

India: Tapas Pal, Trinamul Congress MP, must resign for threatening to call to rape women of the opposition and to kill CPI(M) cadres

Monday 30 June 2014, by [Radical Socialist \(India\)](#) (Date first published: 30 June 2014).

DEMAND THE RESIGNATION OF TAPAS PAL FROM PARLIAMENT AND LEGAL ACTION AGAINST HIM: FIGHT THE PERSISTENCE OF POLITICAL RAPES AND THREATS OF THE SAME

Tapas Paul, film actor and in recent times a Trinamul Congress Member of Parliament, has reiterated openly the threat that many political leaders utter a little covertly. He has stated that if women supporters of “our party” are attacked, men of the party will be sent to rape women of the opposition. In earlier times, at least since the rise of mass communal and casteist politics in India, this had been a regular strategy of such communal/casteist forces. This was taken over and used systematically by the Hindutva forces, for example in Gujarat during the 2002 pogroms, when the false news that women had been dragged from a train and raped by Muslims was spread in order to incite rioting mobs of Hindutva cadres to rape and sexually attack Muslim women (as well as to kill men, women and children because of the Godhra deaths).

In West Bengal, in the past, we have seen the former ruling party, the CPI(M), and its leaders using violent and sexist language against women, and have condemned these immediately. We have also seen the use of rape as a political weapon on several occasions, and have joined hands with feminists and women’s rights groups, civil liberties organisations, and other progressives, to resist such cases, regardless of the party, class, community or caste colour, for we do not believe that any progressive social or political work can be achieved using such means, and see it as our task to resist all practices that promote rape or violence on women, and the use of political violence under conditions of democracy.

This violent, criminalized and sexist political culture has been absorbed and regurgitated by the ruling TMC of West Bengal. The latest case is the speech by Mr. Pal, the M.P., at a meeting in Krishnanagar today. He claimed that CPI(M) members had attacked his party members, and said that not as an MP, but as a TMC activist, he was warning that he would avenge such things. He went on to threaten the killing of CPI(M) members and the rape of women.

Mr. Pal has been elected MP, and as long as he holds on to that position, public utterances by him have that effect. So whatever his disclaimer, this was an MP, someone who has sworn to uphold the Constitution of India, urging people to go and rape women of opposition parties and kill members of the opposition. As for the recurrent claim that the CPI(M) is using violence, we question this on two grounds. If indeed the CPI(M) uses violence, the response should have been the use of due legal process. And secondly, the CPI(M) today is in shambles. Its cadre base is so pathetic that in the elections of 2014 the Left Front had its share of votes lowered to 29 per cent and the CPI(M) could not even put enough people even in all booths. So the bogey of CPI(M) violence, based on what was a reality in the past, is used by Pal to call for nothing less than lynch law, a call that can be easily

used to stage “events” and then take “revenge”. The ultimate case one can remind is the Reichstag fire, but plenty of lesser events exist.

The TMC has tried to go into a damage control mode by saying that the context must be examined. We reject this absolutely. No context justifies calling for killing the members of an opposition party or raping their women cadres.

Above all, however, we warn that appealing to various state institutions will be futile, unless ordinary people, women and men, people in political parties, people in social movements, unite to protest and resist.

Our goal is not one of scoring points, nor of removing one hated government only to replace them by a new set of the same kind but to defend the democratic rights of everyone. Radical Socialist has always taken the position that in a bourgeois polity, any call for defending democracy must stress the role of mass action rather than calling upon the bureaucratic state of the ruling class. It is not by appealing against Pal to Narendra Modi, but by appealing to the democratic traditions of our working people, that we must mobilise against the political use of rape.

We demand:

- Immediate legal action against Tapas Pal by the Government of West Bengal.
- Resignation of Mr. Pal from the Parliament.
- Proceedings against Mr. Pal to be initiated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
- Immediate action be taken by the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women.
- An end to criminalization of politics and use of women’s bodies as a political tool.
- Safeguarding of democratic rights of all as enshrined in the Indian constitution.
- Right of women to move and work freely without the constant fear of being sexually assaulted.

Radical Socialist, 30 June 2014
