

Statement

India: On the Police-party Axis and violence on Women in West Bengal

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The incidence of police torture on a woman at Kalamadanga village under Budbud police station in Bardhaman district of West Bengal, is a grim reminder that the “normalisation” of state violence, including, or better to say particularly, violence on women, has continued unabated regardless of which political party has been in power.

The incidence is a straightforward case of politically motivated violence targetting women. A man named Sheikh Mithun, of the Parui region, is reported to have switched from the TMC to the BJP. As part of the threat to wipe out the BJP from the Parui area, he was injured due to bomb throwing on the part of alleged TMC goondas. Treated in a hospital in Bardhaman, he was released on the 17th of January, 2015. Thereafter, police, accompanied by TMC people, turned up at the paternal home of Mithun’s aunt, which is in the Budbud area of Bardhaman. She was asked about his whereabouts, and dragged to a forest area, tied to a tree, beaten, with a blade used on her body, stripped and otherwise tortured.

The TMC has jumped to the defence of the police, claiming that nothing wrong was done. The police has accepted that some wrong was done, but the role of senior police officer, SDPO Amlan Kusum Ghosh, has been ignored. In a typical move, the internal police report has been trying to pick holes or inconsistencies in the torture victim’s claims, questioning whether a blade was indeed used and so on. The Calcutta High court had asked the police to provide protection to the woman, yet in subsequent developments the father and brothers of the woman were attacked by TMC leaders with journalists being chased away. The survivor claimed that they are under constant threat to withdraw the case and even the threat of rape dangles on her which the police think will compel Sheikh Mithun to surrender.

Without diluting in any way our condemnation of the police and the ruling party, and while fully supporting the woman concerned, we would however also point out that the media hype today is because this is a conflict between two rightwing bourgeois parties. When it is a case of women being accused of belonging to left forces, or of being relatives of male left wing activists, in particular the radical left, the media often plays a far less vocal role. We therefore urge all women’s rights activists to relate the Budbud case to all cases of police and party led violence on women, instead of treating it in isolation.

Radical Socialist:

- condemn the police violence
- condemn use of woman’s body as a pressure tactic to arrest the target of the police
- demand an end to police protection of political parties whenever they are in power
- demand a speedy independent enquiry and punishment of the guilty

- demand an interim suspension of the OC and the SDPO during the inquiry
- demand that the government should take the responsibility of the safety of the woman and her family and should also bear the responsibility for the medical expenses

Radical Socialist, 28 January 2015
