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Announcement

A Public Discussion: Communal Violence Bill (Ahmedabad, 9 August 2007)

Thursday 9 August 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 1 August 2007).

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE BILL

PUBLIC MEETING

Mehendi Nawab Jung Hall, Paldi, Ahmedabad

9th August 2007 : 4.30 - 7.30 pm.

As all of us are aware, the UPA Government had promised the nation a comprehensive legislation to combat communal violence. This legislation would be expected to address the root causes of such violence and enable the State to take decisive action to prevent it. We should not also forget the fact that such legislation was expected to have been conceived in the context of Gujarat genocide of 2002. Mass crimes, sexual crimes against women, total impunity of state as well as non-state perpetrators of such violence, victims languishing for years without any entitlements or reparations - all these have become part and parcel of our national scenario today. All these dimensions should have been addressed by the comprehensive legislation that we were waiting for. Instead we have been given a half-baked, ill-conceived Bill which in the present form would not only be ineffective, but could be dangerous. This Bill does not take cognizance of the politically motivated, conspiratorial process of build up towards any sequence of communal violence; instead reduces such violence to discrete events. It neither defines mass crimes / gender-based crimes nor provides for new punitive measures. The impunity of the state officials and the political class would still remain intact. This legislation, which should have empowered the citizens, made them feel more secure, strengthened the secular fabric of our nation, and given the victims

broader avenues for justice, instead, has nothing to offer at all.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has presented this Bill to the Parliament. However due to excellent advocacy done by several groups and activists from across the country, the Bill may not be passed in its present form during the current session of the Parliament. Alternative drafts also have been prepared by different groups. However it is important that we as civil society organizations and activists raise our voice against the Bill and also engage in the process of developing a citizen's draft of the Communal Violence Bill.

The public meeting on the 9th of August is an opportunity for all of us to deliberate on this legislation, update ourselves as to the efforts being made to stall this Bill from being passed in the current form, and also exchange notes regarding the alternative drafts which have been developed. If we all agree we could also draft a resolution to be sent to the PM and the HM registering our total disagreement with the Bill in its present form, exhorting them not to pass the Bill and urging them to have wider consultations at the civil society level in order to draft an effective legislation. We request you to be present in this meeting.

In solidarity,

Hiren Gandhi, Fr. Cedric Prakash, Shabnam Hashmi, Gagan Sethi, Zakia Jowher, Hanif Lakadawala, Sheeba George, Prasad Chacko, Persis Ginwalla

P.S.

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