Vidyabhavan | Kerala 9 |
|  | Dr Aduvala Sujatha | Women Writer Rudrama sahithi sravanthi president | Telangana |
|  | Madhoo | Theatre Activist | Telangana |
|  | Uma chakravarti | Retired teacher | Delhi |
|  | Paul | Priest/Social worker | Maharashtra |
|  | Devendar | Sc | Telangana |
|  | GGParikh | Janata Trust | Maharashtra |
|  | Akash Bhattacharya | All India Peoples' Forum | Karnataka |
|  | Shreekumar | Karnataka Communal Harmony Forum | Karnataka |
|  | Vincent siluvai vijayan | MSW graduate and community organizer | Tamilnadu |
|  | Manasee Palshikar | Dictor | Maharashtra |
|  | Manisha Banerjee | Bangla Sanskriti Mancha | West Bengal |
|  | Arundhati Dhuru | NAPM | Uttar Pradesh |
|  | Sandeep Pandey | Socialist Party(India) | Uttar Pradesh |
|  | Anthoniraj Thumma | APFC | AP |
|  | Avinash Kumar | JNU | Delhi |
|  | Violet S | College of Social work Nirmala Niketan . Mumbai | Maharashtra |
|  | Anand Mathew | Vishwa Jyoti Communicatons | Uttar Pradesh |
|  | PRAVIN PATEL | FORUM FOR FAST JUSTICE | MAHARASTRA., |
|  | Ambika | Individual | Telangana |
|  | Rajkumar Sinha | Bargi Bandh Visthapit Evam parbhabit sangh | Madhya pardesh |
|  | Lisa Pires | Retired Teacher | Goa |
|  | chitra | consultant | karnataka |
|  | Kanaklata Yadav | PhD | UP |
|  | సుమిత్ర | అంకురం | తెలంగాన |
|  | Jose | Na | Kerala |
|  | Manchala Gangadhar | Democratic Teachers Federation | Telangana |
|  | Sanjay Reddy | Individual | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Dr. Anjali Monteiro | Filmmaker and academic | Goa |
|  | rajameenakshi chezhiyan | Voice of people | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Sudhir Katiyar | Centre for Labour Research and Action | Gujarat |
|  | Naveen Gaur | Delhi University | Delhi |
|  | Ephraim Nayak | All India Students' Federation | Odisha |
|  | Shiva Shankar | \_ | TN |
|  | Bittu K R | THITS, WSS | Haryana |
|  | R Ravishankar | NA | Karnataka |
|  | Ram Reddy Eppa | DTF | Telangana |
|  | Ramesh Patnaik | all india forum for right to education | Andhra Pradesh |
|  | Manshi Asher | Kangra Citizens Rights Group | Himachal Pradesh |
|  | Sudha Goparaju | Development activist | Telangana |
|  | Meena Gupta | Nil | Telangana |
|  | Ashish Kothari | Pune | Maharashtra |
|  | meena menon | freelance journalist | Maharashtra |
|  | Amod Shah | PhD Researcher | Uttarakhand |
|  | Imran | Freelance | TELANGANA |
|  | Vijay Dattatraya Mandke | Vidrohi Sanskritik chalval , Maharashtra (India) | Maharashtra |
|  | Upendra shanker | Jaladhara abhiyan | Rajasthan (RJ) |
|  | Sunita | Sehkar radio | Rajasthan (RJ) |
|  | Katyayani vidmahe | Prajaswamika rachayithrula vedika | Telangana |
|  | Arun Kumar | Retd. Professor | Haryana |
|  | John Dayal | Writer and activist | Delhi |
|  | affan Quadri | MEHAR Organisation | Hyderabad |
|  | Charu Govindan | Founder Member, Voice of People, Chennai | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Rahee S G | JNU, Delhi | New Delhi |
|  | Sudha | Psychologist | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Chandra Mohan | Makkal Pathai | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Pushpesh Kumar | University of Hyderabad | Telangana |
|  | Hasina khan | Bebaak Collective | Maharashtra |
|  | Anand Patwardhan | None | Maharashtra |
|  | Anna Joseph | Nava Jeevana Rehabilitation Centre Ballari | Karnataka |
|  | Stella Kujur | Asha Seva Kendra | Jharkhand |
|  | D B Maheshwar | Personal | Telangana |
|  | Walter Fernandes | NESRC | Assam |
|  | swatija | individual | Maharashtra |
|  | LASAR | Retired Engr. | TAMILNADU |
|  | firoz | teacher | delhi |
|  | Clara | Social service | Assam |
|  | Shanti Picardo | Forum of peace and justice | West Bengal |
|  | Gurusaravanan | Institute of Grassroots Governance | Tamil Nadu |
|  | R o s a r i a | M s w | G u j a r a t |
|  | Jahir Hussain | Arappor Iyakkam | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Anuradha | VoP | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Saravanan Karunanidhi | Human Rights Activist | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Krithiga Viswanathan | Freelancer | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Gita Chadha | Sociologist | Maharashtra |
|  | D kriishna kumar | Nfiw | Telangana |
|  | Jayasree Subramanian | Academic | Telangana |
|  | Eric Pinto | NAPM | Goa |
|  | Qudsia Tabassum | Lawyer | Telangana |
|  | M A Shakeel | Advocate | Telangana |
|  | Abha Choudhuri | Socially-committed Educationist | Maharashtra |
|  | HIRAK Bandyopadhyay | Physician | WEST BENGAL |
|  | Dr. P. K. Sarkar | Health Activist | West Bengal |
|  | Dr. P. K. sarkar | Health activist | West Bengal |
|  | Strongly condemn the heinous crime. No constitution seems to be enough to safeguard rights of dalits and the very existence of the minorities. Continued protests and confrontations are the only wayout, at least for now. | Progressive Plantation Workers Union(PPWU} | West Bengal |
|  | Sujata Patel | Retd, teacher, Pune University | Maharashtra |
|  | Joseph Maliaman | Journist | Delhi |
|  | Sayantan Ray | Working as content writer | West Bengal |
|  | Chennaiah poguri | National Alliance of Agriculture allied Workers Union - NAAWU | Andhra pradesh |
|  | Vinay Sreenivasa | Advocate | Karnataka |
|  | Sibi Melvin Resalayyan | ROSE | Tamilnadu |
|  | Ashok Maridas | Samvidhanada Haadiyalli | Karnataka |
|  | Saganipuram Venkateswaran | Citizen | Karnataka |
|  | A.R. Vasavi | Independent scholar | Karnataka |
|  | Firdouse Khan | Forward trust | Karnataka |
|  | Augustine | Counselor | Illinois |
|  | Mallu Kumbar | Karnataka Sexual Minorities Forum | Karnataka |
|  | Seema koshy | AIPC | Karnataka |
|  | Koninika Ray | National Federation of Indian Women | Delhi |
|  | Shaheen Shasa | Bahutva Karnataka | Karnataka |
|  | Anu | VOP | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Sujata Madhok | Journalist | Delhi |
|  | Indranee Dutta | Retd Professor | Assam |
|  | Anjana Mangalagiri | Retired | Delhi |
|  | Madhu chawla | Individual | Delhi |
|  | Divya | Self Employed | Delhi |
|  | Kamayani swami | Social worker | Bihar |
|  | Agyatmitra | Play for Peace | Maharashtra |
|  | Avani Chokshi | All India Lawyers Association for Justice | Karnataka |
|  | Abha bhaiyaa | Women's rights activist | Himachal Pradesh |
|  | Runu | Independent activist and professional | Uttar pradesh |
|  | Prakash Louis | XISR | Bihar |
|  | Sharada.A.L | Population First | Telangana |
|  | Jaishri Jethwaney | NDRG | Delhi |
|  | Maimoona Mollah | AIDWA, Delhi | Delhi |
|  | Malcolm Nazareth | na | Minnesota |
|  | Apurva | NREGA Sangharsh Morcha | Delhi |
|  | Padma Velaskar | Tata institute of Social Sciences (retd Prof ) | Maharashtra |
|  | Jothi SJ | Concerned citizens | West Bengal |
|  | Rumi Harish | Alternative Law Forum | Karnataka |
|  | Rudi Heredia | Retired | Maharashtra |
|  | Dr. Anuradha Lobo | MMC | Goa |
|  | Lata Singh | JNU | Delhi |
|  | Fathima | India leads | KARNATAKA |
|  | Kavita Srivastava | PUCL | Rajasthan |
|  | Tanushree Gangopadhyay | Independent Journalist, Retired | Gujarat |
|  | J John | Independent researcher | Delhi |
|  | Sharad Raj | Independent | Maharashtra |
|  | Edwin | Vhak | Tamilnadu |
|  | Kumar Shubhamoorty | Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, | Bihar, |
|  | Harbans Mukhia | JNU (retired) | Haryana |
|  | Alex Tuscano | Praxis | Karnataka |
|  | Rita Anand | Editor, Civil Society magazine | Gurgaon |
|  | Syed Bahauddin | Bahutwa karnataka | Karnataka |
|  | Dr. Shoma A. Chatterji | Journalist author film scholar | West Bengal |
|  | Deepika Sondhi | Freelance Communicator | New Delhi |
|  | Francis Parmar | None | Gujarat |
|  | R.Manohar | HRDA | Karnataka |
|  | Gautam Chaudhury | Self | West Bengal |
|  | Varughese Cherian | AIPC | Karnataka |
|  | Sudha N | Bahutva Karnataka | Karnataka |
|  | S T | Nil | Maharashtra |
|  | Brinda Singh | Universe | Delhi |
|  | Hazel D'Lima | Nirmala Niketan, Prof. Social Worker | Maharashtra |
|  | Pavithra | Employee | Telangana |
|  | Jayashree Kumar | None | Maharashtra |
|  | Veronica DSouza | Social Activist | Karnataka |
|  | Ranjan Solomon | Badayl | GOA |
|  | Sophiya | Individual | Karnataka |
|  | Nagaragere Ramesh | Peoples' Democratic Forum | Karnataka |
|  | Akhand | Human Rights Defender | Odisha |
|  | Dr Sylvia Karpagam | Public health doctor | Karnataka |
|  | I support the demand for safety of young widow. | Associate professor of philosophy | Karnataka |
|  | Shankar Mahanand | Relaa | Odisha |
|  | Medhavinee Namjoshi | Individual | Maharashtra |
|  | Ramdas Rao | PUCL Karnataka | Karnataka |
|  | skmeharadfa | Dalit eavm Adiwasi Vikash Prishad | RAJASTHAN |
|  | D P RAWAT | manav seva samiti | RAJASTHAN |
|  | Veena Vijayan | Communications | Mumbai |
|  | Aruna Gnanadason | Indian Christian Women's Movement | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Dinesh Baishya | AIFRTE | Assam |
|  | Anu | Samanvaya | Maharashtra |
|  | Battini Rao | Progressive Organization of People (POP) | Andhra Pradesh |
|  | Roselyn | Social work | Bihar |
|  | Prema | RHoSS | India |
|  | Gabriele Dietrich | Pennurimai Iyakkam | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Prof Lyla Mehta | Institute of Development studies | UK |
|  | Manju | Activist | Bihar |
|  | David Devadas | Institute for Social Sciences | Delhi |
|  | Mohan Rawat | profession | Maharashtra |
|  | Jill Mistry | Film maker | Maharashtra |
|  | Roop Rekha Verma | Individual | U P |
|  | Gautam Sonti | Filmmaker | Karnataka |
|  | SAMUEL ASIR RAJ S | Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli | Tamil Nadu |
|  | Roma | All India Union of Forest Working People | Uttar Pradesh |
|  | Rìta Manchanda | South Asia Forum for Human Rights | New Delhi |
|  | Harpuneet Kaur | Panjab Feminist Union of Students, Panjab University | Chandigarh |
|  | Shewli Kumar | Tata Institute of Social Sciences | Maharashtra |
|  | Siddharth K J | Independent Researcher | Karnataka |
|  | V.Sridevi | Cms | Telangana |
|  | Ashish Ranjan | NAPM | Bihar |
|  | Nandita Narain | Delhi University | Delhi |
|  | Madhu Prasad | Associate Professor (retd) ZakirHusain Delhi College | Delhi |
|  | Advocate Mohammad Naushad | NIL | Bihar |
|  | Renu Bala | DTF | Delhi |
|  | Anil kumar | DU | NCT OF Delhi |
|  | Vidya Dinker | INSAF | National |
|  | SHEO DUTT. | Delhi university | UP |
|  | Sucharita Sen | Jawaharlal Nehru University | Delhi |
|  | Rekha Awasthi | Janwadi lekhak Sangh | Delhi |
|  | NARLA RAVI SHARMA | Forum Against Hindutva Fascist Offensive | Telangana |
|  | Prof Ram Niwas Sharma | jNVUniversity Jodhpur | Rajasthan |
|  | A N Roy | Retired Associate Professor | Delhi |
|  | Abha Dev Habib | Miranda House | Delhi |
|  | Rudrashish Chakraborty | Associate Professor, DU. | Delhi |
|  | Archana Dixit | Retired Associate Professor | New Delhi |
|  | Karen Gabriel | St Stephen's College | Delhi |
|  | Faraz Ahmad | Freelance journalist | Delhi |
|  | Dr Sunilam sunilam | KSS - NAPM - SKM | Madhya Pradesh |
|  | Amita Braganza | Concerned citizen of India | Karnataka |
|  | SASWATI GHOSH | Academic and activist | West Bengal |
|  | Aristo | Business | TAMILNADU |
|  | T M Thomas | DTF | Delhi |
|  | Saba | Activist, MKSS | Rajasthan |
|  | Ayesha Kidwai | Jawaharlal Nehru University | Delhi |
|  | Yakub Mohd | Sahayogi Sewa Sansthan | Rajasthan |
|  | Sujata Jena | Sacred Hearts | Odisha |
|  | Mini Mohan | Researcher | Kerala |
|  | Narender Thakur | University of Delhi | Delhi |
|  | Kavita Krishnan | AIPWA | Delhi |
|  | Suhas Kolhekar | NAPM-JSA | Maharashtra |