

URGENT ACTION

DALIT SISTERS ORDERED TO BE RAPED IN INDIA

On 30 July, an unelected all-male village council in Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh, northern India, ordered that a Dalit woman and her teenage sister be raped and paraded naked. The sisters and their family have fled the village and are now in Delhi.

On 24 May, 23-year-old **Meenakshi Kumari** and her 15-year-old sister fled their village in Baghpat district with their family, fearing violence after their brother eloped with a married woman from a *Jat* (dominant caste) family. On 30 May, their house in the village was ransacked. On 30 July, members of a village *khap panchayat*— an unelected all-male village council - ordered that Meenakshi Kumari and her sister be raped and paraded naked, with their faces blackened, as punishment for the actions of their brother.

The family continue to fear for their safety. Another brother, Sumit Kumar, said, “In the *panchayat*, the *Jat* decision is final. They don’t listen to us. The police don’t listen to us. The police said anyone can be murdered now.”

On 5 August, Meenakshi Kumari filed a petition before the Supreme Court seeking protection for her family so that they can return to their home. The family also says they are concerned for the safety of the *Jat* woman who eloped with her brother, who claims that she is pregnant with his child. Meenakshi Kumari’s father has lodged a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, alleging harassment by the police and the dominant caste family.

On 18 August, the Supreme Court ordered Uttar Pradesh authorities to reply to the petition by 15 September. “After we went to the Supreme Court, the villagers are even more aggressive,” said Sumit Kumar.

Please write immediately in English or your own language calling on authorities in Uttar Pradesh:

- To take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of Meenakshi Kumari, her sister, and the rest of their family, in accordance with their wishes, and ensure that they are able to return to their home;
- To carry out a swift, full and impartial investigation into the orders passed by the *khap panchayat* to rape the sisters, and where sufficient evidence exists, prosecute the suspects;
- To ensure the safety of the woman from the dominant caste family, and take necessary precautions to prevent any violence against her.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 SEPTEMBER TO:

Principal Secretary (Home)

Debashish Panda
Civil secretariat
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
India
Phone: +91 522 2239279 (English or Hindi only)

Salutation: Dear Sir

Director General of Police

Jagmohan Yadav
Ranapratap Marg
Lucknow,
Uttar Pradesh, India
Email: dgp@up.nic.in
Phone: +91 522 2206104 (English or Hindi only)

Mobile: +91 9454400101 (English or Hindi only)
Salutation: Dear Sir

Station House Officer

Subodh Yadav
Khekra Police Station
Vijaya Nagar
Baghpat District 250101
Uttar Pradesh
India

Salutation: Dear Sir

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

DALIT SISTERS ORDERED TO BE RAPED IN INDIA

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Unelected village councils or *khap panchayats* are widespread in parts of India, and usually comprise of older men from dominant castes who prescribe rules for social behaviour and interaction in villages. They are known to order sexually violent punishments against women. In 2011, in the case of Arumugam Servai versus State of Tamil Nadu, the Supreme Court of India described these *panchayats* as 'kangaroo courts' and said their decrees were illegal. However, in some states these bodies still operate and their orders continue to be carried out. In April 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, expressed concern about the continuing influence of *khap panchayats*.

Name: Meenakshi Kumari (f) and her family

Gender m/f: Both

UA: 186/15 Index: ASA 20/2316/2015 Issue Date: 24 August 2015